

Lessons from Jabez

Prayer

1 Chronicles 4:9-10

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

Let's look at some context here before we press in...

We come into the scripture and there is a genealogical list of names. It is relevant to the tribe of Judah. In the midst of this genealogy something really stands out... It says: "Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers" ...

When I come across things like this in scripture; and by: "Things like this" I mean things that don't seem to fit or stand out within the context, I tend to look deeper. In this case If Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, I need to ask the question: WHY?

Now as we read through the passages here we can see that we are not explicitly told why he was more honorable... However, as we read this account, there is an emphasis on the actions of Jabez.

What do we see Jabez doing?

He is praying...

In the midst of a genealogical recount within the tribes of Judah, the flow of the scriptures stops to mention three things:

- 1) Jabez is more honorable than his brothers
- 2) Jabez is praying
- 3) Jabez is named by his mother. She said: "Because I bore him in pain"

I think we can safely say that the illustration of him praying here is significant... So why is what his mother said significant?

In Hebrew the name Jabez means literally Grieve and be Sorrowful

Jabez - יַבֵּץ ya'hêš; from an unused root probably meaning to grieve; sorrowful;

As you may recall, children were named by their parents; and those names were what their parents believed their child would become. Jabez mother was saying that her son would bring grief and sorrow... That he would literally be grief and sorrow...

Think about how you would feel this morning if your mother had called you:

- Suffering
- Sorrow
- Pain
- Boring
- Stupid
- Worthless
- Unwanted

Now what does **honorable** mean here? Its not as simple as many might think... There are several connotations from the original Hebrew that are not immediately apparent without study... Let's first examine the two opposing meanings of the word.

כָּבֵד kâbêd; or כָּבֵד kâbed;

NEG - to be heavy, be weighty, be grievous, be hard,

POS - be rich, be honourable, be glorious, be burdensome, be honoured

There are in fact 5 things to evaluate with this word... Let's look at them

(Qal) to be heavy to be heavy, be insensible, be dull to be honoured

(Niphal) to be made heavy, be honoured, enjoy honour, be made abundant to get oneself glory or honour, gain glory

(Piel) to make heavy, make dull, make insensible to make honourable, honour, glorify (Pual) to be made honourable, be honoured

(Hiphil) to make heavy to make heavy, make dull, make unresponsive to cause to be honoured

(Hithpael) to make oneself heavy, make oneself dense, make oneself numerous to honour oneself

Now that you know his name and you know what the expectations of him were, it is pretty evident what his mother had imposed upon his life...

Friends, some people have amazing families that love on their kids. What do you think the impact would be on a kid who's mother called him her sorrow? Often times people come from broken homes or broken relationships where words have been used to literally murder a persons spirit or their identity.

Now let's take up in the scripture where Jabez is praying to the Lord in Verse 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.

This morning I believe that we need to recognize that Jabez recognized the implications of his name. He saw what was expected of him. He saw the curse on his life and he made his plea to the one who could free him from his prison.

You see he was trapped by his mothers curse. Her expectation of him brought hurt, pain and sorrow into his life as he understood how his mother felt about him. She literally blamed him for the pain in her child birthing...

Folks, this morning, if you felt that your mother regretted giving birth to you and named you for the experience, how would you feel?

It doesn't matter what hurt you have experienced in your life. What path you are on or quite frankly your circumstances. There is one who can make a difference in your life.

Life altering, positive changes come through prayer...

So what lessons can we glean from this scripture?

- God took the negative aspect of Honorable and turned it around into a positive because Jabez was a man of prayer
- Jabez prayed passionately as he did not want to continue living in the curse of others expectations of him
- Jabez believed that God could make a difference in his life

Did you notice that in the middle of this genealogical list, there is a break to detail the exact words of his prayer?

I want to examine now the four key points illustrated in this prayer:

Point 1) He says: "Oh that you would bless me..."

Jabez is asking God for a positive increase in his life.

Let's examine this a bit... If he is a sorrow and a pain to others, with the change in his life and expectation, to whom is the blessing directed. Well obviously for him to a certain extent, but even more so to those around him...

When we pray for blessings often it is not for us but for those individuals with whom we share fellowship. Jabez was giving up his expectations for his life in favor of what God could do with his life.

Now when we hear of blessings in our modern churches in Canada and the USA, most of the time the first thing that comes into our minds is getting something. I have been blessed with a larger paycheck or I have been blessed with being able to get that new truck or perhaps I have been blessed with wonderful children... These are all true blessings, but let us not forget that when God blesses and prospers us we are enriched by a spiritual prosperity. It is a higher more meaningful quality of life. It is this type of blessing that I believe Jabez was asking God for...

Point 2) Next he says to God: "Enlarge my territory"

Was he speaking of land here?

OR

Was Jabez saying God, I am asking you to remove my personal limitations in favor of your expectations on my life. Is he asking God to expand his boundaries? Is he asking God for more?

You see the Hebrew word for: "Territory"

גְּבוּלָהּ g bûl; or (shortened) גְּבֻלָּהּ gbul; from 1379; properly, a cord (as twisted), i. e. (by implication) a boundary; by extens. the territory inclosed:— border, bound, coast, x great, landmark, limit, quarter, space.

Simply put the Hebrew word means: border, coast, bound, landmark, space, limit, quarters

My friends, when I read this scripture in context, what I see is a man asking God to taking him outside of his comfort zone and enrich his life.

Point 3) In his prayer he then says: "That Your hand would be with me..."

So interesting... his wording here: "Your hand" Literally the hand of God. What does he mean?

Well... Let's go back to the Hebrew once again and see what "Hand" means here in this context.

Hand: yâd; a primitive word; a hand (the open one (indicating power, means, direction, etc)

Ah! So what Jabez is saying is:

- God I want your power to do what you want done
- God I want the resources to see your will done
- God I want your direction on how to do what you want done

Starts to become pretty evident why he was considered more honorable...

Point 4) Jabez says to God: “You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!”

When sin is done against us, it causes us struggle, sorrow, grief, strife and pain.

Jabez’ mother branded him with the label: “One who causes pain” But what we see here in his prayer is him asking God to free him from the curse given to him by his mother.

So what can we take away from this little blip in the genealogies?

- When we consider this man called Jabez, we see that:
 - He was not a king
 - He was not a priest
 - He was not a prophet
 - He was not a warrior
 - He was not significant to man
- We don’t have to think we are special or be special in the eyes of man to be honored by God
- God wanted us to notice that he stood out.
 - He was a man of prayer
- What did he pray?
 - He asked for God’s blessing
 - He asked for God to take him out of his comfort zone and enlarge his territory
 - He asked for God’s power, resources and direction
 - He asked God to keep him from sin

Let’s Jump ahead to Jesus here just before we close this lesson.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:7-13:

And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

“ Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

God wants us to live abundant lives in his kingdom. He wants to bless us and cause us to grow in his kingdom. He wants us to take on the nature of his Son. God wants to take us out of our comfort zones and He wants to increase us by expanding our territory. He wants his will to be done here on earth just as it is in heaven. He will provide for our needs by giving us power and resources to carry out his will as we obediently turn to him for direction. Just as God has forgiven what we have done, we are to forgive endlessly that which others have done towards us. We are not to take offense. Finally even though we are new creations in Christ Jesus we still can fall into sin. We need to ask God for help so that we can avoid these traps of the enemy.

In many ways the prayer of Jabez illustrates what Jesus told us how to pray in Matthew 6.

What is the bottom line... If you only take one thing away today let it be this...

God honors prayer...