

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
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Hannah — Woman of Faith
1 Samuel 1:12-20

1:12 As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth.

1:13 Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman.

1:14 And Eli said to her, “How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you.”

1:15 But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD.

1:16 Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.”

1:17 Then Eli answered, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.”

1:18 And she said, “Let your servant find favor in your eyes.” Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

1:19 They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her.

1:20 And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, “I have asked for him from the LORD.”

Today's message is titled “Hannah — Woman of Faith.” Gideon and Samson both fought to protect and save Israel, no wonder that they call them “hero.” But no one would call Hannah “hero.”

Regardless of men or women, everyone fights in their life. Even

you don't take weapons in the war, all believers are fighting on the battlefield in "prayer" every day. When you pray, you are in the battlefield of prayer and anyone who prays with faith is a "prayer warrior."

Hannah was also like that. Let's learn together such as, what led Hannah to pray, what did she pray, and how were her prayers were answered.

1. Hannah's Distress

Her "distresses" led Hannah to pray. To understand Hannah's prayers, let's imagine a little bit of Hannah's distresses. Hannah had three pains.

The first is she is the "second wife." In ancient times, many men died in wars, and men population were not enough. Also, in that society, a single woman was not an easy life. Therefore, some wealthy man often had two wives. Even such a case, the husband had to treat any wife equally but, the second wife still had a narrow desire to feel in various respects.

Since God bound Adam and Eve together, God established a monogamy system. However, since the sin entered into mankind, human convenience has preference over God's rule, and polygamy system was started. It was also happened among Israel (people of God), but it was not God's will. If a marriage is not according to God's will, then always problems follow. And routinely women were in a weak position, like was Hannah's position.

Hanna's second pain was what she doesn't have children. Woman who fails to give birth to a child is disqualified as a woman,

furthermore some people say, a family, not given children is not a real family, but it is not at all. Both the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul accredit people who will penetrate the single life for God, and my respected pastors applauded many of the women who became widowed by a war in Germany then involved in the work of mission and welfare as Sisters of religious communities. Also, they prized married couples who have no children devote in work for God.

However, in the ancient times, people believed that if children were given, that was regarded as blessings of God but, women who were not given children, lost the blessing of God. Hanna suffered for “second wife” and “not given children.”

And the third suffering was “bullying” from other wife, Peninnah. That “bullying” seems to be not only concrete “harassment” but also religious. 1 Samuel 1:6 says, “her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb.” Every year husband Elkanah and family went up to house of the LORD. At that time, I expect Peninnah told Hannah, “You do not qualify to go to house of LOAD. Even you went up to the house of LOAD and praying, GOD does not give you children, because GOD hates you,” and so on. Peninnah has attacked Hannah's last cornerstone of “faith.”

Peninnah did not have faith, she was lacking in kindness as a woman and consideration as moral. It is sad, the dirtiest trick, “bullies weaker” continued from ancient times to now, even it is among the people of God. People believe in God, are able to endure most cases. Even if you are treated terribly from inconsiderate or selfish people, rely on God and you can overcome. But the difficult thing is that people who say they believe in God do not really fear God and are not

eager to seek fellowship with God. Rather, disobedient behavior strains their relationship with God. The believer in the Old Testament experienced such suffering, but as the end of the world comes closer, prophesied that the same thing will be repeated in the church. We should wake up and do not to lose to them.

2. Hannah's Prayer

Hannah brought this before God through “prayer”; however, people who do not know God do not have a solution to their suffering. Buddhism was born by looking at sufferings. We have a Buddhism background in Japan; however, we do not face to the sufferings directly anymore. In most cases, we try to avoid or ignore the sufferings and do not find true solution to them.

In these days, you might want to go the counseling if you have a psychological problem. If Hannah goes to the counseling of this modern day, the counselor might say, “Find something fun so that you don't need to think about it.” However, even if you can conceal your suffering temporarily, the suffering will be several times more when it comes back to you.

Elkanah, Hannah's husband visited God's temple and prayed there every year. However, Hannah was not healed by this visit. To visit the temple and pray there is the sacred duty to the people of God, and it was a joyful privilege to them. If “Worship at the Temple” is just a religious duty, it can not heal the people. For Hannah, in fact, this “Worship at the Temple” was the most frustrating period of the year.

