

Reasons to Rejoice

Luke 10:17-20

Pastor John Miller

Luke 10:17, “And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils”—or demons—“are subject unto us through thy name. 18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. 19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits”—demons—“are subject unto you,”—I read all that to get to this—“but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

You say, “Well, John, didn’t we read these verses on Sunday morning?” Yes, you’re quite observant. We did read these verses on Sunday. But when I came to verse 20, and Jesus says, “Don’t rejoice, don’t be glad, don’t be happy, don’t rejoice that the demons were subject unto you.”

The seventy in this context had gone out. They’d done their mission preaching, and they had cast demons out. They’d healed the sick, they preached the gospel, and they came back rejoicing in the success that Jesus had invested into them, the power and the authority over demons, and they came back just elated, “That was amazing! Lord, You should’ve been there and seen it. It was awesome, even the demons were subject to us.” Jesus kind of causes them to call in check, and He actually says to them, “. . . rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” When I read that, I thought about that what an awesome thing that Jesus is actually telling us that we should be rejoicing that are names are written in heaven. That’s an interesting thought that we have our names written in heaven. I think that this is the most important reason for us to rejoice.

You know, we thank the Lord for His blessings in our life, but do we realize that our spiritual blessings are to be of the utmost priority. We’re to, Count your blessings, name them one by one, but usually at Thanksgiving you think, Well, I’m thankful for my health, thankful for my job, thankful for my wife, thankful for my kids, thankful for my grandkids, thankful for my family, thankful for my church...thankful for my pastor, right? throw that in there. Those are all wonderful things to be thankful for, but rather should we be thankful that our names—individually, personally—are written in heaven. That’s the most important reason we should be thankful.

I mentioned Sunday morning, and I’ll mention it again before we leave this passage, that that statement that, “. . . your names are written in heaven,” in the Greek is in what’s called the present tense. What that means is your names have been written in the past, they are written in the present, and they will continue to be written in the future. So, they have been written, they are written, and they shall forever be written. I’m of the belief that our names were written in that book before we were ever born. We’re going to see in Ephesians in just a moment that we are chosen by God, elect by God before the foundations of the world, and that God Himself wrote our names in that book; and if your name is in the book, sometimes it’s called the Book of

Life, that you are going to be saved, it just takes the time in God's plan and purpose, and that you will be saved, and when you go to heaven you'll spend eternity with God, so it has great implication theologically and doctrinally.

I wrote down 14 reasons why we should rejoice that our names are written in heaven, then I realized we would be here all night, and I want to eat some mashed potatoes tomorrow, so I whittled it down to three and a couple other subpoints. I thought I should have a text for my points as a good preacher should, so I want to go to Ephesians 1 and look at the blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus.

In Ephesians 1:3 Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"—and notice what he says—"who hath"—past tense—"blessed us with all spiritual blessings"—notice spiritual blessings—"in heavenly places," so Jesus said these material blessings are great, but the spiritual blessings are what you should be thankful for that your name is written in heaven. When you come to Ephesians 1:3-14, and it's such a familiar passage—and I know that many of you are familiar with it, we studied it many times, I preached on it numerous times—where Paul delineates some of the great blessings that are ours in Christ, and it's because our name is written in heaven that these blessings are true of us.

Why should we rejoice that our names are written in heaven? I believe that Ephesians 1 gives us the reason. Now, notice with me in verse 3 he starts with a beatitude, "Blessed," or it's really a worship or praise to God, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here the Father is called, " . . . the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and "Blessed be," means praise to or worship to or exalting Him or even bringing Him joy and pleasure, just acknowledging God.

That's what we should do at Thanksgiving, we should be thanking the Lord, we should be praising the Lord. I've often wondered in reality if a person is not a Christian, who are they thanking at Thanksgiving? When they say, "I'm thankful for . . ." they're not thanking God particularly, but we as Christians actually turn toward God in our personal relationship with God and we are giving Him thanks because we know that He's the One from whom all blessings flow. Amen? So, we praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Just a couple of thoughts again about verse 3 before we break down the blessings, and that is, " . . . who hath blessed us with all"—not some, but all—"spiritual blessings." So, these aren't referring to physical, material blessings. In the Old Testament their blessings were primarily physical or material—the land, the fruit, the blessings of the land that God promised them—but for us as believers our blessings primarily are spiritual. A lot of people want to focus on the material—they want health, they want wealth, they want prosperity, they want to have an easy life—but our blessings are true great blessings, and we need to see that and acknowledge that. Our spiritual blessings, and notice they are " . . . in heavenly places," this phrase literally means in the heavenlies. So, praise "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath"—this is a done deal.

