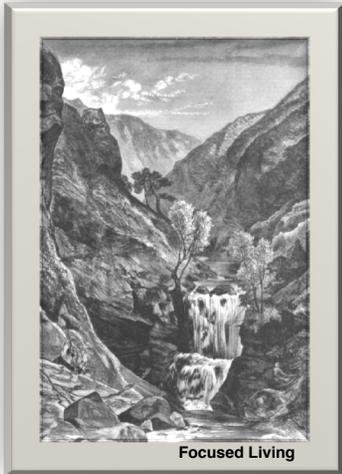


THE MAKING OF A MAN #15 Jabez



Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-73) was a famous painter of the Victorian era showing his talent at the Royal Art Academy at thirteen. Though commissioned to do the official portraits of the royal family and private drawing lessons to Queen Victoria, he is best known for nature pictures. One day while visiting a mansion in Scotland, a servant spilled tea leaving a dark stain on the wall. To protect the servant, Landseer used some charcoal to graciously transform the stain into a picture of a beautiful waterfall that seemed to *'wash away'* the stain. In the same way God works to turn our

messes into miracles, tragedies into triumph, gaffs into grace and even stains into gains! Things we consider a failure or weakness, through His grace in Christ, become our greatest strengths which He uses to bring glory to Himself. **Can you recall a time when God graciously worked like this in your life? How does God use pain to chisel our lives to draw our hearts to His heart and make us more like Jesus?**

FROM PAIN TO GAIN (1 Chron 4:9-10) Tucked away among the genealogies of the Chronicles written by Ezra are two short verses about a dude named Jabez (lit "pain"). He caused his mother much pain at birth and most likely experienced much pain during his life. But at some point he decided that his pain would **not** define him even though his name came straight from the curse of sin through Adam and Eve described in Genesis 3:16! The more Jabez *"called on the God of Israel"* (1Chron 4:10), the more he understood that his **IDENTITY** was not his pain but that he was created in His image (Gen 1:26-27) a son of the living God and that he needed to put his faith in the coming Messiah (Gen 3:15; 12:1-3; 17:1-5; Ex 12:1-14)! **What do you wrongly let define your identity instead of your Sonship in relationship to God the Father through Christ? (Nationality, gender, race, work, sports, failure, success, weakness, strength, politics, position, possessions, productivity, pleasures, accomplishments?) Have I forgotten who I am and Whose I am? How does finding your identity in Christ build/bless and putting your identity in other things break/bruise?**

THE REST OF THE STORY Just as Landseer's sketch of the waterfall points to Jesus **washing away** the stain of our sin (1John 1:7-8), so his portrait of a lamb reminds us that Jesus died to **take upon Himself** the stain of our sin (Is 53:6; 2Cor 5:21). And his painting of the lion declares Jesus **victory over death** for our sin (Rom 6:23; John 11:25). In the same way, the short prayer of Jabez was a heartfelt



cry to the Father for His grace to replace the pain in this life that originated with the curse of sin from the fall (Gen 3:14, 17) with the blessing of eternal life (Gal 3:13; Rev 22:3) so he could be a blessing to others.

POWER OF PRAYER TO THE FATHER In a sense, we are all like Jabez in that we are born in pain from sin (Psalm 51:5 Gen 3:16), experience pain, often cause pain to others and live in a fallen world filled with the pain from the futility of sin. So Jabez, like Jesus taught His disciples (Matt 6:8-13; Luke 11:1-2), wisely turns to his only real option...a heartfelt prayer to his **FATHER** in heaven (Luke 22:40-44; John 17:1-3). For it is He alone who has the wisdom and power to walk us through the hassles, heartaches and headaches of life. Since the power of prayer is a key theme in Chronicles (1 Chr 16:1-36; 17:16-27; 29:10-20; 2 Chr 6:12-7:22; 7:14; 20:1-30; 29:1-36), Jabez calls on the God of Israel (Is 64:8; Ps 103:13) in faith leaving the results to Him (2 Cor 12:7-10; Matt 7:7-11; John 15:16). This is not a 'name it claim it', social gospel, vending machine type prayer where you insert a request and pull the lever of good works hoping to change God's heart so you get what you want. NO! This is the sincere heartfelt request of a son to his heavenly Father in his time of pain. **How can trusting the Father with the answer to our prayers be a great chisel to make us more like Christ? Where must you trust God with your pain or the pain of others in prayer trusting Him with the results?**

