

# Jabez's Prayer

by Robert F. Adcock

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a specific and God-centered aim in prayer, and being committed to prayer as a way to experience God's power and presence in our lives.*

**Duration:** 39:03

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 7:14, 1 Chronicles 4:10, Psalm 37:4, Psalm 66:18, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 1 Timothy 6:6

**Topics:** "Effective Prayer", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Jabez from 1 Chronicles chapter 4. Jabez was a man who had a purpose in his heart to pray regularly and he called on the God of Israel to bless him. The preacher emphasizes the importance of seeking God's blessings and acknowledges that God promises to bless his covenant people. The sermon also highlights the need to pray for deliverance from evil and the power of Satan, as well as the importance of maintaining fellowship with the Lord through prayer.

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## Transcript

I'd like for us tonight to look at a passage that is found in 1 Chronicles chapter 4. I'd like for us to think about the subject of prayer. I think it was about a year ago, not quite a year ago, that my wife and I, in discussing the subject of prayer, realized that there were a lot of unanswered questions regarding prayer, as we understood it. We well recall that the first conscious act of anything spiritual that we ever did after we were saved was to say, Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul.

That's what I remember. And, of course, that's the, I think, very appropriate Thanksgiving. But there are a lot of areas in this matter of prayer that I believe are misunderstood, and it's more than just doing it by the numbers.

It is really a deep spiritual exercise of soul that requires that we know, I believe, a lot more than most of us know about. So I'm going to use this passage tonight just to point out one aspect of prayer, and I think it will alert us to the fact that things can happen when we pray. But we have to be sure that conditions are right, and we have to be sure that we understand what's happening.

So I'm going to read this account, 1 Chronicles 4, about a man named Jabez and his prayer to God. Verse 9 says, And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bore him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldest bless

me in thee, and enlarge my border, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.

And God granted him that which he requested. I know in our search through the scriptures about this matter of prayer that a question was raised, what is the aim of prayer? There must be some objective in view. A lot of times you go to the prayer meeting and you may not be aware of this, but it's a praise meeting.

The brethren are praising God for what he has done. That's good. I love that.

We can tell the Lord many wonderful things and how we appreciate what he's done, how we appreciate him. And we can worship him and praise him. But actually, that's not a prayer meeting.

A prayer meeting or prayer is asking God for something. There has to be something very definitive about it. That's the reason I selected this one little story in the scriptures, is because here's a man that he made four requests and the Lord answered every one of his prayers.

Every one of those requests were granted. And I know prayer meetings that you ask the question, what are y'all praying about? Oh, we pray about a variety of things. Well, what's happening as a result of your prayer meeting? That usually draws some blank stare.

How many prayers have you had answered in your prayer meeting? More silence. Nothing really definitive about what we're praying about. And seemingly not really expecting anything to happen.

Sometimes the prayers may be almost on the verge of desperation, crying out for something. And you never hear it mentioned again. You never hear anything happening as a result of that prayer.

No real sharing as to what the consequences of our praying, what happens. Now, that seems to me to be rather tragic. If our prayer life is only a devotional exercise in which we talk to the Lord and we thank him and we praise him and we worship him, I'm quite sure that we benefit from that.

It warms our hearts. But I don't think we are praying effectually until something happens as a result of our praying. We have the little mottos that we sometimes paste around the house.

Prayer changes things. They're just words. How many of your prayers have changed anything? Are you consciously aware of any prayer that you prayed changing anything? All of those things that you had upon your hearts, when you prayed about those things, do you have any assurance that God heard you or answered your prayer? There are a lot of conditions that have to be right.

I can think of one. It's found in Psalm 66. It says, If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me.

God never hears the prayer from that individual, that saint of God that prays with unconfessed sin in his life. God never hears that prayer. He gives no regard.

He doesn't listen to that prayer. That individual is completely out of tune with all that God is. And there's been transgression, and that sin has been taken lightly, and it's been passed over without confessing it.

