

God Hears Us

1 Samuel 1

When LORD created Adam in His own image, He created Adam to be a worshipper who lived his life in personal relationship with Him. This relationship with God was not secondary or peripheral to his life, but central. Everything revolved around the LORD. So much so that walked with Adam and Eve every evening. And as they walked together, they talked together. God listened as Adam and Eve talked to Him. Adam and Eve listened as God talked with them. **This is worship!** Deep, real, personal, intimate communion with God is the heart of worship.

Truth: Man's highest activity is worship. We were made for the kind of communion with God that brings glory to Him and meaning to us.

But then, man's communication with God is severed when Adam and Eve decide to sin against the LORD by eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. **Adam and Eve now hide in shame and guilt from the presence of the LORD.** From this time forward, every person born into the world is born with a broken relationship with God. Our sin keeps us from having access to God and to any real conversation with Him.

But God in love, makes a way when there is no way. He sends His Son so that we who are estranged from Him and alienated from relationship can be reconciled. **Now through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, we have confidence to enter into God's presence and talk with Him without fear of condemnation.** We know that He will listen to us when we call upon Him because Jesus introduces us to the Father. Jesus first cleanses all who believe in Him with His blood so that our sins are removed from us as far as the east is from the west. And Jesus introduces to the Father as people who are faultless! What grace!

We look to the story of a woman named Hannah in 1 Samuel 1 to learn more about this God who hears us. Hannah is born into a dark time in Israel's history. **There is no king and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. (Judges 21:25)**

The few godly people of that day are thinking, "Our world is upside down. What people say is right is wrong. And much of what our culture says is wrong is

right. We can hardly believe what is happening in this world.” The evil of this culture is so very strong and Satan has such a foothold in the hearts of the people.

But Hannah is different. As a teenager, she finds grace in the eyes of the LORD. **In fact, her name Hannah means “woman of grace”.** Hannah is different not because she is naturally more righteous than others of her neighborhood. Hannah is different because God in grace looks down upon her and she in faith looks up to Him.

Truth: If we are to escape the corruption of our culture and the sin of our own hearts, we must look to the LORD in faith to receive grace to be clean and to have a heart of worship.

As a teenage girl, Hannah experiences the goodness of the LORD and worship becomes a central priority of her life. She loves the LORD with all her heart.

She rejoices when she falls in love with a godly man named Elkanah. Such a man is very rare among her people and in her day . . . The day she marries Elkanah is the happiest of her life. **She is filled with hopes and dreams as these two lovebirds begin their lives together.** A year passes and their love deepens, but something now concerns them. Hannah has not yet conceived. **This initial disappointment turns to anxiety and soon their anxiety over this becomes deep distress.**

It is a disaster for Elkanah to have no heir. He hears about it from the ungodly men of his town, *“Ha! You cannot bring a son into this world. What is wrong with you? You are one who honors God, why then does God not honor you with a child? You are going to die without an heir!”* And he wonders why God would withhold this blessing from him when God gives sons to the ungodly men around him.

Every night Elkanah comes home depressed and presses Hannah with his desire to have a child. One night, Elkanah does what other men of his culture do with such a problem. **He seeks to answer his problem his way and decides to take a second wife.** Though he is a godly man, he is still influenced by his culture. Unbelief grabs hold of his heart like it did Abraham the father of his people. So in defiance of God’s design, he marries a Peninah.

Principle: Problems test our faith. Real world problems tempt us to meet them through culturally accepted, but disobedient means.

Poor Hannah! She not only has to bear the pain of not being able to bear a child. Now she bears the pain of having to share her husband with another woman.

I wonder where Hannah is the day that her husband married Peninnah.

Did Elkanah ask her to come to the ceremony and the reception? Did she sit in the back? Did she decide that was a good day to do the wash? **We are not told, but we KNOW that it was a day that broke her heart.**

Yet in spite of this, she still loves the LORD and she still loves her husband. **She does not let bitterness turn her heart hard toward God or toward her husband.**

As time passes, Hannah's distress deepens in sadness, in despair, in dark hopelessness. Peninah bears multiple children. **Their little cries and laughter remind her daily of her own barrenness.** She sees Elkanah's satisfaction in them and she wonders why the LORD is withholding this blessing from her.

Time is no healer of soul wounds. Time instead proves to be the great persecutor . . . filling each day with renewed agony.

