

## The Prayer of Jabez (Part 2)

by Bayless Conley

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Hello friend. Thank you for joining me. If you were with us last time, we were speaking about the prayer of Jabez. I know you've just been waiting with bated breath for me to finish this. Well, I'd like to go back and read it, but kind of read it in its context. I'm going to take a couple of minutes and just quickly recap some things. Then, we're going to dive right back into where we left off last time. This is from 1 Chronicles 4, and I want to begin reading in verse five. I'm going to ask your forgiveness ahead of time because there are a bunch of names that, at least to my ears, sound very strange, and I'm probably going to mispronounce one or two of these in here, so just bear with me because I think it's significant if we read this prayer of Jabez in its context. Are you ready? Okay, now don't fall asleep. It says in 1 Chronicles 4:5–12 NKJV,

<sup>5</sup> And Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah. <sup>6</sup> Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hopher, Temeni, and Haahashtari. These were the sons of Naarah. <sup>7</sup> The sons of Helah were Zereth, Zohar, and Ethnan; <sup>8</sup> and Koz begot Anub, Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum. <sup>9</sup> Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." <sup>10</sup> And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested. <sup>11</sup> Chelub the brother of Shuhah begot Mehir, who was the father of Eshton. <sup>12</sup> And Eshton begot Beth-Rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-Nahash. These were the men of Rechah.

Then, it goes on, the sons of Kenaz, et cetera, et cetera. So, there's just this sort of boring thing about family, so-and-so had a kid, and these were the sons of this person, and this was the mother of this person. Then, all of a sudden, out of this morass of mediocrity, this hand thrusts up and takes a hold of God and prays this amazing prayer. God grants the answer. Then, it goes right back to, "Oh yeah, so-and-so begot so-and-so, who's the father of so-and-so." It's like this guy Jabez just distinguishes himself from the crowd. My friend, if you'll pray bold prayers and trust God for big things, it can distinguish you from the crowd. Jabez actually prayed for five things in this prayer. He prayed, first of all, "God, that You'd bless me." Second, "That You'd enlarge my territory." Third, "That Your hand would be with me." Fourth, "That You'd keep me from evil." And fifth, "That I may not cause pain." Last time, we looked at the first two there, "That You would bless me."

Every child of God has the right to pray that God will bless them. We want to be blessed for the glory of God. We want to be blessed so that we can be a blessing to others. We also want to be blessed because we have tangible physical, material needs. We certainly want to be blessed in the spiritual sense. I want to be blessed with wisdom. I want to be blessed with understanding. I want to be blessed with influence. I want to be blessed with peace, but I also want to be blessed materially. I want to be able to meet my needs with sufficient leftover to help somebody else. To me, that's a good biblical definition of prosperity. Here, Jabez prayed, "That You would bless me," and God granted his request. I love the fact that it says he was more honorable than his brethren. He called on God. Maybe his brethren wanted the same things in their lives, but

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they were looking to men to do those things for them. They were looking to their own strength and their own savvy to make those things happen in their life.

Now, God certainly uses a lot of different channels. He may use our education. He may use this person here. He may use our job, may use this or that, but our eyes need to be upon Him and not upon others. Certainly not upon a system, not upon a government, but our eyes need to be upon Him. Jabez called on God, and God did bless him. Then, he prayed, "Enlarge my territory." I love the message Bible. He said, "Give me land. Give me large tracts of land.", and God did. In fact, we read in Scripture that there was actually a city named after Jabez. But God blessed him in that way, and we talked about that at length last time. I shared how us being on this wonderful campus that we're in now that we thank God for all the time and that is being used to reach people for Christ and to help raise people up and to teach them the Word of God. It came in part because of an encounter I had with the Holy Spirit one time as a guest minister spoke in our pulpit about the fact that we should trust God for land. Through it, the Holy Spirit just spoke to me. So, I prayed big, and God answered us in a very, very big way. Again, I talked about that at length last time. So, I'm going to leave that there.