If I regard iniquity, if I give any place into my life for sin, God will not hear me. There is a beautiful, beautiful verse found in Psalm 37 that tells us, Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. There are conditions that must be right if we are to enjoy the blessings of God.

There is a verse found in Romans 8 and verse 26. And indeed, this verse, I think, is so misunderstood by many, many believers. It says, Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.

Oh, that shocks me. That makes me aware right away. I have a weakness.

It's possible for me to say words. It's possible for me to come boldly to the throne of grace and say things, ask for things. That because of this weakness that's inherent in the soul of every human being, I may be asking something absolutely contrary to the will of God and be ignorant of what I'm doing.

And the Spirit of God is there to help that weakness and that infirmity that is common to all men, even to those of the household of faith, not knowing what we ought to ask for, being completely out of accord with the will of God. If you ask anything in my name, he will grant that request. We preface our prayers, we close our prayers with, Thy will be done.

And in between those remarks that we make that preface our prayers and those closing remarks, very often filled in things that are completely contrary to the will of God and the way of God. I don't say these things to try to discourage you, fellow believer, from praying. I just trust that it will send you searching and looking in the Bible for things that will help you to more intelligently pray.

And there is found within the Word of God all that we need as far as learning and understanding the will and the way of God. That life that is controlled by the Spirit of God, that life that is yielded to God's will and way and seeks day by day to know more perfectly the will and the way of God, will most certainly have that wisdom and understanding as to how to pray. Definitive answers are needed when God's people pray.

I don't have to tell you, I don't know what the attendance is at your Wednesday night prayer meeting, but if it's like most places that I know, you can have 200 people in a congregation at 11 o'clock service on Sunday morning, and if you get 50 back to your prayer meeting, that's a pretty good percentage. You get back about 25 percent. And these people are gathered together on Sunday morning to fulfill a commitment, a religious commitment, whatever it is.

But they have no, no commitment as to gathering together with God's people and praying. And yet there's a blessed promise. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst.

That wonderful personage of our Lord Jesus Christ has promised where two or three meet together to pray. When they come together in my name, meet unto my name, there am I in the midst. You know, I'm convinced that there was a greater consciousness of that presence of the Lord Jesus with us when we pray, knowing that he's there, knowing that he's a part of that heart exercise to pray, to entreat God, to entreat God to do things, that there again there's that perfect involvement of the Spirit of God in reconciling our wills, our way to the will and the way of God.

So important, I think, that we know this. So J. Bez is an honorable man. And the very fact that he is honorable, I would expect something to follow after a man has such a commendable thing said about him, that he was honorable.

I would expect something good to be said about that man. It doesn't say that his brethren were not honorable, too, but he was more honorable. And he was more honorable for a specific reason.

There was a reason for that. I believe this was a man that God was first in his life. And that's scripture.

The Word of God says that Paul, writing to the church at Colossae, says the Lord Jesus should have the preeminent place in our lives. He should have first place in our lives. And I believe J. Bez was a man that honored God in his life above all else.

That's what made him so distinctively different from his brethren. The very fact that he had a name that was associated with sorrow, grief or sorrow. Grief and sorrow were associated with this man's name, his very birth.

In fact, his mother called him J. Bez, saying, because I bore him with sorrow. But God declared him more honorable, worthy of honor above his brethren. It could be, and I think this is true, that his brethren perhaps failed to take very seriously all the things that God had declared.

There are all kinds of degrees of dedication and loyalty to the cause of Christ, even among the Lord's people. And very often we may become content with just measuring up to the standard that exists in a local church gathering or fellowship. We feel no peer pressure when we've reached a stage in our development as Christians and when we say, I'm on a par with everybody else and we just relax and we're content.

Well, the sad thing about it is that you never stand still. If you're not progressing, there's retrogression. You're losing.

Now, this man was a man, I believe, that recognized that honoring God in his life every day, obedience to the will and the way of God was very important. And so the Spirit of God has very carefully singled him out and said he's more honorable than all of his brethren. He was doing something they weren't doing.

