

A MAN WHO ASKED GOD FOR FOUR THINGS

1 Chron. 4:9, 10

Intro: It is evidently a common thing for people to skip the first 9 chapters of 1 Chronicles when they read it, and then begin with chapter 10.

If you do that, you would not only miss the two verses which we are going to consider tonight, but you would miss many other blessings found in the first 9 chapters.

(Read.)

The only other time that Jabez is mentioned in Scripture is in 1 Chron. 2:55. If we can put these two together, it seems that he was such a prominent man that a city or town was named after him. This would agree with the fact that he is said to be "more honorable than his brethren" (4:9).

But these three verses give us absolutely all in Scripture that we know about him. Let us look first at the man, and then at his prayer.

I. JABEZ, THE MAN.

All we have are these three things:

- 1) A word about his birth.
- 2) A description of his character.
- 3) His prayer.

A. His birth.

When he was born, his mother had a very difficult time. Whether or not she died as a result of it, we do not know. His mother was the one who named him, and she gave him the name of pain, or sorrow.

Why she did this, we do not know. Such things were customary, as the name that Rachel gave to Benjamin indicates. It certainly reminded him of what his mother went through to give him birth, and probably spoke to him as he grew older of the grace of God in sparing him. But this is all conjecture.

B. His character.

He "was more honorable than his brethren." Actually it can mean that he was honored. It means that he was distinguished by his accomplishments, and so surpassed his brethren.

This would mean that he was a man of great industry. He

was a worker. He was zealous. And, in view of the fact that his prayer follows, we must link this statement in v. 9 with his prayer in v. 10. There is nothing that will enable a man of God to accomplish so much as for him to be a man of prayer.

II. HIS PRAYER.

When Jabez lived, we do not know. How long he lived, we do not know. What all he accomplished, we do not know. All we do know is that he is forever honored in Scripture as a man who prayed, very probably a man of prayer.

We do not even know how often or how long he prayed this prayer. Of all of the prayers that he prayed, it is very likely that this was the burden that he kept bringing to the Lord.

At first we are surprized as we read it because it seems to be a rather selfish prayer. There is no worship, no praise, no intercession for others that is immediately seen -- just four petitions for himself.

And yet we have two indications that God was pleased with his prayer:

- 1) It is recorded in Scripture. If you are going to be remembered at all, how wonderful it is to be remembered as a man of prayer, AND EVEN HAVE YOUR PRAYER RECORDED AS A PART OF HOLY SCRIPTURE. Undoubtedly many have prayed this prayer over the thousands of years that this has been read in the WORD of GOD.
- 2) God answered his prayer. See the latter part of v. 10.

Let us examine his prayer. There are 4 petitions.

A. "Oh, that thou wouldst bless me indeed."

What did he want? Perhaps the key is to remember how this word "bless" is used prior to this -- and especially when we are told that he was praying to "the God of Israel," the nation, but also the man.

1. See concerning Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3.

This is an expression that has to do with the blessings connected with salvation. Jabez was a man who had a heart for the things of God.

2. See concerning Jacob when he became Israel in Gen. 32:24-32.

This was the cry of Jacob when the Lord had finally

brought him to an end of himself, and he realized that he could not go on without the blessing of the Lord.

Such was the first petition of Jabez. If we had no more, this would be enough.

B. "And enlarge my coast."

For this petition, turn to Deut. 19:8, 9.

Jabez wanted all that the Lord had promised to him. But he could not pray such a prayer unless he was willing to do two things that are intimately connected with each other in the Word of God:

- 1) To love the Lord above all else.
- 2) To obey His commandments.

Evidently there never were many in Judah or Israel who were praying like this -- and this is why Jabez' prayer is recorded here. The heart of God was touched.

How cold our hearts must be that we can read over the promises of the Word of God and not have our hearts moved to pray because of what we read!

C. "And that thine hand might be with me."

One of the interesting things about reading a book of the Bible through is to see the way in which certain expressions come up again and again. Thinking about having the Lord with us and what it means, turn to:

- 1) 1 Chron. 11:9 -- the reason for David's greatness.
- 2) 1 Chron. 22:11-13 -- David's charge (or prayer) for his son, Solomon, as he became king.

All of this means that we not only need the Lord to begin with us, but we need Him to continue with us and to prosper us -- all our success being dependent upon him.

Jabez did not want his life to be wasted. In this and the preceding petition we can see that Jabez is reaching out to God for others in addition to himself.

D. "And that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me."

Here Jabez brings his own name into his prayer in the word, "grieve."

There are two kinds of grief:

- 1) Physical grief -- which his mother had experienced

when Jabez was born.

- 2) Grief of heart -- which can be caused by many things, but it would seem here that Jabez is concerned about the grief which is caused by sin.

Are we wise enough to realize that when a man prays these first three petitions that all of the forces of hell are going to be turned loose on him?

Do you wonder why Paul leaves his comments about our spiritual battle until we come to the end of Ephesians?

The man who will walk with God, and trust God, and obey God, and seek His glory, is a man who is going to face more opposition than he can possibly handle by himself. Therefore, Jabez cries out to God for protection. He does not want to have the grief that comes from having displease and dishonored the Lord.

Concl: What do we do with a prayer like this? The prayers of the Bible are certainly recorded for our learning and instruction.

The first thing that we want to do is to make sure that we understand it. This does not all come to us as we consider it like we have tonight. There must have been circumstances in Jabez' life which brought him to the place, perhaps early in life, where this became the cry of his heart.

We need to be impressed by the fact that the Spirit of God has recorded it for us here. It has to be very important. How wonderful if we can profit from Jabez' experience so that we can avoid some mistakes that we would otherwise make.

And then -- we need to pray this prayer ourselves.

How serious are you when you pray? God knows your heart. He knows if you really want what you are asking Him to give you, or if your prayer is just words.

This prayer obviously pleased God. He answered it. How? We do not know. If we did, we might expect the Lord to do the same thing for us that He did for Jabez. He does not work that way. He has His own plan for us -- just as wonderful as the plan that He had for Jabez. May we cry out to Him with all of our hearts and trust Him to give us all of the blessing that we can possibly receive -- blessings that we can use for His glory, and for the good of all who come under the influence of our lives.

Who is "the God of Israel"? He is the God of Jabez. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our God -- and He will answer us as we come to Him.