

## RTO™ School of Prayer

### *The Radical Prayer of Jabez- God's Radical Answer*

#### *1 Chronicles 4:9-10*

*by Dave Mozdin*

1 Chronicles 4:9-10 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore *him* in pain." <sup>10</sup> And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep *me* from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested."

NOTE: This is an extended lesson of a previous one, The Radical Prayer of Jabez. The extra material focusses on the answer to Jabez' prayer, and how God answers our prayers, according to His word. This includes a testimony on God's radical answer to a "prayer of Jabez" in this writer's (my) life.

This is a short, but powerful prayer (Oh, the beauty of the short prayer), tucked away in the middle of *nine* chapters of names in a seemingly never-ending series of genealogies, prayed by a man about whom we apparently know little, but by digging more deeply into God's word, we come to see him as a great man, walking humbly with and praying radically to a great God. This prayer was popularized by a pastor writer in the year 2000 in the form of a little book, and is not referenced much today, but the impact and *gravitas* of this passage as an example of an answered radical biblical prayer remains strong.

***To better understand this prayer and the man who prayed it, we need to consider:***

- 1.) **The Background and history.** As described in the MacArthur Study Bible, "...the books of First and Second Chronicles were written to the repatriated Jewish exiles as a chronicle of God's intention of future blessing, in spite of the nation's past moral/spiritual failure for which the people paid dearly under God's wrath. The historical themes of this book are inextricably linked with the theological in that God's divine purposes for Israel have been and will be played out on the stage of human history. These two books are designed to assure the returning Jews that, in spite of their checkered past and present plight, God will be true to His covenant promises. Two basic principles enumerated in these books prevail throughout the Old Testament, namely, obedience brings blessing, disobedience brings judgment." We'll see how God brought blessing to Jabez through his obedience.

- 2.) **The Name.** Quite often, even today, we attach significance to the names we give our children, and this was equally if not more important during this point in history. “And his mother called his name Jabez, saying, ‘Because I bore *him* in pain’.” As women who are mothers clearly know, children are birthed in pain, and this has been so because of the fall from the first sin of Adam and Eve. “To the woman He (God) said: ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children;’”(Gen 3:16) As Matthew Henry writes: “Usually the sorrow in bearing is afterwards forgotten *for joy that the child is born*; (John 16:21) but here it seems it was remembered when the child came to be circumcised, and care was taken to perpetuate the remembrance of it while he lived.” This could have been a burden to him, imagine how you would feel every time you realized that your name means you caused your mother pain. Yet Matthew Henry also writes: “The sorrow he carried in his name might help put a seriousness upon his spirit.” It seems like his name was certainly on his mind as he prayed the prayer of this passage.
- 3.) **The honor, the character of Jabez.** “Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers”. In this passage, he is listed as a part of the family/tribe of Judah. The context in which his name is listed makes no direct reference to his father, no specific names of his brothers, or that he fathered any children of his own. He is given no introduction; one assumes that the audience to whom this book is directed would know right away who Jabez is. The parallel we can use today is that when you mention the name of the president of the United States to people, they will know him or know of him, there is virtually no need to explain who he is. The only specifics given about Jabez are his name and that he was *more* honorable than his brothers.

There is reason to believe that Jabez was a scribe, a learned doctor of the law, one who intently studied God’s law, interpreted it, taught it. In 1 Chronicles 2:55 we read: “<sup>55</sup> And the families of the scribes who dwelt at Jabez *were* the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, *and* the Suchathites.” Note the context of his name here is in reference to a place where *families* of scribes lived. It’s not difficult to see how Jabez could have been well known if a place for the *families of scribes* was named for him. It’s also not difficult to see how he was influenced to be a man of prayer for his love for and knowledge of God’s word, as we know for example about Daniel and his prayer in Daniel 9.

***Now that we’ve established the background, the name, the honor, and the character of Jabez, a deeper look at his prayer.***

- 1.) **The Direction:** “And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying . . .” He called on the one true living God, the God who was specifically for Israel, “For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;” (Deut. 7:6-9). *This is the God who Jabez called upon.*

*Application note:* This is the very same God we can call upon, only the reach of the kingdom of His people has expanded to us who are not from Israel. As Paul explains in Romans 11:17-19, we were “grafted in” as a branch to God’s olive tree, which is symbolic of His people Israel. When our Lord Jesus Christ walked this earth in the first century, much of Israel rejected Him, yet His sacrificial death for the sins of all who would believe and resurrection from the dead, victorious over sin, was how He has grafted us into Israel’s branch. This ability to be grafted into God’s olive tree is available to anyone who believes, but you *must* believe that Jesus Christ died to forgive your sins, to save you from eternal damnation in hell and to grant you entrance into His magnificent eternal kingdom in heaven. You must repent, ask Him to forgive your sins, you must put your faith and trust in Him as the one who will restore you to favor in the eyes of the God of Israel. If you have not made that decision, make it now. You will be saved, and you too can call on the God of Israel as Jabez did, and He will hear and answer.

