

# The Vocabulary of Praise

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Date: 24 May 2026

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[ 0 : 00 ] This week, one of the things that we noticed last week was how she worshipped both before and after. And this week's an amazing insight into the prayer that she prays as she worships the living God.

So I'm going to read that for us. Then Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the Lord. In the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance. There is no one holy like the Lord.

There is no one besides you. There is no rock like our God. Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance. For the Lord is a God who knows and by him deeds are weighed.

The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who are full hire themselves out for food, but those who are hungry are hungry no more.

[ 1 : 02 ] She who is barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. The Lord brings death and makes alive. He brings down to the grave and raises up.

The Lord sends poverty and wealth. He humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap. He seats them with princes and makes them inherit a throne of honour.

For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's. On them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his faithful servants, but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness.

It is not by strength that one prevails. Those who oppose the Lord will be broken. The Most High will thunder from heaven. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth.

He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed. And Alkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the Lord under Eli the priest.

[ 2 : 05 ] Let me pray. Almighty God, we thank you for your word, the Bible, and we thank you that this is how you speak to us. And so we pray, Almighty and everlasting God, that you would speak to us now.

We thank you that you're here, present with us. And we pray that you'd minister to our hearts. We pray that you'd lift us up. And we pray that you'd teach us the big truths of who you are. Lord, wherever we're coming today, whatever is going on in our minds, we pray for this moment, that you would minister to us in the particularities of life, but also as a people that are together.

We pray that we'd know your blessing and goodness through your word. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, if one thing you'll have noticed, perhaps if you spent any length of time with me, is not to get me onto the subject of chocolate or biscuits.

Because if you do, you're likely to enter at least a 30-minute discussion about the attributes of the best ones. Which one has the best chocolate, the best biscuit base, the best flavour from the best shop, or whichever it is.

Personally, there are three that are up there at the minute, if I was going to go for a top three. It'd be a dark chocolate, take note of this, it'd be a dark chocolate-covered ginger, a gold biscuit, or the M&S; chocolate-covered custard creams.

[ 3 : 29 ] I don't mind which, I'm happy with any. Now, it might sound silly, but the reason I can talk for 30 minutes about biscuits is because every time I try a new one, you kind of think about, well, what makes this better than an ordinary chocolate hobnob?

Is this as good as the biscuits I've had before? Where does it rank? Why is it good? And what lets it down? And then the biscuits that are in the top three get more praise, then the others are more ready to talk about how great they are.

Here's the point. I have to taste, and think, and consider, to experience the biscuit in order to be able to articulate kind of what it means to praise it.

With detail. You know, the more, and the more I eat them, the more praise I have. I kind of get a biscuit praise vocabulary because I've spent so much time admiring them.

The same is true with any area of life. Praise and prayer comes out of not just knowing that things are true about whatever it is, but they come out of lived experience.

[ 4 : 45 ] Now, Hannah's praise, we think, is about something more substantial than a biscuit, and it involves evaluating more than just her taste buds.

However, her praise does come from tasting. because her praise comes from tasting and seeing the Lord's goodness. It comes from tasting and seeing the Lord's goodness, not just as words on a page, but in the very details of her life.

And what it means is that the praise and the prayer that she brings to the living God is not superficial. It's not trite or littered with meaningless platitudes, but it is grounded in deep, lived experience, which kind of makes it all the more richer.

worship and prayer, praise, are really, the words that we sing, not just that we say, but the words that we sing or say in our hearts are birthed from our experience of knowing the Lord's goodness in our lives.

That's where they come from. And as we see Hannah's prayer and praise, what we realise is something, it's quite difficult in some ways, because what we realise is that it's actually that it's her hardship.

[ 6 : 12 ] As hard as it is for her, and we're not discounting, we're not saying it wasn't hard, it's definitely hard, but it's her hardship that is the same ground where she experiences God's faithfulness to her.

It's the same ground where the experience where the praise actually comes from. That's the reason she can praise the living God and pray to him is because how he delivers her from the difficulty.

And it's that, it's actually the hardship that changes her perspective. It means something quite powerful, I think, for any time we go through hard things, because what it means is that our hardships are never meaningless.

They're never meaningless. And I'm not saying that makes them easy at all, but our hardships are the very same place where we experience God's faithfulness.

That's what we're going to think through as we look at Hannah's praise. And so as we kick off, what is the gem of truth that Hannah experiences?

[ 7 : 28 ] What is the attribute, the character trait which she can praise God about? Well, it's the character of God that she becomes to know. And here it is, it's that God exalts the humble, but with the words of the psalm, he shatters the wicked.

He exalts the humble and shatters the wicked. And that truth is woven right through her song, Hannah's prayer, her praise. The basis of all you could say, I think, comes in the second half of verse three.

Read with me, second half. It says, For the Lord is a God who knows and by him deeds are weighed. It's really important, isn't it, to know that it's, the substance of what she prays is connected to a God who knows all things and because he knows all things, he's able to weigh all the deeds of man.

