

Jabez: 'That I May Not Cause Pain'

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In a few minutes we are going to start this sermon circling in on the same scriptures that we read at the beginning of my last sermon, three weeks ago. At that time, we did not get to what I had hoped was going to be the focal point of that sermon, because I felt compelled to head off in a bit of a different direction than what I had intended.

Hopefully today you are going to see that the two messages have a common thread running through them—God's sovereignty in the work that only He can do to create us in His image only if we continue to listen to His still small voice that speaks to all of us from His word of truth, while humbly submitting to live as He lives.

Last weekend, in obedience to that still quiet voice, we celebrated the incredible gift God has given to a very small segment of humanity at this time. The very gift through Jesus Christ, of the Father and the Son living within each of us so we can stay tuned into that still small voice.

As a matter of fact, I think it is important, as a reminder, for us to again review a scripture where God clearly shows us that He does use mighty overt displays of His power, within His creation as He sees fit! But it is in His still small voice that He continues to give hope and clarity to those, whom He sends under the direction to do the work that can only be done through Him.

So please turn with me to this very familiar chapter.

I Kings 19:1-4 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and

left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"

After Elijah had fled the violent evil that had become the overwhelming focus of this righteous man, God sends an angel with instructions to help for a physical journey to Mount Sinai. This was the site of the covenant Israel had made with God after being released from bondage as only God could do.

Elijah was now on a 40-day journey back to the physical place where unconverted Israel (after the Exodus) could only hear, see, and shake because of unbelief.

With the minds of slaves to this world, even though released from physical bondage, God was so overwhelming to them that they could not truly see nor hear Him through the haze of their own fear. Elijah, too, now hid himself in a cave considering himself as good as dead if he continued in the work God had purposely set him apart to do amidst all the violent chaos and confusion around him.

Picking it up in verses 9 through 13:

I Kings 19:9-13 And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when

Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

For our purposes today we do not need to go any farther than this. God's implicit words of reaffirmation of Elijah's duty before Him, quietly saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" is reminiscent of what Christ said to Peter (when he went fishing).

Again, here we find Elijah, set apart and sent by God to carry out mighty works in faith. However, as I noted last time, maybe he had gone beyond what God considered necessary at the time.

Now we find him here. And, just like us, at times, coming to the end of our rope, running for his life in fear of Jezebel, He knew God was in charge, but the reality of God's still small voice of assured protection was now being distorted by the sounds and fury of the chaos, confusion and pain of lawlessness.

Perhaps he became too focused on power in the physical, and it momentarily caused the broadcast from God's Holy Spirit to be muffled, and then a drift began from the reality of God's word of absolute protection under His wings to those He has called to do work in faith.

So again, with this in mind, please turn with me to Ecclesiastes 1. Now, we are going to add a few more verses than we read at the beginning of the sermon three weeks ago, because I want us to see what happens when the focus of the gifts is lost, and the precious gift of God's still small voice within us becomes muffled by the chaotic pain of this world.

Ecclesiastes 1:8-11 All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after.

Ecclesiastes 1:14-18 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered. I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge." And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

Hold onto that last verse there, brethren, and Solomon's conclusion regarding the fruits of even the greatest wisdom and knowledge when used without the right God ordained goal—much grief and increased sorrow is the result!

Hopefully we shall see this is the antithesis of what God clearly shows in His still small voice as the expected result of any who are truly seeking to live as He lives.

Ecclesiastes 2:13-17 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived that the same event happens to them all. So I said in my heart, "As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me, and why was I then more wise?" Then I said in my heart, "This also is vanity." For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool! Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:22-23 For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.

There it is again; despair and sorrow are the fruit of even the wisest of men, who do not lift their focused goal of their life's work beyond this world, and the circumstances in which they live.

Brethren, the more we allow our focus to stay on the chaotic divisive foolish ways of men under the sun (that really have never changed), the more wearying it is, even beyond the ability to describe it.

