

The Prayer of Jabez

by Chuck Smith

The true purpose of prayer is to cooperate with God in accomplishing His eternal purposes, not to get something from Him.

Duration: 36:14

Scripture: Psalm 5:1

Topics: "Prayer Of Jabez"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker acknowledges the presence of evil in the world and the struggles that people face in trying to be good. They mention that the world is currently being overcome by evil and that even those who desire to be good are being influenced by it. The speaker also highlights the pain and grief caused by the prevailing evil in the world. They emphasize the importance of keeping oneself in the love of God and harkening diligently to His voice in order to receive His blessings. The sermon references Bible verses from Jude, Deuteronomy, and Psalms to support the message.

Transcript

And now let's turn to Psalm 5 and we will read that psalm in its entirety. I'll read the first and the odd-numbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the even-numbered verses.

And shall we stand as we read God's Word? Give ear to my words, O Lord. Consider my meditation. Harken unto the voice of my prayer, my King and my God, for unto Thee will I pray.

For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Thee. Thou shalt destroy them that speak falsehood. The Lord will abhor the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

But as for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy, and I will, and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness because of my enemies. Make Thy way straight before my face.

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth. Their inward part is very wickedness. Their throat is an open sepulcher.

They flatter with their tongue. Destroy Thou them, O God. Let them fall by their own counsels.

Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against Thee. But let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice. Let them never shout for joy, because Thou defendest them.

Let them also that love Thy name be joyful in Thee. For Thou, Lord, will bless the righteous. With favor will Thou compass him as with a shield.

Let's pray. Father, we are thankful that You have promised that when we called, You would hear us. You would answer us.

You would show us great and mighty things. Lord, we ask that today Your Holy Spirit might instruct us in the subject of prayer. We ask, Lord, that we'll come to a richer understanding of the purpose of prayer, that we, Lord, might exercise this tremendous privilege that You have granted to us, that we might, Lord, join with You through prayer in the accomplishing of Your eternal purposes here on earth.

So teach us now, Lord, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

We move into the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. And the book of Chronicles actually begins with Adam and the families and the generations that would bring us down to this particular time in the history of the nation, which probably was about the time of the return from captivity. There are those that think that Ezra perhaps was one of the scribes that kept these records or wrote this record of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

And because the first nine chapters are taken up with just a lot of names and names that you cannot pronounce and names that mean nothing to us today, we have decided to skip the first nine chapters as far as required reading and encourage you to begin with chapter nine. It's the story of Saul, and it's really sort of the final battle of Saul, who was the first king over Israel. The Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, beginning with Saul.

So we'll study tonight chapters nine through two twelve. And that will be our study this evening. First Chronicles nine through twelve.

This morning, however, we're going to go to chapter four and not going to bore you with a lot of names. It's interesting that as he is chronicled, giving a chronicle of the tribes and so forth, he's actually now giving you the genealogy of the tribe of Judah. And as he is talking about the tribe of Judah, suddenly he gives us the name of a man, and then he stops and gives us background on this man.

The only place he is mentioned in the Bible is in the ninth and tenth chapter of First Chronicles. All we know about him, we discover in these two chapters. But yet, so remarkable was he, and so remarkable was his prayer life, that the author saw fit to sort of, just when he gets to this name, give you a little background concerning him and concerning his prayer.

So we read in verse nine of chapter four, And Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. And his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bore him with sorrow. And Jabez called upon God of Israel, saying, O that you would 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 God granted him that which he requested. Now about all we know of him is that he was the son probably of Kuz, but he was more honorable than his brothers. His mother named him Jabez because of the grief in which she bore him.

Now whether or not it was just an extremely difficult pregnancy, whether or not it was a difficult delivery, or perhaps while she was bearing him, because it would seem that he was the youngest of the brothers, perhaps her husband died. So that she had great sorrow in carrying this child, knowing that he would never know his father. Whatever it was, we are not told.

We are only told that when he was born, his mother gave to him this name grief. That's sort of a tough thing to be, you know, saddled with for all of your life. What's your name? Grief.

You know, but that's the name that he got from his mother because of the grief or the sorrow that accompanied the birth of this child. We know that he was a man of prayer, that he called upon the God of Israel. Now I think that prayer is probably one of the most misunderstood issues in the Bible.

I think that most people look upon prayer as a means of getting something from God. And we usually pray when we want something from God. But I do not believe that the true purpose of prayer was that we might get things from God.

