

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 24 February 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

“For This Child I Prayed”

1 Samuel 1

You don't have to be under the preaching at Redemption Baptist Church for very long before coming to realisation that this church takes its stand upon the Word of God. Just as our Lord did, we condemn the religious traditions of men whenever their traditions contradict the Scriptures.

Now, it is not wrong to have a tradition, so long as the tradition is based upon Biblical principles. For example, you'll notice that we have a certain **order of service** that we follow in our church services. Now, does the Bible say that we must sing two songs, and then have an offering, and then sing two more songs before the sermon? No, it doesn't. This means that we do follow a certain “tradition” in the way that we conduct our services. Yet, our order of service does not contradict God's Word. In fact, by conducting the service in an orderly way, we are obeying the Scriptural command to **“let all things be done decently and in order.”** Another example of a tradition is our **Wednesday evening service**. We are not commanded in Scripture to meet on Wednesday evenings; but we *are* commanded to be in church as often as it assembles. Our Wednesday evening service may be a Baptist “tradition”: but it is biblical.

Now, this morning, one of our families has publicly dedicated their child to the Lord. In a sense, you might call this is a “tradition,” since the Bible does not command that we have a “baby dedication” service. However, they have not done this simply because it is a “nice tradition.” By dedicating their son to the Lord, they have, in reality, dedicated *themselves* to the Lord. They have vowed to pour their heart and soul into bringing up their son for the Lord. This may be a “tradition”; but it is a *biblical* tradition!

This morning, we will be focusing on a godly woman named Hannah, who made a solemn vow to God. Before Hannah's son was conceived, she dedicated him to the Lord; and the Lord took her vow seriously. Hannah took her vow seriously, too; and *because* she took her vow seriously, her son turned out to be one of the greatest men of God in Israel's history. The title of this message is **“For This Child I Prayed.”**

Read I Samuel 1:1-11.

In these verses, we see that Hannah understood two very important truths about children. First of all...

I. Hannah realised that children are given to us by God (v. 11)

In these verses, we see a rather intense scene. We see Hannah praying to God for a son. However, Hannah wasn't praying a casual thirty-second prayer. She was pouring out her heart to God, and *beseeking* Him for a child. She was in bitterness of soul. Hannah believed, with her whole heart, that God is the One who opens and shuts the womb. Listen to what she said about the Lord's sovereignty over life.

Read I Samuel 2:1-6.

If you really believe that children are from God, and that He alone is sovereign in the giving (and taking) of life, then that belief will affect your outlook in a profound way. You will realise that children are truly miraculous—and special—from the time of conception!

You know, we live in a world in which science is practically considered “god.” Have you ever noticed the hushed, almost “religious” tone in which many people speak of “science” these days? “Science” is virtually a state religion. “Science” is virtually worshipped. Mighty “Science,” we are told, can explain everything. This is the thinking of our modern world.

One of the most tragic results of this humanistic, “science can explain everything” mentality is that human life has come to be viewed as not particularly special. Why? Because God has been kicked out of the equation. We are now viewed as an “accident” of evolution. Now, you would *think* that the increase of scientific knowledge would *confirm* people in the realisation that we are unique creations of God! The more we learn about nature, the more we should stand in awe of the infinite power and genius of God. The more microbiologists delve into the molecular function of human cells, the more they are amazed at the breath-taking complexity of conception. With all the molecular barriers and checks that are involved in conception, the odds of conception *even happening* are virtually zero! If there were not an all-wise Creator and Sustainer of life directing the whole process, then we would have to conclude that chemicals and acids somehow have a voluntary “mind” and “will”—which is absurd!

