

# Here comes trouble!

## Stuart's bookshelf

### 1Chron 4:1-10

The descendants of Judah:

Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur and Shobal.

<sup>2</sup> Reaiah son of Shobal was the father of Jahath, and Jahath the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the clans of the Zorathites.

<sup>3</sup> These were the sons of Etam:

Jezreel, Ishma and Idbash. Their sister was named Hazzelelponi. <sup>4</sup> Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah.

These were the descendants of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah and father of Bethlehem.

<sup>5</sup> Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah.

<sup>6</sup> Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hepher, Temeni and Haahashtari. These were the descendants of Naarah.

<sup>7</sup> The sons of Helah:

Zereth, Zohar, Ethnan, <sup>8</sup> and Koz, who was the father of Anub and Hazzobebah and of the clans of Aharhel son of Harum.

<sup>9</sup> Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "I gave birth to him in pain." <sup>10</sup> Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request.

**Context** - Chronicles - we're now into the 4th chapter of genealogies, lists of names, that person had this son etc etc etc with just a few scant details scattered through the chapters about certain towns being captured and someone having a miscarriage. And it goes on for 9 whole chapters! It would be so easy to go on autopilot and just speed read thru them - or dare I say it, even skip them? But in skipping them we'd miss the wonderful story of Jabez and how God turned his life around.

### Names & meanings -

Coren Elisa

Joshua Nathaniel

**Jabez** - I don't know if he was the first born but his was a particularly painful childbirth. So much so that his dear mother named him Jabez = He will cause pain, sorrow trouble.

Wow! Pain maker! Just imagine how he felt everytime someone called his name. This wasn't just a figment of his imagination for we go on to read that he cried out to God to be delivered from this that marked him and been with him since birth. Pain, sorrow & trouble - that's what he was called. *Here comes pain, here comes trouble, here comes sorrow, here comes Jabez!* What would that do to a person? But as we shall see, God turned all that around!

### What turned things around?

We see how Jabez had to live under that name for years, how he was shaped by his birth. That would be the end of the story but for one thing - **Jabez called upon the God of Israel**.... Jabez would have remained the same, bound to pain, trouble and sorrow all his days but one thing turned it around - he prayed! Do we realise the simplicity yet enormity of what is going on here? One man prayed and his destiny and consequently the lives of others around him was changed. See how entrenched Jabez was, how helpless and hopeless - yet he prayed.

## Who did he pray to?

In order to grow in prayer it's good to stop and consider WHO we are praying to. Jabez called on the God of Israel. Therefore this wasn't a strange God but a God who had entered into a covenant relationship with His people, His own redeemed people who were His by blood sacrifice. Jabez prayed to the Covenant keeping God, the God who had revealed Himself as the promise keeping God and the God who kept His promises even when all looked hopeless - consider

- Abraham,
- David,
- Joseph

for example and see the covenant keeping God in action there.

**See His covenant Names** revealed to His people:

- the LORD,
- Healer,
- Provider,
- Shepherd,
- The LORD who is There,
- Peace,
- Righteousness,
- El Shaddai.

This is the God he called upon. Put Jabez and all that means on one side of the scale - put all the hurt, pain, trouble, issues, baggage, sin and mess on the balance. Then on the other side put the LORD God of Israel. There is so much more than an overmatch, what is our need and dearth in comparison to this Fullness?!!

## Oh that....

**Oh that...!** Is there an Oh! in your prayer? This is a prayer from the depths, not formal, not reliant on grammar, diction or framed in nice phrases - the thing that matters here is prayer from the heart, that outpouring of heart, that exclamation from the depths of our being.

What follows mayn't be too coherent but it is one of those prayers where the tongue isn't eloquent but the heart and the spirit is packed with meaning and power. Deep calls to deep, we are praying in inexpressible groanings - but our Father hears, our Father understands. This is prayer with passion, this is prayer with meaning. Oh!

So lets break down the specifics of this prayer and look at the individual requests:

**That You would bless me....** He asked for the blessing of God on his life. He didn't want to settle for what he or man could muster up or the things that the arm of flesh could achieve - he wanted that which God and only God could bring about. **How does this apply to us today?**

- High Priestly blessing in **Num 6**, **The LORD bless you and keep you....** and how our Great High Priest stands and declares this over us today. How much more sure are His words than that of the Aaronic priesthood!
- **Eph 1:3** and how we are **blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.**

My cry then today isn't so much to be blessed but to discover, to lay hold of and appropriate the blessings that are already mine in Christ, for the blessings of Heaven to come down into my life here today.

I am already blessed in Christ but there is much to discover and lay hold of. It is like coming to see the presents under the tree and finding out that they already have my name on them, they are there for the opening and enjoyment! I can therefore pray along the lines of, *Oh You have blessed me so much, pouring upon me grace after grace, blessing heaped upon blessing! Open my eyes so that I can see and know and therefore lay hold of that which You have already given me in Christ.*

### Enlarge my border -

Jabez prayed for an enlargement. It means to bring enlargement, expansion, abundance. In the immediate context it would have meant an enlargement of acreage for Jabez, more land, crops and herds and therefore more prosperous and influential. How does this transfer over to us today? First of all we can pray the same thing for ourselves in the same context.

