

Sermon: The Prayer of Jabez

by Thomas Bradbury

The sermon explores the significance of Jabez's prayer, highlighting the importance of trusting in God's sovereignty, communion with God, and effective prayer for spiritual growth and understanding.

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 4:9, Isaiah 57:1, John 10:28, John 17:15, Ephesians 1:3

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches on the story of Jabez, emphasizing the importance of seeking God's blessings, acknowledging His sovereignty, power, providence, protection, and presence in our lives. He highlights the need to pray for God's hand to be with us, guiding and blessing us, while also asking for protection from evil influences that may grieve us. Bradbury encourages believers to trust in God's faithfulness to grant their requests, just as He did for Jabez.

Transcript

"And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, 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." (1 Chronicles 4:9,10)

The most telling and lasting of all teaching is that of history or illustration. Precepts and commands may be given, but we all know the truthfulness of the old adage, "Example is before precept." We see this true in the household, in the senate, and in the field. The commander who leads on his men with a cheerful, Come, inspires them with more boldness and confidence by his example, than could be possible by all the authoritative commands he might have in his power to issue. Those of us who are acquainted with God's written Word know well that there is not a precept therein but what is illustrated by some bright examples. God commands, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." He sends the trouble and draws the heart of His child to Himself in prayer and supplication for the deliverance. It is thus that the exercised hearts of the children of God are led by the Holy Ghost into a right understanding of His dealings with His people. Men of like passions with ourselves were all the worthies whose histories are recorded in the Book, and the knowledge of this gives us a little confidence and liberty in breathing our complaints to Him with whom we have to do, when adverse circumstances try our faith, when accursed influences distress our spirit, and indwelling sin and corruption appear to almost swamp the life of God in our heart. It is no small mercy to

stand before Him knowing that we have just that experience which characterized those persons upon whom He has thrust signal honour in giving their names and histories a place in His most Holy Word. It is a blessed privilege for us to know that Abraham was not one whit better than ourselves, and that the most highly favoured one mentioned in the Bible is on the same level in Jehovah's eyes and esteem, as the weakest lamb within these walls, or the most timid child of His who, through a godly jealousy, dares not utter that personal pronoun, "My" in its lisps before the mercy-seat.

May it be our lot this morning, in humble dependence upon the best of all teachers, God the ever blessed Spirit, to look at the precious portion which I have read by way of text. To look at it? Say you, why each of us can do that! Yes, we can as we are blessed with the answer to Paul's prayer in our heart: "The eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," (Eph. 1:8). I love to experience this as I am brought to meditate upon any portion of the Scriptures of truth, and to find that Christ is All and in all therein to His tried exercise, and sorrowing children. Just look at the position of the text. Notice its surroundings. You may, or you may not read such portions as these very often. They may appear dry, sapless, unnecessary. But every word of God is pure, and all Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine for reproof and for correction. By such genealogies, though they may not yield so much comfort to our hearts or peace to our minds, yet they are of marvellous importance in tracing out the true line of descent of our blessed Lord from Adam to His appearing in the flesh. I well remember the first time, long years ago, my eyes fell upon this precious portion; I was astonished! It appeared like an oasis in the wilderness, a garden in the desert, a spring of clear water in a dry and barren land, or like a beautiful gem shining in the midst of a dark setting. Well, there is something for us to notice in the surroundings of this portion as we view them in the light of the first sentence.

