

The Prayer of Jabez

Prayer of Jabez
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THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

Introduction

When the Lord began sharing with me about Jabez, I did not realize there is a book out called “The Prayer of Jabez.” I am going to share with you out of the scriptures that deal with Jabez, but I want to preface it by saying that God shared with me on Jabez before that book came out. I did not know there was such a thing. He shared with me some things that I want to share with you that I believe are truly from His heart and I believe truly are the word of God. What I have to share is different from the book that has been published, but again, what I have to say, I received before I heard about this book. Anything that I share here is in no way influenced by or meant as a response to this book. With that said, let us begin.

Born Him with Sorrow

I Chronicles 4:9-10: *“And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I have born him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the Lord God of Israel, saying, O 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.”*

These are very isolated scriptures. It was the Holy Spirit who pointed them out to me. Jabez means sorrow, or pain. Jabez's mother *“called his name Jabez {sorrow, pain} because I have born him with sorrow.”*

What is rather amazing about these scriptures is that if you start in the first chapter of I Chronicles, and continue reading the second chapter, and the third chapter, and go all the way through chapter 8, it all reads very similarly, including the verses in chapter 4 surrounding these two verses that discuss Jabez. Look at verses 5 and 6 for example: *“And Ashur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah. And Naarah bare him Ahuzam, and Hepher, and Temeni, and Haahashtari...”* The point is that if you are reading this, you are likely to skip over the story of Jabez. You are likely to skip over the whole first eight chapters because it is just a whole bunch of names. There is a long line of people written about in these scriptures who are just walking through life one after another: so and so begat so and so begat so and so and so on. All we have is their names, the fact that they lived, had children, and died. One lived, had children, and died. The next one lived, had children, and died. And that is pretty much the story of all their lives. That is the legacy that each of them left. But God brought out Jabez here for a particular reason, and God says that he was more honorable than his brethren.

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Known Only As Pain

He was more honorable than his brethren. But he was not originally that way. He was born with a name that his mother gave him, not with a name that his father gave him. Many times your father might yell, “Hey, stupid!” at you, but at least your mom loves you. And yet, his mother named him pain; his mother named him suffering; his mother was the one who called him that. For the rest of his life “pain” would be his name. His name would be suffering, pain, and sorrow. Names are a big deal in the Bible. Names are a really big deal. One example would be Abraham. Originally, his name was Abram, which means “exalted father.” God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means “father of the multitude.” And of course, he was the father of all the Israelites, and is the father of all who believe by faith in Christ; quite the multitude indeed. Similarly, many names in the Bible were changed and the changes had tremendous impact on their character, and were indicative of who they were and who they represent. Imagine if you are living in a land where the people's names mean something and one is named “pain, sorrow.” You might see him coming and say, “Hey, there goes pain!” or “Hey, here comes suffering.” That literally was his name, so everywhere he went pain was there; sorrow was there; suffering was there. This was not because of something he did, but because that is who he was. Everywhere he went there was suffering. Everywhere he went. It did not matter if he did good or bad, he was pain. He was suffering. He was sorrow. That was his legacy. That was his life. That was his identification. That was who he was to people.

Being Born of Adam

I Chronicles 4:10: *“And Jabez called on the Lord God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldst bless me indeed...”*

Genesis 3:16: *“Unto the woman he said I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.”*

Genesis 3:16 is after Adam and Eve have sinned; the serpent has deceived them and they have sinned, and now the curse has come upon them. Remember the prayer that Jabez prayed, *“O that thou wouldst bless me.”* What is the opposite of a blessing? A curse. The curse is put upon them in verse 16, *“Unto the woman he said I will greatly multiply thy sorrow (remember Jabez), and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.”* In these verses, we have a curse: every child of Eve, every one that has come out of that fallen race, has been a child of sorrow. In one sense you can say that you are a Jabez. You are also a child born in sorrow and born cursed. You were born in that sort of a state. Therefore, every one of us can be called Jabez. Every one of us is that sorrow, the pain of the fall, the fallen nature. Everywhere we go: pain. Everywhere we go: suffering. No matter what Jabez touched or did, “pain” touched it, “suffering” and “sorrow” touched it, because that is who he was.

