

God's Power
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Allen Power

Deuteronomy 33:1-5,26-29

Opening: There is something special about feeling special! Put another way, whether we admit it or not, we all desire to feel special in someone's eyes. Think about the feeling you get inside when someone gives you something they custom-made for YOU. Any examples? [My grandmother's quilts] [Illustration: Matt's Micah 6:8 gift].

Most of us don't wear custom-made clothing because of the expense. If you've ever had a well-tailored garment, you know how different it feels to wear something that fits you perfectly; "tailor-made" for your frame. An old word for custom or tailor-made has become trendy: "bespoke." Drop that into a sentence and you can sound trendy too!

What does that have to do with Moses and Deuteronomy 33? Let me explain. In the Old Testament, parents or leaders would invoke a "blessing" on children. Just before Moses went to Heaven, in his final speech to the Children of Israel, he pronounced blessings on them. In addition to general statements about the love and power God has for all His children, Moses gave specific and unique blessings for each tribe of Israel (except one).

The point: Again, there is something special about feeling special! The sad truth is many people don't feel that way. The good news for followers of Christ is God sees each of us as special and unique and He has blessings and plans custom-made for who we are.

Deuteronomy 33:1–5 (NLT) — **1** This is the blessing that Moses, the man of God, gave to the people of Israel before his death: **2** "The Lord came from Mount Sinai and dawned upon us from Mount Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran and came from Meribah-kadesh with flaming fire at his right hand. **3** Indeed, he loves his people; all his holy ones are in his hands. They follow in his steps and accept his teaching. **4** Moses gave us the Lord's instruction, the special possession of the people of Israel. **5** The Lord became king in Israel— when the leaders of the people assembled, when the tribes of Israel gathered as one."

- A little more about the Old Testament custom of "blessing" children:
 - *"Bless" and "blessing" occur some 415 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, showing the importance of this concept in biblical times.*^{vi}
 - The father placed hands on the child's head to invoke God's favor, [Jacob did this for his grandsons in Genesis 48-49.]
 - *"Moses...was in a sense Israel's [earthly leader and] "father."*ⁱⁱ
 - Blessings wished God's strength, wisdom, and peace for the child.
 - Often, they would use the Priestly Blessing from Numbers 6:24-26: *"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."*

- We sing a moving worship song called “The Blessing” based on those verses. [Here is a YouTube link](#) if you want to BE BLESSED!
- Verse two: Moses recalled God’s appearance on Mt. Sinai with “flames of fire.”
- Verse three: Moses’ blessing was both factual and aspirational.
- God “*loves his people; all his holy ones are in his hands.*” A fact!
- “*They follow in his steps and accept his teaching.*” His desire for them. It was what Moses was praying would be true of them in the Promised Land.
- In verses six through twenty-five Moses pronounced unique blessings on each tribe. In our studies in Numbers and Deuteronomy we’ve seen Moses call out the people of Israel for their sin and disobedience. Not so in these verses.
- Wiersbe: “*[We] note that Moses does not name any sin in the tribes...[his] heart was filled with love for his people, [as] he gives his parting benediction [and] asks God’s blessing on the various tribes.*”ⁱⁱⁱ
- With no time to unpack the individual blessings in detail, here’s a summary:
 - **Reuben:** Though few in number, let his tribe not die out.
 - **Judah:** Hear their cry, Lord and give them strength. Help them in battle.
 - **Levi:** [The tribe of Priests] Help them teach “your regulations/instructions.” Bless their ministry and strike down their foes.
 - **Benjamin:** They are “loved by the Lord”; preserve them from harm.
 - **Joseph:** May their land be blessed with abundant fruit and crops. They will have the strength to defeat nations as they claim the Promised Land.
 - **Zebulun/Issachar:** May they prosper from the “riches of the sea.”
 - **Gad:** May they be enlarged to carry out justice.
 - **Dan:** May this tribe be bold, strong, and aggressive like a young lion.
 - **Naphtali:** Give them divine favor, prosperity, and abundant land.
 - **Asher:** May they have superior material blessings and extreme prosperity [symbolized by “dipping his foot in oil”—a metaphor for abundant olive oil production, wealth, and fertile land.]
 - **Simeon (omitted):** Simeon was likely omitted due to Jacob’s curse (Genesis 49:5-7) over their violent acts (Genesis 34), leading to their scattering and absorption into Judah.
- Moses’ blessing for each tribe was uniquely tailored for each of them.
- In verses 26-29 Moses proclaimed the blessings of God on ALL tribes alike:

26 “There is no one like the God of Israel. He rides across the heavens to help you, across the skies in majestic splendor. **27** The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you. He drives out the enemy before you; he cries out, ‘Destroy them!’ **28** So Israel will live in safety, prosperous Jacob in security, in a land of grain and new wine, while the heavens drop down dew.

- Again, Moses was factual about God and aspirational in his desires for Israel.
- Facts about God in verses 26-27: “*There is no one like the God of Israel.*” “*He will help you.*” *He is “eternal.” He is “your refuge.” His “everlasting arms are under you.” “He drives out the enemy before you.”*
- Moses’ desires in verse 28: Safety, security, and prosperity in the Promised Land.
- Verse 29: Moses gave more facts about Israel in their relationship with God.

