

Sunday Morning Message

May 6, 2018

The Prayer of Jabez

Text – 1 Chronicles 4:9 - 10

Congregational Reading – 1 Chronicles 4:9 - 10

Introduction

Plug for the Website

This morning's message was from the daily Bible reading passage that we are reading as a church family, which today is 1 Chronicles 3 – 5. If you follow along with us every day, you will read through the Bible once per year. There are also "second miler" passages included that will help you read through the New Testament a total of four times per year; the Proverbs a total of twelve times per year, and the same for the Psalms – twelve times per year. If you use the tools on the website (www.pastorerickson.com), you will be able to listen to the various Bible passages as they are read by Alexander Scourby, while you are reading the passage visually from the Blue Letter Bible. Finally, there is a short devotion from the Bible reading. This tool is very helpful, as God wants us to have a daily quiet time with him, and this tool will help you accomplish that.

Explanation of Genealogical Passages

Before we examine the text for today's message, an explanation needs to be made regarding the importance of these genealogical passages. First, they are very important because they contain information that may be critical in understanding other passages of Scripture, especially regarding relationships between important Bible characters. (i.e. 1 Chronicles 2:13 – 16 – David was a first cousin to Joab and his brothers.) Look also at 1 Chronicles 2:3 – this passage sheds a little more light on the story found in Genesis 38 of Judah's sons Er and Onan who were both killed by the Lord. Also, 1 Chronicles 2:7, we find a statement about Achar, which we can tie to the story of Achan from Joshua 7 who took the accursed thing from Jericho. These genealogical passages contain great little nuggets of truth in between all of the names. (See also 1 Chronicles 1:19 – in Peleg's days the earth was divided. Compare with Genesis 10 and 11, we found that after Peleg, the average life span of man drops almost in half, from over 400 years to about 250 years. So, whatever happened in the dividing of the earth, it adversely affected lifespans.) See also 1 Chronicles 5:18 – 20.

The bottom line is that genealogical passages are important, and it benefits us greatly to at least skim through them at least once per year, mining for those nuggets of truth that are in them.

Transition

In our text, we see one of the more famous prayers in the Bible – The Prayer of Jabez. Among these seemingly dry genealogies is the story of a man who prayed. Only two quick verses in the middle of all of the names, but also a great passage teaching the importance and benefits of the "first work" of prayer.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Philippians 4:6)

We do not know much about Jabez, except that he was from the tribe of Judah. We do not know exactly when he lived, but it seems logical that he lived after the time that Israel was in the land, around or shortly after the time of Joshua. The name, "Jabez", means sorrow or pain, which might be an indication of the conditions that he was born into; but God apparently turns Jabez' sorrow into gladness through answering his prayer. There is no other mention of him in the Bible, except that possibly there was a village named after him, which was a place where the scribes lived. Scribes were the writers of the Bible. Tradition states that Jabez may have been a "doctor of the Law", which would have attracted the scribes to move to his location.¹

When we look at this prayer of Jabez on the surface, we can easily see the things that most people pray for, and they represent the basic need of all people.

1 He prayed that God would prosper him. He depended on God for that prosperity. He recognized that God was the source of all blessing. His prayer required a great deal of faith which we know is pleasing to God.

2 He prayed for protection. Again, he knew that anything could happen to him; but he also knew that nothing could happen to him without God's permission. He asked God to put an hedge of protection about him.

3 He prayed for peace of mind (happiness). Not every situation we face in life will be pleasant to us; but God's people should be a very happy people. We have a lot to be happy about.

On the surface, this prayer almost looks selfish, however, not only is this simple prayer a demonstration of Jabez' complete dependence upon God, it also bears a striking resemblance to the model prayer that Jesus showed us in Luke 11:1 – 13.

Let's notice the comparisons. (Hold your Bible open to both places, so that you can compare the two.)