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Not in Selfishness

I Chronicles 4:9-10: *“And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I have born him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the Lord God of Israel, saying, O 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.”*

Let us look at I Chronicles 4:9-10 one more time. I can understand any human being looking at these scriptures and simply concluding that he was asking for blessing. In some people's minds these scriptures might be a selfish prayer, as though he is saying, “O bless me Lord, just bless me Lord, bless me and increase my borders, give me more land and let your hand be on me and keep me away from evil.” I can understand a whole lot of people seeing this prayer request and saying, “Well, that is a really good prayer and I would like to pray that.” I can understand the popularity of the prayer of Jabez.

A Descendant of Jacob

I Chronicles 4:10: *“...And Jabez called on the Lord God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldest bless me indeed...”*

Genesis 32:26: *“And He said let me go for the day breaketh, and he said I will not let thee go except thou bless me.”*

I want to relate Jabez's prayer to Jacob. Remember Jacob: he is the son of Isaac and he had a twin brother Esau. I believe the prayer of Jabez is directly connected to Jacob for three different reasons.

1. This is a book that gives the lineage. Jabez is a direct descendant of Jacob. Therefore, you could say he is of Jacob (or rather Israel, because that is what God renamed Jacob). Jabez is in the direct line. This is not some far away Bible person and name that you somehow just identified with for reasons of your own. Jabez was in Jacob's family line; he came out from Jacob, or Israel.
2. The scriptures speak of this relationship in verse 10, *“And Jabez called on the God of Israel.”* This is more significant than most of us might understand. We would say, “Well, of course he called on the God of Israel, he was an Israelite.” But remember: Israel was a man. I believe that Jabez saw something in relationship to this Jacob who was able to become Israel in the eyes of God. That affected Jabez and he wanted to call specifically on the God of Israel. Not just the God of the nation, but the God of that

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man, Israel, who once was named Jacob. There was something very specific about his prayer: “I personally need to get hold of the God of Israel, the God *of Israel*.”

3. It is not just who he called on, but exactly what he says when he prays: “*And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed.*” Now let us look at Genesis 32:26. Here we have part of the great story of Jacob and the time when he becomes Israel. Verse 26 is the prayer of Jacob (in reality, this is the very first prayer of Israel): “*And He said let me go for the day breaketh, and he said I will not let thee go except thou bless me.*” There is a correlation between Israel’s prayer and Jabez’s prayer. Now, interestingly enough, they both said, “No, I want you to bless me.” Now, all the people before Jabez and after Jabez in the genealogy were Jews, the people of God. At some point or other, most of those people probably prayed, “God, bless me.” But we don’t have the story of Heekabu and his prayer, or Millimulu or Haahashtari. We do have the story of Jabez, and moreover it says specifically that God granted his request (1 Chronicles 4:10).

There is a reason for this! There are very few people in most churches that have not asked the Lord’s blessing at some time or another. None of them are drawn out and identified by God as more honorable for it. However, there is something more honorable about Jabez’s prayer than our prayer, even if it is the same words. Something more honorable *to God*; we are not talking about what man considers honorable, man may not understand. But there is something more honorable about Jabez and his prayer than all of his brethren. It is not just a “bless me” prayer, it is not just a “take care of my needs” prayer or a “give me more land or give me more this or give me more that” prayer. It is not necessarily even a “give me more so that I can be more effective for you” prayer. It is a completely different prayer than that. To fully understand his prayer you have to understand this chapter in Genesis, and to understand this chapter you have to have a little bit of a view of who Jacob was.

The Significance of Jacob

Jacob’s name is also significant. His name Jacob means “deceiver, trickster, manipulator.” God changed his name to Israel, which means “prince with God.” So there was a tremendous change. What does that come from? We know the story of Jacob, we know that from the very beginning this guy wanted God, he was after God, he had a heart for God, and he loved God. There is no question in my mind that Jacob really was a man of God. The problem is not in relation to him being a man of God; the problem is how he went about obtaining the things of God. That is clear from his early days when he tricked and deceived and manipulated circumstances so that they would work in his favor so that he could work in God’s favor.

One of the examples is with his own brother. Esau and he were twins, but Esau was born just before him, so that made Esau the elder, which meant that the birthright went to Esau.