As I typed the word prosperous a few seconds ago it almost felt like it came out dirty but I felt a check in my spirit, prosperity isn't a dirty word but the use of it can be. Money, prosperity, wealth isn't inherently evil and it can be used for either Kingdom purposes or selfish purposes. If the motive is right and we understand the reasons for it then there is such a thing as Biblical prosperity, being best summed up in

- **2Cor 9:8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. and
- **3 John 2** Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. As long as our lives are aligned with the KofGod then there is a Biblical enlargement that we can pray for.

### Spiritual enlargement -

Look at the early church and see how the church grew, multiplied and expanded. Growth! Expansion! But I believe one of the reasons the church knew such growth is because the individual saints were people who knew expansion in their own lives and spirits.

They were people full of the Spirit, led by the Spirit and people who were pushing forward in the things of God and not settling for the status quo.

Their prayers pushed forward - see the prayers in the book of Acts and see the prayers in the letters that are all geared towards spiritual growth.

Their lives laid on the altar in sacrifice pushed forward. See **Ps 138:03** - *When I cried out for help, you answered me. You made me bold and energized me.*

Can we have that same cry today? That same push forward in the things of God that cries for the KofGod to come here and now? Oh God! Lift us! Enlarge us!

### That Your hand might be with me -

The hand of God stands for the power, protection and authority of God. Jabez wanted to know God's hand of blessing and power with him to turn his circumstances and life around.

For us as New Covenant believers this is a prayer that goes up to a much higher level than Jabez could have ever dreamt. Oh may we be people who have our eyes opened to the incomparably great and inexhaustible power that is for us, towards us and in us. MAY we know what it is to be baptised in the Holy Spirit and to receive the ability of God in our lives. May we know what it is to pray prayers like, **Act 4:29-30** *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, <sup>30</sup>while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.* Oh that Your healing, signs and wonders performing hand might be with us again!

**Isaiah 59:1** *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear....* Let's take hold of this is expectancy - that our sins have no longer separated us from God, that we are His people and we can therefore pray Jabez's prayer with confidence and expectation.

### **And that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!**

There are several points here to unpack:

**Keep me from harm** - this is reflected in the Lords, prayer, **deliver us from evil**. Don't let evil dominate me, keep me from walking in its ways, being touched by it and even participating in it myself. Instead, may I be a person who hates evil and rejoices in that which is good. Keep me from disaster and tragedy - see **Ps 91**.

**So that it might not bring me pain! Surface level prayer** - don't let me be in pain, let me walk in health and healing, don't let painful evil happen to me.

#### **Fruit Mold Co - China - Mold fruit.**

But there is something more - an alternative meaning of the word pain - it can mean **to shape or to fashion**. Most translations have Jabez praying something like, *keep me from harm and pain* but I believe that he prayed, *keep me from evil that it might not shape or fashion me!*

He didn't want to be shaped by his natural identity, weaknesses, disposition but he wanted God to shape him and re-fashion and re-purpose him. As I've pondered this the past week since I started digging into this phrase I've found a liberty inside of me. Stuff may have happened in our past - things that others have done to us. But God is saying that we're not to be shaped by them.

These things are powerful tho, there needs to be something more impactful, more influential, greater and more far reaching in order for me not to be ultimately shaped by my human nature and the evil done to me. For Jabez it was rooted in the character and ability of God to turn him around - he launched out purely on the mercy and power of God - and God did it.

That is good, that is wonderful - but for us today, as the writer to the Hebrews would say, *we have a better covenant with better promises*. Now we have **the momentous event of Calvary** to look back to. Whatever else has happened, Calvary carries more weight, carries more influence and is far superior in its life changing ability than any evil that could happen.

Think of the abuse, terror, abject poverty and disaster that could happen in a life - whether due to human error, evil deeds, demonic influence or the forces of nature - these all combined are overmatched and outweighed by the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

What has shaped me? What is shaping me? THE thing that should shape and fashion me more than anything else is the atoning work of Jesus on my behalf. Everything pales before this, everything else bows the knee before this. Im not minimising the other things, rather, I seek to maximise and squeeze the last drop of juice out of the death of my Saviour - and that will never happen for there is always more.

**And God granted what he asked.** What did he ask?

- That You would bless me
- That would would enlarge my borders
- That Your hand might be with me
- Keep me from evil
- That I might not be shaped by evil

And God granted these things! We know that God will only answer if we ask according to His will (**1John 5:14**) so these requests, the desires of Jabez's heart must have been in alignment with Gods will for Him. As I've looked into this over the past week my heart has thrilled and soared as I've taken this prayer on board in my life.

That's the last we hear of Jabez. In the midst of all these chapters of family trees he pops up for just 2 verses - but what a powerful testimony to the God who hears and answers prayer, what a story of the intervention of God, what a record of how God steps in and turns the most hopeless of lives and situations around - and because Jesus is the same yesterday, **today** and forever, because He isn't a respecter of persons, we can confidently take the prayer of Jabez on board in our lives today!!