By the way, these blessings are true of every Christian no matter how long you've walked with the Lord, no matter how mature you are in the Lord, no matter how spiritual you might think you are. Every child of God has all these blessings because of their position in Christ, and that's the key phrase not only in verse 3 but in this whole first chapter to these blessings.

So, “. . . spiritual blessings in heavenly places”—or in the heavenlies—“in Christ.” That phrase, “in Christ,” is the most commonly used phrase of Paul the apostle and one of the most important concepts for every Christian to understand. Before you were born again, I'm just kind of doing this real simple, before you were saved or born again or regenerated, you were “in Adam.” Adam was your federal head, and Adam's sins, Adam's death, Adam's condemnation, Adam's judgment were on you. All of humanity is either “in Adam” or “in Christ,” and Christ is the last Adam, not the second Adam, because there won't be a third or fourth or a fifth. There's Adam the first and Adam the last; there's the first Adam, and then the last Adam being Christ. All of humanity are either “in Adam” or you're “in Christ.”

Before you were born again you were “in Adam,” and all this condemnation, sin, and death were yours. But when you got born again, and we're going to see it in our text, when you believed and you were regenerated and you received the Holy Spirit of promise, you were taken out of positionally “in Adam” and you were placed “in Christ.” Now that you are “in Christ,” all that pertains to Christ—His righteousness, His obedient life, His substitutionary death—it's called imputed to you by your faith, so you are “in Christ.” You've all read Romans 8:1, right? It says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” and when you end the chapter of Romans 8, it says there is no separation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Now, I'd like to go a little deeper in all of this, but I'll just throw out a couple thoughts; that is, I'm convinced that once you're “in Christ,” you're always “in Christ.” There's no teaching in the Bible telling you that you can get out of Christ and go back into Adam. Every Christian is “in Christ.” The moment you were born again, you were placed “in Christ.” Paul says to the Colossians, “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” So, you're taken out of Adam, you're placed “in Christ.”

You didn't put yourself “in Christ,” the Holy Spirit did that. You can't take yourself out of Christ because God did that, and we're going to see tonight one of the blessings from the Holy Spirit is that, “. . . ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” This is what's called the believer's position “in Christ,” and all Christians, all Christians equally, are “in Christ” perfectly righteous. This is your position. But that begins a life of sanctification where we need to grow in our walk and relationship with Christ, so that moves us from our position of being perfectly righteous “in Christ,” no condemnation, to our practice, how we live the Christian life. Someone put it like this, we are “in Christ” declared righteous, it's called justification; Christ is in us to make us righteous, it's called sanctification.

A lot of Christians just don't understand that and they get confused and maybe when they have a sinful thought or they do something that's disobedient to God, they have this idea that God kicks them out of the family or God doesn't love them anymore or they've lost their salvation or

they've ruined their walk with God. It is true that we need to maintain fellowship with God, and 1 John 1:9 is in the Bible for that. If we sin, we must just " . . . confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," but we don't lose sonship. We lose fellowship and communion, but we don't lose sonship. We're still the children of God.

It's so important for you to understand you are positionally, perfectly righteous. Satan tries to condemn you, tries to put you down. You need to remind yourself, "I am in Christ; Christ is in me. I am righteous because of that and He gives me His power to live a righteous life and I'm growing in the grace and knowledge of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." But this is the believers' position, verse 3.

Now, let's get down to the blessings that are ours because our names are written in heaven. The first reason we should rejoice that our names are written in heaven is because we were chosen by God the Father, chosen by God the Father. Look at verses 4-6. Paul says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

There's a lot that we can say about these verses, but in these first few verses here, verses 4-6, we see the blessings that God "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." So, He's chosen us in Christ and to be in Christ, and when did He choose us? Before the foundation of the world. This is what is known as election. God chooses us, we don't choose Him. You say, "Well, didn't I believe in Jesus?" Yes. "Didn't I put my faith in Jesus Christ to be saved?" Yes, you did. But in just an amazing way that you could never fully comprehend or fully understand, if you are saved, God chose you; if you are not saved, it's because you haven't believed and repented and trusted in Jesus Christ. So, we have the sovereign grace and choice of God in electing us, but we also have human freedom, and I believe we can resist God's grace, we can say, "No," to God's grace, and we can say, "No," to salvation and we're responsible. So, if you go to hell, your loss. You can't blame God and say, "He didn't choose me." If you go to heaven and you're saved, you can't take any credit for it, He chose you by His grace.

