

Tuesday, August 25, 2020—1 Chronicles 10-13

After reminding Israel of their history and their tribal legacies through a series of genealogies, the Chronicler moved to the people and the stories that shaped Israel's past. He wanted the generation resettling the land to follow the examples that led to blessing and avoid the mistakes that led to exile. He began with a focus on the leaders of the people.

Though the first king of Israel, Saul was not an example to follow. He was spiritually unfaithful and did not trust in Yahweh (10:13-14). Israel then turned their allegiance to David, and they saw in him the heart of one who wanted to shepherd the people as God did (11:2).

David was God's chosen and received his blessing, but the suffering he endured before becoming king shaped his character and attracted many to him (12:1-40). God blessed David and gave him military success. David knew he was incapable of leading and protecting alone, so he surrounded himself with a group of trusted partners who were courageous and self-sacrificial (11:10-47).

Included in the list is Uriah, the Hittite. He was the one who died in battle because David made him vulnerable after an affair with his wife. Chronicles doesn't openly discuss this, but Uriah's name reminds the reader that David, though blessed by God, was not perfect. The story of Uzzah's death (13:1-14) is another reminder of David's imperfection. He was passionate about God but failed when he didn't follow God's standards.

Pray that God shapes your character through suffering and sin to make you more like Jesus.

Monday, August 24, 2020—1 Chronicles 7-9

God had promised the people through Jeremiah that He knew the plans He had for them, plans to prosper them and not harm them, plans to give them a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). That promise took nearly 70 years to come true. Finally, the exiles were able to return to Israel (9:2).

When they returned, they came with expectations that God was going to work in them and through them. Thus, the Chronicler wrote down the history of God's people and the legacy of each tribe so they would remember their past. Knowing how God worked set the standard for what He would do as they resettled the land, so among the first to come back were not only common Israelites but also "priests, Levites, and temple servants" (9:2). The writer reminded the people of the sacred nature of the dwelling place of God and how the priests, Levites, and gatekeepers worked together to maintain this precious treasure (9:22-32).

This was remarkable because the Temple had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's forces decades earlier at the beginning of the exile. These men were returning without a place to do their ministry in full expectation that God would restore not only His people but His house as well.

Each day gives every believer an opportunity to live with such faith, knowing God has made promises that He will fulfill. When God seems slow in answering prayers, live with the faith that He works for the good of those who love Him. Give Him time. Give

Him praise.

Sunday, August 23, 2020—1 Chronicles 4-6

Reading through 1 Chronicles can feel like walking through a museum without a guide or any informative plaques. There are names and places but little information. For the original audience, each of the names was a connection to the past for those who were resettling in Israel and a way to learn of their heritage. How had God worked? In whom did He work? What were their strengths and weaknesses? Whom do we emulate?

In 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, the writer takes a moment to share some specifics about Jabez. He was more honorable than his brothers because of how he lived. He was born in difficult circumstances, and his name reflected that pain. Rather than allowing those circumstances to define him, he prayed to God to bless him by giving him more land and, therefore, more opportunity to honor God and bless others. He also asked God to keep him from harm and bless him. God granted his request.

Jabez was an example for those returning from exile. The past mistakes did not define them. It certainly educated them, but it was not a handicap. God used faithful people in the past. He was looking for faithful people in the present. The people needed to know their genealogical record and tribal connection to know what God expected and the area in which they were to live. The exile had not changed His call to His people.

Praise God for His work in the past. Pray for a fresh move of His Spirit to use your faith and obedience for His glory.

Saturday, August 22, 2020—1 Chronicles 1-3

College students moving back to campus experience some of the same emotions and do some of the same things they did the first time. Saying goodbye, unpacking boxes, and preparing a schedule are foundational each semester. Starting and starting over are quite similar.

After Israel spent 70 years in exile in Babylon, many were able to return to Israel. God had promised this, and He fulfilled His promise. Those coming back needed to remember who God was, who they were, and how they could avoid the choices that led to exile.

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles represent a new beginning. Not surprisingly, 1 Chronicles opens like Genesis, providing a family tree for God's people tracing all the way back to Adam. God had intentionally created mankind and chosen Israel to be His people. The family tree was also a reminder of how all the other peoples around them had come to be. Of all the nations in the world, God had chosen the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They had done nothing to earn this privilege. God had done this by grace alone.

