

JABEZ: THE MAN WHO WANTED TO BE SOMEBODY FOR GOD

I CHRON. 4:9-10

I WAS FIRST INTRODUCED TO JABEZ IN 1953. WE HAVE BEEN RENEWING THAT ACQUAINTANCE PERIODICALLY FOR THE PAST FORTY YEARS. HERE'S HOW WE MET....S. FRANKLIN LOGSDON THE CONFERENCE AT SOUTHLAND - HIS STORY OF TRAVELING TO ANOTHER CONFERENCE READING THE BOOK OF CHRONICLES - A BIT BORED UNTIL JABEZ LEAPED FROM THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE. JABEZ CAME TO MY ATTENTION AGAIN MANY YEARS LATER WHILE READING J. OSWALD SANDER'S BOOK ENTITLED A SPIRITUAL CLINIC AND THE CHAPTER ENTITLED "GOD-SANCTIONED AMBITION" A CHAPTER DEALING WITH JABEZ. ALL WE KNOW ABOUT JABEZ IS RECORDED HERE - NOT MUCH BUT ENOUGH FOR A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH. FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES IS ONE BOOK IN THE HEBREW CANON. IT PARALLELS SAMUEL AND KINGS WITH THE EMPHASIS ON GENEALOGY. GENEALOGIES WERE IMPORTANT TO THE JEWS WHO RETURNED TO ISRAEL FROM THE CAPTIVITY. THESE HAD TO DO WITH PRIESTHOOD AND THOSE WHO WERE QUALIFIED TO SERVE. IN OTHER WORDS, THESE GENEALOGIES GIVE THE HISTORICAL RECORD OF THOSE WHO WERE QUALIFIED TO SERVE AS PRIESTS. CHAPTERS 1 THROUGH 9 DEAL WITH THREE PRIMARY KINGS - SAUL - DAVID - SOLOMON. CHAPTERS 10 THROUGH 36 DEAL WITH 18 OTHER KINGS OF JUDAH. LET US EXAMINE THE LIFE OF JABEZ AND SEE WHAT WE MAY LEARN FROM HIS EXAMPLE.

I. THE PERSON OF JABEZ - VERSE 9

THE FIRST STATEMENT ABOUT HIM IS:

- A. "MORE HONORABLE THAN HIS BRETHREN" - VERSE 9.

THE WORD HONORABLE MEANS DISTINGUISHED OR NOBLE. INTERESTINGLY, IT IS THE SAME HEBREW

"What
wish"

WORD TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO WAS RICH. IT LITERALLY MEANS TO BE HEAVY. IN THIS REGARD, JABEZ WAS A "MORAL HEAVYWEIGHT" - HE WAS SUPERIOR TO HIS BROTHERS IN THAT CAPACITY. THE TEXT DOES NOT SAY THAT HIS BROTHERS WERE BAD BUT THAT HE WAS THE OUTSTANDING SON IN THE FAMILY - AN HONORABLE MAN WITH AN HONORABLE MENTION IN THE BIBLE! THE SAME WORD IS USED TO DESCRIBE SOME OF DAVID'S MEN. (1 CHRON. 11:21) THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT JABEZ'S CHARACTER THAT STOOD OUT ABOVE HIS OTHER BROTHERS. JEWISH WRITERS HAVE AFFIRMED THAT JABEZ BECAME A DOCTOR IN THE LAW WHOSE REPUTATION DREW SCRIBES FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY TO HIM AND EVANTUALLY A TOWN WAS NAMED IN HIS HONOR. (2:55) NOTHING OF A DISTINGUISHABLE NATURE IS SAID ABOUT JABEZ'S BROTHERS. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THEIR NAMES ARE NOT LISTED IN THE TEXT. THE POINT IN CONTRAST WITH HIS BRETHREN IS THE FACT THAT JABEZ DID NOT LET HIS BROTHERS' LACK OF SPIRITUAL INTEREST RESTRICT HIS OWN PERSONAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.

APPLICATION: SOMETIMES PEOPLE HIDE THEIR OWN LACK OF SPIRITUAL INTEREST AND PROGRESS BEHIND OTHER PEOPLE. OUR HINDRANCES IN CHRISTIAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT MAY BE TRACED TO ONE SOURCE AND ONE ALONE - THAT IS OUR OWN SPIRITUAL INEPTITUDE OR LACK OF SPIRITUAL INTEREST. WE HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO BLAME BUT OURSELVES. IN THIS REGARD, JABEZ REMINDS US OF JOSEPH. JACOB HAD SEVERAL SONS BUT IT WAS JOSEPH WHO WAS DIFFERENT IN BEHAVIOR YET HE WAS FROM THE SAME FAMILY. GENESIS 37:2 RECORDS HOW JOSEPH BROUGHT TO HIS FATHER THE EVIL REPORT WITH REFERENCE TO HIS BRETHREN. JOSEPH WAS NOT A TATTLETALE BUT RATHER BECAUSE HE WAS A RESPONSIBLE MAN WAS COMPELLED TO REPORT THE MISCONDUCT OF HIS BRETHREN TO THEIR FATHER. AS A MATTER OF FACT, EVIL NATURE AND DISPOSITION OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS WAS DEMONSTRATED MUCH LATER IN LIFE IN THEIR TREATMENT OF JOSEPH.

