

Last time we were in Paul's letter to the Ephesian church looking at the Christian's armor. The Christian is told to "Put on the whole armor of God in order to stand against the wiles of the devil."

The Apostle Paul ends this section of Scripture letting his readers know that they also fight their spiritual battle against the devil and his demons with *prayer*.

Today being Mother's Day, we will begin our study of the subject of prayer by watching something that took place in the life of a woman who wanted desperately to become a mother. This woman's name was Hannah.

1 Samuel 1:1-28

Background

The events portrayed in 1 and 2 Samuel primarily concern three important figures in Biblical history—Samuel, Saul and David. First Samuel opens with the birth of Samuel an event that occurred around 1120 B.C. 2nd Samuel closes with the death of King David.

At the opening of 1 Samuel, Israel was being ruled by Judges and was on a roller coaster ride of political, moral, spiritual anarchy and decline. Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, it did; even the sons of Eli, the high priest at this time, had completely taken over the priestly office to fulfill their lust for material gain and sexual exploits (1 Sam 2:22).

The Bible says in Proverbs 14:34, "*Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.*" The Biblical record shows that God has reserved fire and brimstone for wicked nations of people.

2 Peter 2:4-10 says, "*For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds); then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries...*"

Just when you would think that God would pour down fire from heaven or at least allow the nation to collapse under the weight of its own perversion, He intervenes and in response to the prayer of a godly mother, sends Hannah and the children of Israel a baby named Samuel.

1 Sam 1:1 Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.

1 Sam 1:2 And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Just so you'll know...It was never part of God's original plan for a man to have more than one wife (one is enough). Just because a situation is recorded in Scripture doesn't mean that God condones it. God is merely letting us know the facts concerning history, persons and events.

Polygamy went against God's ideal for marriage found in Genesis 2:24; polygamy was never sanctioned by God. We shall soon see that these practices often caused a lot of pain and strife in the home.

1 Sam 1:3 This man (Elkanah) went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there.

Verse three introduces additional characters in this drama to us. We are introduced to *Eli*, who was "high priest," and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were also served in the office of priests of the LORD.

These are Israel's spiritual leaders. Again God is letting us know more about the spiritual climate at the time. The sanctity of the temple had been spiritually ransacked and pillaged by the evil sons of the High Priest Eli. Hophni and Phinehas were sleeping with the women in exchange for favors from the priests. They were stealing some of the meat that was brought to the temple to be sacrificed by the command of God.

In another place of Scripture, God's Word says, "...like people, like priest." (Hosea 4:9) In Hosea, God was saying He would judge priest *and* people because they both were wicked. Again, I bring this to you attention because it lets you know something about the times in which Hannah lived.

Elkanah went up to the temple each year to sacrifice to the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh and there was evil awaiting him. His sacrifice, one that was meant to be offered primarily and exclusively to God, would find its way lining the pockets of the evil priests.

Today we find the same thing happening in some of our churches. People are giving their tithes and offerings to God—they are told that the money would be used to get the Gospel out or to "feed the hungry children." But instead, the money is going toward a preacher's earthly mansion, his or her expensive fleet of cars and jet planes.

1 Sam 1:4-6 And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the LORD had closed her womb. And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the LORD had closed her womb.

The Bible tells us that when it was time to go make an offering that Elkanah would give provisions to his wives. He gave portions to Peninnah and her children but he gave a double portion to Hannah who was *childless*. And here we begin to get a glimpse of what motivated Hannah to pray. A Jewish woman was considered to be under a curse if she couldn't have children. In those days, when a woman had difficulty conceiving, society believed that God had closed her womb.

Now you have a woman, Hannah, who believed she was cursed and outside of the favor of God and in addition to this she was now being provoked by her husband's other wife—the Bible says that she was

miserable. The words “miserable” or “irritate” (NIV) are from the Hebrew word that means, “to tumble,” one who is “violently agitated. It means, “to crash;” “to make to fret,” “roar,” “thunder,” “troubled.” In other words, Hannah was getting upset.

This isn't the first time in the Bible we see this kind of thing happening. There are other times in the Bible when men have broken away from God's idea for marriage and “tried to love two.”

