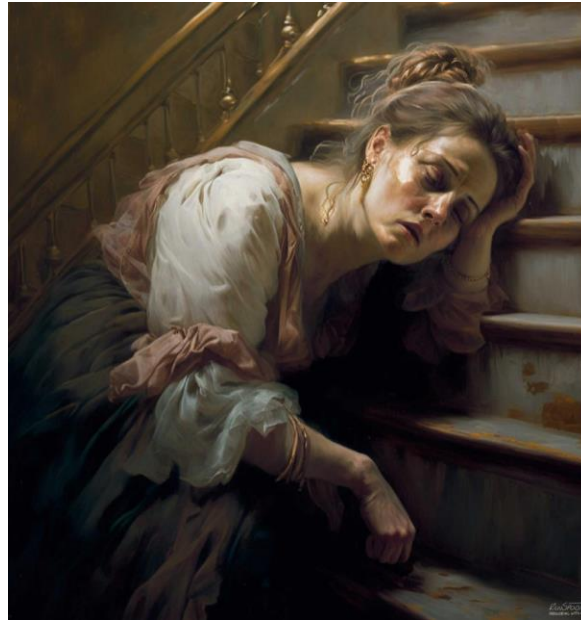


DESPERATION



And Eli said to her, "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. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." 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.

I Samuel 1:14-18

Who of us cannot relate to Hannah's despair?

Who of us has not at some time in our life, perhaps even at this moment, known that silent desperation?

Her lips were moving, but nothing was coming out. *"Lord God! Give me a child! I'll give him back to you. I'll dedicate him to you for life. But Lord, let me have a child!"*

No one on earth knew the anguish of this woman's heart. Her husband did not have a clue about the kind of torment she was living through, while his other wife kept making Hannah's life miserable. Finally, when old Eli the priest understands Hannah's desperation, he speaks a word from God: *"Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have made to him."* And it was done. And Hannah knew that it was done. She knew it before she ever conceived the child, Samuel.

For most of us, the first experience we ever had of God's grace took place at such a moment of desperation. It's when we know that we cannot lift ourselves out of the problem, that no amount of money, no human help will do it, that we turn to God with hearts that are almost pure.

"Lord, help me! I have nowhere to turn, but to you. Help me!"



Pretty soon a door opens, a light comes on. Something happens that causes us to know that heaven has heard the cry of our heart. It's going to be okay. And it is!

The woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment, the father who cried out to Jesus to heal his epileptic boy --- they met Jesus' power at their point of desperation.

So for anyone reading these words who may be walking through a valley like Hannah's, and doesn't know which way to turn...

...you have this burden, this fear, this overwhelming need --- lay this thing before the Lord right now, as we join our hearts to yours....as we lift up our prayers and say, *"Lord, answer the cry of this heart! Send help right out of heaven! Touch this person with your hand of peace and healing, Lord!"*

Why else does the Spirit bring us together as followers of Jesus, but to pray for one another and to call down heaven's power on those who share Hanna's desperation.

And for those of us whose moment of desperation has passed --- for the time being --- life isn't so bleak as it was when we were passing through our dark valley....

.... We need to learn that every moment we live....

..... is actually being lived on the edge of desperation,

...whether we are aware of it or not.

Even if you are in perfect health, you have tons of money in the bank, all your children are doing well

--- apart from God's mercy, apart from God's patient love, where would you be?

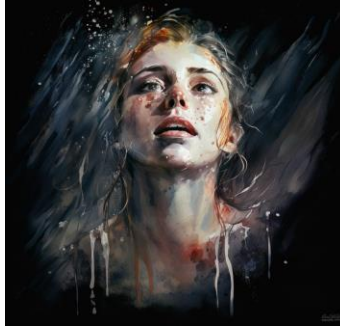
And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Mark 13:1-2

To the disciples those Temple buildings were a sign of God's protection. Behind the veil, in the Holy of Holies, was the Shekinah glory of God. God is in our temple! We're safe. Who can harm us?

"No," says Jesus, "Israel is living on the edge of desperation and doesn't know it. Do you see these magnificent buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. Wake up, fellas!"

**To live by faith is to be awake to the fact that we are in desperate need
.....of God's protection, power, guidance, healing grace, all the time.**



***My soul, wait thou only upon God,
for my expectation is from him.
He only is my rock and my salvation,
He is my defense, I shall not be moved.***

Psalm 62

Too many people who once tasted God's redeeming power forgot all about it, once the moment of desperation passed. "It's okay, Lord, I'll take it from here!"