"And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren." Who was Jabez? Who were his brethren? Some have identified him with Othneil the first of the judges. If we turn to Judges 1:13, and 3:9-11, we see that he was the son of Kenaz, and as Caleb's younger brother, and son-in-law to Joshua, he would be one of those whose business it was to enter the Promised Land, and see by the power of God's right hand the Canaanite driven out little by little. But who were the brethren of Jabez? The persons whose names appear in the various parts of 1 Chron. 4. We notice the posterity of Judah, Ashur, and others who acquired to themselves, renown, position, place, and power, in the world in building cities, founding nations, leading victorious armies and doing exploits; yet the testimony of God in the face of all these is, "Jabez was more honourable than his brethren." Why more honourable? What is stated of Jabez to distinguish him from the rest of his brethren? The wisdom of the head is seen in one, the strength of the arm is seen in another, the skill of the hand is seen in the third while the wisdom of the understanding is seen in a fourth; but the grace of God and communion with Him is seen by Jehovah's eye in the heart and experience of Jabez. Hence he, "was more honourable than his brethren." Ah, my dear friends, it is more honourable to be identified with a despised, rejected, but precious Jesus, and associated with His tempted, tried, scattered, and peeled ones, than to hold place, position, and power, in connection with the great, the mighty, and the renowned of this world. See! "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee," (Isa. 43:4). This is the declaration of God concerning the whole election of grace. Do we know as brethren, beloved of God, our election? Are our names written in life's fair book, and that since before the worlds were framed? Have we the good hope that when the roll-call of God's worthies takes place, when the world is on fire, our names shall be owned therein? Does the all seeing eye of God look upon us in the midst of the seed royal of heaven in unchanging, uninterrupted oneness with Christ, who is All in all to me? Then He is at this very moment with us in the midst of all the

temptations, tribulations, and trials, which perplex us, and which are unknown to all the world beside. What glorious distinction! "More honourable than his brethren!" O how precious to have a knowledge and realization of our grace union to Jesus Christ, the Captain of Our salvation, the Leader and Commander of the redeemed host, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

"And his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow." Jabez! A name corresponding with the circumstances of his birth and with her own spiritual experience. This reminds me of what we read concerning Hannah in 1 Sam. 1, who, in bitterness of soul and sorrow of heart, breathed out her desires into the ears of Him, who, when He hears His own Spirit indited prayers, is sure to answer them. When the prayers are Spirit indited and God breathed there must be an accomplishment and performance of the same. This is sweet encouragement to those who pray not by the clock, but who, as it were, pray without ceasing, in the public ministration of the sanctuary, in the quietness of their chamber, in the solitude of their souls though surrounded by the busy throng or the gay assembly. But mark! She called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bare him with sorrow." Sorrow! Part of the entail which God put upon woman as the effect of sin and transgression. Remember ye not the words pronounced in the ears of our first parent Eve? Gen. 3:16: "And to the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." But we see something more than nature here! With spiritual understandings we behold the Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, bringing forth a spiritual progeny, a seed which the Lord has blessed. Now all these are born again in sorrow, sorrow on account of sins of omission and commission, sins against His holy law, sins against the glorious light of His Gospel, sins against the grace He has richly bestowed upon us, sins against the precious privileges He has brought me to enjoy, sins when I pray, therefore my prayers must be perfumed with the sweet incense of my Saviour's intercession, sins when I sing His praises, sins when I preach His Word; but, O how blessed for me to know that the sweet Singer of Israel sings for me, that the Conductor of the liturgies of His people intercedes for me, and that the great Prophet of the Church appears for me in my necessity and speaks home His own precious truth to the heart of His poor and needy brethren! Sorrows sometimes swell as the sea through felt, accursed indifference, a wandering mind, a wayward disposition, and, vain thoughts!" A precious portion comes to mind. Jeremiah tells us that vain thoughts are only lodgers. Do vain thoughts lodge in thee? See! He who holds uninterrupted possession of the house, in His own time will turn these wretched lodgers out, as He reveals the beauty of His person, sheds abroad His love in thy heart, makes known to thee the joys of His salvation, shows thee His hands, His feet, His side, and His once thorn crowned brow, saying, I suffered all for thee. Blessed with such gracious communications the sorrowing soul rejoices with trembling, and with the sweet realization of His mercy cries.

"Dwell on the sight, my stony heart

Till every pulse within

Shall into contrite sorrow start,

And hate the thought of sin."

