

JABEZ- the giant among dwarfs

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(I CHRONICLES 4: 9, 10)

And these were of the father of Etam ; Jezreel, and Ishma, and Idbash: and the name of their sister was Hazelelponi: And Penuel the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These are the sons of Hur ... and Ashur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah. And Naarah bare him Ahuzam, and Hepher, and Temeni, and Haahashtari . . . And the sons of Helah were, Zareth, and Jezoar, and Ethnan. And Coz begat Anub, and Zobebah . . . "-Oh, Mr. Historian, they are enough! We are perspiring already. Historical records can be stimulating and exciting ; but when you must write things such as these, oh dear! Weren't you bored when you could only record that people lived in a certain village ; that they bore children, and then died? We are thankful you refused to leave your task, for among the ancient dwarfs a giant appeared. Weren't you thrilled to find him in the records? A few words were sufficient to describe other people ; yet for Jabez you had much more to say. He was an oasis in a desert! We are refreshed!

Grief Allowed

"And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow." We are not certain that this boy lived up to his reputation; that his name expressed his nature: but we know that he commenced his earthly journey in adversity. The historian did not supply the details which we seem to need, and we can only imagine the grievous trials which attended the birth of Jabez. The growing child surely wondered why his mother was sad. Did he reflect her gloom? These things were permitted in order to produce within the boy a desire for deeper spiritual experiences. He lived in a world of little people, where sometimes even God longed for fellowship with a real man!

Greatness Acquired

" And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren." We cannot read the mind of the writer concerning the matter, but one thing is certain-Jabez was a giant among pigmies! His greatness was a rare orchid grown from the soil of adversity. His sadness begat dignity, and suffering encouraged sympathetic understanding of the problems of other people. Jabez became spiritually famous. He was the man of God among men ; the giant among dwarfs; an honored saint where spirituality was at a premium.

Godliness Appealing

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!" This prayer of Jabez repays investigation. It divides into four sections, for he asked the Lord to bless, to help, to guide, and to save. And shining through all the fervent longings of this unknown Bible character was an intense longing for godliness. His desire to be kept from evil might be interpreted as a yearning for protection against enemies. On the other hand, Jabez might have feared sin more than he feared his fellow men. He believed in the power of prayer. He believed that the fervent prayer of a righteous man availed much. His hope lay in God, and in no other ; and it was this remarkable faith

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which increased his stature. The daily prayer arose from his
honorable, heart, and while other people pursued carnal
ambitions, Jabez knelt in the secret place.

Gladness Assured

"And God granted him that which he requested." We cannot be sure whether or not the city of Jabez was named after this great man (2:55), but we are justified in assuming that the Lord prospered his efforts. Alas, the faithful historian returned too quickly to the monotonous recording of the uneventful. We wish he had provided more details concerning the prayers of Jabez. How did the Lord answer those prayers, and what were the reactions of the Israelite? The rest of the story is wrapped in silence, and we are left to imagine the mighty triumphs wrought through the intercessions of the prayer warrior. Answered prayers beget within hearts a sense of deep gratitude, and of surging joy. Jabez soon discovered that his sighing was turning to song ; his grief to gladness. " Then was his tongue filled with singing, and his lips with mirth." Apparently he was not a great preacher, nor an organizing genius ; and he never became famous on the field of battle. Prayer alone made him great. Effective intercession gilded his name with immortality. Such men have saved the world. Such people are numbered among God's aristocracy.

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