This wasn't the first love triangle in the Bible. You had Abraham, Sarah and Hagar. There was Jacob, Rachel and Leah. A song that came out in the seventies had the lyrics, “*When you're trying to love two; ain't easy to do.*” Not only is trying to love two not easy to do---it's wrong. When Abraham took Hagar as his second wife and bore Ishmael, we hear of the fruits of his sin every day on the evening news when announcements are made of the warring going on between the Arabs and the Jews.

The thing that was in Hannah's favor was that the Bible says that Elkanah loved *her*. He proved his love for her by giving her twice as much provision then he did for Peninnah, even though he had sons and daughters by her.

While this kindness from Elkanah toward Hannah, brought some relief to Hannah it served to infuriate her rival even to more jealously:

1 Sam 1:7 So it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat.

1 Sam 1:8 Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Hannah could not win—she could not find any relief and it got so bad that she lost her appetite (vs. 7). She does just the opposite of what I do when my heart is heavy—she stopped eating and I normally “pig out!”

Elkanah tried to console his wife Hannah and I suppose that his concern encouraged her to eat.

1 Sam 1:9 So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the LORD.

But verse nine tells us that she still was grieving in her spirit:

1 Sam 1:10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish.

There are just some experiences in life that bring about the kind of internal pain and turmoil that no doctor, no psychologist or psychiatrist, no counselor, no medicine, no pastor, no priest—no spouse, no food, alcohol, drugs, or no amount of sex will remove—nothing, it seems, will permanently take away or get rid of the pain.

Hannah was in *bitterness of soul*... Bitterness is the archenemy of hope, the ultimate corruptor of faith. Bitterness sucks away joy, keeps us ever mired in the past, robs us of the ability to celebrate life and all its possibilities. In order to thrive, bitterness averts its gaze from God's grace and mercy, focusing instead on the multitude of ways He and people we've counted on have let us down. *He said He loved me. How*

could He let this happen to me? Bitterness is forever making its case that God is hateful and vindictive — the exact opposite of who He is.¹

When your soul is bitter you play the “blame game.” Hannah was probably angry with God who had closed her womb. She was angry with her husband who was not “giving her enough seed” to get pregnant. She was angry with her husband’s other wife who was “taking all her husband’s seed.” She was probably angry with herself for not getting pregnant.

Hannah was in bitterness of soul but she didn’t stay there. The Bible says she, “*prayed to the Lord...*”

Are you harboring bitterness today? Is there something that you have gone through or are presently going through that has you angry with the world? Are you angry with God? Hannah prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. When was the last time you prayed like that?

Hannah did the right thing—she prayed!

She could have become psychotic like Rachel. Genesis 30:1 says, “*Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister (Leah), and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!"*”

It would have been easy for her to get back, to get even with Peninnah, Elkanah’s other wife, like Sarah the wife of Abraham did with Hagar. As soon as Hagar had a child by Abraham, Sarah ran Hagar and that baby out into the desert.

But Hannah prayed! Hannah’s plight may have been the source of inspiration for the hymn writer who penned the words, “*Are we weak and heavy-laden, Cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge— Take it to the Lord in prayer. Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer! In His arms He’ll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there.*”

Hannah prayed! But it seems that prayer is often the last thing we do when we are in a pinch. Many people think this way: “*I’ve done everything that I can think of doing, I might as well pray.*”

Hannah prayed! Do you think she was tempted to do evil to Peninnah or one of her kids? The Scripture doesn’t say but there are examples in Scripture and even in the news today of what some women would do to become a mother. Try *googling* the phrase “woman steals baby from womb” and see all the times women have done this or at least have tried.

Hannah may have been tempted to do evil for evil but she didn’t; she prayed!

When you are weak—pray! When you are envious—pray! When you are discouraged—pray! When you are depressed—pray! When you are grieving—pray! When you feel alone—pray! When you are tempted to sin—Pray! The song says, “*Ask the Savior to help you, Comfort, strengthen and keep you; He is willing to aid you, He will carry you through.*”

Hannah prayed! The Bible says in verse ten of our text that Hannah prayed and verse 11 says, “*then she made a vow...*”

1 Sam 1:11 Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give

¹ <http://www.troubledwith.com/Relationships/A000001209.cfm?topic=relationships%3A%20anger>

Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

Hannah was praying no ordinary prayer. She was making no trivial vow, for she was promising the Lord that if He gives her a son, that this boy will be raised as a *Nazirite*.²

In the book of Numbers, chapter six, we first learn of the Nazirite vow. Here it says, "*Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, ''*"

The vow of the Nazirite was when one expressed a special desire to draw close to God and to separate one's self from the comforts and pleasures of this world. "The English word *Nazirite* transliterates Hebrew *nazir*, meaning "set apart."