- 1 God's Praise** – compare 1 Chronicles 4:10 with Luke 11:2
- 2 God's Pleasure** – compare "saying, Oh that thou wouldst" with "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth" (Luke 11:2)
- 3 God's Provision** – compare "bless me indeed" with "Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3)

¹ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 251). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

- 4 **God's People** – compare “and enlarge my coast with Luke 11:5 – 6.
- 5 **God's Power** – compare “and that thine hand might be with me” with Luke 11:13.
- 6 **God's Protection** – compare “and that thou wouldst keep me from evil” with Luke 11:4.
- 7 **Peace** – compare “that it may not grieve me!”, which may be a reference to the sorrow associated with his name, with Luke 11:4 (“and forgive us...)

When you boil it all down, in both of these prayers we see the three basic elements of prayer:

Praise – which includes worship for who God is, and praise for what God has done.

Penitence – a humble attitude along with a complete confession of all sins.

Petition – asking – God's power, protection, provision for God's people first, then provision for myself.

Conclusion

The result of Jabez prayer was that God gave him what he asked for.

Matthew Henry states:

*God granted him that which he requested, prospered him remarkably, and gave him success in his undertakings, in his studies, in his worldly business, in his conflicts with the Canaanites, and so he became more honourable than his brethren. God was of old always ready to hear prayer, and his ear is not yet heavy.*²

J. E. Rosscup, in his *An Exposition on Prayer in the Bible*, states:

When Jabez prayed, he gained God's answer, a deposit of what he had requested. He had pled in God's will, and not with sinful motives (Jas. 4:3), and as Jesus would later assure, what he asked he received (Matt. 7:7).

What did he receive, then? He secured progress, because that was what he asked. He gained a sense of God's presence, for that was what he specified. He got guardianship from what would hurt him, because that was what he desired.

Principles are a beacon flash to the person of prayer here. One is that the potential for a life of pain due to sin is with each believer, yet God's presence to help is available if he (she) will take it. Another is that it is never asking amiss to plead for blessing that is in God's will. In giving the blessing God Himself is glorified, even as the one petitioning is

² Henry, M. (1994). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume* (p. 563). Peabody: Hendrickson.

made glad. Third, to ask for an increase, as in land or money, can please God when the asker lives in sacred trust to use it for His sake. God can entrust much to the person who uses His deposit well, as George Mueller showed in asking supplies for his orphans in Bristol, England.³

Maybe the reason that we don't get blessed like Jabez is because we don't ask. "Ye have not because ye ask not." (James 4:2)

Prayer is perhaps the most neglected spiritual practice in the lives of most Christians today. By our lack of prayer we not only cut off the source of things we need in this life: "*ye have not, because ye ask not*" (James 4:2); but we also declare our independence from God. Prayer is really a declaration of our faith in God, because when we pray, we are showing that we believe that God is, and that God can:

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

"Prayer - secret, fervent, believing prayer - lies at the root of all personal godliness." (William Carey)

"The church that is not jealously protected by mighty intercession and sacrificial labors will before long become the abode of every evil bird and the hiding place for unsuspected corruption. The creeping wilderness will soon take over that church that trusts in its own strength and forgets to watch and pray." (A. W. Tozer)

"Prayer is the way and means God has appointed for the communication of the blessings of His goodness to His people." (A. W. Pink)

"I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk about, when I lie down and when I rise up. And the answers are always coming. Thousands and tens of thousands of times have my prayers been answered. When once I am persuaded that a thing is right and for the glory of God, I go on praying for it until the answer comes. George Mueller never gives up!" (George Mueller)

"We can do nothing without prayer. All things can be done by importunate prayer. It surmounts or removes all obstacles, overcomes every resisting force and gains its ends in the face of invincible hindrances." (E. M. Bounds)

³ Rosscup, J. E. (2008). *An Exposition on Prayer in the Bible: Igniting the Fuel to Flame Our Communication with God* (p. 663). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.