

Prayer

Part 4

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[00:00:01] The fourth address by Mr. Frank Wallace on prayer at Bassenfell Manor, October 1986.

You would notice that the two hymns that we've sung together were very, very personal. We've sung them together in the singular, and the last hymn that we shall sing together is of the same character. And I've chosen them deliberately because the prayer that we're going to read tonight is intensely personal too, the prayer of Jabez. Very significant that this honorable man finds his place in Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit, we find his prayer. Quite a remarkable thing that this man gets a place in Scripture and thousands, millions have read about him because he prayed this distinctively personal prayer.

That's why I felt we should sing hymns that are very, very personal indeed, distinctively personal, so that we might all enter into this on a personal basis. [00:01:08] We turn please to 1 Chronicles chapter 4. 1 Chronicles chapter 4, and we'll read from verse 9. 1 Chronicles chapter 4, verse 9.

And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren.

And his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bear him with sorrow.

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, [00:02:04] that it may not grieve me.

And God granted him that which he requested.

Again I say, dear friends, quite a remarkable thing that this honorable man should find a place in Scripture and be an encouragement to those who pray.

Secondly, his prayer was of such a character that God granted his prayer.

God answered him and gave him what he desired. That indicates that this is a prayer of outstanding quality.

Not many prayers are answered in this way in our experience. We're very, very thankful for the answered prayers that we find in Scripture. One of the outstanding prayers that was answered was the prayer of Solomon.

You remember God said to him, Now Solomon, ask me for what you would like, and I will give it to you.

[00:03:10] And Solomon, he asked contrary to what we would ask, I'm sure.

Most of us, I think, would ask for that which is nearest to our hearts. Of course, that might be a challenge to us. But anyway, Solomon, he asked for that which particularly pleased God. He asked for wisdom in relation to the people of God that he might rule them and guide them. God was so pleased with his request that he gave him what he desired and then gave him what he didn't ask for, fame and wealth and power.

I think it's a tremendous thing when we know that our prayers are in line with God's will. An easy thing then for God to grant such requests. [00:04:02] So we'll examine this man's beginning and his prayer and trust that it will bring something for our souls.

First of all, he came into this world and his mother experiencing a great deal of sorrow in relation to it, a great deal of pain, concern.

I often think of what the Lord said in John 16 that a woman has travail until the baby is born and then she has joy because a man-child has been born into this world. And the Lord Jesus was giving a lesson in relation to that statement. But I think it fits in here because the mother of Jabez, she called him Jabez because of the sorrow that she had experienced in his birth. But oh what joy when Jabez grew and became a man [00:05:02] and became an honorable man with moral qualities that were pleasurable to her and I'm sure were pleasurable to God. Now I find in scripture that when anyone is called honorable, it is because they have some quality that's pleasing to God. I want to prove this from scripture. In the book of Genesis, we did a story where a man called Shechem wanted to marry Jacob's daughter, Dinah.

And they placed stipulation in connection with this marriage and he was prepared to go through with it. It's a sad story at the end. We don't want to go into the details. But he loved Dinah and he was ready to do what was placed upon him.

And then it says he was honorable.

Now it seems to me that because he had love and because he was obedient, [00:06:05] he was an honorable man. Nothing dishonorable about him. No ulterior motive.

Move on a little bit in scripture and we come to 1 Samuel and we find that people are inquiring about the man of God, the prophet, and they are told he's an honorable man. His word comes to pass.

His word is reliable.

There I think we find the secret of Samuel being described as an honorable man. What he said came to pass.

It wasn't imagination.

He was under the direction of God. He was an honorable man. And then you remember when Saul

was very angry against David, there was one who spoke up for David in Saul's presence and said, why David?

He's an honorable man.

He's always thinking of your interests. [00:07:02] This is what the man said to Saul. He was a faithful servant, an honorable man. And when we come to the New Testament, we are reminded that the women in the 17th chapter of the Acts were honorable women.

They were amongst those in Berea who were more noble than those of Thessalonica because they believed what Paul taught them. They didn't reason in their minds against what Paul says. They accepted it and searched the scriptures daily to see if these things were so. And there are many other references. But you will see that each person who is called honorable has qualities, qualities that indicate why they are honorable. And I believe Jabez had those qualities that were pleasing to God and God could describe him through the Spirit as an honorable man, [00:08:01] an upright man.