In the Bible you can find the examples of several people who took the Nazirite vow: *Samson* (Judges 13:5), *John the Baptist* (Luke 1:15), and *Paul* (Acts 18:18). There is no Biblical example of a woman taking the vow for herself, except for Manoah's wife during her pregnancy with Samson (Judges 13:4).

Listen to the requirements for the one who would vow to be a Nazirite:

He shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separates himself to the LORD he shall not go near a dead body. He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD.

Can you imagine that? Asking the Lord for a son and then giving him back to the Lord at such a severe level of dedication and commitment! I know some mothers who would gladly turn their boys over to such a life—"Take him Lord! Take him!!!"

But here's Hannah, who wanted a son so badly, and now vowing to give him away? The only time that she might be able to see him was when she took her yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the sacrifice. Outside of that, she would rarely get to see him.

She would not be able to talk to him, tuck him in bed, read to him, tell him stories, teach him manners, be there for him as he grows up—no telephone—no email—no hugging and kissing and spoiling him rotten. Nothing.

We she soon see that the only thing that could explain Hannah's decision to make this kind of vow is that she wanted a son for more than personal reasons. I believe that for Hannah, having children had a larger purpose than being removed from the group of those that had the "curse of barrenness."

1 Sam 1:12 And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli watched her mouth.

² <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/0406.htm>

1 Sam 1:13-14 Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!"

Eli, the High Priest, thought she was drunk. Now what could lead him to that conclusion? He came to that conclusion because that is the kind of thing that was occurring at the temple of God!

Pagan worship involved drunken orgies and this kind of behavior was obviously being practiced under the watchful care of Eli's sons so her concludes that Hannah is drunk.

1 Sam 1:15 And Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

1 Sam 1:16 "Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now."

It's interesting that the temple now has a reputation of a place of drunkenness and those who hang out at the temple, though innocent of this kind of behavior, are now being associated with it.

This tells me that we ought to be very careful about who we hang out with. We ought to be careful where we go to church. Some churches have a reputation for being places where "anything goes." A church leader runs around with women other than his wife and the word out on the street is, "He's just human—we need to forgive him." All this does is lower the bar of holiness and the righteous standard for the rest of the church.

A website created for "gentlemen" lists "Five Hotspots for Meeting Single Women." Guess what's included on this list along with the Happy Hour, family type bars (TGIF, Bennegins), Art Shows and Weddings? That's right, *the church*. Now listen to how the church is described:

If you are the type to stay awake during sermons and devote some time 1-2 times a week for worship then you can hook your claws into a pious woman easily. If you want the pick of the litter then you should go as far as either joining the choir or the offices of the church – these guys get the prime picking of the women who attend. Not the outgoing type? They have singles meetings and all sorts of methods to marry off members to each other. Just sell her a dream and enjoy the benefits, although many churchy women know that fornication is a sin, they treat it like a teeny, tiny sin and before long your cold-blooded, fake, church going, behind will be reaping the benefits of your... er.. faith.

Eli thought Hannah was just a player—just one of the women his sons were involved with. So Hannah tells Eli that she is not drunk—she's been pouring out her soul before the Lord and grieving heavily.

1 Sam 1:17 Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him."

1 Sam 1:18 And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

When Hannah corrects Eli's faulty appraisal of her situation, she is told by the priest to "go in peace" because the "God of Israel would grant her petition."

1 Sam 1:19 Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her.

1 Sam 1:20 So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked for him from the LORD."

God does answer her prayer! He does grant her petition! Hannah gives the baby boy the name of "Samuel." The name Samuel means, "Heard of God."

1 Sam 1:21 Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and his vow.

1 Sam 1:22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "Not until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the LORD and remain there forever."

1 Sam 1:23 And Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him. Only let the LORD establish His word." So the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

What do you sense anything going on here? Do you sense that Hannah, like any other mother, is somewhat tempted to go back on her promise to God? It's time for the entire family to make their annual pilgrimage to not only make the yearly sacrifice to God but it is also time for Hannah and Elkanah to follow-up on their vow to the Lord to hand over the boy Samuel.

