



Faith and Uncertainty

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Introduction:

The relationship between faith and uncertainty is inescapable. Faith, by definition, is risking something new based on God's faithfulness. Since faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see, once something is a certainty, it no longer requires faith. Do you know the results of your enterprise before you start? Then it's not faith. Are you manipulating the outcome to be in your favor? Then it's not faith. What is the passion that God is placing on your heart? How can you be ready?

She had tried to get pregnant for several years, but was unsuccessful. It really mattered to her and she so desperately wanted a baby. Other people had children and she wanted a child too. It seemed impossible and foolish for her to trust God to get pregnant, but she prayed and put her trust in God and waited hoping and trusting and praying. One day she got pregnant and had a little boy. She had told God that if He would give her a child, she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life.

After many months, the mother took the child and gave him back to God. She said, the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him and now I am giving Him back to the Lord for His whole life.

1 Samuel 1:27 - I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him.

It was uncertain to Hannah when she did this what the outcome would be and what would happen to Samuel, or how God would use Him, but it is obvious that in spite of the uncertainty, Hannah acted in faith and God blessed her for it.

I. Acting in faith means I trust God's actions.

Hannah had to act in faith when it came to giving back to God what He had given to her. Even though it was uncertain the way God would choose to use Samuel, Hannah had to give the uncertainty of the future to God and trust His actions.

There are times in our journey of faith that uncertainty about something overwhelms us especially in those moments we have to trust God's actions.

Abraham had to trust God when it came to Isaac and giving back to God what God had given to him.

I remember when my mom had a brain aneurism and I acted in faith that God would heal her. I had to trust God's actions when it came to my mom's life. It was an uncertain time as far as if she was going to survive the aneurism, and then she had to have surgery. I trusted God and prayed and God took her. Listen brothers and sisters, we don't have the final word when it comes to life and death. We trust God. We don't have the final word when it comes to sickness and health, we trust God. We don't have the final word when we dedicate our children to God. We trust God to take care of them.

When Hannah sought God for a son, she trusted God's actions. When God blessed Hannah with Samuel, and again she trusted God's actions by giving Samuel back to God. We may be uncertain as to what God will do with what we give Him, but we can still have faith trusting Him even in the uncertainty.

II. Acting in faith means God gets the glory.

"Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends."

George Muller

We have all experienced times when there have been God sized challenges. In those times, we are unable in ourselves to meet the challenge. Our faith, our trust, our confidence in God's word and how it directs us is what holds us.

If we just trusted ourselves and didn't have to trust God then what ever happened would be a result of *our* efforts and strength, and *we* would be glorified. We could handle things ourselves. But often things in life are larger than what we can handle. Even in the small things that we *can* handle, if we trust God and let Him accomplish His will, then we cannot take the credit or glory for the accomplishment. He gets the glory.

In studying the story of Hannah and Samuel, I see that because of Hannah's faith a great prophet came to the Israeli people. In those days (3:1) the word of the Lord was rare and there were not many visions. And God began to speak to Samuel, this lad who had been prayed for, and dedicated to the Lord.

It is interesting to see in the account the stark difference between the way Eli's sons treated that which belonged to the Lord and the way Hannah treated that which belonged to the Lord. Eli's sons demanded and took from the offerings that were brought to the temple whatever they wanted. They were greedy and thought that because it was given it was theirs. Hannah on the other hand, gave Samuel back to God as an offering.

God was displeased with Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas (2:17). They treated the Lord's offering with contempt. Let me encourage you this morning, that when it comes to what belongs to God, be sure that you don't take and hold it for yourself.

When I look on in the story, God not only blessed Hannah with Samuel but he gave her 3 other sons and 2 daughters (2:21).

The glory for what takes place in our life in answer to prayer is something which we dare not try to grasp. Give it to God and let Him have the glory.

