

# Jabez

by Bill McLeod

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*Bill McLeod's sermon on Jabez emphasizes the power of fervent prayer and the pursuit of a life that honors God despite challenges.*

**Duration:** 35:10

**Scripture:** John 10:27, Romans 13:11-12, Hebrews 12:1

**Topics:** "Blessing"

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## Description

In this sermon, the pastor shares the story of a godly pastor in New Brunswick, Canada, who prayed for revival for 25 years. Despite his fervent prayers, revival did not come until after he resigned from his church. The pastor emphasizes the importance of persistent prayer and crying out to God for revival. He encourages believers to lay aside sin and live a life of faith, anticipating the imminent return of Christ. The pastor also highlights the need for God's intervention in bringing about revival, while also emphasizing the role of believers in preparing themselves for God's work.

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## Transcript

I hope that you read all of the genealogies, as well as the more interesting portions of the Word of God. Many Christians do not. There are, I counted one time, I think 1,500 different names in these genealogies.

And you know, some day in heaven, somebody may walk up and say to you, well, good morning, my name is Jabez, what's yours? And you will say, Jabez, Jabez, never heard of you. And he will say, didn't you read the Bible? And that will be kind of embarrassing. There are some gems of truth sandwiched in between those names, and we're going to consider one of these tonight from 1 Chronicles chapter 4. And I noticed in the first seven chapters of 1 Chronicles that there are dozens of gems of truth that are sandwiched in between these long lists of names.

A man called Jabez, his genealogy, his biography, is given in two verses. Now, the story of Joseph takes twelve chapters. What a contrast.

But this is a very, very important biography because it's the biography of a man who prayed for and experienced a personal revival. It says, Jabez was more honorable than his brethren. And his mother called his name Jabez saying, because I bore him with sorrow.

The word Jabez meant sorrowful, or sorrow. And then it says, And Jabez called and the God of Israel saying, O that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And what happened? Well, the Lord God granted him that which he requested.

That's the story. What can we learn from it? His mother called his name Jabez, because she bore him with sorrow. But in later years, when she discovered that he was the best of all the children she had, he was more honorable than his brethren were.

Now, I see from the teaching of the Bible that sometimes this may be a cultural thing. The Bereans were more noble than the people in Thessalonica, and so they searched the Scriptures daily. That was kind of a cultural thing.

The Cretans, Paul said, writing to Titus, he said the Cretans are always liars, and evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. That was a cultural sort of thing. So he said, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the face, because these problems were carrying over into the lives of the Christians.

I was in a foreign country one time, and one of the Christians told me, he said, our people, they are liars, they are thieves, they are adulterers, they are wicked sinners. They can look you in the eyes and tell you three lies in a row, and still claim to be a Christian. It was a cultural thing.

But it had to be dealt with from the Word of God. It's not always that. In this case, it was not a cultural thing.

He was more honorable than his brothers were, but they had the same parents, he had the same, they all had the same opportunity, they were taught the same things about God. But he turned out to be better than the others did, because he chose to be different for the glory of God. The Bible says, if a man therefore purge himself from these, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, fit for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

If a man will purge himself from these, make up his mind, he's going to be different for the glory of God. He's not going to be like the run-of-the-mill. He's going to have a life that will honor God or he'll die.

He can't live. At a low level, when he sees the Bible talks about a higher level than he's at currently, he wants to be on the stretch for God. And he isn't satisfied until God does something great in his heart and life, so he can really live the Christian life to the full.

Whitefield used to mourn, he said he was afraid that he might cool off sometime. He never did, thank God. If anything, he got hotter as life went on.

Spurgeon said the one dread he had was that he might become unfaithful. He never did, thank God. They both died at the same age.

Made a tremendous mark on theirs in succeeding generations. But Jabez had the same spirit and concern that these men had, that his life might count for the glory of God. Now then, his mother, later on when she saw him, what kind of a child she had, I'm sure she forgot all about the problems she had in childbirth.

And thank God for what had happened. You know, the song that Doris sang was not by accident. She did not know what I would be speaking on, but as she was singing I was thanking God because she was just

saying some of the things I'll be saying here.

Abraham and his wife. Abraham was a hundred years old. No child.

Oh, a child by Hagar the Egyptian. But no child by his wife. And they wanted a child and God had promised them a child.

But how could it happen? He did not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able also to perform. And then God did it. Oh, they waited a long time and then God gave them Isaac.