And God's people are to be a peculiar people. That doesn't mean they're eccentric. They're different.

They're different. And where you find faithfulness and loyalty to the cause of Jesus Christ, you're looking into the faces of a minority among professing Christians today. Good old-fashioned faithfulness and loyalty to the things of God, it's become a rarity even among the Lord's people.

The 11 o'clock service on Sunday morning, that suffices for so many. All of the other things that are provided in the way of corporate gatherings, that remembrance meeting around the table, remembering our Lord Jesus Christ. Many would glibly say, Oh, how I love Jesus.

The Word of God tells me if you love me, you will keep my commandments. How could one say he truly loves Christ when he will not avail himself that wonderful divine privilege of breaking the bread and drinking of the cup in remembrance of him that loved us and gave himself for us? Faithfulness and loyalty to the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, J. Bears called on God.

I don't know if he got down on his knees to pray. I think getting on your knees to pray is a good way to pray. There are all sorts of positions that you may occupy in praying.

I found out some people say they lie down upon the bed at night and they pray when they get under the cover. That don't work for me because I wake up sometime and no prayer. I don't even remember what happened.

So I've got to stay on my feet or stay on my knees or do something in order to stay alert so that I don't pass out on the Lord. And I would certainly advise that you assume a position in which alertness. And

don't wait until you're dead tired and say, well, I didn't pray today.

Maybe I'll say a few words and you find that you're so weary that you can't collect your thoughts and it really becomes just a sham. Let's devote that time and the day in which the mind is fresh and which we're able to communicate with the Lord to the very best of our mental ability. Everything is sharp and clear rather than to wait until all the senses are dulled and we've exhausted ourselves doing everything else in this life and finally at the close of a day we say, I just feel guilty if I don't say at least a few words of prayer today.

I don't think it was that way with Jabez. I believe Jabez was a man that, like Daniel of old, he purposed in his heart. There was purpose of heart.

He prayed regularly. He had a time for prayer. And he called on the God of Israel saying, oh, that thou wouldst bless me.

That's his first request. Bless me, Lord. If we were to have a testimony service tonight and say, just share with us how the Lord has blessed you, I'm sure we would hear many things that would just delight our souls as we heard from different ones about how wonderful the Lord has been to them.

Pouring out his bountiful gift. That's what he's talking about. Promises to God's people.

I think about Deuteronomy 7, verse 14. Thou shalt be blessed above all people. He's speaking to his covenant people, the people of Israel.

I'm going to bless you above all the people that are upon the face of the earth. Jabez is consciously aware of that. And he says, Lord, I can't be content with just that general blessing that you're going to bestow upon your people.

Lord, I'm being very specific. Bless me! Bless me! You know, we can be so general in what we pray about. Oh, bless the world.

Bless the world. Be more specific. What is it you really want? What is it you really desire within your heart? That you can say, I want this, but I want it for the glory of God.

You know, many people pray that, and this is something that's very real, because this is how someone analyzes the prayer of a dear brother. He always prays that circumstances will be changed in his life, but he never asks God to change him. You just don't realize how important that is.

Lord, change all these things, but don't bother me. There's no need for any change in my life. I'm all right.

Change the circumstances, but leave me alone. You know, that's ridiculous. And it proves, of course, that there is something wrong with that heart attitude.

Change the circumstances, but I have no intention of changing myself. Anything that I do, anything I ask you for, I want it to be something that will not only bless my life, but it will be a blessing to others. There are no ulterior motives.

And I'm not asking these things that I might consume it upon my own lust. This is not a passionate thing in which passion is involved. There's a real need here, and one in which I discern that great glory and honor could be brought to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So bless me. Indeed, that's very emphatic. Have you prayed lately? Lord, bless me.

Have you thought about that? Lord, bless me. I know you have many, many wonderful spiritual gifts that you pour out upon your people. Bless me with a greater understanding of yourself.

You seem so far away and so mysterious at times. And the Word of God says you are a spirit, and we must worship you in spirit and truth. Lord, reveal yourself.

