

JABEZ AND HIS LIFE CHANGING PRAYER

*“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 Chronicles 4:10 (NKJV)*

Part 1

GENEALOGY/BACKGROUND

Jabez lived in southern Israel after the conquest of Canaan and during the time of the Judges. He was born into the tribe of Judah and eventually became the notable head of a clan.

“Jabez was more honourable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying “I gave birth to him in pain.” 1 Ch 4:9 (NIV)

Why does the Chronicler record that Jabez was considered to be more honourable than his brothers? Perhaps it was because **he had set his heart to please God no matter what**. One thing I have learned in life is that when trouble and trials assail us, to focus on the inherent goodness of God is of paramount importance if we are to remain faith-filled, surrendered and obedient to the Holy Spirit.

MOVING FROM PAIN TO GAIN

The Hebrew word for Jabez means ‘*pain*’. Why did Jabez’ mother name him ‘pain’? The Chronicler notes that she gave birth to Jabez “*in pain*.” We can legitimately say that pain is an aspect of all labour and giving birth for every woman, yet it is evident that the world is not full of children called *Jabez*; to the inquisitive mind this provokes further thought on the naming of the boy Jabez.

The naming of a child points to their future potential. In ancient times the choosing of a name was often the expression of aspiration and/or prophecy about a child’s future. For instance *Solomon*, means ‘*peaceful*.’ Solomon succeeded his father King David and reigned over Israel as a man of peace.

When naming our children, my husband and I spent much time in prayer and in the Scriptures searching for the names we believed God had decreed for each one of them. It was a precious and powerful time of seeking the mind of the Lord. We knew God had a destiny for them and we wanted their names to reflect that God-given destiny.

When naming our son *Daniel*, we had a strong impression that he would become a young man of great intellect that God would use for His glory and that he would be a peer to his peers just like his namesake in the bible. At seventeen years old our son Daniel is living up to his God-given name – he is academically brilliant and he is clearly a young man who is extremely popular with his peers, and therefore, has the capacity to influence and lead.

As we look to the time of Jabez' birth it is clear that things were not easy in his household. We might ask what was it about this season of Jabez' mother's life that caused her to name her son in such a negative manner? Was her pregnancy difficult? Did the boy's father abandon them? Did the father die? Was it a physically difficult birth? Were the family facing financial crisis? The truth is we will never know this side of Heaven why she named her son Jabez, but we can think compassionately about the woman's situation nonetheless.

It is useful consider the circumstances surrounding the birth and early years of the young man Jabez who experienced an epiphany of such magnitude that he moved from a position of "pain" to "gain" in one magnificent faith-fuelled prayer that became a transformational point in his life and propelled him into what God our Father had prepared for his life.

One important lesson we can learn from the naming of Jabez is that no matter what circumstances we are born into (including any painful or traumatic situations our parents may have faced), every child of God is positioned in Christ to be an over-comer and to rise victoriously over their circumstances to the glory of God! Our past or present difficulties are not to become a thing that will confine us and nor should pain become a roadblock on the path of destiny. Jabez knew God as deliverer of Israel and in God he placed a fervent hope as may we today. Just like Jabez, every believer must choose to surrender their will to the goodness of God and trust Him as a mighty Deliverer. I heard a quotation recently that expresses something of this truth; *"When you are standing on the edge of a cliff, trust God, surrender and let go. He will either catch you when you fall or teach you how to fly!"* When we reach the end of our rope ... we touch the hem of His garment and therein lies our healing and hope.

And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh that you would bless me indeed!"

Dr Bruce H Wilkinson comments on the life of Jabez:

- Things started badly for a person who no one had heard of
- He prayed an unusual, one-sentence prayer
- Things ended extraordinary well

As we conclude part one of our study on the life of Jabez, may we be encouraged and aspire to live a simple life of faith that flows with the knowledge and manifestation of God's gracious blessing.

Today, join me in praying, ***"Oh Lord, bless me indeed – for the glory of your Name and the expansion of your Kingdom"*** In Jesus name, amen.