It reminds us that, you know, God is not a raving lunatic. He's not just turning people's lives up and down on a whim. The reversal we see of the proud being humbled and those who are humble being exalted, this reversal, it is not just a chance occurrence but the living God weighs in the balance. You can imagine weighing skills maybe that you've used for weighing out ingredients. He can weigh the deeds of somebody's heart because he knows them.

[ 9 : 03 ] He's the God of all knowledge. He knows exactly where each person stands. Nothing escapes him or his understanding. He knows your heart and mine. And here's the crux of it.

The reason that she can say that is because Hannah has lived this out. She knows the living God is like that because she has lived it. Look what she says at the end of verse 5.

She who was barren has born seven children but she who has had many sons pines away.

And if we needed it any clearer that this was the Lord's doing she says it really clearly in verse 7.

The Lord sends poverty and wealth he humbles and he exalts.

again this isn't just abstract poetry. When you truly taste something you get specific about it. Hannah has tasted the reality of a God who brings low and lifts up.

[10:14] This song is her detailed praise filled experience of his faithfulness to her. and perhaps we know that too with the things maybe the hardships that we've tasted in our own lives.

We've tasted what it maybe we've tasted what it's like to be delivered from a season of deep darkness a health scare or an impossible situation and when you're delivered out of that suddenly your praise for God becomes incredibly specific.

You're thankful because of what he's done without having gone through that it would be more superficial. However when we read this when we read the praise there's always a thing that grabs our hearts I wonder if there's aspects of Hannah's praise that we might still struggle with.

The thing that grabs my heart is the thing that I struggle with is this humbling of the wicked. If you question people there would be when you think of wickedness there would be the obvious examples of wickedness that people would salute as deserving of punishment the obvious one like Nazi Germany Islamic terrorists those kind of perpetrators when we think of that it's those who commit terrible dark acts of abuse and you might be thinking well yeah throw the book at them but here when we consider Hannah's song in context you think of her hardship she's been dealt this raw hand unable to conceive but the most wicked person in her life is Penina remember Penina she would be really cruel that she could have children and Hannah couldn't don't get me wrong it's really cruel it's really awful to go through that must be in fact verse 5 which we've gone through must be about her she who's had many sons pines away that pines away just means she must become weak and kind of languish and we might think well on the scale of kind of like wickedness yeah it's bad but we wouldn't put it up there with like terrorism would we like she's a bit of name calling right but like would we really put it up there with that is that what goes to our head with wickedness well is it right for Hannah to praise

God for doing that is that worthy of praise and I think we're kind of left with the question aren't we why we're left with the question is why do we it kind of makes a squirm a little bit why do we squirm at the very idea that God humbles kind of the proud or perhaps squirm at God not judging like outright evil but kind of everyday wickedness if you want to put it like that judge everyday wickedness of someone like Penina the answer's not straightforward as to why the first reason let me give you a couple of reasons why we might the first reason we might struggle with that is because we've you know wicked the word wicked or evil has become a word of like great acts of terrible things and we've forgotten that the reality of everyday wickedness and what it actually is we think it just means extreme evil but biblically wickedness is simply someone relying on themselves instead of

[14:01] God it is pride and we live in a world that exalts the self-reliant and the strong that is the world we live in and even it grabs our own hearts doesn't it because if we can be honest we know that there are times when we try to be self-reliant and strong the second reason we might struggle with that is that if God scales where that kind of self-reliant pride as wickedness then what it really means for us is that he won't treat our pride any different than that of Penina's if God's standard is absolute holiness then none of us will escape the weighing of his scales I'm thankful that that song doesn't end there because it would be without hope but really this whole song doesn't just have the humbling of the wicked of the proud but it has the exaltation of the humble the gospel is the reason that we can sing and join with

Hannah and praise God for his righteous judgment at first maybe you're reading it as well and it might seem like Hannah has become the proud maybe you might think well isn't she just acting all holier than thou looking down on her rival but it's the exact opposite Hannah's heart has ordinary everyday areas of wickedness that need to be judged and she knows that because last week we saw she brings sacrifices to worship the Lord she brings sacrifices that demonstrate that she's trusting that if she is to come into the presence of God she must trust that blood has to be shed in her place before she stands before a holy God she knew she needed a substitute to die in her place and yet Hannah looks beyond the blood on the altar Hannah knows that she needs more than the blood of an animal but that her ultimate rescue can only come through a promised king we see that in her song look with me just towards the end of verse 10 or the second half of verse 10 look with me we read she's praying the most high will thunder from heaven the lord will judge the ends of the earth and here we have it she says he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed that lord that language of horn sound a bit confusing it's not something we would use

today it's imagery the horn of an animal say an ox a ram or even a bull is if you think of the animal it's its primary weapon isn't it it's used to fight or defend itself and if an animal is defeated you would this is how the imagery is working is his horn would be in the dust but if an animal is victorious in fighting another creature its horn the sign of its strength is raised up she's praising the lord that he will exalt the horn of his anointed king it's the first time in the bible that anyone that word for anointed is the word messiah it's the first time in the bible that anyone any person will literally point to