If you remember the sermon from three weeks ago, we spent a bit of time looking at the word remembrance, as it is translated in Ecclesiastes 1:11. It is from the word *zikron* (zik-rone'): a memento, or memorable thing, day, or writing; a memorial, or record. I mentioned at that time, in the ancient Hebrew we find it concisely means, "A recalling of events of the past," or "To act upon a past event." In this world men do not learn from their past, and even the best wisdom and knowledge under the sun produces pain and sorrow. Within the ancient Hebrew language of symbolic characters, I also mentioned, as one of the points it meant, "A remembering, and action, based on a past event."

This past week on Pentecost, we did just that: We spent a good deal of time, as God commands on His holy day, remembering what Jesus Christ did and continues to do, through the still small voice of His Holy Spirit that should be the driving force in learning to live God's Word.

However, it was not just that single remembrance, but a remembrance as God commanded that proclaimed the unique work of Jesus Christ tying us all together as firstfruits with His perfect offering.

As Richard clearly pointed out in his sermon on Pentecost, the unique unblemished burnt offering was without need for the sin offering on the day the sheaf was waved (as a type of Christ as the first of the firstfruits). Then we are tied with Him as the burnt offerings exemplify on Pentecost. But unlike His sinless offering, ours can only be made after our sins are forgiven through Him. His perfect work continues (even though we still come up short in our efforts to be just like Him), as long as we remain branches attached to the vine (the work that only He can do).

Martin also clearly showed a practical example of our part in this, with Peter's prayerful study into the still small voice of God's Word so that he was ready on Pentecost to effusively have those words pour out in service to others once he was filled with the Holy Spirit, no longer a mere fisherman, but a fisher of men.

Interesting is it not, that the same small voice that said to Elijah, "What are you doing here," had implicitly said the same thing to Peter shortly before Pentecost to get him refocused on the goal God intended for His called out ones. The Word had asked Peter, "What are you doing here fishing, when you should be getting ready to be a fisher of men?" (John 21) Christ pulled him back into his responsibility to get ready to do the work that Christ intended to do through him.

Now again, as we did last time, I would like us to consider for a minute, the example of Solomon's conclusion in the opening chapter from an under the sun focus: "What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered," and, "For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow."

Brethren, I would really like to drive home the point of our separation from this world with this next example. I would like to turn our attention to the difference between what should have been our focus over the last couple of months, and the violent center of the world's attention today, which seems to be getting more violently painful by the minute.

Today, June 14, 2025, is Flag Day. We are going to take a quick look at the significance of this day. But what I find more interesting is the preoccupation of a self-centered world, full of chaotic violence, pain, and sorrow this past week, versus what should have been our focus in following the Word of God.

Here is an opening summary of the Flag Day holiday from Wikipedia:

Flag Day is a holiday celebrated on June 14 in the United States. It commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States on June 14, 1777 by resolution of the Second Continental Congress. The Flag Resolution stated, "That the flag of the thirteen United

States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

A bit farther down in the article under the subheading of Observance Flag Day , it states:

The week of June 14 (June 08-14, 2025) is designated as "National Flag Week." During National Flag Week, the president will issue a proclamation "urging the people to observe the day as the anniversary of the adoption on June 14, 1777, by the Continental Congress of the Stars and Stripes as the official flag of the United States of America.

It is also interesting to note the following, cited from the National Flag Day Foundation, headquartered in the location of the officially recognized site of the first Flag Day celebration.

The "Stars and Stripes" was designated the official National symbol of the United States of America by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1777-the fifth item on the agenda that day. In 1885, a schoolteacher named Bernard J. Cigrand encouraged his students to reflect on the real meaning and majesty of this symbol.

In Waubeka, Wisconsin, nineteen-year-old Bernard J. Cigrand placed a 10" 38-star flag in an inkwell on his desk at the front of his one room classroom. He prompted his students to write an essay about what the flag meant to them, referring to that day, June 14, as the flag's birthday. From that day on, Cigrand dedicated himself to inspiring not only his students but all Americans to reflect on the grand significance of "Old Glory."

