

The Prayer of an Honourable Man

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth M Ferguson

- [0 : 0 0] Old Testament and the first group of Chronicles and chapter 4 where we have read. 1 Chronicles and chapter 4 and at verse 10.
- And Jabez called on the 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. From the beginning of this book, first book of Chronicles, we have name after name after name given to us.
- All the way from Adam, right through, to the time when the children of Israel came back from the captivity.
- And in the first four or five chapters, this man, Jabez, is the only one to whose name a comment is attached.
- [1 : 3 4] It says from verse 9 that Jabez was more honorable than his brethren. And his mother called his name Jabez saying, Because I bear him with sorrow.
- And then it talks about the fact that Jabez called upon the name of the Lord. And bearing in mind the request of the disciples of the Lord Jesus, we read that in Luke chapter 11, when they asked him, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.
- And then the Lord Jesus taught them what we call the Lord's Prayer. Well, prayer is a very important part of the Christian life.
- It is an essential part of the Christian life. Because the people whom the Lord calls to himself and blesses with eternal blessings, they are made a people of prayer.
- But the evil one will try and turn our hearts away from that privilege and duty. But in the midst of this particular generation in which Jabez lived, it says of him that he was more honorable than his brethren.
- [3 : 0 5] Because he was a man who kept close to his God. I'd just like to say two or three words.
- First of all, under that first heading, this man's character, he is said to be more honorable than his brethren. Secondly, the focus that he had in his life, he was calling on the God of Israel.
- And thirdly, the prayer that he had. Oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed, enlarge my coast, that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.
- These four issues that he had close to his mind in his prayer life, just touch on each of these. And finally, the fact that God granted him his request.
- Firstly then, what it says about this man, apart from any of the names that you read of listed in this book, right up to this point, no one has mentioned regarding the kind of person he was in godliness, in godliness, but this man.

[4 : 31] He was more honorable than his brethren. Now, the same word in the original is used of other people, for example, in chapter 11 at verse 21, a man called Abishai, chapter 11 at verse 21, it says of him, one of the three, he was more honorable than the two, for he was their captain, howbeit he attained not to the first three.

A man who was honorable in his duties as soldier on behalf of the nation.

He was an honorable man. And then also we find in chapter 11, verse 25, a man called Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada.

He had a name among the three mighties. Behold, he was honorable among the thirty, but attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard.

Now, these men were honorable. That is, they were men of substance. They were not men who would be tossed around, as it were, by every opinion and every wind of doctrine, as it says in Ephesians chapter 4.

[6 : 01] They were men who had focus in their life. And these soldiers had a focus in that they were faithful to the king and faithful to the nation.

They were committed. They were mighty men. They were honorable men, fulfilling the duties to which they were called. But this man of whom we read here in verses 9 and 10, Jabez, he was an honorable man regarding godliness.

He was a man whose focus continued to be a spiritual focus in the midst of an evil and wayward generation of people.

he was more honorable than his brethren. And what do you think would have made him more honorable?

Well, I believe this is what had made him more honorable, that he was a man who feared God and who kept the commandment of God. He was a man who walked with God, just like Enoch of old.

[7 : 22] And this man who walked with God, who was often in the company of God, in his personal, private life, he was able to grow in grace and in the knowledge of his God and of his Savior.

that made him honorable more than the mass of people around him. It says that these people in Israel at that particular time had deviated in their allegiance away from God to various idols.

But this man, he kept his focus and that's always a challenge to every Christian in our day and generation and in every generation.

We need the grace of God to look unto Jesus and keep looking to him as we run our race with patience. In that particular verse, looking unto Jesus in Hebrews, it means looking away from everything else.

and continuing to focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ. There are so many other voices calling to us, so many other attractions in the world that our fallen and corrupt nature responds to.

[8 : 57] We all know what the confession of faith says regarding people who are born again, that they have a remnant of corruption still in their hearts.

They are not made completely holy. There is a remnant of corruption still there and that corruption wants to identify itself with the corruption in the world round about us and the world and the world calls to it and the world would want to deviate you from looking unto Jesus and walking a consecrated life.

This man here, Jabez, was more honorable than his brethren because by God's grace he kept close to the Lord.

And that's a challenge to every one of ourselves to keep close to him, reading his word, hearing his word, keeping close to him at the throne of grace and keeping close together as a Christian community.

