

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,  
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 2**

**FIRST SAMUEL**

**CHAPTER 2**

**INTRODUCTION**

Life is filled with opportunities and challenges. When these are recognized and the occasions seized upon with much determination, the effort will yield great benefits and blessings. Four characters stand out in this chapter – Hannah and her son Samuel, and Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. They provide valuable lessons concerning the chances and challenges of life. The one who is diligently careful will be blessed whereas the one who is negligently careless will suffer great loss.

Hannah's prayer for a son was answered. She burst out in a song of praise and thanksgiving to the LORD (2:1-11). We gather from the text that Hannah and her husband Elkanah were good parents. In contrast, Eli was not. He failed miserably as the high priest of God and as a parent (2:12-17, 22-25).

Samuel, now living in Shiloh, grew up in the house of the LORD before Eli, the high priest (2:18-20, 26). Then a man of God appeared in the scene and prophesied the end of Eli's priestly ministry and his household. God would raise another priest who would be faithful to Him

and who would obey and do His will (2:27-36).

**COMMENTARY**

**Hannah Praised and Rejoiced in  
the LORD**

Hannah indeed had every reason to sing this song of praise to God (2:1-10).<sup>1</sup> Her desire to have a son was fulfilled. From her experiences, she had found that the LORD was her fortress and a very present help in time of need. The LORD knew about her troubles and plight, and answered her prayers. After she had given her son to the LORD, she sang from her heart unto the LORD. Her whole being was involved in praising and thanking God – *my heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn (strength) is exalted in the LORD, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies*. The gift was costly and sacrificial but the LORD is worthy of the gift.

The main thrust of her song centred on the LORD (YAHWEH). She had personally experienced the salvation of the LORD. She was delivered from her enemies. The LORD is holy and there is none like Him. The LORD is like a towering mountain that is strong and dependable. He is beyond compare! Before an all powerful and holy God, human arrogance has no place at all. God knows the hearts and thoughts of man. He is omniscient and He weighs man's words and works. He breaks the *bows of the mighty*, but lifts up the powerless and the meek. Those who have plenty will be reduced to hirelings, while those who

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the song of Mary when she was with the child Jesus Christ (Luke 1:49-55, known as the Magnificat.).

are hungry will cease to be so. And the barren will produce many children. The LORD God is sovereign. He has the power to take life and the power to give life. He is the Creator of both the rich and poor, and He is able to make the rich poor and the poor rich. In other words, the LORD has the power to change a person's standing in life at any time. A person's status in life is not unchangeable or permanent. The LORD can reverse it. The LORD raises the poor from dirt and sets up the *beggar from the dunghill* to be among people in high places and authority. The LORD is the one who sets up the "pillars" of the earth, its very foundations. Raising the poor to positions of honour and authority is nothing to our Almighty God. The LORD knows His people and He will keep and protect them (2:9). But as for the wicked and those who oppose Him, they will be shattered and destroyed (2:10).

Elkanah and his family returned to his home in Ramah. He left Samuel in Shiloh to serve the LORD in The Tabernacle under the charge of Eli. Hannah's song encourages the humble that in due time God will raise them up for His own glory. Hannah's song inspired by the Holy Spirit is predictive that one day God is going to set up His King who will rule the whole earth, and He shall judge the world. It looks ahead to the advent of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Redeemer. Hannah praised God because He is holy (v.2). She praised God because she knew Him (v.3) and because His power (v.8) and judgment are always proper (v.10).

#### **Eli Failed as a Priest and Parent**

The focus is shifted to Eli, the high priest, and his two sons, Hophni

and Phinehas. They were earlier introduced simply as the two sons of Eli. The present passage described them as "sons of Belial" (2:12). They were also described as priests who did not know the LORD. "Belial" literally means "useless" or "without worth". The word is usually used to describe a person – "a son of Belial". In today's modern expression, such a person is "a good-for-nothing". But sometimes the context of the passage suggests definite forms of evil, not just the absence of good. The evil men of Gibeah who abused the Levite's concubine were called "sons of Belial" (Judges 19:22-25). Eli misjudged Hannah for being drunk as "a daughter of Belial" when she had moved her lips silently in prayer (1:16).