A little over three decades later in 1916, President Woodrow Wilson declared June 14th as National Flag Day. President Wilson proclaimed:

The Flag has vindicated its right to be honored by all nations of the world and feared by none who do righteousness.

On August 3, 1949, President Truman signed an Act of Congress recognizing the holiday of Flag Day and encouraging Americans to celebrate it.

On June 14, 2004, 108th U.S. Congress unanimously voted on H.R. 662 declaring Flag Day originated in Waubeka, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin.

Now, Stony Hill School is a historical site and is located in Waubeka, WI, and the National Flag Day Foundation (of which Cigrand was once president) is still actively pursuing Cigrand's mission. A yearly celebration of Flag Day occurs *on the second Sunday* in June, [actually last Sunday, Pentecost] and patriots of not only Waubeka, WI but from across the Union gather to celebrate where Flag Day was founded.

There was one more thing I found interesting as cited toward the end of the "Flag Day" article on Wikipedia that is another bit of food for thought that ties in nicely with the unity God expects from us under His flag versus what is going on at this very moment, again reminiscent of Ecclesiastes 1 and the same pain and sorrow that is common to all men under the sun.

Once again from the Wikipedia article, toward the bottom of the page:

Coincidentally, June 14 is also the date for the annual anniversary of the BearFlag Revolt in California. On June 14, 1846, 33 American settlers and mountain men arrested the Mexican general in command at Sonoma, and declared the "BearFlag Republic" on the Pacific Ocean coast as an independent nation. A flag emblazoned with a bear, a red stripe, a star and the words, "California Republic," was raised to symbolize independence from Mexico of the former province of Alta California. The Bear Flag was adopted as California's state flag upon joining the Union as the 31st state in 1850, after being annexed by the United States

following the Mexican-American War of 1846-1849. Prominently flying both the US and state flags on June 14 is a tradition for some Californians.

I found it interesting that this day intended to celebrate unity began with a presidential proclamation of flag week on the very day we were memorializing and celebrating real unity that can only come through Jesus Christ and the work He expects from each one of us going forward, under His flag [Pentecost].

The second thing I found interesting is that during this same week, and under the divergent flags, the painful disunity of a world with focus on itself, exploded in riots, chaos, confusion, and even murder this morning in Minnesota, adding more of the grief and sorrows of sin that is the source of it all.

Just like Solomon wrote in the last two verses of Ecclesiastes chapter 1, as stated in the *Amplified* translation:

Ecclesiastes 1:17-18 (AMP) And I gave my mind to know [practical] wisdom and to discern [the character of] madness and folly [in which men seem to find satisfaction]; I perceived that this also is a searching after wind and a feeding on it. For in much [human] wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

Jesus Christ spoke to His disciples of this very time in which we live. And even though it may not yet have sunk to the lowest depths, this has always been the circumstances in the world around us focused on the wrong goal.

With all of this in mind please turn with me to Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:4-13 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there

will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Matthew 24:21-25 “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.”

Matthew 24:29-31 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Matthew 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”

So what are we to do? Brethren, this is the reality of the society in which we live! Because the focus is wrong all of the best gifts that men have without the proper focus will only produce the same things over and over—pain, grief and sorrow, because this is what sin does.

A number of years ago, as a matter of fact during the midst of the Covid pandemic that was another moment in time that hurried men farther into the grief and sorrow of wisdom from the minds of men, I gave a sermon on a still small voice within God's Word that I would like to revisit today through the rest of this sermon.

However, since I gave that sermon just a bit over five years ago today, I think I have recognized another vital lesson that God is giving us through His still, small voice of the goal we need to stay focused on.

As I said we are going to revisit this lesson, but this time I hope to juxtapose this small critical lesson of what God wants with a more broadly reported one. I hope this will be the encouraging lesson I had hoped to get to in the last sermon, when I pretty much got hung up on what happens to us all in those moments when our perspective falls below the sun, as it did with Elijah, Moses, and all the rest of us. Do not lose heart!

