

## Jabez's Prayer • 1 Chronicles 4:9-10

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Setting the Scene*

1. Now that we've finished Romans, it's time to return to the OT.
2. And next in our study is 1 & 2 Chr.
  - a. Chronicles parallels what we've already seen in Kings.
  - b. The main difference between them is the *focus* Chronicles has on the Southern Kingdom of Judah & the royal line of David.
3. Since this is the writer's theme & purpose, he begins his record with this long list of names; he wants to describe the *political & social background* out of which David's dynasty rose.

<b>READ TEXT</b>
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#### B. *Treasure In Mud*

1. A miner was working on a small vein of gold in the wall of a mine.
2. Eventually it played out when the rock ran into a soft, dark mud.
  - a. The miner thought the vein might *continue* on the other side of the dirt,
  - b. So he dug it out, put it in buckets, & hauled it to a narrow crack in the floor of the mine tunnel.
  - c. There he poured it out, sending dozens of buckets of mud into the depths.
3. A couple days later he reached solid rock once more, but the hoped for vein was not there.
4. Disappointed & realizing he'd have to close the mine, he carried his tools into the light of day.
  - a. In one hand was the bucket, with its last haul of mud.
  - b. There in the light of the mid-day sun he emptied it.
  - c. As it plopped to the ground, he saw something glint in it.
  - d. He stooped down to take a closer look.
  - e. It was a clear stone, about the size of the end of his thumb.
  - f. He poured his canteen over it & rolled the rock around his palm, a diamond
  - g. He set it down & ran his fingers through the rest of the mud & found 2 more good sized gems.
5. Then the realization hit him; he'd poured *dozens* of buckets of diamond-filled dirt into the depths.
  - a. For days he'd worked in the darkness of the mine, eager for *gold*,
  - b. Removing what he assumed was worthless dirt, all the while feeling these little rocks but assuming they were worthless.

#### C. *Diamond In the Rough*

1. Jabez is a classic "diamond in the rough" story.
2. The *1<sup>st</sup> 9 chapters* of 1 Chr. is a list of names – *lots* of names – *hard to pronounce* names!
3. Many people, when they get to this part of the Bible, think the scripture-gold vein dries up.
4. So they scan over the text, looking for where the list *ends* & the golden goodies pick back up.
5. The problem is, if we do that we run the risk of missing some real *gems*.
6. And one of them is here in vs. 9-10 of ch. 4

### II. TEXT

#### A. V. 9

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

1. Jabez is unusual for a *couple* reasons.

2. First off is that while he's mentioned here in the midst of dozen's of genealogies, we're told neither who his ancestors nor descendants were.
3. Everyone else is the son of one guy & the father of another whose names are given; not Jabez.
4. All we know is that he's of the *tribe* of Judah, but what *clan* he was a part of is a mystery.
5. He pops into the story in v. 9 & exits in v. 10.
6. But what we learn about him is remarkable!

### **B. Painful!**

1. The name Jabez means, "He brings pain."
2. The writer tells us his mom stuck him with this name because of the grief giving birth to him caused her.
3. We pick names for our kids today because we like the sound.
  - a. Right now the hot baby names are Ethan, Elijah, Abigail, & Hannah.
  - b. Sometimes parents name their child after a relative.
4. In the ancient world, names were drawn from 2 sources;
  - a. **Either** a child was named with the *parents' hope* for what he/she would accomplish in life -
    - 1) As in "Isaiah – God will save"
    - 2) Or "Daniel – God will judge."
  - b. **Or** they were named for some *event* tied to their birth.
    - 1) When the ark of the covenant was captured by the Philistines, one woman named her baby, "Ichabod = the Glory has departed."
    - 2) How'd you like to go around the rest of your life with *that* name? No-glory!
    - 3) Jabez's name was even worse!
      - a) His mother's labor was so difficult she stuck him with a name that forever memorialized it.
      - b) Jabez = Painful!
      - c) Can you just imagine the ribbing this poor kid got growing up?
      - d) "Hey, who's that over there?" "Oh that's just *Painful*."
      - e) "Hi, what's your name?" "I'm painful."
5. Growing up, there were many times I wanted to change my name.
  - a. Kids can be cruel, & "Lance" rhymes with a lot of stuff, so I often got made fun of.
  - b. We moved a lot when I was in elementary school & there were times when we would move into a new house that I thought about telling people my name was *Mike* or *Tim*.
6. Poor Jabez! Just imagine the jokes he heard.
7. Yet despite this – Jabez grew up to be a good guy.
8. The writer says he was *more honorable* than his *brothers*.

### **C. Honorable**

1. We'll see what *made* him honorable in a moment.
2. But first – notice that Jabez didn't let a rough start hold him back.
3. He didn't play the victim.
4. He didn't throw up his hands & say, "My parents ruined me."
  - a. "Mom hated me!"
  - b. "I never got the love I needed from my folks."
  - c. "What's the use in trying to live a productive, successful life?"
  - d. "After all, I'm *Jabez*, & I'll *always be* Jabez!"