The conception, gestation, and birth of a child are miraculous. God’s fingerprints are all over it! According to the evolutionists, a baby in the womb is just a “mass of tissue”: and it is therefore O.K. to kill “it.” This calloused attitude toward human life abounds in our modern world. For example, on 22 January of this year, the legislature of the state of New York took the state-sanctioned murder of babies a step further, and made it legal to kill babies just *after* birth. Human life itself is increasingly being looked upon as inherently “evil.” In Mumbai, India, a man named Raphael Samuel is now suing his parents for bringing him into the world. He says that he “didn’t give his consent” to be born, and that it was cruel of his parents to bring him into the world for “their own pleasure.” Samuel complains that because his parents begat him, he must face “suffering,” “pain and depression,” “having to work,” and having to be “stuck in traffic.” According to Samuel, “There’s no point to humanity. So many people are suffering. If humanity were extinct, Earth and animals would be happier. They’ll certainly be better off. Also, no human will then suffer. Human existence is totally pointless.”¹ By the way, you may think that this kind of insane thinking is limited to only a few crazies; but this “anti-natalist” (anti-birth) movement is growing larger by the day. More and more, rebellious men are railing against God and their parents for being so “cruel” as to give them life. Incidentally, God has some choice words for people who make such complaints.

Read Isaiah 45:9-10.

God says that to complain against your parents for begetting you is the same as to complain against *Him*. God says that that every child is a living soul whom *He* created for *His* pleasure: and He does not apologise for saying so. (See **Revelation 4:11.**) Wicked and unthankful though we are, God still loves us, and desires to have a relationship with us.

Folks, we are special creatures. However, we must remember *why* we are special. We are special because *God* has given us our worth. Every child that comes into the world came

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-47154287>

because God, the One who opens and closes the womb, allowed that child to be conceived for a special purpose. God's Word says that before *you* were conceived, God had the blueprint for your body written in heaven. Before you existed, God already viewed you as a person!

Read Psalm 139:13-16.

The realisation that children are given to us by God should lead us to worship and praise God for the children He gives us! Let's see what Solomon said about this.

Read Psalm 127:3-5.

Do you really believe that children are a gift from God? If you do, then you must come to the same conclusion that Hannah did. You see, not only did Hannah realise that children are a gift from God, but she also realised that because of this gift, she now had an *obligation* to God.

II. **Hannah realised that she had a *responsibility* for the gift God had given her.**

In **Ezekiel 18:4** God said, "***Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son if mine.***" Do you know what this means? This means that if you have children, those children are not ultimately yours. God has *given* that little soul to *you* to rear. You are the *steward* of those children: and you will answer to God for how you rear them.

Hannah knew this truth well. She knew that if God were to give her a son, God would expect her to bring up that little man in the fear of the Lord. And so, in the agony of her soul, she prayed to God: and in that prayer, she made a solemn promise. Before her son was even conceived, **she dedicated her son to the Lord's service. (Read 1 Samuel 1:11 again.)**

This should be the attitude of every child of God. Every married believer should have the attitude that "If God should bless me with a child, I will pour my heart, life, and strength into bringing up that child in the fear of the Lord, so that he will come to know Christ as Saviour, and then serve God with his life." That should be your attitude before you even *have* children.

Hannah was so serious in her plea for a son, that she made a vow to God. She didn't make a fuzzy, non-specific kind of resolve in her heart; she made an actual commitment. She put it into words. By the way, many people (tragically, even many Christians) have no idea of the seriousness of making a vow to God. Christians too often make promises to God, and don't follow through with them. Christian, when you give account of your service to God at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Lord will not judge you according to your "good intentions," or according to how serious you felt at the time you made the vow. He will not judge you by whether your "heart was in the right place." God will *not* let you off the hook because there were "circumstances" that came up, which made the situation "completely different," and therefore justified your breaking your vow. God will judge you according to one criterion: whether you *kept* your vow. That is why dedicating your child to the Lord is such a solemn thing. It is not just a "nice little ritual": It is a binding promise to God.

Read Ecclesiastes 5:4-6.