So, if you will bear with me, I am going to go over the sermon I gave on the Sabbath that followed Pentecost in 2020 when we were in the midst of the hopeless foolishness of men. That sermon was entitled, "Jabez, A Road Marker of Hope" and perhaps today we can add another layer to the lesson (as we continue to do our work within the pridefully self-centered chaos and pain around us), Jabez ended his prayer with, "that I may not cause pain."

Although the secret things belong to God and He gives us everything we need to do the works of the law, as Deuteronomy 29:29 clearly states, He is always holding His incredible plan and work to create man in His image in accord with His likeness in front of us. We just need to keep humbly looking for those bits of evidence, while recognizing within our own limited perspective, as opposed to God's, that what we know could barely begin to fill a thimble. But again, He is always giving us, and our children, what we need to do the works of His law—teaching us to live as He lives with outgoing concern for others.

In that sermon several years ago, we looked at some of the possible clues God leaves in His Word about what He is doing and how is doing it. We began with a few, seemingly offhanded comments, as examples of these very

possible clues, while considering we can and must learn from every word of God and sometimes especially those words that seem merely descriptive.

With this in mind, we looked at John 20 and John's account of a several things that happened on the morning following Christ's resurrection and a few of the things that happened at that time.

Please turn with me to John 20 and we are just going to pick up just verses 15 through 17:

John 20:15-17 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

Within the whole context of that previous sermon, we found a couple of things as food for thought clues from God's Word starting with the simple phrase in the middle of John 20:15 "She, supposing Him to be the gardener, . . ." Within that phrase, was God's still small voice telling us Christ was holding the first of the barley harvest that represented His own role as the first of the firstfruits?

The second, although perhaps more obscure lesson that we considered within the overall context of that sermon perhaps was attention drawn to holding a sheaf of grain, like a gardener, to show His own work in all He does to produce the magnificently beautiful garden as was intended from the beginning! He is the Gardener that will bring order and beauty back from the ugly chaotic disorder that sin has brought down on all mankind, as we are vividly witnessing these days of rage and war!

Mike Ford, himself a former student at Ambassador College, told me there used to be a joke going around that Ambassador College either produced ministers or landscapers. He, of course, said it as a bit of self-deprecating

humor, and it was an amusing comment, knowing how good he was at what he did. But the truth of the matter is Jesus Christ is in fact a landscaper Himself, creating something much more magnificently beautiful than we can imagine. All this work of God in creating us in His image, according to His likeness, can possibly be recognized in the seemingly offhanded remark, “She thought Him to be the gardener.”

As noted in that sermon, throughout God’s Word, if we are looking for them, God continues to give small road signs of the sure hope that He is moving us along the right path as we maneuver through the chaotic evil all around us, as long as our focused goal is clear!

Whether it is something as obvious as Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of the Father, standing in encouragement to Stephen in the final moments of his life (Acts 7:55-56), or something as subtle as God’s Word showing Him as a gardener who is working diligently towards a harvest that will include much more than just the winter harvest! We can learn much from every word of God.

Throughout His Word God gives us sign posts of encouragement. And as we did on that first Sabbath after the Feast of Pentecost, we will once again consider a wonderful reminder of His plan for all men that I hope goes beyond the lesson we considered 5 years ago. I hope we can add something to this today.

Please keep in mind this is only my speculation, but I believe through the still small voice of His Word, God is not only giving us a valuable lesson of endurance and positive prayer, but one that shows the mind of one focused with clarity on the goal to be just like Him.

We considered II Timothy 3:16-17 that, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work,” Please turn with me to I Chronicles 4, verses 9-10:

I Chronicles 4:9-10 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 cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested.

Why would God note this prayer, and His abrupt response within this list of generations of Judah, and point out Jabez without even noting who his brothers were? It certainly is a seemingly strange declaration in its context, unless we actually begin to consider the context in which it is given.

