

It's a Matter of Choice - Genesis 49:1-33

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everybody. Turn to Genesis 49, if you're not there already. We're fast coming to the end of Genesis. By the Lord willing, we'll finish it next week.

Then we can be raptured. We did it. We got through Genesis. Let's go. We'll go right into Exodus is the plan, and just kind of continue to follow God's narrative here. It's been such a blessing. Teaching through the Old Testament, there's so many principles and truths that are found in the New Testament that match up so well with the Old Testament.

I feel like when you teach the New Testament, very often you're just right there in it. When you go through the Old Testament, God is constantly bringing in so much of the New Testament. It's such a blessing. So last week, we were in Genesis 48, and Jacob's coming quickly to the end of his life, and he's realizing it.

He's been 17 years in Egypt, 17 years with Joseph after spending 17 years at the beginning of Joseph, life with him. He now gets these 17 years. God is so gracious to give him these 17 years at the end of Joseph's life. And he's seen his two sons grow up. And he says, hey, I'm going to pass off the scene. Joseph goes and brings his two boys to Jacob at this time, and Jacob then blesses the two sons of Joseph in place of Joseph.

Remember we said that Joseph is now not just a father to these men, but he's also a brother, as well as being a son of the father of Jacob. And we saw a cool picture there of the Trinity. But if you remember, at the end of the chapter, we said that our greatest privilege is not what we can pass on monetarily to someone, but our greatest privilege privilege we have in life is to pass on the truth and blessing and faithfulness of God, that we have been given the blessing of passing on God's faithfulness. And that's what Joseph did.

[1 : 50] John chapter 1, verse 12, it's kind of been our theme verse going through this as Jacob ends his life. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. How do we enter into God's blessing? How do we enter in?

We enter in through birth. It's through a new birth. But there's a choice in there, isn't there? There's something we have to do. To as many as chose, you could put in there, to receive him.

To as many then as chose to believe on him. The title for today's message is, it's a matter of choice. And as I was reading through this, I'm like, Lord, he's going to bless and kind of speak to each son. And it's so varied. You got 12 sons here. And we're going to find out later in the chapter, in verse 28, it says, and Israel blessed them. The beginning of the chapter says he's going to speak to them of things to come. But we get down to 28 and it says he blessed them. This is a blessing. Man, if I was some of these guys, I don't know if I'd think this is a blessing. Simeon and Levi, cursed is Simeon and Levi. Ooh, I don't know if that's a blessing.

It's not easy to speak the truth to people, especially to those that are closest to us. The ones we love the most, it can be hardest to speak the truth to them. But all of these men, we're going to find, they're all whose son? They're all Jacob's sons. They're all Israel's sons. They all enter into that blessing through birth. But not all of them are able to have the capacity to enjoy that blessing. They don't all receive the same amount of enjoyment of that blessing. And it's through their choices. Our choices matter.

It's a matter of choice because choice matters. In John 3.36, we read, he that believes on the Son has everlasting life. And he that believes not the Son shall not see life. Well, how do we get that life? Believe. It's a matter of choice. Receive it.

[4 : 02] Choose to enter in. Romans 6.20 says, for when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness. So there was a time in your life where you didn't have a choice. You couldn't choose.

Now, we all can choose to believe to enter into that life. That when Jesus says, hey, believe on me, he that believes on the Son, well, that's available to anybody. But outside of that, it says here that we were servants of sin. That literally means to be bound. It means to be held by sin. You couldn't choose anything else. We shouldn't expect the world to do anything other than what? They only know how to do. They are bound in sin. But man, when we come into Christ, when we choose to believe by birth, we now enter in to a new heritage that Romans 6.18 says, then being made free from sin, you've become the servants of righteousness. Now we are bound by righteousness. Does that mean we'll always do righteous things? No. But it means righteousness holds us fast and won't let us go in the same way sin at one time held us fast and didn't let us go. But it's a matter of choice because what we choose in this new life now matters greatly. Galatians chapter 6, Paul is writing to the Galatians who thought at one time they could go back to the law through the deeds of the flesh and gain God's favor. He says, be not deceived. God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

What you put in the ground comes out of the ground. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. But he that sows to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. I don't know how many times we've quoted the scripture going through Genesis, watching these men reap what they've sown. Watching when they sow to the flesh, when they sow to the spirit. Paul is talking to believers here. He's not talking to those who need to come to Christ. He's not saying, hey, you need to come into the house of God. You need to be born again so then you don't have to worry about your flesh.

