

“A Discourse on the Prayer of Jabez,” (London, 1736), by John Brine (1703- 1765.) Brine was born in Kettering, Northamptonshire. He was called into the ministry by the church at Kettering, and eventually became a pastor at Particular Baptist Church at Coventry. In 1730 he succeeded William Morton, as pastor of the Baptist congregation at Currier’s Hall, Cripplegate, in London, where he delivered his discourse on the prayer of Jabez. He was friends with Dr. John Gill. John Brine was a strong Calvinist in his theology.

“And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh, 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.”
(1 Chron. 4:9-10)

To wit: Gill: (v. 9) The Targum adds, “*and wiser in the law than his brethren;*” or he might be a man of great wealth and riches, or of great strength and courage, all which make a man honourable; or he may be so called, because a praying man, as follows, a man of devotion and religion, a man of God, “*and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, because I bare him with sorrow;*” either with sorrow for her husband, being dead, or by reason of very sharp pains she endured at the birth of him; he was another Benoni. (v. 10) “*And Jabez called on the God of Israel,*” Or prayed to him, as the Targum; though some understand it as a vow, promising what he would do if God would do thus and thus for him; the Syriac and Arabic versions read in the third person, taking it to be what others, his parents and friends, wished for him, “*let him bless thee.*” But they are doubtless his own words, and a supplication of his to the Lord: saying, “*Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed;*” the Targum adds, “*with children;*” but he no doubt prayed for greater blessings than any outward or temporal ones are, even spiritual blessings, covenant blessings, the sure mercies of David, which are solid, substantial, durable, and irreversible: “*and enlarge my coast;*” the Targum is, “*multiply my borders with disciples.*” It may be understood of a spiritual enlargement by deliverance from spiritual enemies, and of grace as to exercise; and particularly of spiritual light and knowledge, and of the affections and desires of the soul after divine things, see **Ps 4:1; 119:32; 1Ki 4:29; 2Chron. 6:11,12** “*and that thine hand might be with me;*” the Targum adds, “*in business, prospering and succeeding him;*” the sense may be, that his hand of providence might be with him to protect him, of grace and love to comfort and help him in every time of need, of wisdom to direct him, and of power to keep him: “*and that thou wouldest keep me from evil;*” from the evil of affliction, and especially from the evil of sin, and from the evil one, Satan, and from all evil men and evil company; the Targum is, “*and make me companions such as I am:*” “*that it may not grieve me;*” alluding to his name Jabez, which he had from the sorrow and grief of his mother; and nothing is more grieving to a good man than the evil of sin, so contrary to the nature and will of God, being committed against a God of infinite love, grace, and mercy, whereby the name, ways, and truths of Christ are dishonoured, and the Spirit of God grieved, and saints are bereaved of much comfort; and therefore desire to be kept from it, knowing they cannot keep themselves, but the Lord can and will, at least from the tyranny of it, and destruction by it: the Targum is, “*lest the evil figment (or corruption of nature) should move or provoke me:*” “***and God granted him that which he requested;***” as he does whatever is asked in faith, according to his will, and will make for his glory, and the good of his people; see **1 John 5:14,15**.

We can be comforted by these excerpts from John Brine’s 50 page discourse, to wit: Believers have no cause to Fear. It is true, their Enemies are very numerous, and their Power, is exceeding great, and they are not capable of defending themselves a moment; notwithstanding which, they

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have no reason to be terrified, for Omnipotence itself is engaged for their Security, and therefore the Will of their Adversaries shall never be accomplished upon them. Each of them may say with the Psalmist, ***“The Lord is my Light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, and whom shall I be afraid?”*** (Ps. 27:1.)

Believers only are happy persons. Happiness all men are seeking to obtain, but they are either fatally mistaken in their notions concerning it, or in the way of arriving at the possession of it; Many conceive that it consists in riches, pleasures and honours; others imagine, that extensive knowledge, and tranquility of mind, is true felicity. These come nearer to it than the former, but yet fall short. It is only the knowledge of, and communion with God and that in a mediator, one finds settled peace. Consummate felicity hereafter will consist in conformity to and in the enjoyment of God and Christ, which is not attainable by any thing that we can do, as men of natural conceit. Many of the children of God are poor, afflicted, and despised in this world, yet they alone are truly happy persons, because they only are interested in God, the Source and Fountain of real and perfect bliss. ***“Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.”*** (Ps. 144:15.) To them he will shew the path of life; in his presence is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. (Ps. 16:11.)

