



*A short and unique prayer*

# JABEZ'

## PRAYER *A Prayer or a Vow?*

Edited by  
Alex Khalil

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Translated by  
Mary Hany Dawood

*4 short and unique prayers*

# JABEZ' PRAYER

*A Prayer or a Vow?*



**Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty**

Translated by  
**Mary Hany Dawood**

Edited by  
**Alex Khalil**



Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain."

*"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.*

**(1 Chronicles 4:9-10)**

All we know about Jabez from the Holy Bible and from the Jewish Tradition is that he was a Doctor in Law and that he was righteous, which is probably why the town, in which he lived, was named after him (1 Chronicles 2:55).

Jabez' Prayer that was mentioned in the First Book of the Chronicles (4:10), and is considered a unique prayer. The prayer and its answer occupy only one verse .

Jabez presents us with a perfect prayer that God acknowledged and answered so quickly. Why was it accepted?

### **THE ACCEPTABLE PRAYER**

**1. *You would bless me indeed!***, i.e., requesting the blessing, the heavenly blessed life.

**2. *Enlarge my territory!***, i.e., requesting the enlargement of heart with love for God and men.

**3. *That Your hand might be with me!***, i.e., requesting the existence of God's hand with us, or the enjoyment of the Divine Presence

**4. *That You would keep me from evil!***, i.e., requesting the protection from evil, or the victory over Satan and evil.

Prepared by: **Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty**

Translated by: **Mary Hany Dawood**

Edited by: **Alex Khalil**

**Queen Mary & Prince Tadros**

**Coptic Orthodox Church**

**Pope Shenouda III Center**

283 DAVIDSONS MILL ROAD

SOUTH BRUNSWICK, NJ 08831

Printed by: American Pack

Cairo - Egypt +202 22801119

US Branch +1 973 323 2666



## A PRAYER OR A VOW?

In Hebrew this verse is in the form of a vow, i.e. he was vowing that God would bless him, enlarge his territory, give him His hand and remove evil from him. Jabez did not specify what he vowed for. It is as if he made the vow on a blank piece of paper, signed it, and gave it to God to complete it.

The concept of vowing is wonderful. I am asking God for His blessing, the enlargement of my territory, His hand to support me and to keep evil away from me. I give Him my heart, mind, emotions, feelings and all my being, gifts and capabilities as a blank paper. He can then work with them as He sees fit. I do not promise Him anything, but I surrender my will to His will!

This is a true vow: I am my Beloved's own, and He is mine. He chooses my way for me, guides me with His Holy Spirit, and carries me in Him, so I can enjoy the embrace of my Heavenly Father!

God does not need a favor from us, or certain actions or even money; rather He demands my heart and will, so that I can live according to His Divine Pleasure. What I vow to Him is that He may do unto me whatever pleases Him and He sees fit!

## THE FIRST REQUEST: THE HEAVENLY BLESSING

The first commandment, which Christ mentioned in His sermon on the mountain, was: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit..."* (Matthew 5:3). He is calling us to the blessed life, i.e. sharing the divine heavenly life with Him by sharing His qualities: *"He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich"* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

His first commandment was the enjoyment of the blessed heavenly life that is rejoicing through our poor hearts in spirit; i.e. we should become poor with Him so that many people can become rich through Him.



The word "Jabez" in Hebrew means "hurting" or "distressing." Although his mother called him Jabez, for she gave birth to him in sorrow (1 Chronicles 4:9), he was certain that God called him "the blessed" and "the rejoiced."

His first request was: *"Oh, that You would bless me indeed,"* which came in harmony with God's will, who wants to tell everyone what He told our father, Abraham: *"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing"* (Genesis 12:2). He wants us to carry Him inside us, for He is the Source of all blessings, so that wherever we are, God's blessings will dwell there and upon those whom we meet.

St. Mary arose and went with haste to the house of Zachariah and Elisabeth; and when she entered the house, Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and the babe leaped with joy and danced in her womb, just as King David danced with all his might before the ark of the Lord (2 Samuel 6:14).

Knowing the essence of Fatherhood, we dare to ask the Source of blessings to reside inside us, so we may **become a blessing to others!** The first request is to ask our Father to grant us what He has, just as Christ mentioned: *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"* (Matthew 7:11).

***My Heavenly Father, I ask You one thing:  
Bestow upon me what You wish to grant me from above,  
That I would hold You, O the Beneficent One,  
That my soul would satiate with You,  
and that through You I would become a blessing for all  
people I meet!***



## THE SECOND REQUEST: ENLARGEMENT OF THE TERRITORY

What would I ask of my Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth? As heaven and earth do not contain You, grant me, Your son, a wide open heart to grasp You, so that its territory may expand until, if possible, it is able to love all mankind that is beloved by You!

The enlargement of the internal territory is a divine gift, as the heart opens up with love to contain all men, even those who resist it; so that the law of the heart becomes: *“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”* (Matthew 5:44).

This request accords with God’s spiritual gift, which He promises us by saying: *“For I will cast out **the nations** before you, and **enlarge your borders**: neither shall any man desire your land, when you shall go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year”* (Exodus 34:24). Who are the nations here, but the spiritual dark forces that want to occupy the heart to corrupt it with detestation, hatred and narrow mind, that it would become a land inhabited by Satan and his armies? However, if God enlarged our territory, He would expel every evil thought and detestation towards our brethren, so that we can rise before God with love, rejoicing as in festivity that never ends!

The cry of the song that we present to God, who works in us, would become: *“You have increased the nation, Oh Lord, You have increased the nation: You are glorified: You had removed it far unto all the ends of the earth”* (Isaiah 26:15).

The Apostle Paul has asked his people to pray for him and for all who work with him in the vineyard of the Lord, that God would enlarge their territory through the word of the preaching: *“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak”* (Colossians 4:3-4).

## THE THIRD REQUEST: GOD’S HANDS TO BE WITH US

Christ has promised to count us amongst His sheep that dwell on His right hand, so He would allow us entry into His eternal Kingdom on the day of His coming. God’s right hand refers to His strength and power that works inside us to sanctify us; it also refers to His presence within us. That’s why we announce our longing to Him in our morning prayer, saying: *“I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved”* (Psalms 16:8).

When Moses interceded for the people of God, who sinned, and God accepted his intercession on their behalf, he did not stop with that; rather, Moses insisted that he would not move the people unless God accompanied them Himself: *“If your presence go not with me, carry us not up hence”* (Exodus 33:15). God was pleased with that, for He replied: *“I will do this thing also that you have spoken: for you have found grace in my sight, and I know you by name”* (Exodus 33:17).

Is it righteous for us to say so? God wishes to find a pure heart to support it with His right hand and sustain it with His strength: *“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him”* (2 Chronicles 16:9). He is always encouraging us by saying: *“With whom My hand shall be established: Mine arm also shall strengthen him”* (Psalms 89:21).

## THE FOURTH REQUEST: PROTECTION FROM EVIL

The first three requests were positive, where we asked God to dwell inside us to bless us, so we would become a blessing; to enlarge the territory of our hearts, our thoughts and all our depths with His divine love; and to grant us His hand, His strength, through His constant presence amongst us and inside us. The last request is a negative one: *“that You would keep*





*me from evil, that it may not grieve me.”* This is exactly what Christ has taught us to ask for as the last request in our prayer: *“lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil”* (Luke 11:4).

Let us behold God, so that the evil enemy would flee away from us and fall as if from the sky of our hearts in humiliation under our feet. Christ said: *“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven”* (Luke 10:18).

- ❖ Do not be afraid of Satan as he approaches the flesh although he has no flesh, for there is no one weaker than he, who approaches this much although he has no flesh, and there is no one stronger than the valiant brave even if he had a mortal body!<sup>1</sup>

**St. John Chrysostom**

## The Answering of the Prayer

As the requests, or the vows of Jabez, were in accord with God’s will, it was said that: *“God granted him that which he requested.”* (1 Chronicles 4:10). It was mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah that: *“Then shall you call upon Me, and you shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you; and you shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart”* (Jeremiah 29:12-13).

