

The Man Who Got God's Attention

by Greg Locke

The sermon 'The Man Who Got God's Attention' teaches that we should pray for God's blessing, enlargement of our coast, and protection from evil, and that we should let God lead us in our lives.

Duration: 25:48

Scripture: Romans 12:1

Topics: "Surrender To God", "Prayer And Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God's will and praying for four specific principles. He shares a story about a preacher who preached on surrender and full-time Christian service, and a young crippled man who was deeply moved by the message. The preacher affirms that he meant every word he preached and encourages the young man to believe that God wants to bless and use him. The sermon highlights the transformative power of surrendering to God and living according to His will.

Transcript

All right, open your Bibles please to 1st Chronicles chapter number 4, the 4th chapter of the book of 1st Chronicles, please. And look at verse number 9 with me. The Bible says, And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren.

And his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bear him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And God granted him that which he requested.

We'll bring you a simple message this morning entitled, The Man Who Got God's Attention. Thank you very much. You may be seated.

Let's have our simple word of prayer. Father, thank you so much for this time. I pray that you would use once again the Word of God in the hearts and lives of people.

And Father, I pray that the Word of God would be bold, it would be stirring. And Lord, that it would not just simply stir us, but dear God, it would change us. And you would use the testimony and the life of a man by the name of Jabez to challenge our hearts, I pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.

If you're going to be honest this morning, if you're anything like me, many times when you read your Bible, you can get to certain books like Leviticus or the book of Ezekiel, and you have the vision of Ezekiel up in the wheel. Or you can get, like I am saying this morning, to the first four chapters of the book of 1 Chronicles. Sometimes you can get very, very bogged down in many of the names that are mentioned.

For the first four chapters of Chronicles, we have this person begat this person, this person begat this person. And by the time you get to the end of chapter 4, you don't know who begat who, why they begat them, or what the word begat even means. And sometimes you can get very discouraged in your Bible study.

But I want to remind you this morning, ladies and gentlemen, that we're not dealing with just a Sunday School manual. We're not dealing with the Sports Illustrated or the Reader's Digest. We are dealing with the perfectly preserved, inspired, infallible, indestructible Word of Almighty God.

And so as fundamentalists, we believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. That simply means that every Word of God is perfect, every Word of God is pure, and every Word of God has been placed there for our admonition and for our study and for our learning. And so I contend this morning that words and even names in the Bible mean something.

But I want you to notice in 1 Chronicles 4, in verses 1 through 8, there are 44 names, which I will not, by the way, take time to read, but there are 44 names that there is no description given of them whatsoever. As a matter of fact, the first three chapters of 1 Chronicles is completely impacted and chock full of multisyllabic name after multisyllabic name, and they're hard to pronounce, they're hard to spell, they're hard to read, and sometimes we can get the idea, Lord, why in the world did you even see fit to put such crazy things in the Bible? But yet when we get to 1 Chronicles 4, verses 9 and 10, the Holy Spirit of God saw fit to stop what He was writing, what He was inspiring this dear writer to write, to stop and put down in two verses of the holy writ of the Word of God, one man's life, his testimony, and especially, expressly, his prayer life, and I believe we can learn and we can greatly be challenged from the life of a man that many people know absolutely nothing about in their Bible, this fellow by the name of Jabez. Let your eyes fall to verse 9 if you would please.

1 Chronicles 4, 9, the Bible says, And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren. Now, the word honorable has the idea of faithful. He was a second miler.

You told Jabez to carry one sack of taters, he carried two. And so here was a man that always went the extra mile, and so the Holy Spirit saw fit to write that he was an honorable or a more faithful person than his brethren. And his mother called his name Jabez.

Here's the reason. Saying, because I bear him with sorrow. So right at the end of verse 9, right at the get-go of this man's life, we see that his future looked pretty bleak.

Here is a man whose name, one who brings pain or sorrow to another. Now, let's take the American culture in which we live. My name is Gregory.

In Latin, my name simply means or is described as meaning, that is a watchful one. But you know what? Most people don't say, you know, this is evangelist, watchful one. What my name means to you doesn't mean a whole lot in our culture.

You say Greg, or you say Gregory, or as my granddaddy used to say, call me Gregg. But not very many people refer to me as what my name means. But in this culture, in the Hebrew culture, in Jabez's day, in your Old Testament Bible, names or the meaning of names could make you or they could break you.

