

Date : 5 May 2024

Theme : Attaining to our inheritance

Topic : Blessing God's people with a great future

Passage : Deuteronomy 33

Key Verse : *"Blessed are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will tread on their heights."* Deuteronomy 33:29 (NIV)

Introduction

This week's chapter on blessings of *Deuteronomy 33* may be regarded as the counterpart of last week's study on the Song of Moses in *Deuteronomy 32*. While the Song dwells on warnings, today's chapter on blessings depicts the benefits to God's people through divine favour. Both were fitting utterances for Moses' farewell message. God sought to encourage His people, through warnings and blessings to attain the best potential of God's purpose for His people.

In contrast to Jacob's blessings of his 12 sons in *Genesis 48*, Moses's blessings were for a collective group – tribes rather than only for individuals. Everyone must belong to a tribe – what today can be applied to us as a church body.

The release of blessings reflects God's grace and mercy upon the tribes of Israel. Yet, like many believers, each tribe would respond differently. While some tribes seized their prophetic blessings, others did not. As a church body, we are heirs to blessings as joint heirs with Christ. Thus, these lessons on blessings to the tribes of Israel apply to us too.

What does it mean to bless someone as Moses did? It is to speak a great future. It is a prayer or a prophetic word. The power of a spoken blessing is a positive biblical statement that invokes the blessing of God on the life of another.

What can we learn from the blessings given to the tribes of Israel that will help us recognise the significance of the blessings of God, and know how to seize His blessings and be an instrument to bless others.

1. The blessing of Israel

'This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced on the Israelites before his death.' Deuteronomy 33:1 (NIV)

In *Deuteronomy 33*, Moses, the prophet of God, pronounced blessings on his people in the Presence of God: Moses blessed the people according to their tribes.

We take a look at the significance of his blessings on the following 4 tribes:

- (i) Reuben: *"Let Reuben live and not die, nor his people be few."* (vs6).
 - For this tribe to carry on living, it must reproduce in a continuing chain of descendants. This is the blessing every disciple must desire. He must not be the last link in the chain.
 - It is a prayer of blessing for survival and growth
 - that the tribe of Reuben be blessed with growth.
 - The background from *Genesis 49:4*
 - Reuben sinned by sleeping with his father's concubines - There is no hint of repentance on his part.
 - Consequence: He lost his blessing and forfeited his birthright.
 - A description of his character: he was unstable as water; he wasn't firm and lack commitment.

- ❖ Lesson for us: If you and I choose to live in certain sins we risk forfeiting God's blessings in the future
 - It is by the mercy of God to keep Reuben as a tribe... "let them live and not die'... What is the blessing word here? It's a prayer of intercession like: "O Lord, please keep him and let him turnaround... let not the chain of his generation be broken."

- (ii) Judah: **"Hear Lord the cry of Judah... be his help against his foes" (vs7)**
 - Judah was the remnant tribe with a continuous history of keeping loyalty to worship the Lord compared to the other tribes.
The prophetic nature of this simple statement points to the tribe from which the line of kings that will culminate in the King of kings – the Lord Jesus Himself.
This is blessing its role as leaders. Every time the Lord has some great work, He seeks someone to provide leadership.
 - ❖ Can you make yourself available?

- Judah had his faults but he repented
 - That changed the course of curse upon him to blessings for his generation. Judah was the voice that influenced the brothers to sell their own brother Joseph as a slave in some foreign country. Years later we see his repentance in offering to take the place of Benjamin by offering himself as slave to Joseph (the second man in Egypt) - a change of heart... showing a fruit of repentance... ended with reconciliation of the sons of Jacob.

- ❖ What's the lesson learnt?... Judah changed from his wicked ways and opened himself to God's blessing. The lesson learnt from this is that no matter what we've done in the past, God is willing to bless us when we repent.

- (iii) Levi: Your faithful servant, keeps watch over the word; covenant keeping, teaches; offers incense. Bless all his skills.
 - What areas of blessings were involved?
 - Obedience to His word; Covenant keeping; in worship; in all his skills and that all his works be of acceptable standards to the Lord.

