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Again in verse 18, Zebulun and Issachar are mentioned. Zebulun, he says, Rejoice, O Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar, in your tents. You have a contrast.

Going out always speaks of military action. You're sending your armies out. Your goings out and your comings in is a phrase used throughout the Old Testament for military action.

So, Zebulun is going to rejoice in his going out. What had been said of Zebulun before? Zebulun was the one sitting by the sea and having commerce, the haven for ships and so forth. And the potential is there for corruption from the evil sea and corruption from the borders of Sidon and so on.

But what's going to happen with Zebulun? Zebulun is now going to be the ones who go out and God's going to bless them because what is their reaction going to be to the evil and to the pagan hordes that are outside the borders of Israel? They're going to go out and defeat them. They're not going to be compromised. They're not going to be sucked into evil.

And here is Issachar who is going to be blessed in his tents. Issachar was the one who had the burden and he set his burden down because he saw that the land was pleasant and he became a band of slaves. And his settling down was a bad thing in the oracle of Jacob.

But now Moses says, you're going to be blessed in your tents. Your dwelling doesn't matter how you got there. It doesn't matter if you initially started out in a bad way.

You're going to be blessed in your dwellings in your tents. And they, Zebulun and Issachar together will call the peoples to the mountain. Remember, Zebulun were the ones dwelling by the seashore and Issachar was the one who settled in the valley.

But both of them are going to call the people to the mountain. The mountain is the place of worship. The mountain is the place of acknowledging God.

And rather than being an opportunity for corruption and the ingress of evil like Zebulun had the potential to be or of compromise the way Issachar was with laying down the burden and trading the bearing of the burden for safety and prosperity, they together are going to be calling the people to the mountain to offer sacrifices of righteousness for they will partake of the abundance of the seas. They're going to take the spoils of victory, the treasures hidden in the sand. There's going to be treasure in the sea and treasure in the sand.

And those are the good things that are going to come into the nation of Israel through Issachar and Zebulun. Verse 20 of Gad, he said, Blessed is he who enlarges Gad. He

dwells as a lion and tears the arm and the crown of his head.

Remember, Gad was the one who was being trampled all the time. The troops were coming in and trampling him. And there was the future promise that he would prevail.

Well, now Gad is going to be even more numerous than before. He's going to be enlarged by God. And now he's not the doormat tribe being trampled by others.

You try to reach out and touch Gad and you're going to get your arm ripped and you're going to get your head scratched because he's no longer a doormat. Remember elsewhere in Scripture it says the last shall be first and the foot has become the head. Well, literally the one who was trampled and was walked on by feet is now the one wounding the head.

He's gone from bottom to top and he tears the arm and the crown of the head. He's not down there at the feet anymore. And he dwells like a lion.

He provides the first part for himself because a lawgiver's portion is reserved there. All of these things speak of the head. He came with the heads of the people.

He administered the justice of the Lord and his judgments with Israel. So he's gone from being last and being tromped upon to rulership, to lawgiving, to the heads of the people, to administration, and passing along the justice of the Lord and the Lord's judgments to Israel. So what a reversal for each of these tribes.

You get to verse 22, the tribe of Dan. Dan was the little snake, the little viper by the path. Now Dan is a lion's whelp leaping from Bashan.

Instead of a serpent striking at the heel, now he's the lion. He's got the same imagery as Judah had. Naphtali, verse 23.

Naphtali, satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord, possessed the West and the South. Naphtali was the beauty of form and beauty of words, but the question is, is there any substance? Is there any permanence? And here there is. He is satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord.

This fullness is in contrast to the external beauty and the beauty of sound that was associated with him earlier. He's going to possess the West and the South. He's got a substantial permanent inheritance possession.

Rather than just looking good, he's got possessions and value. Asher, in verse 24. Asher is most blessed of sons.

Let him be favored by his brothers and let him dip his foot in oil. You have the bread and the royal dainties that were spoken of before. These are things that are offered up to the ones who are royalty.

They leave Asher and go up to people who will consume them. But now you have the oil. His feet are going to be anointed with oil.

Your sandals will be iron and bronze. As your days, so shall your strength be. So he is blessed and favored.

His feet are anointed. He's going to travel without weariness. This idea of sandals of iron and bronze.

