

## THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

"Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not case pain!" So God granted him what he requested." I Chronicles 4:9,10

Through a little book passed along to me and an encouraging word from my wife, I have "discovered" a little prayer in Scripture that I believe, if prayed with the right motive, will change your prayer life and mine, and possibly the prayer life of your church. It is the one verse, four point prayer of an obscure "nobody" named Jabez, mentioned only once in all of Scripture.

We know almost nothing about this "little, big man" who is found in what appears to be an endless sea of names and genealogies. (The verses we always skip over.) Whoever he was, he rose above the difficulties of his life and was more honorable than his brothers. His mother named him Jabez meaning "pain" or more literally, " he causes (or will case) pain." Can you imagine being pinned with this label of shame for your life? Think of the teasing and taunts Jabez must have received on every side. Apparently his birth was traumatic and his mom marked that by his name for the rest of his life. However, Jabez didn't let it ruin his life. He, ultimately, appealed to the God of Israel who could not only change his name but change his life and circumstances.

Notice the four point prayer of Jabez and begin to pray it today.

"Oh, that you would bless me indeed." - Whoever said you can't ask God for blessings for yourself forgot to tell Jabez. This guy was desperate for supernatural favor in his life, and he asked God for it. He not only asked for blessings but he asked for blessings INDEED. In other words, "bless me real good." Jabez was earnestly seeking God for God's best for himself. He was asking God to extend His supernatural favor toward his life and do something extraordinary. How many of us need extraordinary miracles in our lives and churches? Then why not begin to boldly ask God for them?

" And enlarge my territory." - Jabez's second request was for enlargement. Literally the phrase means to "enlarge my coasts and expand my borders." Jabez is asking for God to stretch him, to expand his capacity and to broaden his horizons. Are you willing to pray this "dangerous but desperately needed" prayer for yourself and your church. Does God need to enlarge your heart? Or, enlarge your capacity to love and trust? Do you need to have your vision stretched? How about your comfort zones? Begin today asking God to "enlarge your territory." Be sure to fasten your seatbelt.

"That Your hand would be with me." - When God has blessed you real good and stretched your borders then the next logical request of the Father is for His protection, provision, power and to point you in the right direction. When I think of His hand I immediately think of divine guidance and His anointed presence. Both of which make the difference in our lives, family and ministry. Jabez is asking the Lord for the enabling presence, the anointing that breaks the yoke. He is asking for God's ability, God's capacity, God's fulness and God's unction.

" That You would keep me from evil." - Again, note the divine progression of this little prayer. First, Jabez asked for supernatural favor. Then he asks for enlarged capacity for enlarged capacity followed by a humble request for God's leading and power. Now he knows, with all of this, he will be a major threat to the enemy and rise to the top of the devil's hit list. For this reason, Jabez pleads for the Lord's protection from evil and the evil one. He knows he will become an increased target. We all know that with increased blessings comes intensified warfare. He is not only praying for victory over temptation and the attacks of the adversary, he is praying that God will keep him away from the temptation and keep the devil at bay in his life. Bruce Wilkinson in his little book on the Prayer of Jabez says, "We make a huge spiritual leap forward, therefore when we begin to focus less on temptation and more on avoiding it." Bruce says it is O.K. to pray that we will not have to fight unnecessary temptation. I agree!