THEY HATED JOSEPH BECAUSE OF HIS FAVORITE POSITION WITH THE FATHER AND HIS OUTSTANDING MORAL CHARACTER.

B. "HIS MOTHER CALLED HIS NAME JABEZ"

THE WORD JABEZ MEANS SORROWFUL. ONE TRANSLATION SAYS, "I BORE HIM WITH PAIN." WE MAY BE READING SOMETHING INTO THE TEXT NOT IMPLIED BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT HIS BIRTH THAT BROUGHT PAIN TO HIS MOTHER. THIS IS A BIT STRANGE BECAUSE THE BIRTH OF CHILDREN USUALLY IS IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF JOY NOT SORROW. WHAT HAPPENED WE DO NOT KNOW BUT IT INFLUENCED HIS NAME BUT NOT HIS NATURE. WHATEVER THE PAIN IT WAS NO FAULT OF HIS. THE SADDNESS AND SOMBER SIDE OF THIS STORY WAS WITH HIS MOTHER NOT THE SON. HER EXPERIENCE SIMILAR TO THAT OF RACHEL AS RECORDED IN GEN. 35:18. BENJAMIN WAS NAMED "THE SON OF MY SORROW". HOWEVER, JACOB QUICKLY RENAMED HIM THE SON OF MY RIGHT HAND OR STRENGTH. JACOB APPARENTLY SAW THE DANGER OF BEARING SUCH A NAME THROUGH LIFE AND CHANGED HIS NAME. IT MAY BE THAT RACHEL'S LONG LIFE OF DIFFICULTY INFLUENCED HER PHYSIOLOGICAL MAKEUP CULMINATING IN THE BIRTH OF HER SON. APPARENTLY RACHEL LIVED IN A HOME WHERE JEALOUSY AND ENVY FROM AN OLDER SISTER WHO WAS APPARENTLY HER DADDY'S PET CREATED PROBLEMS IN HER OWN MAKEUP. FROM THE TEXT OF GENESIS IT IS OBVIOUS THAT RACHEL NEVER GOT OVER CLINGING TO THE IDOLS OF HER OWN LIFE. YET SHE WAS A WOMAN WHO WAS LOVED BY JACOB. SHE DIED IN CHILDBIRTH IN A SPIRIT OF GLOOM AND SADNESS THAT WAS REFLECTED IN BENJAMIN'S NAME.

POINT JABEZ DID NOT LET HIS FAMILY, CIRCUMSTANCES OR ENVIRONMENT DIM HIS SPIRITUAL DESIRES AND INTERESTS IN SERVING THE LORD. "THE PRODUCTS OF SORROW HAVE BEEN THE RAREST GIFTS TO MANKIND." (F. B. MEYER) (JONI)

WHATEVER HIS DISABILITY, JABEZ DID NOT LET IT DISQUALIFY HIM IN SERVICE TO OR FOR GOD. MOST PEOPLE HAVE NEVER HEARD OF JABEZ. THEY KNOW ABOUT MOSES, ABRAHAM, DAVID AND OTHER GREAT PERSONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BUT FEW KNOW ABOUT THIS REMARKABLE MAN. JABEZ WAS A NOBODY FROM NOWHERE. HOWEVER, GOD KNEW HIS INTERESTS AND HONORED HIS LIFE AND THE DESIRE TO SERVE GOD FIRST AND FOREMOST. HOW COULD ONE BETTER DESCRIBE THE IMPACT OF A PERSON'S LIFE THAN HE DID THE WILL OF GOD AND HONORED GOD BY THE WAY HE LIVED. JABEZ REMINDS ALL OF US THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO RISE ABOVE HEREDITY, ENVIRONMENT AND CIRCUMSTANCES TO EXCEL IN LIFE. ONE NEED NOT WALLOW IN THE SPIRITUAL DOLDRUMS. IF THE SPOT LIGHT OF PUBLIC ATTENTION DOES NOT SHINE ON US, LET US BE GLAD AND USE THE OPPORTUNITY THAT GOD PROVIDES TO SERVE HIM. (COMMENT REGARDING KEN BARKER AND CHARLES HANSEL.) (See clay on a dozen plant)