You won't have to worry about ever sinning again because now you've been born again. Righteousness holds you fast. No, he's talking to believers here. That so to the flesh, they shall of the flesh reap corruption. Even though I have chosen the way of faith, faith does not keep me from experiencing the consequences of sin in this life. If I decide to get smashed, if I decide to get drunk, I'm going to run, I'm going to reject God's commandment. Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the spirit. You know, if instead of being overflowing with the spirit, I'm going to be overflowing with alcohol. I'm going to go out and get drunk. And I jump in my car and I drive out and I get in an accident. As that car is T-boning me, I'm not going to think, well, you know what? Faith will protect me. I don't have to worry now. Sin has no effect upon me. No, I'm going to be paralyzed the rest of my life. Has God rejected me?

Nope. He's going to be with me through that paralysis. As someone asked me, you know, if I jumped off a cliff, would Jesus catch me? It's like, no, he won't. He'll either take you to heaven or be with you in your recovery. But he's not going to keep you from doing something stupid like that. Hopefully he will by putting someone in your path saying, don't do that.

[7 : 13] But even though I've chosen the way of faith, I've made that choice. I'm now born again. I'm part of the heritage, the blessing that comes on the heritage of God's people. Man, there are still consequences. We see that very strongly in this chapter. In Hebrews 10, 23, he says, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised.

God is not going to let us fail. We're all going to make it. His faithfulness keeps us. And so because he's faithful, I can be faithful. It doesn't work the other way around. My faithfulness doesn't then somehow give me greater access to God's faithfulness. Oh God, I've been so faithful. Please be faithful to me. God's going to be faithful to us no matter what. But what that does now is it opens access to me for me to experience being faithful and living in faithfulness. So as we get into that, that's kind of the thought process that we kind of want to keep as we look at these different men and the blessings or prophecy that's spoken to them. This is the first prophecy in the Bible spoken specifically from one man to another. We know Abraham was a prophet when he was down in, I can't remember if it was Egypt or with Abimelech, but either one where God comes to him and says, hey, you're a dead man. That man's my prophet. So you know Abraham's a prophet. But this is the first time we see someone prophesying over someone else like this, the way Jacob does to his sons. So verses one through two, we're going to see there's a choice here and it's a choice to gather. It's the choice of Jacob's sons to respond to his call. Let's pick up in verse one. And Jacob called unto his sons and said, gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together and hear you sons of Jacob, hearken unto Israel, your father. And what's he going to call them together to tell them? What shall befall you in the last days? Befall means to encounter.

What you shall encounter. It actually has the idea of chance within it. You don't know what's coming. Now to us, it seems like chance, but to God in reality, it's an appointed event. God knows what's coming. God has no desire to leave us guessing either, does he? Revelation 1.1 says, the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. And he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant, John. What are those things that are shortly to come to pass? God didn't want us to be guessing. He wants us to know. What are they? We have to come Wednesday night when we start revelation to find out or read ahead. That's allowed to. Jeremiah 29.11, we've quoted this one a lot, especially as we've gone through Joseph.

For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you an expected end. What may seem like a chance encounter to us is in reality an appointed event by God. Joseph, Jacob here, he said the word gather yourselves together twice. They actually have two different meanings. The first one is to come together. So he's saying to his sons, come together.

And then the second one is be here together. Come together and be here together. You know, if Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Zebulun, whatever, said, I don't want to go. I'm not going to go. Jacob's an old man.

[10:27] He wasn't going to force him to come. They had to choose to come. Choose to gather, be here together. Such a picture of what we're even doing right now. And then if you look in verse two, he says, you sons of Jacob hearken unto Israel, your father, the old name, the old nature, the new name, the new nature. The sons of the old nature, come listen, sons of Jacob. I know whose sons you are.

Look at guys. I understand. I was there. The old nature needs to listen to the voice of the new nature. Sons of Jacob, come and listen to Israel, your father. All of Jacob's sons received the blessing of their father by birth, but not all, like we said, experienced that blessing to the same capacity. In Ezekiel 18, Ezekiel's writing about this idea that like generational cursing happened, that if my father sinned, well, I'm going to still bear the consequences of my father's sin.

Or if one of my kids goes off and does some horrible sin, well, then somehow I bear, I bear the guilt of that as well. And then in Ezekiel, Ezekiel writes and says, no, no, no, no.

