

Praying Through Our Trials (1 Samuel 1:1-20 and Luke 18:1-8) 25-Jan-26

1 Samuel 1:1-20

The Birth of Samuel

¹ There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. ² He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

³ Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. ⁴ Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. ⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb. ⁶ Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. ⁷ This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. ⁸ Her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

⁹ Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's house. ¹⁰ In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. ¹¹ And she made a vow, saying, "Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

¹² As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴ and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

¹⁵ "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. ¹⁶ Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

¹⁷ Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

¹⁸ She said, “May your servant find favour in your eyes.” Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

¹⁹ Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. ²⁰ So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, “Because I asked the Lord for him.”

Luke 18:1-8

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

¹ Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

⁴ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

It would be good to have your Bibles opened up at **1 Samuel 1**

There's a **sermon outline** for you to take **notes**.

Let me **pray** first. Let's pray...

Intro

This is the **final part** of our **4-part series on Prayer**

There are basically **four types of prayers**

[Slide-4 types of prayer]

In Part 1 - A – Adoration – Build an altar and pray to God in adoration – telling God how great He is!

In Part 2 - C – Confession – Confess our sins to God (like King David did in Psalm 51) so that we are forgiven and so we have a pure and contrite heart

In Part 3 - T – Thanksgiving – Thank God for what He has done in the past – Thank God for what He is doing now – and Thank God for what He will do in the future!

This week

S – Supplication – *asking or begging earnestly and humbly for God's help!* I call it – a “*shopping list*”

It's appropriate that it is the last type of prayer we will look at – because all too often we forget the first 3 – we forget to adore God – we forget to confess our sins to God – and we forget to say thank you to God – and we go straight for the shopping list!

To help us with our **prayers of supplication** this morning we going to look at **“praying through our trials”** – and we going to look at the prayers of Hannah in the OT.

[Slide-1st point]

1st point this morning is – **“Let our trials drive us to prayer”...**

Let our trials drive us to prayer

I'm sure we've all had plenty of trials in our lives – problems that have really tested us to our limits of coping? Some of us – might be wrestling with a doozy of a problem right now.

If we turn to our OT reading from 1 Samuel 1 – in verses 1 and 2 – we are introduced to a man called Elkanah and his two wives - Penin-nah and Hannah. Penin-nah had many children and Hannah had none! That was Hannah's problem – she had no children – and ***the Lord had closed her womb*** (v5). For those of us who have children – there might have been times when we'd have said to Hannah – 'please take my kids!' – but this is no laughing matter for Hannah – or for any woman who wants to have children and can't!

It does beg the question – why did God make it so that Hannah cannot conceive? Had she committed some secret sin and she's being punished? Not likely – as the rest of the passage portrays Hannah as a godly woman!

Ironically, the woman with all the children was the immature, selfish and insensitive Penin-nah. Whereas, Hannah, who would have made a tremendous mummy – had no children!

If I was God – I would have done it the other way around. Hannah would be the one with plenty of children.

But God did things His way!

It goes to show that we will never understand some of our trials. If we could, our trials would no longer be trials of faith!

The mystery of why God blessed Penin-nah with children and made Hannah barren illustrates that we can't judge people by their outward appearances.

God had a plan for Hannah – **He wanted to bring Hannah to the point of total dependence on Him.** God was teaching Hannah that her only hope of motherhood was found in Him. If it was to happen, that she would have children; the power would come from the Lord alone!

The bitterness Hannah felt from Penin-nah's mockery was an ongoing problem – v7 – this went on **“year after year” – Penin-nah provoked Hannah.**

And Hannah's husband wasn't much help -- v8 – **“Hannah, why are you weeping?” – “Why don't you eat?” – “Why are you downhearted?”** - - and then of course the classic helpful comment **“Don't I mean more to you than ten sons!”**

Elkanah didn't quite get it – did he? He was essentially saying “Hannah, snap out of your depression”. Which is the best way to sink a person into even deeper depression and gloom!

Hannah had **three trials:**

- She was **unable to have children**
- Her **husband had another wife** – and vv6-7 – say she was **“a rival”** and she **humiliated Hannah!**
- And her **husband doesn't understand her**

As a result, Hannah couldn't stop crying, she couldn't eat and was in a deep hole of depression!

To illustrate the point:

A farmer stopped at a neighbour's house to tell them their son was stuck in a mud hole.

The father asked “how deep is he stuck”

The farmer replied “up to his ankles!”

So the father said “Oh good – plenty of time for us to have a drink before we fetch him”

The farmer said “I don’t think so – he’s in the mudhole – headfirst!”

Maybe that’s how you feel with your trials/problems – up to your ankles – headfirst?

Many people in that situation – either retreat into the fetal position or even decide to take their own lives!

Hannah was different. **She allowed her trials to drive her to prayer**

See v10 - *In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly*

Bitterness had penetrated her soul but she took it all to God in prayer!