And so, can you imagine this young man at his public elementary school? Can you imagine him walking around and all the kids snooting up their noses and saying, hey, there's the painful one. There's the one who brings sorrow. There's the one who brings pain and heartache and discouragement to other people.

Now, Josephus, the great Jewish historian, he said the main reason more than likely that Jabez was named this by his mother of all people was simply because during the pregnancy, his father died in a battle. And no doubt, according to the context, he was more honorable than his other brethren. So we do see from the Bible that he had other siblings, brothers and sisters perhaps.

And so here's a lady who now has no husband, who the children now have no father. She has a financial crisis. Obviously, he's a pain to her physical body just from the birth.

And so all of a sudden, she raises her hands and her voice to God and she said, here's Jabez, Lord, this one who has brought pain and sorrow, this unwanted, burdened-down person. And you can imagine the stigma that Jabez had in his life for many, many years. Many people agree that he was probably only about 18, 19 or 20 years old at this time.

And so here's a young man who doesn't look like he's got a whole lot going for him. It doesn't look like his future is going to be real bright and he's going to make a whole lot out of himself. And so with that in mind, look at Jabez in verse number 10.

The Bible says in Jabez called on the God of Israel. Now, right from the start, we see that Jabez realizes, without me, ye can do nothing, John 15.5. He knows he's not going to make anything out of himself. He knows he will never amount, as they say in the hills of Tennessee, to a hill of beans.

He knows there is nothing that he is ever going to make out of himself unless he does it God's way, in God's will. And in verse 10, he throws himself on the mercy of God and he begins to pray. Now, he prayed four very simple thoughts.

Although they are all entailed in one prayer in verse 10, these are four dynamically changing thoughts that can redirect your spiritual life, that can help you, revive you, rejuvenate you personally, rejuvenate your marriage. These can help a church. And these are four principles that God's people should pray for and should continually strive to live by.

Look what he said. And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, number one, all that thou wouldst bless me indeed. Right from the very get-go in verse 10, the first thing he prays about, it almost seems like he's being selfish.

He prays for the blessing of God. He said, Lord, I want You to bless me. And in the Hebrew culture, that word indeed would signify, if we were writing it, it would say, Lord, would You bless me? Exclamation mark, exclamation mark, exclamation mark.

Here is a man who is in dire earnest. I mean, he is in dire straits with his God. I believe the problem in America is this.

The situation in America is desperate, but many, many times, the saints of God are not. And I don't believe that we get as desperate as we should as did Jabez. And he said, Lord, if there is anything I want, more than fame, more than fortune, more than money, more than friends, more than family, more than anything, dear God, he said, I want the blessing and the power of God to preside upon my life.

Now we should pray that God would bless America. We should pray that God would bless our churches, that God would bless our marriages. But as selfish as it may sound, ladies and gentlemen, there are times, according to your Bible, where we are encouraged to pray about that which only supposes between me and my God or which only deals with me and my relationship with Almighty God.

And the first thing he prayed for is, Dear God, would You bless me? Here is a man who desired the power of God. Here is a man that wanted the blessing and the hand of God to be upon him, not on a small way, not on a minuscule insignificant way, but in a big way. Now I don't believe his head was over swollen like a ripe watermelon.

I don't believe he was saying, Lord, bless me so everybody can look at what a great Christian I am. I just believe honestly that Jabez had a desire within his heart to see the blessing and the power of God. Let me ask you this simple question.

What would you give up and what would you forsake right this very moment to have the power of God and the blessing of God upon your life? Now don't answer out loud, but you think about this. If the answer in your heart to that question is not everything and anything, then don't you ever, my friend, ever expect the power of God because it only comes to those who are willing to forsake all. Now that does not mean that you will have to forsake all, but you'll have to be willing to give up all, forsake all, turn your back on the ways, the will, and the whims of the world and say, Dear God, I want You to bless me.

I want Your power. I want Your Shekinah glory. And I want to be a Matthew 5, 14 and 15 Christian.

Well, the Bible says, a city that is hit on a hill cannot be hid. Let Your light so therefore shine before men, that they may see Your good works and glorify Your Father which is in heaven. And here is a man that says, Dear God, I need Your blessing.

Dear God, I need Your power more than anything else. Here's the question of the hour, ladies and gentlemen. When's the last time you got on your face before God and said, Lord, would You just simply bless me? Lord, I need Your blessing.