The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not bear the sins of the father, and the father shall not bear the sins of the son. And he says this in verse 21. He said, but if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed and keep all my statutes and do that which is lawful and right, well, he shall surely live. He shall not die. There's a choice there. But if the wicked will choose to turn all his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him.

In his righteousness that he has done, he shall live. There's a choice there. There's a choice. You see, we are not the victims of the decisions of others. These sons of Jacob, they're not victims of his decision. They can't own that and say, well, my dad was a sneaky rotten thief. He tried to swindle his father and his brother. And oh, my word. He had two wives. And you don't know what my home life was like. You don't know what it was like growing up with Jacob.

[12 : 30] You know, oh yeah, he became Israel. You know how old I was when God worked in his life? Oh, it was so hard for me when I was younger. But we are the result of our own decisions towards God. The soul that sins shall die. We are the result of will we turn and acknowledge and make a decision that has an impact in my life for eternity? And so Jacob's going to begin to speak to these sons of his. He says, hearken unto me, O sons of Jacob. Listen, pay attention, you sons of Israel. And he's going to pass on a blessing to them. The greatest blessing that can ever be passed on, we've already said it is truth, no matter how hard that truth is to hear. In Jeremiah chapter one, Jeremiah is struggling with his call to go and to preach to the nation of Israel. He's like, man, I'm so young.

I'm not ready for this. What do I say to them? What do I say to that person that I love so dearly and I need to speak the truth to? And it's probably going to hurt him.

But the Lord said unto me, say not, I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. And then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said unto me, behold, I put my words in your mouth. When you don't know what to say, speak God's word, not your own. When you have a difficult situation, Jacob here is going to pass on blessing to his sons. The blessing is that he's speaking the truth to them, but it's God's word he's speaking. Man, they might get mad at it. I can't believe you said that. I didn't say that. God's word says that, and I love you too much to not give you the truth. When you don't know what to speak, speak God's words and not your own. Proverbs 28, 23, he that rebukes a man afterwards shall find more favor than he that flatters with the tongue. Not at the moment. At the moment when you rebuke a man, he's not gonna say, oh man, thank you so much. There may be one in a million that might say that. Man, I really appreciated that. You don't know where I was at. I just needed that one last thing to push me over the edge, to turn me back to the Lord. Most of the time, if you rebuke someone, they're like, oh, well, thank you. You know, all right. It's not really your business, but. But afterwards, he shall find more favor than he that flatters with the tongue. Why? Flattery is empty. Flattery doesn't last. Flattery doesn't do anything. You can't count on a flatterer. They're only going to tell you what you want to hear. When you have a difficult situation, you're like, I need counsel.

Oh, yes, everything's going to work out fine. You know, they're flatterers. Afterwards, there'll be more favor. You look at Joseph, how many years it took before God brought the afterword back into his life. Those hard words he spoke to his brothers early in his life as a 17-year-old, that he spoke to his family, and they didn't like that all these years later. God has brought that around. And now we move into the sons, and we're going to go pretty quickly through these and just look at some of the truths that play out over time for each of these boys. So verses 1 through 2 was a choice to gather, and now we've had verses 3 through 28 will be a choice to speak, that Jacob will choose to speak hard things in spite of this situation. So he starts with Reuben, of course, his oldest. And all of these prophecies that he speaks over his sons, they have a near fulfillment, of course, but they're speaking much more to when Joshua, oh, about 500 years later, comes into the promised land with the generation of

Israel, the tribes of Israel at that time, millions plus people, and they begin to populate the land. God gives them their inheritance. But he says, Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength. That means my exaltation. I'm sorry, strength means power. The excellency of dignity, that means exaltation. And the excellency of power, there he means his exaltation, his excellency, his strength. He says, Reuben, you had a lot of potential, a lot of potential, Reuben. Both of those words, dignity and power, dignity, exaltation, but it also can lean into uprising. It's like you've exalted yourself. It's an uprising. It's rebellion. Power means strong, fierce, but it also has the idea of greed in it, that you're so strong that you begin to take for yourself. And that's what Reuben did when he went into Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid. He says, Reuben, you had so much potential. Verse 4, but you were unstable as water. Thou shalt not excel, because thou went up to thy father's bed, then defilest thou it. He went up to my couch. Unstable means to be reckless or unbridled.

[17:15] And Reuben is a man of unbridled passions. He had no control. And an unbridled, passionate life indicates a lack of stability. He says, Reuben, you are so unstable. You are unstable as water.