Jesus in prophetic speech but that's not the end of it either this is where the song really shines look with me how she starts her song and Hannah prayed and said my heart rejoices in the lord in the lord my horn is lifted high my horn is lifted high like a defenseless animal whose horn was in the dust it has been raised in verse 8 she was in the ash heap the poor in the dust whose horn has been raised but her success is tied to the success the raising up the exultation of the anointed king's horn Hannah's horn is only lifted up because the king's horn!

is and here is where the gospel gold comes because we might ask well how is this king going to deal us indeed ours too I mentioned it's because that word for anointed the Hebrew is Messiah Hannah isn't singing about a political leader but she's singing about her future saviour and a saviour whose life perfectly mirrors in this song the life pattern of Jesus Christ you see the great reversal we see that Hannah understands is more than just a theme of a song it's what God does it's the very narrative of the gospel itself because Jesus is the one who humbles himself he comes down and makes himself needy he puts himself in the ash heap he's brought low and lower than anyone could imagine down to his own death just as God brought miraculous light out of the darkness of Hannah's dead womb

God brings eternal life out of the darkness of Jesus too it's because he brings himself low to the grave that he's the anointed king but there's more isn't there because he doesn't just do that for himself he goes from the thrones of heaven to the ash heap so that we who are in the ash heap might be exalted to the thrones of heaven this is the gospel this is the living God the Lord who through his anointed king brings Hannah up from the dust to sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor verse 8 he takes away us in union with him we receive his life his life trajectory the life trajectory of Jesus becomes ours so when he's exalted we as forgiven clean when sinful people are exalted with him our horn is lifted high because it's united to the horn of

[ 20 : 38 ] Jesus Hannah hundreds of years before seems to understand something of this in her song not perfectly we know that kind of cloudy but she seems to understand something of this as Christians Hannah's life journey is also ours which means we can join in singing this song with her let's not forget this Hannah's prayer her praise is birthed from the experience of being in the dust and I've said we there's the reality that we will know times in the dust we will know times when it feels like when we're in the ash heap but the reasons that we praise God thank him and sing to him are because of the very things he's done to help us when we were in that place whilst we were in it when there were times when we couldn't see a way out and maybe that is you know that could be some of us today maybe it feels like you're in the valley and the mountain top looks like a long hard slog but when

God exalts us and we can see the view from the top our experience of having his tender care his loving kindness that is the thing as we look back we'll be able to see from the mountain top and look back at the valley that is the thing that will bring thanks and praise he'll use the hardship to praise his own name!

the reality is that doesn't make the hard days easier it doesn't mean that in these moments we don't want to use meaningless platitudes we don't want to throw around theological tidbits or pretend something's okay when it isn't but we need deep understanding and deep experience of God's goodness on the other side of the cross we have something that's different Anna because if you can't sing right now about how good life is right now what you can sing of is because of the place your life is heading if you're in the valley you know that the mountain top you will eventually get there so you can sing of that place because you know that

Jesus trades places with us that your ultimate exaltation is guaranteed the everyday things when we're lifted the foretaste the aperitifs of being lifted up will one day be complete and final and you'll be lifted up forever just think of things things that have happened in our own lives think of where you were before you knew Jesus as Lord it is the good news it is the gospel that's lifted you out of your mess which is why we sing it's because he answered your cries that we say thank you again even

knowing this our daily walk can still be tough filled with tears horrific stress and pain but the hardship is never meaningless never meaningless it'll be the very place where we experience his faithfulness and why we can pray and sing and rejoice

I started with that silly example of the vocabulary I heap on biscuits I can do that because I spent time eating with them well the truth here is you can only really develop that vocabulary if you've tasted it in hardship Hannah tastes the ash heaps but it's also the place where she tastes the Lord's goodness she didn't just read about it but she sings because through her experience she gains the vocabulary of praise for the living God because she's tasted and seen that he's good we can sing with her there is no one holy like the Lord there is no one beside you there's no rock like our God he'll give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed my heart rejoices in him in the Lord my horn!

[ 25 : 19 ] is lifted high and a day is coming well that will be our only song could we make it our song today and if you've never sung those truths before the Lord can make it your song today you can join in sing let me pray almighty god we thank you that you raise the poor from the dust that you lift the needy from the ash heap and you raise us to sit with princes that you give us a throne that we will inherit of honour we thank you that we this is the trajectory of our lives because we are connected to the

Messiah the horn the strength of the anointed one the king and so would you lift our hearts to rejoice in you would you lift our hearts to boast in only you our Lord who's lifted our horn! connection with him for there is no one like you there is no one besides you there is no rock like our God we pray for your blessing upon us that this would carry us through even in those days when we feel like we can't sing when we when it's too hard we can help us in those moments maybe not to sing of the valley but to sing of the place where you're taking us and that in our experience we would know that would motivate us that even in the hardships it's not meaningless but it is the place where we'll experience your goodness we ask for this in the name of!  
Amen Thank you.