Well, this is the kind of man who prays to God, an upright man, an honest man, an obedient man.

I believe a man who loved God and who loved the things of God. And so it says he prayed.

Jabez was more honorable than his brethren. Then it says, Jabez called on the God of Israel.

I think this is extremely important, the statement that Jabez called on the God of Israel.

If we examine the Old Testament and find the way God dealt with his people Israel, we'll find that he made promises to them, unconditional promises, a covenant made with Abraham that was continued through Isaac and Jacob, covenants that indicated God would bless his people. [00:09:03] But there were conditional covenants also, and this is where they failed. But the God of Israel never changes.

His principles never alter. And anyone who trusted in the God of Israel and was faithful to him was blessed by the God of Israel. And if you read the Old Testament, you'll find this is borne out again and again. Obedience to God brought blessing.

But this man is crying to a God, a God whom he knows, a God with whom he is in relationship, a God whose promises he believes, a God who has promised the greatest possible blessing to those who obey him. Now, I think this is extremely important. Now, just for the moment, we transfer that from Jabez and the God of Israel to ourselves as Christians and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. [00:10:03] We've said at the outset that prayer honors God. And here is a man who is honoring God. And if we pray to God because of the way we know him and understand him, then obviously this is going to please our God.

We are not talking to him in a way that belittles him or in any way is derogatory to him.

We pray to him in the known sense of his greatness and his ability in power and blessing to give us what we desire. And I think this is extremely important. And I cannot stress it enough for myself and for you that we pray to a known God with inexhaustible resources, a God who delights to be called upon, a God who delights to be trusted. Jabez called on the God of Israel.

And I believe this name, the God of Israel, is the God of blessing. [00:11:04] Just as he blessed the first Israel, Jacob, having his name changed. And we'll speak about that later. And gave him this tremendous name, Prince with God. This is the God who wants to bless his people, individuals, and the nation in a way that pleases himself and brings blessing into the lives of all concerned. Oh, dear brethren, let us lift up our voices freely, happily, intelligently in the knowledge of our God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I don't need to tell a company like this how this God desires to bless us, has blessed us, blessed us in a way far beyond our understanding, blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ and in blessing that never shall be taken from us. And I believe there are conditional blessings. There are blessings that are given to us sovereignly in Christ. [00:12:03] Blessings that are, oh, too vast to speak about, too deep to be plumbed, too high to be scaled. Tremendous blessings that we have in Christ.

But there are other blessings which I believe come to us on the basis of concern, exercise, a hackneyed word, but an extremely important word. It means concern, diligence, blessings that are acquired on that basis. And I think that Jabez was a man of that character. He desired to be blessed. He prayed to be blessed. God knew the reality that was in his heart and God blessed him. Well, we'll see what he asked.

Oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed.

I think I mentioned this little word, oh, before. But I want to stress it again.

When I come across this little word, it always appeals to me that there's a [00:13:02] depth of feeling connected with it.

It's not just a casual prayer or a casual request. It seems to indicate a depth of feeling and desire.

We have it in connection with Paul when he wrote to his son Timothy. Oh, Timothy.

One feels the depth of feeling as the apostle was writing to his young friend. Oh, Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust. Oh, man of God.

Again, we find the depth of feeling in the apostle. When he wrote to the Galatians, bemoaning their slipping away from the great things of Christianity and the danger of them slipping into Judaizing influences that robbed them of their liberty and joy. Oh, foolish Galatians.

What a tremendous feeling the apostle had in his heart as he saw those dear saints slipping into things that would have been disastrous for them as [00:14:05] Christians.

Oh, Corinthians, he says.

Again and again, we find Paul using this expression. I think we have it, too, in connection with the greatest of all, our Lord Jesus Christ. He quotes this in relation to his God.

Remember, I'm quoting from Hebrews 10 where he says, coming into the world, he says, I come to do thy will. Oh, God.

So, dear friends, this is a tremendous expression, a small one, but indicative that this is no written

prayer just reeled off in a mechanical way, perhaps very precise and exact in expression, but so cold and formal. It's not that kind of prayer. It's a prayer that comes spontaneously from the heart with all the feeling of the man behind it in the conscious sense of the one to whom he was praying and [00:15:02] the conscious sense that this God was able to give him his request.

Oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed.

There are two people I want to draw your attention to, to show this desire for blessing, both in the Old Testament.

You remember in the book of Joshua and in the book of Judges, very significant. The same story is told in precisely the same detail of a promise that Caleb gave to any who would conquer a city.

If they conquered it, then he would give his daughter to be their wife. Well, this was done.

And Aksah, after this great promise was given, she sprang down from her mule and she asked her father, I want a blessing, she says. I want a blessing. Thou hast given me the southern land, she says. [00:16:03] I want the upper and nether springs. And he gave them to her. It was her request.

It was consequent upon victory. Othniel, her husband, had won a great victory, and now she desired a blessing. She asked, asked for this blessing, and she acquired it. Well, it was something good she asked for. Southern land, fair land, fertile land, good land and wells to give the water all the irrigation that it required to produce the crops that were so necessary. Oh, what a desire.

She wanted the territory.

She wanted the springs. And surely that's a lesson for us too, not to be niggardly in our asking and to be content with small things, but to be enlarged in our desires, to be concerned about getting things that are worthwhile, things that are lasting and abiding and [00:17:02] eternal, things that form us in our appreciation of the persons of the Godhead and the things that they are doing and things that involve us, asking blessing in relation to these things. Then there is the well-known story of Jacob. What a man he was.

Call him supplanter, if you will.

Call him a twister, any name you like to mention. What a man of God he was. Morally, I don't think we could tie his shoelaces. He was a great man.

God doesn't call himself by the name of someone who is unworthy, the mighty God of Jacob.

How often he uses that name again and again and again. And we find him wrestling. I will not let thee go until thou dost bless me. What a depth of concern and struggle and exercise Jacob had as he wrestled with the angel, wrestled with God, the prophet tells us. [00:18:01] No, dear friends, he got what he desired.

All the rest of his life he limped. The power of nature in Jacob was broken, and he went in the power of that wondrous name that was conferred upon him, Prince with God. How did he acquire that? Not sovereignly, through struggle, through exercise, through concern, through a deep, deep desire to be

blessed. And what blessing he acquired.

There's not much that is worthwhile that's got easily.

Not in the divine realm. Things are not handed to us on a plate. They have to be acquired through great diligence and through great exercise. And I find that Jabez was such a man. Oh, that thou wouldst bless me.

There cannot be any doubt as to the depth and reality of this man's desire for blessing.

[00:19:03] Have we this desire?

Are we content?

Content with what we have received and not much concern to make any more progress?

I don't think any Christian should ever be content with any progress they have made, because if they did feel contented, it would be tantamount to saying, I've reached finality.

And that's not true.

Not in any Christian's life. There is always room for improvement. There is always room for enlargement. Always room for growth. Always room for adjustment.

And that's why I believe continually we have to pray Jabez's prayer, that we might be blessed, blessed in our prayers, blessed in our desires, blessed in our exercises.

He goes on to say, and enlarge my coast.

[00:20:05] Just one moment before we go on to that. The authorized version says, oh, that thou wouldst bless me indeed. I think another translation renders it, oh, that thou wouldst richly bless me.

Well, now, if we transfer that to the New Testament teaching, the blessing that a Christian has received sovereignly, he is blessed richly. Tremendously richly.

You remember in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, when Paul was encouraging the Corinthians to open their purse strings and to help things that required to be helped, he quoted something that helped them in that direction.

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, for though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be enriched.

[00:21:02] That is, every Christian through faith in Christ is enriched in blessing through the depths of poverty into which the Lord Jesus went when he died on the cross. And because of that, we have been blessed in a way beyond our understanding, not only for time, but for all eternity.

And then again, you remember in Paul's epistle to Titus, he speaks about the Holy Spirit being poured out richly, richly on those who accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

And so today, every believer who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, everyone who accepts him as Savior and Lord, receives this tremendous gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit. What richness. And in the indwelling spirit, there is, if you like, the key to open the door for all the riches that are available in Christ Jesus. [00:22:03] He is the power that enables us to enjoy them, to understand them, to appropriate them. And so how richly blessed a Christian is.