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But what did Jacob do? He tricked him. Esau is hungry and tired and he can smell the food. So Esau comes by his brother's tent, smells the food, and his brother says, "Oh, are you hungry? Would you like some of this? Sure, no problem, just give me your birthright." In other words, if you would like to sustain your flesh, all you have to do is give me your birthright. And he sold it out. Esau sold it out. For one bowl of pottage, he sold out his birthright.

We can all look at Esau and say, "Look at what you did." But look at Jacob, look at what he did to obtain it. From the very beginning God said, "*Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated*" (Malachi 1:2; Romans 9:13). Without going into the full explanation of that verse, let us see that Jacob did not really have to do anything. Most of his life, he was working (through deception and manipulation) to bring about what God had already promised. He was working to bring it about, nervous about it, concerned about it, wrapped up in it, wanting it. Sometimes our desires, our wanting, and our concerns are not really the Lord's. It is the flesh trying to lay hold of what God has given us by promise.

Jacob in His Own Strength

Jacob actually does a pretty good job of accomplishing things in the flesh, if you can do a "good job" in that way. First, he tricked Esau out of his birthright. Then he defrauds Esau even further by tricking their father Isaac into blessing him instead of his brother. On this one, Jacob and his mom work together; again, keep in mind that they do all of this to bring about something God already promised when the two boys were born. So they get Jacob all dressed up and put some fur on his hands because his older brother was a little hairier than he was. Isaac is blind, so Jacob walks in and Isaac cannot see him. Isaac feels Jacob with his hands and says, "It is the hands of Esau, but the voice of Jacob." Nonetheless, Isaac gives Jacob the blessing he meant for Esau. So Jacob successfully deceives his father and gets the blessing along with the birthright. Then here comes Esau. Venison all fixed up. He says, "Hey, dad, I'm here, and I am ready for the blessing." His father says, "What are you talking about? I just blessed you." "No, I just got here." "Well, I blessed somebody." "That dirty rat, Jacob." Esau is thinking, "That guy stole my birthright. That guy has tricked me and deceived me and now he has stolen my blessing too." Now Esau was a big hairy hunter, and Jacob was a sissy mama's boy. So naturally Esau says, "I am going to get Jacob."

Jacob takes off. He runs for his life. He goes to Haran because he has relatives there. He figures he can find a wife and manage pretty well there, and he does. He gets his wives and his cattle and whatnot, all the while scheming and planning and working to gain everything. He is doing all of this stuff, working to be blessed, working to have all this stuff from God, working to have a bride, working to be of God, working to be successful for God.

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It is important to remember that he did have a heart after God. We are not talking about a person who does not love God or who is not in covenant with God. We are talking about a child of God. We are talking about you and me as much as about Jacob.

So here we go: we have what I call the wrap-up of this whole deal. Finally it is time for Jacob to come back. He is going to go back home. He has his wives, children, herds, servants, and all this stuff. And here he comes, he is coming home and all he can think about is Esau. Esau, my older brother, is going to kill me. So what does he do? He starts scheming. “Jacob” kicks in. How can I deal with this? What am I going to do? How am I going to handle this? What can I come up with? All of his life he has had a great big bag of tricks that he can always reach into and pull something out, always get by, always get through to them, always be a manipulator. He always had self in ways that he used for God, ways that were not out-and-out sin, but were NOT the Lord, they were Jacob. It was Jacob all the way, working and having to figure, trying to get food, trying to get by, living by his wits, always pulling stuff out of that bag. And God saw it and knew what Jacob was doing. Jacob was relying on all of that.

The Bag of Tricks Runs Low

Genesis 32:3-7: *“Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. And Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the cattle into two bands.”*

Initially, Jacob did not send anything, he just sent messengers with promises. You know, promises work for a whole lot of people. Especially if you are a “Jacob” type, you just promise somebody you will do this, or tell them, “I am sure it will work out, we will get to that.” All these promises! I know people who promise the world and never give a penny, because a lot of people just take their promises. In this instance, Jacob did not necessarily say, “Esau, I have got all this and I will give it all to you.” He just sends messengers who mention what Jacob possesses in the hopes that Esau will go, “Oh, wow, he has all that stuff? Maybe I shouldn’t kill him.” But a messenger came back and said that Esau was bringing four hundred men, so Jacob goes, “Ahhh! He didn’t go for it! Let me see my bag!” and he reaches in there again and pulls something else out.

