

1 Chronicles

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[0 : 0 0] for our meditation upon the word I will read from the first book of Chronicles the fourth chapter, the tenth verse 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 the first book of Chronicles the fourth chapter, the tenth verse 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 I want to impress this on your mind as I begin this morning as a real vital consideration and that is that all real religion springs from spiritual life in the soul all real religion springs from spiritual life in the soul and everyone knows that who has passed through that vital change that new birth whereby they come from death to life from ignorance to knowledge from darkness to light that's the root of the matter it isn't just a question of soundness of our doctrine nor whether we prefer this or that form of worship or whether we associate with this or that body of people

I don't say that these considerations are unimportant but they're not essential the essential thing is to possess spiritual life in the soul and that only God in his sovereignty and grace can give you would be very wise to consider this because to live and die ignorant of the truth of God and godliness will have an eternal effect upon your soul and it's inexcusable because there's a way in which truth can be known and believed and felt and there are many of us who are witnesses to it we have been brought to know the truth that way we have been made to know for ourselves that there is a God in heaven a God to bless to pardon and to enrich our soul if anyone is ignorant of that then the fault lies at their own door they don't seek the knowledge they don't desire it they prefer ignorance to life then let them be ignorant if they prefer spiritual deadness to spiritual life then the consequences lie with them now I was saying then as I began that true religion springs from the life of God in the soul and that is very evident and where there is spiritual life the indications of it and the effects of it are certain there's no mistaking them there's no mistaking the effects of a spiritual life in the soul if it is imparted to any of you who have it not now you will know that there is a real change come into your spirit you will see things different feel different about them you will be conscious of your passing from one state of heart and mind into another but then the question may be raised what are the feelings and affections that indicate such a change in the heart well you may see that very clearly in the word of God the scriptures are full of the expressions of spiritual life in the hearts of those whose words and desires and prayers are recorded for us in the scriptures and they occur sometimes in very unexpected places and in comparatively unknown people now I've read this morning a brief word that occurs in a context that is not particularly interesting to us we have in the first part of this book of chronicles a long list of genealogies genealogies there's a purpose

no doubt in their preservation in the scriptures though it does not mean anything much to us but of course we must understand that the Bible wasn't just written for us in our generation it was written for all times and there are some parts of the scripture that are more necessary for other periods of time than this and so this portion of the scripture we very seldom much consider but then we come upon a very striking instance in the midst of a long list of uninteresting names there stands the name and character of this remarkable man Jabez and Jabez was more honorable than his brethren and his mother called his name

Jabez which means sorrowful because I bear him with sorrow and Jabez called on the God of Israel that's all we know about him just that one those two features that he was more honorable than his brethren and that he was a praying man the old Jewish writers have various traditions about this man which may or may not be true but it is considered that he was in his day an outstanding teacher and doctor of the law and that he gathered quite a number of disciples under his teaching something like the Gamaliel that we read of in the New Testament well that may have been so but the scripture doesn't record anything of that and so we can't put much to it he was more honorable than his brethren but the scripture doesn't say in what respect he was so it wouldn't appear that he was more honorable than his brethren with regard to his birth because his brethren were on an equality with him in that matter whether he rose to any honorable position as it is suggested in his day and generation may or may not be true but it is very clear that he was honorable in one sense that he was a godly man and that really is the highest honor anyone can have to be a godly man or a godly woman for godliness is an honor it is an honor upon anyone to possess it and to manifest it it's honorable to them and it's glorifying to god it may it may well be perhaps that Jesus in this sense was the only one of his brethren that God really called to the knowledge of his truth and imparted living faith to him ever that we must leave and that's all I feel caught upon to say with regard to the personality of this man he was a godly man he evidently had that root of godliness in his heart that I've mentioned this morning it showed itself in his prayer and Jabez called on the God of Israel he was a believing man oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed and enlarge my coast here then are the desires and feelings that clearly betoken the root of spiritual life and grace in the soul a godly man is a praying man and a praying man is a godly man and a prayerless man is an ungodly man that's equally true and so as the Lord may help me this morning and hoping I may carry your

[11 : 47] hearts and your feelings with me I want to expound the spirit and principle and feelings of this prayer we might have just a thought or two upon the general character of it for it is very noticeable for its brevity there are no waste words it is expressed in as few words as possible most prayers in the scriptures are brief not all the prayer of Solomon at the opening of the temple of course was exceptionally lengthy well my friends it is so in general some prayers are brief ejaculatory much feeling expressed in very few words some prayers are more lengthy more enlarging I feel with regard to our public worship we have should have some regard with regard to our prayers in this particular I feel that where there is only one prayer offered in a service it is called for it to be somewhat more comprehensive and embracing where there are several prayers to be offered it is better for them to be comparatively brief we can say in prayer much in few words and we can say little in a lengthy petition now the prayer of Jabez was very brief and it is obviously very sincere you can almost tell when a prayer is sincere at least if we cannot

