

Prayer: Great Creator, we pray these things not just for us. We pray for others, for your blessing in others' lives. For your protection in others' lives. For your hand upon those around us; those closest to us. God, we pray for those far from us. Particularly those who don't know you, God. God, we pray right now, together, for your blessing on all of us; that we will hear and respond to the gospel.

God, we pray we would experience your salvation n. And God, we want to be bold right now in asking you for this. Please bring salvation to your people. And especially for those who don't know your grace. Help us to be a blessing to them today. Amen.

TURNING YOUR PAIN INTO GAIN

The Prayer of Jabez" is written from the perspective of an obscure prayer found in 1 Chronicles 4. Everything written in the Bible is not as vague as it may seem.

Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "I gave birth to him in pain." Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request.

People of God, especially our Youth – remember - your past does not have to determine your present.

I want you to listen well today, some of you need to break out of the living in your past and experience the pleasure God wants to bring. Buried in the genealogies of the Old Testament is a nugget called Jabez. In the days in which he was born, they took considerable time naming a child. Names have meaning. **Naming of our oldest daughter Marissa.**

Names have meaning, and so the name of Jabez signifies what his mother thought when she named him. Jabez in the Hebrew means "One who causes pain." How would you like to go through life being known as one who causes pain? It is so often tragic what parents do to their children. The harsh words, the painful memories of childhood some have endured, being told they will not amount to anything in life. Imagine having a name that brings back unpleasant memories, Jabez, one who causes pain. Or a parent or parents who look at you as being a pain.

Charles Francis Adams, a 19th-century political figure and diplomat, kept a diary. One day he entered: "Went fishing with my son today - a day wasted." His son, Brook Adams, also kept a diary, which is still in existence. On that same day Brook Adams made this entry: "Went fishing with my father - the most wonderful day of my life!"

You can live with the name and the reputation that name makes for you, or you can make a decision to live the way God determined. I have resolved to live the greatest life I possibly can, to look for the good in life instead of looking at the pain.

The Bible says in Psalm 139 that I am fearfully and wonderfully made...Jeremiah 29:11 says I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a hope and a future. Your past does not need to determined your present. It did not for Jabez, and it absolutely does not have to for you.

We need to be optimistic about our lives. Consider Michael. Michael, a fifth grader, decided to run for president of the student council. During the "campaign," Michael and his younger brother went to the pediatrician for a checkup. The doctor, noticing the campaign buttons, volunteered that he, too, had run for president of the student council when he was in the sixth grade, but had not won. Several days later, Michael called his mom with the election results. "It looks like I'm going to be a doctor!" What a way to look at life.

How are you going to live today? You past does not have to determine your future. You can begin today to shun the labels of the past, walk past the lies, others have developed around you, not wallow in the legacy of someone else's plans for you. You can take the Jabez challenge...live the life God has ordained for you!

You need to understand...your present does not have to determine your future.

Jabez had things to overcome in his life. These short verses don't tell us much about his plight, though there are clues. First, we know he had to overcome his name, Jabez, the one who causes pain. It also says he was more honorable than his brothers. How many of you have experienced sibling rivalry? Jabez was elevated above his brothers is an indication there might well have been this rivalry taking place in his life. I have two brothers...how many of you know there is rivalry there? They were quite athletic, in various sports. That gene was not given to me. Our home was a shrine of their awards, trophies and ribbons. Sometimes words don't have to be spoken concerning my athletic inability. Every time I walked past those awards, I was reminded, I didn't measure up. Some of you know what I am talking about. I could have resigned myself to being a failure. You may not be good at something but don't give up, because you are great at something else. You just have to discover what that something else is. I learned that I was gifted with medical skills. I worked on it. I was not going to allow my present to determine my future. I have skills and abilities they did not. In my sophomore year of high school, I was hired by an obstetrician/gynecologist – who would and still is my mentor, big brother and god father of Marissa.

The benefits, which came from using my talents, were awesome. Had I allowed my present situation of being non-athletic to not drive me to discovering what I was good at, I would have missed a lot in life. I met Martin at my first duty station - a hospital corpsman. But he also had the gift of being athletic as well.

Jabez did not pray for God to just help him make it through, he prayed, Lord I pray that you would bless me indeed and enlarge my life, that your hand would be with me, and that you would keep me from evil.

It might seem life has handed you a lemon. Learn how to turn your lemon into lemonade so you can quench the thirst of the world.

Listen, your future has already been determined. Live your life by faith in Jesus Christ, and hold on to the promise God gives to those who He calls His own. You do not have to let your present determine your future. Let go and let God.