Much of what I am going to say was in that earlier sermon. However, toward the end of this I hope to draw our attention to what I have come to believe may be the more important focus of the lesson—the goal!

It is recorded within the line of David, a man after God's own heart, who was carefully chosen by God rather than the people, to fulfill God's plan and purpose, not only then but as king directly under the King of kings, as Christ continues to bring mankind back into line with God.

A footnote in the NIV Study Bible on I Chronicles 4:1-23 and 2:10-34 states that, "The Chronicler's primary concern in the genealogy of Judah is with the line of David, as shown by the way these sections are arranged." Brethren, this is going to be another important component as we get toward the end of the sermon, because in the same chronicle of this line of Judah is someone else that God may have purposely put there so we can recognize juxtaposition of the goal.

But let us continue to consider the previous lesson. First, what we see is that David is at the center of this whole section in which Jabez appears. We considered that this was not the only time God had interrupted a list of genealogies to place an important historical marker within them. Although Jabez is a marker of hope, the other two markers point to critical moments where mankind headed more clearly in the direction away from God.

Both of these appear in the early chapters of Genesis, and both are indicative of seminal moments in the history of man—events clearly moving men farther away from God in enmity against Him. This first one is about the line of Cain:

Genesis 4:19-24 Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah. And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah. Then Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, even a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

Polygamy entered the picture with Lamech, who was the seventh from Adam through Cain and was representative of a society that was quickly sinking in depravity and growing in contempt for God's way of life! His sons represented those people with material talents, but not with the right focus.

This example of moving away from the closest thing to a sanctified God plane marriage relationship is very significant!

The second is in Genesis 10.

Genesis 10:8-12 Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).

Here the genealogy of descendants from Noah is interrupted with another critical footnote in the mankind's history of empire building in enmity

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against God! God points out Nimrod's blatant first attempt at one-world government under him in defiance against the Creator!

I used both of these as examples of historical footnotes of men moving away from God as recorded within genealogies because we need to see Jabez is very likely another historical footnote in history of a seminal moment when God was moving men back toward Him.

I really wish I had time to go into it in more detail, but in keeping with Solomon's message of the pain, grief, and sorrow that is always the result of men in worldly wisdom, we could spend quite a bit of time here on how far men had moved from God by this point with Jabez that greatly affected the lifestyle and thinking into the time of David and the kings of Israel.

If we had time to go through Judges into Samuel we would see that over hundreds of years society had become so far from God and His Word, with every man doing what was right in his own eyes, that lawlessness and the violent pain it caused had become so ingrained in the fabric of society that everybody was dealing from the rock solid hardness of heart. They were not even within miles of being in submission to God's law of love and outgoing concern for others!

Even if you take time to read the last two chapters of Judges (which I recommend), it is appalling to see what had become acceptable behavior throughout the fabric of society. God certainly allowed it in order to serve His greater purpose, but He most certainly did not cause it. Sin causes pain—not God. All sin is against God, and I am certain it causes Him pain, as well. But it is every sin, small or great, that ultimately causes pain. Pain is the consequence of sin, and it continues to this day!

God, sees the bigger picture, and with mercy, He works with us in the circumstances that we have ultimately manufactured ourselves. Jesus Christ is faithfully doing all that needs to be done constantly and consistently, in spite of the temporary circumstances in which we are being shaped and pruned according to His Word.

With all of this in mind and getting back to Jabez, in these two verses are a number of clues to the identity of Jabez.

I Chronicles 4:9-10 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 cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested.

The phrase, "bore him in pain," is a derivative of the same Hebrew wording that records God's curse following Adam and Eve's sin as recorded in Genesis 3:

Genesis 3:16-19 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

The first curse of sin is the pain in childbirth. And although each man is not born sinful, each of us is born under its curse, and each man immediately faces the almost overwhelming pulls of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, which drives carnal nature that is enmity against God and continues to cause pain and hardship.