Like a picture can lead to a thousand words, each name had a story of God's faithfulness and working. Arriving at David and his family in 1 Chronicles 3, the writer reminded the readers of God's standard for the leader of His people. They needed God to provide His leader again.

Thank God for godly examples of faithfulness in your life.

Friday, August 21, 2020—Lamentations 1-5

Lament. "A passionate expression of grief or sorrow." We don't use the word very often, but 2020 has given plenty of opportunities for lamentation. From the COVID-19 pandemic to racial tension to political turmoil, there has been lamentation in our homes and our media.

God made us to lament. He Himself expresses emotion, so we are to do the same. For some, the lamentation is without hope. There is grief but no relief. There is sorrow but not solution. As Jeremiah lamented the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of many of his people, he poured out his grief. He couldn't keep it in, but his lament was mixed with hope.

Lamentations 1 admits the guilt of the people. God is righteous in punishing, but the discipline is hard. Jeremiah weeps. He feels no comfort, yet he remains confident that he can cry to God to see and act (1:20-22).

God is no longer speaking to the prophets (2:9). Women and children suffer (2:11-12), so He called out to Yahweh (2:20-22). He was physically and emotionally miserable (3:1-18), but Jeremiah knew this: because of the Lord's great love they were not consumed. His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is His faithfulness (3:22-23). He does not willingly bring grief (3:33-36).

Jeremiah knew the promise of God, so he called on God to restore them (5:21). He asked, "Why?" (5:20), but he continued to trust. Learn to lament sin and its devastation. Trust God to make all things right in Christ.

Thursday, August 20, 2020—Jeremiah 50-52

God is sovereign, and He does what He wants. He is able to use anyone He chooses to accomplish His will, but that usefulness does not imply holiness. Babylon is a prime example.

The Babylonians were idol worshipers. The Babylonians were ruthless. The Babylonians had the power to enact God's discipline, but they did not have the righteousness that removed them from God's judgment. There was coming a day when God would send a powerful nation to judge Babylon just as He used Babylon to judge His people (50:1-18).

In contrast, He was going to restore His people and remove their guilt (50:20). "For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the Lord Almighty; though their land is full of guilt before the Holy One of Israel" (51:5). Unlike Babylon, Israel was God's chosen people. He made a covenant with them and would be true to those promises. Their guilt led to their exile, but He would work to restore as He told them He would. Babylon would pay the price for its assault against Israel (51:49).

Until that day, God's people would suffer loss. Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar's forces, and the people went away into captivity (52:1-30). What God said would happen finally did, yet God continued to provide for His people in their struggle (52:31-34).

Thank God for His working in all circumstances. Pray for wisdom to see His hand in difficulty and heartache. Pray for strength to endure the discipline that shapes your character to be like His.

Wednesday, August 19, 2020—Jeremiah 47-49

Jeremiah spoke primarily to the people of God, but his prophecy included messages about and to the surrounding nations. Yahweh was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so the world associated Him with the Jewish people, but Yahweh is the God over all gods. He is, therefore, God over all people whether they recognize Him as such or not.

Jeremiah saw God at work bringing destruction on His people at the hand of the Babylonians, but the Egyptians were also going to wreak havoc on the surrounding nations. Their lives ignored Yahweh and violated His standards, so their sin brought consequences. The Philistines would experience this judgment (47:1-6). The Moabites would suffer because of their pride and arrogance (48:29). Though these people had been a thorn in the side of Israel, Jeremiah was mourning their destruction (48:36).

Ammon, Edom, Damascus, and Elam were other neighbors who would face judgment. If there were many who would suffer under the wrath of God without deserving it, these nations certainly would suffer because they did deserve it (49:12-13). God is just, so His actions always come from a perspective of what is true, noble, and right. To be just, He treats everyone by the same standards. In mercy, He restores after discipline (48:47, 49:6, 49:39).

God may not work on the timetable or with the severity that we want for our enemies. He usually works too harshly and too quickly when He disciplines us. Admit today that He is truly just, good, and loving.