If you want to accomplish the purpose God has for your life, you are going to have to overcome something. There is no gain without some sort of price, some pain. It is just a matter of how much you are wanting, how much you are willing to invest, how much you want to achieve in the realm God has planned for you. This is not the time to give up; here the good news - it is the time to get up! Peter told the lame man, rise up and walk. Have you been lamed by life. Then get up, take the Jabez challenge, arise above the circumstances of your life and walk into the promise of God.

Here are six keys to turning your pain into gain, your failure into success.

1. Pray. Jabez sets a great example. The simplest yet it seems hardest thing for us to do is to pray. If you need a jump-start, then pray the Jabez prayer and ask God to enlarge your life that things would go well with you and that God would keep you from evil.
2. Be Optimistic. When you expect good things to happen, they are more likely to occur. Look for the silver lining in every cloud, not the passing thunderstorm.
3. Explore the Possibilities. Don't just write things off as not being possible. There are things I have done that many would have written off. It wasn't because I was special, just that I explored the possibilities of doing them. When God gives you the green light, learn to go for it. Just make sure it is God controlling the signals.
4. Keep at it. Persistence will pay off. You will never know if you can unless you try. When Kristi Yamaguchi fell to the ice in the 1992 Winter Olympics, the crowd groaned. Everyone thought her chance for a gold medal had been destroyed by the fall. But Kristi quickly got to her feet, flashed a smile, and resumed her program. She received high scores from the judges, despite the mistake, and she won the gold medal. It happened because though she fell, she didn't stay down-she got back on her feet.

5. Be Flexible. This means being willing to change. Too many people get stuck in the rut of living. When we are willing to change, it opens the doors to new adventures. When I realized I was not going to be athletic, I realized that there was something else I was a winner at, and I changed, it opened up wonderful opportunities in life for me.

6. Become a risk taker. Be willing to make mistakes along the way. Stick your head out of your shell and begin to move forward and watch the doors open.

God will change your pain into gain. You can change the outside of the package but it will not change what is inside. We spend a lot of time doing that don't we. Jabez prayed from the heart. It wasn't a long-drawn-out affair. He got right to the point. It was as if he was saying, God, you know me, you know my mom has called me a pain, and at times I have been. Now I want to break out of that rut and I know the only way I can do it is if you will bless me.

Jabez prayed, oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory. Someone said we have decaffeinated the word blessing. Taking the punch out of it. In the Hebrew Jabez would be shouting, "Oh God bless me indeed!" Blessing is the supernatural favor of God in our life; it is God doing something for us, which we could not do for ourselves. It is asking God to open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing. When is the last time you looked back and said I can see where God took my pain and turned it into gain? You need to take the Jabez challenge.

Your troubles have not come to stay, they will pass if you get a hold of the supernatural power of God, if you step out in faith believing God will bless and enlarge your territories. God has more blessing for your life than you can image if you will just put your faith and trust in Him.

James 4:2 say you have not because you ask not. Matthew 7:7 - Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. When we fail to ask, we forfeit all those blessings, which come when we only ask.

When is the last time you asked? When is the last time you asked God to expand your horizon so you could have a greater impact for the kingdom of God? This is not a selfish prayer; this is a prayer to do more for the Kingdom, to do more for God. You might not think God can use you. God will take your pain and turn it to gain for His kingdom, it requires your availability.

God is ready to give you more than you have. God is waiting to provide you with the provisions you need to accomplish great things through you for the Kingdom of God. Are you ready for the supernatural blessings of God to fall on you?

God has a plan for you, which will come as a surprise. He will do things through you that you never would have thought possible; He is just waiting for you to take the Jabez challenge.

You have to know God. Not just as an abstract object in your life. You have to know God personally. Just like I did years ago, like some of you have, like some of you today will. We are going to call on Jesus and acknowledge Him. The Bible says all of us have sinned and done wrong in our life. Jesus paid the fine for all our wrong doing, and we can receive the receipt for it in our life by asking him to not only be our Savior, but letting Him take full ownership of the rest of our life. I want to take a moment for some of you to do that right now. Just pray this prayer in your heart:

Lord Jesus, I want to admit to you that I have done wrong in my life, that I am sorry and will turn from wrong doing and turn to right doing. Thank you for forgiving me and paying the price and I now give you the keys of ownership to my life asking you to help me come under your new management today. Thanks for doing for me what I could not do for myself. Amen."

Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request. Amen!