FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 2

*Hannah’s Prayer*

**Then Hannah prayed and said: “My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. 2“There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. 3“Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the Lord is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed. 4“The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. 5Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. 6“The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. 7The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. 8He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. “For the foundations of the earth are the Lord’s; upon them he has set the world. 9He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. “It is not by strength that one prevails; 10those who oppose the Lord will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the Lord will judge the ends of the earth. “He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.” 11 Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the Lord under Eli the priest.**

**2:1** *prayed.* Hannah’s prayer is a song of praise and thanksgiving to God (see Ps 72:20, where the psalms of David are designated “prayers”). This song has sometimes been termed the “Magnificat of the OT” because it is so similar to the Magnificat of the NT (Mary’s song, Lk 1:46–55). It also has certain resemblances to the “Benedictus” (the song of Zechariah, Lk 1:67–79). Hannah’s song of praise finds many echoes in David’s song near the end of the book (2Sa 22). These two songs frame the main narrative, and their themes highlight the ways of God that the narrative relates—they contain the theology of the book in the form of praise. Hannah speaks prophetically at a time when Israel is about to enter an important new period of her history with the establishment of kingship through her son, Samuel. To reject Baptism is to reject Christ Himself. The Christian Church is by Christ commanded to baptize and it has no right to discontinue this Sacrament. (CSB)

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*rejoices in the Lord*. The supreme source of Hannah’s joy is not in the child, but in the God who has answered her prayer. (CSB)

*my horn is lifted high.* See NIV text note; cf. Dt 33:17; Ps 75:5, 10; 92:10; 112:9; Lk 1:69. To have one’s horn lifted up by God is to be delivered from disgrace to a position of honor and strength. (CSB)

**2:2** *no one besides you.* See 2Sa 7:22; Dt 4:39; Isa 45:6. (CSB)

*Rock.* A metaphor to depict the strength and stability of the God of Israel as the unfailing source of security for his people (see 2Sa 22:32; Dt 32:4, 31; Ps 18:31; Isa 30:29; 44:8). (CSB)

**2:3** *so proudly … such arrogance.* After the manner of Peninnah (and others in the narratives of 1,2 Samuel—Eli’s sons, the Philistines, Saul, Nabal, Goliath, Absalom, Shimei and Sheba). (CSB)

*the Lord is a God who knows.* See 16:7; 1Ki 8:39; Ps 139:1–6. (CSB)

**2:4–5** In a series of examples derived from everyday life Hannah shows that God often works contrary to natural expectations and brings about surprising reversals—seen frequently in the stories that follow. (CSB)

**2:5** *seven children.* See note on Ru 4:15. (CSB)

**2:6–8** Hannah declares that life and death, prosperity and adversity, are determined by the sovereign power of God—another theme richly illustrated in the following narrative (see Dt 32:39; 1Ki 17:20–24; 2Ki 4:32–35; Jn 5:21; 11:41–44). (CSB)

**2:6** *grave.* See NIV text note; see also note on Ge 37:35. (CSB)

**2:8** *foundations of the earth.* A common figure in the OT for the solid base on which the earth (the dry land on which man lives, not planet earth; Ge 1:10) is founded. The phrase does not teach a particular theory of the structure of the universe (see Job 9:6; 38:6; Ps 75:3; 104:5; Zec 12:1). (CSB)

**2:9** *guard the feet.* Travel in ancient Israel was for the most part by foot over trails that were often rocky and dangerous (see Ps 91:11–12; 121:3). (CSB)

*saints.* People who are faithful to the Lord. The Hebrew root underlying this word is used of both God and his people in 2Sa 22:26 (see also Ps 18:25) to characterize the nature of their mutual relationship. The word is also translated “godly” (Ps 12:1; 32:6) and “faithful ones” (Pr 2:8). (CSB)

**2:10** *judge.* Impose his righteous rule upon (see Ps 96:13; 98:9). (CSB)

*ends of the earth.* All nations and peoples (see Dt 33:17; Isa 45:22). (CSB)

*his king.* Hannah’s prayer is here prophetic, anticipating the establishment of kingship in Israel and the initial realization of the Messianic ideal in David (Lk 1:69). Ultimately her expectation finds fulfillment in Christ and his complete triumph over the enemies of God. (CSB)

*horn.* See note on v. 1. (CSB)