Bless me with a consciousness of your presence. Could you comfortably ask God to do that? Would that mean something to you? Obviously, it meant a lot to J. Bear. And then he said, and enlarge my border.

I noticed in the Schofield reference Bible that there's reference made to enlarge my coast. The King James Version says coast. I think it really means my goings forth.

I sense maybe he'd been restricted a little bit, and he wasn't having the kind of influence in the community that he felt like that he should have. My goings forth. Increase that influence.

The sphere of my influence upon others. And there again, not to just promote self, but he has a spiritual reason for making this request. I want it all for the glory of God.

And you know, again, that seems selfish. It seems like that's self-centered. He's asking God to indeed do something for him that in the eyes of others, he might become a very prominent figure.

Well, there's nothing wrong with that if the right motive is associated with it. God doesn't put any premium upon being poor and wretched and ignorant. God doesn't put any premium upon those things.

To have the marks of being successful and successful for the glory of God, it's wonderful. This man asks for this, and God put it in his words. And then he says, and that thine hand might be with me.

We're encouraged in song and so many other ways that we take the Lord Jesus Christ with us everywhere we go. I'm reminded from the word of God that Paul says, Christ lives in me. So he's going with you whether you like it or not.

You may not be consciously aware of it, but Christ lives in me. Christ lives in every believer. He's a part of our lives.

He should be the most important part of our lives. But he says, thine hand might be with me. The hand in Scripture speaks of power.

The hand of God's extended power and strength upon his life. John 15 reminds us, the Lord Jesus says, without me you can't do anything. And yet Paul in Philippians 4.13, he says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Those two truths, those companion truths. Without him you can't do anything. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

The hand of God upon me. The Lord is my helper. What a wonderful thought.

You may seek help from all sorts of sources. And it may bring you a lot of comfort. But there should be no comfort any dearer to us than to know that I've enlisted the help of God for my life.

I want God in my life. I want him to control my life. I want him to be my strength.

You know, fortified by the thought that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. That's what he's asking for. In our prayers do we ask God, Lord, I have some things that I'm faced with.

Perhaps there are opportunities. I realize if I try to do this in my own strength, it would probably be a flop. I'm enlisting your help.

I want it to bear the divine mark of God's power working in and through me. I don't want any glory for myself. I want it for you.

Can we pray that way? Lord, your hand and power upon my life. I think there has to be some definitive step taken by the believer, God recognizing that there is commitment. There is that recognition that I need your help in anything that I undertake.

After all, you're the one that created me. I owe my very existence to you. You're the one that saved my soul.

You're the one that is seeking to conform and make me into the image and likeness of your dear, beloved Son. Lord, I want your hand in my life and in my affairs. I don't want to freelance it.

I don't want to try to work out all these things on my own. I need you. And I'm asking you, Lord, to help me.

Your arm is not shortened that you cannot save and that you cannot provide me with all that I need in the way of strength for everything that I undertake in this life. Then his fourth request, that thou would keep me from evil that it may not grieve me. How often in a prayer meeting do you hear someone get up and say, Lord, deliver me from evil.

Deliver me from the power of Satan. Satan is our adversary. He's powerful.

The Word of God says, Be strong in the Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sixth of Matthew. And the disciple says, Teach us to pray. Teach us how to pray the way you pray.

We've heard you pray. You teach us how to pray. That, incidentally, is not the Lord's prayer.

He's teaching the disciples how to pray. He says, Lead us not into temptation. What? But deliver us from evil.

Deliver us out of the power of the evil one who would take us and manipulate us and use us to destroy our Christian witness. You know, sometimes we become proud. And we may think, Oh, I don't need that.

I can take care of that. Well, I've been saved many years. I know the Lord, and I've been going on, and I've made a lot of progress.

I can take care of myself. Oh, no. Oh, no.

To cry out to God, Deliver me from evil. Deliver me from the power of Satan. I know he's lurking around the corner.