God can here reads the heart can discern exactly how the heart is before him in its prayer for as I've often said God only regards the words of prayer as far as they express the feelings of the heart if they do God accepts both the words of the prayer and the feelings of the heart in it Jabez's prayer was very sincere very earnest very tender oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed well the Lord knows whether it is in our hearts sincerely to desire that he would bless us indeed if the prayer is there he will answer it in our prayers remember we have to do with a heart searching

God all things are naked and open in our most secret feelings before the eyes of him with whom we have to do sincerity is a great thing in prayer it is much better than a natural ability of utterance some have more ability of utterance than others ability of utterance is very useful especially in public prayer but sincerity of heart is the greater matter and another feature I'll just point out of this prayer is its comprehensiveness it seems to bring on almost everything as regards Jabez's own personal case and desire for the

Lord to bless to enlarge to uphold and to preserve seems to compass everything that we need and I'll just touch also upon its personal character oh that thou wouldst bless me now that doesn't mean of course at least I shouldn't take it that it meant that Jabez had no concern for anyone else remember that true religion in the exercise of it is personal but it's not selfish it's not self centred a man can never really pray for others who doesn't pray for himself that's obvious why should one desire the

Lord to bless others when they've no concern to be blessed themselves but if the Lord grants this prayer and blesses us he will make us a blessing as well brethren the way to be a blessing to others is to be blessed yourself it really is the way to be a blessing to others is to be blessed yourself for the blessing of the Lord flows out from those into whose heart it's imparted now with these few observations on the face of the matter I would ask you to look more into the substance of it is no mere embellishment to the prayer not just an habitual expression it indicates the earnestness of his heart well we need to be earnest brethren half hearted prayers what can we expect they will ever bring into our hearts

[18 : 56] God loves to be pleaded with when Jacob that night of his great stress and strain wrestled with the angel and though the angel would have left Jacob but Jacob constrained him held him I will not let thee go except thou bless me it's no wonder is it that Jacob got the blessing half hearted prayers ask for denial rather than ask for really blessings but you'll say well that's one thing that troubles me often I feel my prayers are so half hearted well that is so with all I suppose at times more or less I question whether there is any praying soul always prays with such energy and ardency of spirit as this but

I think there are times there must be times surely when if there's a spirit of prayer at all in the heart there will be an ardency there's three things make our prayers fervent three things one is some pressure upon our spirit you know something like a spring if there's no pressure on a spring it doesn't exert any power but as soon you apply pressure you get the power against the pressure you exert on the spring and the more pressure you exert the more strength there is in the spring under the pressure at least the strength is more is more hell now it's not often my friends we pray with real energy unless there's some pressure on our spirit and I feel sure that's one reason why the

Lord does sometimes permit things to come on our spirit that have a very heavy effect upon us there may be someone here this morning who has felt may perhaps even now be feeling some particular pressure upon their spirit well how does it affect you now if the spirit of prayer is in your heart it will put energy into your prayer you will feel somewhat like the Selmist did in the 116th Selm when he had evidently been brought into some heavy trial he said then called I upon the name of the Lord oh Lord I beseech thee deliver my soul we are not to suppose that he never prayed except then he was a praying man but to use a sometime used expression he meant this if ever I prayed in my life if ever I wrestled with God it was then it was then when that pressure was so heavy on my spirit well that's one thing that gives intensity to prayer when things are easy with us we don't pray much really we may get through our prayers in a more or less formal way but there's little wrestling with God there's little real fervency there's little of Jacob's wrestling spirit

I will not let thee go except thou bless me but then it isn't only that another thing that makes our prayers fervent is when the Holy Spirit invigorates those desires in our hearts perhaps more than usually if you understand what I mean there are times when the Holy Spirit as a spirit of grace and supplication invigorates our desires after spiritual things wonderfully you have it in that word of the apostle in the 8th chapter to the Romans he puts it this way for we know not what to pray for as we ought but the spirit itself he means there the

Holy Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered that is to say he stirs up in us such intense feelings that no words are adequate to really express them and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God how very true that is we know not what to pray for as we ought but some might say of course we know we ought to pray for the forgiveness of sins we ought to pray for the conversion of souls and we ought to pray for this and we ought to pray for that and that's true enough but do we know how to pray for it as we ought to pray for it with that energy of faith with that fervency of spirit with that warmth of desire with that submission to

[25 : 35] God's will with that patience in waiting for him to answer with that expectation that the psalmist speaks of wait upon God for my expectation is from him now do you know how to pray as you ought to pray like that I know how I ought to pray but I don't know how to pray as I ought to pray now there's provision for this the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities there comes upon our hearts sometimes such an influence of the Holy Spirit that animates us with such desires towards God and such a longing to be blessed that he would come to us enrich us fill us possess us enliven us satisfy us that we hardly know how to express what we feel now that is the Holy