Sorrow will be the lot of God's children as long as they remain in this wilderness world. Notice that precious and profitable declaration of Jesus to His sorrowing disciples, (John 16:20-22), "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but

as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your joy no man taketh from you." Notice that word, "again." I do like it, for it has been a precious word to me for many days and weeks past now. See Jer. 31:4: "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel." There must have been a breaking down! "Thou shall again be adorned with thy tabrets!" Stripping and stripping again must be experienced. Look at Psa. 72:20: "Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken be again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth." "Deaths off!" See Mark 10:1: "And, as He was wont, He taught them again." A patient Teacher! Poor ignorant, forgetful scholars. Mark sell Jonah 2:4: "I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple." Then God's holy temple must have been hid from the sight of His longing, anxious, waiting servant. "Ye now, therefore, have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Is not that blessed? No one can rob you of your joy! What is your joy? "The joy of the Lord is your strength; and Jehovah Himself is the joy of His people."

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel." Not on one of the gods of the heathen, or on a god of His own manufacturing. Not on a god of his vain imagination, or choice, but he called on the God of Israel, the covenant God of an elect and distinguished people. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things," (Psa. 72:18). Look at the wondrous things He did in Egypt in the preservation of His people there, and delivering them there from, in sending their enemies down into the depths of the Red Sea, like lead in the mighty waters, in marching and counter marching them through the wilderness, and bringing them by the strength of His own right hand into possession of the land which He had promised to their fathers for them. All these are so many types of His dealings with His spiritual Israel throughout all time. Now turn to Luke 1:68: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people." "His people." Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile. No guile? Why I find that my nature is nothing else but guile! Wait a moment, I am not speaking of thy nature, but of that which God has implanted within thee, of that which is born of God, for in that there is no guile, no deceit, no hypocrisy, or, as the word may be correctly rendered, no reserve. No holding back part of their confession to Him, but as the Spirit dictates so they speak, and make a clean breast in the presence of God of all their sins, follies, and infirmities. And so the preacher in the pulpit, as he is guided by God the Holy Ghost into a clear, warm, and blessed apprehension of a portion, he cannot for his own fancied convenience hold it back for a future time. It is with him as with Micaiah who said, apparently to his disadvantage, "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak," (1 Kings 22:14). I will give you an instance: A precious portion was brought home to my heart while in the North. Something suggested, that will do well for Sunday morning, and so I purposed; but Friday morning came, there was not another text for me in the whole of God's Book, and from the depths of my heart I thanked Him for it. There can be no holding back, no reserve, no dallying with God when He works in us by the love and power of His blessed Spirit.

"The God of Israel." The covenant God of all those with whom the covenant Angel wrestles and who wrestle with a covenant God. Israelites who feel and mourn their weakness with the thigh out of joint. Israelites who glory in their infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon them, causing them feelingly and gratefully to acknowledge, "When I am weak then am I strong." Israelites who plead and prevail with God as Jacob and Jabez did, for we find from the last words of the text, "And God granted him that which he requested." Jabez was a praying man. What do we mean by a praying man? Not the man who is brimful of words, and ever ready to exercise his gift. No such thing! I believe if a true child of God is called upon to pray in public he must tremble in spirit, and that with godly fear, to address the Majesty of heaven, lest he may be betrayed into presenting the false fire of his own production, and not the true fire wrought in

the heart by the Holy Ghost. How blessed is the testimony of God in Rom. 8:26, a precious chapter, revealing glorious doctrines and a gracious experience coming down to the weakest child in the family of the living God! "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." What are these infirmities? Our prayers. What! Call our prayers infirmities? Yes, "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." God seals the lips of His child in His sacred and solemn presence that he may learn to wait His will and time for the performance of His gracious promises, and know that the ways and works of the Lord are right. "We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." So it was with Jabez, as he breathed this short but comprehensive prayer into the ears of his covenant God, "the God of Israel." Let us notice the four short but significant requests:

"Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed."

"And enlarge my coast."