FOUR SPECIFIC REQUESTS OF HIS HEART

"BLESS me indeed." Jabez not only recognizes the Father as the one and only true God, he also acknowledges that all true blessings come from Him alone. He is saying, "Lord, if I am going to be blessed at all, it is going to have to come from you for *every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above coming down from the FATHER*" (James 1:17; John 3:27). **Are you chasing promises or blessings from the world and others? Or, are you trusting the Father for**

what He thinks is best for you (2 Cor 12:7-10)? Where do you want the Father to bless your life so that you can be a blessing to others? Where do you need for the Father to assure you of His favor and that He is for you (Rom 8:3; Ps 118:1-8) when so many other things seem against you (Ps 16:8; Pro 18:10)? Are you prepared to ask in faith leaving the results to Him? Warning: Check the motive of your heart... “Do I want the Father or just His blessings?”

“MULTIPLY my territory” This short account of Jabez is in the midst of a seemingly boring 10 chapter genealogy tracing God’s faithfulness through generations and how He used various folks to accomplish His purposes. In this context, Jabez is not merely asking the Father to increase his wealth/prosperity. He is asking God to enlarge the border of his impact so that he might be used by the Lord to do his part to advance His Kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:7-8; Zech 4:6; 1 Cor 2:1-4; 1 Thess 1:5). He wanted his spiritual territory to increase so that coming generations might also claim their salvation in the Lord of Israel in addition to those named in 1 Chronicles 1-10.

Jabez was not using prayer as a formula to get something from God. Rather, just like Jesus, he was calling upon God to help him accomplish His promises for His glory (John 17:1, 4)! Paul prays this same kind of prayer in **Ephesians 3:14-19** followed by his own Jabez type request in verses **20-21**! And the disciples no doubt asked the Lord to increase their boundaries after receiving the God-sized Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20) which extended to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). **What must we ask God to multiply in us order that He might do more through us? Are you ready with the help of the Spirit (John 15:26; 16:7-14) to take on more Kingdom responsibilities? How can we start asking the Lord to help us reclaim some of the spiritual ‘territory’ that we have lost to our enemy, satan? Do you have a God sized or man sized vision for your life, family and church family or are you satisfied where you are? Are you growing in your confidence that our God specializes in working through ordinary men to do extraordinary things for His glory? God is not looking for great men of faith but He is looking for men who will pray in faith for His greatness to reign (2 Chron 16:7-9).**



“May Your HAND be with me” What does your hand as a father represent to your children? Protection. Provision. Guidance. Love. Wisdom? Encouragement? Discipline? Help for things too big? These

are exactly what Jabez was begging from his Father! Is this not what Jesus also taught in the Lord’s prayer (Matt 6:10-13)? Check out some other men who relied on the various aspects of the Father’s hand as they stepped forward in faith to accomplish great things with God! **For what aspect of the Father’s hand (character) are you crying?**

Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 22, 31 8:18

Neh 1:10, 2:8, 18,

1 Peter 5:6

John 10:27-30

Isaiah 49:16; 59:1

John 1:3

Psalm 23:1-6

Psalm 63:8; 89:13; 138:7

Jeremiah 18:6

Romans 8:34

Psalm 16:8-11

Deuteronomy 7:8

Exodus 6:1

“KEEP me from harm so that I will be free from pain” Like us, Jabez live in the real world with a real enemy who is determined to kill us (1 Pet 5:8-9; Eph 6:10-16) and destroy everything around us (Gen 3:8-24). So he asks the Lord for a **hedge of protection** (Job 1:8-10; Psalm 91) and the armor of God (Eph 6:13-17) because he understood that *“He who is in you is greater than he who is the world”* (1 Jn 4:4, 14)! Jabez was weak and acquainted with pain, so he asked the Father for courage to face this fallen world just as Jesus asked for protection for His disciples (John 17:11-12). Safety is not to be our #1 priority, but asking for God to **“keep us from harm”** as we take risks in obedience to the Father is! When we learn to submit our will to God and pray with vulnerability like Jabez, we will begin to see God move in mighty ways! **What battlefield are you entering and what landmines do you anticipate needing the Lord’s protection? that they might not harm you? Are you committed to comfort or to being conformed to the image of Christ?**

TAG TEAMS **1.** Will you accept the **challenge** to daily pray this prayer this week keeping the above insights in mind so that it does not become a meaningless spiritual exercise? **2.** With which aspect of Jabez’ prayer do you most identify? Why? **3.** How does this account of Jabez’s life to point you to trust Jesus more? **4.** What principle/insight chisel your heart the most?