She could have retaliated against Penin-nah – she could have lost her temper with her husband – she could have got angry with God for closing her womb – but instead she got down on her knees – and prayed.

Application: What’s the trial you’re facing? **Let it be a catalyst to drive you to pray.**

In our NT reading from Luke 18:1-8

Jesus tells a parable to show his disciples that they should **always pray and not give up**. In the parable, a powerless widow keeps appealing to an unjust judge for justice. Though the unjust judge neither fears God nor cares about people, the judge eventually grants the widow’s request simply because of the widow’s **persistence**.

Jesus’ point is: if even an unjust judge responds to persistent cries, how much more will God, who is just and loving, respond to his chosen people.

Persistent prayer is not about wearing God down, but trusting that a just Heavenly Father hears and will act for his people.

(pause)

Having prayed –

[Slide-2nd point]

2nd point – Like Hannah we need to – Trust God in our trials

See v11 – ***“She made a vow, saying, “Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life”***

At first glance we might think Hannah was ‘doing a deal’ with God – like – ‘Lord, if you give me a son, I’ll give him back to you’ – like God is some celestial used car salesman, we can strike a bargain with!

But Hannah prayed for just one son, yet she was willing to surrender him to God. She longed for a blessing, so she could place that blessing at the feet of her Heavenly Father!

Hannah trusted God for not only the birth of a son but also with his entire life if God granted her prayer.

We also have to see Hannah’s **motive** – she didn’t want a son – so she could get back at Penin-nah – and say “she who laughs last, laughs loudest”. Her motive was to yield her greatest treasure to God! Her motive proved her faith was genuine!

Notice too her **persistence in prayer** – in v12 – ***she kept on praying*** – and v13 – ***she was praying in her heart with her lips moving but no words coming out!***

Sadly, Eli, the priest – added to Hannah’s burden – by misunderstanding Hannah’s praying - thinking Hannah was drunk rather than praying. That was very insensitive of him!

Application: We’ve all had times when we are so overwhelmed – we can’t find the words to pray. Thankfully the Holy Spirit intercedes for us through our wordless groans (Romans 8:26-27) and our Lord Jesus, unlike Eli, understands our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15) and He intercedes for us (Hebrews 7:25) Hannah trusted God so much – she was not put off by Eli’s mistake. She explains – v15 – she is ***a woman who is deeply troubled*** – and that she ***is pouring out her soul to the Lord*** – that’s what prayer is – isn’t it? Pouring out our soul!

She continues to explain – v16 – she has been ***praying out of her grief and anguish!***

Eli finally gets it – and tells Hannah – v17 – “***Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked Him***”

Eli didn’t give Hannah absolute assurance that God would answer her prayer. But that was all Hannah needed to hear from Eli.

Humbly she says v18 – “***May your servant find favour in your eyes***” – and then she went on her way – ate something – and her face wasn’t downcast anymore! Hannah was now trusting in her generous God to give her the son she prayed for!

In the 4th century AD – a lady called Monica had a wayward son called Augustine. As a teenager Augustine had a mistress and an illegitimate son. Monica prayed and prayed for her wayward son for fourteen years. She even

begged a pastor to talk to her son but the pastor said Augustine was beyond help! She burst into a flood of tears. The pastor was moved to say "***Go your way, Monica, and God bless you. It is not possible that the son of those tears should perish!***"

Like Hannah, Monica, accepted the words of the pastor, as if they were the voice of God from Heaven. She left absolutely certain her son Augustine would come to follow Jesus. And sure enough, Augustine did – and became the chief theologian between the Apostle Paul in the 1st century and Martin Luther in the 16th century.

God honoured Monica's faith – and God honoured Hannah's faith too!

And God will honour our faith!

Look at the end of v19 – ***the Lord remembered Hannah*** - and v20 in the course of time ***Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son!***

Some people, if they'd been Hannah, might have said to the Lord – 'remember how I prayed for a son? Don't worry about that, my infertility is finally over, and the problem has solved itself!'

But Hannah was careful to give credit to God - Hannah named her boy **Samuel** – which means "***asked of God***" or "***heard by God***"

Every time Hannah called her boy's name – it would remind her that God had heard and answered her prayer!

Later on in the chapter – beyond what we read – in vv24-25 – Hannah kept her vow to God – and after Samuel was weaned she took Samuel to the house of the Lord and gave him to Eli the priest.

Imagine how difficult it would be for Hannah to hand over Samuel – who would have been about three years old! To make matters worse Samuel was under the care of Eli – who we are told in chapter 2 v12 – had “**sons who were scoundrels and had no regard for Lord**” and they even **committed adultery in public** (1 Samuel 2:22) and it was their father, Eli, who would be raising Samuel. Hannah could have said ‘*Lord, when I made a vow to you. I didn’t realize that Eli was such a poor father, please understand I can’t leave my Samuel with Eli, I must take my boy home*’

But no, she didn’t say that, because she knew she gave her boy to the Lord, not to Eli! She trusted God would watch over Samuel despite Eli’s negligence.