- 2.) **The Passion.** Jabez begins this prayer with the word “Oh”, a part of speech known as an interjection. The Free Dictionary defines interjection “also known as an exclamation, is a word, phrase, or sound used to convey an emotion such as surprise, excitement, happiness, anguish, or anger.” We don’t know which emotion Jabez was expressing, but as a man of God who had a strong relationship with God, he cried out, expressing emotion, knowing he can go to God just as he is. Sometimes we use the word Oh in a casual manner, or sadly, in vain, but great people of prayer in the Bible, such as our Lord Jesus in John 17 or Daniel in Daniel 9, or various psalmists throughout the Psalms often used the word Oh or O in their prayers, passionately calling and crying out to God.

3.) **The Boldness and Purpose.** “. . . that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my territory”. Jabez comes right out and asks God to bless him *indeed*, no doubt about that! As defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, *indeed* means “without any question, truly, undeniably.” We ask God for many different requests, but how faithful, how confident are we in God and in our walk with Him to just come out with passion and ask Him to bless us indeed? To give God, as Matthew Henry describes Jabez, a “blank check” to do whatever God chooses to do? Apparently Jabez was!

In that same vein, Jabez continues and asks God to enlarge his territory, in some translations “enlarge my coast”. This can be viewed externally, a literal expansion of the territory over which he wants to have influence. The Benson Commentary says: “Prosper my endeavours for the increase of what has fallen to my lot”. The Pulpit Commentary says: “it (the prayer) was one when not selfishness and greed of larger territory, but just opportunity”. Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible says: “multiply my borders with disciples.”, and of an increase of his worldly substance for good (God’s ends and purposes”. This can be viewed internally, again from Gill’s, “of a spiritual enlargement by deliverance from spiritual enemies, and of grace as to exercise; and particularly of spiritual light and knowledge, and of the affections and desires of the soul after divine things.”

4.) **The Dependency.** “. . . that Your hand would be with me . . .” Jabez most likely knew full well that he could not enlarge his territory in a good way or in any way at all without God’s help. Matthew Henry writes “God’s hand with us, to lead us, protect us, strengthen us, and to work all our works in us and for us, is indeed a hand sufficient for us, all sufficient. Gill’s Exposition: “that his (God’s) hand of providence might be with him to protect him, of grace and love to comfort and help him in every time of need, of wisdom to direct him, and of power to keep him”. The Pulpit Commentary illustrates through these verses from God’s word: Psalm 119:173, “Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts.” Psalm 139:5, “You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.”

- 5.) **The Humility.** “and that you would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!” This returns to the subject of His Name and links his humility to his dependency. Remember his character, that he was “more honorable than his brothers,” and remember that his name means “Because I bore *him* in pain”. We noted too that this could certainly have been constantly on his mind. Being a man of God, he did not want to sin against God or anyone else and cause God and others pain. He also knew that by his own efforts he could not resist evil, so he sought God’s help for that. This request echoes a New Testament request that is familiar to us, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matt. 6:13)
- 6.) **The Answer.** “So God granted him what he requested. Although we can’t know for sure, we know of no instances in Scripture where Jabez caused anyone pain or that God didn’t keep him from evil. Further, God *did* enlarge his territory as evidenced by what we saw in chapter 2 verse 55, which notes a place named Jabez where three families of scribes dwelled. There is also the implication of no introduction to him in this passage, which assumes the people of this era knew who he was. His territory was enlarged to impact us right here, today, over 2,400 years later! Lastly, the greatest evidence of his enlarged territory was that God placed him and his account in the Bible, where it will stand forever (Psalm 119:89, Isa. 40:8).

**God’s radical answer to my radical prayer of Jabez.** Over time, as I have continued to teach these School of Prayer lessons, the Lord put upon my heart a desire to expand this ministry, to help His people outside of RTO to increase their faith in Him through a more God glorifying radical biblical prayer life. My first thought was to expand to Stateville and Sheridan, two IDOC facilities where I have frequently served for many years. I prayed and had the request placed on the RTO weekly list of prayer requests that we see every week near the end of our time together, but that hasn’t happened (*yet* might I add!). And the desire still burned in my heart to expand my sphere of this ministry which God has so freely and graciously given me. So in the spring of this year, 2023, I remembered the prayer of Jabez, that I had previously taught this, and decided to pray it for this situation, specifically “to enlarge my territory.” All I had asked for was one or two more locations for the ministry. God graciously answered with one location through Pastor Dan at St. John’s Lutheran Church, where two lessons have been taught to congregation members there, with opportunities for more opportunities later this year.