I think that prayer was ordained by God as a means whereby we could cooperate with God in the accomplishing of his eternal purposes here on earth. The purpose of prayer really was never to get my will done. The purpose of prayer was to get God's will done.

You see, God doesn't exist for my pleasure, nor does he exist to do my bidding. I exist for God's pleasure, and I exist to do God's bidding. Now I'm aware of the many wonderful promises that are given to us in prayer that might cause us to believe that God has given to us this sort of open sesame kind of a thing, that we can have anything that we desire.

Jesus said, therefore I say unto you, whatsoever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive it and you shall have it. Again he said, and all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing you shall receive. In John 14, 13, Jesus said, whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do that the Father might be glorified in the Son.

In chapter 15, 7, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. In John 16, 23, in that day you shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

And finally, in John 16, 24, hitherto you have asked nothing in my name. Ask that you may receive that your joy may be full. Now I will confess that reading these verses of scripture, it seems like the Lord is saying, look, prayer is just a means by which you can have anything you desire, as long as you just believe when you pray.

But I think that it is extremely important that we look at those that Jesus was giving these broad promises to. You see, he didn't say this to the multitudes. He didn't say this to just the crowds of people.

When he made these tremendous promises, he was speaking to his disciples. Now what constitutes being a disciple? Jesus said, if you would come after me, you must deny yourself and take up the cross and follow me. In other words, these tremendous promises that are given to us concerning prayer are in their promises to the person who really has denied self.

In other words, my prayers would not be selfish in motivation. I've denied self. I've taken up the cross.

My interest is in the kingdom of God and the bringing of the kingdom of God to the earth. Not in the developing of my kingdom or my resources, but it's actually seeing the purposes of God fulfilled and accomplished. I believe that true prayer begins in the heart of God, in the purposes of God.

That he puts those purposes in my heart and that I in turn then express them to God in prayer and thus the cycle is complete. As I take the purposes of God that he's planted in my heart and I make them my prayer, the cycle is complete and God then can operate as he desires to operate in the accomplishing of his eternal purposes here on earth. God wants my interest to be aligned with his interest and thus our prayers should be concerning the things of the kingdom of God and those things that God is desiring.

In 2nd Chronicles, we'll get to this in a few weeks, they're in the 15th chapter where the prophet Hananiah came to King Asa. He said, don't you know that the eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the entire earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards him? And that's the real key of prayer, a heart that is perfect towards God. So let's look at the prayer of Jabez.

We know that he was a man of prayer, he called upon the Lord. And looking at the first petition, he said, oh that you would bless me indeed. You say Chuck, you just blew it.

You just told us that prayer wasn't to be of selfish motivation. And yet his first request is that God would bless him. Well, let me just say this, God wants to bless you.

God desires to bless you. In Psalm 81, God is lamenting the fact that he couldn't bless the people of Israel, though he desired to. And he was lamenting the fact that he wanted to bless them, but couldn't.

He said, oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways. For I should have subdued their enemies, I would have turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord would have submitted themselves unto him, and their time would have endured forever.

I would have fed them also with the finest of wheat, and with the honey out of the rock, and I should have satisfied them. You see, God said, oh how I wanted to bless them. If they had only hearkened unto me, if they had only walked in my ways.

But they had not hearkened to God. They had not walked in his ways, and thus he could not bless them. Thus when I pray, oh Lord, bless me indeed.

My real prayer is, Lord, help me to walk in your ways. Lord, help me to listen to what you say to me. Give me a listening ear.

Help me, Lord, to hearken to you, and to walk in your ways. Because as I hearken to God, and walk in his ways, then God can bless me as he desires too. Jesus said, fear not little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

God wants to do good things for you, but it takes being a part of his little flock, in order that God might give to you the kingdom. In Deuteronomy chapter 28, the Lord said, it shall come to pass, if you will hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord your God, and observe and do all of his commandments, which I command you this day, that Jehovah your God will set you on high above all of the nations of the earth. And all of these blessings shall come on you.

They'll overtake you, if you will hearken to the voice of Jehovah your God. You will be blessed in the city. You'll be blessed in the field.

Your children will be blessed. And the fruit of the ground, the fruit of the cattle, your cows, your flocks, and your sheep will increase. You will be blessed when you come in.

You'll be blessed when you go out. You'll be blessed every direction, if you will hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord. If you will observe and do all that he has commanded you.