The description that they did not know the LORD does not mean that they were ignorant of His existence. It means that they had no personal relational or experiential knowledge of the LORD. They were quite conversant with the customs concerning the sacrifices made to the LORD. Certain parts like the fat had to be offered completely and some portions of the meat were to be given back to the worshippers. These two brothers had blatantly ignored God's laws concerning what they were entitled to have in the matter of the sacrificial offerings brought by the people for the LORD. They put a three-pronged fork into the pan and took what it extracted. This was in violation of the precise restrictions on what could and could not be taken for themselves (Leviticus 7:31-36). In other words, they had set aside God's laws and done what they personally want to do. They did this to all the worshippers who came to Shiloh to present their offerings and sacrifices

to the LORD. They continued to live in the way of the Judges where every man did what was right in his own eyes. There was no absolute law. They acted very irreverently before God. They demanded the fat and some of the meat from the worshippers for themselves. They knew fully well that the fat of the animal was for the LORD only. If the worshipper refused to give it to them, they would take it by force. The sons of Eli had behaved greedily, dishonestly and had profaned the name of God. They put themselves first before God. They took what belonged to God even before it was offered to Him. It was a very great sin because they had profaned the offerings made unto the LORD. The penalty for taking what belonged to God was death (Leviticus 7:25).<sup>2</sup>

### **Samuel Grew Up in the House of the LORD**

Samuel was different from the two sons of Eli. The conjunction “but” which introduces him is significant. It is heartening to read and know that even at a very young age, Samuel ministered unto the LORD. Obviously Samuel performed all the duties as instructed by Eli, the high priest. He carried out his duties alongside the two bad sons of Eli. Here one wonders how Samuel must have been tempted and tested, but God preserved and protected him. Being a child, he was also girded with a linen ephod. This ephod was a sleeveless outer vest worn by the priests. This “boy” priest started his ministry very young.

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<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 7:25 For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, even the soul that eateth *it* shall be cut off from his people.

Every year when Elkanah and Hannah made their yearly trips to Shiloh to worship the LORD, Hannah would bring a coat for Samuel. Hannah was an example of a mother who loved the LORD and who loved and cared for her son Samuel as he served the LORD. Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife that the LORD might give them more children because she had given Samuel to the LORD. Indeed, Eli would bless Hannah when she came each year to worship the LORD. We can imagine how excited and happy she would be as she made the journey! Eli’s blessing upon Hannah was no mere pious pronouncement but prophetic (2:20). The LORD blessed Hannah with three more sons and two daughters (2:21). This is a great testimony of the LORD’S generosity and goodness. The LORD is no debtor to anyone. The LORD honoured and blessed this pious couple for they had honoured and given to the LORD what they promised, even Samuel whom they loved with all their heart! In addition, Hannah had the privilege to see how Samuel grew and got along in the service of the LORD.

### **Eli Failed as a Priest**

Eli was a very bad priest who had not faithfully served the LORD. He failed to control his two sons even when they went amok in desecrating the sacrificial system of Israel. Nepotism is a great sin. He allowed his own sons to destroy the faith of the many who came to The Tabernacle to worship and sacrifice. Complaints were made to Eli concerning the sins of his sons. Apart from what they did in the matter of the sacrificial offerings, they also committed sexual immorality with the women who gathered at the entrance of The

Tabernacle (2:22) which was nothing short of scandalous. It was a stumbling block to the people and a great sin before God.

Eli chided them for their evil works. Their behaviour had caused the Israelites to commit sins too. Eli reasoned with them that if a person sinned against another, a human judge could judge them. But if a man sinned against God, who could intercede in his behalf? The answer is definitely: "No one." His two sons could not be bothered with their father's mild "pat on the wrist" correction. It was to no avail. It was too little too late. The father merely "chided" them for such a serious sin. He failed to take the necessary action like removing them from office. The LORD would slay them because of their sins against Him.

The nature of Eli's sin was that he did not discipline his sons. He ought to severely punish them for their sacrilegious and irreverent acts against the LORD. In short, he esteemed (or loved) his sons above the LORD. (2:29). He allowed a father's love to cause him to sin against God. That is not acceptable with God.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Samuel grew up in the favour of the LORD (that is, spiritually) and of man (that is, socially) (2:26).