III. Acting in faith means I rise above my rival.

Have you ever been frustrated because of your rival? Your rival provokes and ridicules you. Your rival attempts to get you to doubt and brings questions against your faith and trust in God. It might come from a family member, a co-worker, a friend, a neighbor or Satan himself, but the faith we place in the inerrant word of God can help us rise above such things. That doesn't mean that you might not be driven to tears over the situation.

In the case of Hannah, scripture indicates she wept much and with bitterness, she cried out and prayed to God. In fact this went on over a period of years. It didn't end quickly, but it took time. We see at the end of the story that Hannah's trusting God paid off and the rival was silenced.

IV. Acting in faith means I will wait for God to move.

In many of the accounts in scripture about the people of God, we read they had to wait for God to move to accomplish what He had promised them. At times waiting can seem like an eternity. "God, I know you will do this and I expect you to do this now - RIGHT AWAY!"

With Hannah, we again see that there was a period of time that she had to put up with her rival and suffered the embarrassment of not being able to give birth to children.

Abraham didn't wait. He thought he would help God out when it came to the promise God had given and look at the mess that he created. Don't take things into your own hands. Wait on God. God's plan is perfect. God's timing is perfect. Even when we don't understand, when we can't see His hand, we can trust His heart.

Joseph, who was sold into slavery, could have botched things up. After all, God had given him a dream. Why shouldn't he help God fulfill that dream and make it come to pass? He waited in faith through what seemed like some horrible experi-

ences, but all through the process God was working on Joseph, and was preparing the people in the palace to accept his leadership and influence. When finally he was promoted, God was able to use him to save his family and nation in a time of famine.

Acting in faith means that I won't rush ahead of God and I won't get behind Him. I am willing to wait for God to move and bring about the answer to prayer for which He has been petitioned.

V. Acting in faith means I commit to do what I've told God I'll do.

Along with being people of faith, we have to be people of integrity. In other words we follow through. We do what we say we will do. There are times that we tell God we will do such and such if He answers prayer and honors faith. He comes through, our prayers are answered, and then we are tempted to turn away from what we had said we would do.

Hannah was a woman of faith but also of integrity. She meant what she said. After not being able to get pregnant and then finally God blessing her and answering her prayer, she might have thought, "God will understand if I keep this child for myself. He is mine. I prayed for Him. I was the one who put up with the rival, I was the one who hung in there and now God has rewarded my prayers. Samuel should be mine."

Do you realize that if Hannah had been selfish, it is quite likely that Samuel would not have become the prophet that God needed? Do you realize that the nation of Israel would have been cheated in hearing from God? Do you realize that Samuel was the one who anointed David King over Israel and through

David's lineage, came Jesus Christ? WOW! Think of it.

But Hannah followed through on the commitment she made to God. We have to be careful to follow through. Remember to make that commitment to God that what we have said, we will do.

VI. Acting in faith has greater impact than we might think.

For Hannah, her faith had an impact on her life, the life of her family, the life of her nation, and the course of the history of the entire world.

There is a bit of knowledge I have picked up in my 52 years of life. It's this. Whatever decisions and actions we take in life, they do not solely affect us. Our choices and decisions affect others as well. That is true when it comes to our life and journey of faith. We may be uncertain how it affects another, we may be uncertain what God will do with what we trust Him with, or how long it will take for God to answer that prayer, but we can be certain, that what happens in the realm of our faith walk and life, has a far greater impact than we might think.

You may be saying here this morning, "Come on pastor, I'm no Hannah, no Abraham, no Noah, no Moses, I am just little ole me." God still responds to faith. He is still looking for people who are committed to following through on what they said they would do. He is still looking for people who will wait on Him to move. He is still looking for people who will give back to Him what He has given them and trust His actions.

Conclusion:

Whenever we take on a God sized challenge, self-sufficiency is no longer an option. Trusting in God's faithfulness is the only option. There is so much that we don't know, such as the results of following God's call. But there is enough that we do know: we know who God is and that His love will never leave. Whatever uncertainty you face in the adventure of journeying with Jesus, hold to the rock of Jesus, the One who died and rose again. For all who receive Him, the promise of an outrageous abundant life and the adventure is theirs.