A lot of times Christians can't accept that. They say, "No, it's either one or the other." They do that because they can't reconcile the two. How do you reconcile that God chose me but I actually chose Him? And the answer is, you can't reconcile it. But I believe it reconciles in a higher unity that God reconciles it, and I'll just leave it with Him and accept that both are taught in the Scriptures. To teach one to the neglect of the other, or to believe one to neglect the other, is actually to deny the clear teaching of Scripture, the Word of God.

I don't want to spend the whole night on the doctrine of election. I just want to say that it's taught in the Bible, and that if you're a child of God, you can be thankful that your name was written in heaven by God, and that He wrote it there before the foundations of the world. I know

you can't understand that, and you don't need to understand that to enjoy it, just give thanks to the Lord for He is good. Amen? And be thankful that God has chosen you by His grace. So, He chose us in Christ, He chose us when? "Before the foundation of the world," and He chose us why? So "that we should be holy and without blame"—without blemish—"before him in love," which is how we are positionally "in Christ" and how we are to grow in sanctification and develop to be like Him, but until we get to heaven, we won't practically be perfectly righteous but we will be positionally righteous in Him.

Notice, He actually, "predestinated us unto the adoption of children"—this is all combined in this idea that He chose us, He predestined us. That phrase means He determined beforehand what He would do with those who did believe and were saved and those whom He chose. Again, you say, "Pastor John, it's Thanksgiving. Can you be a little bit less theological and not give me a headache because it's just too much." Predestination is different than election. Election is God chooses you; predestination is God predetermining what He will do with you. If you want to know the answer to that, read Romans 8, ". . . whom he called . . . them he also glorified." What begins with grace ends in glory.

Paul said in Philippians, ". . . he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Amen? It's a marvelous thought to think that God chose me by His grace and that He predestined what He would do with me, that there would be no condemnation, Romans 8:1, and that there would be no separation; therefore, I should rejoice and give thanks to the Lord for He is good.

How does he end this, verse 6? "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." He says three times in these verses we are going to cover tonight, all of this is to be, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." Salvation is designed by God so that He gets all the credit, all the glory, all the praise, and we are His trophies of grace and we're all to be, "To the praise of the glory of his grace."

The first reason that we should rejoice that our names are written in heaven is because God wrote them there and He chose us and predestined us all by His mercy and all by His grace.

The second reason we should be rejoicing that our names are written in heaven is because we have been forgiven through God the Son. We've been chosen by God the Father, but secondly, we've been forgiven by God the Son. Look at verses 7-12, "In whom"—he's referring to the beloved at the end of verse 6, which is Jesus Christ, and it's in Him—"we have redemption." So, we're forgiven and we're redeemed. We're bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, and we have, verse 7, "the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance," so we've been redeemed, we've been adopted, and we have now an inheritance as we're the children of God, that's why our name is written in heaven, and we're

being, “predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”

If you're a Christian, you've been chosen. If you're a Christian, you've been forgiven, you've been adopted, your sins have been forgiven. Again, these are the blessings, verse 3, that are ours in Christ in the heavenlies.

To be redeemed means that you've been bought. Jesus died on the cross to buy you from sin and slavery, to set you free, to make you His very own. We belong to God, “. . . therefore glorify God in your body . . . which are God's.” I love that fact that he says even, “. . . the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,” the richness of his grace, His unmerited, undeserved favor. How rich is God's grace? It is infinite. It's amazing, right? John Newton wrote a song Amazing Grace (how sweet the sound) that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see. God's grace is amazing! God's grace is infinite as God is.

What could you be thankful for this Thanksgiving? God chose me, God the Son forgave my sins, that's why my name is written down in heaven, that's why it means that I'll go to heaven, that's why it means I'll see Jesus face-to-face, that's why it means I'll have a new body. When you're celebrating Thanksgiving tomorrow and you can't really eat some of the things you want to eat because of your body, just rejoice that one day you'll have a new body. I believe that we'll be eating in heaven, by the way, and we won't gain weight, we won't get indigestion, and I'll stop right there. It will be marvelous. There'll be fruit trees. There'll be all kinds of things to enjoy because our sins have been forgiven. When we think of my name written in heaven, it means my sins are forgiven, it means I'm a child of God, it means that I'm going to see Jesus face-to-face. Don't get all earthbound. Don't get all bummed out. Don't get all upset if you don't have the material blessings that you want. If you're a Christian, you have all these spiritual blessings in Christ.