*anointed.* The first reference in the Bible to the Lord’s anointed—i.e., his anointed king. (Priests were also anointed for God’s service; see Ex 28:41; Lev 4:3.) The word is often synonymous with “king” (as here) and provides part of the vocabulary basis for the Messianic idea in the Bible. “Anointed” and “Messiah” are the translation and transliteration respectively of the same Hebrew word. The Greek translation of this Hebrew term is *Christos*, from which comes the English word “Christ” (see NIV text note on Mt 1:17). A king (coming from the tribe of Judah) is first prophesied by Jacob (Ge 49:10); kingship is further anticipated in the oracles of Balaam in Nu 24:7, 17. Also Dt 17:14–20 looks forward to the time when the Lord will place a king of his choice over his people after they enter the promised land. 1,2 Samuel shows how this expectation of the theocratic king is realized in the person of David. Hannah’s prophetic anticipation of a king at the time of the dedication of her son Samuel, who was to be God’s agent for establishing kingship in Israel, is entirely appropriate. (CSB)

**2:11** *ministered.* Performed such services as a boy or acolyte might render while assisting the high priest. (CSB)

*before the Lord*. At the “house of the Lord” (1:24). (CSB)

*Eli’s Wicked Sons*

**12 Eli’s sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord. 13 Now it was the practice of the priests with the people that whenever anyone offered a sacrifice and while the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand. 14 He would plunge it into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot, and the priest would take for himself whatever the fork brought up. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. 15 But even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, “Give the priest some meat to roast; he won’t accept boiled meat from you, but only raw.” 16 If the man said to him, “Let the fat be burned up first, and then take whatever you want,” the servant would then answer, “No, hand it over now; if you don’t, I’ll take it by force.” 17 This sin of the young men was very great in the Lord’s sight, for they were treating the Lord’s offering with contempt. 18 But Samuel was ministering before the Lord—a boy wearing a linen ephod. 19 Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. 20 Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, “May the Lord give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the Lord.” Then they would go home. 21 And the Lord was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord. 22 Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. 23 So he said to them, “Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. 24 No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear spreading among the Lord’s people. 25 If a man sins against another man, God may mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?” His sons, however, did not listen to their father’s rebuke, for it was the Lord’s will to put them to death. 26 And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men.**

**2:12** *wicked.* See note on Dt 13:13. (CSB)

*had no regard for.* Lit. “did not know.” In OT usage, to “know” the Lord is not just intellectual or theoretical recognition. To know the Lord is to enter into fellowship with him and acknowledge his claims on one’s life. The term often has a covenantal connotation (see Jer 31:34; Hos 13:4, “acknowledge”). (CSB)

**2:13–16** Apparently vv. 13–14 describe the practice that had come to be accepted for determining the priests’ portion of the fellowship offerings (Lev 7:31–36; 10:14–15; Dt 18:1–5)—a tradition presumably based on the assumption that a random thrust of the fork would providentially determine a fair portion. Verses 15–16 then describe how Eli’s sons arrogantly violated that custom and the law. (CSB)

**2:15** *before the fat was burned.* On the altar as the Lord’s portion, which he was to receive first (see Lev 3:16; 4:10, 26, 31, 35; 7:28, 30–31; 17:6). (CSB)

*roast.* Boiling is the only form of cooking specified in the law for the priests’ portion (Nu 6:19–20). Roasting this portion is nowhere expressly forbidden in the law, but it is specified only for the Passover lamb (Ex 12:8–9; Dt 16:7). The present passage seems to imply that for the priests to roast their portion of the sacrifices was unlawful. (CSB)

**2:16** *by force.* Presenting the priests’ portion was to be a voluntary act on the part of the worshipers (see Lev 7:28–36; Dt 18:3). (CSB)

**2:18** *But Samuel.* Between 2:11 and 4:1 the author presents a series of sharp contrasts between Samuel and Eli’s sons. (CSB)

*linen ephod.* A priestly garment worn by those who served before the Lord at his sanctuary (see 22:18; 2Sa 6:14). It was a close-fitting, sleeveless pullover, usually of hip length, and is to be distinguished from the special ephod worn by the high priest (see note on v. 28; cf. Ex 39:1–26). (CSB)

**2:19** *little robe.* A sleeveless garment reaching to the knees, worn over the undergarment and under the ephod (see 15:27; 18:4). (CSB)

*annual sacrifice.* See note on 1:3. (CSB)

**2:22** *slept with the women who served.* See Ex 38:8. There is no further reference to such women in the OT. Perhaps these women performed various menial tasks, but certainly their service is not to be confused with that of the Levites, which is prescribed in the Pentateuch (Nu 1:50; 3:6–8; 8:15; 16:9; 18:2–3). The immoral acts of Eli’s sons are reminiscent of the religious prostitution (fertility rites) at the Canaanite sanctuaries (see 1Ki 14:24; 15:12; 22:46)—acts that were an abomination to the Lord and a desecration of his house (Dt 23:17–18). (CSB)

**2:23** *he said to them.* Eli rebuked his sons but did not remove them from office. God would do that. (CSB)

**2:25** *God.* See NIV text note. Eli’s argument is that when someone commits an offense against another man, there is recourse to a third party to decide the issue (whether this be understood as God or as God’s representatives, the judges; see NIV text notes on Ex 22:8–9); but when the offense is against the Lord, there is no recourse, for God is both the one wronged and the judge. (CSB)