Now let us consider Jabez’s solemn worshipping of God. He called on the God of Israel. By this is sometimes intended worship in general, as in these words, ***“Then began men to call upon the Name of the Lord.”*** (Gen. 4:26.) I.e. to join together in his public worship. In other places; it designs a particular branch of religious worship. Consider prayer in these words; ***“Call upon me in a Day of Trouble.”*** (Ps. 50:15.) This is a part of natural religion; or, it is a duty of a moral nature, and is incumbent on all persons; as well on the unregenerate as on those who are born again; hence the Apostle Peter, at the same time he tells Simon Magus that he was in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, puts him upon the practice of this duty; ***“and pray God”*** (Acts 8:22, 23.). Although the prayer of an unregenerate person, is an abomination (Prov. 28:9.), he is not excusable in the neglect thereof. Greater guilt is contracted by the entire omission of a duty, than attends the improper discharge of it. If prayer can be neglected by unregenerate persons, because they cannot perform it in an acceptable manner, they may also decline to perform the civil actions of life upon the same principle, for; ***“The plowing of the wicked is sin.”*** (Prov. 21:4.) I suppose, the wicked will despise and think it improper.

What I shall further offer on this head, immediately concerns the saints; and it will be contained in shewing this to be their duty; and that the Holy Spirit is their director in it; and, that they have great encouragements to practice it. This should excite us to a constant attendance at the Throne of Grace. I am of opinion that we may best judge the care of our souls by a readiness to draw nigh to God in secret prayer. If a spiritual frame is maintained in us we shall closely attend to this duty. This is as much a privilege as it is our duty. In prayer to God we may use the utmost freedom of complaints; we need have no check upon us, from an apprehension that he will take advantage against us for, or upbraid us with those evils we complain of before him; this too frequently is the manner of poor guilty creatures towards one another. But that is not the manner of our infinitely gracious God, we therefore may unburden our whole souls to Him, and tell Him of any, or all the vile lusts that distress and plague us; we may mention our temptations and freely confess our faults. The Lord has very high resentment for and against families that neglect his worship. Families should attend to this duty faithfully.

“Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name; for they have eaten up Jacob and devoured him, and have made his habitation desolate.” (Jer. 10:25)

I love you. Amen!

God permits us to bring our unspeakable grief, without the least thought of being upbraided therewith hereafter. We also may be full and free in our petitions: **“As God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”** (Eph. 3:20.) He allows us to entreat for whatever is needful to our spiritual support, relief and consolation. Since we have this liberty and access to the Throne of Grace, and may use such freedom of our addresses to our heavenly Father, how base are our hearts, which frequently tempt us to decline the practice of this important duty, and the improvement of so inestimable a privilege. Family prayer should be constantly attended to. The worship of God ought to be maintained in all the families of the saints. That family in which solemn and joint prayer is wholly neglected, is far from being such as it ought to be. Such behavior is very much unlike Christian behavior.

Happy would it be with us were we wrought up to the same resolution that Joshua was, who said, **“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”** (Jos. 24:15.) For we should certainly find our own advantage in it. The great God will show very high resentment against those families that neglect his worship. It cannot but be thought a duty incumbent on matters of families, to pray with, and for their children and servants, whom providence has put under their care and inspection; a faithful attendance hereon may, at least, strike their minds with an awe of God, and lay such a check upon them, which may prevent their sinning as others do. I doubt not but many can attest to the truth of this by their own experience. Besides, as we ought to endeavor the conviction of those under our immediate notice, we can't tell how far God may please to succeed the discharge of our duty in this particular way. However, whether or not the outcome follows, which we should desire, that is to say, the spiritual good of those about us, we shall keep clear of their blood, if we are found in the practice of our duty towards them. (How comforting for us, at this hour?!)

Believers ought to practice public prayer. The advantages arising from the conscientious observance of this are more than perhaps are commonly thought of. Hereby the saints are mutually edified, comforted and strengthened, their hearts are strongly cemented together in love; and it has a wonderful tendency to promote spiritual affection to divine things. It is no small part of the commendation given by the Holy Ghost of the primitive churches, that they practiced this duty. They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers. (Acts 2:42.) Such who are in church-fellowship are doubtless under obligation jointly to confess their imperfections, and entreat the Divine blessing on the Word and Ordinances preached and administered among them, that their souls may be built up in their most holy faith, and to pray that peace may be within Zion's walls, and prosperity in all her palaces. (Ps. 122:7.) The Holy Spirit is the director of the saints in this duty; on account of the assistance which he gives in the spiritual performance of this branch of worship he is called, the **“Spirit of Supplications”** (Zec. 12:10.)