The third time, and this is where we ended last time, Jabez prayed, "God, that Your hand would be with me." Whenever we find the term "The hand of God" in Scripture, it's symbolic of the anointing of the Holy Spirit and for the presence of God to be upon a situation, upon a person. We'll read, "The hand of God was upon so-and-so and they prophesied." "That the hand of God was upon the prophet, and he outran Ahab's chariot to Jezreel." "The hand of God was upon her, the hand of God was upon him, and they did thus and they did so." The hand of God allows us to do things that we could never achieve with our own hands. We have a right to, and we should be praying that God's hand, His anointing, His power, His strength, His comfort, and His influence would be upon us and would flow through us. I believe we should expect God's hand to be upon us. You have coworkers who need Christ. Pray that God's hand would be upon you as you witness to them and as you share with them during your lunch break. Pray that God's hand will be upon you as you come into God's house to worship with fellow believers so that you might give a word of encouragement to somebody who is down in their heart. Pray that God would bless you and that His influence would be upon you and flow through you.

The Scripture says that it's the anointing that destroys the yoke. Sometimes, we quote that verse of Scripture that says, "The anointing breaks the yoke," and it certainly does that. But the Bible says, "The anointing destroys the yoke." There are different types of yokes. There are yokes of bondage. There are yokes of legalism in people's lives. There are yokes of sickness and disease in people's lives. There are yokes of oppression in people's lives. It's the anointing that destroys the yoke. God wants to use you to lift the burdens off of other people's shoulders, to destroy the yoke of the enemy that has them depressed and suppressed. God wants to use you. God wants to use me. We should be praying, "Lord, may Your hand be with me. May Your spirit rest upon me as I talk to this person. As I engage with these people, as we're seeking new land to build a church building, as I'm seeking to increase my business for the glory of God so I can finance God's kingdom, may Your hand be with me." God answered the prayer of Jabez. The hand of God, the Spirit of God, the anointing of God's Spirit, was with him. My friend, it can be with you as well.

Then, he prayed, the fourth thing he prayed. He prayed to be kept from evil, so as not to be hurt by it. Or it literally could be translated, "Or that I may not be grieved or pained by it. Keep me from evil so that I may not be grieved or pained by it so that I may not be hurt by it." Didn't Jesus teach us to pray, "Deliver us from evil."? Well, He certainly did. In Psalm 91, the promise says, "No evil shall befall you." Now, listen, this is not a prayer to never experience trouble

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because Jesus clearly said in John 16:33, that in the world, we will experience tribulation, but to be of good cheer because He has overcome the world. The Bible says, "All they that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Trouble is coming and trials are coming. The book of James says, "Count it all joy when you encounter various trials." Obviously, the context is knowing that something is being worked in you as you look to God, as you look to His Word, as you look to His Spirit. God works in you and causes you to grow in those situations. Now, you're not going to grow if you don't look to God and if you don't look to His Word and to the promises. The trial just by itself without looking to God for answers, looking to Him for strength, and looking to Him for wisdom, the trial's liable to crush you and kill you, my friend. So, as we look to Him and look to the truth of His Word and to His ever-abiding presence, well, then good things are certainly worked in us. So, this prayer for Jabez and for us is not a prayer to never experience trouble but to realize that God is with us in those troubles. He said, "That I may not experience pain." That literally means to be grieved at heart. But in Hebrew, listen carefully to me; it also has the meaning to shape or to fashion. "God, keep me from evil. Keep me from the evil one and that I may not cause pain or that I may not experience pain. Again, that I may not be grieved at heart." The original word carries with it the thought to shape or to fashion.

Here's what I'm trying to get across. Some have been shaped and fashioned by the grief and the pains they have experienced, but they haven't been fashioned and shaped in a good way because they haven't looked to God. As I said in the book of James, "Count it all joy when you encounter various trials, knowing that the trying of your faith works patience, but let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect in entire lacking nothing." In that same context, talks strongly about faith. We need to have our faith anchored in God. There are people where their griefs, their sorrows, and their pains have molded them into a cynical person. It shaped them into a negative person. It's fashioned them into a bitter person.

I talked to someone just the other day, someone who I don't talk to often, but every time I do talk to them, they're so negative. They are just downtrodden; everything about them. The truth is that the experiences they talk about, that they've gone through, and the things that have happened are not different from anyone else I know in my world, not different than this person or that person or this friend or this acquaintance. Everyone's experiencing the same kind of troubles and trials, but this person has let these griefs and these pains that they've gone through, shape them into being a bitter person and being a negative person to the point where others don't want to even be around them.