You know what the book of Proverbs says, a threefold cord is not quickly broken. When people are united in one spirit that unison goes for strength and if we are of the same mind in the Lord we will go on from strength to strength.

[10 : 39] So that's the first thing about this man, his character. He was more honorable than his brother. Secondly, the particular focus he had in his life.

He was calling upon the name of the Lord. He called on the God of Israel. Now I looked up this in the original before I came away this evening and when it says called on the God of Israel, the Hebrew says he called on him by name.

He called on the Lord by name. How did he know him? Well, he, the Lord, had given himself to be known as the covenant God, the covenant keeping God, the God of grace, the God of mercy, the holy God, the creator of all things, the sustainer of all things, the God who identifies himself with his people.

And when Jabez, in his day, called upon the God of Israel, I mentioned a moment ago, he was doing something that the masses of people around him just were not doing at all.

I read this in the afternoon in the book of Numbers, it says that the people of Israel invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

[12 : 27] So Israel was joined to Baal Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel. they had mixed with the heathen people in Canaan, rather than destroy them as the Lord had commanded them when they went into the land of Canaan.

Nevertheless, they did not destroy them, and because they didn't destroy them, these people's attitudes and religions drew them away from following the Lord wholeheartedly.

this man, he was a man more honorable than his brethren. He hadn't deviated in his allegiance from following the one through God.

The rest of the people had gone. Isn't that true in our day? there are so many people nowadays and they aren't wholehearted in their following of Jesus.

They aren't at all wholehearted in living a godly life. The Lord says, come ye out from among them and touch not the unclean thing ye who build the vessels of the Lord.

[13 : 53] and there are so many people nowadays with their hands full of worldliness and worldly activities while still professing the name of the Lord.

This man wasn't like that. He was more honorable than the rest. And he called on the God of Israel by name. He boldly called upon him, Lord, remember me.

And I just want to go on to what the prayer he had really involves as he calls upon the God of Israel.

The first thing that he asks in his prayer is oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed. that you would bless me indeed.

In the original it says blessing bless me. It says if he doubles the strength of the word bless. In the English translation it translates with these words bless me indeed.

[15 : 15] But in the original it says blessing bless me. Now a man who is more honorable than his brethren and who lives close to the Lord you can imagine the kind of blessing that he is looking for.

Certainly the Lord was blessing people with rich harvests in Israel but this man wants a blessing that is spiritual in nature something like the blessing Jacob received remember when Jacob was experiencing that wrestling with the man at Peniel and Jacob asked what is your name and the man the angel said to him why do you ask after my name and he blessed him the name was in the blessing he dealt with him in such a way that Jacob couldn't but realize and know that he was in the fellowship of God from heaven that it was a spiritual blessing he received that his soul was richly blessed with fellowship with

God and that's what this man is looking for oh he said that thou wouldst bless me indeed the thief on the cross asked Lord remember me you yourself often say to the Lord remember me in my need remember me because I am tempted give me strength to turn away from the temptation remember me because of the sinful inclination of my heart sanctify me by your Holy Spirit remember me in relation to all the duties that I have to fulfill and I don't feel adequate for them give me strength remember me give me to understand your word and more and more about yourself as you are revealed to me in the scriptures of the

Old and the New Testament send your light forth and your truth let them be guides to me remember me so that I will not be a spiritual dwarf as the years roll on remember me bless me indeed and then he says and enlarge my coast enlarge my coast now some of the people who promote what they call a prosperity gospel they latch on to this particular petition of Jabez and they say well Jabez this man who was so honorable he's asking for a large house he's asking for a large tract of land he's asking for more and more money I don't believe he's asking for that at all this man's focus is a spiritual focus and when he asks

Lord enlarge my coast he wants spiritual expansion he wants spiritual riches he wants to be expanded in his fellowship with God I'm sure this is something that you yourself can follow that you pray every day enlarge my coast enlarge my capacity for fellowship enlarge my love to the Lord Jesus enlarge my constraints regarding following the Lord Jesus in service give me more capacity to serve give me more opportunities to serve give me more and more depth of understanding so that I might grow in grace and in the knowledge of my Lord and Savior

[20 : 05] Jesus Christ that you would enlarge my personal coast enlarge my soul in spiritual things but then of course I suppose we could apply that and extend it thinking of not just ourselves individually but our family circle those of us who have family isn't that a burden every day that we bring them to the Lord in prayer that the extent of Christ's kingdom would embrace them and envelop them and bring them in and when you think of our congregation that the Lord will enlarge our coast that more and more individuals and family members would be brought under the saving power of the gospel of