Now every year, Elkanah leads his family on a 15-mile journey from Ramah to Shiloh. **Shiloh is the place where Joshua leaves the Tabernacle of the LORD and establishes it as a site of worship for the Israelite people.** Elkanah is a worshipper of the LORD. Elkanah leads his family in the worship of the LORD.

Now Elkanah was likely tempted to neglect this annual journey with his family to Shiloh. His flesh likely gives him many reasons to not go to church:

1. Shiloh is too far of a journey for my kids. And they do not have nursery when I get there. They have a nap schedule to keep.
2. Everyone else is staying home and having a relaxed time.
3. The priests are crooked. They do not care about me or about the LORD.
4. I am a busy man with too much on my plate anyway.

But Elkanah refuses to let these excuses rob him of the role of being spiritual leader in his family. **He knows that life with God is the only way to have life in his soul . . . the only way for his children to avoid eternal destruction.**

He also knows that without a blood sacrifice there is no forgiveness of sin and that without forgiveness of sin we have no relationship with God and without relationship with God we cannot worship and enjoy Him. **So Elkanah goes every year to Shiloh offer sacrifices to the LORD.**

For if the blood of goats and bulls, . . . sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” (Hebrews 9:13-14 ESV)

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, . . . , but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, . . . But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Hebrews 9:23-26 ESV)

Now Elkanah receives children from his sinful choice of taking a second wife. **But he also receives trouble and conflict.** He loves Hannah more than he loves Peninnah. **And this is revealed especially at the time of sacrifice.** He distributes portions of food from the sacrifice to Peninnah and her children. One for you. One for you. One for you. But when he comes to Hannah, he gives her a double portion to show her how much he loves her.

But he is the classic well-meaning husband who swings and misses on the gift he gives her. (Husbands, have you ever done that?).

He does not understand his beloved wife and so He does not understand that his gift only compounds the heartache. **What is Hannah to do with a double portion of food?**

Her heartache over her barrenness keeps her from being hungry for even ONE PORTION of food. What is she going to do with TWO PORTIONS? It is only going to rot.

But Peninnah notices her husband’s additional attention and love for Hannah. She bitterly resents Hannah. She has grown to hate Hannah and so she taunts her at every opportunity. *“You have nothing to be happy about. God has placed a curse upon you. God has forgotten you!”* **Every day Peninnah looks for some way to bring added distress into Hannah’s life.**

Principle: Bitterness makes us capable of extreme unkindness. Our anger will justify our harshness and make us forget that we are sinning against the LORD through our resentment. Our anger makes us believe that God has the same view of the person that we hate so much.

Hannah knows that God is in control of conception. She knows that the LORD has closed her womb. **She trusts in the LORD, yet her emotions struggle with God’s sovereign design for her.** And she weeps and weeps and weeps over

the LORD's decision not to give her a child. **Does your heart ever have trouble embracing the theology that your mind knows to be true?**

Hannah's childlessness is not a curse from God upon her, but a designed trial to bless her.

When the LORD withholds good from those who love Him, it is not because He hates us or is punishing us. He knows the present painful trial will multiply our future joy and exalt His goodness and glory. **Hannah holds on to hope by believing that God is sovereign over her hurt.**

Hannah is so depressed and sad that her husband tries to comfort her. He first asks her three questions:

"Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad?" (1 Samuel 1:8 [ESV](#))

Now Elkanah knows why Hannah is so sad. And if Elkanah stopped right there and then listened as Hannah unburden her heart to him and if he would have just held her close and prayed with her, he would have done well. But no! **Elkanah has to try to fix the problem!!**

"Am I not more to you than ten sons?" (1 Samuel 1:8 [ESV](#))

And Hannah responds, "Take a long donkey ride honey." 😊 Do you not see that in the text? No.

One pastor points out that Elkanah should have said, **"Are YOU not more to me than 10 sons?"** Instead, he placed himself at the center of Hannah's grief as though the problem is that she is not giving him enough credit for being a good husband.

Elkanah is uncomfortable with the knowledge that his own decision brought more pain into his Hannah's soul. **But instead of confessing, he is deflecting. He redirects Hannah's mind** from his foolish decision to point her to all his efforts to make her happy.

Am I not doing enough to make you happy?

Husbands, if we have to ask that question of our wife, please know that the answer is "No. No, you are not." Take a lap and try another route . . . try the route that requires humility, tender-heartedness and sensitivity.

Hannah knows that God loves her and that she needs Him in this hour of need. She also knows that God hears us when we cry out in faith to Him. So she goes to the sanctuary of the LORD to pray.