I suppose if we take account of what we're enjoying today and what we've enjoyed this week, the good weather, the companionship, the lovely countryside, the good food, the friendship, many, many things that we could speak about since we've come together to Bassanville. And we would say, and rightly say, we are richly blessed. We are.

I'm sure everyone here would say amen to that. We are all richly blessed. But then these things are passing. In a few days, we return to our own homes.

I believe the rich blessings that we have in the Bible are blessings that are eternal and abiding.

[00:23:01] And they have to be acquired, have to be enjoyed in the power of the spirit and on the basis of personal exercise.

Why is it that some brothers and sisters are so efficient in witnessing for the Lord and others perhaps not?

And we're not saying for one moment that one who doesn't preach or expound the word is not witnessing correctly.

There are hidden things that are done in an obtrusive way, but I think it is evident from scripture that some help and some don't. Why is it?

We believe because some are on their knees, concerned about what they can do, praying for the Lord to help them and instruct them as to things that require to be done.

And we believe this is the source of their power and their energy and their activity.

And so this is the kind of prayer that Jabez prayed. Oh, that thou wouldst bless me indeed or bless me richly with riches that are [00:24:03] abiding and eternal.

Again, if we looked over the New Testament, we would find the riches of God's mercy, the riches of his grace, oh, the wonder of them, the riches of his glory and so on.

What tremendous riches, what tremendous worth and value are in them. Then we go on and it says, and enlarge my coast.

Now, for a Christian, it might seem a selfish thing to pray in this way, and I think in some senses it would be just to pray for material enlargement. But this wasn't so with a godly Israelite. It was quite in keeping that he should pray for material enlargement. Indeed, it was a mark of God's blessing upon the Jew if he was enlarged in border, enlarged in cattle, enlarged in wealth. [00:25:03] You remember Abraham, he seemed to grow in this and the cattle he had in the herds and flocks and in silver and gold. And this was reckoned as a mark of God's favor upon him and was so. And for the godly

Israelite, this was always true that material blessings were a mark of God's favor.

But now, there's another thought connected with this and I think it's extremely important.

In one part of the Old Testament, you'll find that God speaks about enlarging the borders of Israel.

And in the same breath, he's talking about them bringing their flocks and their herds as a sacrifice and bringing to the firstfruits of their land.

And I think that while on the surface, it might appear a selfish prayer of Jabez, in reality, what he's saying is, enlarge my border and there will be a greater response to thyself.

[00:26:01] More firstfruits to offer, more tithes to give, more sacrifices to offer. And I think that's a tremendous thing. While it might appear to be selfish, it isn't. He's praying that God might bless him in order that there might be a return to God in this material way as the worship was in those days. Now then, as Christians, we can pray in exactly the same way for a greater appreciation of Christ, for a greater understanding of the persons of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for greater enlargement as to the understanding of the truths of God that we find in the New Testament, particularly bearing upon us as Christians. Enlargement in that, enlargement in our spiritual practice as Christians and in our response to him, I believe, which flows out from the real understanding of these things.

[00:27:02] Enlarge my border, says Jabez.

Paul prays to the Colossians that they might grow by the true knowledge of God. There is an enlarged border, if you like, for the Colossians that as they grew spiritually by getting to know more and more and more about God, then there was an added response to God in worship and in praise.

I don't think there's any need for me in a company like this to say that worship doesn't consist in following a set of rules and regulations in what we say and do and in hymns that we sing and things of that nature. Worship is the spontaneous outflow of the heart intelligently to God in the understanding of what we find in the New Testament. This is the true worship of God.

Now we want enlarged in that. And I think there would be a greater variety of response to God in the morning [00:28:02] meetings when we worship him and the Son if we had an enlarged appreciation of them as we find in Scripture and an enlarged appreciation of the blessings that are ours in Christ. That would give us a variety of response that is pleasurable to the heart of God. We don't want to fall into a ritual where we say the same things every Sunday or every time we worship.

We don't want to be reiterating the same things again and again, a formal approach of worship, not at all. We want what is fresh, what is varied, what is vital, what is true in relation to God and Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. I think this is true enlargement.

Oh, that thou wouldst bless me indeed and enlarge my border. An enlarged border means an increased appreciation of God and an increased [00:29:03] response to God in a way that gladdens his heart.

Now he goes on to say, and that thine hand might be with me.

