

Sermon, April 10, 2011
“The Prayer of Jabez”, 1 Chronicles 4:9-10
Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

Overview of Chronicles:

- 1 & 2 Chronicles originally written as one book covering Adam to the return from exile in Babylon/Persia in 538 BC. Author unknown, perhaps Ezra. The 8th book of history.
- **Overall Outline of 1 & 2 Chronicles:**
 - 1Ch.1-9 Genealogies
 - 1Ch. 10 United Monarchy under Saul
 - 1Ch.11-29 United Monarchy under David
 - 2Ch.1-9 United Monarchy under Solomon
 - 2Ch.10-36 Judah Monarchy in the Divided Kingdom
 - 2Ch.36 Return from Exile, Judah’s release form 70 year captivity

Major Themes of 1 & 2 Chronicles:

- A major premise of the book is that obedience brings blessings, while disobedience results in judgment.
- Three basic failures brought God’s wrath: 1) personal sin; 2) false worship/idolatry; and 3) trust in man rather than God
- Chronicles answers the question of the exiled community, “Is God still interested in us?”
- The genealogies reflect God’s everlasting interest in His people and speak of Israel’s continuity and election as God’s people.
- Presents David and Solomon in their glory, reflecting the true King to come.
- Immediate divine response for disobedience and obedience is portrayed.
- An emphasis on seeking and turning to God shown in 2 Chronicles 7:14 as an example.

There are many lessons in 1 Chronicles. One is the focus on the genealogy of God’s people and the blessings He is eager to give to those who seek Him.

The first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles give are a long history beginning with Adam and proceeding through thousands of years to Judah’s return from exile. There is very little commentary given on the names presented. One such commentary is on an unknown son of the tribe of Judah, Jabez.

Jabez grew up in the promised land somewhere in the south in the land of Judah during the times of the Judges (1,360 to 1,010 BC), a time of degradation, when men did what was right in their own eyes.

The first mention of Jabez: the meaning of his name and his status among his “brothers”.

1 Chronicles 4:9 ⁹ *Jabez was honored more than his brothers; and his mother named him Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain."*

- Jabez means: bore him in pain, I bore him with sorrow, his birth was painful
- Typically, Biblical names were a representation on the person’s life.
- He had to go through life with a name associated with pain and sorrow, not honor.
- But it does not seem this was a hindrance to him; Jabez was more honorable than his brothers.
- He grew up overcoming the negative connotations of what people called him and turned to God for his sustenance. He was a godly man who was obedient in a time of degradation.

He called to God for 4 things:

- **1 Chronicles 4:10**
- ¹⁰ *Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!" And God granted what he asked.*
- Jabez called on God for abundant blessings
- He called on God to enlarge his territory/border
- Asked God to keep His hand upon him, be with him, guide him
- Prayed for God to keep him from hurt, harm, evil so that it would not hurt, grieve, harm

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Jabez called on God for abundant blessings.

- The Hebrew language is more profound than simply “bless me”; it is a request for abundant glorious, emphasized blessings; Jabez was looking to God for his spiritual sustenance.
- Blessings is a word that tends to be diluted in its meaning. Jabez is asking God for supernatural favors. He wants God’s way, guidance, grace and power...not his own.
- **Proverbs 10:22, Matthew 7:7-8** *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you”* **James 4:2** *You do not have because you do not ask.*
- **BUT, let’s be very clear; James also adds...**
- **James 4:3** *You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*
- Blessings are a gift from God to be used for His Kingdom, not your won purposes.

Jabez called on God to enlarge his border/territory.

- The territory God has placed you in is the everyday surroundings of your life; your home, property, family, neighbors, friends, church, work.
- Your territory is what God gives you to expand through Him, according to His purposes.
- When you ask God to enlarge your territory, you are asking for Him to take everything He has put under your care and enlarge it.

Jabez asked God to keep His hand upon him, be with him, guide him

- When God pours out His blessings so that your walk with Him can grow and your borders enlarged, you must keep in relationship with Him.
- God wants you to continue to depend upon Him for your guidance and sustenance.
- Blessings, territory, and God’s hand go together, **Acts 11:21, Matthew 28:19-20**

Jabez prayed for God to keep him from hurt, harm, evil so that it would not hurt, grieve, harm

- Evil must be purged from our lives as we continue the mission of God.
- There is no room for evil in God’s plans for you.
- Jesus tells us in **Matthew 6:13**, *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”*
- As you pursue your new territory by the blessings of God and you continue in relationship with him, evil will be lurking about to thwart you mission.
- **Peter tells us**, *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”* (1 Peter 5:8)
- The devil does not want God’s kingdom to expand and so you will be challenged with doubt and considering worldly purposes that will seek to distract you from the border enlargement mission of God.
- Peter tells us to, *“But resist him, firm in your faith”* (1 Peter 5:8)
- Do not let evil get a foothold and drive a wedge between you and your Lord. Pray to God for protection.

So Jabez prayed for the abundant supernatural favor of God, in order that the Kingdom of God in Jabez territory may be expanded, as Jabez serves God in loving relationship, with protection from evil.

What happened next?

1 Chronicles 4:10 *And God granted what he asked.*

This simple prayer of Jabez is the walk of a Christian in relationship with God. In the midst of all of the darkness of the disobedience of Israel in the books of history this basic truth of living a life in union with Christ shines forth.

Pray for God’s favor, as you expand His Kingdom, in union and service to his will, and for His protection from the evil that would distract you from your mission...

...and He will grant what you ask!