Listen that doesn't have to be. Pray the prayer of Jabez. Call on God so that your temperament and your personality, as it were, are not going to be shaped by the difficult things that have happened to you. Pray that in the midst of trial, you're going to find joy. That in the midst of trouble, you're going to be that light and that beacon that others are going to come to seek strength during their trials and their tribulations. It's true. We don't have to let our temperament be shaped by our trials in a negative sense anyway. I remember years ago, I was attending a meeting, and they had a guest speaker there. I've since seen him numerous times on social media things. He is the same now as he was back then. When I saw him, it was probably 15 years ago, maybe more than that. He was born without arms and without legs. They put him up on a table, and I still remember him. He's kind of going around on his stumps, and he's preaching the gospel. He got so close to the edge of that table. Sometimes, there was almost a gasp. But the thing that really made me just kind of take in a breath was his attitude. He wasn't bitter. He wasn't heartbroken. He was joyful. His spirit was strong. He was encouraging. He hadn't let the difficulties that he had obviously gone through in life as being someone who was born without limbs; he had not let it affect his heart. He was there bringing encouragement to thousands of people who were in that meeting.

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I think about another friend who my wife and I have. In fact, my wife prays with this lady on a regular basis. She's from a certain Latin American country that had a military coup. Her family was quite well off. They owned property. There was generational wealth in her family, but the existing government was toppled. They lost everything, had to flee as refugees, and came to the United States with nothing. They lost their ancestral lands. They lost their home. They lost the accumulated wealth of generations. They lost influence, lost everything. This woman had to rebuild her life again. But if you get around her, she's bright. She's weighty. She's hopeful. She's full of faith. She's happy. She's compassionate. She didn't let the difficulties that she went through in her life and the things that her family experienced, literally losing everything. She didn't let that shape her temperament. She let God shape her. She looked to God in the midst of those things. Then, there's another facet of this that we really should explore. There's actually a play on the name of Jabez in this little section of Scripture here. His mother named him Jabez. She said, "Because he was brought forth in pain." The name Jabez literally means "sorrow bringer" or "he causes pain." Think about it. Jabez was labeled from birth. Every time he heard his name, every time. "You bring sorrow. You cause pain." Labeled from birth, but his life became a contradiction of his name. His life became a contradiction of the label that was placed upon him.

Have you been labeled? "Underachiever. Stupid. You're no good." Maybe your father was just a sort of a product of what he'd been brought up in and didn't have the light of the truth of the gospel. Maybe he just pounded on you and told you that you were worthless and that you'd never amount to anything. "You're a loser. You're a failure. You'd be lucky to get any job. You'll never own a home." Some of you, watching me right now, have been labeled. You were labeled as a kid in school. You were teased, and the trauma of that in your childhood, you've carried it with you. Or maybe you were labeled by some mistake that you made in the past, and people have put this label on you, and that's the only way they view you. It's the only way they think of you. Maybe even it's just something that this thought that has addressed itself to you, and you've somehow succumbed to it. The devil's been speaking to your mind. Did you know that in Revelation 12:10, the devil is called the accuser of the brethren? Interestingly, that word accuser is the Greek word *katēgoros*. It's where we get our word category from. He's the categorizer. The devil wants to stick you in a particular category. He says, "Oh yeah, you're this. You'll never be free from this. If people in church really knew what you were like, oh, they wouldn't want to be around you because this is who you are. This is who you'll always be." In your own mind, the devil is giving you some label. Well, do you know what? Jabez said, "I'm not sticking with the label that my family put on me. I'm not sticking with the label that everyone gave me. God, keep me from evil that I may not cause pain." God answered his prayer. You can break free of the constricting labels that have been placed upon you.

Maybe some teacher just told you, "Look, you're not very bright. You're never going to amount to anything." I remember reading a story about a guy where his teacher, and it was at an early grade, told him, "Look, the truth is you're not very bright." I think he was in high school and said, "The best job you can ever hope to have is to be a janitor." Listen, there is nothing wrong with that at all. Maybe you're watching me, and you're a school janitor, or you're a janitor in a building somewhere working a night shift. Listen, any work we do as unto the Lord is worthy, and it is sacred. You just bring whatever influence you have to the area where you are. You keep a smile on your face. You give glory to God. You honor God with the first part of your paycheck. You raise your family in the fear of the Lord, and you do your work as unto the Lord. Back to the story, that's what this guy was told by his teacher. He said, "Look, you're not very bright. The only thing you'll ever be able to do is push a mop. So, the best job you could ever hope for is to be a janitor." But God had put other things in him. He was working for a large corporation. One

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time, and I don't know why it was decided, but they just decided to give everybody who wanted to, an IQ test who worked for the corporation, from the CEO, all the way down to the janitor and the guy who was repairing the machinery who was on full time, everybody.

