

I SURRENDER ALL

By Hepzibah Kore

Theme: Fulfilling Our Vows to God

Suggested Call to Worship: *I Waited Patiently for the Lord*, SDA Church Hymnal Reading #801

Primary Bible Text : 1 Samuel 1:11

Opening Song: Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus, #524 SDA Church Hymnal

Closing Song: I Gave My Life for Thee, #281 SDA Church Hymnal

Hannah was a barren woman—a woman of affliction. In Bible times women achieved self worth by bearing sons, just as it is today in some parts of the world, particularly in the east. Her affliction, frustration, and grief were aggravated by her rival Peninnah’s indolent jibes and jeers. Little did Peninnah realize that she was sinning against God by grieving Hannah and her husband; by setting a bad example for her children, and by forgetting that nothing is impossible with God.

Elkanah, their husband loved Hannah dearly. He was sympathetic, tender, caring, and kind. He gave her a double portion of the peace offerings, and did everything he could to encourage Hannah and to lift up her spirit under her affliction. All this attention was in vain. Nothing could fill the void in her life. She lacked the most precious gift her married life could offer—a child—more specifically a male child. God had closed her womb. Why?

When Elkanah consoled her by asking if he weren’t better than ten sons, she controlled her emotions and partook of the dinner with the family. Then she went to the temple of the Lord. There she wept in anguish. Poured out the bitterness of her heart and soul. She believed that the God of heaven alone could lift the burden off her shoulders and so she cast it upon him through prayer—for God had promised to meet His children at the tabernacle,

Hannah's Prayer I Samuel 1:11

Her prayer was a vow. She prayed, "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maid servant, and remember me, and not forget your maid servant, but will give your maid servant a male child, than I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life. No razor shall come upon his head," (I Samuel 1:11 NKJV).

Her attitude in prayer

1. Even though greatly troubled, she praised God and declared her belief and faith in Him.
2. She mingled tears with prayer.
3. She was particular yet modest in her petition.
4. She made a vow that if God would give her a son she would give him back to God.
5. She trusted God's knowledge of the heart. Thoughts are words to Him.

3 phases of Hannah's vow

I. Hannah's vow

II. God's answer

III. Fulfillment of the vow

Phase I Hannah's Vow

Hannah's vow is two fold:

1. The commitment. "If you look on my affliction and give me a male child I will give him to you until death." Her craving for a child, over a long period, created deep commitment
2. Devoted to serve, he will be a Nazerite. No razor shall touch his head. "He would be by birth a Levite, and so devoted to the service of God, but he should be by her vow a Nazerite, and his very childhood should be sacred. It is very proper when we are in pursuit of mercy to bind our souls with a bond. Not that hereby we can pretend to merit the gift, but thus we are qualified for it and for the comfort of it. In hope of mercy let us promise duty." *Mathew Henry's Commentary*

Hannah prayed earnestly. Her pleading before the Lord should encourage all the desperate souls who pray. "I have poured out my soul before the Lord," said Hannah, "for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now." (v.15, 16 NKJV) Prayer should come from the depth of the heart.

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. . .His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them." (Ellen White, *Mind, Character and Personality*, Vol. 2, page 480)

Phase II God's Answer

Eli, the High Priest was God's representative at the tabernacle. When he heard Hannah's bitter experience, it did not take long for him to realize his mistake in thinking that she was drunk. He rectified it immediately by lending her a listening ear, speaking words of comfort, faith and assurance of God's gift to the burdened soul. God answered her prayer through Eli, with a promise that she would have a son. She believed unquestioningly what the man of God told her. Then Eli said, "Go in peace and the God of Israel grant your petition, which you have asked of him," (v 17). His words filled her eyes with tears of joy; her heart with gladness at the thought of the gift of a son, *Oh! How wonderful! God did not forget me after all. My prayers were not in vain. I will have a son. Thank You, Lord for answering my prayers. I will do everything to fulfill my vow and bring up my son worthy to serve you. No more affliction. No more insults.*

The clouds cleared from her mind. Her spirits high, her burdens lifted, she left the house of the Lord and the presence of Eli cheerfully.

God's Time

Why didn't God answer Hannah earlier? "Hannah's acceptance of God's spiritual gift to her through the feast impelled her plea for a more tangible gift—a son—promising that such a gift would be immediately returned to the Lord, holy and consecrated to him....Perhaps God had waited long for such a surrender; He could have opened her womb before, but was she ready to bear the responsibility," (*SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 455)

It is part of heaven's plan that people voluntarily surrender as fully to the in-filling and out working of the Holy Spirit as did Christ when He was here on earth. So far as God was concerned, it was not necessary for Abraham to wait 25 years for the fulfilling of the divine covenant. When the patriarch came to the place where he could enter fully into heaven's plan for him, God was able to turn all past failures into stepping stones of blessing. So it was with Hannah.