“The preparation of the heart in man (for this duty) is from God, and (as well as) the answer of the tongue.”(Prov. 16:1)

The Holy Spirit teaches us what to pray for. We know not how to order our speech by reason of darkness. (Job 37:19.) Our spiritual ignorance renders it necessary for us to depend on heavenly influence and guidance, when we draw nigh to God in prayer, for we know not what to pray for as we ought. Without instruction from above we are incapable of a proper discharge of this important duty; as we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; (2 Cor. 3:5.) We must needs be unequal to a service of this nature, wherein are required a profound reverence of the Divine majesty, a humble opinion of ourselves, spiritual ideas of things naturally unknown, fervent desires of what we naturally are not disposed to seek after, and our thoughts insistently fixed on invisible objects.

Hence it is evident that our spiritual prayers are effected under a supernatural influence; it is *“The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* (Rom. 8:26.) He excites our desires after those things which we pray for. Our supplications consist only of a few cold and formal petitions, unless our affections are moved, and our hearts ascend up to God, whose Name we invoke. It is the heart he looks at; lip-service is far from being acceptable to him. In this duty our heart should always be the guide to our lips. What we express with our tongues ought to be the unfeigned desire of our souls. Now as we are bent to backsliding (Hos. 11:7.), it is absolutely necessary that we should be Divinely attracted. The Church was justly sensible of this when she thus expressed herself; *“Draw me, we will run after thee; the king hath brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine; the upright love thee.”* (Song of Solomon 1:4.) The necessity of such a heavenly attraction and influence is evident to every believer, who finds himself naturally indisposed to things of a spiritual kind. The great difference he experiences in his soul in his solemn approaches to God, sufficiently convinces him, that all his dependence ought to be on the Holy Ghost in his addresses at the Divine Throne. Sometimes his heart is cold, vain and wandering, in the beginning of this duty; before the conclusion, it may be that it is greatly enlarged, and is made like to the chariots of a willing people. At other seasons, when he imagines himself to be in the suitable framework of this nature, and therefore cheerfully engages in it, on a sudden, his affections cool, his thoughts rove, and his soul is greatly contracted; wherefore, he cannot but conclude, it is a vain thing to attempt this duty without a view to the gracious operation and aid of the Spirit of God.

God gives his people liberty and freedom in prayer. The people of God have always liberty of access to him through Jesus Christ. Under every temptation, distress and affliction, they may freely draw nigh to their heavenly Father, and spread their case before him; but it is not at every season they have liberty in their access to God; as the psalmist was, we all sometimes are, shut up and cannot come forth (Psalm 88:8.) A sense of their guilt fills them with shame, and almost forces them to silence. It is only when the Spirit of Christ takes of his things, and shews them (John 16:14.) to their souls, that they have inward freedom. A view, by faith of his blood, righteousness, grace and intercession are the foundation of the believer's boldness; in whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, through the faith of him. (Eph. 3:12.) And the spirit of Grace is the efficient, or author of that freedom; where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (2 Cor. 3:17.)

The Spirit of the Lord causes us to hope for what we ask. The exercise of faith is necessary in this duty. *“Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.”* (Jam. 1:6.) That is the direction of the apostle James. If we have no expectation of receiving a favour, upon an application to a friend, we are easily prevailed with to decline it; so, if we have no hopes of obtaining a gracious answer to our prayers from God, our inclination to call upon him will sensibly abate. Without some encouragement to expect a favourable audience with God, our petitions to him will be very faint and cool; and therefore the influence of the Spirit of Faith should always be desired by us when we engage in this sacred duty, as what is absolutely needful to our comfortable performance of it. With what satisfaction, liberty and pleasure, as well as assurance of faith, *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”* (Heb. 10:22-24.), do the saints draw nigh to God, when the Holy Ghost powerfully applies the Divine Promises to their Souls; such as;

“Seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.”(Luke 11:9)

“I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”(Isa. 41:17)

I love you. Amen.