

I. Introduction

A. The prophets

1. Ezra through Malachi and stories contained in Kings and Chronicles
2. Characteristics
 - a. Power comes from the Spirit
 - b. Love for the restoration of God's people
 - c. Obedience
 - d. God is the greatest and highest treasure
 - e. *The prophet is positioned for a difficult life and work. There is both a joy in the Word of God and a suffering in the reception of that same Word. There is a heaviness but the core of the prayers of the prophets is that God keeps His promises.

B. Themes in the prayers of the prophets

1. Attention drawn to God's character, His superiority, and His uniqueness
2. The bulk of their content is repentance, including the confession of sin and asking God for His mercy.
3. There is always a focus on hope of restoration, sometimes in the present but always with God's promise of the coming and full work of the Messiah.

II. Prayers of the prophets

A. Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9:3-19)

1. Context

- a. One of the exiles taken into captivity by Babylon
- b. Deeply affected by Jeremiah's prophecies about Jerusalem
- c. Risen in rank and influence in Babylon and succeeding empires
- d. *Daniel prophesied primarily outside of Israel

2. Structure

- a. Adoration because of God's character

Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking Him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, Who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments,"
(Daniel 9:3-4)

- 1) Daniel's prayer is dominated by a sense of God's character.
- 2) When we pray, we not only recognize **what** God does but **Who** God is.

- b. Confession of sin and repentance

"we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from Your commandments and rules. We have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. To You, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,

and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which You have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against You. To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, refusing to obey Your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against Him. He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole Heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. Therefore the Lord has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works that He has done, and we have not obeyed His voice." (Daniel 9:5-14)

- 1) Daniel, among the most faithful of all God's people, takes all of Israel's sins and guilt (past and present) as his own - "we."
- 2) Desire of "fair" and the requirement of humility

c. Petition for restoration and God's mercy

And now, O Lord our God, Who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for Yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. "O Lord, according to all Your righteous acts, let Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a byword among all who are around us. Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for Your own sake, O Lord, make Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear. Open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by Your name. For we do not present our pleas before You because of our righteousness, but because of Your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for Your own sake, O my God, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name. (Daniel 9:15-19)

- 1) Daniel did not ask God to abandon His righteousness but rather, God's righteousness is seen as Israel's only hope - as it is ours (maybe God could be less righteous just this once).
- 2) God's righteousness is what makes Him unique among all god's and concepts of divinity.

d. Daniel's prayer to God is filled with authenticity and emotion (Daniel 9:19)

- 1) Listen. Forgive. See. Act.
- 2) Don't delay for the sake of Your own glory.

B. Elijah's cry (1 Kings 19)

1. Context

- a. Defeated Jezebel's prophets of Baal
- b. Jezebel's vow to kill Elijah
- c. Elijah afraid and depressed

2. The burden of the stepping into repentance. There is a weight that we carry when we cry out to God in repentance toward restoration.

- a. Exhausted and discouraged that he was no more successful than his forefathers in outing Baal-worship from Israel

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." (1 Kings 19:4-5)

And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. (1 Kings 19:8)

- b. Ran away out of fear and felt he was standing completely alone and defenseless against God's enemies

There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." (1 Kings 19:9-10)

- 1) Only spoke of Israel's prophets being killed, not the 450 prophets of Baal
- 2) Fear and discouragement cause us to see only the dark side of things - boldly call that out to God

- c. God did not chastise or scold Elijah but gave him a demonstration of His ways. *And He said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." (1 Kings 19:11-14)*

- d. God's present promise of a remnant

"Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." (1 Kings 19:18)

- 1) 7,000 faithful

2) Israel - about 2-5 million

III. How the prophets enrich our prayer life

- A. God's character can be trusted even in our rebellious moments (righteousness).
*Don't hesitate to reach out or cry out to God.
- B. There is no rescue short of repentance. (In the same way that faith is universally accessible, repentance is achievable by everyone, anywhere, without exception.)
*Owning our (mine and ours) sin and asking for mercy is the only doorway to restoration.
- C. God's promise of full restoration is absolute.
*No matter how dark the darkness is, there is always an absolute hope.