Verse seven: *“...and Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.”* You see what the scripture says? It did not say he was kind of upset. It says he was greatly afraid and distressed, and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the cattle, into two

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bands. So here he goes. He's thinking, "Here comes Esau, he is mad, he is going to try to kill me and he is going to take everything. I am going to save at least one group. So if these guys fall dead at least half of them get away." It is a good tactic. The only problem is that if Esau meets one group and Jacob is not there, he is probably going to hunt down the other group. Esau is not really just interested in taking stuff. Even though he might be interested in taking everything Jacob has because he might consider every ounce of it the blessing of God that belonged to him, it is still probably more than just a wholesale taking of things. So Jacob thinks about dividing the group, but decides ultimately that it will not work. So what does he do next?

A Self-Centered Prayer

He reaches back into his bag of tricks and he pulls out this wonderful thing called prayer. He prayed and it was a good prayer. But it was not a God prayer. It was a selfish, self-centered prayer. It was a cover-my-rear prayer. That is what it was. It may have sounded good, but I am telling you that the prayer was not a good prayer to God, because immediately following the prayer he reaches back into his bag and at least two more times pulls tricks out of it. If he had really put it in the hands of God, he would not have needed his bag of tricks anymore. But there are times when you are just worried about yourself and your circumstances, so you reach in that bag and pull out prayer just to cover yourself, but when you do not think God is actually going to cover you and take care of you, you will turn right around and reach for something else. We give it thirty seconds and if God does not answer then we have to come up with something quick. Now, that is human nature, the nature of Adam, the nature of the old man that does that. So Jacob is praying, and he is saying the right words: "I am not worthy." But then he goes, "Well, maybe I am not worthy in a sense, but I am worthy to *live*, so I better come up with a plan." Do you understand what I mean? He is saying, "I am not worthy," but in his mind he *is* worthy; Jacob ought to be allowed to live. God ought to bless Jacob. God ought to take care of old Jacob. That is not God's plan for Jacob. Jacob does not know that at this stage. He is just crying out, trying to get anything any way he can to get out of the situation he is in.

Oneness Has a Cost

Genesis 32:13-20: *"And he lodged there that same night and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother, two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove. And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and,*

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behold, also he is behind us. And so he commanded the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me."

So he does his third thing. In verse thirteen, he comes up with a whole new plan once the prayer thing does not work. He gets a whole bunch of cattle and stuff and he says, "Okay, you take this first group and when you get to Esau say, 'Look, Jacob is giving you all this stuff.'" Now when Esau would come to that first group, he might say that it was good, but not enough. Then he would come to the next group and there is a whole bunch more and they say, "Look, Jacob wants to give you this." Then Esau says, "Well, that Jacob...I don't know." But then he would come to the third group with more stuff and he says, "Well, maybe he is not so bad after all." See, that is the plan!

Remember stories of the nation of Israel doing that with God? God says to go over to the land and they say, "No, there are giants in there." So God tells them they will not go into the land at all, and Israel says, "Noooo!" God says, "Do not go, I am not with you." But Israel says, "No we are going." We want to do it when we want to do it. We are not in tune with God. We are not plugged in with God. He is not our life. He is just our big Santa Claus that helps us and tells us what the best thing is to do. Following Jesus costs you, it costs you your life, it costs you to really know Him and be one with Him. It does not cost you to be saved, but it costs you to know him and be one with him. When I say know Him, I am talking about being one with Him. There is a price: it costs you everything to know the Lord in oneness. It just does. So, Jacob is saying that it is costing him alright, but the cost is to preserve his life, preserve the identity of Jacob. Preserve something that is good and smart and witty and comes up with things. I mean, what he is doing is better than a lot of people who do nothing, right? No. Not right.

It is Jacob. He is always trying to find a way, always thinking, instead of having the mind of Christ. He is always thinking, instead of *"[letting] this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"* (Philippians 2:5-8).