Your passions are unbridled. You have so much potential, but you had no ability to contain that. Proverbs 16, 32 says, he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty. He that rules his spirit and he that takes the city. Self-control is of greater value and is more heroic than if you go and you can take a city. It's mightier than the mighty if you're able to be self-controlled.

Stability does not come from within, right? Reuben had all this potential. What was the problem? Stability comes from above. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes, but thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast. That therefore means we can be steadfast because what just came before. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory. It came from above through our Lord Jesus Christ. I can now be steadfast. My beloved brethren, be steadfast.

Be unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For as much as you know, your labor is not in vain in the Lord. Our stability comes from the Lord. It doesn't come from within. You know, there's things within I don't like. I have reactions sometimes. I'm like, Lord, I'm not outwardly reacting, but I don't like what's flaring up in here. I don't like how I'm responding in this situation, Lord. I don't like that. What do I do, Lord? Oh, thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. So Reuben, the tribe of Reuben, like I said, about 500 years later, they come into the land and Reuben is one of the tribes, you remember, he will end up on the east side of the Jordan. Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, they will not cross over. They're content to be on the other side. Reuben means behold a son. The tribe of Reuben never did excel. No prophet, no judge, or king that we know of ever came from the tribe of Reuben. Reuben is an example of how the first can be last, as Jesus spoke about in Matthew 19. Now you can see down there at the bottom is where Reuben is. Simeon and Levi in verse 5, they are brethren. Instruments of cruelty are in their habitation. Brethren indicating they have the same characteristics, the same dwelling place, and the same values. They're comfortable with violence. Violence, cruelty is in their habitation. They dwell with it. It's a place that's comfortable for them to be. Oh, my soul, come not thou into their secret.

[19 : 49] Under their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united. For in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Do not come into their assembly. That's another word for congregation, for gathering. Do not come into their company. Self-will indicates they were ruled by their pleasures and their desires. Their own self-will. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. Proverbs 22, 24, and 25 says make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways and get a snare to your soul. Is anger a sin? No. The response to anger can be a sin. Somebody who has no ability to control that anger, was not yet given that to the Lord, and they're an angry man, in other words, it's bursting out. The problem with anger is the consequences of anger are usually far and away beyond the reason for that anger. These men are ruled by their passions, their self-will.

Think of a little kid. They don't get their way. What happens? They get angry. That's self-will. They get very angry. They want that because they think that everybody is there for their edification and their fulfillment. But the consequences of anger are usually far beyond the reason for the anger.

Simeon. Simeon was scattered. The prophecy about them being scattered in Israel when they came into the land. Their tribe, the tribe of Simeon, was the weakest one numerically. And they also shared an allotment of land with Judah when the tribes were dealt out. So Simeon shrunk and ended up just getting lost in Judah. Levi, and I think this is really cool with the idea that our choices matter, Levi is under this same pronouncement. Cursed be their anger. O my soul, come not thou into their secret.

Simeon and Levi are instruments of cruelty. Levi's under that same thing. Exact same place. And yet Levi will never be given an inheritance in the land. Because in Exodus 32, when Moses is on the mountain and all the people are making the golden calf and worshiping him, Moses comes down and he says, hey, whoever's on the Lord's side, draws a line in the sand, essentially, you come with me.

The entire tribe of Levi comes. And because of that, God makes them a blessing. Does God's word change? Mm-mm. They're still scattered in Israel. But God can turn a curse into a blessing. And then they become priests. And the Lord says, I will not give you land for inheritance. For I, the Lord God, will be your inheritance. And that's Joshua 13. Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.

[22 : 26] Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies. My father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah stepped into the role of the eldest son by taking the responsibility of the eldest. You remember, Judah, at the time, when Joseph was sold into slavery, it was his idea. They wanted to kill him.

And then Judah's like, you know what? I think we can get a buck. I think we can get a few dollars for this kid. He's worth something. It was his idea to sell him. At one time, it was Judah's idea to sell his brother for his own benefit. And then when it came to Benjamin, God had done a work in his life. Remember, he leaves the family, that whole thing with Tamar. And then he realizes, I have been wrong.

He comes back. And now, instead of looking to sell out his brother for his own benefit, he's willing to sell out his own life for the sake of his brother. God does this wonderful work.

In verse 9, Judah is a lion's whelp. From the prey, my son, thou art gone up. He stooped down. He couched as a lion, as an old lion who shall rouse him up. We know that Jesus will be called the lion of the tribe of Judah. But right here, this just means that Judah is prosperous. He gets the prey.