In the book of Ezra, we find a few quotations that greatly help us in relation to this expression that thine hand might be with me. I think perhaps at least six occasions we find Ezra speaking about the good hand of our God upon us.

And each time it is mentioned, there's a different bearing. And very briefly, I think the hand of God upon Ezra and his companions meant guidance, protection, strength, prosperity.

[00:30:02] God's hand guiding his people, protecting them from the evil powers that were against them, providing the strength that was necessary in order to make this journey from Babylon to Jerusalem and then to be engaged in the work that was necessary.

God's provision all along the way, his hand upon them.

Now we transfer that to New Testament teaching and we think of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory, the risen glorious man at God's right hand. And there we find the hand stretched out to help us in everything that we require. Do we require guidance for the Christian pathway? Christ will supply it for us.

Do we require protection from the powers of evil that are against us? Christ will provide it. Do we require strength to keep going when there is so much against us, in us [00:31:04] and around us?

Christ will supply that strength.

Just let me quote one expression by the Apostle Paul. I can do all things through him who gives me strength or who gives me power. What a sweeping statement to make. But if anyone knew the truth of that, it was the Apostle Paul. What a tremendous man he was.

What powers were against him? Power of Judaism, power of Rome, power of paganism, many, many powers.

And what he had to contend with? Because he was a man just like ourselves. The flesh was with Paul just as it is with us. Oh, what powers he had to fight against. But he found adequate resources in the Lord Jesus Christ. His hand was with him just as his hand will be with us. Perhaps we don't pray enough to know that hand in living power every day of our lives.

[00:32:06] I do believe that the sovereign power of Christ operates towards his people and protects them in spite of their failure in approaching him. There is a sovereign provision of power and blessing streaming from Christ day by day on our behalf.

I often say this, and I think you will agree with me, those of you who are a bit older, that when we were young, it was quite a common thing to see hanging upon the walls in the homes a young child stretching out over a cliff to gather some flowers. And behind the child was seen a picture of an angel, and an angel stretching out a protecting hand to preserve the child from falling over the cliff. Or a child gathering some flowers on a railway track and an approaching train, and again the angel behind the child protecting it. Now, it might have been imaginative as far as the artist was concerned, [00:33:05] but the truth of it was there. Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation? Does that scripture not tell us that there is a tremendous resource of unseen power operating on our behalf in protection day by day, and operating through Christ in

glory? If there are unseen powers of evil, and there are, according to Ephesians 6, tremendous powers of evil, and they are operating against the saints, thank God there are unseen powers of good that are operating through Christ for the protection and care of those who belong to him. And that's not mystical or imaginative, it's based upon the revealed word of God. What we believe is according to the word of God, not according to our speculation. And extremely important, that in anything we say, we can turn to the Bible and prove it. [00:34:06] The Bible says it, we believe it, and also we get the advantage of it. And so what a wonderful thing for the hand of strength operating towards us day by day as Christians, and providing that help that is necessary. And then the idea of provision, it's not only strength, what comfort we need, what consolation we require, what help we need in many, many ways. And thank God it comes to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. You remember when Paul was on the ship as he was traveling to Rome, and what tremendous danger there was, the storm was howling, the waves were rising, and there was all the great possibility that the ship would founder and be shipwrecked. And Paul says, having received help from God, [00:35:05] having received help from God, I continue until this day.

Oh, it's a wonderful thing to receive help from God. Some of us who are a little older, we look back over many years, and we can remember many occasions when we might easily have slipped away, when we might easily have succumbed to the temptations and wickedness of this world, or the allurements of it. Ah, but there was help there.

Help that was ever there, always there, and always operating on our behalf. And like Paul, we can say we received help from God to continue unto this day.

I believe all this is involved in the prayer of Jabez. Oh, that thy hand might be with me. Oh, dear brethren, think of that. The hand of God, the hand of God with us day by day, [00:36:01] and all the power that is expressed in such an expression. Tremendous thing.

The hand of God that formed creation. The hand of God that was stretched out to help those in need in the New Testament and the Old Testament, so evident in his power and protection. And Jabez says, I want that hand to be with me.

And surely we can all say that.

Remember what the Lord Jesus said in the prophetic words in relation to himself and his sufferings. Thy hand was heavy upon me.

