

THE POWER OF A PRAYER

By Pastor Denzel Fenn

One of the greatest prayers of the Bible is found in **I Chronicles 4:10**. There it records – “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 it may not cause pain.’ So God granted him what he requested.”

Several years ago a book was written on the Prayer of Jabez that sold millions of copies around the world. Evidently this prayer connected with the people of all nations.

I probably would have missed this prayer had it not been for an elderly pastor, who preached on this text, when I was a young man. The reason I may have missed it is because it is buried in nine long chapters of genealogies. I have a habit of skipping those parts when I am reading the Bible through. So I could have missed this hidden treasure.

This is a story of the power of prayer to change things and people’s lives. Destinies are often determined and altered by people who pray.

This man’s name is Jabez, and Jabez means pain, vexation and sorrow. In our culture we give names mostly for identification purposes. In Hebrew culture the name often described the character of the child or some event surrounding the birth. So it is obvious that some traumatic event happened at his birth. We do not know what it was but we know that he was not on an equal playing field with his brothers.

He had every reason not to exceed. He could have given up and concluded that life was not fair. He could have withdrawn and lived a substandard existence. He could have become bitter. But he would not content himself with the status quo. He would not be a victim of his circumstances. He would find a way to rise above them. He would cry out to the God who created him.

It is obvious that his was a cry of desperation. He lifted up his voice and called upon the Lord. This was no casual prayer. This was fervent and heartfelt. It became the overriding passion of his life and it emanated from deep in his spirit. He had no backup plan. This was it.

Jabez longed for God's blessing and favour. He understood the rejection and disfavour of his peers. All that he could bear if he could have God's blessing. Perhaps he had understood that, "the blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and adds no sorrow." Jacob understood its value and cried out, "I will not let you go unless You bless me." Tenacity in prayer is always rewarded.

Jabez not only wanted a blessing, but equally he wanted to be a blessing. So he prayed that God would enlarge the sphere of his influence. He was not content to live a narrow and selfish life but wanted to leave his mark for good in the world.

And he requested God's direction. He prayed that God's guiding hand would be with him. No doubt, because of his pain, he walked a lonely road. Now he wants to walk with God and let Him lead the way. The Bible says, "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."

Finally, he prayed that God would keep him from evil so that he would not cause anymore pain. Sin brings pain and suffering, not only to the one who commits it, but often to those who are around. Often the wounded becomes a wounder and Jabez wanted to break the cycle.

And here's the good news. His prayer was heard. The Bible account is quite matter of fact. It is accepted that God hears and responds to prayer. So the writer simply said – “So God granted him what he requested.” Truly God gives us the deep desires of our hearts.

So perhaps today, as you read this, your life too is filled with sorrow and pain. Maybe you received the short end of the stick and in many ways life has been unfair to you.

In the midst of the darkness there is hope. There is a God in heaven who cares and who responds to the cry of the human heart. The Bible encourages us to “cast our care on Him because He cares for you” (**1 Peter 5:7**).