

FOURTH QUARTER STRATEGIES - Saturday, April 25, 2015

In 2000, Bruce Wilkinson published a small yet powerful book entitled THE PRAYER OF JABEZ. I can't recall how I received my copy of that little book, but I can relate the impact it had on the way I prayed from that day forward. Apparently nine million copies were sold in the first two years of publication and I was amazed at the numerous websites dedicated to this topic today! There are two verses dedicated to Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4 in the midst of the lineage of the tribe of Judah. What's unique is the depth of those sixty-plus words as they describe his birth, his prayer and God's granting his request. Since reading the book, I've frequently ended my morning prayer-times with a customized version of the prayer that I feel fits who I am and what I want to convey to God on a daily basis. Let me explain the four parts to my prayer.

"Lord, bless me beyond my expectations ..." - You see I know that my expectations may well fall short of what God has planned for me. Certainly none of us know what lies ahead. God has surely blessed me over the years, but many of those blessings did not feel so great at the time. They took the form of trials and afflictions yet in time I was able to see how God was orchestrating events that would strengthen me for what He had planned for me downstream. I knew I needed to trust Him in all things and He certainly has never let me down.

"Expand my borders - My area of influence - for your glory Lord ..." - Once again, I had no idea what God had planned. I was pretty sure this part of the prayer had nothing to do with my insurance career. Over time I felt it had more to do with being influential in the lives of others, but I saw it limited to my local community. These days I can see how he has taken some of my writings and has carried them around the world through the internet without any of my doing. And, it's truly all for His glory!

"Keep your hand on me constantly Father ..." - For me, this is the most straightforward part of the prayer. I know that God will not let me go, but I want Him to know that I have no desire to leave Him. I need Him to take me through the depths of disappointment that mankind must deal with in the uncertainty of life. He is my Strength. He is my Fortress. He is my Rock. He is my Salvation. Jesus looked at His disciples in Matthew 19:26 and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

And keep evil from me so I may not cause pain." - I imagine Jabez prayed that God would keep him from evil so that he would not cause pain in the lives of others and in his own life. Evil is all around us. Much of the evil in the world has been sugar-coated and may not look or taste so bad. Oswald Chambers reminds us often that God wants and deserves our best - nothing less. My desire is to give my Lord and Savior "My Utmost for His Highest." He often gets less from me, but my desire is to always give him my best.

Let me share the joy God has recently bestowed on me. I felt led to start writing a bi-weekly piece entitled "Fourth Quarter Strategies" in October 2014. My goal was to reach local CBMC members through e-mail and convey principles to light a fire under them and bring about revival in lives to reach business and professional men in our community for Christ. But God had a much bigger plan! I remember CBMC Director Paul Johnson asking my permission to send the first six FQS discussions to Bob Tamasy at CBMC International. He felt there might be an interest in using some of my work as future Monday Manna devotionals. I gave him permission and was delighted to receive an e-mail from Bob a few days later asking me to consider becoming a regular contributor to Monday Manna. It's been a joy to see these writings reach an international audience and I know it's all for God's glory.

God has truly blessed me beyond my expectations. He's greatly expanded my borders (my area of influence) for His glory. I can attest that He's kept His hand in mine continually. And, He constantly keeps me from the Evil One so I don't cause pain for others or myself. In a nutshell, He has answered my prayer and I'm certain He will answer yours as well. Simply ask and you will receive wonderful blessings from God Almighty!

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: 1 Chronicles 4:9-10; Proverbs 10:22; Ecclesiastes 9:1a; Philippians 1:19-20; 1 John 2:13

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1 Chronicles 4:9-10 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁹ Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, ^[a] saying, “Because I bore *him* in pain.” ¹⁰ 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.

Proverbs 10:22 (NKJV)

²² The blessing of the LORD makes *one* rich,
And He adds no sorrow with it.

Ecclesiastes 9:1a (NKJV)

⁹ For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works *are* in the hand of God.

Philippians 1:19-20 (NKJV)

To Live Is Christ

¹⁹ For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

1 John 2:13 (NKJV)

¹³ I write to you, fathers,
Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
Because you have overcome the wicked one.
I write to you, little children,
Because you have known the Father.