II. THE PRAYER OF JABEZ - VERSE 10

(1.) A PRAYER FOR DIVINE BLESSING - "INDEED"

THE WORD INDEED SUGGESTS THAT JABEZ WAS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING BEYOND THE USUAL, ORDINARY OR EXPECTED. JABEZ WAS INVITING GOD INTO HIS LIFE AND HE RECOGNIZED HE REALLY NEEDED GOD'S BLESSING. MANY FOLK WOULD ENJOY HAVING GOD'S BLESSING BUT IT REALLY DOESN'T SEEM TO MATTER ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. ESPECIALLY IF IT COSTS SOMETHING IN THE AREA OF SACRIFICE AND SUFFERING OR IF IT REQUIRES SOME SPECIAL EFFORT ON OUR PART. SOLOMON SAID: "THE BLESSING OF THE LORD IT MAKETH RICH AND HE ADDETH NO SORROW WITH IT." (PROVERBS 10:22) (NOTE- THERE IS A KIND OF RICHES THAT BRINGS ALL KINDS OF SORROW. THERE ARE NO SUBSTITUTES FOR THE LORD'S BLESSING.)

lines of
fortune... not
always fortunate
(Patty Hunt)

"is our greatest wealth"
(Living Proverbs)

(2) A PRAYER FOR DIVINE ENLARGEMENT -
"ENLARGE MY COAST" THIS IS A REFERENCE TO
TERRITORY OR BOUNDARIES. SIMPLY STATED, THIS
PRAYER THAT WENT BEYOND BUSINESS AS USUAL AND
THINKING SMALL WAS JABEZ'S DESIRE TO HAVE A
LARGE PLACE IN THE WORK OF GOD. WE WOULD CALL
IT A "WIDER MINISTRY." SMALL IS NOT NECESSARILY
SPIRITUAL, IN FACT, IT MAY BE SELFISH! THERE IS
SUCH A THING AS WRONG AMBITION BUT ALSO NO
AMBITION. IN A WORLD OF SPIRITUAL FREE-
LOADERS, WHERE PEOPLE ATTEMPT TO DO AS LITTLE
AS POSSIBLE AND GET AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, JABEZ
WAS A MAN WHO WAS ASKING GOD FOR GREATER
OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY. HE WAS
SPIRITUALLY AMBITIOUS. HE THOUGHT IN BIG TERMS,
OF ENLARGED BORDERS AND TERRITORY, GREATER
OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE GOD IN ORDER TO BRING GLORY
TO GOD. MANY OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE TOO
EASILY AND QUICKLY SATISFIED CONCERNING
SPIRITUAL GROWTH. IF WE HAVE ONE ANSWER TO
PRAYER EVERY FIVE YEARS - THAT'S ENOUGH. ONE
BLESSING A YEAR WILL DO! JABEZ'S MOTIVE WAS
THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD. MANY BELIEVERS ARE
ALWAYS IN TROUBLE TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THEY
ALWAYS NEED HELP AND NEVER GIVE HELP. JABEZ'S
CHRISTIAN CHARACTER MOVED BEYOND THE SURVIVAL
SYNDROME. HE DID NOT WALK ON SPIRITUAL CRUTCHES
ALL THE TIME BUT RATHER WAS A MARATHON RUNNER.
THE IDEA OF BEING HELPED AND PROPPED UP ALL THE
TIME NEVER ENTERED HIS MIND. IF YOUR
PHILOSOPHY IS SURVIVAL AND NOT SERVICE YOU'LL
PROBABLY NOT BE INTERESTED IN THE LIFE OF JABEZ.
SANDERS SAYS: "GOD IS LOOKING FOR MEN WHO, LIKE
JABEZ ARE DISCONTENTED WITH A LIMITED OPPORTU-
NITY WHEN THEY COULD BRING GREATER GLORY TO GOD
IN A WIDER SPHERE."

(3) A PRAYER FOR THE DIVINE TOUCH -
"THAT THINE HAND MIGHT BE WITH ME" THIS IS A
PRAYER FOR THE DYNAMIC TO MEET THE DEMANDS.

JABEZ KNEW THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO ACCOMPLISH SPIRITUAL GOALS WITH UNSPIRITUAL METHODS. LIKE MOSES' ROD AND SAMPSON'S JAWBONE OF AN ASS THEY WERE MIGHTY WEAPONS ONLY WHEN EMPOWERED BY GOD. (ILLUSTRATE PULLING A BOW STRING BY A SMALL BOY. IT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED ONLY WITH HIS FATHER'S STRENGTH.) JABEZ REALIZED THAT IF HE GOT BIGGER IN OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY HE WOULD NEED THE ABILITY TO ACCOMPLISH THAT GOAL THROUGH DIVINE HELP. CONCERNING THE WILL OF GOD IN OUR SERVICE FOR HIM MANY OF US ARE CAUGHT ON THE HORNS OF A SPIRITUAL DILEMMA:

- (1) PRESUMPTION: SOME FOLK BELIEVE THEY KNOW BETTER HOW TO RUN THEIR LIVES THAN GOD. GOD IS FOR THE BIG EMERGENCY, THE DESPERATE SITUATION WHERE THERE IS NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO. HE IS THE ONE REQUESTED TO SALVAGE THE WRECK BUT NOT UNTIL THE ACCIDENT! THESE FOLK ARE THOSE WHO SHOW ONLY IN CHURCH PERIODICALLY AND RESORT TO PRAYER ONLY IN TIMES OF CRISES - ILLNESS, MARITAL TROUBLE, FAMILY DIFFICULTIES, ETC. WHEN THE CRISES IS OVER - THEY ARE GONE UNTIL THE NEXT CRISES.
- (2) PARALYSIS: THESE FEAR THAT GOD'S DIRECTION WILL UPSET THEIR PLANS AND THAT SOMEHOW GOD'S PLAN WILL HURT THEM AND CREATE DIFFICULTIES THAT ARE INSURMOUNTABLE IN LIFE. THEREFORE, THEY DO NOTHING. (MATTHEW 28:19)

(4) A PRAYER FOR DIVINE PROTECTION - "KEEP ME FROM EVIL" SPIRITUALLY MINDED PEOPLE ARE AWARE THAT WHEN ONE MOVES INTO LARGER AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY THEY MAY EXPECT OPPOSITION FROM SATAN. JABEZ WAS CONCERNED THAT SATAN MIGHT ATTEMPT TO SIDETRACK HIM FROM SPIRITUAL GOALS HE SOUGHT. OUR CHURCHES ARE FILLED WITH PEOPLE WHO IN THEIR YOUTH HAD HIGH VISIONS OF PURPOSE WITH

REFERENCE TO SPIRITUAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES. BUT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE THEY MISSED THE WILL OF GOD. THE WORD EVIL IN THE TEXT SUGGESTS RUIN OR DECAY. JABEZ KNEW THE FRAILTY OF HIS OWN DISPOSITION AND THE DANGER OF SERVING THE LORD. GREATER OPPORTUNITY MEANT GREATER VULNERABILITY. THE ASSAULT OF THE ADVERSARY WERE VERY REAL TO JABEZ. (I JOHN 5:19, JOHN 17:15)

IDEA: A TECHNIQUE TO ELIMINATE PASTORS FROM CHURCHES. VOLUNTEER AND DO SOMETHING OTHERS DO NOT WANT TO DO. STOP QUARRELING AND QUITTING ON THE LORD. REALIZE WE ARE NOT OVER WORKED BUT UNDER MOTIVATED. ADOPT THE NEHEMIAH SYNDROME - "GOT ANY WALLS YOU WANT ME TO BUILD LORD?" PASTOR WILL HAVE A HEART ATTACK.

QUESTION: WHERE IS YOUR GODLY AMBITION?

III. A PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY - "AND GOD GRANTED HIM THAT WHICH HE REQUESTED"

JABEZ ASKED AND GOD ANSWERED. THIS IS A BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE BIBLICAL FACT THAT GOD ANSWERS PRAYER. GOD WILL ANSWER THE PRAYERS OF THOSE WHOSE AMBITION IS TOTALLY FOR THE GLORY OF GOD AND NOT FOR SELFISH INTERESTS.

QUESTION: WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME GOD ANSWERED ONE OF OUR PRAYERS?

IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY THINKING OF A SPECIFIC ANSWER PERHAPS IT IS BECAUSE WE HAVE NOT ASKED OR IF WE HAVE ASKED HAVE DONE SO IMPROPERLY. (JAMES 4:3) IF GOD GRANTED OUR MOST FERVENT REQUEST - WOULD IT HELP IN OUR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT? I AM CONFIDENT THAT WINNING THE LOTTERY, HAVING A BIGGER CAR, BOAT, LAKEFRONT CABIN, OPPORTUNITY TO TRAVEL WOULD NOT NECESSARILY MAKE US BETTER CHRISTIANS! AS A

MATTER OF FACT THE MORE THINGS WE ACCUMULATE
TEND TO LEAVE US LESS TIME FOR GOD AND MORE
TIME MANAGING OUR OWN AFFAIRS. JABEZ WANTED
TO BE SOMEBODY FOR GOD - NOT SOMEBODY IMPORTANT
FOR SELFISH REASONS.

QUESTION: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE FOR GOD?

IF ITS FOR HIS GLORY THEN TO ASK IS TO HAVE.
GOD GAVE JABEZ EXACTLY WHAT HE ASK FOR -
EXACTLY.