And I'm sure after Isaac came, and certainly in heaven centuries later, when they saw the unfolding of the great and glorious plan of God, they thanked God that they had to wait as long as they did to get the kind of a man they got in Isaac. Isaac married and his wife became pregnant and she had twins and didn't know it. And the children were struggling together within her.

So she didn't know it was happening, so she did the right thing. When you don't know what's happening, ask God about it. And God said, two nations are in your womb.

Do you know what that tells me? When there's a great, protracted inner struggle, it's because a double blessing is on the way. Don't despair because you've tried for so long and somehow you still can't get into these truths. The moment will come.

God's moment will come in your life. I despaired because of the awful inward struggle. Later on I could look back and see why it was and thank God for every moment of it, hot though the fire was.

But I prayed a very dangerous prayer as a young Christian. I said, God, I want to be the kind of person you want me to be, whatever the cost. And the dangerous part of my prayer was this.

I said, God, I know you may have to heat the fire seven times hotter than it's usual to be. No matter how loudly I holler, don't ever listen to me. And sometimes when I was complaining, the Lord would say, I'm sorry, I can't hear a thing.

Then Jacob married Rachel and they were childless for years. And Rachel said to Jacob, give me children or else I'll die. And he said, am I God? God withheld this from you.

I'm not God. Finally, after a long, long wait, God gave them Joseph. Do you think when they saw the unfolding of the plan of God, that they minded waiting all those years when God gave them Joseph? The Savior of a civilization? The clearest picture of Jesus Christ we have in the entire Old Testament Scriptures? I'm sure they thanked God.

Do you know something significant happened? What did she say? Give me children or else I die. She died in childbirth with Benjamin, went to heaven. And the centuries rolled by.

Her son Benjamin was the head of a tribe called the tribe of Benjamin. And she saw Jeremiah the prophet, that great man of God. He was a Benjamite.

And the apostle Paul was a Benjamite. Oh, I'm sure she thanked God a thousand times for the difficulty and the death that ensued as a result of the bearing of that child Benjamin. When she saw that Jeremiah and Paul were born of this boy that took her life.

Churchill said, as the war ground came to a close and the Nazis were defeated. It wasn't original with Churchill. He said, the mills of God grind exceedingly slow, but they grind exceedingly small.

And the big trouble in the average Christian life is, I'm in a hurry and God isn't. And we need to learn that. When the war comes, we need to learn that.

Until, until God comes. Habakkuk prayed for revival and then he said, God came. God came.

You'll be able to say that too. On the personal level, the church level. God came.

There were others like this in the Old Testament. If you'll remember, the parents of Samson had no child. They waited for years.

No child was given them. Then God gave them Samson. A lot of people think, because they haven't read the Bible carefully, that Samson was a flash in the pan.

Don't make that mistake. He had problems, yes. But he judged Israel for twenty years and God used him to begin to destroy the historic enemies of the people of God, the Philistines.

His name is mentioned in God's hall of fame in Hebrews chapter 11. You don't get your name registered there unless you're a man of faith. A lot of people think that Samson always had this great strength.

But the Bible indicates there were times when the Spirit of God came on him. The Hebrew means it overpowered him. In other words, the power was not always there.

Do you remember when three thousand soldiers of Judah came and they had to ask this man's permission to bind him to deliver him to the Philistines? They'd ask his permission if you flee. He said, I'll let you bind me if you promise not to kill me yourself. They promised.

He let them bind him with new ropes. And the Philistines saw him and they shouted. And the Spirit of God overpowered him.

And the ropes dropped off him like flax melts in the fire. And he slew a thousand men. And you know something people? He was one of the humblest men that ever walked the earth.

Does the Bible say that? Oh yes it does. He was walking with his parents in the vineyards of Timnath. And being young and strong, there was a way out ahead.

His parents were in behind. And a young lion roared on him. And he took this lion, killed it with his bare hands, and threw it over the bush.

But the Bible says he never told his father or his mother. Think of that. You know what Spurgeon's comment on that was? If the average modern Christian was to kill a mouse, he would publish it in the Gospel Gazette.

And then some weeks later when they were coming back through the same path, he was ahead of his parents again. He turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. There was honey in the carcass.

He took the honey in his hands and waited on the path for his parents to come. And when they came he shared the honey with them. But it says he never told them where he got it.

Do you know why? Because he was afraid they'd want to look at the carcass of the lion. They'd ask some questions and they'd find out that he did it. Now people, that's humility.