When she enters the house of the LORD, she sees the high priest Eli sitting beside the doorpost of the temple. He acknowledges her as she enters. Once inside, her heart bursts with tears before her LORD. She pours out her heart in anguish to the God who loves her and hears her. **She brings her hurts and hopes into the presence of God. She believes that the LORD will hear her.**

Truth: God is too faithful to ever not hear us, He is too wise to ever make mistakes and He is too loving to ever be unkind. Prayer is always the right decision in our time of need.

In her arguments to the LORD for Him to grant her desire for a child, she makes a vow of faith: *“And she vowed a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.””* (1 Samuel 1:11 [ESV](#))

Eli peaks in at Hannah. He sees her emotional outbursts. He sees her lips moving. But he does not hear any words coming from her mouth. These are the days when everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes. **Many come to the house of the LORD drunk and so Eli assumes that Hannah is one of them.** Foolishly, Eli speaks before he listens. He has been right about his assumptions so often in regard to people’s sin that he has gotten used to believing the worst of everyone.

“And Eli said to her, “How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you.”” (1 Samuel 1:14 [ESV](#))

“The best of men are men at best.” Alistair Begg

Principle: We may often be right to assume the worst of others. But it is better to be wrong about 100 people’s righteousness than to be wrong about one person’s sin. Satan is the accuser, let us not do his work.

“If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.” (Proverbs 18:13 [ESV](#))

Though hurt, Hannah refuses to let bitterness or resentment enter her heart. She responds with patience and humility, yet with clarity about her soul before the LORD.

*But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but **I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD**. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation."* (1 Samuel 1:15-16 [ESV](#))

Hannah's prayer is so fervent; she is not even saying words. Her lips are moving, but no audible voice is produced. She is "pouring out" her soul to the LORD. What a sweet description of pleading, fervent, persevering prayer. **John Bunyan said, "In prayer it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart."**

Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. (1 Samuel 1:17-18 [ESV](#))

When we pray, our tears do not immediately stop. But the LORD does meet us as we wait upon Him. We find grace to help us in our time of need.

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16 [ESV](#))

How does God's peace work? Not always by changing our circumstances, but by changing our hope. In prayer we see that the Lord Almighty is not distant, but close. That He loves us and that He does all things well. We can trust Him.

Hannah's peace was not restored by a change in sorry circumstances, but by a change in her spiritual sight. God did not tell her why He withheld a child from her. But He did reveal His love and care for her. And now she can trust Him with her troubles.

Truth: We do not live on explanations; we live on God's promises.

They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. 1Samuel 1:20 And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the LORD."'" (1 Samuel 1:19-20 [ESV](#))

The LORD hears us when we cry to Him and He answers according to His love and His wisdom.

Friends, the God who listened to Hannah has not changed. **His steadfast love for us is from everlasting to everlasting.** He pledges to hear us when we cry out to Him and He does not change. He never tires of our complaints or our petitions or our anguish. He never turns away from us. He is always present . . . completely present with us.

Before we leave I pray we are encouraged by the LORD's commitment to love us in every circumstance and to hear us when we call upon Him in faith.

Main Idea: Whatever our situation, God hears us when we pray. The LORD invites us to make our requests known to Him in prayer.

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him." (1 John 5:14-15 [ESV](#))

Are you ever in a situation when you wonder if God notices, if God cares, if God is listening. Consider the story that is given for our instruction and encouragement.

God hears us when . . .

1. We are overwhelmed.

Hannah finds herself languishing in a life that she did not expect or want. She had every reason to believe that she would conceive after she is married. But that does not happen. She had every reason to believe that her husband would not give himself to another. But that does not happen. And she is overwhelmed.

Illustration: God is working in the hearts of our young people. Thank God for that!

Bree shared her testimony of the time in her life when the LORD met her and grew her faith in a time of great distress. Her life was going great when one

evening mom and dad came to her and her siblings with some very painful news. Her mom was diagnosed with cancer. This young girl was overwhelmed by the thought of losing her mom. She felt overwhelmed by this trial much like Hannah in our story. Her mom wanted to help her daughter through this and she took her aside and encouraged her with scripture. Her mom told her that God often uses the Psalms to bring comfort and help in time of need. Her mom suggested that they look at Psalm 8 together. But something prompted this young lady to ask if they could look at a different Psalm. She said that she felt the number 4 was a special number to her. She does not know WHY. But she asked if they could look at Psalm 4 instead. This young lady did not know what Psalm 4 was about, but the number was fixed in her heart.

“Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!” (Psalm 4:1 [ESV](#))

I wish you could have heard this young lady recite that verse as she told of God’s love for her. She said that since that day, that verse has rolled over and over through her soul. And I could feel her faith, her devotion, her love for God as she shared this verse with us. So much so that the reality of God’s love and care flowed through her as she spoke Psalm 4 to us.

God hears us when . . .

1. We are overwhelmed.

2. Others oppose us.

Hannah had an enemy. **Peninnah woke each day with an intention to make her life hard and painful.** Have you ever had someone in your life who hates you? Then you know the depth of suffering this hardship brings to your life. Many of you have been liberated from this. But many of you experience it.

Sometimes the person who has decided to hate you is a family member, sometimes a co-worker, sometimes a neighbor, sometimes a fellow church member.

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise up against me;

deliver me from those who work evil, and save me from bloodthirsty men. For behold, they lie in wait for my life; fierce men stir up strife against me. . . . Awake, come to meet me, and see!"
(Psalm 59:1-4 ESV)

1. **We are overwhelmed.**
2. **Others oppose us.**

3. Others do not understand.

Elkanah was well-intentioned. But he just did not understand the need of his wife. He did not understand her pain. He did not understand his part in it. He did not understand the path to peace.

Principle: In our distress, we will find no shortage of wrong-headed comforters.

They do not mean ill, but they also are no real help. Do you know that God always understands us? He understands our needs and our heartache more than we do!

Let us come to Him and sit at His feet. Let us pour out our hearts to Him and know that He is good and wise and loving.

Hymn: Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side. Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain. Leave to thy God to order and provide; In every change, He faithful will remain. Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

1. **We are overwhelmed.**
2. **Others oppose us.**
3. **Others do not understand.**

4. Others fail us.

Eli should have known better. He is supposed to represent God to the people. Yet he fails this hurting woman. He swings hard and strikes out in his words to Hannah.

Many have experienced the disappointment of a spiritual leader missing the mark in their conversations or counsel. The spiritual leader may be a parent or a SS teacher or a pastor or a Christian counselor. We are all flawed. And though Eli intended well, his faith had grown dim in his old age and he failed in many ways in the ministry that God had given him.

Yet Hannah knew that God was not like Eli. That even though Eli failed her that the LORD would hear her cry without accusation or misunderstanding.

Truth: Satan wants to use the failings of others to tempt us to doubt the LORD's goodness. But know that God never fails us. He completely understands our troubles and always speaks what is true over us to help us.

May we not doubt in the dark what we know to be true in the light. We know in the light of day that God hears us when we pray. When we enter the darkness of deep distress, let us not doubt that which we know to be true.

Main Idea: Whatever our situation, God hears us when we pray. The LORD invites us to make our requests known to Him in prayer.

Hannah believed in God's love for her and ran to Him instead of away from Him in her distress.

Why does God hear us? Because He loves us.

Why does God love us? Because He loves us.

The foundation of God's love for us does not rest in us, but in God. That is such a comfort! Because I know that I change. And if God's love rests in my life, then His love for me could change. But since God's love rests in His unchanging person, His love for me is secured and stable and steadfast.

Do you know the love of God that is found in Jesus? When we open her hearts in faith to Jesus, we receive the seal of God's unfailing love. If we refuse to open our heart in faith to Jesus, we remain outside of His redeeming love. Open your heart to Christ today!

God hears us when . . .

- 1. We are overwhelmed.**
- 2. Others oppose us.**

3. **Others do not understand.**
4. **Others fail us.**

May I leave you with one application?

Application: Pray. Above all pray. Continue in prayer. Devote yourself to prayer.

How much of God's Word is filled with this subject of prayer. We find promises that promote prayer, commands to lead us in prayer and examples to inspire us to pray. We find Moses interceding, Jacob wrestling, Daniel persisting, David crying, Paul and Silas singing and Jesus sweating drops of blood . . . all in prayer.

Ask the LORD to revitalize your prayer life. Ask Him to make it full of joy and faith and meaning. Our prayer life is often so very thin!

Two Big Helps:

1. The LORD's Prayer
2. ACTS

Devotions in Morning and Evening:

A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant, the shout of the fighting believer, the requiem of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honor of a Christian . . . Pray that this year you may be holy, humble, zealous, and patient; have closer communion with Christ, . . . Pray that you may be an example and a blessing to others, and that you may live more to the glory of your Master. The motto for this year must be, "Continue . . . in prayer." Charles Spurgeon