

WHEN HEAVEN HEARD [A MAN NAMED PAIN]

INTRO

New sermon series: When Heaven Heard – Desperate Prayers of Faith

- Talk about the prayer of Jabez found in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10
- It's a bold prayer, asking for God's blessing in a number of different ways—that are a reversal of his beginning.
- What's fascinating is that this short account comes in the midst of a genealogy.
 - It seems to be disconnected from what's immediately preceding and following it.
 - Scholars point out that this has to be dropped in here as a theological statement, reminding readers that God is a God who answers the prayers of his faithful people.
 - And ultimately Chronicles reminds us of God's faithfulness to his covenant promises, even when his people are faithless.

1 Chronicles 4:9-10 ESV

⁹ Jabez was more honorable than his brothers; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." ¹⁰ Jabez called upon 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 harm so that it might not bring me pain!" And God granted what he asked.

1: A SORROWFUL BACKSTORY

Jabez gets his name because his mother takes special note of her pain/sorrow/grief that came with his birth or by his birth.

- Jabez sounds like the word for pain/sorrow/grief.
- Q: What mother names her son pain or sorrow?
 - Normally, after the difficulty of childbirth is over... joy comes.
 - In Jabez case... the sorrow, grief, pain is on the forefront of his mother's mind that she names him Jabez... sorrow, pain, grief.
 - One study note states that his name means: he will cause pain

Names are powerful, words spoken over you are impactful.

- Jabez lived his whole life hearing that he's a pain, that he will cause pain, he's grief.

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What you consistently listen to is what you will believe.

- But every time his name is spoken, he's reminded of the pain, sorrow, and grief he's brought into the world
- Or at least... that's what he's been led to believe, by his naming.

2: BUT JABEZ WAS MORE HONORABLE THAN HIS BROTHERS

- Scholars actually aren't sure of where he fits in the line (genealogy) of Judah do to the structure of the text.
- But we know that he was more honorable than his brothers.

The truth was not in what he was named, but in the substance of his heart and character before the Lord.

HONORABLE

- The Hebrew word for honorable used here is literally:
 - to weigh heavily upon
 - be heavy (some scholars think this is why his mother had such pain)
 - weighty
 - honored or glorified
- The LXX uses a word that conveys high esteem, noble, glorious... even gorgeous

I think it was something in him (character, godliness, goodness of heart) that took years to become evident or recognized by others.

- He was honorable
- But he became highly esteemed
- More so than all his brothers.

3: JABEZ' PRAYER OF REVERSAL

JABEZ' PRAYER IS A PRAYER TO REVERSE THE EVIL THAT HAD BEEN SPOKEN OVER HIM, THE PAIN/GRIEF THAT HAD COME TO BE HIS NAME

- He doesn't want to be a man of sorrows

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- He doesn't want to be a man destined for grief and pain
- He doesn't want to be a man who causes others pain (not any longer at least)

NOTICE:

HE PRAYS TO THE GOD OF ISRAEL

- Notice:
 - His mother called him 'he causes pain'
 - But Jabez calls upon the God of Israel
 - Its a total contrast. Its a prayer for reversing the curse of his name.
- He went to the One who truly controlled his life—His Creator and Sovereign Lord
- He knew where to turn to—It wasn't anywhere or anyone else
- He knew (or became desperate enough) to run to Yahweh, the Lord of Israel
- Perhaps he had heard the stories of his ancestors
 - How God could take a man like Abram and turn him into the father of nations
 - How God could take Jacob, a deceiver, and make him an overcomer—Israel.
 - How God could take Moses, a murderer and failure, and make him a deliverer and shepherd of God's people
- He for sure learned how to pray like Jacob.

Genesis 28:20-21 ESV

²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, ²¹ so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God,

HE PRAYS FOR BLESSING

- Like Jacob's prayer, his prayer is in the form of an oath or vow (english translations don't capture it)
 - If you will bless me, I will...
- The amazing thing is that he leaves off or never finishes the conditions.
 - He gives God a blank check with his life
 - If you bless me... I'm yours to do whatever you wish
- So his prayer isn't merely "God give me stuff"
- It's God give me a blessed life so that you can use me to be a blessing.
 - Like Abraham

Genesis 12:2 ESV

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² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

HE PRAYS FOR GOD TO ENLARGE HIS BORDERS

- He's asking for the Lord to make him successful in business and/or in war (driving off enemies).
- He's asking for God to make him not merely a man of means, but a man of influence
- Again, put this against the backdrop of his name.
 - He doesn't want to live out that curse - a life of sorrow, a life that causes others grief and pain.
 - He wants to be successful, he wants to be a blessing, he wants to be a positive influence for good and God in this life.

HE PRAYS FOR GOD'S HAND TO BE WITH HIM

- This is also a reversal of Moses' prayer for Judah
 - Moses prayed that Judah would contend with his own hands... that his hands would be sufficient

Deuteronomy 33:7 NIV

⁷ And this he said about Judah: "Hear, LORD, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his help against his foes!"

- Jabez prays for God's hands to be with him
 - He knows he's insufficient on his own
 - He knows he can't make himself blessed without God's favor and presence
 - He knows his success is dependent upon the Lord's blessing!
- Further, Jabez is asking for God to be with him.
 - It's a prayer asking for God to be near and not far.
 - It's a prayer for God's presence!

HE PRAYS THAT GOD WOULD KEEP HIM FROM HARM [EVIL]

- Harm:
 - evil, wickedness, depravity
- I don't think he's praying simply for protection from bad stuff... though that's probably a good prayer!
- He's praying the Lord's prayer:

Matthew 6:13 ESV

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

- Notice how other translations render this (difficult in the original Hebrew)

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1 Chronicles 4:10 LEB

And may your hand be with me, that you would keep me from evil so that it might not harm me!”

- In this case:
 - He recognizes how evil (sin, wickedness) is the cause of harm

1 Chronicles 4:10 NKJV

that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep *me* from evil, that I may not cause pain!”

- In this case:
 - He recognizes that his evil (sin) causes pain to others!
- He’s a man that recognizes the nature and consequences of evil and he wants nothing to do with it!
- God, make me a righteous man that I might be a blessing and not a curse.

4: GOD GRANTED THAT PRAYER

Heaven heard his prayer that day and answered affirmatively.

I think God answered that prayer because his motives were right and in alignment with God’s purposes for him.

1 John 5:14-15 ESV

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

1 Chronicles 2:55 ESV

⁵⁵ The clans also of the scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites and the Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.

- Scholars think this town was named after the Jabez in our text.
- Jewish writers and tradition says that Jabez became a chief scribe and either a Torah school or his disciples settled there.
- What stands out from that tradition in alignment with v10—God granting his prayer:
 - He became a blessing
 - His life counted

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- He was not a curse, he did not bring pain.
- He brought the light and life of God's word

RESPONSE

Prayers for reversals:

- Truth would reign over the lies of the enemy and destructive names you've accepted.
- That God would change our character if necessary (probably), so that we could be 'more honorable'
- That God would make us successful in our endeavors so that we could be a blessing
- That we would recognize God's presence... that He wouldn't seem so far.
- That God would deliver us from all forms of evil (prayer for protection)
- That God would deliver us from sin and the consequences
 - Jesus is the greatest answer here!!!
- That God would bless us to be a blessing.