



September 4, 2022 ~ The Flame of Dependence

OPEN

When have you needed to depend on something beyond what you thought you could do? While hiking in Waterton Park, I needed to depend on a safety line, fixed to a nearly sheer rock face.



Have you noticed that dependence does not usually come naturally. Fallen humans are wired to be distrusting and self-dependent.

Are you “on fire” for God? That is what we are exploring in our current series of sermons - **Ignite**. What does it mean to be ablaze for God? Wesley L. Duewel wrote that God’s “*holy flame, is for all of us believers...It is to make us beautiful in goldy personality, radiant in disposition, and fruitful in life.*” (**Ablaze For God**, Zondervan, 1989, 19)

Today we consider someone who agonized over a lack of physical fruitfulness. Indeed, there are many ways in which Satan attempts to extinguish our passion to follow God. Our enemy works to lure us into the lie that God is either uncaring or incapable of accomplishing His will in our lives. We might even feel that our flame for God has all but gone out.

But as Wesley Duewel reminds, “*a flickering flame that is almost gone can be fanned into brilliant fire again....God has created our spirits flammable. We are spiritually combustible. Our nature is created to be set ablaze by the Spirit.*” (25-26)

We started our **Ignite** series by noting the factors involved when the fire of the Holy Spirit in us. First comes indwelling at conversion to Christ. Then we must be filled daily. In Acts 2, the early Church received the indwelling Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost which was witnessed as “tongues of fire”.

God deeply desires to ignite our hearts with a passion to encounter Him in greater ways than we ever thought possible. This was true for **Abraham** when God called him into **friendship**. **Moses** passion was stirred when he was **commissioned** at the burning bush. **Joshua** was called to be **courageous**.

DIG

Today we consider the **flame of dependence** in the life of Hannah. She lived about fifteen miles north of Jerusalem in the hill country of Ephraim with her husband Elkanah, his other wife Peninnah and their children. During her life the Ark of God was in Shiloh, so that is where they went to worship.

In our text – I Samuel 1:1-20 – we are going to see the way in which Hannah was “on fire for God”. She was dependent upon Him. This is a quality for which we find three types of evidence.

[A] Dependent in suffering

The first expression of Hanna’s dependence upon God was her endurance and perseverance through suffering. In what way did she suffer? She had the shelter, care, and protection of a husband. Yet she was barren – “*the Lord had closed her womb*” (v.5). This was painful and even shameful in her culture. And making this worse was Peninnah, who provoked Hannah to bitter tears and loss of appetite (v.8).

Her suffering also came from her surroundings. This was not an easy time live with dependence upon God. Hannah lived in the era between entrance into Canaan and the first king (Saul). This was the period of the Judges – roughly a 300 year span.

It was “*marked by political, moral, and spiritual anarchy and deterioration....Just when it seemed that the nation would cave in on its own rottenness, God intervened and in response to goldy Hannah’s prayers gave young Samuel to her and the nation.*” (**Bible Knowledge Commentary OT**, Eugene H. Merrill, Victor, 1988, 431)

Do you find it easy to depend upon God? Does it even feel like suffering when the world around us puts their confidence in anything other than God?! Hannah was a great example of overcoming such odds.

[B] Dependent in seeking

Essential to depending upon God is seeking Him for what we need. This not the only aspect of dependence. It is appropriate that we plead with God. In Matthew 7:7-11 we are commanded to **ask** in light of God's character as our good and gracious Father. Psalm 37:4 – “*Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.*” We grow in dependence upon the Lord as we seek Him.

We also grow in dependence as we submit to God's will. Hannah displayed this. In verse 11 she asked of God from the heart of a “bond-servant” (mentioned twice). In verse 15 we discover she poured out her soul to God. We need God's fire to purge and purify our desires. This is why dependence upon Him is central to all our seeking and pleading. As Amy Carmichael prayed in her poem,

*O Lord our God, to Thee is known our inmost heart's desire;
Thy love is fire, Thy love alone; O bathe our souls in fire.
And purely purge away our dross, and take away our tin;
And by the virtue of Thy Cross renew us, Lord, within.
O turn Thy hand, Thy wounded hand, on us who love Thy name,
And make of us a holy band, a single, burning flame.*

[C] Dependent in sacrificing

The third way Hannah displayed dependence upon God was by sacrificially dedicating her son Samuel to the service of the Lord. We read her vow to the Lord in verse 11. Now, had she not nurtured a heart of dependence upon God this vow would have been empty and mere pragmatism. However, Hannah was fully prepared to fulfill her vow, as we read in verses 27-28.

Because of Hannah's sacrifice, Samuel was nurtured in faith, and he became a powerful prophet in Israel. The nation was blessed because Hannah lived dependently upon God. Hannah's willing submission to God foreshadowed Mary's submission to God's will in her life. She was also rewarded when she was blessed with five more children – see I Samuel 2:20-21.

REFLECT

How does the flame of dependence grow in our hearts? Suffering, seeking, and sacrificing will be cold and mechanical actions if not flowing from a **heart** of dependence upon God.

And of course, such a heart must be expressed in action. In response to God's revealed will through His Word two actions are vital for believers.

- **How are you growing in a life of prayer?**

Prayer means so much more than specific words and phrases. Prayer must become a spilling over of what is ablaze in our hearts.

Richard Foster writes, “*Prayer changes things, people say. It also changes us. The latter goal is the more imperative. The primary purpose of prayer is to bring us into such a life of communion with the Father that, by the power of the Spirit, we are increasingly conformed to the image of the Son.*” (**Prayer: Finding the Hearts True Home**, Harper Row, 1992, 57)

- **How are you growing in a life of fasting?**

Fasting means setting aside meeting our normal needs in order to experience God in greater depth and reality. We normally fast from food. But there are many other legitimate needs that can be set aside.

Mark Buchanan notes, “*If you never fast, then the whole concept of being wholly nourished and sustained by God's Word alone will likely be only a nice, sweet, and totally irrelevant idea to you.*” (**Your God Is Too Safe**, Multnomah, 2001, 188)

Lastly, we see in Hannah's life that dependence upon God leads to **delight!**

Consider Hannah's testimony of worship and praise found in **I Samuel 2:1-10**.