And dear God, I desire Your power more than anything else. You know, that's what kept the Apostle Paul going through the hard times. He said in Philippians 3, 10, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being made conformable unto His death if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

What was the Apostle Paul saying? He said, I'll go through shipwreck. They can spit on me, slap me in the face. They can cut my paycheck, cut my salary.

They can stone me outside the city of Lystra. They can do anything they jolly well please to my life, to my mind, to my body. He said, but the one thing I want in life is that I may know Him.

He wanted the power of God as did Jabez. And the first thing Jabez prayed for was, Oh, dear God, would You simply bless me? Now ladies and gentlemen, if that was the only thing he would have prayed, I

contend and contest that that would have been enough. But it is not.

He prayed a second thing. Look at your Bible. It says, And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, number one, O that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, number two, and enlarge my coast.

Now I want you to understand that when Jabez prayed for God to enlarge his coast, he was not referring or praying about more real estate property. He was not talking about a bigger building or a bigger house. He was not speaking about a bigger car or a better truck.

He was not speaking about more acreage out back. And he wasn't speaking about having more chickens and more cows. That is not at all the fault that Jabez had in his heart.

He was saying, Dear God, not only will You bless me, but number two, in blessing me, will You use me? Will You expand my coast, enlarge my ministry, broaden the horizons of my spiritual life and my spiritual atmosphere, and dear God, help me to go on and live for You on a new plain and new heights. And he was saying, Lord, my heart's desire is, number one, to be blessed, but dear God, my heart's desire, number two, is to be used by the Sovereign God of Heaven. Oh, what a thought! To be used by God, to see people saved, to see people encouraged, to see families strengthened, marriages strengthened.

As an evangelist, I get a great deal of joy out of being used to see pastors encouraged all over this country and around this great world. And here was a man that said, Dear God, would You bless me not a little? Would You bless me not just a teeny bit, but dear God, would You bless me? And oh, God, bless me a lot. Fill me with the power of God.

Use me in a big way. And he said, oh, dear God, if there's anything I want, it's to have the touch of God and to be used by God to impact other people for Jesus Christ. Here's the thought.

He said, Lord, as You're blessing me, in return, help me to be a blessing to other people. And I contend, ladies and gentlemen, that God wants to bless and God wants to use all of His children. I'm reminded of a story that happened in Southern California back in the late 70s.

There was a preacher that was preaching at a Bible college. And it was a larger college and seminary in that day, Good Fundamental School. And he preached on Romans 12, 1 and 2. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God. And he preached on salvation, but his main goal was to preach on surrender and full-time Christian service. He gave the invitation and made this statement, God will use you if you avail yourself to God to be used.

During that invitation, while they was playing Just as I Am or Have Thine Own Way, there was a young man about midway in the back of the auditorium. He was a crippled young man, and I'm not sure exactly why, but in my reading, the book that I read said that he did not have his crutches, his walker, wheelchair, anything that day. And so he began to push his way through the crowd.

Excuse me, pardon me, excuse me, pardon me. That auditorium that afternoon, that morning, was kind of a sloped auditorium, kind of like an old-fashioned coliseum. And he came and he got in the aisleway there and he knelt down and began to crawl his way with his contorted, twisted, emaciated body.

He began to crawl his way down to the altar to pray and get right with God. As he got to the back of where those people were praying, many were there that day getting right with God. Some were being saved.

He said, excuse me, pardon me, I need to come through and spend some time with God. He pushed his way through and crawled over this one and crawled over that one. He made his way up the first, the second, the third, finally the fourth step of the platform.

Crawled all the way to the edge of the pulpit. The preacher was kind of startled by this little act of this young man. And he looked up at that preacher and he said, He said, did you mean everything that you said this morning in your sermon and this service? And he said, well, son, I did.

And the young man could kind of see the apprehension in his heart and the apprehension in that preacher's voice. And he said, sir, honestly, did you really mean what you said this morning? He opened his Bible and he put it up to his chest and said, son, every word I preached this morning, I meant every word of it. He said, God wants to bless you and God wants to use you in a big way.

And that young man with gaping tears in his eyes said, look at me, preacher. He said, I'm a mess. He said, my body is twisted.

I slobber out of the side of my mouth. He said, my body is not only twisted, but it's contorted and discombobulated. And the doctors say that I'll be like this for the rest of my life and I can't walk.