Spirit helping our infirmities in prayer and enlivening us with his quickening influence now that's what it is to pray and I see that suggested in the very way in which Jabez expresses himself oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed and there was faith he clearly believed with all his heart that there was a God to bless him and that there was such a thing as being blessed indeed and that stirred up in his heart these ardent expressions of his desire oh that thou wouldest bless me me well now my friends let me speak as simply as my text expresses it who am I addressing this morning who is there before God in this chapel who honestly earnestly longs for the

Lord to bless them who will be thankful if this Lord's day the Lord really blessed them indeed for it's a poor due to come to the house of God and go and gain no real benefit receive nothing from God to go as poor as we come who that fears God could be satisfied with that now I want to show you a little what it is to be blessed indeed and you will observe the emphasis here oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed and to put it in other words Lord I want a real blessing a real blessing I would not be content with something transient fanciful merely temperamental emotional imaginative

Lord I want a real blessing a solid spiritual vital genuine soul enriching blessing it is a great thing to be blessed indeed for one thing it's a blessing to have health and strength it's a blessing to have health and strength to bring us here this morning we might be on beds of pain or suffering for that matter but we are here before God it's a blessing to have health and strength to come to the house of God this morning but it would be a blessing indeed if the Lord met with you here and you are conscious of his presence in the sanctuary it's a blessing to come to the house of

God but it's a blessing indeed to meet with God in his house to have a natural understanding intelligence of mind is a blessing but to have our understanding enlightened to discern spiritual things is a blessing indeed to have a natural ear to hear is a blessing but to hear the voice of God in his word speaking in our hearts through it that's a blessing indeed that there is a gospel to preach and a gospel to listen to that's a blessing but for that gospel to come to us not in word only but in power and in the Holy

[31 : 23] Ghost and in much assurance that's a blessing indeed oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed now for the few minutes left this morning I'll just sketch out a little example what it is to be blessed indeed I know this is a familiar line for me to take but a very safe one and very necessary and if a question were it to be asked of us personally what would you consider to be blessed indeed well I know I know what some would say to me to be blessed indeed would be to be blessed with the forgiveness of all my sin pardon through

Jesus most precious blood brought into my heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit with power and application to hearing the gospel in a personal way as though the Lord was really speaking it to me son thy sins which are many are all forgiven ah you say that's it that is just the point oh if the Lord would speak that to me and in speaking that to me would impart with his word the blessing to my soul so that I felt my sins lifted off my conscience like a heavy load or to use another beautiful scripture I have blotted out as a cloud thy sins and as a thick cloud thine iniquities oh that would be a blessing indeed to me if all my sin was blotted out like a cloud from my soul's feelings and nothing between me and God but the clear shining of the light of his favour and his love into my soul ah you say that's my case up to the fields where angels lie and living waters gently roll pain would my soul leap out and fly but sin hangs heavy on my soul well that is a blessing to pray for it is a blessing countless countless believing souls have prayed for for we read for this for this blessing of the forgiveness of sin shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when there mayest be found one of the most blessed and memorable experiences in my long life of being the experience of the forgiveness of my sins and I won't take time to express that before you this morning

I know I've often said and I want to keep it clear in my teaching that believers are forgiven people every believer is forgiven without exception the time that you are brought to believe in Jesus and look to him and come to him and trust in him you are forgiven then you are forgiven but then does forgiveness as a blessing experience a sweet enjoyment of forgiving love oh that thou would bless me indeed you might say Lord every blessing that you could give me would leave me unsatisfied without the forgiveness of my sin oh how the forgiveness of sin opens the heart and opens the lips to show forth his praise bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name why who forgiveth all thine iniquities who healeth all thy diseases all it is surprising how long some seem to go without that blessing in other cases it comes early in their spiritual experience but come early come later still the prayer is suitable

Lord bless me with the forgiveness of my sin oh what a morning this would be if anyone came into the chapel burdened and went out pardoned if even now through my simple testimony simple I know it is sincere I believe it is the Lord were pleased to visit someone with pardoning mercy like John Bunyan put it and felt it when the Lord delivered his soul from the burden of his guilt then he filled with joy he did leap for joy and he said blessed man blessed cross yea rather blessed man that suffered there for me Lord bless me indeed

I see forgiveness in the gospel I believe that it is with thee to pardon sin I believe that Jesus died for sinners I believe that there is a virtue in his atoning blood that's divine I believe that was Jesus when he hung on the tree that opened the channel of mercy for me now Lord let it come oh let it come let that mercy come now even to me whether Jabez meant and felt all that I wouldn't like to say but I know this is what every godly man does feel and does pray for oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed and enlarge my coast that thy hand might be with me that thou wouldst keep me from evil that it may not grieve me and the

[39 : 20] Lord granted that which he requested and he is the same Lord now as faithful as ever as able to bless as ever and if it is given to you to pray for that blessing from your heart it will come it will come and your lips will praise him time amen máatlhé