

Never Forgotten

I Chronicles 1-9

Introduction

Chuck Swindoll, in his devotional book entitled, *Come Before Winter*, told of a telephone call that he had from a young woman. She had not been wanted by her mother and father when she was born. They had placed her in a foster home, walked out of her life, and left no clues of their whereabouts nor any promise of their return. She went from home to home longing for the day that they would come back and want her, love her, and accept her. They never did.

Years passed. She became a teenage rebel and lashed out at the world and then, at herself by attempting suicide. Misery stalked her steps as she waited in vain for the return of her parents.

Finally, suddenly, she decided to try to find them. She did! Through an incredible chain of events and so-called coincidences, she walked back into their lives one evening. She soon discovered, however, that she still was not wanted. Her parents allowed her to stay for awhile, but the relationship was forced and awkward.

One morning they told her they had plans to adopt a baby boy and “start all over.” Deep within her heart she longed to be included in that new beginning, but reluctantly, she squeezed out the words, “I don’t want to be in your way. Maybe I’d better leave.”

Her father replied, “Okay, I’ll help you pack.”

He hurriedly stuffed a few clothes into her backpack, rolled up a sleeping bag and gave it to her, and handed her a ten dollar bill. He then shook her hand, smiled, and said, “Goodbye.”

Since that dark moment in her life, that young woman has lived in the hills, slept in alleyways, eaten

out of garbage cans, and hunted unsuccessfully for work. Wanting neither pity nor a handout, she finally hung up the phone because she was cold in the phone booth and needed to find shelter.

Swindoll said, “I shall never forget her voice, and somewhere is a girl who is confused, totally disillusioned about life, and terribly in need of being wanted.”

While that story is a dramatic extreme of being unwanted, I am very aware that the deceiver of humanity has at one time or another, whispered in your ear, “You aren’t really accepted by God; you don’t really matter to God. He’d probably like to start over again, without you.”

Ladies and gentlemen, the communion table is intended, among a myriad of other things, to silence that accusation; to shatter the myth that God does not care about you. In fact, He cares so much that His fleshly body was ripped and torn for you. A pool of blood under a rugged cross declares His love for you.

I believe I am addressing at this moment, people who, even now, feel unwanted, forgotten, unloved. Frankly, there are times when we have all felt that way. It is a common denominator of fallen humanity.

That is why, as we prepare our hearts to remember the incredible declaration of love from God, I want to take some time and turn in the Bible with you to an ancient list of names. It is a lonely passage of scripture that has had its own share of being forgotten and overlooked.

We are currently studying through the books of Kings and Chronicles. This list of names appears in I

Chronicles, beginning in chapter 1 with the name Adam and ending in chapter 9 with the name Azel.

Some Preliminary Principles

Obviously, we do not have time to reference every story or character in this grand list, which is, in fact, the history of humanity up to this point. However, for God to take up the space of inspired scripture; for God to take the time to see that everyone's name is included, tells us some wonderful truths. Let me suggest two of them before we look at a few people mentioned in the genealogies. Two preliminary principles are:

According to God's word, no child of His is ever forgotten or unwanted

1. According to God's word, no child of His is ever forgotten or unwanted.

According to God's perspective, value or worth is defined far differently in heaven than on earth

2. According to God's perspective, value or worth is defined far differently in heaven than on earth.

Some Life-size Examples

Now, I want to look at a few life-size examples of these principles in I Chronicles.

Jabez and his painful past (I Chronicles 4:9-10)

Our first stop will be in chapter 4, which deals with a man named Jabez and his painful past.

To set the context, the name of Jabez appears in the list during a time that was very difficult. War was constantly on the lips of everyone and this list of names, as one man put it, is like taking a stroll through an old cemetery. It is a series of epitaphs, one after another. As you look at this chapter, however, the Spirit of God seems to pause and hover over one life.

J. Oswald Sander wrote, "When God troubles to preserve the epitaph of one man out of millions and gives it in such concise and meaningful language, we can be certain that it will repay detailed study."

So, let us read verse 9 of I Chronicles, chapter 4.

Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother named him Jabez saying, "Because I bore him with pain."

This man's name, in Hebrew, was "Yabets," which is transliterated "Jabez," and means "intense sorrow; pain". His mother is saying, "Because I bore him in 'yabets,' or pain."

This was more than physical pain. My wife has born our four children and I will never forget the pain she experienced in delivering our last child, and the pain I experienced from her squeezing my hand. There was pain, but not sorrow.

We do not know what the situation was that caused the birth of Jabez to be a sorrowful time to his mother. We do not know what caused the birth of a son, that would normally bring great joy, to bring great sorrow.

This kid is named, "Pain". To him, it really was not very funny. Everywhere he went, his name reminded everyone of the negative shadows from his past. That is why the first part of verse 9 sends an interesting message. Look at that again.

Jabez was more honorable than his brothers,
...