Again brethren, pain, grief, sorrow, is not in God's nature. It is the result of those living under the divisive flags of Satan and sin! However, immediately before God's curses on man for sin is God's first promise of the eventual deliverance from the curse of sin through One who would be born within the pain and sorrow of the human condition:

Genesis 3:14-15 So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

Immediately God gives the hope of realignment with Him through a descendant of Adam and Eve. This, of course, is the first promise of our Savior Jesus Christ. This is something that King David himself understood by the grace of God, and looked forward to, even in the midst of a culture so far from God, as we can see from his life and his inspired words in the Psalms.

My speculation within that earlier sermon, which I still think is a good possibility because of where it appears within the line of Judah leading to David, Jabez is either a type of David, or David himself, who God declared was a man after His own heart! But as I hope we will see Jabez clearly had his eye on the goal.

Although he was born as every other man subject under the immediate curse of sin and stumbled many times throughout his life, his focus was typically on God and seeking to repent and grow in the grace and knowledge of God (expanding his borders to become more like God through the intervention of God's Holy Spirit).

It is important for us to keep in mind that God is always in control, especially in these chaotic times when the consequences of sin are exploding around us, just as they are today. But the world in which we live can and will distract us from our appointed jobs to be just like Christ if we let it!

This world's goal is skewed, and we need to realize God is seeing how we are using the gifts we have been given to prepare to serve all the people swept up in the zeitgeist of the day!

Israel did not catch God by surprise when they demanded a king like the other nations, as you can clearly see in Deuteronomy 17:14, where you read Moses' instructions from God about when they would come into the land and demand a king. But when God sent Samuel to anoint Saul as king of Israel, God gave the people what they wanted in a king like the nations around them. He was a man from a powerful family, who physically stood head and shoulders above men, and was very much like the kings of the pagan nations around Israel. The people got what they wanted in Saul.

But David was the king God wanted.

I Samuel 8 records Israel's demand for a king and God's instruction to Samuel to give the people what they wanted and expected, along with the caution regarding what they would get in fulfilling their demand for a king to reign over them. God gave Israel what they wanted and, as you know Saul did end up to be just what God warned them.

However, David was the king who God wanted:

I Samuel 16:1 Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons."

I Samuel 16:10-12 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here." So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!"

This is one of the indicators that point us to the identity of Jabez, within the context of David's genealogy in the first few chapters of I Chronicles. God

sent Samuel to the house of Jesse to anoint a king that He had selected from among Jesse's eight sons. David was not the son of Jesse that Samuel expected to be king. But of all his brothers, God, looking at the heart, declared him to be the one He wanted to suit His purposes, thus declaring him more honorable than his brothers, in the eyes of God.

We know that David's life was like every man's life: a struggle with overcoming carnal nature. But the difference was that he continued to look to God as his only hope to bring him from what he was to what God wanted him to be through the miracle of God's grace, being led by His Holy Spirit—the same Spirit that He has given us to lead us through the toil and turmoil of this world driven by the carnal mind—from what we were, to what He wants us to be—sinless, and not causing pain!

Again, consider this further in terms of David's own prayer for forgiveness, as he looked forward to his own change from the curse of sin to the life that could only come through the life of Christ and the giving of His Holy Spirit.

Psalm 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

Psalm 51:4-6 Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

Psalm 51:8 Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice.

Psalm 51:10-15 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence [like Jabez], and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and

sinner shall be converted to You. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

Perhaps these same verses verse in Psalm 51:10-15 as translated from the *Message Bible in Contemporary English* can help to see more clearly the strong parallel between Jabez's life, and answered prayer, as stated in these two verses in I Chronicles 4 and the life of King David and the hope of all men:

Psalms 51:10-15 (The Message) God, make a fresh start in me, shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life. Don't throw me out with the trash, or fail to breathe holiness in me. Bring me back from gray exile, put a fresh wind in my sails! Give me a job teaching rebels your ways so the lost can find their way home. Commute my death sentence, God, my salvation God, and I'll sing anthems to your life-giving ways. Unbutton my lips, dear God; I'll let loose with your praise.