But God did not speak to her through an angel; He used the appointed medium of the priesthood, even though it was imperfect and in need of reformation. God recognized the fact that Hannah's natural desire for offspring had finally been absorbed in a passion for devoting the most precious of gifts to Him, and He answered her petition through Eli. (*SDA Commentary* pp. 456.

Hannah acknowledged the goodness and the sovereignty of God and named her son Samuel—asked of God.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR PRAYER TO BE ANSWERED

1. Have unwavering faith.
2. Total commitment.
3. Fulfill the promise.

4. Acknowledge God's sovereignty—God is Jehovah, God is great and powerful, God is dependable.
5. Ask God for specific things—Hannah asked for a son, not just a child.
6. Pray without ceasing.
7. Fast and pray earnestly.
8. Pray from the depth of the heart
9. Devote time, talent and life for the Lord.
10. Pray with right purpose and motive.

Phase III Fulfilling the vow

1. Hannah's part

A. She went with an offering. She did not go to Shiloah with the family until the boy was weaned. She waited until Samuel was ready to remain in the temple and serve the Lord forever, When Samuel was weaned, she presented him before the Lord with offerings—more than what was required.

B. She acknowledged God's goodness and faithfulness when she presented Samuel before Eli.

She said, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord had granted my petition which I asked of Him," (1 Samuel 27, NKJV).

C. Total surrender. She surrendered all her interest in her son to the Lord when she said, "I have lent him to the Lord—as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord." (1 Samuel 1:28, KJV). No matter what we give to God, it is what we have first received from him. As such, whatever we give to Him is said to be lent to Him. Hannah recognized with joy the fact that her gift to God was His first special gift to her.

2. Elkanah's part

Elkanah could have protested against Hannah's vow. If he had done so, the vow would not have been binding. But he was so devoted and consecrated to God that he consented to stand by her vow even though it meant he too must part from the son whom Hannah very much longed to have.

It is very essential for both husband and wife to be of one accord to receive the fuller measure of God's blessings.

3. Samuel's part

1 Samuel 1:28, last part, says that Samuel worshipped the Lord there. Though just a child, he yielded himself to fulfill his mother's vow. This act of Samuel is beyond comprehension.

Could it be because Hannah taught him diligently of God and talked of Him when they sat in the house, when they walked by the way; when they laid down and when they rose up? Or could it be the close attention and tender care she gave in nursing him, not only because he was dear to her but because he was devoted to God?

The whole family honoured Hannah's vow. She fulfilled her vow without any difficulty. Her faith was tested and proved.

We are at liberty to make a vow to God or not to make a vow. But if we make a vow, we should pay what we vowed. God has no pleasure in fools. (Ecclesiastes 5:4) Moreover when we fail to fulfill our vow, we wrong ourselves. We will be forced to pay the penalty for it. Not to vow would be just an omission, but to vow and not fulfill would be the "guilt of treachery, and perjury; it is lying to God....If we treacherously cancel the words of our mouths, and revoke our vows, God will justly overthrow our projects." Matthew Henry's Commentary based on Ecclesiastes. 5:4-8. The New Testament example is Ananias and Sapphira who lost

their lives. (Acts 4)

How often have we vowed to surrender ourselves completely to the Lord? How often have we rededicated our lives to serve God and God alone? How often have we failed to fulfil our vow? Yet, how often our heavenly Father graciously forgives and grants this day also as one more opportunity to surrender ourselves completely to Him? Didn't he sacrifice his only begotten Son to redeem us and; make us worthy of eternal life?

Jesus asks: I gave my life for thee, My precious blood I shed,
 That thou might'st ransomed be, And quickened from the dead
 I gave, I gave my life for thee, What hast thou given for Me?
 I gave, I gave my life for thee, What hast thou given for Me?

Lord, I surrender my all to you today.

Biographical Information on Sermon Writer:

Hepzibah G. Kore, who lives in Hosur, India, is Women's Ministries director and Shepherdess coordinator for the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Hepzibah was first appointed as WM director for the South India Union in November 1993. She became associate director for Women's Ministries in the Southern Asia Division in January 1998 and full-time director in June 1998. She has been Shepherdess coordinator at various levels since 1988. She delights in serving the pastor's wives and ministering to all women. Hepzibah started her career as an elementary school teacher in 1967. She married a pastor in 1969 and is the proud grandmother of two lovely, lively grandsons——Joash, 7 years old, and Jared, 4 ½ years old. Her interests are reading and gardening.