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5. What *made* Jabez *more honorable* than others is found in v. 10 -

**And Jabez called on the God of Israel.**

- a. Jabez got dealt a bad hand by the *circumstances* of his birth.
  - b. But he didn't *look* at those *circumstances*, He *looked* to the *God above* them.
  - c. As he looked at the people *around* him, his family, he didn't find anything worthy emulating, so he looked to the Lord.
  - d. When his mother's expectations of him were only of continued grief, Jabez looked *past* her to his heavenly Father.
6. One of the many deceptions Sigmund Freud fostered was the idea that our parents leave an indelible mark on us that we can never rise above.
- a. Many today think we're the *product* of our upbringing & there's no resisting it.
  - b. We are *doomed* to live out our parents' expectations.
7. That's simply not true!
- a. God is *greater* than man & His grace is *stronger* than sin.
  - b. Thru faith in Christ, He gives *new life*, the kind that overcomes evil.
  - c. *Of course* our earthly parents exert a powerful influence on us,
  - d. But our Heavenly Father is *ALL-powerful!*
8. In Deut. 5:9-10 God says –
- I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**
- a. When generation after generation reject God, the consequences of their sin accumulate & roll over in a heavy negative influence on their descendants.
  - b. Sin begets more sin.
  - c. **But at any time**, as soon as someone *repents* & breaks the cycle of sin, God immediately steps in to bring all His mercy & grace to bear.
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9. You might be a Jabez.
- a. You were born into a family of the dis-honorable.
  - b. Maybe you were born into a family of alcoholics, or drug-addicts, or *rageaholics*.
  - c. Your parents neglected you. There was no emotional nurture.
  - d. You spent more time with the TV than mom or dad.
  - e. Maybe mom told you over & over that you weren't wanted, or that you remind her of your loser dad.
  - f. Your father told you you'd never amount to anything; that you're too dumb or ugly.
10. All of that is a colossal lie that originated in the deepest pit of hell.
11. You were in the mind of God when He first spoke the universe into existence.
- a. He created all of this just so there'd be a place FOR YOU!
  - b. He loves you with a love beyond your wildest dreams.
  - c. You are His image-bearer & He has unbelievably marvelous plans for you.
12. Stop looking *back* at all the things that would hold you *there* –

13. And look *UP* to your *real* Father who *wants* to → Hold *you!*

#### **D. V. 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.**

1. Jabez asked God for 4 specific things. We'll see what they were in a moment.
2. First, let's take them out & read it this way -

**Jabez called on the God of Israel. So God granted him what he requested.**

3. God *loves* it when we call on Him.
4. Believe it or not, He **WANTS** us to call on Him.
5. You see, this is what marked Jabez as *different* from his peers; this was the basis of his being honorable → He *relied* on God instead of himself.
  - a. While everyone else lived a mundane life of *self-sufficiency*,
  - b. Jabez looked to & called on the Lord.
6. He asked for 4 things . . .

### #1• He Asked for a General Blessing

#### Oh, that You would bless me indeed

1. At first blush, we could easily just chalk this up to *selfishness*.
  - a. We might think Jabez was just asking for an easy life.
  - b. But there's one word here that leads us to a different conclusion = "indeed."
2. You see, Jabez isn't just asking God to make his an easy, carefree cruise thru life.
3. He asks God to bestow on him what **God** knows is best, not what Jabez *thinks* is.
4. When others look at Jabez, he wanted them to see the evidence of God's favor & be drawn to faith in Him.
5. I love the story Rob Bell tells about walking with his 4 year old son thru the mall.
  - a. There was a kiosk selling toys & the attendant was playing with one of them.
  - b. It was a complicated ball & string thing that was way beyond the capacity of a 4 year old to operate.
  - c. But the attendant made it look easy, so Rob tried it & realized even he couldn't work it.
  - d. But his son wanted it – & put up quite a fuss when his dad said, "No!"
  - e. He cried, then pouted & refused to cheer up.
  - f. But Rob stuck to his guns, because from the beginning, even before they'd passed that toy kiosk, Rob had a plan.
  - g. They left the mall, got in their car and Rob drove to one of those huge sporting good stores.
  - h. Then he took his 4 year old son to the ball aisle, where there were balls of every shape, size & color piled floor to ceiling and he said, "Okay – pick which one you want."
6. How often we're like that 4-year old in the mall—enthralled by some ball & string that we really can't handle.
  - a. But we *want* it & pout when we don't get it, then get angry at God for not "blessing" us.
  - b. When all along, He has something *much better* in mind.
  - c. God tells the single, "Wait till marriage till you have sex." But we think we know better.
  - d. God says, "Save up, wait to buy." But we put it on credit again & again until we've so in debt we can't see our way clear.
7. When Jabez asked God to bless him, he knew his life until then had been pretty sad.
8. Not a lot of blessing had marked his past. But God could change all that.
9. And Jabez wanted others to know the *source* of his blessing was none other than God.
10. **Listen: Our God is a Blessing God!** He wants to bless you! Ask Him to!
  - a. Not just so that your's will be an easy life –
  - b. But so that others will see in you the glory & goodness of God.