Within the two-verse synopsis of the life of Jabez in I Chronicles 4, we see this same process taking place. Within the curse and the pain of sin, Jabez's mother brought him into this chaotic world. But by the end of his life God answered his prayer, expanding Jabez's territory beyond the curse of sin to the Kingdom of God through the intercessory work of Jesus Christ, who gave him the opportunity to be a living example of God's handiwork through His Holy Spirit.

As Bullinger writes in his commentary on Jabez's prayer,

The words that immediately follow show that God was so much more ready to hear than Jabez was to pray! Without waiting for him to finish his prayer it is added, "And God granted Him that which He requested."

Many have written about Jabez's prayer, and they focus mainly on what we can learn from it, and the blessings God is ready to pour out on us. As a matter of fact, there is a short book called, *Jabez's Prayer* by Bruce

Jabez: 'That I May Not Cause Pain' by Mark Schindler (<https://www.cgg.org>)

Wilkinson that I have read since I gave that earlier sermon, and it focuses on the blessings God wants to pour out on us.

Good tools! But without the right goal that lies right there in Jabez's prayer, many of the blessings people are looking for are merely self-serving. But Jabez's prayer is actually in perfect sync with Jesus Christ's own word, as recorded in John 14:13-14 that are so important He repeats them for emphasis.

John 14:13-14 "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

Jabez's prayer is very much in line with Jesus Christ's desire to pour out all we ask for, if the focused goal is there in His name. If prayer is in His name, it will be totally in line with the Father, and the Father's way of life of outgoing concern for others.

Jabez's prayer is a vital lesson from God's still small voice, from one who was more honorable than his brothers because it ended with the petition for God to pour out the blessings as they produced someone who wanted to be just like Him. Someone living a life doing whatever it took for serving with the purity of outgoing concern for others, just like God. Someone who was keeping his eye on God's goal that God would give to someone who would come in Jesus Christ's name, always doing the will of the Father, with eyes focused above the sun.

I mentioned at the beginning of this sermon I wanted us to see Jabez's prayer with its still small voice of focus on God and His purpose, in contrast to someone who prayed the wrong prayer because he lost that focus.

Again, brethren, this is only food for thought.

I Chronicles 4:41-43 These recorded by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and they attacked their tents and the Meunites who were found there, and utterly destroyed them, as it is to this day. So they dwelt in their place, because there was pasture for their flocks there. Now some of them, five hundred men of the

sons of Simeon, went to Mount Seir, having as their captains Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi. And they defeated the rest of the Amalekites who had escaped. They have dwelt there to this day.

It was a defeat of those who had escaped from the Philistines, and Amalekites (who had escaped from Saul). That defeat took place by the hand of the descendants of Simeon in the early days of Hezekiah.

Here Hezekiah is mentioned. Also, when you investigate it there is a time marker here with these descendants of Simeon who seems to have pushed toward Judah from Israel, actually expanding Judah's borders as they moved away from Israel and avoided the siege and captivity of Israel by Assyria that took place in the early years of King Hezekiah's reign.

Again, with a still small voice God was pointing to Hezekiah and the incredible work he did, unlike any king before him. But through the years, he lost his focal point, and his prayer did not produce what Jabez's prayer did. You are all very aware of Hezekiah's reign and what God has to say about him. And, at one point he came to be tested by God, right before this prayer. I have once again gone on too long. Please bear with me while I read a section of Herbert Lockyer's comment on Hezekiah from *All the Men and Women of the Bible*.

Hezekiah was one of the best kings who ever sat upon the throne of Judah and was distinguished as the greatest in faith of all Judah's kings (II Kings 18:5). Sincere and devout, he was not a perfect man by any means, but outstanding because of his brilliant gifts he possessed. This good king, however, is to be admired when one remembers his family background having such a wicked apostate father, Ahaz. The wonder is that his son became the noble king he did. He has no pious training, but only a heritage of weakness in his moral fibre, for which God graciously made all fair allowance. With Hezekiah's ascent to the throne at the age of 25 there began a period of religious revival in which he was encouraged by the noblest and most eloquent of Hebrew prophets Isaiah.