*the Lord’s will to put them to death.* This comment by the author of the narrative is not intended to excuse Eli’s sons, but to indicate that Eli’s warning was much too late. Eli’s sons had persisted in their evil ways for so long that God’s judgment on them was determined (v. 34; see Jos 11:20). (CSB)

**2:26** *grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men.* Cf. Luke’s description of Jesus (Lk 2:52). (CSB)

*Prophecy Against the House of Eli*

**27 Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Did I not clearly reveal myself to your father’s house when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? 28 I chose your father out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your father’s house all the offerings made with fire by the Israelites. 29 Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?’ 30 “Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that your house and your father’s house would minister before me forever.’ But now the Lord declares: ‘Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained. 31 The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your family line 32 and you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, in your family line there will never be an old man. 33 Every one of you that I do not cut off from my altar will be spared only to blind your eyes with tears and to grieve your heart, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life. 34 “ ‘And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day. 35 I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always. 36 Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and a crust of bread and plead, “Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat.” ’ ”**

**2:27** *man of God.* Often a designation for a prophet (see 9:6, 10; Dt 33:1; Jos 14:6; 1Ki 13:1, 6–8; 17:18, 24; 2Ki 4:7). (CSB)

*father’s house.* The descendants of Aaron. (CSB)

**2:28** *to be my priest.* Three tasks of the priests are mentioned: 1) *to go up to my altar.* To perform the sacrificial rites at the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard of the tabernacle. 2) *to burn incense.* At the altar of incense in the Holy Place (Ex 30:1–10). 3) *to wear an ephod.* See note on v. 18. It would appear that the reference here is to the special ephod of the high priest (see Ex 28:4–13). The breastplate containing the Urim and Thummim was attached to the ephod of the high priest. The Urim and Thummim were a divinely ordained means of communication with God, placed in the custody of the high priest (see Ex 28:30 and note; see also 1Sa 23:9–12; 30:7–8). (CSB)

**2:30** *I promised.* See Ex 29:9; Lev 8–9; Nu 16–17; 25:13. (CSB)

*Far be it from me!* This is not to say that the promise of the priesthood to Aaron’s house has been annulled, but rather that Eli and his house are to be excluded from participation in this privilege because of their sin. (CSB)

*Those who honor me I will honor.* See v. 29. Spiritual privileges bring responsibilities and obligations; they are not to be treated as irrevocable rights (see 2Sa 22:26–27). (CSB)

**2:31** *strength … strength.* Lit. “arm … arm,” symbolic of strength. Eli’s “arm” and that of his priestly family will be cut off (contrast David, 2Sa 22:35). (CSB)

*not be an old man in your family line.* A prediction of the decimation of Eli’s priestly family in the death of his sons (4:11), in the massacre of his descendants by Saul at Nob (22:18–19) and in the removal of Abiathar from his priestly office (1Ki 2:26–27). (CSB)

**2:32** *distress in my dwelling.* Including the capture of the ark by the Philistines (4:1–10), the destruction of Shiloh (Jer 7:14) and the relocation of the tabernacle to Nob (21:1–6; see note on 21:1). (CSB)

**2:33** A reference apparently to Abiathar, who was expelled from office by Solomon (see 1Ki 2:26–27) after an unsuccessful attempt to make Adonijah king as the successor to David. (CSB)

**2:34** *a sign to you.* The death of Hophni and Phinehas (4:11) will confirm the longer-term predictions. Such confirmation of a prophetic word was not uncommon (see 10:7–9; 1Ki 13:3; Jer 28:15–17; Lk 1:18–20). (CSB)

**2:35** *I will raise up for myself a faithful priest.* Initially fulfilled in the person of Zadok, who served as a priest during the time of David (see 2Sa 8:17; 15:24, 35; 20:25) and who eventually replaced Abiathar as high priest in the time of Solomon (see 1Ki 2:35; 1Ch 29:22). (CSB)

*firmly establish his house.* Lit. “build for him a faithful house”; the faithful priest will be given a “faithful” (i.e., enduring) priestly family. See the similar word spoken concerning David (25:28, “lasting dynasty”; see also 2Sa 7:16; 1Ki 11:38). The line of Zadok was continued by his son Azariah (see 1Ki 4:1) and was still on the scene at the time of the return from the exile (see 1Ch 6:14–15; Ezr 3:2). It continued in intertestamental times until Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 b.c.) sold the priesthood to Menelaus (in the Apocrypha see 2 Maccabees 4:23–50), who was not of the priestly line. (CSB)

*my anointed one.* David and his successors (see note on v. 10).