Totally unaware that they're living on the edge of desperation all the time.

So they stumble along in their vanity until they fall into another pit. "Lord! Where are you? How could you let this happen to me?"

***Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.
Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.***

Psalm 127

Don't forget where your security lies.

Don't forget the promise you made.

When Hannah cried out to God in her despair, she made a promise....

"And she vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life."

1 Samuel 1:11

And when the child was born, Hannah kept her promise. She did everything she said she would do...



..... and her son Samuel was blessed and so was she.

If I throw my life on God's mercy in that moment of desperation, "Lord, I'm putting my life into your hands! Do with me what you want! Lead me where you will!" ----

--- if I make such a commitment, pity help me if I don't follow through!

It would have been better for me never to turn to God than to make a promise in desperation, and then, when the storm is over, forget all about my vow.

There are multitudes of spiritual zombies walking around out there and in our fellowships.....

.... who backed away from their vow and lost a piece of their soul.

After Jesus and the disciples left the Temple that day, they climbed the Mount of Olives and sat down. They could see the Temple buildings gleaming in the sunlight off in the distance below. The disciples were still shaken by Jesus' prediction that the Temple would be destroyed.

Surely that must mean the beginning of the End!

"Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are all to be accomplished?"

Mark 13:4

And now Jesus begins to teach them how to live on the edge of desperation all the time.

His words are preserved for us in Mark 13, Matthew 14, and Luke 21, because this teaching is meant for us as well as for those first disciples.

Jesus began to say to them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines; this is but the beginning of the sufferings."

Mark 13:5-8

Jesus is teaching us to walk by faith in a world that is unstable and unpredictable.

He is teaching us to live on the edge of desperation all the time.

He is teaching us that we need to rely on God to sustain us...



... Just as Hannah relied on God.

To really rely on God!

And this is much easier to do, once you've found out that there is nothing else to rely on, but God!

Think about it. What assurance do we have, that we will even be alive on the earth next year at this time? Or next week? Or even tomorrow?

What assurance do we have that the world economy won't collapse by April? Or that terrorists won't get control of the nuclear trigger in Pakistan before summer?

***Whom have I in heaven but thee,
and there is none I desire upon earth besides thee.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.***

Psalm 73

Hannah found God's mercy at a moment of desperation.

And we find God's mercy the same way.

But the Lord Jesus wants to take us beyond that.

**He offers us the power to live on the edge of desperation all the time....
....and still keep trusting God.**



**He offers us the power to live each day... with the clear knowledge...
.... that the only security we have is the Lord himself.**

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

***Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.***

***Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.***

Psalm 23

Surely mercy and goodness shall follow me.



Prayer: Dearest Lord, may we continue to turn to you, seek you, cry out to you when all we can feel is desperation and anguish. We lay our need, our anguish, our despair before you. We cannot rescue ourselves. Oh wrap your arms around us at these times. May we find your help and may the thankfulness for it pour out of our hearts and mouths. And Lord for those of us who are not experiencing desperation at this point...we lift our hearts with the suffering of those in despair...crying out for mercy for them. Yes, answer the cry of their hearts, send help from your heavenly throne, touch them with your healing hand and bring them peace. And Lord, help us to keep in mind that all of us are on the edge of desperation, needing your help, protection, and guidance. Without you, without your mercy, love, presence, and protection we cannot face the troubles of this world, we cannot face the instability and the unexpected, we cannot face disappointment and frustration, we cannot face the brokenness and evil in this world, we cannot face the coming terrors. May we know, really know that no matter what, you will sustain us, that we can rely on you. That we can walk through the shadow of death... and fear no evil...for you are with us in all things, even blessing us in the midst of darkness, and that your mercy, that your goodness shall follow us all our days and cause us to dwell in your holy presence no matter what our circumstances. Amen.

Maranatha Mirror

Message: Richard E. Bieber 2009 and edited by him in 2014

Featured Art: Permission and courtesy of Ross Boone at RawSpoon.com. One piece, "Samuel Brought to the Lord by Hannah" by Jan Van t Hoff, at GospelImages.com, with his permission.

Maranatha Mirror Messages

mmirror.net

maranathamirror18@gmail.com



THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN