

converted when I was teaching down in Leverborough so Harris has a very special place in my heart as does its people so we pray God's blessing as we come around his word tonight and we're going to continue our worship by singing to God's praise Psalm 57 the Scottish Psalter version of Psalm 57 be merciful to me oh God thy mercy unto me do thou extend because my soul doth put her trust in thee we're going to sing verses one to five to God's praise be merciful to me oh God be merciful to me oh God thy mercy unto me do thou extend because my soul doth put her trust in thee do thou extend because my soul doth put her trust in thee in the shadow of thy wings my refuge I will be

NINGNINGNINGNINGNING Most High To God Do not All things For me Perform Most Perfectly From Heaven He shall Set down And me From His Sweet Cross Defend That would Devor me God Is true And mercy For Shall send My Soul Among Fierce Lions High Fire Bronze Live Among Men Suns To Sleep Dark Spears And Dark Such Sharp Sword Is Their Tongue Be Thou Exalted Valley High Above Thans O God Let Thou Thy Glory Be Advanced Sun On The Earth Abroad Well friends we're going to turn now to read God's word together from the book of James in the New Testament James chapter 5 James chapter 5 and we can read the whole chapter together Let us hear the word of God Come now you rich weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth eaten your gold and silver have corroded and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire You have laid up treasure in the last days behold the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields which you kept back by fraud are crying out against you and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self indulgence you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter you have condemned and murdered the righteous person he does not resist you Be patient therefore brothers until the coming of the Lord see how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth being patient about it until it receives the early and the late rains [16 : 56] You also be patient Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand Do not grumble against one another brothers so that you may not be judged Behold the judge is standing at the door As an example of suffering and patience brothers take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord Behold we consider those blessed who remain steadfast You have heard of the steadfastness of Job and you have seen the purpose of the Lord how the Lord is compassionate and merciful But above all my brothers do not swear either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath But let your yes be yes and your no be no so that you may not fall under condemnation Is any among you suffering?

Let him pray Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick And the Lord will raise him up And if he has committed sins he will be forgiven Therefore confess your sins to one another And pray for one another That you may be healed The prayer of a righteous person Has great power As it is working Elijah was a man with a nature like ours And he prayed fervently that it might not rain And for three years and six months It did not rain on the earth Then he prayed again And heaven gave rain And the earth bore its fruit My brothers

If anyone among you wonders from the truth And someone brings him back Let him know that whoever brings him back A sinner from his wandering Will save his own soul from death And will cover a multitude of sins Amen We pray God's blessing on that portion Of his own holy word Friends let's sing once again This time from Psalm 61 And sing Psalms Psalm 61 Reading at the beginning of the psalm Oh hear my urgent cry my God And listen to my plea From earth's remotest bounds I call When my heart faints in me We're going to sing verses 1-6 to God's praise O hear my urgent cry my God O hear my urgent cry my God O hear my urgent cry my God And listen to my plea From earth's remotest bounds I call When my heart faints in me O God O God God, conduct me to the rock that's higher far than I.

For you're my refuge from the foe, my tower of strength on high.
[20 : 55] O let me dwell within your dead, forever there to live.

O for the shelter of your wings, the refuge which they give.
For you have heard my voice, O God, and you have given me.
The heritage of those who fear your name continually.
No longer days the King will live, his sovereign rule extend.

[22 : 07] For many generations more, established without end.

Well friends, for a short time this evening I'd like us to turn to the pages of the Old Testament and to the book of 1 Chronicles.

1 Chronicles chapter 4. And we see that that's a chapter full of many different names.

This is a genealogy. But we're going to take our text this evening from the words that we have in verses 9 and 10. 1 Chronicles 4 verses 9 and 10.

Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. And his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bore him in pain. Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my border, that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm, so that it might not bring me pain.

[23 : 39] And God granted what he asked. Friends, I wonder this evening if I was to ask you what your favorite book in the Bible was, what your answer would be.

Perhaps it would be the book of Psalms, a book that really reflects every human emotion that there is. The good times, the bad, and everything in between.

We find it there in the book of Psalms. Perhaps for you it would be one of the Gospels, those many stories that tell and teach of the life of Jesus, his miracles, the times that he taught and healed as he went through the towns and the cities.

Or perhaps you even have a chapter that is precious to you, that you go back to. Maybe it's Romans 8 as a chapter that gives you that encouragement that you need just to carry on as one of God's people.

How many of you tonight would say that Chronicles chapter 4, 1 Chronicles chapter 4, is your favorite chapter? Let's be honest, when was the last time any of us even read this chapter?

[25 : 05] Perhaps if we're reading the Bible in Korsh, we would have come across it, and we might have struggled. We would have struggled as we came across all these many different names, as we tried to pronounce them, as we tried to make sense of who they are.

And the temptation really is, when we come to a chapter like this, to skip over it. Maybe when you saw these words coming up on the screen, you were wondering, well, where is the minister going with this tonight?

But yet, friends, we're asked to search the scriptures. And in Gaelic, it's roundsochach na scripturin. And I believe Gaelic scholars here will correct me if I'm wrong, that word roundsochach, it means research, but I think it can be translated as the word ransack.

We're to ransack the scriptures. That means we're to dig deep into the word of God. We're to mine the depths of what God has here given to us in his word.

And when we do so, what we find is treasure. And that's what we find in this chapter here tonight. That nugget of gold as we have it in verses 9 and verse 10.

[26 : 24] The prayer of Jabez. Jabez called upon the God of Israel saying, Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my border, that your right hand might be with me, that you would keep me from harm, so that it might not bring me pain.

And God granted him what he asked. And so for a short time this evening, I'd like us to look at this prayer, and particularly the words that you would bless me and enlarge my border.

We're going to think about who this man Jabez was, and then we're going to ask the question, why he prayed this prayer? Who and why?

Who then was this man? Well, the only account that we have of Jabez in the whole of scripture really, is found in verses 9 and 10 of this chapter.

Elsewhere in Chronicles, we read of a place called Jabez, and it's thought maybe this place was named after this man. We can't be sure of that. But what we can be sure of is what his name meant.

[27 : 35] The word Jabez means to be heavy. It was one who was honourable. An honourable man who is heavy.

Now that might sound strange to us tonight, but how is he heavy? Well, this heaviness is figuratively speaking about his character. Because Jabez was a man who was so full of integrity and humility and faith.

A man who could be trusted. And what makes Jabez honourable above everything else is the testimony of our text this evening.

The fact that Jabez was a man of prayer. And that's really the sum total that we know of this man. He's a man of prayer.

Not a bad testimony for any of us to leave behind. So let's look briefly at his prayer. And we notice in verse 10, firstly, Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying...

[28 : 44] Now that's interesting. That word called, it firstly tells us that there's an intensity to the prayer of this man. He doesn't just speak to God.

He's calling. There's a sense of urgency in his cry to God. But more than that, because this word call in the original language, it has that idea of summoning.

You know when you call someone and you're summoning them to come to you. You're beckoning them. You're wanting them. You're even demanding for them to come to you.

And that's the sentiment that we have here. That Jabez is summoning God to him. He's asking God to come and bless him.

We might think, well, what arrogance, what pride, what right does this man, this sinful man, have to come before a holy God in such a way? And then when we see his next request, we would have that thought only accentuated by the fact that he says, oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my border.

[29 : 53] Now this sounds as if he's asking the Lord to increase his assets. It's as if you would come to the Lord tonight and you would ask the Lord, oh, that you would bless me and give me all of the crofts around my house.

That you would give me all the land in this area that it would be mine. Now we wouldn't really do that, would we, unless we had a very specific reason and a good reason to do that.

We would say, well, how shallow. What kind of man is this man, Jabez? Is he honourable at all? But that's not the sentiment of the prayer.

Because Jabez's prayer to be blessed and to have his territory enlarged, to be given more land, it's not motivated by a selfish desire, but rather by faith.

By faith in God's covenant promises of inheritance and blessing to his people. Because what we see here is, is Jabez petitioning the one who had previously entered into a covenant with Abraham and promised Abraham and the Israelites the land of Canaan for possession.

[31 : 08] We read of that in Genesis chapter 12. And then when God renews the covenant with his people, his promise in Exodus 34, he says, I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders.

And then in Joshua 1, 2 to 3, we read, Moses, my servant is dead. Now therefore, arise and go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you, just as I said to Moses. And so right throughout the pages of the Old Testament, friends, God's promises are often connected with land, with giving his people land as an inheritance.

And Jabez knew this. He was in tune with the promises of God. He knew this, and he also knew that God was a covenant-keeping God, that God was bound to keep his promises.

So that Jabez's boldness before God was only really as a result of God's boldness to his own people in the first place.

[32 : 29] As one commentator put it, Jabez's prayer was a God-sanctioned ambition. Isn't that wonderful? For us to have a God-sanctioned ambition.

I wonder if we have that tonight. That boldness within our spirit. Knowing that God has given to us as his people, promises that are ours to lay hold of by faith if we want them.

And that we have these as our God-sanctioned ambition to go out into the ordinary every day, each and every day. A boldness, a boldness that even leads us to summon God.

To summon God. We're not told in Scripture for no reason to come boldly to a throne of grace and to ask for help in time of need. That boldness, it's so important.

And so in light of this boldness, we see that Jabez, he prays. But at this point, just as an aside, and it all links together, we might ask the question, well, what exactly is prayer?

[33 : 43] I wonder if you struggle with prayer. Private prayer is probably the biggest struggle that every single Christian has. How often do we come, we pray to God, distracting thoughts come to our mind, we find ourselves wondering, and by the time we finish, we forgot how we even began in the first place.

And it gets us down. And we wonder, should I be like this? Why am I like this? And of course, there's a very good reason for this, friends, because there's power in prayer.

We saw that in our reading in James. And the forces of darkness, the principalities and powers, Satan himself and his legion of angels, they know this.

We mustn't put Satan to one side as if he doesn't exist. He does. And he knows the power in prayer, and he knows the results of prayer, what they can lead to in the lives of those in the world that we find ourselves in.

And so he tries to stop it. And so as we come before the Lord, we struggle. But we might ask, well, what exactly is prayer?

[34 : 58] Is it a way of articulating ourselves with a certain type of word? We need to stand up with a certain form, with certain theological language that God only listens to if we don't have this type of prayer that somehow it won't be listened to.

That's not what prayer is, friends. The Shorter Catechism, it's such a useful little book. It was actually designed for children in the first place.

But I think for all of us, it's such a wonderful mine of theology. It's just so simple, yet so profound. And when asked the question, what is prayer?

The Catechism says, prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will. In the name of Christ, with confession of sins and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies. Things agreeable to his will. We always struggle, don't we, to know what the will of God is. What is the will of God in my life? I wonder if that's a question you're maybe asking yourself just now as you find yourself at a juncture in your life.

[36 : 16] What is God's will in my life? And how can we pray for things agreeable to God's will when we don't know what God's will is in the first place? Well, in a way, we do.

Because praying for things agreeable to God's will is really praying for things that God has already promised us in his word.

Things that God has said he will give to us if we come to him in faith. We come to God with what he's already given to us and we plead these things with him.

And so what Jabez is doing is he's praying for something agreeable to the will of God. Now, of course, we know that every detail in our lives is not outlined explicitly in the Bible when we're making decisions.

Of course not. But there are principles outlined in Scripture that show us whether or not something is agreeable to the will of God or not. And that can be difficult to discern at times.

[37 : 26] And we really do need to dig a little deeper just to find that. But yet, we know it's there. We know that God's promises, and this is encouraging, friends, God's promises are not just for Jabez but for you and for me tonight.

They're ours for the taking. And so that although God is sovereign, we have a responsibility. We have a responsibility to plead, to wrestle with God just like Jabez, just like Jacob, and not let go until we are blessed.

I had two great aunties who discussed this at length in terms of whether or not we could miss a blessing or in Gaelic to put a blessing past us.

Can we do that? Well, one of my aunties was of the opinion that there was no way we could ever miss a blessing because the Lord foreordains whatsoever comes to pass and so we can't miss a blessing.

Whatever blessings are ours are ours and we will receive them if they are ours to receive. But yet the other auntie would say yes, we can miss a blessing.

[38 : 48] We can easily miss a blessing. We can miss a blessing by perhaps deliberately not coming to hear the word of God, by distancing ourselves from fellowship, fellowshiping with God's people, by not reading the word of God, by not coming boldly to that throne of grace, that through our own doing we can miss a blessing.

And I would agree with her. We can miss a blessing. How many blessings are we missing by not laying hold of the promises by faith?

To say otherwise is bordering on being fatalistic. we might as well all just sit back and wait for the blessings to be showered upon us from heaven yet that's not what the word says.

Faith without works is dead. And one of the works that is to be ours, perhaps one of the simplest, yet one of the most profound, is that we lay hold of these promises, we bring them to ourselves, we plead them, and we see them fulfilled in God's time.

Maybe you've received a blessing, a promise rather, I'm sure you've received many blessings as well, but maybe you received a promise for someone years ago and you're waiting for that promise to be fulfilled.

[40 : 13] Maybe you received a promise for someone in your family who you believe is going to be saved, who's going to come and know the Lord and as far as you can see they couldn't be further away.

And then you begin to doubt, you begin to wonder, has he got it wrong, have I got it wrong, is this promise going to be fulfilled at all?

But yet, we're called not to give up, we're called to plead every day because whether we see it or not, the reality is God will fulfill his word.

Maybe you've had a blessing for this district, for this area, and you're waiting to see it fulfilled, plead it. Come boldly to the Lord and tell him what he said in his word and ask him for his honor to fulfill this word.

Maybe you're not a Christian here tonight and you're thinking, well this isn't for me. I should have stayed at home. All this talk of promises, it's not for me, I don't understand it, the sermon doesn't apply to me.

[41 : 33] But friends, this applies just as much to you as it does to the believer because what does the Lord delight in? He delights in mercy.

He's not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. That's what he says. It's not my words, it's his.

Romans 8, 13, what do we read there? Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Whosoever calls will be saved. In exactly the same way that Jabez called on the name of the Lord, summoned the Lord, so too can you tonight.

That if you call on his name, you will, it doesn't say you might, you will be saved. How do you call on the name of the Lord?

[42 : 36] Do you need long prayers, as I said, with special words? No, you don't. A wonderful prayer that the tax collector prayed in Luke 18 consisted, at least in English, of seven simple words.

Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. If you've got no other prayer, pray that prayer. You delight in mercy, you say, O Lord, in your word.

Will Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner. Plead this, it's not presumption. You say in your word that all who call on your name will be saved.

I am calling on your name and I'm praying that you will honour your word, that you will save me. Maybe you've been praying that prayer for years.

I wonder if there's any seekers in here. And still nothing. I've been praying to be saved and still nothing. As far as I can see, I'm not saved.

[43 : 41] Well, friends, keep praying, keep pleading, and I guarantee you, I absolutely guarantee you, the Lord will honour his word.

If he's not already done so, maybe you already have what you're looking for. Maybe you have been saved and what you're looking for is not what the Bible tells you that you're going to have.

Maybe you're looking for a road to Damascus experience, a flashing light coming before you, showing you that there is a God. He doesn't promise that. He does promise that if we call on him, we will be saved.

That if we believe in him, we will be saved. Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my border. And so these words, they teach us the principle of pleading God's promises through, but what else do they teach us, I wonder? Well, prosperity preachers would advocate this kind of prayer as a prayer that we should pray for material gain.

[44 : 53] Pray this prayer and God will give you your best life. He will give you the biggest car, the biggest house. He will make you successful in every area of your life.

There are people standing up telling innocent people this even tonight. Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my border.

And yes, the Lord does bless many of us, especially in the western world, with blessings to enjoy. And that's good and that's fine. But what about those in the world who don't have these blessings? What about those who tonight are living in abject poverty, who do not know where their next meal is going to come from? Are they exempt from the promises of God, of being blessed and having their borders enlarged?

Well, of course not. Because these promises on offer to us here in Christ, and we praise the Lord for this, they go so much deeper than being blessed by things.

[46 : 03] Because just like the children of Israel, friends, just like them, if we are the Lord's tonight, he has promised us a land. He has promised us a land that is far greater, that stretches into the endless realms of eternity, a glorious inheritance in heaven itself.

Often I feel, and I include myself in this, that we think we're being short changed at death as God's people, as Christians, that it's better to stay here, to be rooted and anchored to this world.

What's still to come is it's okay, but it's not as good as this, so we stay. But God says no. What I have for you, dear child, he says, is far better.

Far better than anything or anywhere you could possibly ever begin to imagine. Eye has not seen nor ear heard.

But, that verse goes on to say, God has revealed to us, he's revealed to us by his spirit, what? The wonder of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[47 : 21] And that's what heaven is for us, a place where there's no more pain or suffering or tears or separation or hurting or anything else, all the bad is undone, but a place where we see Jesus face to face, a place where we're like him and with him.

Isn't that a thought? Do we not want to know more of that promised land here on earth? We need to wrestle.

We need to wrestle with God. Not let go till he blesses us, till he reveals something of himself to us. That we would have that desire to see our territory enlarged here on earth. What do I mean by that? Well, to see God's kingdom in North Harris expanded.

Is that not what we want? That's what we want in Pathk. I know that's what you want here in North Harris. To see many more coming and tasting and seeing that God is good so that they too would inherit the land.