I know he looks for every opportunity to discredit the person of Jesus Christ through me, a member of his body. Oh, no. Be bold.

Lord, deliver me from evil. And there's a reason for that. And obviously, this man had experienced it.

J. Bez had experienced it. He said, There's a reason that it may not grieve me. Have you ever been out of fellowship with the Lord? Have you ever gotten cold in heart? Have you gotten away from the Lord? Did it hurt? If you haven't experienced it, I have, and I can tell you, it hurts.

It really hurts. And my, what it does within your soul to realize that, Lord, I'm walking afar off, no longer responsive to your will and way for my life, and my soul is grieved. And you know I can say, Thank you, Lord, for grieving my soul.

Thank you, Lord, that I was still responsive. It hurt, and I needed help. That's the reason we pray one for another.

Sometimes, we need that support of our brothers and sisters in Christ. That's why we're told to pray one for another. When one member suffers, we all suffer together.

When one member is out of fellowship, it affects the fellowship of believers. So to be grieved by the fact that evil, that sin has touched my life, I think it's remarkable that J. S. gives this reason. Lord, deliver me from the evil that's in the world.

Deliver me from the power of Satan. I've been through that experience of having my soul grieved because of sin that has touched my life. I don't want to have that experience again.

I want to avoid that because I've learned that to walk hand in hand with you, Paul says, godliness with contentment is great gain. To be godlike, to be Christlike, to be Spirit-led and directed and filled so that we might indeed serve a wonderful, wonderful Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. We read the bottom line.

God granted him that which he requested. Four requests. The Lord granted him everything he asked for.

But man's heart was right. I know it was. There was no sin in his life.

Psalms 66, again, If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me. Jabez was honorable and right before God. And when he got on his face before God and he cried out to God, Oh God, I want you to bless me.

I want you to enlarge my borders. My sphere of influence in this world in which I'm living doesn't give the reason. God knew the reason.

I want your hand of power upon my life. I want you to deliver me from evil. God granted all of his requests.

Let's think more seriously about our own prayer life. And when we go to that throne of grace and we are encouraged to come there with boldness, with assurance, Lord, I have a terrible weakness in my life. And I know I have this weakness because the Word of God tells me I have a weakness.

But the Spirit of God understands and he's able to enlighten me. And I should be searching your Word and making sure that those requests that I lift up to you are in accordance with your will. Do you know that all of the suffering, all of the sadness that touches human life, that sometimes it is with a purpose? A good purpose.

It is ordered of God. God chastens his own children. It's always with a view that they'd be restored.

We might get on our faces in a prayer meeting and say, Lord, raise brother so-and-so up. God hasn't finished working with brother so-and-so yet. He may be like the prodigal, away in the far country.

God's dealing with him. And we're completely out of order to pray that God would raise him up. God is chastening for a purpose.

There are many things that happen in the course of our lives, and you can look at this for yourself in the Word of God. It's there for a purpose. God put it there for a purpose.

And if we see and discern these things, may God give us that wisdom and understanding to know how to pray more perfectly in accordance with his will. Always with this in mind, the Spirit of God is going to present your prayer perfectly and in accordance with God's will at the throne of grace. The 27th verse says that.

That prayer that you utter, that the Spirit of God taking into account your weakness, and your lack of understanding, he will divinely intervene on your behalf. And your prayer, when it comes to the throne of grace, will be in perfect accord with God's will. We can thank the Spirit of God for this wonderful intercessory work that he does on our behalf.

Now, shall we pray? Our Father in heaven, we do bow in your presence and thank thee for your love to us and for the happy day of fellowship that we've enjoyed together. And for the things that we have been able to share one with another from the word of God. Use these things, we pray thee, to enrich our lives.

Use these things to help us to grow. Use these things, we pray thee, to help us to conform more and more to your will and way for our lives. And grant, we pray thee, that these lives of ours were not our own, we were bought with a price.

We just pray that we'll use our lives to bring glory and honor to the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. This we ask in his name. Our brother will just close with a verse of the Hebrew.

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