Hannah's words were not hollow and empty. She followed through with her vow. For one thing, she followed through with her vow by **raising her son as a Nazarite**. She promised God that if He would give her a son, there would "***no razor come upon his head.***" (Read 1

Samuel 1:11 again.) The Nazarite vow was a very strict vow. Under Old Testament Law, people could make a Nazarite vow for a certain amount of time—or, if they so desired, for the rest of their lives. People who had made the Nazarite vow were bound never to drink or eat any grapes or grape products; never to cut their hair; and never to touch a dead body (not even for the purpose of burying a close family member).

What was the purpose of this vow? Basically, **the Nazarite vow was an illustration of separation from sin.** The Nazarite's separated way of living reminded the Jewish people that **God is utterly holy, and separate from sin.** For example, not touching any dead body pictured the fact that God cannot accept moral corruption. Not consuming grapes, or anything made from grapes, illustrates the fact that we should not allow things into our lives that can *lead* to sin. (If Nazarites didn't even eat grapes, then there was no possibility that they would ever drink *wine* that had become intoxicating.) Of course, under ordinary circumstances, there is nothing wrong with burying the dead, or with drinking non-intoxicating grape juice; but the Nazarite restrictions were meant to be living *pictures* of separation from sinful things.

Now, the Nazarite vow is no longer around; but is there anything we can learn from it? We certainly can! If God went to such great lengths in Old Testament times to *illustrate* separation from sin, then separation from sin must be *really* important to Him! Christian, God's will for you is for you to be sanctified—to be set apart from sin. Christians should not reek of the world. God warns us to avoid even the **“appearance of evil.”**

Now, what about our children? You can't give your son or your daughter a clean heart, can you? No, you can't. Only God can give your child a clean heart, when your child surrenders his heart to Him. You can't make your child a Christian. Your child must personally choose whether to receive Christ as Saviour, or to ignore His offer of salvation, and thus reject Him. You cannot make your child receive Christ. **However,** you can (and *must*) keep your child as far away from the corruption of the world as possible, so that when your child finally *does* realise his need to be saved, he will not be enchained by destructive, sinful habits, and thus find it hard to turn to Jesus. Should your child have received Christ already, then you have the responsibility to *continue* to shelter him from the pitfalls of the world. Now, make no mistake about it: the world will think you a fool for guarding your children from worldly friends, and from godless television shows, godless video games, godless books and magazines, godless web sites, and godless music. They'll think you a crackpot for not allowing your children to date casually, and for teaching them to stay pure until marriage. They'll think you a religious fanatic for keeping your children from worldly dress, and from the pubs and movie cinemas. However, having children whose hearts have been guarded from sin, and who are thus able to be used of God, is worth all the ridicule people may throw at you.

Hannah made good on her vow to dedicate her son to the Lord's service, and to raise her son as a Nazarite. But that wasn't all. She also vowed to give her son **“unto the LORD”** all the days of his life. What does this mean, exactly? The last part of **chapter 1** has the answer.

Read 1 Samuel 1:20-27.

When Hannah vowed to dedicate her son to the Lord all the days of his life, she had something very specific in mind. She was vowing to give him up to the service of the Tabernacle. Now, Hannah and her husband did not belong to the priestly tribe of Levi: they were from the tribe of Ephraim. Under ordinary circumstances, their son Samuel would not have been permitted to serve in the Tabernacle, because he was not a Levite. However, this was not an ordinary

circumstance. Elkanah and Hannah actually handed over their son to the high priest Eli, and allowed Samuel to become Eli's son *by adoption*. God saw Samuel as though he were a Levite, because he was *adopted* into a Levite family. (God takes adoption seriously!)

Hannah was very serious about giving her child to God's service, wasn't she? She wasn't concerned about having a child for her own enjoyment; rather, she was concerned about having a son who could serve the living God! Christian parent, it should be the passionate desire of your heart that *your* children would one day serve the Lord with all their hearts.

Now, that having been said, I want to make one thing clear: when Samuel went off to the Tabernacle to begin his service, **he was not yet saved!** How do I know this? Here is why.

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-7.

