

Seeking Blessings

1 Chronicles 4:10

“.....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.”

Nestled amongst the list of the descendants of Judah we discover this gem of a prayer by Jabez. Little is known of Jabez except that he was an honourable man and his mother had borne him in sorrow. Jabez’s mother may have given him the name to serve as a reminder of difficult times.

The worldview of being blessed are varied, sometimes it is seen in terms of status, wealth and fame. The natural links to these positions are of course a passion for increase in material and territorial possessions, which many seek above all else. Little do they realise that it really is a form of idolatry, which is an affront to God.

God blessed Solomon, but he misused his divine gift and in time his excessive wealth led him into worldliness and idolatry resulting in spiritual poverty (1Kings 11:6). When surrounded by wealth and fame even greater is our need to cry out “Oh that thou would bless me indeed”! A blessing that indeed, keeps us in line with God’s will. Peace and joy is not achieved by an abundance of possessions or health, which can easily fail in a short space of time.

Jesus said; “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?” (Mathew 16:26). Jesus clearly taught that we are to: “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” and all our needs will be met by Him (Matthew 6:33).

The body of Christ is, in many instances, experiencing spiritual poverty and there is a great need for leaders to examine the manner in which they are shepherding the sheep. There needs to be a fresh look at guiding people into a meaningful and vibrant relationship with Christ, which naturally leads to a fulfilled prayer life.

From a biblical perspective it’s difficult to conclude that Jabez was praying solely for material blessings. Certainly God does bless many a believer with material wealth and health, but these are temporary blessings to be used wisely. At the time of the Apostles, there was no lack, as wealthy believers took care of those in need (Acts 4:34).

In the first instance, Jabez called ardently on the “God of Israel” to bless him greatly. The very same God that Jacob wrestled with all night and would not let go, until he was blessed. Jacob’s purpose of being alone that night, was to pray and lay before the LORD his fears and needs, particularly, as he was meeting Esau the next day (Genesis 32: 24).

The prophet Hosea tells us that Jacob wept and sought favour from the LORD (Hosea 12:4). The blessing bestowed upon Jacob was far greater than he had anticipated. God crowned him with the name Israel – a name that will remain to the end of time!

It would have been impossible for Jacob to have prevailed against the Angel in his own strength. Jacob was a man of faith who prayed fervently – he wrestled all night to receive God’s blessings. So too it is with us when we fervently seek the Lord, hardly possible in our own strength. It is only in Christ and with the Holy Spirit guiding us (Romans 8: 26) that our prayer life is enriched and our longings met.

As Donald Guthrie writes: “The mission of Jesus was based on the conviction that what God expected of people was impossible through human effort, but became a viable proposition when faith linked them to God’s way of doing things, i.e. to His redemptive plan. This impossible aspect becomes intelligible only when it centres in a known person (i.e. in Jesus himself). It is in Christ that God does the impossible.” (New Testament Theology. 576)

Jabez prayed that God would keep him under His hand and to protect him from evil and assault by his enemies. A similar prayer is echoed in Mathew 6:13; “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” Oh! That we may learn to abide under God’s all sufficient hand to lead, strengthen and protect us.

As we struggle in life’s battles, it is of great comfort to know that we can at all times, even in our darkest moments, seek comfort and refuge under God’s mighty wing span. Sometimes, as many of you may well have experienced, we find ourselves engaged in a spiritual battle of darkness, but persistent prayer and absolute faith and trust in God, brings deliverance – perhaps not always immediately, but it does come.

Jabez sought the LORD’s blessings, and placed himself under God’s divine protection. Recall Proverbs 3: 5-6 which says; “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your path.” In trusting the LORD absolutely, we receive grace upon grace through Jesus Christ (John 1 :16)

Jabez prayed that the LORD would enlarge his territory and would prosper his endeavours for increase. In this instance the enlarging of his territory may also be seen in terms of conquest over the Canaanites whose religious practices were abominable. May we also enlarge our territories by reaching out into our broken and hurting society with hearts and arms of love!

It is entirely permissible to pray that God gives us increase materially and may He greatly bless us all! It is certainly not a sin to want to live well and not be in poverty. It can indeed be a blessing to be rich, as long as we share the wealth with those in need. Not enough to go around? Then share your time and console the lost, the needy and those in grief.

There are many people in the world who are in need of one kind or another. The big question we truthfully have to ask ourselves is do we hoard our blessings or do we meet the need of others. Are our prayers for divine blessings with a view of also blessing others?

Recall the story of the poor widow who gave two mites in Luke 21:1-3. Jesus commended her for giving far more than the rich! Another poor widow gave her last morsel of food to Elijah and in doing so she received in abundance not only food, but God restored her son back to life! (1Kings 17:10-24)

Today in the United Kingdom darkness prevails, it almost seems like a blanket over the land. We are being ruled by a godless government. More and more laws are being changed to accommodate

ideas that oppose godly precepts. They have long forgotten the history of this country where many gave their lives in defending the faith and upholding Biblical values.

Young children are being deprived of the natural goodness of youth. There are no structures in place for youths who have been mentally and physically abused. They resort to violence in order to hopefully alleviate their sense of loss and brokenness. Many schools are advancing the idea that sexual immorality is acceptable, a practice that leads to hurt, guilt, low self-esteem, use of mood changing substances to name but a few. Anger abounds - often leading to murder.

Families are struggling to make ends meet as breadwinners lose their jobs. Thousands have lost their homes and many their life savings. Families are grieving from the loss of loved ones. Let us, especially those who are not affected by these terrible times, not lose sight or cast a blind eye. If nothing else we must pray and intercede for restoration of not only our nation, but worldwide!

Like Jabez we must pray that our gracious and Almighty God would give us increase and enlarge our territory. That we may push back the 'Canaanite' darkness that prevails and that all people may lead peaceable and joyous lives! Prayer reveals God's perfect will for mankind. Prayer involves action! The action required of all of us is love, patience, forbearance, tenderness, sympathy and solicitousness toward all humanity.

Our God is a God of miracles – slow to anger and abounding in love and patience!

Now is the time more than ever for us all to repent of all forms of idolatry and humble ourselves and fervently seek the LORD above all else, that He may turn away His wrath. For the LORD Himself says:

“If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Oh, LORD that You would bless us indeed!