

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of May 13, 2018

THEME: "Hannah, Mother of Samuel"

PRAYER

Sunday Read I Samuel 1:8-15

"And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, If thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thy handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto thee all the days of his life." One of the first assignments given to human beings was motherhood. After God created all living creatures, He made a man. After giving man the responsibility to manage His earth, God made him a wife. They were given orders to populate God's earth; this means that all humans would have a mother and father. This obviously means that being a parent carries huge responsibilities in that God has entrusted parents to nurture those whom God placed in their care. It was the desire of all Hebrew women to bear a son to carry on the family tree in the name of the father. When Hannah seemed not able to have children, she became severely depressed! What could she do? Well, she was a godly woman; and she knew that God was the God of the impossible! She prayed, and in the prayer, she made a promise to God: she would dedicate that son to the service of God! As soon as the baby was sufficiently weaned, she would make a huge sacrifice for a mother to make. But in so doing, she set the stage for her son to have a part in God's eternal scheme of things. As it turned out, God gave her a son, and he became a faithful servant! His life became a tribute to this godly woman; we today benefit from her example!

TROUBLES

Monday Read John 16:32-33

"In the world ye shall have much tribulation, but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." Anyone who thinks that believers have an easy life are living in a fantasy world. The life of faith in God is the most rewarding life a person can live, but it comes with deep need for faith because there will be many trials. That is the point that Jesus made in our Bible reading for today. When a person becomes a part of the family of God by receiving Jesus into their heart as Savior and Lord, he or she instantly picks up a formidable foe who will challenge that faith to the hilt. That is particularly true if the believer is totally committed to doing the will of God. Well, Hannah sets a good example for us to follow. Not only did it seem that she was denied the privilege of motherhood, she was subjected to the ridicule of the other woman in her husband's life. It seemed that there was nothing her husband Elkanah could do to ease the pain; and he certainly tried by showing obvious favoritism. It may have been the better Elkanah treated Hannah intensified the sarcasm of the rival woman. But Hannah did the right thing to deal with the troubles. Instead of resenting the fact that it seemed as though maybe God was treating her cruelly, she turned to God in the midst of her troubles and cast it at His feet. That is the instruction given to believers in I Peter 5:7: *"Casting all you cares on Him because He cares for you."* Does He ever, and Hannah knew that and so should we!

VOWS

Tuesday Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

"Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." Here is an important instruction from the Word of God about making vows! It is quite easy to make vows, but it is an entirely different story when it comes to keeping the vows. People can come up with all kinds of excuses to justify their backing out of a promise, blaming just about everything and everyone but themselves. I think the devil, the Christian's arch enemy, loves to take on the challenge of having believers violate their vows, especially covenants into which they enter with God. This is why it is so important to consider very seriously the challenges that may come to test our commitment to keeping the vows we make before we make them. That's the point God is making in today's Bible reading: It is much better not to make a vow than to make it and not keep it. Because we know there will be challenges, we must prayerfully enter into vows and then seek to stay close to God to enable us to keep the vows we make!

HEART'S DESIRE

WednesdayRead Psalm 37:1-5

"Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Is not the psalmist telling us that if our goal in life is to delight in the Lord, then we shall receive that which our hearts desire? Now if our goal in life is self-indulgence, then we are not promised that we shall get what we had hoped for, resulting in frustration and failure. How then can you tell if a person is delighting in the Lord. I would say it begins with a hunger for what God had said in His Word. If a person has no desire to know God's truth as recorded in the Bible, it is obvious that they have no delight in the Lord. Another key in determining whether or not a person delights in the Lord is the frequency with which he engages in prayer speaking and listening to God. And are those prayers with the intent to seek God's direction or are they to get God to fulfill a desire even though it would be contrary to the will of God. If our whole desire is to glorify God, then it is easy for God to determine whether we will get that for which we ask. If our whole desire is to have God do what we want with no commitment to do His will to further His kingdom, then we may end up disappointed wondering why God did not do as we asked. We do know from God's response that Hannah delighted in the Lord: by her commitment to God's work and her fervent prayers!

EXPECTATION

Thursday Read James 4:1-3

"Ye have not, because ye ask not." To have God's blessing and God's direction in our lives, we must engage with Him in prayer! I wonder how much of God's blessing is missed because of the neglect of prayer? God is waiting to open the windows of heaven to pour out blessing on His people, but He patiently waits for them to ask! Our Bible reading for today points that out: *"We have not because we ask not."* Hannah had a serious problem with depression! She was subjected to daily harassment by another in the household! She prayed! That was the right thing to do. I am amazed at God's role in her life! By denying Hannah for such a long period of time before blessing her with a son, God brought Hannah to the point of being willing to dedicate Samuel to lifetime service. We can believe that at some point she revealed her vow with God to him. That delay in childbirth resulted in a man being mightily used of God. That does not mean we will get everything for which we ask! Our loving Father will not say yes to any request that would do us more harm than good. Many times our requests are for things of temporal value only, and God works from the eternal perspective and responds with that in mind. The truth is that many times He can best show His love by denying us from having that for which we ask!

GLORY TO GOD

Friday Read I Peter 5:10-11

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, will make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever." Bringing glory to God should be the ultimate desire of all Christians every day of their lives. After all, it is the grace of God that gives us eternal life and eternal purpose! It is the grace of God that gives us the meaning to life as God intended when He created the man and the woman. It is the grace of God that brings undeserving sinners light in a spiritually dark world! It is the grace of God that gives hope in hopeless situations! It is by the grace of God that we can overcome the temptations of the world and keep them from distracting us from things with eternal value! It is God's grace that opens the door to the abundant life we have in Christ Jesus. It is the grace of God that keeps the earth going! To God be the glory!

PATIENCE WITH OTHERS

Saturday Read Ephesians 4:1-3

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." The Christian life is a life of relationships: first and foremost, a relationship with God, and then with our earthly family, our local family of believers, and worldwide family of believers, and the eternal family of all ages! Then it also is developing relationships with unbelievers in an effort to be used of the Holy Spirit to introduce them to our Savior! In short, the life of Christians is a loving relationship with fellow believers and a compassionate relationship with the lost. Hannah is a good example, particularly

with her local body of believers. Consider how she reacted to Eli's mistake. When the priest accused her of being drunk while she was praying, instead of being offended and spreading bad thoughts about him, she patiently explained the truth. God was honored and trouble averted.