Jabez’ requests or vows were about enjoying God Himself and the salvation from evil, and thus they were fulfilled at once!

- ❖ We ask and request of the Lord with our hearts, for the door is opened through the voice of the heart<sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ He who prays with desire, praises in his heart even if his mouth is silent. But if man prays without yearning, he is dumb before the Lord even if his voice reaches all men<sup>3</sup>.

- ❖ The mouth talks with the language of the words, but the heart talks through his desires. Your prayer is the desire of your heart<sup>4</sup>.
- ❖ God does not ask for the words, but for your hearts<sup>5</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

## THE POWER OF THE PRAYER AND PURITY OF HEART

- ❖ The purity of the heart raises a prayer, which is stronger than all prayers recited with a loud voice, for silence with a genuine mind is better than the loud voice of a screaming person.

Now my dear reader, give me your heart and your understanding and listen to the power of the pure prayer and how our holy fathers strived in their prayer before God and how they presented it as a pure offering (Malachi 1:11), with which prayer the offerings were accepted:

Prayer saved Noah from the flood (Genesis 6:1-11:32).

Prayer clothes a naked (demon possessed man in Luke 8:26-39).

Prayer defeats armies (Exodus 17:8-16).

Prayer reveals the mysteries (Daniel 2:17-30).

Prayer splits the sea (Exodus 14:15-21).

Prayer made a road through Jordan (2 Kings 2:13-14).

Prayer stopped the sun from setting (Joshua 10:12-14).

Prayer made the moon stop (Joshua 10:12-14).

Prayer destroyed sin (Judges 16:28-30).

Prayer put out fire (Numbers 11:2).

Prayer prevented rain and dew (1 Kings 17:1).

Prayer raised from the den (Daniel 6:19-23) and saved from the fire (3:17-25) and from the sea (Jonah 2).

The power of the prayer is great just as the power of pure fasting<sup>6</sup>.



**St. Aphrahat**





## The Prayer and the Happy Life

- ❖ Man, the rational creation, is a great and noble creature, for even when he falls nothing less could satiate him than God, who grants him a happy relief that not even he can grant himself. For that I say: happy is he who beholds God!<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ There is no life, but the one that comes from God, for God is the Divine Life, the Source of life<sup>8</sup>.
- ❖ You have created us for You, my Lord; thus our hearts will not rest until they reside in You<sup>9</sup>.
- ❖ Let us stick to God with love, and reach Him with prayer. The sum of our goodness and all our goodness is God. It is proper for us not to fail in that and not to ask for more than that, for the first is dangerous and the last is impossible... Our subordination to God is a desire to be happy; and reaching God is happiness itself<sup>10</sup>.
- ❖ There is no more goodness for man than for his whole life to be a journey towards the non-changing life, and when his emotions fully reside on it<sup>11</sup>.
- ❖ Prayer is reaching of the mind, which is filled with love, to God. It occupies the mind and heart, the thought and desire, the knowledge and love. The perfect life of a good Christian is a divine desire<sup>12</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

---

<sup>1</sup> *Resisting the Temptation of the Devil, homily 2: 4.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sermon, 91: 3.*

<sup>3</sup> *On Ps. 102: 8.*

<sup>4</sup> *On Ps. 37: 14.*

<sup>5</sup> *Sermon, 91: 3.*

<sup>6</sup> *Demonstration 4: 1.*

<sup>7</sup> *Cf. Confessions 13: 8,9; On The Happy life, 11.*

<sup>8</sup> *On the True Religion 11: 21.*

<sup>9</sup> *Confession 1: 1: 1.*

<sup>10</sup> *Morals of Cath. Church. 11: 18.*

<sup>11</sup> *Christian Doctrine, 1: 12: 21.*

<sup>12</sup> *Tr. on 1 John 4: 6.*