And I persisted, “Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you.” Matthew 7:7, Luke 11:9. “that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” Luke 18:1. On June 9, I received a two-word text that simply read, “Hello Theologian!” My heart jumped immediately! Could this be who I think it is? Some

background and explanation are in order at this point. In 2015, I was on a short-term mission trip to Kenya, East Africa, with a team from the local church where I was a member. For the first three days of this trip, my duty was to be one of the teachers at a conference for local pastors in the surrounding areas. One of the other teachers was Pastor Edward Elly Lokang, and we worked in partnership throughout the conference, and got along well together. We continued in fellowship after the conference as Pastor Edward stayed with us for a few days, exchanged cell phone numbers and remained in contact after I returned to the US. Unfortunately, something happened to his phone, I was no longer able to contact him, and I had no other contact information. Greatly disappointed, I nonetheless kept praying for him and his ministry in the slim hope I would one day be able to return.

Eight years later, our faithful and true God answered! While we were together, Pastor Edward began to call me "Theologian", so when I saw that name on the text, I texted back to confirm it was indeed him. We began to exchange a series of texts and emails that would show that God is surely enlarging my territory, a tremendous answer to my prayer. Pastor Edward has asked for my partnership with him as a teacher to help teach Sunday School teachers in Kenya, to ensure they are properly prepared, both theologically and practically. The school has been in operation since 2004, and Pastor Edward is seeking my help to expand the school to a new location. He has also said we will be ministering to Sudanese refugees in Uganda, a nearby country, where the need for ministry is great, but the laborers are few. This is humbling for me, as I consider refugees to be political prisoners (an opportunity to do a type of prison ministry), in a place where they do not want to be, innocent of any crimes, but unable to go home. At this point I am planning for a two-week trip in late January 2024.

**The "miracle" answers to my prayers.** Yes, I mean miracle, as in supernatural, from God. First, after praying for 8 years to return to Africa to see Pastor Edward, God answers. Sometimes God sovereignly takes a long time to answer. This may have seemed like a long time to me (but to "the Lord one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day", 2 Peter 3:8), but it was a test of my faith in Him, my perseverance in His faithfulness.

Second, after praying for God to enlarge my territory, to grant me two more local areas, He gives me an enlarged territory in two *nations*!

Third, this calling to Africa is a type of "coming full circle" for me. Pastor Edward has asked me to preach the Sunday sermon at his local church while I am there. I asked about what Scripture or biblical topic. He said "Missions", because "Our local church

seems not to be interested in carrying out missions activities even though they have the opportunity to do so." This greatly encouraged me. Let me explain. In May 2001, less than 3 years after my coming to faith in Christ, my local church had a Pastor visiting from the west African country of Ghana, and he gave a sermon on missions. After hearing that anointed sermon, I came away a changed man. Since that day over 22 years ago, I have rarely missed a day when I have not prayed for missions or missionaries. I have gone on 5 short term mission trips to 5 different countries. I have contributed financially as well. *Now I, an American, coming full circle, have been given an opportunity to preach to Africans on the very same subject.* My prayer is that there would be at least one person, and many more, who respond the way I did, gratefully giving time, talent, and treasure to the work of God's kingdom in carrying out Christ's Great Commission. To God be the glory!!

Fourth, that God brought forward two local brothers in Christ, prompted by the Spirit, to tell me that they will finance the travel costs for this first trip. I did not have to wonder about or even ask for financial help. This was truly a sign for me that God has opened a door here, praise His Holy Name! Thank you, Lord!

**The Biblical Reasons for God's Answer.** Knowing the biblical reasons for God's answer is important because we can't just go to God carelessly and presumptuously, asking for whatever we feel we want, especially in asking something like enlarging my territory. Remember James 4:3, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions." Drawing from some of our previous School of Prayer lessons: First, be righteous, James 5:16, "The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Make sure you are rightly reconciled to God, having repented, placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins. Second, confess any known sin, Psalm 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." Isaiah 59:2, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." Third, that you pray according to His will. 1 John 5:14, "And this the confidence we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." Part of God's will is for people to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), and to be sanctified, (1 Thess. 4:3). To assist in the sanctification (spiritual growth/discipling) of believers is a part of the work of my upcoming mission trip, as well as the salvation (evangelism) of unbelievers.

7.) **The Application for us.** All praise, honor, and glory to our great God, who through His word has given us yet another tremendous example of one of His people who prayed radically to love radically. From these two verses alone, we learn that we ought to pray in God's direction, to Him, the one true living eternal saving God, pray

with passion, boldness, purpose, dependency, and humility. Then He will grant you what you requested, seeing that you are righteous with Him and have confessed all known sin, and according to His will. James 5:16, Psalm 66:18, Isaiah 59:2, 1 John 5:14).

- 8.) **Application exercise.** In your prayer devotional time, practice praying these verses that Jabez prayed, and say them out loud. Pray also for God's hand, God's direction, God's will, that He would show you what you need to do to enlarge your territory, both within and outside of yourself. Pray that God would keep you from those sins which would cause pain to Him and to others. Pray in the spirit of Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if *there is any* wicked way in me And lead me in the way everlasting." Thank Him for hearing and answering. (John 11:41(b), Jer. 33:3).

**Ephesians 3:20-21:** "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Alleluia!

***Questions or comments? Email: [dmozdin.dfp@gmail.com](mailto:dmozdin.dfp@gmail.com)***

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