God gave them Samson after a long, long wait. Hannah had no children. Was so distressed and upset.

Waited for years. Then God gave her Samuel, one of the greatest prophets Israel ever had. Again, do you suppose she minded waiting all that time? I don't think so.

Zacharias and Elizabeth waited for years. No child. They were both well stricken in years.

Past the time of childbearing and God gave them a son, John the Baptist. Do you think they minded waiting when they saw who he was? What God did through him? Filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb? Jesus Christ said, there hasn't risen a greater prophet than John the Baptist. But they waited a long time.

And God's greatest blessings dear people, they don't come immediately. They come after a period of time. And sometimes it's a long wait.

In New Brunswick, Canada, a pastor, a godly pastor, he prayed for 25 years for revival. His wife said he spent hours and hours crying, shedding tears, crying to God for revival and it never came. Finally, he resigned the church and he left.

And in less than a month, a glorious revival hit the church. Spread for hundreds of miles around. Hundreds of people found Christ as their personal savior.

When he heard about it, do you think he minded the 25 years? I'm sure not. Listen people, give God a chance. Cry to God day and night, but give God a chance.

So, Jabe was more honorable than his brethren. And he prayed. Do you know why he prayed? Do you know why he prayed this prayer? Because he was sick to death of a ho-hum, hum-drum type of life as a believer in the living God.

Nothing was happening. No reality there. No power of God in the right hand or the left.

Seemingly very little if any answers to prayer. He couldn't live that way. Like Billy Bray said, I was born in the fire and I can't live in the smoke.

And he was something like that. He had to see things happen. He would rather die than go on the way he was.

Yet there are thousands of Christians and no doubt some here tonight, they're perfectly satisfied. Nothing's happening in their life. There's no reality.

There's no power. They never went and sold to Christ. They don't see any really concrete answers to prayer and they couldn't care less.

They go right on the way they are. I don't know how a real Christian can ever do that or live that way. If you have the Spirit of God living in your heart, how can you be that kind of person? How can you live that way when the world's in the mess, the shape it's in today? Do you realize that in India, in some states in India, there's only one church in every 30,000 villages? Do you realize even in a country like Belgium,

there are 170 towns with over 10,000 people, there's not a single evangelical witness? And why is our world like that? It's like that because we Christians, we people here in America, we're so complacent.

We don't want to be stirred up to a certain point, yes, but not to the point of absolute reality. Jabez couldn't live that way. And he called on God.

Oh, he said, that thou wouldest bless me indeed. There's not enough O in our praying. I read a book one time on conversational praying.

I could agree with some things that were said, but I had to take issue with some other things that were said in the same book because they were not really biblical. The idea was when you pray, the writer said, you're not supposed to keep interjecting the name of God, Lord, God, Christ, and so on when you're praying. You address Him once, Lord, He hears.

You don't have to go interjecting His name in your prayer. You don't have to talk loudly when you're praying or groan or moan or anything. Oh no.

You just talk to God as you might talk to a grocer in a store. Do you mind if I use the word nonsense? In 1 Chronicles 17, David prayed a prayer. There are 17 verses in his prayer.

Pardon me, there are 17 references to God, Lord, God, over and over again. He prayed with such intensity of heart and being in a prayer that isn't three minutes long. In chapter 9 of the book of Daniel, Daniel prayed the same kind of a prayer, just absolutely filled with, oh God hear, oh God forgive, oh Lord hearken and do.

He cried to God with all his heart. And there are 19 references to God in a prayer that isn't three minutes long. Neither of these prayers are conversational prayers.

There are times when you don't talk to God like you talk to a man behind a counter in a store. Jesus Christ, the Bible says, He prayed with strong crying and tears. Unto Him that was able to save Him out of death.

And He was heard because He feared. But that's how He prayed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Somebody said the average Christian prays like a jackrabbit nibbling at a cabbage. He says His prayers, but he doesn't really call on God. Jabez called on the God of Israel.

He knew that Israel's God was there. Maybe he was thinking of that night when Jacob wrestled all night in prayer with God. Do you think that was conversational praying? In the morning the angels let me go, the day is breaking.

And Jacob cried, I will not let you go unless you bless me. That's not exactly conversational praying. Now I think that's probably what Jabez had in mind.

He called on the God of Israel. Oh God. God, you God, you changed Jacob into Israel.

You heard his prayer. He prayed all night. Oh God, hear me.