He's victorious. And he's secure. Who will rouse him up? And Judah was one of the tribes, one of the last ones, to go into captivity. Judah was also blessed with having Jerusalem within his borders. Judah means let God be praised. And the leadership position that Judah had among his brothers meant that the eventual kings of Israel would come from Judah and that ultimately the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. Verse 10, the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come. Unto him shall the gathering of the people be. A prophecy of Jesus. Jesus is referred to Shiloh. The name just means he whose right it is or whom it belongs to.

[24 : 20] It's his right to rule. It belongs to him. And that means that the scepter, that their ability to govern themselves will not be taken until Jesus comes. Rome at one point took away the right of the nation-state of Israel to exercise capital punishment. He took away the scepter, their right to rule. It was said on that day that the chief priests and the scribes, there was wailing, and they were like, because we had this promise, the Messiah didn't come. And it's very possible on that day that a 12-year-old boy was in the temple meeting with the scribes. And it was Jesus the Messiah had come. Binding his foal unto the vine, and here's a beautiful picture of Jesus. Jesus in John 15 is called the vine. I behold, I am the vine, you are the branches. Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt unto the choice vine. We know when he rode into Jerusalem on, I was going to say the day of atonement. And a triumphal entry. When he rode into Jerusalem, it says that he was on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And here he is binding. That word bind means to imprison or to tie. You think of how Jesus says he set his face to Jerusalem. It says he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

He had bound himself for that purpose. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his donkey's colt unto the choice vine, he washed his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes. Jesus washed his garment in red, so that we might wash ours and be white. His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk, just indicating an abundance of blessing. Zebulun. Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the seas, and he shall be for a haven of ships, and his border shall be unto Zidon. And so Zebulun literally was between two seas, the Mediterranean and the Galilee. Well, you can kind of see it. It's up there. But he was between those two seas. You know, Zebulun is kind of like, you have the 12 apostles.

Man, Peter, James, John, Bartholomew. I don't know much about him, right? Get these, get into these other guys, you're like, Simon Zelotus. I don't really know who he is. Well, it's kind of like the sons of Jacob. Some of you are like, who is this? Who is Zebulun? Well, Zebulun gets the amazing privilege of having Jesus walk in his borders one day. And Matthew 4 says, Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, John the Baptist, he departed into Galilee.

And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. Those are just the Greek words of saying Zebulun and Naphtali. Zebulun and Nephthilim. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people which sat in darkness saw great light. And to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up. We don't know much about Zebulun, but Zebulun gives this amazing blessing.

Issachar. Issachar is a strong donkey couching down between two burdens. And he saw that the rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant. And he bowed his shoulder to bear and became a servant under tribute. Issachar is right in the middle of the land, tucked in there. It's an interesting phrasing here. Seems like a good thing, but then what's this? He became a servant under tribute.

[27 : 48] Issachar means man of hire. And because of his size and their abundance, they were very wealthy. They were often targets of foreign armies who would put them into servitude. They became a band of slaves. The idea is he had the strength to prosper. He had everything at his disposal to do that, but not the will, not the choice to use what God had given him.

Dan, Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent, by the way, an adder in the path that bites the horse heels so that his rider falls backwards. And if you're Dan, you're sitting there going, what? What'd I do?

Jacob is speaking forth God's truth and God's word. It's not for us to determine the application of God's word. It's just for us to speak it and to be faithful to do that.

God is the one who determines where it goes to, right? The Holy Spirit, thankfully there's a Holy Spirit filter that I say things and thank the Lord. He takes it and filters it and you hear what he needs you to hear. There are times where it's like, that didn't go so well. And someone will say, oh, that thing you said ministered to me. I'm like, I don't even remember saying that.

That was the Holy Spirit filter. Thank the Lord. Dan shall judge his people. And he did have a judge, a famous judge. Samson came out of Dan. But then it says he shall be a serpent, by the way, an adder in the path that bites the horse heels so that his rider shall fall backwards. Dan was a troublesome tribe. He introduced idolatry into Jerusalem, Judges 18. Jeroboam set up one of his idolatrous golden calves in Dan, 1 Kings 12. And later Dan became a center of idol worship in Israel in Amos chapter 8. What does a serpent do? It's one who spreads poison. It's one who injects poison and spreads poison. This was Dan. He's being told this.