The word "honorable" means, "influential; powerful; heavy". "Heavy" is not talking about weight, but about reputation. It is a way of saying that this man was "heavy" in that his name and life brought deep respect from those who knew him.

Now, something happened to Jabez. We do not know what because we are not given any clues to fill in the gaps. However, he went from being a man who caused his mother sorrow to being a man who was considered more honorable and righteous than his brothers and a man who was of great dignity and honor.

We do have some information as to what happened to Jabez, because of verse 10. We do not know at what point in his life this occurred, but perhaps it was as a young man. Look at that verse.

Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain [Jabez] me!" . . .

Jabez was praying a prayer that some of you have prayed and perhaps, that all of us, in varying degrees, should pray. He was saying, "Lord, make a difference

in my future. I don't want to be handicapped by my past! I don't want my future to be representative of the sorrow that I caused others in my past."

Isn't that a great prayer? Notice again, a key phrase in the middle of verse 10.

. . . that Your hand might be with me . . .

He is asking for God's intimate presence in this phrase.

Did you notice the phrase, ". . . that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me . . ."? He is literally saying, ". . . that my life may not 'Jabez' me . . .".

Jabez is praying, "Lord, I don't want to live up to my name; I don't want to live up to my reputation. I want to change; I want to live differently! I want something to happen in my life that is like turning a corner and opening a door into a brand new room."

Have you ever felt like that? Of course you have, and I have too. Jabez prayed, "Lord, I want to be so committed to you that I live differently. I want to live so that when people say my name, even though they are saying, 'sorrow,' they think of You; they think of honor and dignity and purity."

And, the last part of verse 10 says,

. . . And God granted him what he requested.

Jabez was able to hurdle his past, even though he was constantly reminded of the sorrow he had brought his parents, for whatever reason. His life was filled with fulfillment and blessing.

Reuben and his valiant sons (I Chronicles 5:18-20)

Now, let us move to chapter 5 of I Chronicles and take a look at Reuben and his valiant sons. This will be one more brief snapshot as we work our way through this Israelite cemetery and read the epitaphs. Look at verses 18 through 20.

The sons of Reuben and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, consisting of valiant men, men who bore shield and sword and shot with bow and were skillful in battle, were 44,760, who went to war. They made war against the Hagarites, Jetur, Naphish and Nodab. They were helped against them, and the Hagarites and all who were with them were given into their hand; . . .

(note this),

. . . for they cried out to God in the battle, and He answered their prayers because they trusted in Him.

Success is determined by dependence upon God

Now, God included this brief passage as a constant reminder, for everyone who stops to read the tombstone of this small tribe, that the battle belongs to who? The Lord. It is more than a song.

Did you notice in verse 18, some interesting references to these Israelite soldiers? They consisted of "valiant men" and they were "skillful in battle". That tells us that they were not slouches when they went to war. These soldiers were highly trained, skilled, courageous men. In other words, that is a way of telling us that these soldiers had every reason to believe that they could "pull this battle off"; they had every reason to believe that they had the power, strength, and ability to win. Yet, when they went to battle, they did not rely on that skill. Their success was determined by dependence upon God.

Now, I want you to notice a phrase, and perhaps some could underline it in their Bible as their theme verse, due to something that may have happened in the past or that is expected to happen in the near future. Look at the latter part of verse 20 again.

. . . they cried out to God in the battle, and He answered their prayers . . .

Perhaps that is your verse. Maybe you are in the midst of the battle, whatever it may be, and you need to be reminded that God hears and God cares.

Success is determined by dependence upon God.

Victory is the result of a relationship with God

Let me give one more thought concerning Reuben and his sons. Not only is success determined by dependence upon God, but victory is the result of a relationship with God. These soldiers trusted in God.

I recently read an article that was taken from a conference paper entitled, *Spiritual Renewal*, and authored by, Pastor Dan Schmeizer. The conference paper tells of an incident that occurred in the life of the great desert fighter from the First World War, Lawrence of Arabia.

After World War I ended, Lawrence brought several Arab leaders to Paris to represent their interests at the Versailles Peace Conference. These

Arab men had lived in the desert their entire lives and were filled with astonishment at the sights, the sounds, and the technology of Paris. They were especially amazed at the modern conveniences.

When Lawrence took them to their hotel room, they were shocked and in awe when he turned on the tap and showed them how to operate the running water. They could not get over the fact that there was water at will and in seemingly, endless supply. In the desert, water was such a luxury. To get water in the desert, they had to dig a well and draw one bucket at a time, yet in the hotel, they could turn a nozzle and get a bathtub full!

Lawrence said that when it was time to leave Paris, he found the Arabs removing the faucets from their hotel bathrooms. They believed that these magic instruments would give them water at will back in their native Arabia. Only after great length and with difficulty did he finally convince them that the faucets were no good if detached from the hidden pipes that led to a water supply. In fact, they were no good if detached!