What a tremendously solemn statement. The hand of God in wrath, in judgment, not because of his sin, because of your sin and my sin, God's hand was heavy upon him.

Thank God that hand is not heavy upon us in judgment. If it were, we would all be shriveled up. But that hand is towards us in blessing, in power. [00:37:04] And may we pray this as Jabez prayed it, that his hand might be with us, providing all that is necessary for us in our testimony as Christians. Then he goes on to say, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil.

I want to give you the testimony of an old man, a good old man, man of God.

That man was Jacob.

You remember at the end of his life, the two sons of Joseph were brought to him and he blessed them.

Among other things, this is what he said, the angel who redeemed me from all evil. The angel who gave me liberty from evil, protected me from evil, gave me power against evil.

This is what Jacob said. The end of his life, after a life of many failures, and we don't want to talk about them. [00:38:06] We want to talk about him as a man of God, a man who communed with God, who received revelations from God, a patriarch in the true sense of the word. It's quite an astounding thing that we never read about Joseph praying. We read about Abraham speaking with God. We read about Isaac speaking with God. We read about Jacob speaking with God. You never read about Joseph speaking with God. I haven't the slightest doubt that he did. But in the inspired word, we find no record of it. Jacob was a man who had many communications with God. God loved him.

God protected him.

God had great designs for Jacob and for his posterity. That's why all through his life, he was the object of God's care. He was an important man. That's why God protected him.

[00:39:02] Can we say, and we shall say, without any presumption, without any arrogance, that we too, as Christians, are important to God, every one of us? Not one is away from his eye.

Not one is out with the reach of his care and his love and his protection. God loves us, each one of us, individually.

He loves us, knows our names, knows our circumstances, knows our weaknesses, knows, if you like, our strengths. But he loves us.

Oh, his eye is upon us. And just as he looked after Jacob step by step until he came to the end of his life, so it is with us.

Oh, how God loves us.

Nothing, not things present nor things to come, things seen, things unseen.

Nothing, nothing, nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [00:40:02] And that's not an abstract statement. It's an operative statement. It's something that goes on day by day by day. It's relative to us as Christians. What a wonderful thing that is, that the love of God is operating day by day in his care for us, his love for us, his protection for us, his provision for us. So this, I believe, is involved when Jacob says that thou wouldst keep me from evil. Jabez says that thou wouldst keep me from evil. He was just praying that he wanted to be protected and blessed in the same way that Jacob was, kept from all the evil influences that are around.

My, I don't need to tell the Christians here the amount of evil that's in this world. The Lord Jesus, and his word cannot be denied, said, it's an evil world. You remember how he prayed? Prayed to his father that his own might be kept from the evil that is in the world. [00:41:04] That was his estimate of what was in the world. John, the one who was so near to the Lord Jesus Christ, leaned upon his bosom, knew the secrets of his heart. He said, all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of

the eye, and the pride of life. That is the world as an organized system away from God, regulated, governed, controlled by the ruler of this world, Satan.

That world has nothing to give us but evil, nothing to give us but opposition to the truth that we know and love in our Lord Jesus Christ. And we need to be kept from it.

One of the precious words that we find in Peter's letter, Peter the Apostle, when he wrote to some Christians, he says, kept, kept by the power of God. And we need that power as we are brought face to face with the powers of evil that are in this world. [00:42:04] Don't let us be casual about the evil that's in the world. It's low standards of morality.

It's low standards of righteousness. The wicked evil things that are becoming commonplace in the world. Don't let us as Christians be governed by the prevailing sentiments of the age. Let us be governed by God's high standards, which never bend or are lowered to suit our need or our weaknesses.

Let us be marked by a sense of what is truly evil in the sight of God. Homosexuality is a disease.

Other things are mentioned as diseases. Things that were formerly spoken of as evil and immoral are now given fancy names and allowed to pass muster in the world. The Christian must say, no, they're evil. Homosexuality is an evil thing.

[00:43:01] Many, many other things that are being accepted in the world are evil things, grossly evil in the sight of God and should be in the sight of the Christian. Jabez says, I don't want to be governed by these things. These are evil things.

And there are many, many things that are evil that we want to avoid and not be drawn in to this morass that's in the world today that's been produced by men's imaginative thinking that has been governed by the Word of God, the inspired Word of God that calls evil, evil and good, good.