### #2 • He Asked for Increased Capacity

#### Enlarge my territory

1. Because of the way this is worded, commentators believe Jabez was one of those who helped settle the land of Canaan.

2. Remember that Joshua led 3 major campaigns to conquer the main fortresses & armies of the Canaanites.
  3. But afterward, when the land was divided up among the tribes, each family had to take possession of it's allotment.
  4. There were still Canaanites who had to be removed.
  5. Many of the Israelites *failed* to take possession of what God had given them.
  6. But Jabez asked God to expand his borders; to take possession *of all God wanted him to have*.
  7. His father & brothers had not gone forth in faith to take what was theirs. They let it sit under enemy control.
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8. Christian, you are a new creation in Christ.
    - a. God wants you to enter in to the full possession of all He created you to be.
    - b. Don't let the enemy sit encamped on areas of your life Jesus paid for & rose again to take control of.
  9. Think about your God-given territory; Who rules there?
    - a. Your relationships
    - b. Your health
    - c. Your finances
    - d. You sexuality
    - e. Your family
    - f. Your past
    - g. Your future
    - h. You eyes, you mouth.
  10. If in any of these the enemy exercises more influence than God – pray the prayer of Jabez.

### **#3 • He Asked for Guidance**

#### **That Your hand would be with me**

1. The “hand of God” was an idiom for *God's abiding presence*.
2. This is where we see the center of what made Jabez honorable in the sight of God.
3. He didn't just want God's goodies, *he wanted God!*
4. He wanted to *walk with the Lord*, hearing His counsel throughout the day, guiding him.
5. This was Jabez's way of expressing Proverbs 3:5-6

#### **Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.**

6. Jabez knew that *true success* is being faithful to follow God.
7. So He asked for His abiding presence.

### **#4 • He Asked for Protection**

#### **That You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain**

1. Jabez was an sharp guy!
  2. He knew that blessing & success can be a person's undoing.
  3. Some will only look to God when things are hard & they have to!
  4. When life is chugging along smoothly, they forget about God – & THAT is disaster!
  5. So Jabez wisely asked that as God blessed & prospered him, giving him the success he asked for, his trust in & reliance on God would not falter.
  6. If it did, then he'd *become* the very person his mother named him for – one who causes pain.
  7. This last thing Jabez prays for is risky, but essential.
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8. It's risky because Jabez is *really* asking God to do whatever He has to, to **KEEP** Jabez dependent on Him.
9. But from the perspective of Eternity – Dependence on God **IS** the Success God is looking for.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Grace

1. What fired Jabez's prayer, & the reason I believe the Holy Spirit inserted it here, so out of place as it seemingly is, is his awareness of the *grace* of God!
2. Jabez simply got it!
3. He understood that ours is a God of love who *yearns* to bless His people –
4. Not as a reward for being good – but because they've come to realize HE'S the one Who's good!
5. Jabez asked, "God, bless me for the glory You'll get for it!"
6. With Jabez, let's ask, "Bless me, even with *hard* blessings! I don't care – just so long as *You're blessed* in the blessing."

#### B. Tatiana

1. Some years ago when I was in Vladivostok, Russia, I met a young woman who spoke passable English.
2. It was after a church service & she approached me to practice her English.
3. She was newly married but said her husband was about to leave for the US to work at a research firm for 4 months.
4. She was concerned about being apart for so long.
5. I suggested we pray & ask God to make a way for her to be able to accompany her husband to the States.
6. She was *astonished* at the audacity of such a request & just laughed.
7. I thought she must have misunderstood me so tried to clarify. No, she'd understood me quite well.
8. She replied by saying she wasn't important enough to God to bother Him with something so inconsequential as wanting to be with her husband.
9. I was intrigued by her response & asked her to explain. She had 2 wrong ideas about God –  
**First** - she thought God only hears the prayers of the important & holy.  
**Second** - she thought her request was too petty for God to care about.
10. She thought that even if God *did* love her, her request was too *selfish*.
  - a. She thought the only prayers God answered were *selfless*.
  - b. And she feared troubling the Almighty with *her* request would make Him *angry*,
  - c. So instead of blessing she'd earn His wrath.
11. My attempts to correct her view of God didn't get through.
12. She couldn't grasp the idea that God loved & cared for her.
13. I finally gave up trying to persuade her & prayed for her anyway.

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14. Who are you more like this morning, Jabez or Tatiana?