

Grace Communication 11 - 4 OT Prayers

a study for the Gulf Coast Baptist Church Bible Institute

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Introduction

God has given the believer access to the Throne of Grace in order to align the believer with the Will of God. The Godhead is seeking communion with the ones that He died to redeem. The problem is that the believer is distracted with desires and perspectives that will not bring peace and comfort. So the God we love and serve graciously uses Providences to bring the believer in alignment with God's desired will for his life. The Communication that God has provided for us is designed for that purpose, to move us to where God can reveal Himself in the best way, for this is what will benefit the believer in the best way.

God did this in various ways in the Old Testament as well. The OT scriptures record the prayers of Nehemiah, Daniel, Hezekiah, and Hannah among others. A study of these prayers shows that God brought His people through events in order to reveal Himself to them in a more complete way, teaching them something about themselves along the way.

Section I: The Four Prayers at a Glance

Person	Scripture	Key Characteristics
Nehemiah	Nehemiah 1:4-11	Response to national crisis; weeping cupbearer; sustained prayer over months before action.
Daniel	Daniel 9:1-19	Response to prophetic timeline (exile ending); sackcloth & ashes; deep corporate confession.
Hezekiah	2 Kings 19:14-19	Response to immediate military threat; spreads enemy's letter before the LORD; bold petition for God's glory.
Hannah	1 Samuel 1:10-11; 2:1-10	Response to personal barrenness; silent anguish turning to prophetic praise; mother of Samuel.

Section II: Individual Prayer Profiles

1. Nehemiah: The Patient Intercessor

Context: As cupbearer to the Persian King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah receives word that the walls of Jerusalem remain in ruins and the people are in great distress. Though living in comfort in the palace, he is broken by the news.

Prayer Focus: He identifies corporately with the sins of his people ("I and my father's house have sinned"). He appeals to God's covenant character and specific promises to Moses. He prays for months before the opportunity to act arises.

2. Daniel: The Penitent Prophet

Context: An elderly statesman in Babylon, Daniel studies the scrolls of Jeremiah and realizes the prophesied 70-year captivity is nearing its end. Instead of celebrating, he turns to God in deep humility.

Prayer Focus: He sets his face to the Lord with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. His prayer is dominated by confession of Israel's rebellion and an appeal to God's mercy, not their own righteousness.

3. Hezekiah: The Bold King

Context: Jerusalem is besieged by the Assyrian army. King Hezekiah receives a terrifying letter from Sennacherib mocking the God of Israel. He takes the physical letter into the temple.

Prayer Focus: He physically spreads the threatening letter before the LORD. He acknowledges God as the Creator of all kingdoms and asks for deliverance specifically so that "all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone."

4. Hannah: The Prophetic Mother

Context: One of two wives, Hannah is barren and mocked by her rival. At the tabernacle in Shiloh, she is in such deep anguish that Eli the priest thinks she is drunk.

Prayer Focus: She pours out her soul in silence, making a vow to dedicate her son to the Lord. Once answered, her prayer shifts (1 Sam. 2) to a magnificent song of praise that magnifies God's sovereignty and foreshadows the Messiah.

Section III: Full Comparison Chart

Feature	Nehemiah	Daniel	Hezekiah	Hannah
Scripture	Neh. 1:4-11	Dan. 9:1-19	2 Kings 19:14-19	1 Sam. 1-2
Occasion	News of ruins	End of exile	Assyrian threat	Barrenness
Tone	Mourning/Action	Penitential	Bold/Urgent	Anguish -> Praise
Posture	Weeping, Fasting	Sackcloth, Ashes	Spreading letter	Weeping, Silent
Confession	Strong ("We sinned")	Deep/Detailed	None (Doxological)	None
Appeal Basis	Covenant Promise	God's Mercy	God's Glory	God's Sovereignty
Answer	favor with King	Vision of 70 weeks	Angel kills 185k	Son (Samuel)
Speed	Months	Immediate	Same Night	In due time

God's Will for His People

Notice what God had to allow in the lives of His people to get them to the point where they would seek His face. Judgement for sin, bondage for God's people, the enemy at the gates, barrenness and mocking - all bringing the people of God to the brink of ruin. Yet, God answers each of these requests in His will and his time. The answers allow God to further His plan for the purpose of Redemption over the course of time. Whether the result was the restoration of God's people, or the bringing of a man who would anoint one of David's most famous kings, God had a familiarity with His people and where they were. Also, He knew what He needed to do to get them to where He wanted them to be. God used events and circumstances to bring the people to where they would need Him, and when they called upon Him, He revealed Himself in a mighty way, achieving what He wanted.

Conclusion

Using the 8 words that God has graciously set aside for the Grace believer to use to approach Him, the believer confidently returns to God those things He has said about Himself with gratitude and an acknowledgement of God's character. He seeks God's desired will regarding things that he is familiar with and submits to God's wisdom and leading regarding those things that he is not familiar with. He asks for God's desired, revealed will regarding himself and for others. He confesses sin and deals with it the way God intended, restoring fellowship and communion with God, and when led by the Spirit of God, makes promises to God and through God's power, keeps them. Doing these things, allows the believer to be brought to the exact place that God wants him to be, and to rest there empowered by God to do the will of God.

God has designed communication with Him to bring the believer into alignment with Him. Too many times we see it as something that will bring God to where we want Him. Humbly accepting the place and role has for the believer will allow him to experience a much deeper and richer prayer life with God.