What a terrific reminder for every believer that it is only when we remain openly and intimately related to our Savior, Jesus Christ, does His power and peace flow richly into our lives. The moment we, as His sons and daughters, disobey, we are no good, as it were, to Him or to the world.

The temple and its dedicated servants (I Chronicles 9:17-34)

I want to make one more stop in I Chronicles, before we leave this list. We will take a behind-the-scenes look at the tabernacle operations during the days of King David. There were literally thousands of volunteers and thousands of staff associated with their worship system. Look at chapter 9 for the first review of some dedicated individuals.

The gatekeepers (9:17-27)

Look ahead to verse 19.

Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his relatives of his father's house, the Korahites, were over the work of the service, keepers of the thresholds of the tent; . . .

(notice this),

. . . and their fathers had been over the camp of the Lord, keepers of the entrance.

In other words, gatekeepers had been in the family for generation after generation.

Continue to verses 21 through 22a.

Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah was gatekeeper of the entrance of the tent of meeting. All these who were chosen to be gatekeepers at the threshold were 212. . . .

Look at verse 27. This is what they did.

They spent the night around the house of God, because the watch was committed to them; and they were in charge of opening it morning by morning.

I like the reference to 212. It is as if God is saying, "I'm keeping count. I know every one and they are precious to Me."

God wanted the number of gatekeepers recorded in scripture. Every one of these gatekeepers were significant to the work of God.

You could ask one of them, "What do you do?"

He would answer with pride, "I'm one of the 212 gatekeepers. I open the doors. That's what I do."

The utensil counters (9:28)

The list continues in verse 28. How would you like this job?

Now some of them had charge of the utensils of service, for they counted them when they brought them in and when they took them out.

Imagine the ministry of being a utensil counter.

The furniture polishers (9:29a)

Look at the first part of verse 29 where we are told of the furniture polishers.

Some of them also were appointed over the furniture . . .

The spice mixers (9:29b-30)

Continue to the last part of verse 29 through verse 30 where we learn of the spice mixers.

Some of them also were . . . over the fine flour and the wine and the oil and the frankincense and the spices. Some of the

sons of the priests prepared the mixing of the spices.

The bread bakers (9:31-32)

Skip to verses 31 and 32.

Mattithiah, one of the Levites, who was the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, had the responsibility over the things which were baked in pans. Some of their relatives of the sons of the Kohathites were over the showbread to prepare it every sabbath.

These were the ones who had the responsibility for bread baking. That is where I would want to “hang out”!

The music makers (9:33)

Continue to verse 33 to learn of the music makers.

Now these are the singers, heads of fathers’ households of the Levites, who lived in the chambers of the temple free from other service; for they were engaged in their work day and night.

Now we will stop with this, but it is quite a list. We have the gatekeepers, the utensil counters, the furniture polishers, the spice mixers, and the music makers.

Remember that God is not just recording that there were people who mixed spices and wrote music, He tells us their names. Who people were was more important than what people did – and it still is. In fact, the moment you begin to think that what God does through you is more important than what God does in you, is the moment you begin to place more value in results, figures, status, and position than in character, integrity, purity, and intimacy with God.

Some Closing Principles

I want to pull these three brief snapshots together with a couple of closing principles.

Service for the Lord may never be recognized nor applauded on earth

1. First, your service for the Lord may never be recognized nor applauded on earth.

Whatever you are doing in your life that is seeking to honor God, whether it is changing a diaper, fixing a meal, straightening chairs, moving hymnals, parking cars, or preaching, it may never be recognized nor applauded on earth.

I frankly, doubt the spice mixers and the gatekeepers were ever slapped on the back by someone who said, “Oh, you spice mixers, your work is critical to the ministry of God.”

I doubt any of the furniture polishers ever got slapped on the back by someone who said, “Oh, the furniture looks great! Keep it up! I noticed.”

Your work may not be recognized nor applauded on earth, but from the record of scripture, these workers evidently kept on mixing and polishing and opening and singing. And, so should you.

Service for the Lord will never be overlooked nor forgotten in heaven

2. Secondly, your service for the Lord will never be overlooked nor forgotten in heaven.

Listen to Hebrews, chapter 6, verse 10.

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

I want to remind you that if God can remember that there were 212 gatekeepers; if God can answer Jabez’s prayer that emanated from a past filled with pain; if God can remember and respond to the panic stricken cry of terrified Reubenites on the field of battle, who realized they were nothing and God was everything, then the record of scripture is His way of reminding you that He can hear and remember you as well.

Now, it is ironic that almighty God would give us a table like the communion table and command us to do this in remembrance of what? In remembrance of Him. It always astounds me to think that a sovereign God would ask us to remember Him.

So, the communion table works both ways – it reminds us that He remembers and deeply loves us and it challenges us with the thought, “Are we remembering and deeply loving Him? How important is His name to us?”

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 7/2/1995 by Stephen Davey.

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