Preserve your identity, preserve who you are, preserve what you think. Preserve what you have got, preserve your talent, preserve all of this and shove it forward for the use of God. Paul says instead of shove it forward, take it away. And that is the Lord's heart and that is what he wants to do, not just in one group of special people, but in that church over there in that one over there and that one there and all around the world. That is God's plan.

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Children of Israel

Genesis 32:21-24: *“So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over all that he had. And Jacob was left alone, and there he wrestled with a man.”*

God wants to bring forth a nation, but it is not the nation of Jacob. It is not called the nation of Jacob, they are not called the children of Jacob. They are called the children of Israel. The children of Jacob are rebuked over and over and over again in the prophets. It is the children of Israel that God loves. Now of course He loved Jacob; that is why he wants to bring him in. We think He loves us enough to just bless us and keep us the way we are. He does not. He wants you to lose your identity, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. Jacob tries appeasing Esau with gifts, but he is still afraid. So here is the final deal, Jacob's final maneuver: He sends his wives, his kids, and his personal belongings over the brook. He is saying to God, “Look man, all I've got are my wives and my kids and my personal belongings, the things I treasure. I don't care about the two hundred she-goats.” When it gets down to it, you will give all the he-goats and she-goats you have got, as long as you can save your personal stash. Those things closest to your heart. You will shove everything else up on the altar except yourself and your private stuff.

Jacob is protecting the most sure, the most important things to him. The things he figures are the most important, that surely God agrees need protecting. After all, Abraham is the father of a multitude, but Abraham's descendants are not a multitude yet, and it is going to have to come through Jacob, so God must want those things preserved. We do this. We add scriptures and what we have heard from the Lord to justify and protect flesh. You can be scriptural and not be operating in oneness with Jesus. You can be “right” and it still not be Christ. We say to ourselves, “At least I'm not Esau.” Sure, but what good is not being Esau if it is not Jesus instead? It does not matter if it is good or bad, it is the wrong tree, and God said, “Do not eat of that tree.” But we say, “Well, I'm not eating the evil, but the good. I want to preserve that. I want to give that to God.” But that is Cain's attitude. Giving God “good” fruit that is not the Lamb is not the answer.

So Jacob gathers up that which is important to him and he says it is important to God. “My grandfather was Abraham,” he says. “God changed his name to ‘father of a multitude.’ So God is going to need my kids. He is going to need my stuff. So I am doing this for God.” Jacob, if you will check deeper you will hear this on the inside: “This is the stuff I want. This is the stuff I care about. In the deepest part of me, it is not what God wants first, it is what I want.” Come on Jacob, look deep within, you will see it. You are the deceiver; you deceive your own

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self. Wake up! Look within, Jacob, and you will see this is your manipulation, this is your plan, and this is your bad increase again. It is not God, it is not pretty, and it is not glorifying the Lord. Self protection as pure as it can be.

Now Jacob is left alone. And there he wrestled with a man. Here, he is finally run out of tricks. The only thing he has left is his own strength. Now it is just him. No more things in his bag to throw at Esau, or at God. It is just him and the last bit of strength that he has.

And he actually had quite a bit left in him. God stripped away everything and was that enough? Apparently not. He has still got Jacob; everything in him is still Jacob. But here he goes, he is left alone. That is significant. Many people never come to the place of being left alone. They just keep digging in the bag and coming up with stuff. And if they ever do come to that place, it is important to remember that God stripping away everything you had in your bag, everything but you yourself, is not the victory. It was the journey you took to reach the real battle. At that moment, Jacob was still Jacob. And God knows that, although Jacob is destitute at this moment, if He lets Jacob go from this place unchanged, he will gather up everything he has and will be Jacob-big-shot-manipulator again. When we reach this place where Jacob found himself, we cannot leave. We have business to do, business called “wrestling with God.”

Genesis 32:24-25: *“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.”*

So here he is, a man of strength, a man of great wrestling, a man of great ability. He exerts every ounce of strength he has got, still trying to gain something in his own strength, so what does God do? God smites him, making him irrevocably weaker. And there it is: Jacob has lost everything. He has sent most of his possessions to Esau, his family has left, he is alone with God, and still that was not sufficient to God. Jacob must go lower still. He loses even his strength, his own inherent ability, and he is totally beaten. He is emptied out. So what does he do next? The right thing. He prays the prayer. *“And he said let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me”* (Gen. 32:26). And that right there is the key to understanding Jabez.