So, we are chosen by God the Father. Secondly, we have been forgiven by God the Son, and here's blessing three, verses 13-14. Look at it with me. We should rejoice that our names are written in heaven because we've been sealed by the Holy Spirit, by God the Holy Spirit. He says, verse 13, “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is”—referring to the Holy Spirit—“the earnest”—which means the downpayment—“of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession,”—that's our glorification. So, we have our election, our justification, our sanctification, now we have our glorification, “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his”—glorious grace.

God the Father chose us, to God be glory. God the Son died for us to save us from our sins, to Christ be glory. God the Holy Spirit seals us “. . . unto the day of redemption.” What a blessed, blessed gift the Holy Spirit is!

This part of the blessings that are listed here is one of my favorite, “. . . ye were sealed with that

holy Spirit of promise.” He was promised by the Father, promised even in the Old Testament, promised by Jesus. He came in His fulness in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, but the moment you are born again as a child of God, guess what every Christian has? The Holy Spirit. If you don’t have the Holy Spirit, you’re not a Christian. Every Christian has been sealed by and with the Holy Spirit for how long? “. . . unto the day of redemption.” Go back to my statement—once in Christ, always in Christ. This is consistent with that. The sealing of the Holy Spirit speaks of security.

In the ancient world when they sent a package, like we send packages today, they would seal the package. Only the sender and the receiver could open the package. When Jesus seals you with the Holy Spirit, He is both the sender and the receiver. He’s the only One that can break the seal, and He’s promised not to break the seal. He’s promised that you’re “. . . sealed unto the day of redemption.” Again, that’s Philippians where Paul says, “. . . that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” It speaks of ownership as well—that stamp, that seal—that we are His property. We belong to God. I love the truth that it is speaking of our security, and no one can break that seal.

If anyone ever asks you as a Christian, “Do you have the Holy Spirit?” The answer is yes because you can’t be a Christian without the Holy Spirit. Now, I recognize that all Christians have the Spirit, but the Spirit doesn’t have all Christians. You say, “What do you mean by that?” In Ephesians 5:18, Paul commands us, it’s an imperative, “. . . but be filled with the Spirit.” So, not all Christians are Spirit-filled. What does that mean? It means that they’re not all being empowered and controlled and yielded, day by day, moment by moment, to the power of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes they get into the flesh, and even as Christians we have to constantly be filled. It’s be being filled. It’s in the passive voice, let the Spirit fill you. You do have the Spirit, but the Spirit wants to control you—your thoughts, your heart, your attitude, and your actions, your life. We are all sealed by the Holy Spirit, and it’s “. . . unto the day of redemption.”

Notice the Spirit is also called the “earnest,” which means downpayment. It was also used, that word “earnest”, of an engagement ring. What is an engagement ring? It’s a promise, “I’m going to marry you,” or “We’re going to get married.” God gives you an engagement ring. He gives you a promise, and He also gives you a foretaste of what is to come. It’s the same concept of a downpayment when you buy a house or you buy an automobile. Automobiles are more expensive than houses are today, and you give a downpayment. What does that mean? It’s earnest money, “I’m going to finish the transaction. I’m going to give you x amount of dollars a month for several years until this car is paid for.” It’s a sample of more to come.

When you buy a house, you put money down. What does it mean? It means that’s just the beginning, right? There’s a whole lot of more money that needs to be given toward the purchase of that home. God gives you the downpayment, the Holy Spirit, and He says, “I’m going to finish the deal. I’m earnest about this transaction, and I’m going to keep you secure and safe until you go to heaven, until you’re in My presence, so that you have been sealed until the day of redemption.”

There is nothing you can do to break the seal. You can't get yourself out of Christ. You can't unseal yourself from the Holy Spirit. It is a, verse 3, “. . . spiritual blessing.” It is yours because of your position in Christ.

Now, be thankful for your job. Be thankful for your kids. Be thankful for your dog, good luck trying that one. Be thankful for your health, whatever God's done for you, but be rejoicing that your name is written in heaven. Amen? That you've been chosen by God the Father, you've been forgiven by God the Son, and you've been sealed by God the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. Certainly, we have so much to be thankful for. Amen? Let's pray.