In Hebrew, the word "know" (*yâdă*) often means to "have a relationship" with someone. That is the way it is being used in **verse 7**, where we are told that "***Samuel did not yet know the LORD.***" Up to this point in his life, Samuel did not have an actual, personal relationship with the Lord. In other words, he wasn't saved yet. Sadly, Hophni and Phineas, Eli's sons, never *did* know the Lord. **First Samuel 2:12** says that "***the sons of Eli were sons of Belial*** (the devil); ***they knew not the Lord.***" Sadly, Eli had failed with his own sons. He never disciplined or restrained his own sons; and thus, he lost their hearts. They never were saved. But with his *adopted* son Samuel, Eli got it right. Eli restrained Samuel, and brought him up in the right way; and through Eli's testimony, Samuel came to know the Lord personally.

Now, let us stop and consider Samuel's pedigree. Who was Samuel? He was one of God's covenant people. He had been circumcised on the eighth day. He had been brought up under the strictest vow of separation—the Nazarite vow. Furthermore, he had been familiar with the Tabernacle, and with all the rituals of the Tabernacle, from the time he was about three years old. He knew the "ins" and "outs" of the Law from the time he was very young. Yet, up until this particular night, *he wasn't saved*. He had not yet placed his personal trust in the LORD.

Christian parent, you must never forget that until your child personally repents of his sin and trusts in Christ, he is a little pagan. He is still lost in his sins! From the time your child is old enough to understand that he has sinned against God, he is accountable to God, and is condemned. **Your child *must* personally place his trust in Jesus Christ.** Your child *must* be born again. Being in church every Sunday, and knowing all the Bible stories, hymns, and Christian terminology, will not make your child a Christian. Being well-behaved will not make your child a Christian. I think it safe to assume that *Samuel* was a well-behaved child before he was brought to the Tabernacle, because he had good parents. Samuel was undoubtedly well-mannered and well-behaved. *Yet, he did not know the Lord.*

Christian parent, you have an awesome responsibility. As we've already seen, you have the responsibility to guard your child from sinful things. However, while you are teaching your child to stay away from sinful things, you must teach your child that he needs a *Saviour* to *save* him from his sin! You *must* know how to lead your child to the Lord! The first and foremost responsibility that you, as a parent, have, is to teach your child the Gospel.

Now, when, exactly, was *Samuel* saved? We don't know how old he was when he was saved; but Scripture does indicate that Samuel was saved on the very night when God spoke to him. He wasn't saved because he had this amazing experience of hearing the voice of God. The

Bible tells us of several lost people (such as the false prophet Balaam) who, at some point, received a genuine revelation from God; yet, they didn't even know the Lord! Samuel wasn't saved because he had the experience of being given a revelation: he was saved the same way that every sinner is saved. He was saved by placing his *faith* in the God who had spoken to him that night. Perhaps God's warning about the fate of Eli's sons showed him that being a high priest's son can't save you—that one must *personally* trust in the Lord. What we know for sure is that from that point onward, God's divine presence in Samuel's life was obvious.

Read 1 Samuel 3:8-20.

God's purpose for Christian parents is not merely that they bring their children to the knowledge of salvation. That is only the beginning. After your child has placed his faith in Christ, your next responsibility is to show your child how to serve the Lord with his whole heart. We parents had better be taking this responsibility seriously, because we are stewards of what God has given us. God has entrusted these precious souls to our keeping for a little while; and God wants us to do our best to bring up a **"godly seed"** for Him.

Now, before we close this morning, I want you to notice one more thing about Hannah. We've seen that she dedicated her child to the Lord before he was born; and we've seen that she followed through with her vow. However, there is one more important thing that Hannah did: she "lent" her son to the Lord not just for a little while, but **for as long as he lived!**

Read 1 Samuel 1:28 and 2:18-21.

Not many women would have made the promise that Hannah made to God; and even fewer would have followed through with it. Yet, Hannah kept her promise. As the years slipped by, Hannah *continued* to lend her son to the Lord. She continued to allow her son to serve in the Tabernacle. Hannah didn't say, "O.K., my son knows the LORD now, and he's served in the Tabernacle for several years: but he's been there long enough. Surely God doesn't expect more than that. I'm taking him home now." No, she *continued* to yield her son to the Lord.