True Meaning of Blessing

The key is found in this word “bless.” We have the American understanding of what “bless” means. The American understanding is this: Jacob has just lost everything. He has become weaker than he has ever been before. Esau is still riding in his direction with four hundred men, and he is turning to God and going, “Lord, give me a Cadillac. O Lord, give me some land.

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O Lord, give me this and give me that.” No, that is not what he is doing, but that is what we think of when we think of blessings: material gain. But Jacob is not laying there on the ground, worn out from wrestling with God after losing everything, knowing that Esau is coming over the hill with four hundred men, asking for more land and more blessings.

He is asking for “blessing” in the true sense of what it means. Blessing means to yield expectantly before the Lord. It means yielding to a greater. It means yielding up everything. It means extending the hand in complete reliance. Jacob does not have his own strength or wits to depend on. He views himself as absolutely empty and says, “O God, without you I can do nothing. I am hopeless. I yield to a greater One than myself. I extend my hand expectantly to one who is greater than I am. I yield up all that I was and everything I have, that I might be filled, that I might be blessed with that which is You.” Maybe we still do not see that in what Jacob is saying, but the Lord’s response is very telling. Jacob says, “O Lord, bless me” and the next words from the Lord are not, “Ok, open your eyes and I will give you everything you see” or “Go back home and you will find riches of silver and gold.” The Lord answers with a question: *“And he said unto him, What is thy name?”* And finally God has got him. What must Jacob answer? “I am Jacob.” I am deceiver, I am surplanter, I am trickster...that is who I am. He finally got him down. He got him weak and emptied. What is your name? “Jacob, I am Jacob, everything I have done has been Jacob, because that is who I am.” And God said, *“Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed”* (Genesis 32:28).

“What do you mean I prevailed? I have not prevailed. I have lost, I have lost everything. I have come to an end of everything.” Exactly. This is the greatest gift you will ever come to. You *have* prevailed: you have come to an end. But you did not just come to an end; at that end you knelt down, extending the hand expectantly to the One who is greater. So much more beautiful. “All that I was as Jacob, I yield that I might be filled with you, that I might be changed.” And He says you are prince with God. He does not say, “Jacob, I make you prince for me.” He did not make Jacob princely. He said you are no longer Jacob, your former identity is over with, and you are now one with me. You are prince with God, not because *you* are princely but because you rule as a prince. You reign in life as a king. They that receive abundance of grace and the free gift of right standing shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

Finally Encountering the Cross

Genesis 32:30: *“And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”*

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Jabez called upon the God of Israel, and not just the God of “the nation.” He called upon the God of the one who was previously Jacob. Called upon that God and was completely yielded up to that God, the God of Israel. It says in Genesis 32:30, *“And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”* He should have experienced death. Not the death of the cross where resurrection comes, but death. But God showed him the cross, that it is Christ who is the resurrection. That is the important point: Jesus has not just resurrected us, He is the resurrection. He is not just the one who resurrects; He is the resurrection Himself in us. That is the glory of the resurrection, and that is the promise of the resurrection to anyone who is a Jacob: instead of being blessed I should have been killed. But God showed me a death and through Christ the resurrection takes me out of Jacob and into Israel. Verse 31 says, *“And as he passed over Peniel: the sun rose upon him.”* Resurrection morning, the sun coming up.

But look at Jacob in verse 31: *“...and he halted upon his thigh.”* He walks into the light of resurrection morning, but limping, so as to never forget that it is only by the grace of God that his life was preserved. It is only in Christ that he still lives. Now let us go back to 1 Chronicles. 1 Chronicles 4:9-10: *“And Jabez was more honorable 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.”*

Oh, that you would change me from being pain, Lord. Oh, that you would change me from bringing sorrow everywhere I go, not because I want to but because it is who I am. Everything I touch is touched by pain, sorrow, and suffering. Bless me, Lord, like you did Israel. Bless me like when you touched Jacob and made him Israel. Jabez was pain all his life, but he came to a certain place where he said, “I do not want to be this anymore. I do not want to be like this anymore. Bless me Lord.”