Unfortunately, the Bible tells us that in the last days things that are evil will be called good and things that are good will be called evil. And we're rapidly approaching that day, but a Christian must never condone these things. And so, Jabez says, that thou wouldst keep me from evil. He's taught to say that it may not grieve me.

[00:44:02] I've often felt that this is one of the most important things that Jabez said in his prayer. Because of the nature that we have, a sinful nature, a nature that cannot do anything to please God, a nature that is corrupt in every conceivable way, it has the potential of committing the most wicked things. When we hear about things being done, or read about them, or see them even, we mustn't say, I couldn't do that. We could, if we were in the area or in the circumstances where we'd be tempted to do these things. We have a nature that has the potential for doing these wicked, wicked, evil, depraved things.

And so, here is a man who says, I don't want to be grieved by sin, by evil.

We find a psalmist saying that he was deeply grieved because he had sinned. [00:45:05] Psalm 51 is an expression of how he felt his guilt. We're referring to the adultery of David with Bathsheba.

And he didn't gloss it over.

He called it sin.

I have sinned against thee and done this evil in thy sight. No question of David glossing it over. It grieved him.

It lay heavy upon him, it says.

Jabez says, I don't want to be grieved because of sin. Oh, what an ugly, evil, wicked thing sin is.

It affects the conscience. It destroys communion. It sadly affects strength and testimony for Christ and for God. Sin is a destructive thing.

Jabez says, I don't want to be grieved by sin. There's a story in the Bible in 1 Corinthians of a man who was guilty of incest.

[00:46:03] This man was disciplined. He was put out from the company of believers in Corinth, and the apostle gave directions as to it. But then it's obvious that in the intervening period, this man's conscience had begun to work, and he was terribly grieved, repentant because of the sin that he had committed. And Paul wrote a second letter to the Corinthians, and he says, I want you to show grace to this man, lest he be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. He was a man who was grieved because of sin allowed in his life. Have you felt grieved because of sin? I can say before you, dear brethren, I have. Sin is a destructive thing, and the only way we can get rid of it is to repent before God, and not only repent, to make sure that we don't do the same thing again. Sin is destructive in the Christian testimony and cannot be allowed in a Christian's life. [00:47:02] If it is, it affects him in every conceivable way. These are serious things, dear brethren. We cannot gloss over them. Jabez says, I don't want to be grieved with sin or by sin. I don't want it to come into my life. We read in the stories in the Bible what terrible havoc it caused in the lives of godly men, in the lives of a nation, in the lives of a Christian company. And Paul says, the way to cure this matter is for repentance to be operative and the grace and love of the Christian company to be shown to the person that his grief might be removed and be happily restored to the communion of the Christians. My dear friends, let us pray the prayer of Jabez, that sin might not enter into our lives or into our homes. Would I be right in saying that sometimes we are more concerned about people learning about our sin [00:48:03] than repenting before God in relation to it?

I wouldn't like the brethren to know that I've said this or done this. I wouldn't like the Christian company to know that I've been involved in this disreputable thing. And perhaps not so much concerned to get down on our knees in true repentance before God and get the matter out with him.

Grieved ourselves, but also deeply concerned as to how it affects God.

God hates sin, and he hates it with a perfect hatred. Dear brethren as Christians, may we pray more and more the prayer of Jabez, as he says here, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me, and God granted him that which he requested. Oh, I like that, and I'm sure you like that too. That here was a man who was honest. He was a man who could face the stern realities of living in the sight of God [00:49:04] and was prepared to pray in this way in a straightforward manner, and God granted him his request.

Oh, that when our prayer life, we might be able to say this too. God has granted our requests.

Requests for enlargement. Requests in many ways.

But principally in relation to the interests of God and our maintenance as individual Christians in the pathway. We're not talking now about Christian fellowship. We're talking about that which makes up Christian fellowship. Any Christian fellowship is only as strong as the individuals who form it. If they are weak individuals, it's a weak fellowship in testimony and response. If we're strong individuals, then there'll be a strong testimony and a strong response. And may we learn to be individual in this respect. [00:50:01] Crying aloud to God in all the earnestness that we can command. No ulterior motives or platitudes or anything of that kind. The simplicity of a real request that God honors by his answer.

May it be so for his name's sake.