"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. "Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed." These four requests embrace all the wants and necessities which God's poor children pour into His ever open ears and sympathizing heart. To be blessed is to be in Christ. To be blessed indeed is to be assured of our acceptance with the Father in all the glorious perfections of the Son of His love. Just a word or two here. Sometimes we pray, but we little think for what we are praying. We pray for warmer zeal, for a clearer and brighter apprehension of God's love, to be made more useful in the Church of God, I pray that my testimony may be blest to the hearts of God's elect, eternally loved and loving children; but I little know what I am asking for in that. See! As sure as God is in heaven I am praying for temptations, for trials, for tribulations, and without the full measure of these there will be no fruitful ministry of the Word, no sweet savour of life and power to the hearts of God's exercised and troubled ones. Do we pray for our faith to be strengthened? We pray for storms, tempests, and trying winds to shake the tree whose roots shall strike deeper and firmer into the clift of the Rock of Ages. O blessed be His Name who hath blessed us; the winds may roar as they rush from His fists, (Prov. 30:4), and blasts from hell may rage horribly around us, but the faith He has given can never be destroyed, the hope He has implanted can never be impaired. Does Jesus pray for me? My faith can never fail, my hope cannot decay, and the little spark of love I experience shall be fanned into a flame of eternal duration, as He leads me safely to His own sweet home of uninterrupted peace. But, to the text. Jabez prayed to be blest indeed. He prayed and thanked God for bodily covering; but to be clothed in Christ's glorious righteousness was to him a blessing indeed. To hear the Gospel of love is a blessing; but to, "comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," is a blessing indeed. To sit under a faithful preacher and teacher is a blessing; but to be taught of God is a blessing indeed.

But did I not tell you that as assuredly as we are blessed in Christ what we may expect? Turn with me to Matt. 5,: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Do you want that? You say. I want to be rich in faith, and enriched with all knowledge, and the riches of the full assurance of understanding. Yes, my friend, I know your wants in these matters; but your Master has decided and declared that with the experimental possession of His kingdom and riches, poverty of spirit must be felt and known. "Blessed are they that mourn." You say I want to rejoice and be glad in the Lord. So do I; but He who predestinated thy path of painful but

profitable experience, saw it was necessary for thee to be brought to the spots where thou shouldest mourn over thy sins and for His gracious presence. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst." O, say you, I am so hungry this morning, God makes me to feel the pinchings of my spiritual appetite, I long for the provisions of His house, for the bounties of His covenant. Well, friend, He who provided all things for thee, He who is thy Shepherd, Protector, and Provider will cause thee to know what that means, and confess, "I shall not want." Thou shalt not want the blessedness of hungering, thirsting, desiring, and longing for Himself, and the want experienced by thy poor heart this morning is but the forerunner of that gracious supply and rich blessing which He will communicate in His own set time of favour. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you." I don't like that, and I will tell you why. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," and God having given to us good manners in the Son of His love, Satan is sure to try them by the revilings of his brood. At such times I am tempted to take the law into my own hand, and were it not for the restraining power of my God, instead of being found at the footstool of sovereign mercy, bending lowly with His weak and weary children, I should display my folly in reviling too. O God, give me a soft and humble heart before Thee! Lord, bless me with true repentance and fervent love! Lord, bless me with Thine own faith, and a rich apprehension of my standing in Thy family as an elect vessel of mercy. What! At that election again? Yes, and I hope I shall be with my dying breath; and should Arminians, freewillers, and pietists be looking on, may they hear and know that God's election is to me a precious reality.

See! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him," (Eph. 1:3,4). Is not that blessed? Yes, but listen to this:

"Though God's election is a truth,

Small comfort there I see;

Till I am told by God's own mouth

That he has chosen me."

That is to be blessed indeed. In Jehovah's purpose of love concerning me, His, "Yea," was written upon every blessing, and inscribed upon every promise which He treasured up in His covenant for me; but the purpose alone will not satisfy me; I want the performance of the purpose in my heart's experience which is His own, "Amen," begetting gratitude and praise to Him for His electing love. That is what I call being blessed indeed. See! We listen to the preacher and hear him show forth the riches of sovereign, electing, redeeming grace; our outward ears drink in the message of the Word, and, so far, we are thankful. But some are not, they hang their heads, walk out of the place, saying, "There was nothing for me this morning." They look as though they had been living on vinegar for a month. God's tried and truly sent servants need to be encouraged, but they will get sorry encouragement from such murmurers and complainers. We listen to the preacher and are blessed; but as we hear the voice of the Beloved, experience the sweet anointing of the Spirit of love, are favoured with a melting of soul from a sight of the suffering Lamb of God in His agony and bloody sweat, His sorrows, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and intercession for us, we are blessed indeed. Here we have a Bible full of precious promises! Why not appropriate the promises? Cannot! But we look for the presence of the promises Fulfiller. A Bible full of promises is a blessing; but the promises performed in me by the power of the Holy Ghost is a blessing indeed. The revelation of Christ Jesus in the Book of books is a blessing; but the revelation of Christ Jesus