I believe Hannah is determined to keep her vow. However, Elkanah has some doubts about his wife's willingness—you can tell by what he says in verse 23, "*Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him. Only let the LORD establish His word.*"

Elkanah wanted to make sure that Hannah keeps her promise. Let me tell you something, when you pray and make a vow you better keep it. It is better to not make a vow than to make one to the Lord and not keep it. Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 says, "*When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.*"

Hannah purposes to make good on her promise to the Lord. By this time the child was about three months old—not yet old enough to be left with Eli, the high priest. Eli was also an old man—it just makes good sense to wean the child before sending him off to the house of the Lord.

1 Sam 1:24 Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh. And the child was young.

1 Sam 1:25 Then they slaughtered a bull, and brought the child to Eli.

1 Sam 1:26 And she said, "O my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the LORD.

1 Sam 1:27 "For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him.

1 Sam 1:28 "Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD." So they worshiped the LORD there.

Hannah is not finished praying. Did you know there are some people who *use* prayer and when they get what they asked of God, they forget about prayer.

The New Testament tells the story of the ten men who had the disease of leprosy and then implores the Lord for help—They say, "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!*" After Jesus heals the ten lepers and tells them to go show themselves to the priest (to fulfill the Law in Lev. 14:2) Luke 17:15 says that only "*one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice...*"

When Hannah first prayed, she prayed the *prayer of petition*. Here Hannah prays the *prayer of praise!*

Some have called this passage of Scripture, ‘Hannah’s Song.’ In fact, Hannah’s prayer is *messianic*, meaning that it looks forward to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Mary, the mother of Jesus, uses some of this *prayer of praise* in her own prayer where she praises God for having selected her to be the human mother of Jesus, the Messiah (Luke 1:46-55).

1 Sam 2:1 And Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation.

Hannah’s heart is rejoicing. But does she mean when she says her “horn is exalted in the Lord”? Is she blowing a trumpet? Does she look like a unicorn? The “horn” in the Old Testament speaks of *strength*. Hannah is referring to her strength in the Lord. She is rejoicing over all God has done in giving her a son and causing her to triumph over her enemies. She is rejoicing in her salvation!

1 Sam 2:2 "No one is holy like the LORD, For there is none besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God.

Hannah is rejoicing in the truth that God is *holy*—there is no one like Him. He is *omnipotent* (all powerful); He is *omniscient* (having all knowledge); He is *omnipresent* (everywhere at once); He is *immutable* (unchanging). There is no one who is holy like our Lord; there is none besides Him!

Hannah was rejoicing in the truth that God was her rock. That Rock upon which Hannah rested upon is the same Rock upon which we rest today. Jesus is our Rock in a weary land!

1 Sam 2:3 "Talk no more so very proudly; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, For the LORD is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed.

Perhaps this praise is directed toward Elkanah’s other wife—the rival of Hannah. Perhaps this was in response to all those “*Nah, nah, nah, nah, nahs*” that came from Peninnah. Sometimes we look at people and what they have that we don’t have. We are prone to get envious—we are tempted to jealousy. Their bragging and boasting does not make things easy for us.

But God has the final word! He knows what we stand in need of. He is aware of the plotting of others against us and the Bible says, “*Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord.*” (Rom 12:19)

1 Sam 2:4 "The bows of the mighty men are broken, And those who stumbled are girded with strength.

1 Sam 2:5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, And the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, And she who has many children has become feeble.

1 Sam 2:6 "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.

In this section of Hannah’s prayer of praise she is acknowledging God’s sovereignty. God is sovereign King who is the *true* Master of the Universe. He is the One who controls all things. He is the One who closes the womb and He is the One who opens the womb.

He is the One who put kings in place and He is the One who removes kings from their thrones. He is the one who permits armies to win their battles and He is the One who can cause an army to run in desperate retreat.

The Lord brings life into existence and the Lord brings down to the grave—The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the Name of the Lord! (Job 1:21) Hannah praises God for His sovereignty!

1 Sam 2:7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up.

1 Sam 2:8 He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. "For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, And He has set the world upon them.

1 Sam 2:9 He will guard the feet of His saints, But the wicked shall be silent in darkness. "For by strength no man shall prevail.

Hannah's praise here is in response to God's blessing in her life. If you are "down in the dumps," God knows. If you are in need, God knows! If you are in the "valley of despair" God knows! If you feel alone in this world, God knows! If you are being attacked, accused, reviled and misused, God knows!