And he said, how in the world could God ever use a mess like me? And that preacher was so encouraged with the faith of that young man, he lifted up his voice and he said, son, he said, God's been looking for a mess just like you for a long, long, long time. And ladies and gentlemen, God's been looking for messes like you. God's been looking for messes like me.

And God wants to use us profoundly in His work. He wants to use us in a big way. And Jabez said, dear God, could you bless me? And oh God, in blessing me, could you use me? But then he goes on and says this, not only does he say, oh, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed and enlarge my coast.

And that Thine hand might be with me. You see, he's not just glibly praying again that God would bless him. Somebody says, well, you know, he prayed for God to bless him.

He prayed for God to use him. And now he's just praying that God's hand of blessing would be upon him again. Not so.

That is not at all what he's praying. He says, Lord, bless me. Lord, use me.

And now he says, Lord, lead me. I want Your hand of leadership, Your hand of direction to be upon me. It almost has the word idea of a heavenly puppeteer.

Now, I know God's sovereign and we have a free will. I know He's not a heavenly puppeteer. And I know that we're supposed to choose this, that, and the other, but just follow the logic for a moment.

Jabez is saying, dear God, would You sit upon Your holy throne? By the way, the Bible says in Psalm 113 that God is upon His holy throne. His eyelids try the children of men. Always been there.

He's there right now. And thanks being to God, He'll be there from eternity to eternity. And so He's upon His throne.

And Jabez said, Lord, would You attach some strings to me? Would You lead me on the platform and the stage of life? Lord, if You tell me to turn left, I'll turn left. If You tell me to turn right, I'll turn right. If You want me to go up, down, straight, back, north, and south, whatever You want, dear God, would You just simply lead me? I believe the reason a lot of people mess up and make a botch out of their lives is because they take their hands, they place them on the steering wheel of life, they begin to drive through the streets of life, and they do not let God be their pilot.

I saw a fellow not long ago with a bumper sticker. You've seen it before. It said, God is my co-pilot.

I turned to my wife and said, if that's true, then He's in the wrong seat. I don't want God to co-pilot me. I want God to pilot me.

The Bible says in Proverbs 17 and repeated again in Proverbs 23, there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. And that is why Solomon, the wisest and richest man that ever walked God's green earth, that is why he said in Proverbs 3, 5, and 6, trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding and all thy ways acknowledge Him. Not the preacher, not me, not the deacons, not anybody else, but all thy ways acknowledge Him, Almighty God, and He, God, shall direct thy path.

And so here is a man that says, Lord, would You lead me? Psalm 37, 1, commit thy way unto the Lord and He also will lead thee. And so I believe that we should continually want to be led and want to be pushed, if you will, and prodded by the Holy Spirit. Now I will remind you, ladies and gentlemen, according to the Word of God, there is only one place that God will lead you, and that is through the precious holy pages of the written Word of God.

He does not speak through visions. He does not speak through dreams and this, that, and the other. God speaks through His Word.

That is why Jesus told His disciples that the Spirit of God shall lead you, literally means to guide you into all the truth. And that is where God speaks because this is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God. And so here is a man that said, Lord, bless me.

In blessing me, I want You to use me. And in using me, as You expand my ministry, as You expand my opportunities, as You expand my character and my testimony, he said, dear God, would You lead me? But then he prayed something lastly that I want you to see that is very, very significant for the day and age in which we live. He said, and that Thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.

He said, Lord, bless me, use me, lead me. And now he says, dear God, Father, would You keep me? He said, Lord, I want You to keep me from sin. I want You to keep a bridle upon my tongue, as David said.

I want You to keep bridles and gates upon my ears and upon my eyes and upon the relationships that I keep with other people. And he says, dear God, I want You to keep me from sin. Keep me from being involved in sin.

You know, I've seen God use a lot of different Christians. I've seen God use white Christians and I've seen God use black Christians. I've seen God use Christians that were preachers and I've seen God greatly use Christians that were not preachers.

I've seen God use tall Christians and short Christians. I've seen God use fat Christians and skinny Christians, but I've yet to see God use a dirty Christian. Because God uses that which is clean.

God uses clean vessels, holy vessels, sanctified vessels, and righteous vessels, which the Bible says, Paul said, meet or perfect, if you will, for the master's use. Usable Christians are those that are clean Christians. And he said, Dear God, would You keep me from sin? But he said something most unusual here.

