

First Samuel / 1 Samuel 1:21–28

Introduction

One of the things that makes JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* such a powerful story is the way the story begins in such a small place and with such an unlikely hero.

The story begins in the Shire where the Hobbits live. If you are thinking of an epic tale, the Shire *isn't* the place you would expect to find a hero. But that is how many great stories begin, with an unexpected hero from an expected place.

But it isn't just that. As you go through the *Lord of the Rings* it is Frodo's small decisions to respond to danger with courage that leads him into an epic tale. It begins small, he is willing to keep the ring safe when Gandalf asks him to. But as the story continues, Frodo's small acts of courage take him into greater and greater danger and greater glory.

1 Samuel begins in a similar way with Hannah and Elkanah in Shiloh. It is Hannah and Elkanah's small acts of faithfulness that set off a great series of events that lead to the defeat of giants like Goliath and the crowning of kings like David. Their simple obedience is used by God to advance his great work of salvation.

As we consider our lesson this morning, I want to highlight two things:

1. The obedience of Elkanah & Hannah (vv. 21-24)
2. The Adoption of Samuel (vv. 25-28)

The Obedience of Elkanah & Hannah (vv. 21-24)

Like the opening verses of [1 Samuel 1](#), these verses near the end of the chapter continue to highlight the faithful obedience of Elkanah and Hannah. Elkanah faithfully fulfills his duty to go before the Lord to worship at the Tabernacle each year.

Here, the emphasis turns to Hannah who is no longer barren. God opened her womb and she has given birth to the son she asked for, Samuel. But because Samuel is not yet weaned, Hannah will not journey to the Tabernacle at Shiloh. Rather, she would wait until Samuel was weaned to take him before the Lord.

At the end of verse 22 that Hannah refers back to the vow that she made before the Lord. If God gave her a son, she would offer him over to the Lord's service all of his days.

According to [Numbers 30:10ff](#), a woman's vow can be nullified or confirmed by her husband. It's important to understand what a vow likely meant in these contexts. Making a vow to the Lord would often involve offering some sort of sacrifice to God at the Tabernacle. These sacrifices could be a large financial cost to the family. Bulls and goats have always been expensive. Thus, if a wife made a rash vow to offer a sacrifice the family could not afford, her husband could nullify the vow when he heard it.

But in verse 23, Elkanah confirms Hannah's vow, telling her to “***Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned [the child]; only may the LORD establish his word.***” Elkanah is a wealthy man and he is not stingy. He is pleased for his wife to carry out her vow, even if it means that his own son will be offered to the service of the Lord.

According to the Law ([Ex 13](#), [Num 3, 18](#)) all of the firstborn children belonged to the Lord. This principle went back to the Passover, where the Lord pass over the homes of the Hebrews, and didn't take their firstborn sons. But an Israelite family could “redeem” or “buy back” their firstborn sons from the Lord by paying the price of redemption.

Elkanah and Hannah were not going to do this, their son Samuel was going to offered to God's special service as a nazirite. However, instead of immediately going into God's service at at his birth, Samuel would stay with his mother around 3 years.

So, in verse 24, Hannah brings a sacrifice to redeem the three years of Samuel's life that technically belonged to the lord. The age of the bull and the amount of the flour and wine she brought indicates that she is covering the time that Samuel was held back from God.

All of this indicates the piety and obedience of Elkanah and Hannah.

This biblical emphasis challenges many Christians in our day. For some strange reason, “obedience” is a dirty word to many Christians. Many Christians are confused about the role obedience plays in the Christian life. Some fear that if they try to be obedient they may become Pharisees or end up trying to “earn their salvation”.

This is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that your salvation is due to God’s grace. But a part of God’s salvation is his call for his people to walk in obedience to his commands. This obedience does not earn you access to God, but it pleases God and it is good for you.

God’s commands are good things that Christians should seek to know and obey. It is true, that as seek to obey God, you will fall short of his standard. You won’t measure up. This teaches us to receive and thank God for the mercy he has shown us in Jesus.

But God’s Law is not only given to us to point us to God’s forgiveness for our failures. It is also a guide for how we are to live. And Elkanah and Hannah are examples of those in the Old Testament who knew and sought to follow God’s Law.

The Adoption of Samuel (vv. 25-28)

It is easy for us to get lost in some of the technicalities of the Law. However, they are important to understand what is emphasized in various places in the Bible. Many Christians miss things in the Bible because they aren’t familiar with God’s word. This is true in [1 Samuel 1](#). In the final verses of the chapter, Samuel is being adopted into God’s house.

When they brought Samuel to Eli Hannah said, “***Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence praying to the LORD! For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.***”

The theme of the adopted son is central to 1 & 2 Samuel. Samuel is adopted by Eli into the service of the Tabernacle. When this happens, Samuel begins to displace Hophni and Phinehas, the wicked sons of Eli.

This theme of the adopted son displacing the natural born son is repeated in 1 & 2 Samuel. After the death Eli and his sons, Samuel becomes the chief leader of Israel. As the chief prophet in Israel Samuel anoints Saul as king. Saul will be like a son to Samuel, replacing Samuel's own wicked sons, Joel and Abijah.

When David rises to power, he becomes the son-in-law of Saul, displacing Saul's son Jonathan as the heir to the throne of Israel. What's more the king's of Israel are called "sons of God" ([2 Sam 7](#)).

This displacing of the natural heir should remind you of how the younger son displaced the older son throughout Genesis. Here in 1 & 2 Samuel, it isn't the younger son but the adopted son.

What is God communicating by all this?

The first thing to remember is that in [Genesis 3:15](#) God's told the Serpent that he would save the world through a promised son.

But in Genesis and here in 1 Samuel, the sons of the promise aren't the firstborn or even the natural son. As the Apostle John teaches, God's promised son isn't going to be born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God ([John 1:13](#)).

The adoption of Samuel into God's house as a son of God, points us to the true Son of God, who is born of the Virgin Mary, the Lord Jesus.

Jesus is the son of Adam and the son of David according to the flesh. But according to the Spirit he is the Son of God.

Here Samuel is adopted into God's house. Later in Samuel, David will be adopted as God's son. Both Samuel and David are commended because they are "sons of God" who listened to their heavenly father.

But both of them serve as shadows of the Eternal Son of God. Samuel and David listened to God, but Jesus perfectly lived in obedience to his heavenly Father.

This is so clear from [John 5](#) when Jesus told his disciples, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." ([John 5:19](#))

Samuel and David's imperfect obedience point to perfect obedience of Jesus. And it is because of Jesus' humble obedience, even to death on a cross, that he has been raised above every name, even the names of Samuel and David. What's

more, because he has poured out his Spirit upon the church, we too are children of God and heirs with Christ in his glory!

Let's us give thanks to God that he has shown such great love to us!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!