This guy who's a janitor decides to take the IQ test. So, he takes the IQ test, and they turn them all in. He doesn't think much about it. But then, one day, he gets called into the president's office. He's only been in there to clean the thing. He's never met the president. He's never met anyone high up in this corporation. The president and a couple of other guys in there say, "You took the IQ test?" He said, "Yeah, I did. Am I in trouble or something?" He said, "No, you're not in trouble. The fact is you scored higher than anyone else in this entire corporation on that IQ test, including myself. Your score was higher than mine." The janitor was just dumbfounded. The president said, "Look, we'd like to offer you a position doing something else besides the janitorial work. We'd like to give you a shot at doing something." So, they gave him a position. It was explained to him what was required of him. He absolutely excelled in that position. He went up to another level and actually became a key leader in that corporation. He went on to start his own company, which became very successful, and he actually patented several inventions. But for a big part of his life, he lived in this sort of captivity, if you would. He lived in this box with a label on it that said this is all you can do because some teacher told him that he was not very bright. This teacher labeled him. Listen, if you call on God, He can lift you out from under the power of the lies and the labels that have been spoken over your life.

Now, Jabez prayed, and God answered his prayer and his request. Listen, again, I just love the fact that he just sort of rose up out of this dull landscape and took a hold of God. It's almost as if he wrapped his fingers in the garments of God and said, "Oh God, bless me. Enlarge me." God granted his request. You might feel very much like a nobody right now. Listen, first of all, there are no "nobodies" with God. God knows you individually. He knows how many hairs are upon your head. God would be honored if you would pray a big prayer. I think little prayers, though they're fine, don't really honor a big God. Pray a bigger prayer. It may stretch you in your faith, but it's certainly not going to stretch God. "All things are possible to God, and all things are possible to him who believes." This prayer is recorded in the Bible because God wants us to learn from it. God is showing us that though we may be just one among many, if we'll dare to ask God, we can be blessed, we can be enlarged, and we can be delivered. Friend, I want to tell you that you can as well. I'd like to take just a moment and pray for you right now, if I might. If you'll let your heart agree with me. Now, I can only pray generally. If I could come to your home and have a cup of tea with you, and by the way, yes, there is tea in this cup. It's nice; a little bit cold by now because I've been talking and haven't been drinking it, but it's a nice cup of tea. If I could sit down with you at your kitchen table and let you put the kettle on, you make us both a cup of tea. If we could talk about the stuff that's going on in your life, what I would do is I would find Scriptures that cover your situation.

I'd find promises that dealt with those specific, individual things. That's why I always say that you need to have a love affair with your Bible. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." We need to take hold of the promises. So, let's say you shared something about your kid. "My daughter was raised in church. She went to the youth group. She got filled with the Holy Spirit. She loved the Lord, but she went away to university. Now, she's talking this crazy stuff, and it seems like she's not interested in God anymore. She's hanging around with these people who are into heavy drinking, and they're doing drugs. I'm pretty sure my daughter has become promiscuous." Maybe you went on about your daughter. We all love our kids. We never stopped being parents, no matter how old they got. Well, I'd go to the promises about our children. Our children would be personally taught of the Lord, and great will be the peace of our children, and how the seed of the righteous is blessed. We would read those things and then, we'd take

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hands, and we would pray according to the promises. So, what I can do is I can pray a general prayer. If you know a promise, you need to whisper it in your heart to God as we pray. In Matthew 18:19, Jesus said, "If any two of you on earth," you're one, I'm two, and we're on earth. "If any two of you on earth agree concerning anything they ask, it'll be done by my father, who is in heaven." Let's believe Him.

Heavenly Father, my friend and I come to You right now. We realize there is no distance between us, regardless of where they might be in the world. With me sitting here in this studio right now, we know that You see us both. We know that You see our hearts. Heavenly Father, I pray for them, the situations that in their heart, they are describing to You that they need freedom from, that they need deliverance from, and that they need help in. God, we pray that blessing would come upon them. We ask You to stretch forth Your hand, Lord, and bring freedom, deliverance, healing, and wisdom. Whatever it is they need, bring it into their life, heavenly Father. Thank You that the hand of faith takes hold of You now that You dispatch the answer, that You dispatch angels to work on their behalf. Lord, I'm asking You to help my friend and to bless them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

What a Savior He is, what a Lord He is. I just want to close with this. The Bible says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Call on His name.

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