Enlarge My Borders

People break this prayer up into three parts: enlarge my borders, let your hand be with me, keep me from evil. But this prayer is not in three parts. This is one thing, one prayer: Lord, enlarge, then fill, and protect what you fill. Enlarge me, enlarge my capacity to see, my view. Enlarge my ability to receive your hands in me, your life, and your nature. Push back the boundaries. I am bound in a really small space. Push back the boundaries, enlarge the borders, and give me a wider view of what you are doing. Give me a greater openness, that I may depend on you. I am claustrophobic in myself. Lord, do not fence me in, do not let me be fenced in anymore, it is so small I can hardly breathe! Enlarge my heart, enlarge my capacity to receive, because I am too small. My capacity is only able to hold my frailty: my view, my thoughts, and my world. Enlarge my borders *“...that thine hand might be with me,”* that I might always be conscience of your presence. So that it is no longer my hand in my bag of tricks, but rather it is your hand, it is your strength. It is no longer my guidance, it is your

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guidance. That your hand would be with me; that it would be you reaching through me. Not me blessing people for Jesus, not me living for Jesus, but Christ in me the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Again, understand that he prays thus: push back the boundaries (the BOUNDries), then fill me with Your presence and Your hand, and finally preserve that which is of you from the enemy that would snuff it out, and bring it forth through me as an earthen vessel. I am not sufficient, I cannot do it, and even if I could do it I would not do it! Let it be your hand.

This is Jabez saying, “My Lord, it happened to a man, it can happen to me.” It happened to Jacob and now he is Israel. I call upon you God of Israel: change me, enlarge my borders and then let your hand be the hand that is in me that is my sufficiency. And that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve you. Jabez is not asking that he never get attacked by the devil. If you are going to follow Jesus, He will not keep you from evil in that way. The devil is going to attack you. If you follow God, you will be attacked. He is not saying, “Keep me from evil so that nothing bad ever happens.” He is saying, “Keep me from the calamity of being Jabez so that who I am apart from you does not continue to be who I am all my life, always mixed in with everything that happens. God deliver me from this, that it be You. This constant grief that I have that it is me and not you will be relieved. It will be your hand, your sufficiency.”

It is not three things, it is one thing. Enlarge my borders, fill me up, and keep me from myself. God grant me the grace. I will say it again: surely every person in this chronology recorded here in 1 Chronicles prayed, “Lord, bless me” at one point or another. But there is no record of God answering those prayers. Why? Because I believe that was a selfish prayer. It is not the will of God that flesh has control of more stuff. But when somebody like Jabez goes, “I am sick and tired of being Jabez. Oh that thou wouldst bless me,” God grants that prayer. God saw a pure heart. Out of all the names, and there a lot of names in this list, He saw Jabez, and called him more honorable than all his brethren, and answered his prayer.

There is one more honorable than all of Israel because even though he was born this way, he did not look at all these names before and after him that just lived and died and say, “Well, that is just the way it has been and that is just the way it is going to be.” No, Jabez checked out from the crowd, checked out from history, checked out of the earth-understanding into the realm of God. And God said, “There is one right there more honorable than all his brethren, for he says I am Jabez, but I want to be blessed the way Jacob was. I want to go all the way through the process of it. Take me down and bring me up in resurrection.”

So how do we do that? Well, you do not do it by hearing sermons, and you do not do it by knowledge. You do it by being like Jabez, when you step out of the crowd towards God, and you cry out. You cry out, “Do not increase my flesh, do not give my flesh more stuff. Oh God, it is all suffering, all pain, and it is not just around me, it is who I am.” Jabez could have blamed

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his mom all his life. He could have blamed his circumstances. After all, it was not his fault. He was born “pain, sorrow, suffering.” But that was not the point. He *was* Jabez, “pain” was who he was. But he chose not to stay there. He called out to the God of Israel. The God who asked Jacob, “What is your name?” and then declared by the power of the cross of Christ, “That is no longer your name. You are now a prince with God.” That is the God that Jabez was banking on. And that is why God answered his prayer.