in my heart, and the enjoyment of the Promiser in the promise, is a blessing indeed. What are all the promises to me without Him in whom all elect ones are blessed? Just so many tokens of blessing to encourage me in waiting to be blessed indeed.

"Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed." Bless me with an abiding sense of Thy love, a sweet enjoyment of Thy mercy. Bless me with the assurance that I am a stranger with Thee down here, and that Thou hast a place for me with Thee in Thy Father's house when my heart has ceased its throbbing, and sin, sorrow, and suffering are for ever past. These are grand, glorious, and eternal realities, not vain notions or speculative philosophy:

"No big words of ready talkers,

No dry doctrine will suffice,

Broken hearts and humble walkers,

These are dear in Jesus eyes."

And a Spirit imparted knowledge of that is a blessing indeed.

II. "And enlarge my coast." This expression no doubt, had reference to the location of the tribes in the Promised Land. The Canaanites were not all driven out, but some permitted to remain, lest the land should be desolate and the beasts of the field multiply against Israel. By little and little God would drive them out, enlarge the coasts of the children of Israel, and increase them, (Exod. 23:29,30). We thus see Jabez acknowledging the sovereignty of God in temporal prosperity. He remembered that it was not his own wisdom or might that brought him his possessions. But we cannot think that this referred to temporal things alone. Oh, no! We who by grace have been brought into possession of the spiritual kingdom of God know full well that foes abound, and that wild beasts are ever ready to tear and devour the living family. There is a short petition in the Litany of the Church of England, and it would be a mercy if we felt it written in our hearts day by day: "From envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, good Lord deliver us." I have prayed that a thousand times, and yet I find my old nature to be as full of envy, malice, and hatred as ever it was, not a particle better. A petty fellow to be a preacher! Quite right, old friend, I have thought so myself, and were it not for God's sovereign grace and constraining love, you would not catch me preaching here this morning. Wild beasts and enemies without of every description, all dead set against God's truth. Then look at the enemies within! Unbelief, indifference, envy, pride, deceit, conceit, distrust, jealousy, and such like! Well might Jabez cry, "Enlarge my coast;" and well may we. "Enlarge the coast," of my knowledge of Thee and Thine, that I may enter into a fuller enjoyment of Thee my portion and mine Inheritance, and into sweeter and more loving communion with Thy saints! Well, the Lord is witness that oftentimes I am searching within the backs of His Book, when your eyes are closed in sleep, longing for brighter views of Himself and a richer apprehension of what He is to me as my covenant Father, Saviour, and Comforter. "Enlarge my coast." In prayer I am straitened; I cannot pray as I would! Do Thou enlarge my coast of spiritual promise that I may plead with Thee, talk with Thee of Thy judgments, order my cause before Thee, fill my mouth with arguments, and enter into sweet possession of those spiritual blessings which Thou didst make over to me in Thine everlasting covenant of grace. "Enlarge the coast," of my faith that I may not doubt or distrust Thee. When the way is rough, to lean upon Thee; when the clouds are dark, to wait Thy coming; when the furnace is fiercest, to feel Thee near; when all earthly things are shaking, to rest more firmly in Thee.

"Sweet in the confidence of faith

To trust His firm decrees;

Sweet to lie passive in His bands,

And know no will but His."