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Part 2

Today, we continue our study of the life of Jabez a young man who refused to accept a negative word spoken over his life and instead demonstrated to us the power of appropriating Godly blessing through the prayer and proclamation.

At this point it is important to lay a Biblical foundation of our understanding of God’s nature and divine will in the realm of “blessing”.

Bless

2127 eulogeo, (compound of 2093 and 3056) to speak well of, i.e. (religiously, to bless, (thank or invoke a benediction upon, prosper):- bless, praise

2128 elougetos adorable:- blessed,

3106 makarizo from 3107, to beautify i.e pronounce (or esteem), fortunate:- call-blessed, count happy

3107 makraios supremely blest; by extens. Fortunate, well off:- blessed, happier

THE ORIGIN OF BLESSING – THE FATHER HEART OF GOD FOR ALL FAMILIES

It has always been God’s original intention to bless His children. Indeed the blessing of our Heavenly Father produces fruitfulness as an outflow of His presence and power operating in our lives. God’s heart is to nurture and bless the family unit so that His glory may be revealed in all the earth.

“God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of these and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Gen 1:28

In 2 Samuel 6:20 we read how David returned to bless his household after the ark of the Lord had been established and set in place. King David sent his people back home with a blessing and then he ensured that his own household was also blessed. David had a revelation that blessing is for all families everywhere!

GOD'S NATURE IS TO BLESS!

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing; I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:2-3

God's promise to bless Abraham and all the nations of the earth through his servant is first for the nation of Israel. However, since we (the gentile church) are, *"heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus,"* (Ephesians 3:6b) we are all positioned in Christ both to receive blessing and to release blessing in the name of the Lord Jesus to the nations of the earth. Abraham was called into a covenant relationship with God, through which global blessing was released to all tribes and cultures. The blessing of God is not limited to our nationality; our heavenly citizenship becomes a conduit of spiritual blessing to our natural lineage regardless of our culture or nationality. Our sonship in covenant relationship with God through Christ, positions us to inherit a legacy of grace blessing. Perhaps Jabez, who was described as *"more honourable than his brothers"*, had discovered this priceless pearl and his cry to God to bless him was the result of a personal encounter with God through which he came to understand he was heir of a promise of blessing of astronomical proportion!

THE FATHER LOVES TO BLESS!

"Come you who are blessed by my father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." Matthew 25:34b

Jesus spoke and demonstrated blessing, acknowledging that such blessing flows from the Father heart of God to His children. Jesus placed this blessing from His Father in the context of the Kingdom being graciously given in inheritance to the children of God. We see correlation here that those who are citizens of the Kingdom heaven are indeed heirs of blessing.

Furthermore, Christ's words establish a firm foundation that blessing is for a purpose. We are not blessed to be narcissistic in reception of such grace. Rather, as we are blessed we fulfil the Abrahamic mandate to be a blessing to all nations. *"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; all the people on earth will be blessed through you."* Genesis 12:2-3

Jabez may also have gained some understanding by divine revelation about the aspect of blessing bringing increase as he prayed to God. In the latter part of his prayer Jabez goes on to ask the Lord to enlarge his territory. Such a prayer ought to flow from a life that is yielded and walking in obedience to God, so that any increase that God grants is for the furtherance of His kingdom on earth and not for selfish endeavour.

Reciprocal Blessing Flows Between Heaven and Earth

A quick search of the Psalms reveals that they are replete with many examples of God's people ascribing greatness, glory and blessing unto His name. We also see a clear principle

being revealed in Scripture that blessing is reciprocal and flows between heaven and earth. God blesses His people and His people bless Him with hearts that flow with adoration and thankfulness. We are required to engage in the process of blessing God and acknowledging ongoing blessing from God.

"I will bless the Lord at all times" Psalm 34:1

"The Lord will bless the righteous" Psalm 5:12

In part three we will consider how Jesus' life was blessed and how our Saviour operated in the realm of blessing those whom He ministered with and to.

May we bless God with all our heart, strength and mind and experience the blessing of God in all that we do for His glory.

In His great love,

Catherine Brown

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