### **A Man of God Predicted the Fall of Eli's Ministry and Family**

God sent a prophet, "a man of God", to Eli. The identity of this man was not given but the important thing was that he was God's spokesman. He had a very serious message for

Eli from God. That was what matters most.

He predicted God's judgement on Eli's house and its destruction. He greeted Eli with "Thus saith the LORD". Eli had no choice but to hear and accept the message. He opened his message with a reminder of what God had done on behalf of his ancestors. As the high priest, Eli's ancestors were of the Aaronic line. Eli had descended from Ithamar, the fourth son of Aaron (1 Chronicles 24:3). God had honoured his ancestors and had adequately provided for them in return for their services in The Tabernacle. It is not known when the lineage of the Aaronic priesthood had shifted to Ithamar from Eliezer.

The man of God continued by laying a charge against Eli: "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice, and at mine offering, which I commanded in my habitation?" The idiomatic expression means showing disrespect for God's sacrifice. Eli was held responsible for the sacrilegious actions of his sons as he was the high priest in charge of his sons. He knew of their abuses and he did nothing apart from scolding them. The man of God charged him that he honoured his sons above God. He had prospered himself with all the offerings and sacrifices brought by the people (2:29).

God's judgment upon Eli was that his house and family would be deprived of serving as priests in The Tabernacle and would be destroyed. The death of his two sons would happen on the same day (2:30-34). This would be a sign validating the prophecy. Then God would raise another priest who would be faithful to Him and who would do according

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<sup>3</sup> Compare: Matthew 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

to His will. The LORD would prosper his house and family (2:35). The downfall of Eli's house and descendants was graphically described. The piece of silver got by begging describes the extreme poverty of the posterity of Eli and what they would have to do to purchase a "morsel of bread" (2:36).

The "faithful priest" whom God would raise was primarily a reference to Samuel but the fuller and long term reference was to Zadok whom Solomon made priest in the place of Abiathar. Zadok was not of Ithamar lineage but Eliezer's. That action fulfilled this prophecy.<sup>4</sup> Zadok's descendants did walk before the LORD'S anointed, the kings of Israel (2:35).

### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

Hannah's song of praise reveals much about the LORD God. Out of her own experience, the LORD inspired Hannah to declare wonderful truths concerning the attributes and character of God. God is sovereign and reigns supremely over the earth. None can be compared to Him. Absolute power is in His hands and He rules according to His will. A person's status on earth is never fixed. God is able to change it according to His will. That being so, Christians who belong to the LORD God can enjoy the assurance that nothing can happen to them unless God permits it. Moreover, nothing is impossible

with God. A child of God can ask God and it shall be given him according to His holy and sovereign will.

The conduct of Eli is a serious and sobering lesson to all church leaders. In the first place, God is not mocked. Eli's service as the high priest of God did not mean that he could abuse his duties and show preference to his sons. If he did not honour God above his sons, God will deal with him. The principle learned is that God is no respecter of persons.

Eli was an example of bad parenting. He loved his children to the extent that he failed to discipline them even when they sinned against God so blatantly. The punishment was severe and sad indeed.

God's judgment of Eli was severe (Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; Hebrew 12:29). God is always faithful to His Holy and perfect Word. What He says He will bring to pass. Our spirituality can grow stronger with old age or it can become careless. God honours those who honour Him and the reverse is also true. AMEN.

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 2:27 So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**Monday:** 1 Samuel 2:1-11; Hebrews 13:15-16.

**Tuesday:** 1 Samuel 2:12-21; Jude 1:4-5; 1 Corinthians 9:13-14.

**Wednesday:** 1 Samuel 2:22-26; Matthew 10:32-39.

**Thursday:** 1 Samuel 2:27-34; Exodus 32:25-35.

**Friday:** 1 Samuel 2:35-36. Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

**Analysis**

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 2:1-10	
1 Samuel 2:11-21	
1 Samuel 2:22-26	
1 Samuel 2:27-36	

**Discussion Questions**

1. List five attributes of God from the song of Hannah.

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2. How did Eli fail as a priest and a parent? What appropriate punishment should Eli have meted out to his two rebellious and wicked sons?

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3. What is the result of Hannah's prayer, vow and gift to God?

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4. How would you summarize the message of the man of God?

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5. What is the main principle of 1 Samuel 2:1-36?

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