So when I say, oh Lord bless me indeed, I'm actually saying, Lord help me to hearken diligently to your voice. Lord help me to observe and to do all that you have commanded me, so that I might be in that place where you can do the wonderful things for me that you long to do, because you love me. In Jude chapter, oh chapter one, there's only one chapter.

In Jude verse 24. 21. In Jude 21.

He said, keep yourself in the love of God. What he is saying is, keep yourself in that place, where God who loves you, can do for you the things he longs to do, because of that love. When you love someone, you want to kind of display that love by giving to them special things.

Doing special things for them, to show that love. God loves you. He wants to give you special things.

He wants to do special things for you, but it's important that you keep yourself in that place, where God can do these things. Keep yourself in the love of God. So Jabez is saying, Lord bless me indeed.

That is, Lord help me to hearken diligently to your word. Help me Lord to walk in your ways. Help me Lord to obey and to do the commandments that you have given.

The blessings are conditional upon my relationship with him. His second prayer was, Lord enlarge my coast. Now that isn't, Lord give me a bigger house.

Give me a larger farm. Give me more things Lord, another car. No, that isn't what it's about.

Lord enlarge my vision. We so often only have a vision for, it's narrow, it's just for our church. And when we pray, we often are just praying, Lord bless our church.

Lord enlarge my vision. Help me to see beyond the borders of our church. Help me to see Lord, the church of Christ universal.

Help me Lord to see every work that is being accomplished for you. May I see beyond denominational limitations. May I see Lord, the whole body of Christ.

Enlarge my coast. Enlarge my vision Lord. I don't want to have just a narrowed vision, but I want my my vision to be enlarged Lord, to see the whole body of Christ.

And in that regards, I think that we need to be in prayer for the Catholic Church right now, which is going through such a tremendous trial because of the problems that have arisen over the priesthood and the problems that do arise with celibacy. We need to be in prayer for the Catholic Church. It's under severe persecution right now.

And there are many godly people who love the Lord and we need to be in prayer for them. And I think that God enlarge my vision. Don't let me be so narrow-minded that I can only just see what you're doing, you know, in our fellowship here.

But may I Lord have a burden and a heart for the whole ministry of the church of Jesus Christ universal. Lord help me to see beyond just my family. Help me Lord that when I pray, I'm not just praying for my own personal needs, but enlarge my vision.

Enlarge Lord my coast and let me have a broader vision and thus Lord a broader burden for the whole body of Christ, for the whole work of the Holy Spirit through the world. And then he's praying Lord that your hand would be with me. Lord keep your hand upon my life.

Let me never stray Lord from you. Hold me tight Lord. Guide me Lord with your hand.

Hold my hand Lord. Lead me in your ways. And Lord the hand of your protection may it be upon my life.

Watch over me. The Lord said through Isaiah, fear not for I am with thee. Be not dismayed.

I am your God. I will strengthen thee. I will help thee.

Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Lord keep your hand upon me. And surely that should be our prayer.

Lord I want your hand to be upon my life. Never let me stray away from you Lord, but keep me close. Hold me tight.

And then the petition that the Lord would keep him from evil. We are living in a very evil world. And the natural bent of our flesh is toward evil.

In the model prayer that Jesus gave to his disciples, one of the petitions was deliver us from evil. The prevalence of evil in the world today. The availability of evil in the world today.

How important that that is one of our petitions. Lord keep me from evil. Keep my life pure.

Keep my heart and my mind pure. Keep me Lord from evil. Why did he want to be kept from evil? He said, so that it would not grieve me.

Now his name is grief. And so he said, Lord keep me from, keep grief from evil so he won't be grieved. Keep me from evil so that I would not be grieved.

You know, there are so many wonderful positive aspects to being in the ministry that I hate to even mention a negative aspect of the ministry, but there are negative aspects also. And one of the negative aspects of the ministry is the grief that we have to deal with, with people who have become involved in evil things. And they come with their grief, with their sorrows, with their pain, with their hurt.

And you have to try to lead them and help them through that grief and through that pain that is resulted from the evil. And so unfortunately in our position as a minister, we get exposed to a lot of the consequences of evil in people's lives as we have to deal with the evil that has resulted from their sin. Lord keep us from evil that it will not be a grief to us.

I see the pain that evil has brought into our world. You know what a beautiful world this could be if it weren't for evil. What a beautiful nation it would be if it weren't for evil.

