



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## Spiritual Priority (I Samuel 2)

25 MAY 2010

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*Capitol Commission state directors are missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.*

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). Our desire is witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

### Introduction

First Samuel 2 begins with the second prayer of Hannah (2:1-10). The contrast with her first prayer (1:11) is profound. The first prayer was a vow to the Lord as an expression of Hannah's distress and weeping. The second prayer is a song of exultation for God's gracious gift. The song of Hannah may be compared to those of Miriam (Exod 15:20-21), Deborah (Judg 5:1-31), and Mary (Luke 1:46-55). Hannah's song not only expresses thanksgiving and testimony to the providence of God in her life, but also merges to include prophecy of Christ's kingdom. The narrative continues in a manner that contrasts the son of Hannah and the sons of Eli. The line of Eli will be rejected for failure in sin.

### SPIRITUAL THANKSGIVING

(2:1-10) Hannah was faithful to her vow and presented Samuel to Eli for service in the Tabernacle. Hannah's second prayer is in profound contrast to her first prayer. She extolled the faithfulness and omnipotence of God. Hannah's song closely resembles the Magnificat of Mary when she learned that she

would be the mother of the Messiah (also see Ps 113). The focus of Hannah's song is the Lord God. Her heart rejoiced in the Lord for He is the sole reason for her triumph.

There is no indication in Hannah's song that she regretted her vow to dedicate Samuel. The dominant thought of her song is thankfulness. Her rejoicing is not because she dedicated her son to service in the Tabernacle; rather, Hannah knew she was a vessel in the outworking of God's purpose and will. Her perspective is similar to the Apostle Paul: "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am" (Phil 4:11). Hannah was content to dedicate her son to service of the Lord of hosts in Shiloh because she knew to regard her life within God's providence. Have you submitted to the providence of God? Hannah is an example for learning to experience peace and contentment.

Hannah referred to her strength ("horn") as exulted in a manner similar to a strong animal with tossed head in the air. Her "mouth" was silenced in the presence of Peninnah but now "speaks boldly" to praise God. Hannah trusted God's providence because she understood His nature. As Hannah recollected the attributes of God—His holiness, His unity, His omniscience, His omnipresence, His sovereignty—she was able to trust in His providence. "There is no one holy like the LORD, indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God." Contentment and strength is not in self but reflecting upon the character of God. The counsel of verse 3 is not necessarily against Peninnah solely (because the Hebrew verbs and the pronoun "your" are plural). The warning is directed against self-sufficient boasters.

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CONTENTMENT AND STRENGTH IS NOT IN SELF BUT REFLECTING UPON THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

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Hannah also rejoiced in God's justice. The proud ("mighty") will be humbled, but the humble ("feeble") will be mighty. Whereas verses 1-3 focused attention upon God's specific deliverance, verses 4-8 focus upon general deliverance from God in five spheres: the military, the hungry, the barren, the living and dead, and the economic. The emphasis is upon God as the giver of life. "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away" (Job 1:21). God does not apologize for His justice.

Confession of God's sovereignty is expanded in verses 9-10. Hannah confessed her particular experience (1:1-3), and the

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general means by which God rules (1:4-8), to include Christ's kingdom. "Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; against them He will thunder in the heavens." God will overcome those who contend against Him, and the means for achieving victory is "His king." Samuel will anoint David as king but the intent is upon the eternal King. The expectation of a king was perhaps expressed in Deuteronomy 18 (cf. Judg 8:22), but the idea that Israel would have a king was germinating. The language of "His anointed" who will bring low and exalt is the language of Mary (Luke 1:46-55).<sup>1</sup>

### SPIRITUAL CALLOUSNESS

(2:12-17) The spiritual callousness of Eli's sons is a poor reflection upon him. In chapter 1, Eli's lack of spiritual sensitivity toward Hannah was evident. His lack of spiritual maturity manifested itself in the home. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, "were worthless men" (lit. "sons of Belial"), and "they did not know the LORD." Although Hophni and Phinehas were supposed to be "priests to the LORD" (1:3), they used their liturgical office for personal gain. According to Leviticus 7:28-36, the priests were allowed the breast and right thigh of the sacrificial offering, but Hophni and Phinehas devised the use of a three-pronged fork to take whatever they desired. The practice was greed and thuggery, and demonstrated how they despised spiritual things (2:17). It is a tragedy and travesty when leaders abuse those they are to serve, especially with regard to spiritual things.

### SPIRITUAL CONDUCT

(2:18-21) Samuel's faithfulness is in contrast to the wickedness of Eli's sons. His exemplary conduct is demonstrated in verses 18-21. Samuel is a child living in an ungodly environment, but he continues to grow "in stature and in favor both with the LORD and with men" (2:26).

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NOTHING GIVEN TO GOD WILL IMPOVERISH THE GIVER.

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Eli's blessing upon Elkanah and Hannah was that God would give "in place of the one [asked] she dedicated to the LORD" (2:20). Hannah did not ask God for Samuel merely for herself but asked for giving to God. Hannah gave and now she receives "grace upon grace" (John 1:16). In verse 21, God is granting life again to Elkanah and Hannah (but death to Eli's family, 2:25). Nothing given to God will impoverish the giver. "Peter began to say to Him, 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You.' Jesus said, 'Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in

the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. 'But many *who are* first will be last, and the last, first'" (Mark 10:28-31).

### SPIRITUAL FAILURE

(2:22-36) The sons of Eli participated in immoral conduct "at the doorway of the tent of meeting." Such practice was characteristic of Canaanite worship and indicated the worsening of Israel's worship. A prophet revealed the source of Eli's domestic problems, which was honoring his sons to a position above God (2:29). Such spiritual failure will always lead to problems in the home. First Samuel 3:13 indicates another reason as lack of discipline in the home. The children were not taught to respect authority in the home. Therefore, they did not acknowledge authority in spiritual things. Eli apparently benefited physically from the sin of his sons (4:18), but God will never allow sin to continue. The Lord will judge those who use their positions for selfish and sinful reasons.

Eli is an alarming example of one who ignored the sins of his sons, and did not regard their gross immorality for the serious matter that it was (2:22-24). Moreover, the Israelites would engage in sin as a result of the lack of spiritual leadership (2:25). However, even in a godless and wicked environment, one may grow in favor with God and man (2:26). As the sins of Eli's sons were growing in magnitude, Samuel was maturing in faith. Your dedication to God in the study of His Word, and response to this truth in life and prayer, will result in God using you mightily.

In his book, *Who Will Deliver Us?*, Paul Zahl told the account of two duck hunters in the wide-open land of southeastern Georgia. The men noticed a smoke cloud on the horizon, and could hear the crackling sound of burning brush. A brushfire was advancing and the men could not outrun it. The hunters quickly lit a fire around them. With little time remaining the men stood in the circle of blackened earth. The fire came near them and even swept over them, but they were unhurt and untouched. Fire will not pass where it has already burned. The account of Eli's sons is a reminder that God's holiness demands wrath against sin. Trusting in the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ means understanding that He bore the judgment and wrath of God in my place. It is because the Lord Jesus Christ endured the fiery wrath of God that all those who trust in Him are saved eternally.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Polzin wrote, "Hannah's song reads like many of the psalter's hymns of thanksgiving in which composition in the first person singular and concluding references to God's anointed king specify them as royal psalms of thanksgiving" (*Samuel and the Deuteronomist: 1 Samuel* [Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993] 31).