

## 20260201 Persistent Prayer, Mature Faith – Ps Bijoy

1 Samuel 1:1-20

This morning, I want to speak to you about how God matures our faith through prayer. No matter how old we are, or how long we have walked with the Lord, a true mark of grace is that we want to know Him better. If you truly love the Lord, you want to grow in Him. We never outgrow the need to be matured in God's grace. The Christian life is not about arriving. It is about being shaped, deepened, and refined by the Lord throughout our whole life.

Our passage this morning is from 1 Samuel chapter 1, the account of Hannah and her prayer. It is a deeply personal and painful story. Hannah is a godly woman, a praying woman, and yet a suffering woman. She longs for a child, but year after year her womb is closed. She prays. She waits. She weeps. And for a long time, God seems silent.

What makes this passage so powerful is that, at the end of it, we see a woman whose faith has been matured. Hannah does not simply receive a child. She becomes a woman who has learned to trust God deeply, to surrender fully, and to worship Him even in her pain. Through silence and waiting, the Lord is shaping her faith. So my theme this morning is this. How God matures our faith through prayer. And we will see this in Hannah's life through three things. God's apparent silence, God's apparent delay, and God's faithfulness. This morning, we begin with the first one, God's silence.

Before we look closely at Hannah, let me ask you a question. What kind of Christian do you want to be. On a scale of one to ten, how mature do you want your faith to be. A true Christian cannot settle for mediocrity. When you have such a gracious and faithful God, you want to live wholly for Him. God not only begins His work in us, He continues it. He matures us, and often He does that through the challenges and trails we face. Trials are not accidents. God uses them, along with His Word, prayer, worship, and fellowship, to grow us in faith.

Now consider Hannah. She is one of two wives. Peninnah has children, but Hannah has none. Scripture tells us clearly that she didn't have a child. Year after year, the family goes up to worship at Shiloh. And year after year, Hannah's pain is renewed. Peninnah provokes her. She mocks her. She reminds her of what she does not have. And Hannah weeps and cannot eat. Hannah is not an unbeliever. She is not careless with God. She goes to worship. She prays. She pours out her soul before the Lord. But for a long time, nothing changes. God is silent. There is no answer. There is only waiting.

This silence must have tested her faith deeply. Year after year, she comes to the house of the Lord with the same ache in her heart. Others around her have answers, children, joy, laughter. She has tears. Even her well meaning husband does not fully understand her pain. God seems silent. And yet Hannah does not walk away. She does not abandon prayer. She does not turn her back on the Lord. True faith does not turn away when God is silent. Faith perseveres. Faith keeps coming. Faith keeps praying. Even when heaven feels closed, faith remains.

Perhaps you know something of this. You have been praying for something for a long time. You have brought it before the Lord again and again. And still there is silence. The silence of God can be painful. It can be confusing. It can make you wonder if you have been forgotten. As one of the old saints said, the believer knows both the sweetness of God's presence and the sorrow of missing Him.

But God's silence is never meaningless. In Hannah's life, even though she does not yet see it, God is already at work. He is not absent. He is maturing her faith.

We do not know all the reasons why God is silent at times, but we do know a few important things. First, God knows far more than we do. Our lives are like a thousand piece jigsaw puzzle. We may only see two or three pieces at a time, but God sees the whole picture. He sees everything that is happening now and everything that will happen in the future. He knows how every piece fits together perfectly. He knows exactly when to speak and exactly when to be silent. He knows how to deal with us far better than we know ourselves.

Why then would God ever be silent. There are many reasons, but I want to mention two. The first is for His own greater glory. We see this principle throughout Scripture. God sometimes delays answering prayer so that, when He does act, it is clear that only He could have done it.

### **For greater glory**

In Hannah's case, the years of barrenness make the answer unmistakably God's work. When the child finally comes, there will be no doubt. This is not chance. This is not human effort. This is the Lord remembering His servant. Sometimes God allows our hope to feel almost extinguished so that, when He answers, we say this is a God answer. Only God could do this. And He receives all the glory. His delays are never His denials. He often delays so that His glory shines more brightly.

### **Mature our faith**

The second reason God is silent is to mature and purify our faith. Hannah's faith is being shaped through waiting. Year after year, she learns to bring her pain to God rather than harden her heart. Waiting teaches her dependence. Waiting teaches her surrender. Waiting teaches her to pray honestly.

The Christian life often works this way. We learn more about walking by faith in the dark seasons than we do in the bright ones. God receives glory when we trust Him without answers, when we continue to pray even when nothing seems to change.