And God heard him. What was his prayer? Oh God, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed. Oh God, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed.

I say it again, people, if God doesn't do it, it'll never be done. You can't talk yourself into salvation, and you can't talk yourself into a holy life either. It's something God has to do.

We have to meet with God. We have to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us, pick us up in due time. He'll do that if we seek Him.

You remember what it says in Jeremiah? God said, You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. That's what God is waiting for. People that'll search and seek for Him with all their heart, like Jabez did here.

Oh God, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed. It reminds me of Paul in Ephesians chapter 3. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you. So I say it again, if God doesn't do it, it will never be done.

Revival, God has to do it. And yet we have to work with God. We have to let God prepare us.

We have to yield to God's overtures by the Spirit of God and through the Word of God. And as we do, the blessing begins to widen, and sometimes it gets over the riverbanks, and then we call it a revival. Oh, that Thou wouldst bless me.

Ah, you know what that tells me? It's not wrong to pray for yourself. Sometimes we think it's selfish, you shouldn't pray for yourself, you should always pray for others. Sometimes the reason I can't pray effectively for others is because I've never prayed effectively for myself.

And there are times when I need to shut everything else out of my life and lay my heart bare before God, the whole mess, and if necessary, spend hours in the presence of God, beseeching and begging God to search my innermost being, to show me the problems there, things that need to be dealt with, things that need to be made right with other people. God will do that. The heart's deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, Jeremiah said, who can know it? You don't know your own heart.

You may think you understand yourself, you don't really. Only God knows the human heart. There are depths there of wickedness that only God knows.

So what does it say in Jeremiah 17? The heart's deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts. Hence the prayer in Psalm 139, Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me, try me. Do you ever notice how that psalm begins? It begins by saying, O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Why then does he pray this prayer later on, search me and know me? Because it's true enough, dear people, that God knows all about you and I. He's got a history down backwards.

He knows it all. But I need to know what God knows. You need to know what God knows about you.

And we may never know. We may never know. We probably will never know until we ask God to show us.

And God will do that. It isn't wrong to pray for yourself. O that thou wouldst bless me in thee.

And that word expresses to me the intensity of his feeling, his desire. His whole soul was wrapped up in his prayer. We can pray that way when we're facing death.

We can pray that way when some loved one is facing death. Seemingly we can't pray that way otherwise. That's a tragedy.

And enlarge my coasts. Do you suppose he wanted more land? Oh no. No, it wasn't that.

I don't know if he was a farmer or what he was. We're not really told. You know what he wanted, people? He wanted influence with others.

You know, when Spurgeon first became a preacher, he almost died waiting for the first convert. He was always inquiring, has anybody found Christ? Anybody been saved yet? And one day someone told him there was an old lady living in a cottage and she said she'd found Christ in one of his sermons the previous Sunday. He went tearing down the house and he said, is it true? Is it really true? What is true? Did you get saved last Sunday? She said, yes dear, I did.

He was only 15 or 16, you know. Until the end of his life, the tears would always come to his eyes when somebody came and said, I found Christ. He lived for that.

Oh God that you'd enlarge my coasts. Does your life have any influence with other people? You can talk about personal revival all you want, but people, if it doesn't issue in your life having some influence with others, it's phony. And some of us aren't even thinking in terms like this.

We're just thinking in terms of having more peace, more joy, and getting rid of some garbage perhaps. But God's thinking of much more than that. God's thinking of reaching people out there in the world through your life.

Enlarge my coasts. Never quit praying that kind of a prayer. Enlarge my coasts.

And that your hand might be with me. What do you think of when you think of the hand of God being with you? Well, all that some Christians can think about is security. They think of that verse in John 10, and it's part of the Word of God.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man take them out of my hand. Nobody can pluck them out of my hand.

That's all that some Christians think about. What about this? In Isaiah 1, 25, God said, I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tins. What about that? Ever prayed that kind of a prayer? God, take all the dross, all the tins, all that's cheap, all that's worthless, all that's hindering, all that's sinful, all that brings your spirit, take it all out of my life.

Isaiah 1, 25, I will turn my hand upon you, and purely, purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tins. Wouldn't it be great to get rid of all the junk? Hebrews 12 said, let's lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so evilly beset us, and let us run with patience the race that's set before us. Paul said, in that knowing the time, that now it's high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. People, we've lived for self and Satan too long.