- The blessing hinges on their priestly role. **(Numbers 3:5-10)**
Levi's blessing was that of priesthood. Spiritual leadership in all of Israel. This blessing did not come to them as a random choice. It was something they did... mentioned in **verse 9**.
 - When did this happen? When Moses came down from the mountain and the Israelites were partying and worshipping the golden calf... there's wickedness, sexual immorality and idolatry, the breaking of God's 2nd Commandment, and Moses was in rage. But as a mediator he said: "Who is on the Lord's side come to me. **(Exodus 32:26)**
 - All the sons of Levi came. A call for all but only Levi came forward to support Moses, obeying the call to fight on the side of Yahweh. The severity of the punishment corresponded to the magnitude of the crime. The worship of an image was a breach of the covenant, and as such, the Levites acted and ... **"guarded Your covenant." Deuteronomy 33:9**

- ❖ Lesson: If you and I choose to put God first and love him above all things, we position ourselves high in God's list in serving Him.
- (iv) Joseph - Joseph's blessings reflect the quality – the best. Precious things – 4 times. (vs13-17)
 - Blessing of abundance, indicating their future prosperity. (**Genesis 49:22-26**)
- The blessing of Joseph:
 - The best and finest the sun and moon yields.
 - Choice gifts and fruitfulness.
 - Best gifts and favour.
 - Double portion blessings through his sons:
 - Manasseh (*He made me forget all my affliction*) &
 - Ephraim (*God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction*).
- ❖ What does it take for you to take hold of such a blessing?
 - Look at Joseph: a faithful man who feared God:
 - He did not participate in the mischiefs of his brothers.
 - He did not yield to the temptations by Potiphar's wife.
 - He was patient and persevered in times of trouble.
 - He forgave his brothers who sold him as a slave.

2. Receiving the blessing in order to bless others

- a) Who is the source of all blessings?
 - Recognise that blessings begin with God
 - God created and blessed His creation.
 - After the Flood, God blessed Noah and his sons: ***"Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth."***
 - God has always intended to bless the nations through His people.
 - God tells Abraham, ***"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. And all people on earth will be blessed through you."*** (**Genesis 12:2**)
 - God's revelation, rulership and relationship with His covenant people
 - ***"The LORD came...He shone...love the people (assembled to) receive instruction, the law that Moses gave... He was king over Jeshurun when the leaders of the people assembled, along with the tribes of Israel. (vs 2-5)***
 - God was King when the people submitted and governed themselves under God's rule of law. Their blessing under the covenant was tied to their obedience to Him... they followed in His steps... ***"and from You receive instruction, the law that Moses gave us..."*** (vs 3-4)
 - God loves His people and He cares for them... the same God who blessed them is the God who wants to bless you and I.
 - Blessings flow when there's obedience to the word of God.
 - When His people enthrone Him as King.

- God's plan is to give you a blessing so that you can be a blessing
 - **"The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and he adds no sorrow to it."** (*Proverbs 10:22*)
 - With God's blessing in all that you do, you will not crumble under struggles, but even in the midst of suffering, you can encounter a blessing and experience joy.
 - The blessing of the Lord makes you a channel of blessing to others.
 - Like Asher- whose blessing is one of abundance (***bathe feet with oil***), having secured gates and strength of a lifetime; and he also received the favour of his brothers when he blessed them.
- b) Give thanks for God's mercy and grace
- Always praise God for He is the source of all your blessings
 - Moses praised God. (*vs 26*)
 - **"There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty".** (*Deuteronomy 33:26*)
 - Count your blessings and name them one by one, and remember to give thanks to God for bestowing His blessings upon you.
 - Thank God for His greatest blessing on us: Christ redeemed us.
- (c) Safeguards to keep receiving the blessings
- Do not block the blessings. Guard against:
 - Pride and unrighteousness
 - Simeon lost his blessings because of unrighteous acts (*Genesis 49:5*)
 - The neglect of God's word
 - Neglecting in our service of the Lord, for God is faithful and will bless us when we serve Him in faith
 - Glorify God when requesting a blessing
 - Before bestowing his blessing upon Israel, Moses praised God, for it is fitting to glorify God's name before asking a favour from Him,
 - When Moses was about to ask God to bless Israel, he first proclaimed His grandeur and His majesty.

3. How to be an effective channel of blessing to others

a) First, based on the word from the examples learnt, visualise the great future for the person/group and exercise your God given authority to speak by faith

- Be aligned with God's will
 - Some obvious ones already mentioned in the past few weeks: e.g. Blessings in Deuteronomy 28
 - Like the Levites we take our place as intercessors for this church, cell members, friends who have yet to believe. We keep praying for the blessing of faithfulness and fruitfulness. We are gatekeepers opening the door for others to come to God.

Application

1. Can you name 2 blessings you have seen working in your life and share in your small group.
2. How do you think it can be used to glorify the Lord?