God knew of Hannah's situation. He knew of her plight. He heard her cries for help. He saw her tears. In verse 8 Hannah says, "*He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory. "For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He has set the world upon them..."*"

Hannah is saying that "Good things come to those who wait on the Lord! Do not take matters into your own hands. If you are a child of God, He's got your back. In fact, the end of verse 8 is telling us that He who created the world is the one who caused Hannah to get the victory.

Verse 9 says, "*He will guard the feet of His saints...but the wicked shall be silent in darkness.*" Doesn't this align perfectly with what we learned a couple weeks ago—"No weapon formed against the believer will prosper"?

Now verse ten is a special verse that not only was fitting for the times in which Hannah was living but the times in which we are living:

1 Sam 2:10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give strength to His king, And exalt the horn of His anointed."

This is the first verse in the Bible to use the word *Messiah*. The word *anointed* is the Hebrew word *Messiah*. It is translated **Christos** in the Greek New Testament and give us our English word, *Christ*.

The word *Christ* is not the name of our Lord Jesus, it is His *title*. Jesus Christ is *Jesus the Messiah*.

If you continue to read the book of 1 Samuel, you will find that Israel is about to select a king. This is not a good thing. Up to that time God has been their King and they have been living under a *theocracy*—they have been living under His direct reign. Now Israel has rejected God as their King because they want to be like the nations around them (1 Sam 8:5).

Verse ten is prophetic. Hannah is praising God and in her praise God is letting His people know that one day, He Himself will judge the ends of the earth! One day, King Jesus will come and His horn will be exalted! One day King Jesus, the Messiah will come and set up his Kingdom.

1 Sam 2:11 Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah. But the child ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest.

There is something amiss in our cities; there is something amiss in our nation. In 1928 a man named W. L. Caldwell wrote the following:

"Well may we pause to pay honor to her who after Jesus Christ is God's best gift to men, mother. It was she who shared her life with us when as yet our members were unformed, into the valley of the shadow of death she walked that we might have the light of life. In her arms was the garner of our food and the soft couch for our repose. There we nestled in the hour of pain, there was the playground of our infant glee. Those same arms later became our refuge and stronghold. It was she who taught our baby feet to go and lifted us up over the rough places. Her blessed hands plied the needle by day and by night to make our clothes. She put the book under our arm and started us off for school. But best of all, she taught our baby lips to lisp the name of Jesus and told us first the wondrous story of a Savior's love."

And then he went on to say,

"The pride of America is its mothers. There are wicked mothers like Jezebel of old. There are unnatural mothers who sell their children into sin. There are sin-cursed rum-soaked and abandoned mothers to whom their motherhood is the exposure of their shame. I am glad to believe, however, that there are comparatively few in this class," end quote.

Today statistics are giving us a different story than in 1928. According to data released just three years ago by the National Center for Health Statistics, nearly 40 percent of babies born in the United States were delivered by unwed mothers. The 1.7 million out-of-wedlock births, of 4.3 million total births, marked a more than 25 percent jump from the last time the stats were taken.

Let's close with a couple of questions to our mothers.

If you are a mother, are you a praying mother? Let me share with you 31 Biblical Virtues you can pray to be produced in the lives of your children.

31 Biblical Virtues to Pray for Your Children³

by Bob Hostetler

1. **Salvation**—"Lord, let salvation spring up within my children, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." (Isa. 45:8; 2 Tim. 2:10)

2. **Growth in Grace**—"I pray that my children may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 3:18)

³ © Bob Hostetler. Used with permission. www.ReviveOurHearts.com Info@ReviveOurHearts.com