III. "And that Thine hand might be with me." This is a precious petition! What does the hand of God indicate? It is a highly figurative mode of speech oftentimes found in God's written Word. By it the Holy Ghost shows forth the unchangeable purpose of Jehovah. Turn to Acts 4:28, where you see the truth as flowing from the hearts of the worshipping disciples of Jesus, "For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined to be done." The hand of God means His never failing purposes. Lord, let me see Thy hand in every pain and pleasure I feel; let me sing in sweet submission to Thy will:

"His purposes will ripen fast,

Unfolding every hour;

The bud may have a bitter taste,

But sweet will be the flower;"

So that I may say in faith, whether my heart is cheered with His smile, or sad with the feeling of His absence; whether I am rejoicing in the enjoyment of covenant privileges, or mourning my lack of them; whether I am surrounded by smiling friends, or suffering the pangs of bitter bereavement, "Oh that Thine hand may be with me." It also sets forth the power of God. See Psalm 95,: In His hand are the deep places of the earth....and His hands formed the dry land." There we have His power in creation and preservation. The providence of God is seen in this expression in Psa. 145:16: "Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." It is used to shew forth God's unwearied care for, and Jesus' preservation of, His people. See! John 10:28,29: "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 pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." He holds the wind in His fists, and the waters in the hallow of His hand, the very spot where He keeps His redeemed people. Sometimes they may be chin-deep in water, and with the wind boisterous, ready to perish; but perish they cannot, their cry will be, Lord, do assure me that I am in Thy hand. His gracious presence is denoted by His hand. See how Nehemiah acknowledges this: "Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me," (chap. 2:8 and 18). Thus we see that this form of speech, "Thy hand," shows forth His purpose, power, providence, protection, and presence.

Still further. When Joseph brought his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to his father Jacob, the old man crossed his hands, laying them upon his grandchildren's heads, saying, "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads," (Gen. 48:16). Depend upon it, God's blessings will come down cross handed to you and to me. Look at our blessed Lord as He blesses the little children! Are there any such here this morning? I do not mean young in years, but little in their own esteem, weaklings in faith, and according to their own apprehension feeble in their desires and determinations. See! He lays His gentle hand upon the heads of all such and sweetly blesses them. These blessings are the gifts of His bounteous hand, they flow from His purpose, are applied by His power; they are unfolded by His providence, held in His protection, and enjoyed in His sacred presence. They are richly apprehended through His redemption

work: "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones," (Zech. 13:7). Precious hand of blessing and bounty! He puts forth His hand, we are saved! He opens His hand, we are fed! He stretches forth His hand, we are healed! He lays His hand upon us, we are blessed! Are there any fluttering hearts here this morning? May you know that this gracious hand is with you indeed.

IV. "And that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." From the evil one, the devil, and his assaults and temptations! From the evil world with its sins and follies! From the power of an evil heart of unbelief! From evil influences which continually surround me! From evil associates who vex and wound Thy life and Spirit within me! Jabez here alluded to the name given to him by his godly mother, and to the nature implanted within him by the God of Israel. Sorrow was in his name, and grief over sin, failure and infirmity was his daily experience, while the fear of God in his heart caused him to pray for distance rather than deliverance for evil. Such is the lot of every true child of God, suffering is a grief to him naturally, and sin is a grief to him spiritually, so he prays: "Keep me from evil that it may not grieve me."

Now look at the prayer of our blessed Lord for His own whom He was leaving in the midst of an evil world, (John 17:15): "I pray not Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from evil." Notice the confession of Jacob when nearing the close of his earthly pilgrimage: "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," (Gen. 47:9); and then mark the grateful acknowledgment of his adoring heart when blessing his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh: "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads," (Gen. 48:16). Now, just a glance at that precious testimony in Isa. 57:1: "The righteous is taken away from the evil." Not from the evil, "to come," but from the evil which surrounded, dwelt in, and grieved them. Taken away by the kind and loving hand of Jehovah from all that is hateful to Him and grievous to them.

"And God granted him that which he requested." He was and is faithful to His promise and mindful of His covenant. Every desire, hope, expectation, and plea arising from His own life within must be answered in the case of every sorrowing Jabez, of every tried and tempted, sorrowing and sighing child of the living God.

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen

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