29 How blessed you are, O Israel! Who else is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is your protecting shield and your triumphant sword! Your enemies will cringe before you, and you will stomp on their backs!”

- One might ask, did Moses’ blessings for the tribes come to fulfillment?
- Before we answer that, let’s discuss real life. Imagine a parent sending their child off on their own. You tell them facts and you pray your desires over them.
- Hopefully your facts were accurate. ☺ What about the desires? How does that work in real life? How can we apply our experience with that to Israel’s situation?
- The realization of Moses’ blessings depended heavily on Israel’s obedience and relationship with God. For example, Reuben’s blessing was marred by sin, and his tribe did not achieve prominence. The blessings express confidence in God’s protection and provision [facts], but also imply that Israel’s fortunes were linked to their covenant faithfulness and God’s ongoing favor (Deuteronomy 33:28-29).
- Moses’ blessings in Deuteronomy 33 came to fulfillment to a significant extent historically and theologically, reflecting God’s covenant promises and Israel’s experiences. However, their fulfillment was conditional. Some tribes enjoyed the blessings more fully than others due to their behavior and God’s sovereign plan.^{iv}
- How does this apply to us today? Look at the facts about God again: *“There is no one like [our] God.” “He will help you.” He is “eternal.” He is “your refuge.” His “everlasting arms are under you.” “He drives out the enemy [Satan] before you.” “How blessed” we are if we are “saved by the Lord!”*
- Those facts applied to Israel under the Old Covenant then, and to followers of Christ under the New Covenant today.
- Those are the facts about God. What about His desires for each person?
 - That none perish but all repent through the gospel (2 Peter 3:9).
 - That we be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3–4).
 - That we live in a reconciled, abiding relationship with Him through Christ (John 3:16; John 15:4–5).
 - That we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matt. 22:37).
 - That we love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:39; John 13:34–35).
 - That we obey His commands as an expression of love and trust (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3).
 - That we be sanctified—growing in holiness and purity (1 Thess. 4:3; 1 Peter 1:15–16).
 - That we be filled with and walk by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:16, 22–23).
 - That we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him (Micah 6:8).
 - That we show compassion and do good, especially to the needy and vulnerable (Matthew 25:35–40; James 1:27).
 - That we be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus (Romans 8:29).
 - That we bear lasting spiritual fruit in good works and character (John 15:8, 16; Colossians 1:10).
 - That we seek first His kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33).
 - That we forgive others as we have been forgiven (Matthew 6:14–15; Ephesians 4:32).

- That we live as His witnesses and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8).
- That we share eternal fellowship with Him in His presence forever (John 17:24; Revelation 21:3–4).
- Even as sinful as we are, all those things can be true if we are “in Christ!”
- Beyond those blessings for ALL Christ-followers, God has unique plans and desires for each of us tailor-made for us. Study these passages this week!
 - Psalm 139:13–16 – Tells us of God’s intimate knowledge of each person’s creation, days of our lives, and our individual story.
 - Jeremiah 1:4–5 – God knew and appointed Jeremiah for a specific calling before he was born.
 - Esther 4:14 – Mordecai suggests Esther is in her position “for such a time as this,” pointing to a unique role in God’s plan.
 - Romans 12:4–8 – Believers are given differing gifts and functions in the one body, implying distinct roles in God’s purposes.
 - 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 18 – The Spirit distributes different gifts “as he wills,” and God arranges each member in the body “as he chose.”
 - Ephesians 2:10 – We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ for “good works...which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
 - Philippians 2:12–13 – God works in each believer “to will and to work for his good pleasure,” shaping personal desire and action.
 - Philippians 1:6 – God begins and carries on a specific good work in each believer until completion.
 - Galatians 1:15–16 – Paul describes being set apart from birth and called by grace for a particular mission.
 - John 21:20–22 – Jesus indicates Peter’s path will differ from John’s, highlighting individualized callings and stories.
 - 1 Peter 4:10–11 – Each believer has received a gift to use as a steward of God’s varied grace in serving others.
- The fulfillment of God’s unique plans for each of us depends on how we live in relationship with Him, trusting Him, obeying Him, and enjoying Him!

So, What’s The Takeaway?

- There is something special about feeling special!
- As followers of Christ, God sees each of us as special and unique and has blessings and plans custom-made for who we are. What a thought!
- A. W. Tozer wrote: *“With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of God to plan it, and the power of God to achieve it, what do we lack?”*
- Another word for invoking a blessing is “benediction.” [Some think it means “It’s time for lunch”]. A benediction is a short prayer or invocation asking God’s blessing on His people. As we go today, here is a great one:
Jude 24–25 (NASB95) — **24** Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, **25** to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

ⁱ Richards, L. O. (1987). *The teacher's commentary* (p. 161). Victor Books.

ⁱⁱ Deere, J. S. (1985). Deuteronomy. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 320). Victor Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Dt 33). Victor Books.

^{iv} <https://thebibleproject.buzzsprout.com/1728449/episodes/16024790-the-uniqueness-of-the-blessings-of-god-deuteronomy-33-1-29> <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/deuteronomy-33/>