3. **Love**—"Grant, Lord, that my children may learn to live a life of love, through the Spirit who dwells in them." (Gal. 5:25; Eph. 5:2)
4. **Honesty and Integrity**—"May integrity and honesty be their virtue and their protection." (Ps. 25:21)
5. **Self-Control**—"Father, help my children not to be like many others around them, but let them be alert and self-controlled in all they do." (1 Thess. 5:6)
6. **Love for God's Word**—"May my children grow to find Your Word more precious than much pure gold and sweeter than honey from the comb." (Ps. 19:10)
7. **Justice**—"God, help my children to love justice as You do and act justly in all they do." (Ps. 11:7; Mic. 6:8)
8. **Mercy**—"May my children always be merciful, just as their Father is merciful." (Luke 6:36)
9. **Respect** (for self, others, and authority)—"Father, grant that my children may show proper respect to everyone, as Your Word commands." (1 Pet. 2:17)
10. **Biblical Self-Esteem**—"Help my children develop a strong self-esteem that is rooted in the realization that they are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:10)
11. **Faithfulness**—"Let love and faithfulness never leave my children, but bind these twin virtues around their necks and write them on the tablet of their hearts." (Prov. 3:3)
12. **Courage**—"May my children always be strong and courageous in their character and in their actions." (Deut. 31:6)
13. **Purity**—"Create in them a pure heart, O God, and let that purity of heart be shown in their actions." (Ps. 51:10)
14. **Kindness**—"Lord, may my children always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else." (1 Thess. 5:15)
15. **Generosity**—"Grant that my children may be generous and willing to share, and so lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age." (1 Tim. 6:18-19)
16. **Peace-Loving**—"Father, let my children make every effort to do what leads to peace." (Rom. 14:19)
17. **Joy**—"May my children be filled with the joy given by the Holy Spirit." (1 Thess. 1:6)
18. **Perseverance**—"Lord, teach my children perseverance in all they do, and help them especially to run with perseverance the race marked out for them." (Heb. 12:1)
19. **Humility**—"God, please cultivate in my children the ability to show true humility toward all." (Titus 3:2)

20. **Compassion**—"Lord, please clothe my children with the virtue of compassion." (Col. 3:12)
21. **Responsibility**—"Grant that my children may learn responsibility, for each one should carry his own load." (Gal. 6:5)
22. **Contentment**—"Father, teach my children the secret of being content in any and every situation, through Him who gives them strength." (Phil. 4:12-13)
23. **Faith**—"I pray that faith will find root and grow in my children's hearts, that by faith they may gain what has been promised to them." (Luke 17:5-6; Heb. 11:1-40)
24. **A Servant's Heart**—"God, please help my children develop servant's hearts, that they may serve wholeheartedly, as if they were serving the Lord, not men." (Eph. 6:7)
25. **Hope**—"May the God of hope grant that my children may overflow with hope and hopefulness by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:13)
26. **Willingness and Ability to Work**—"Teach my children, Lord, to value work and to work at it with all their heart, as working for the Lord and not for men." (Col. 3:23)
27. **Passion for God**—"Lord, please instill in my children a soul that 'followeth hard after thee,' one that clings passionately to You." (Ps. 63:8)
28. **Self-Discipline**—"Father, I pray that my children may acquire a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair." (Prov. 1:3)
29. **Prayerfulness**—"Grant, Lord, that my children's lives may be marked by prayerfulness, that they may learn to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers." (1 Thess. 5:17)
30. **Gratitude**—"Help my children to live lives that are always overflowing with thankfulness and always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 5:20; Col. 2:7)
31. **A Heart for Missions**—"Lord, please help my children to develop a desire to see Your glory declared among the nations, Your marvelous deeds among the peoples." (Ps. 96:3)

Lastly, Hannah prayed a prayer of *dedication* for her not yet conceived and unborn son. She dedicated her child to the Lord's calling. If you are a praying mother, what direction is your prayer pointing your child in?

Hannah presented her child to the Lord and as you present your child to the Lord, you signify your own personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You show a desire to see God's will carried out in the life of your child. And you acknowledge your place as steward of what really belongs to God; your child.

Dedication means that by word and example, you promise to teach your child to live a holy life and to value the good gifts God has given us. You promise to give your child every opportunity and encouragement to develop into the well-rounded Christian individual God intends him or her to be.

Dedication before God and the Church means that you realize that the Church should have a large part in the spiritual growth of your family. They should know you and your child so they can give prayer support, assist in Bible teaching, and provide opportunities, facilities and workers through which you and your child can enter into the fullness of Christian faith.

National Children's Day is held annually every 2nd Sunday in June. This year GraceWay will use this day to dedicate our children to the Lord. If you are serious about raising your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord and seeking to launch them as arrows to His glory and honor, you are invited to dedicate your child on this special day. We will have certificates made just for the occasion that you can take home and frame.

Everyone is invited to attend so spread the word. I will be preaching a special Children's Day message and the GraceWay children will be singing.

If possible, please have your children come dressed for the occasion because we hope that everyone will bring a camera to take pictures.