Let's cast off the works of darkness, let's put on the armor of light, let us walk honestly, it says, as in the day. Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering, sex, sin, and wantonness, licentious living. But he says, put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

Empty out the closet where you've got things, you know, to satisfy the flesh, and start feeding the Spirit. May that our Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts, that your hand might be with me. I read something else about the hand of God in the book of Acts.

It says, in the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. Ever think of that, in relation to the hand of God in your life? A great number believed because the hand of God was with them? Well, that's what we need to see. People tell God when you pray, God, I'd rather die than go on the way I am.

I must change for the glory of God. I want a life that's pure and clean, filled with the Holy Spirit, obedient to God. The kind of life God can honor and bless and use.

Let's get serious about it, if we never have. And that He would keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. You listen to that, you know the man is really converted.

Because if a man can sin and not feel badly about it, he's probably not saved at all. He was grieved when he sinned. Are you grieved when you sin? Or do you slough it off? Laugh about it.

Fools make a mock at sin. But God is not mocked, Paul said. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

He that sows to his flesh, shall the flesh reap corruption. You'll get what you put into it, you see. Keep me from evil.

I came across that beautiful prayer in Psalm 119. Order my steps in Thy Word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. My dear people, I pray that every morning.

Every morning I call on God, sometimes with tears, God, keep me from evil today. The Bible says He will keep the feet of His saints. You don't have to worry about your feet if your heart's right.

He'll keep the feet of His saints. For by strength shall no man prevail. Just make sure your heart is right.

Keep looking unto Jesus. Walk in the Spirit. And tell God daily, God, don't let any iniquity have dominion over me.

And listen, don't believe the devil when he tells you you can't change. When he tells you you've struggled with a sin for ten years, you can't change. I have no doubt there's people here tonight that have been listening to that song of the devil's.

You can't change. You've tried, it doesn't work. You can't change.

Oh listen, God can change anybody. God can change the worst. I read a beautiful story out of Africa.

A man from England, I believe it was, was in Africa. He was speaking. He said that his interpreter was the brightest Christian he'd ever seen.

He said the Lord just seemed to beam out of his eyes. He said it was just a delight to watch him. The joy of God.

And then they were walking through the village. And there were three men sitting under a tree. And this visitor said they were so evil, I instinctively drew back.

And the missionary walking with them noticed what had happened and said, you see that man in the center? He said yes. He said he looks to me to be the worst of them all. Well he said that man is a wicked, wicked sinner.

One of the worst we've ever seen. He's a brother to your interpreter who used to be just like him. What happened? People? He met Jesus.

The life changer. He can change you if you'll let it. But you have to believe him.

He that comes to God must believe that he is. And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently, diligently seek him. He'll change you, but give him time.

Maybe tonight you need to respond at the invitation. Get into the prayer room. Get down before God.

Get honest with God. Make this man's prayer your prayer. Keep thee from evil, he said, that it may not grieve me.

Paul said, the Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and he will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

Amen. Oh yes, God wants us to pray this kind of prayer. Keep me from evil.

You see this man knew something about his own wicked heart. He knew how easy it was to sin, to think evil, to say evil, to do evil. He knew how easy it was.

And he despaired of changing himself, so he called on God the life changer. How does it all end? It says, and God granted him that which he requested. You know what? It all happened.

It all happened. Every aspect of his prayer was answered by God. And think of this.

It was long before Calvary, long before Pentecost. We live on this side. The Spirit of God has come.

We have a completed Bible. Jabez probably never had a page of the Bible. Oral traditions abounded, I suppose.

God did it way back then. You think God is any different today? Oh no. You're God's child.

He loves you. You'll never know. Neither will I. We'll never know how God loves us, because his love is infinite.

It's the love of God. There's something in Zephaniah, the last chapter, that I sometimes wonder about. I call it God's lullaby.

And the picture I get is of God with all his children, all his children from all the ages, probably hundreds of millions in the aggregate total. And God has them as a baby, pressed against his breast. And he's singing to them.

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will say. He will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love.

He will joy over thee with singing. You're going to hear God's lullaby someday, when God has us all pressed to his breast out there in eternity somewhere, and he sings to us a love song. Listen.

You think God can ever forget you? The devil would like you to believe it, but don't ever believe it. God said, can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not forget the son of her womb? Yes, God said, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, God said, you're graven on the palms of my hand.

God is only to look at his hands. And he thinks of you, and he thinks of me. Would you pray his prayer?

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