[48 : 38] Our part in it all, well not surprisingly, it all comes back to prayer. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, it says in the authorised version, availeth much.

that prayer of faith, a prayer that we read in the modern versions has great power in its working. That's what we have tonight, friends. Let's be encouraged by that. Let's be equipped by that. Let's be emboldened by that reality as we go out.

John Hyde was an American missionary. with this I'm nearly finished. He was an American missionary in the Punjab region of India.

He learned several of the local languages. He really integrated himself in the culture and he became well known as one of India's most powerful preachers.

[49 : 42] But yet after several years he became a little bit discontent, discontented, a bit restless, because all that he sought to do in terms of his evangelistic efforts seemed to bear absolutely no fruit.

The spiritual border of the church if you like, it wasn't being enlarged. So what did he do? He prayed.

He turned more and more to prayer. He prayed for hours. Now we're not saying it's the length of time of prayer that's important.

That's not what we're saying. But he did. He prayed for hours. And because prayer occupied so much of his time, he became known as praying hide.

Praying hide. And you know what? Not surprisingly, it worked. many Indians, they came to know Christ over the following years.

[50 : 51] The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availed much. And I think we can be scared. We can be scared of this. Oh, but it might not be God's will to save these people.

And so we caveat everything with this small print. But yet God says that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man has much power in its working.

That's what God says. That's a promise. And he's bound to fulfill that promise. And so we mustn't be scared. We mustn't be scared to come with our boldness, asking God to do that which brings glory to his name.

C.H. Spurgeon, when speaking about Jabez, said that his devotion was the key to his promotion. We're not saying this in a legalistic way, certainly not, but rather in a lively way.

As we grasp afresh the power of prayer, his devotion was the key to his promotion. Friends, we see this in verse 10.

[52 : 05] God granted what he had requested. Powerful words. God granted what he requested.

Let's turn, friends, to prayer. Don't we need prayer? You have many fears, I would imagine we all do, as we go out into a new week on life's journey. You have many difficulties in your families, in your workplace, in your communities.

That's life. What do we do with them, friends? Do we shoulder them? Do we carry them? Do we trudge along every day seeking to go on our own strength and find ourselves getting nowhere quick?

Or do we, as when I was studying in Edinburgh for the ministry, as I would see on church buildings, do we try praying? Try praying. That's devotion, as it were, would be the key to promotion, that we would come boldly and expectantly to a throne of grace, pleading God's promises to us, seeking with every fibre of our being that he would bless us indeed, individually, on our own and collectively as a congregation, that by the power of his Holy Spirit, who knows, that great things could happen here.

in this very community. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for the fact that you've not left us to ourselves, but you've given to us all the resources we need to be servants of the King.

[53 : 53] Forgive us, we pray, for our lack of faith, for our lack of expectation, for perhaps even the many times that we find ourselves, as it were, going through the motions.

Enliven us, we pray, in our spirit. Grant unto us by your spirit, afresh this evening, a renewed sense of who you are and what we can do for you, by you.

and we pray for any here tonight who are perhaps struggling, who are strangers to grace and to God, that you would speak to them, that you would reveal to them the simplicity of the pleading of your promises, and that they too, even this night, would cry out, Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.

You are a God who hears and answers prayer, and we thank you for that. A God who longs to see men and women, boys and girls, being brought and adopted into that royal household of faith, to be joint heirs with Christ of that promised land that's to be found on Canaan shores.

We thank you for that wonderful hope of glory that belongs to your people. Let it enliven us and inform us as we go on in the days that lie ahead, and forgive us for Jesus' sake.

[55 : 37] Amen. Friends, let's conclude our time of worship singing to God's praise. Psalm 1 to 1. Just a wee reminder to us, a psalm that's so familiar but so profound.

It reminds us to lift our eyes beyond ourselves. I to the hills will lift mine eyes, from whence doth come mine aid. My safety cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth hath made.

We're going to stand to sing the whole psalm to God's praise. I to the hills will lift mine eyes. I to the hills will lift mine eyes, from whence doth come my aid.

My safety cometh from the Lord, earth hath made.

Thy foot he'll not let slide nor will be some bird that he keeps.

[57 : 04] Behold he that keeps his light he somberge not nor sleeps.

The Lord thee keeps the Lord thy shade on thy right hand doth stay.

The moon by night thee shall not smite nor yet the sun by day.

The Lord shall keep thy soul he shall preserve thee from all ill.

Hence forth thy going out and in God keep forever will.

[58 : 21] Close with a benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, rest on and abide with you now and forever more.

Amen.