[29 : 49] And then verse 18, right after, Jacob essentially speaks of this poison that shall be injected. He says, I have waited for your salvation, O Lord. God's salvation is the remedy for the poison of the serpent. As Jacob is speaking this truth over his son's lives, remember these men are about 60, 60-something now? Jacob's 50, and these men, Reuben could be in his 60s at this point.

I have waited for your salvation, O God. Gad is a troop that shall overcome him. A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last. That's all he has to say about Gad. You think, now wait a minute, they're all sons of Jacob. How come Reuben got, I mean, Judah got this much, and Gad got that much? Why? Why? Aren't they all under the same blessing? Don't they all get to partake in the same blessing? Judah could have easily been lumped in with Simeon and Levi. He could have been like, hey, Judah, you sold your brother into slavery, and he could have had the same kind of pronouncement.

But Judah chose to respond to the work God was doing in his life, and he was able then to receive and partake of more of the blessing. We all receive the same amount of blessing from God.

There's no junior Christians, right? It's one of the reasons we like the kids in the sanctuary with us. There's no junior Christians. You're at this tier, and you're at this tier. It's not how it works at all. We all have the same amount of God's blessing. We all have access to the fullness of God. But it's our choice how much of that we get to partake in, how much of that we respond to. So Gad, as a troop, a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last. And Gad did have a number of troops that he supplied for King David. That's in 1 Chronicles 12. And yet, in the days of Jeremiah, he was very oppressed by the foreign armies. They would come in and get Gad, who was on, if you remember, though, the east side of the Jordan. So it was pretty easy pickings when, like, Assyria would come in.

And yet, at the end, he shall overcome. And it makes me think of Revelation 3, verse 5. He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. And I will blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. This is when John is writing to the seven churches, and he's saying, hey, those that overcome, at the end, Gad, you're going to make it because of God's faithfulness. Then God will blot out your sins, and your name will be written in the book of life. Which church is this talking about?

[32 : 21] You'll have to come out on Wednesday night when we do the book of Revelation to find out, or read yourself. Asher, out of Asher, his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

The idea here is that Asher was very blessed as well because of where he was situated. Naphtali is a hind let loose. He gives goodly words. And here we see Naphtali right next to Asher up there in the north, near Zebulon. If you notice, Naphtali, what does it pretty much encompass?

The Sea of Galilee is up there. Capernaum and Naphtali. Naphtali means my wrestling, and his land, the land of Naphtali, was a key portion of the area that Jesus ministered in, near the Sea of Galilee. Remember we read in Matthew chapter 4, where it sat out of the land of Zebulon and Naphtali by the way of the sea, that those that sat in darkness saw a great light.

And to them which sat in the region in the shadow of death, light is sprung up. And then it says in verse 17, from that time, Jesus began to preach and to say, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Naphtali, he gives goodly words. And some of the best words, not some of, the best words ever spoken were spoken in Naphtali. We don't know much about him.

He gets a little blessing, but what a blessing, right? What a blessing. Never discount the size of the blessing God wants to do in your life. Joseph is a fruitful bow, even a fruitful bow by a wall, or by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The idea is he has a constant source of life and uncontained growth. He's pulling from this well, and there's just growth that can't be contained, growing over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him and hated him, but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel. We're going to see a number of names here for the God of Israel. The idea here with Joseph is his enemies hurt him, but they could not ultimately harm him nor diminish his strength, but he ended up stronger. And Jacob now declaring that in parentheses there, from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel. Not from Joseph, he's saying.

[34 : 29] He's saying the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, that from thence, from that mighty God is the shepherd, the stone of Israel. Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee, and by the almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lie under, blessings of the breast and of the womb. Joseph, you're going to be so fruitful. God has a blessing. But what came before that blessing? Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee. Before we can receive God's blessing, we must first receive God's help. Ephesians chapter 1, Paul writes, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. We receive God's blessings because in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Have you allowed God first to help you that you may then take part in God's blessing? Joseph, you remember, it's not the tribe of Joseph. It's Ephraim and Manasseh that were blessed last week. Well, not actually last week, many thousands of years ago. They were blessed. Manasseh being the older, but Joseph crosses his arms. Remember, the blessing came by way of the cross, the redemption. As Jacob says, may the God who redeemed me out of all evil bless the lads and crosses his arms. So Manasseh is the older, he's larger, but Ephraim is the greater, is blessed because he has, again, within him, he'll have Shiloh and Bethel, both places where the tabernacle dwell. In his words about Joseph, Jacob lists five titles for God.