Sandals that don't wear out. He'll never be weary in traveling. He is strong to endure and it is an endurance for life.

As your days, so shall your strength be. You won't be enfeebled at any time, no matter how long you last. And what a contrast between the bread and the dainties that are consumed and these things that are permanent and lasting.

Sandals that never wear out. An anointed feet. You would think, well iron and bronze sandals might be kind of hard on your feet.

He's going to have feet anointed with oil. So you see in the oracle from Moses, he goes on to say in verse 26, there is no one like the God of Yeshurun who rides the heavens to help you. And in his excellency on the clouds, the eternal God is your refuge.

And underneath are the everlasting arms. He will thrust out the enemy from before you and will say destroy. Israel will dwell in safety.

The fountain of Jacob alone in a land of grain and new wine. His heavens shall also drop dew. Happy are you, O Israel, who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty.

Your enemies shall submit to you and you shall tread down their high places. This is the fulfillment of all of the promise, all of the potential that God has given his people. You can see the potential for success or failure in the oracle of Jacob.

You see the fulfillment of the potential for success in the oracle of Moses. And in the same way that we look at these tribes and their respective strengths and weaknesses, and we realize that the people of God in every age are subject to these strengths and these weaknesses, both individually and collectively. We recognize from this passage and from comparing these two passages that there is the opportunity to be blessed by God, to have our strengths converted into eternal fruit, to have our weaknesses go from cursing to blessing and be the place where God's strength is made manifest.

As Paul says, his strength is made manifest in our weakness. That's the great opportunity that individuals have, that the people of God have collectively. In the church today, we have people that fit every one of these profiles.

We in our souls have areas of strengths and weakness that fit these different profiles. What is the key to success? What is the key to bearing eternal fruit, to be being blessed and to be a blessing to others like Joseph with that branch over the wall? It depends on our orientation to God's grace, on our pursuit of His strength, of His power, of His plan and purpose in our lives. If we make that our priority day by day, it doesn't matter what weaknesses we started out with.

It doesn't matter what's in our history. It doesn't matter how we have failed in the past. Look at these tribes and some of the heinous things that they were guilty of, the compromises, the weaknesses, the failures, the sins, the grievous wrongs that had been committed, some of the things that Jacob mentions in his oracle.

But you look in the time of Moses, there is not a rebuke to be found in what Moses has to say about the tribes. They're going to be fruitful. They're going to multiply.

They're going to dwell in the land. They're going to reflect the glory of God. They're going to be a manifestation of God's strength.

And it's a very positive and hopeful prophecy that Moses delivers. Yes, there are going to be ups and downs along the way. And we know in the later history of Israel, there were many downs.

But Moses' oracle looks all the way to the future, to the time of the millennial kingdom, when God has taken out the heart of stone and put in the heart of flesh, when He has overcome death in victory. And that victory of the Lord Jesus Christ is not just a victory over physical death. It is also a victory over operational death.

And we can be fruitful. We can have lives that have meaning and purpose, that reflect the glory of God, that fulfill the purpose of God, just like these tribes. Whatever our weaknesses, whatever we start out with, it isn't how we start, it's how we finish.

And Deuteronomy 33 is one of the most hopeful chapters in the entire Bible, because you look at where Israel started and look at where God places them at the end. And it is all of grace. We think about our scripture reading this morning in Psalm 118.

It is the enduring, eternal mercy of God, upon which we cast ourselves to find ourselves swallowed up in victory and in the glory of God. Let's close here in prayer. Father, we thank you for the wonderful truths that you communicate to us in your word.

We have seen so many rich and wonderful things in the course of studying the book of Genesis and most recently in chapter 49. We thank you for preserving these things and giving us the ministry of your spirit to be able to comprehend and to apply them in our own situation. We pray that as we move forward day by day in our lives and in your plan, that God, the Holy Spirit, will be able to correct, rebuke and instruct us in righteousness, that your word in his hand will serve as the sharp sword to expose the motivations of our

heart, that we can see the places where we need improvement, where we need a change, a change of mind and a change of priority.

We pray that we too, as the Israelites ultimately do, will find ourselves transformed and in the place of fulfillment of all of the positive potential that is available to us because of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name and for his sake. Amen.