When Hannah was crying during the meal, Elkanah, her husband talked to her kindly. (verse 8) However, even his kind words can not

heal her. We need encouragement and heal from someone when we suffer but it is not sufficient to solve the problems.

If Hannah did not have faith, she still might be suffering. She did not visit the temple of the Lord and stayed in her house. However, she had faith; therefore, she overcame the suffering and was led to prayer.

How did Hannah pray? According to 1 Samuel 1:10, “She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly.” She was crying during the meal. She was crying even harder in God’s temple. She did not think that she should pray nicely because before God. She showed all things suffering her and was pouring out what she had before God.

Eli, a priest saw Hannah and thought that she was drunken. According to 1 Samuel 1:14, he said, “How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you.” But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD.” (1 Samuel 1:15) “Before the LORD” “pouring out my soul” This is her prayer. Have you ever prayed like her? God knows everything about you so that your “nice” “neat” prayer does not work. If your prayer is private, you can pour out you soul before God.

3. Hannah’s Deliverance

Hannah’s prayers were heard by God. God listens to our prayer, especially the prayers of those who suffer. Psalm 34:6 says, “This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.” Psalm 120:1 also says, “In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me.”

These verses applies for Hannah's Prayer. Psalm 107 is a song of gratitude for God's deliverance from various sufferings. In Psalm 107:6, 13, 19, 28, there are 4 repeating verses saying, "then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress." Yes, God listens to our immense crying from agony and God delivers us from suffering.

Here is the solution for suffering. At first, I said, "Buddhism is a religion born from looking at suffering." The Bible teaches us not to look away from suffering. But, at the same time, the Bible teaches us to look up to the one who will deliver us from suffering. Buddhism has profound teachings that cannot be expressed in a single word, but ultimately, Buddhism believes that we save ourselves from suffering. But the Bible says that there is God who will rescues us from suffering. The Bible points us to the savior who took all our sufferings and suffered for us.

I tell you a story. A Chinese young man dreamed. In his dream, he fell into a deep well without water. He put his hand on the wall of the well, and was trying to climb it many times, but he only fell down. The young man shouted, "Help me" from the bottom of the well. Then, a person approached the well, and said to him, "Foolish young man. If you had been careful as I taught, you would not have fallen into the well." That was Confucius. After a while, another person came and said to him, "Oh, poor young man. This is terrible. But, the fall in the well comes from cause and effect. Try to think of what it is." That was the Buddha. Both of them approached me, but they didn't help me.

While doing so, the third person's footsteps was approaching. The

person looked at the well and found the young man. He came to the bottom of the well, carried the youth man, and started climbing the wall of the well. Two people's weight put pressure on his hands and feet, and his blood flowed from fingers. But the helper did not care about his bleeding. Then he finally took the young man out of the well. The person was silent from beginning to end. "Who is this person?" The young man did not know. But , when he went out of the well and saw his face, he knew that it was Jesus Christ. In that moment, he woken up from his dream.

This is our God, Jesus Christ, who comes down to those who suffer and lift up the suffering. And He heals our wounds by his wounds. We have a huge blessing to pray to this Deliverer.

After Hannah prayed and raised her face, the priest Eli said to her, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." The phrase "Go in peace" - The Lord Jesus also spoke it many times. Blessed are those who can hear it in prayer and stand up. But more Blessed are those who keep praying until they hear "Go in peace".

Hannah prayed to God and received peace from God. The verse 18 says, "Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad." Keep an eye on the big changes before and after the prayer. Pay attention to the difference between "Before" and "After." Prayer of faith changes our heart, our being, and circumstance.

After this, Hannah gave birth to a boy, and this boy was Samuel. He became the great leader of Israel. Hannah's prayers to God saved her and became her blessing as well as Israel's salvation and blessing.

Let's believe that our prayer is not only for us, but also for the

salvation of many people, and let's learn from Hannah to be the prayer warrior and the man of faith and the woman of faith.

(Prayer)

Thank you God, our father of the Lord Jesus Christ, for availing yourself to hear our prayer. Please let us not forget that you hear us when we suffer. And please let us remember that the greater suffering brings in the greater faith. Please let us be the one to keep praying to you and keep seeking your face by remembering your salvation from our suffering. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.