Hezekiah was a man who prayed about the difficulties and dangers overtaking him. What faith and confidence in God he revealed when he spread Sennacherib's insolent letter before the Lord. Both Hezekiah and Isaiah defied mighty Assyria, God using one Angel to slay 185,000 in the Assyrian camp.

The king knew how to pray about personal matters as well as military dangers. When smitten with a fatal illness, he turned his face to the wall and prayed. Isaiah, his friend and counselor, came to him with a message from God that he would not die but live. God said, "I will add unto you thy days 15 years." Hezekiah asked with all his heart that he might live and God continued his life.

But the question arises why did Hezekiah desire the removal of his illness and the continuation of his life? What object did he have in mind? Was the king anxious to live in order to promote the glory of God, or was he actuated by some personal motive? It is apparent that Hezekiah was afraid of death, and loved life itself. Death was not the same to Hezekiah as it was to Paul, who had a desire to depart," [seeing life with God as the promised goal].

At the time of his sickness, Hezekiah had no son, and this fact possibly added to his desire to live. Three years after his recovery Manasseh was born, who became a curse upon the earth, and an abomination in the sight of the Lord. Here then, was one of the results of Hezekiah's prayer. It might have been better for Judah if Hezekiah had died without such an heir. Many prayers we often are mistakes. God graciously grants our request but brings leanness to our souls."

Brethren, in the still small voice of God's Word, He is telling us what Jesus Christ promised us, if we keep our focus above the sun and living God's way of life for eternity as the goal, always doing the will of the Father that is the source of peace and health. Jabez's prayer was focused on our Great God's way of life and carefully letting Him guide him to live as He lives.

Jabez: 'That I May Not Cause Pain' by Mark Schindler (<https://www.cgg.org>)

So many things I have read ultimately explained Jabez's prayer as part of the self-centered "Prosperity Gospel," because they did not see the important last phrase of Jabez's prayer for God to lead him to grow and live like God lives. This is our lifetime effort to recognize and reject the sins we commit that are the source of pain to others. We too must be changed from the man who sins, and is the source of pain to others, to the man who carefully learns to live as God lives in righteousness for His glory.

Hezekiah had lost sight of God and dropped his focus to under the sun. This very much affected how he prayed.

As we close, I ask you, when God sent Isaiah to Hezekiah to get his house in order, was God doing anything more with him than He does with us every day, regardless of the years or moments we have left? We have seen, here, maybe Hezekiah in the pain of his suffering from his illness of boils, he had lost sight of what he should have been looking at as the focus of his prayer. He may have been so caught up in the pain of this earth, even in his own suffering and sickness, that he lowered his sights. We do not want to do that, brethren, even when we are suffering.

Perhaps if he kept his focus on the perfect work of God in faith, he would have prayed a better prayer in faith that would have given him a great deal more time than 15 years. Perhaps he would have been the father Manasseh needed through all his formative years to help him learn how not to inflict the horrible pain of sin on an entire nation.

Breaking God's law produces pain and Jabez was more honorable than his brethren, including Hezekiah, because he kept his focus on God and what he needed for His honor and glory, in spite of anything else going on around him.

In this world we must follow David's faulted example as a man after God's own heart, but with a quick heart to repent continuing to listen to the still small voice that will lead us in our change from the man who causes pain through sin, as we all pray as Jabez did to learn to live like God that we may not cause pain, but with love and outgoing concern for others.

Jesus Christ told us, as recorded in John 14:

John 14:13-14 “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”

On this Flag Day in 2025 we are going to close this sermon with the last two sentences of Ronny Graham’s 2019 CGG weekly entitled, *Flag of our Father*. Ronny wrote as he closed, “Christ is our Standard, our Banner. He is the Flag of our Father in heaven, the Standard we all strive to emulate and uphold before the world.”