Hannah's story does not end with silence, but it begins there. And through that silence, God is already doing a deep work in her soul. He is preparing her for what comes next.

### **Consistent prayer**

So Hannah hears the silence of God and the ongoing provocations from her rival Peninnah, and the question is: what will she do now? Scripture tells us something remarkable. Instead of turning away, she pours out her soul to the Lord in deep anguish and prayer, saying, "O Lord, if You will only look upon Your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget Your servant, but give me a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life" (1 Samuel 1:11). This is extraordinary. Rather than giving up, her faith perseveres. In fact, as her prayer becomes simpler, her faith becomes stronger.

Notice how her prayer changes. At first, she has many words, laying out her grief and her longing for a child. She brings her full story, her sorrow, her desperation, and her plea for God's mercy. But even as her prayer is refined and made smaller, its power is not diminished. She continues to cry out with a heart fully engaged. "Lord, remember me, Lord, help me," is a prayer that reaches both heaven and earth. It is a threefold movement: "Lord" reaches up to God, "me" reaches down to her own helplessness, and "help" is the connecting word that links her need to His power. Scripture even speaks of help as being from Christ Himself. Help is Christ Himself. Hannah is saying in essence, I cannot let You go. I cannot live without You.

God often reduces our prayers to their essence in order to deal with our hearts first. In our trials, He sanctifies us so that even the problem we came with moves to the background and our relationship with Christ comes to the foreground. "Lord, help me" is a prayer even a child can pray. It is simple, yet profound. It confesses that we cannot help ourselves, that without God we can do nothing. And Hannah prays this while worshiping. She is not simply asking for a child. She is bowing before the Lord as Lord, fully surrendering her will and her affections to Him. Worship in Scripture is not mere outward action; it is moving the whole heart toward God. Faith is not just knowledge. It is not just trust. Faith is agreement, surrender, the alignment of mind, will, and heart with Christ. That is what Hannah does.

As she prays, Hannah encounters another trial: misunderstanding. Eli the priest sees her lips moving but hears no voice, and he thinks she is drunk. Surely this would have been humiliating. Yet she does not turn back. She explains humbly, "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" (1 Samuel 1:15–16). This is a trial of misunderstanding, almost an insult.

It is not easy to bear. But she responds with humility and faith. Her persistence does not waver. Instead, she uses this as another step in drawing near to God.

This is how God matures faith. Hannah is learning to recognize her utter dependence on Him. She is being emptied of self-reliance. She comes poorer and poorer in herself, more needy, and yet more reliant on God alone. In this, her faith is refined. She simply presents her petition and trusts God's will. Her longing for a son is now inseparable from her longing for the Lord Himself. The Puritans spoke often about holy argumentation with God, about wrestling with Him in prayer. They taught that we are to take God's promises from Scripture and bring them back to Him in prayer. We plead, Lord, You have said this; now do as You have said. Jacob wrestled this way, saying, I will not let You go unless You bless me. Hannah wrestles with God by faith. She turns what seems to be rejection, misunderstanding, and delay into a faithful petition. She refuses to let go of God. She refuses to walk away. That is how faith grows. That is how faith matures.

### **Waiting**

Hannah demonstrates another principle of spiritual growth: waiting. "You have to wait. You learn in spiritual life that God matures you through waiting. You learn in spiritual life that in waiting times you often learn more than in possessing times, because through waiting there is a weaning process. You get weaned from the things of this life, and you get ripened for the life to come." If God gave everything instantly, if Hannah had conceived at the first moment she prayed, she might have leaned on her own satisfaction. But God's delay teaches dependence. Waiting deepens faith. Waiting redirects the heart to Him.

If you are a true Christian, you are a pilgrim here. Hannah's life reminds us that the ultimate satisfaction is not in earthly possessions or immediate answers, but in fulfilling the will of Christ in our life. Yes, there are things to look forward to in life. Yes, there are gifts God gives. But they are not our ultimate treasure. We are passing through. We do not want one foot in the world and one foot in Christianity. We want Christ to be our all in all. Like Paul, we want to be able to say, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. We are to live in the world as pilgrims, faithful, active, and salt and light, but with our hearts fully set on God's eternal kingdom.

Hannah's life teaches that God matures our faith when He keeps us on praying ground, when He allows us to wrestle, to wait, and to rely wholly on Him. Faith grows in the soil of persistent prayer, in the fires of trial, in the humility of solitude, and in the long seasons of silence. Hannah's persistent prayer, her humble worship, her reliance on God, and her waiting all show the process by which God matures a believer's faith.