Too many Christians fall short of giving their sons and daughters wholly to the Lord. And why so? Because they're afraid that God might call them to do something that doesn't fit with *their* plans for their children's lives. Perhaps they fear that God might call their child to serve as a pastor, or as a pastor's wife, or as a missionary in a faraway land. Perhaps they fear that the ministry wouldn't be a very stable or lucrative "career" for their child, or that they wouldn't get to see their child very often if God were to call him to a foreign land.

Did Hannah struggle with the thought of her child leaving her? I'm sure she did! Yet, what if Hannah had *not* been willing to give up her son to God's service? History would have been profoundly different! As it turned out, God used Samuel to bring the rebellious, idolatrous nation of Israel back to Himself. God also used Samuel to prepare Israel for the reign of King David; and from the line of King David, Jesus was born! And it was all because of a lady in a little village called Ramathaim-zophim, who dedicated her son *wholly* to the Lord.

Before we close this morning, I would like to read a portion of a letter that was written in the year 1812. It was written by a young man named Adoniram Judson to his future father-in-law, John Hasseltine, to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. At that time, Adoniram was preparing to go to Burma as a missionary; and in his letter, he was very frank with Mr. Hasseltine about what missionary life would be like for Ann. Judson put it this way:

“I have now to ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of him who left *his* heavenly home, and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion, and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with the crown of righteousness, brightened with the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Saviour from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?”

As it turned out, John did consider those precious souls in Burma to be worth the giving up of his daughter, and he did consent to their marriage; and just as Adoniram had warned might happen, John never saw his daughter again. Ann did, indeed, die in Burma fourteen years into their marriage, after a long, painful illness. In fact, Judson’s second wife, Sarah, died in Burma, as well; and several of his children died while they were young. Their lives were filled with great hardship and persecution. During the Anglo-Burmese war, the Burmese authorities imprisoned Judson for 17 months, under the most degrading, agonising, torturous, and life-threatening conditions imaginable. The Buddhist people of Burma viewed Judson and his family with utter contempt; and the Judsons’ lives were constantly in danger. It took 7 years of hard toil for Adoniram and Ann to see their first person saved; and it took 12 years of toil to see 18 people saved. However, by the end of Judson’s 40 years of service to God, he had produced a translation of the entire Bible in the Burmese language, which is still used to this day. He also saw 100 churches established, and about 8,000 people saved. To this day, most Christians in Myanmar (Burma) can trace their spiritual heritage to the labours of Adoniram and Ann Judson. Because Adoniram’s and Ann’s parents were willing to give up their child to the Lord, we will one day meet tens of thousands of Burmese people in heaven!

Am I saying that if you dedicate your child to the Lord, your child will be a missionary in a foreign land some day? Not necessarily. Only God knows that. However, you should be *willing* to yield your child to the Lord, no matter what the Lord may have in store for him (or for her). You may *think* that you love your child too much to give him wholly to God; but is that love, or selfishness? There is no safer place, or a more blessed place, than the centre of God’s will. Do you want God’s richest blessing on your child? If so, then your attitude should be like that of Hannah: ***“I will lend my child to the Lord for as long as he liveth.”***

Conclusion: Christian parents, have you dedicated your children to the Lord? I’m not talking about dedicating them in a formal ceremony: I’m talking about handing them over, *in your heart*, to the Lord. Are you showing them, by word and example, that knowing Christ as Saviour, and serving Him with your whole heart, is the most important thing in the world? **Perhaps there are some of you who don’t even know the Lord.** If you have any question as to where you stand with God, please realise that salvation is a free gift, which Christ paid for with His blood on the cross of Calvary. Jesus paid it all! You cannot earn that gift by any amount of good works or religious activity. You must repent of your sin and place your complete trust in what Christ did for you. Turn to Him today in simple faith, and He will save you!