He lists the mighty God of Jacob, the shepherd, the stone of Israel, the God of your father, and the almighty. Five titles that Jacob says, Joseph, you're going to be so fruitful, but I want to pass on to you a greater blessing. I want you to know my God. And he continues in verse 26, where he says, even by the God of thy father who has helped me and by the almighty shall bless you. Verse 26, the blessing of thy father. He's saying, Joseph, may the blessing of your father, being Jacob himself, the blessing of thy father. Blessings of thy father prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors. And it's just a old English way of saying those who've given who were my ancestors.

The blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, on the crown of him, of the head of him that was separate from his brothers. So he's saying, Joseph, I have had greater blessing than my father's. How so? Well, Abraham, the father of faith, had how many sons? Two. Only one son was blessed. Isaac, the son of promise, how many sons did he have? Jacob and Esau. Only one son was blessed. Jacob, the man of the covenant, he had 12 sons. And now he's bringing in Joseph and Ephraim. All of them receive a blessing. He says, Joseph, I have been blessed. I have been blessed in a greater way, in an eternal way, and in a secure way.

And I want you to know God that way. And then he says here, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate. That word separate is the same word for Nazarite, for a Nazarite vow, a Nazarene, one consecrated, one set apart, like the idea of holiness. He said, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. When Joseph was separated out from his brothers, was he thinking, praise God, hallelujah? Was he singing songs to the Lord? No, he's crying his eyes out. It was a horrible moment in his life. Joseph's separation was not by his choice, and it was painful, but it's also ordained by God, wasn't it? Now we see on the opposite side of all of this, oh, Joseph, God had a plan for you.

You had to be separated out, consecrated out from your brethren so that God could do the work through you that he chose to do. But ultimately, Joseph's separation resulted in a blessing and deliverance, not just for himself, but his entire family. We are told in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, wherefore, choose essentially to come out from among them and be you separate, saith the Lord.

[38 : 42] Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a father unto you. You shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. There's a consecration that has to take place as we choose to follow Christ. Sometimes that means mom, dad, brother, sister, good friend. Man, I have to consecrate myself because God is calling me to do that. But look what God gives back. He will be a father unto us. My sons and my daughters. That means siblings. That means here we are as a family, brothers and sisters in Christ, saith the Lord Almighty. And then he ends here with Benjamin.

Benjamin shall raven as a wolf. In the morning, he shall devour the prey, and at night, he shall divide the spoil. Benjamin was very fierce. It means he's fierce and single-purposed. Benjamin, those who came from Benjamin, Ehud, remember Ehud in Judges? He went in and stuck the sword in the left. He was left-handed, stuck the sword into Eglon, the really fat king of, I think it was Moab, Midian, can't remember, one of them M words. Saul, King Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, and then Paul. And Paul was very fierce and single-purposed, wasn't he? He came from the tribe of Benjamin. In verse 28, and all these are the twelve tribes of Israel. And this is that, that their father spake unto them, and he blessed them. Everyone according to his blessing, he blessed them. Did Simeon and Levi have to have a blessing that was a curse like that? Nope. And they didn't have to stay in it either. We have proof of that because of what happened with Levi. Everyone had a blessing, and everyone could partake of that blessing as much as they chose to. And he charged them. So we've seen a choice to gather, a choice to speak, and now we're going to see a choice to promise. His sons have to choose to promise as we end out this chapter. And he charged them and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people.

Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought, with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying place. So what was that all about? Just went. Abraham's bones still declare that that's Abraham's land. We have a record of deed here. A deed transfer is what we have. And this is the record of it. That's Abraham's land, and Abraham's bones, and Isaac's bones, and Rebekah's, and Sarah's are all there. They may have deteriorated, but they're still there in Abraham's land, in Abraham's field. Joseph, I mean Jacob, he says, receive the help from God, receive blessing from God, and only after receiving God's help and God's blessing is he now able to give God's charge. And he gives him this charge.

In Job chapter 19, Job was most likely a contemporary of Abraham. He says, For I know that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me. We know that Jesus said that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job all live today. That body that's there, still in Israel, well, it'll rise, and it will be metamorphosized into a new body. Not at the same time the church rises. The rapture is the resurrection, the first resurrection for the church. But it will rise. Jacob lives today. A choice to gather, a choice to speak, a choice to gather for the purpose of blessing, a choice to speak truth, a choice to promise beyond death, and a choice to surrender now to God's faithfulness. When Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost, or surrendered, was gathered unto his people. Now, I don't think it means he just turned over and died. It just means he was done. He had done what God had called him to do. And I see in this, you know, Jake was speaking to his sons. Like I said, they're like 60 years old at this point.

