

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *A Prayer of Praise*, this sermon outline will use different Scripture passages from the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

Jesus, in His prayer and throughout His life, sought to magnify His Father. He was successful. He lived a life that caused others to glorify God. Our ultimate goal through our prayers must not be the fulfillment of what would make our life easier but whatever would bring the most glory to God.

Introduction: There are times and places where prayer is difficult and not welcomed by others. Elijah ministered in such a time. God was not popular. It hadn't rained for over three years, and Elijah got the blame. It's hard to get people excited about praising God in such an environment.

As God's prophet, Elijah's passion was to point people to the true God. It hurt and angered him that people were praying to and praising Baal, a false god. He used this time and situation as an opportunity to bring God glory.

1. **Praise God because He is here.** *"thou art God in Israel"* (v. 36a)

The prophets of Baal petitioned a god who was not real. Elijah prayed to the true God. No matter what Baal's adherents tried, they could not get an answer from Baal. A false god can give no answer regardless of how great a sacrifice people offer him. But God listens to the prayers of His people. God answered Elijah's prayer with fire. God is Emmanuel – the God who is with us in the midst of our difficult situations, the God who listens and answers.

Elijah referred to God as the God of Israel, the place, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the people. Naaman, the leprous Syrian general that Elijah's successor helped, believed he needed to take Israeli dirt back with him to Syria. He believed God was localized to one place. The Egyptians had gods for each realm – each part of life. But Jehovah was the God of the land and the people. He is here and ready to intervene in behalf of His people. And that is good reason to praise Him.

2. **Praise God because He calls.** *"that I am thy servant"* (v. 36b)

There are some prophets whose call Scripture records – Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others. Elijah's was not. But it was obvious God had called him. Why else would he stand up against the king and the prophets of Baal? He lived at a time when being a servant of God and especially His prophet was not beneficial from a human perspective. He was in the minority, and his message was not well-received.

But Elijah wanted everyone to know that he was the servant of God. He never got over the fact that God had chosen him. And God still calls people into His

service. People are frail, weak, sinful – not good options for God’s messengers. He uses us anyway. And that is good reason to praise Him.

3. **Praise God because He speaks.** *“done all...at thy word”* (v. 36c)

Israel had been ignoring God and His message for a long time. No one likes being ignored. When it happens, we usually change our message or just simply stop speaking. But God continued to speak. And He expected obedience to His message. He didn’t receive it from the people, but Elijah obeyed when he announced the drought to Ahab, when he showed himself to Ahab and when he gave a prayer of praise in front of idolaters.

God still speaks. In Hebrews 1, the writer records some of the means God has used in the past. Jesus was the final or complete Word, and God’s Spirit speaks through the written word to us. God speaks not just because He wants obedience but because He wants a relationship. And that is good reason to praise Him.

4. **Praise God because He persists.** *“thou hast turned their heart”* (v. 37)

Elijah believed he was the last God-follower in Judah (18:22; 19:10). Jezebel and the prophets of Baal seemed to be winning the people’s hearts. The situation looked bad. Though the actual number of those who still praised Jehovah was indeed low (19:18), Elijah was not alone. And the numbers would eventually grow.

Israel and Judah had experienced God’s discipline. More of it was coming. God didn’t do this to destroy His people but, like a good father (Heb. 12:5-6), He chastened His children to bring them back to Himself. The pain God sent and the messengers who announced it were evidence that God was still working to turn the hearts of His people (Luke 1:17). God had not given up. He refuses to lose hope for His people. And that is a good reason to praise Him.

Conclusion: Elijah was effective in his prayers. His prayers caused the rain to stop, fire to fall, and rain to begin again. Elijah was just a normal guy (James 5:17). The power in Elijah’s prayers came from the fact that he was obedient to God and that his focus was always on magnifying God not necessarily getting what Elijah himself wanted. Do you want effectiveness in your prayers? Then make sure your ultimate goal is God’s glory not your comfort.

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