What a beautiful place to live if it weren't for evil. We thank the Lord that one of these days and we believe very soon the world is going to be delivered from evil. But right now evil seems to be triumphing over good.

We see the whole bent of the human race being swallowed up by evil. And we see those that are desiring to be good sort of being overcome by the pressures of evil in the world in which we live. And we ourselves really are suffering pain because of the evil of others.

It's a grief to the world, the evil that prevails. Now our president talked about evil and how that we as a nation we're going to make war against the evil that is in the world to try to destroy the evil that is in our world. That's a very noble desire.

But the evil that is in the world will never be conquered by military might. The evil that is in the world is a moral evil and it can only be conquered in a power of God's spirit in your life or in the world. It is only God's spirit that can really conquer over evil that is in the world today.

And though it is a noble desire it can't be done by military force. The Bible tells us not to be overcome with evil but overcome evil with good. God said to the nation of Israel through Isaiah the prophet, ah sinful nation, a people that is laden with iniquity, a family of evildoers, children that are corrupt, you have forsaken the Lord.

And then God asked, why should you be stricken anymore? They were suffering. They have been smitten. Their enemies were conquering over them.

And God says to them, why should you be smitten anymore? Why should you grieve anymore? And the idea is turn from your wickedness, turn from your evil. Come now let's reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins are as scarlet, you can be as white as snow.

Though they be red as crimson, you can be as white as wool. And God talked about how that they were foolish. They didn't stop to consider the consequences of the things that they were doing.

And you need to do that. When you do evil, there are consequences. There is grief that is going to come.

And you need to know that. And you need to take that into consideration when you consider doing something that is evil. There are consequences that must be faced.

Lord, keep me from evil, that it would not be a grief to me. God said the way of the transgressor is hard. We read finally concerning Jabez, and God granted him that which he requested.

Which means that he was blessed of God. It means that God enlarged his coast. It means that the hand of God was upon him.

And God kept him from evil. Now, John tells us that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if he hears us, then we have the petitions that we have asked of him.

Is it God's will to bless us? Yes, it is. But as we said, there are conditions to the blessings. It is hearkening to the voice of God.

It is hearkening diligently to the voice of God. It is walking in the ways of God. It is obeying the commands of God.

Is it God's will that we have a broader vision? Oh, yes, by all means. That we won't be myopic, but we will have this broad vision, a heart for the world. Is it God's will that his hand be upon us? Oh, yes.

God wants to put his hand upon your life today. He wants to hold you tight. He wants to guide you in his ways.

He wants to watch over and protect you. Is it God's will that we be kept from evil? Even the question itself, you know, doesn't need to even have an answer. Of course.

That's God's purpose and desire for each of our lives, that we would walk in purity, that we would walk in holiness, that we would be free from evil, because God knows that evil brings grief. And God doesn't want grief to come to your life. And so the prayer of Jabez, because it was according to the will of God, God answered and God gave to Jabez those things which he requested.

And even so, God wants to answer our prayers today. And if our prayers are in harmony with his desires, we can be assured that God will answer our prayer. Let's pray.

Father, we ask your blessings. We ask, Lord, that you would bless your people. That you, Lord, would help us to get in that place where we can receive the blessings.

Help us, Lord, to hearken diligently to your voice. Help us, Lord, to walk in your ways. Help us, Lord, to obey your commandments, to walk in love, to walk in the Spirit, to have, Lord, a forgiving, loving heart.

Lord, we do pray that your hand would be upon our lives. We pray, Lord, that you would broaden our vision. And, Lord, especially in these days, keep us from evil.

That you, Lord, might be able to do the things in our lives that you want to do. That you might be able, Lord, to accomplish through our lives your purposes, your plans. Your wishes.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here this morning to pray for you.

It may be that God's hand has not been upon your life of late. That you've sort of removed yourself from that place of blessing. It may be that you're experiencing grief and sorrow because of some evil that you've allowed to happen or you perpetrated.

And you'd like to get back to that place of God's blessing. You'd like again that knowledge that God's hand is upon your life, watching over, protecting, keeping you, holding you. You'd like God to just work and enlarge your vision.

These men are here to pray for you. And as soon as we're dismissed, if you'll just come on down to the front, they'll be happy to pray for you today. That the Spirit of God might work mightily in your life and bring you into the place of blessing.

The place where God can do all of the wonderful things he desires to do because he loves you far more than you could ever imagine. And so, get right with God. And don't be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.

The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

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