[43 : 04] Except for Joseph and Judah, none of them left home that we know about. So that's why he's like, come on, boys, come here. I'm going to tell you what's going to come next, because they're like, we don't know what to do. Remember when there was famine in the land of Canaan, and they were all in their 40s and 50s, and they don't know what to do. And dad has to say, go down to Egypt and get food. Oh, that's a good idea, dad. So they're all standing around like, what do we do? There's a father's responsibility to warn, to bless, and to charge. And I think of that in light of Jacob right now. These are grown men, and yet it's still his responsibility to warn, to bless, and to charge. It's not his responsibility to be their authority. He's not. He's not an authority. But it is his responsibility to warn, to bless, and to charge. It's the same responsibility we have one to another. I'm not an authority over you that is like, you shall do and shall not do, and if I ever get like that, go somewhere else.

But men have a responsibility to warn, to warn you of things to come, to bless you with God's blessing, and to charge you to continue to choose the way of the Lord. I think it's Jacob pulls his legs up into the bed, and he's thinking back. This man's 140 years old, thinking back to when he was in his 70s, running from home, and the Lord appears to him. He says, I, the Lord, am with you, and I will keep you in all places where you go, and I will bring you again into this land, for I will not leave you until I've done that which I've spoken to you of. And Jacob can lay there, turn over, and go, God, you've done that. You have not left me. You have done everything that you have spoken to me of.

You know, we've said before that past faithfulness equals future promise by God. Well, we also have that God's faithfulness to Jacob means God's faithfulness to me. God was faithful to Jacob.

He's like, well, he's gonna be faithful to me. Say, well, wait a minute, Jared. You're not a son of Jacob. You're not a son of Israel. I wish I was. My sister did a bunch of research, and we don't have any Jewish blood. I can't make Aliyah and go live in Israel. You're not a son of Israel. Yes, I am, according to Galatians chapter 3. Know you, therefore, that they which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham. So then we, or then they, or we could put in we, we which be of faith are blessed with the faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham. We are. We fall into the same blessing, the blessing of birth, and we can partake of that as much or as little as we want to.

As we said at the beginning, it's a matter of choice. It's a matter of choice because it matters what we choose, and a choice can be only made by those who have the capacity to make the choice.

[45 : 45] The first choice you have to make is, am I in Christ? That's step one. Before you can come under the blessing of God, you must first come under the help of God, and we choose that, to believe.

As John 1 chapter, or I'm sorry, John 1 verse 12, we read in the beginning, but as many as chose to receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

That's step one. And then we are given this amazing opportunity now to continue to choose God's blessing and God's faithfulness. A choice can only be made by those who have the capacity to do so.

Now, I'm going to read a few scriptures to you. I'm not going to give any references. I'm going to read them. I want you to hear God's heart for you. You know, we can think, oh man, that's like a heavy trip to always have to do what God wants me to do, and I got to work for this, and what if I don't choose the right thing? Am I going to end up like Levi and Simeon? God gives us the capacity to choose, but then he also gives us the capacity to keep that choice. We don't have to rely upon ourselves.

Just close your eyes and just soak and just listen to God's heart for you. Fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

[47 : 24] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. For he that has entered into his rest, he has also ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. Know you not that so many of us, as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death.

The like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Likewise, reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourself unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace.

And Elijah came unto all the people, and he said, how long? Halt you between two opinions. If the Lord is God, choose to follow him. In Christ, we make choices not for the purpose of righteousness, but because we are righteous. Not to gain God's favor, but because we have God's favor. We make choices not because of our faithfulness, but because of God's. And the Spirit and the Bride say, come.

And let him that hears come, and let him that is a thirst come. And whosoever will choose, let him take the water of life freely. Amen.

You know, he's given us freedom. He's given us life. And so I guess it's just walking it, living it.

[49 : 29] We don't have to do that choice. He already did that. We just get the benefit of living in it and walking in it. It's his power. It's his strength. It's his blessing. Man, just go out there and grab as much of it as you can. Let him fill your life and work through your life. Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you. The Lord be gracious unto you. Lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen. Have a great week. Love you guys.