Jesus Christ and this man has a prayer life asking for that enlargement in spiritual matters so that he will see the Lord's name magnified among his people and when we think of our nation there's not enough material for us to be petitioning the Lord day after day after day a nation that has known so much blessing down through the years and now Christianity is almost cold shoulder at every corner Lord enlarge my coast may my prayers have an answer and may my prayers be more and more fervent on behalf of myself my family my congregation my nation the whole world

Jesus Christ would see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied and then it says also thirdly that thine hand might be with me when when you think of who this man was a creature of the dust like we all are and he wants this amazing reality in his life that the almighty take control of him that the almighty who created the universe would take him by the hand and lead him and guide him infallibly safely every step of his way that the god of providence would be his god remember the marvelous answer in the catechism god's works of providence are his most holy wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions and this man wants such a god to control him to the glory of god and to his own eternal benefit that your hand might be with me the almighty hand of god jesus said none shall pluck them out of my hand out of my father's hand i and the father are one you remember when david went out to fight goliath and he said something like this you come to me with sword and spear but i come to you in the name of the lord god of israel one plus god is always a majority and this man wanted the greatest help of all he wanted the almighty to be with him and the almighty of course is a good shepherd who leads and guides who feeds his people who protects them who gives them all that they stand in need of in time and on the way to eternity that you would keep them me he said then from evil that it may not grieve me the evil of sin the evil of an unbelieving heart the evil of worldliness the evil of carnality all the evil that comes to try and swipe us sideways and make us lose our foothold oh how much we need to be clothed with the armour of

God that the Lord would sustain us and provide for all that we need against the evil one keep me from the evil the Lord Jesus said this in the prayer he taught the disciples lead us not into evil may the evil one not prevail against us because if it does it will grieve us keep me from evil that it may not grieve me sin brings grief there may be pleasure in it for a moment but ultimately it brings grief and death Jabez was granted what he requested isn't it amazing that the Lord will be asked and petitioned by his people asking it shall be given to you seeking you will find knock on the door shall be opened to you and he finishes that section in

Luke 11 by saying if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your heavenly father give the holy spirit to them and ask him we need to be more faithful and fervent in our prayer life I know it's a hard thing it's a struggle often the devil will do his utmost to keep you away from the place of prayer it came before my mind recently but back to tell a little story about a man they called him callum callum moren hoony and he was living in braga long ago a christian man fervent in his prayer life and a friend of his from this side of the island decided to go over and visit him so his friend walked across the moor to visit callum and just as he arrived at callum's house callum moren hoony was coming out of the house and he said to his friend he says

[28 : 02] I can't go in with you just now this is my hour for prayer and callum went to the barn to keep his appointment with the lord we have to do that don't be deflected by anything if it's at all possible don't be deflected do callum moren hoony thing keep your appointment with the lord I believe Jabez was doing that and that's what left him a more honorable man than his brethren he was able to keep close to the lord and I would plead with myself and yourselves follow his example pray pray without ceasing pray without ceasing another story comes to my mind a group of ministers long ago and they used to meet in each other's manses discussing points of theology and this particular day they had finished and the young girl who was kitchen maid in the mans overheard them say well the next time we're going to meet we're going to discuss this particular issue what does it mean to pray without ceasing and they agreed to meet the next time and that was fine and the girl said to the minister she said

I heard what you were going to study for the next meeting she said I find it very easy to explain what that text means oh he said I'm very interested to hear what you have to say well she said when I get up in the morning I put on my clothes and at the same time I am praying that I be clothed with the righteousness of Christ and when I go to wash my face I'm not quite sure which order that comes but when she went to wash her face she washed praying that I be cleansed in the blood of Christ when I go down and light the fire I pray Lord light in my heart the fire of your love and when I prepare the breakfast and the dinner

I'm praying feed me with manna from heaven that my soul may be fed oh the minister said you've answered you've answered the question for us good for you well there was a lot what the young girl said and if we by God's grace are able to follow that kind of example praying without ceasing keeping close to the Lord using the means that he has left with us his word and prayer and the sacraments well these are the means of grace described for us in the confession of faith the word sacraments and prayer and the Lord has left these means to us and may we all use them to his glory and for our own eternal good Donald will you finish up with a word of prayer for to really you