Hannah trusted God in her trials!

Application: Hannah trusted a God who is bigger than her trials. Can we?

(pause)

If we were Hannah and God answered our prayers like He answered Hannah’s prayer. What should we do next?

[Slide-3rd point]

3rd point – Thank God for who He is in our trials

If we were to read on to chapter 2:1-11

We have Hannah’s **prayer of thanksgiving**

Her prayer begins “**My heart rejoices in the Lord... I delight in your deliverance**”

We might have expected her to “**rejoice in having Samuel**” or “**rejoice in being a mother!**”

No, she thanked God in her trials – no hint of worry about Samuel or resentment in handing him over to Eli!

Throughout this prayer, Hannah thanked God not for Samuel, not for releasing her from the ridicule she received from Penin-nah, not for making her husband understand her, **but simply thanking the Lord Himself, for who He is!**

She knew God was at work in her trials!

To illustrate the point.

A man asked his friend “how did you enjoy your recent heart attack?”

His friend said “are you kidding; I didn’t enjoy it at all!”

“But I heard it gave you a greater appreciation for life”

“Yes, but..”

“I heard you’re much closer to your wife and children”

“Yes, but..”

“I heard you’re living a healthier lifestyle now!”

“Yes, but..”

“And that you’ve been motivated to lose the weight you’ve been wanting to lose”

“Well, yes”

“And that Jesus Christ is more precious to you than He has ever been before”

“Yes, that’s true!”

“Okay, then. How did you enjoy your heart attack?”

Application: Even if we can’t enjoy our trials in themselves, we can, by faith, **thank God for who He is IN the midst of our trials and for what He is DOING through our trials!**

As James tells us in James 1:2-3 - ² *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,* ³ *because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.*

Lessons from Hannah's prayer of Supplication

I'd like to just finish up with **three lessons from Hannah's prayer of supplication** – which I pray will be useful to us all – this morning

[Slide-1st lesson]

1st Lesson – Ask God to use our prayers as a way to change our life. Hannah's prayer didn't convince an unwilling God to open her womb. No doubt, it was God's will to bring Samuel into this world. What Hannah's prayer did, was to transform her heart – remove any bitterness and sadness – uproot it – and replace it with joy for the Lord.

How much has prayer changed you?

Do you trust Jesus more?

Do you feel closer to God?

Does prayer quench your frustration and anger and disappointment?

One goal that God wants to accomplish in our prayer lives, is to help us grow more like Jesus and to fall in love with Him!

(pause)

[Slide-Lesson 2]

2nd Lesson - Ask God to give us the right motive for our prayers. Hannah asked for one son so that she might dedicate him to the Lord's service all of his life.

Later in chapter 2 v21 – we read - that Hannah gave birth to three sons and two daughters. God did immeasurably more than Hannah could ever have imagined. You see – her motives were not selfish – **her request had the motive of bringing glory to God.**

If our prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling and go nowhere? Maybe the reason is what James says in James 4:3 - ***When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.***

If we can pray like Hannah, selfish motives won't be a hindrance to our prayers! When we pray, ask ourself...

Why would God answer this prayer of mine?

And...

How will God be glorified if my prayer is answered?

Those two questions will transform how we pray?

(pause)

3rd lesson – Ask God for “spiritual” children. Perhaps like Hannah, we are barren in a different sense: We have no spiritual children. Perhaps we've never been involved in leading anyone through the experience of new life in Jesus Christ. We might argue that we don't have the gift of evangelism.

But if someone told Hannah – she didn't have the gift of being a mother – it wouldn't have stopped her praying!

Likewise, we do have the gift of prayer – and we can pray that God gives us opportunities to share with people why we believe in Jesus – that's evangelism – simply telling people how Jesus has changed our lives!

Penin-nah mocked Hannah for being barren. Likewise the world mocks the church for believing in evangelism but not practicing it. God allows this ridicule because **he wants us to grieve over our barrenness in not sharing our faith!**

Perhaps our prayer should be for God - **to change our church to be maternity ward where people experience a new birth and new life in Jesus!**

Let us ask God for spiritual children of all ages!

Let's pray...

Gracious Heavenly Father,

We thank you that you hear the cries of your people.

Like Hannah, help us to bring our trials to you in prayer, to trust you when we do not understand, and to thank you for who you are in every circumstance.

Shape our hearts as we pray, purify our motives, and teach us to depend wholly on you.

Help our prayers to transform us.

Help our church to be instruments in giving birth to spiritual children.

Help us to persevere in prayer and rejoice in the Lord always.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, who understands our weakness and intercedes for us. Amen.

Benediction (Philippians 4:6-7)

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.