He said, when I want You to keep me from sin, Lord, he said, the reason is that it may not grieve me. Now, it almost seems like he should say, Lord, I don't want to be in sin because it grieves You. No, we know sin grieves God.

We know sin breaks the heart of God. Psalm 22, 14, he said, my heart is like wax. It is melted in the midst of my bowels.

Jesus was on the cross and sin literally broke His heart. But yet, then in Ephesians 4, 30, the Bible says, and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby You are sealed unto the day of redemption. So we know sin grieves God, but he doesn't say that.

He said, Lord, You keep me from sin, that that sin does not grieve me. What is he talking about? Well, you know perfectly well, as a Christian, when you say something you shouldn't say, go somewhere you shouldn't go, do something you shouldn't do, view something you shouldn't view, you know what it's like to have the fellowship with Almighty God broken. You know what it's like to have sin in your heart and to lay in bed, wake up the next morning as empty as a burnt-out volcano.

You know that you're saved. You know that you're washed in the blood and that hell can't touch you and that you're on your way to heaven. You know that, but yet there's a feeling of emptiness, that feeling of dryness, that feeling of coldness and barrenness.

We have got to the place of being the Laodicean church of Revelation 3.19 where God said, you're lukewarm and you make me want to spew you or vomit you out of my mouth. And Jabez said, Dear God, I hate that empty feeling. I hate that grievous feeling of not having the power of God, not being in continual fellowship.

James 4.8, the Bible says, draw nigh unto God and He, Almighty God, will draw nigh or draw close unto you. That's what Jabez is praying. He says, Lord, I want to draw closer.

I want to be closer. I want to do more. I want to go farther.

I want to live on a new plane. I don't want to be complacent and carnal about what I have done. I know with so many Christians, they are so happy and complacent about what they used to do for God that they're not doing for God today what they should be doing.

And they still will not be doing for God tomorrow and next year what they should be doing for God because they're so complacent with that which they've already done. That was not Jabez. Jabez said, Oh, dear God, bless me in a big way.

Oh, dear God, use me in a big way. Oh, dear God, lead me, guide me, pastor me, shepherd me continually. And then he said, Dear God, please, would You keep me from evil? Would You keep my heart

from sin? Would You keep my mind from dwelling on wickedness and perversion? Oh, dear God, would You keep me from evil? And ladies and gentlemen, in the day and age in which we live, that is attainable.

That is possible. He's not praying for sinless perfection. He's not praying that he would be sinless, but he is praying that he would sin less.

You see the picture? Here is a man that wanted to be holy. Here is a man that wanted to be righteous. Here is a man that wanted to be godly.

Did God bless him? Did God use him? Did God lead him and did God keep him? Well, look at the end of verse number 10 as we close and we'll see the thought. It says, And God granted him that which he requested. And you know what, ladies and gentlemen? You can have the blessing and the power of God.

Say, how do you know? Because God gave the jabs. You can be used mightily and greatly by Almighty God. Say, how do you know, preacher? Because God answered it for jabs.

You can be led continually in the pages of the Word of God by the Holy Spirit. Say, how do you know that, preacher? Because the Bible says that God granted him that which He requested. And oh, I love this.

You can be holy. You can be righteous. You can be sanctified.

And you can be godly even in this wicked, perverse world in which we live. And you say, preacher, do you really mean that? I sure do, because He said, Lord, keep me from evil. And the Bible says God granted him.

God gave to him that which He requested. Did you know that this entire portion of Scripture that we just dealt with for a few moments, it's all entangled in one simple verse in your Bible. Jeremiah 33.

Call unto Me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. Why do we not see great things? It's real simple. James 4. Ye have not because ye ask not.

And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, O, that thou wouldest bless me indeed and enlarge my coast, that thine hand might be with me, that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And here's a man that got God's attention. Here's how I know why.

And God granted him that which He requested. And I hope that we will be serious about our service to Almighty God as was Jabez. Had a bleak future.

Had nothing ahead of himself. And I'm sure he was laughed and scorned, but although his name means bringing pain and sorrow to others, he brought great joy to the heart of God. And God blessed him, used him, led him, and kept him from evil in a big way.

And I say, ladies and gentlemen, we today should fall on our face and weep and get the attention of God. Your heads are bowed, your eyes are closed, please. No one's looking and no one's talking.

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