

# Your Greatest Reason for Rejoicing

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 10, where we're going to be looking at verses 17–20, “Your Greatest Reason for Rejoicing.”

I did a search of different texts in the New Testament to see what people were rejoicing about in various places. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, when she became pregnant, rejoiced in God her Savior [see Luke 1:46–55]. The neighbors of John the Baptist rejoiced at John's birth [see Luke 1:57–58]. The magi rejoiced exceedingly when they saw the star that led them to the baby Jesus [see Matthew 2:10]. People rejoiced at the miracles of Jesus during His ministry [see Luke 19:37]. The shepherd in the parable of the lost sheep rejoiced when that one lost sheep was found [see Luke 15:3–6]. The disciples rejoiced when they saw Jesus after His resurrection [see John 20:20]. The apostles rejoiced to suffer in Jesus' name [see Acts 5:41]. The people of Samaria rejoiced when Philip performed miracles and preached the gospel to them [see Acts 8:4–8]. Philip himself rejoiced to see some come to Christ. The angels rejoice over one sinner who repents [see Luke 15:7].

The Gentiles of Pisidian Antioch rejoiced when they heard the gospel [see Acts 13:48]. Barnabas rejoiced [for] the converts at Antioch [see Acts 13:52]. The people of Antioch rejoiced when the apostles and elders in Jerusalem sent Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas to them [see Acts 15:22–31]. The Philippian jailer rejoiced greatly when he and his household re-

pented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ [see Acts 16:34]. Paul rejoiced over the compassionate zeal of the Corinthians and the Philippians [see 2 Corinthians 7:7], and he rejoiced over the obedience of those in Rome and Colosse [see Romans 16:19]. [This is] the bulk of the rejoicing texts in the New Testament. There are [also] a couple [of] exhortations to rejoice. In Philippians 3:1 and 4:4, we are told to “rejoice in the Lord always,” and in Romans 12:12, it tells us to rejoice in hope.

That’s pretty much what the New Testament has to say about rejoicing. We have a lot of things to rejoice about. God even says to be thankful for all things [see Ephesians 5:20]. He says everything is “sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer” [1 Timothy 4:5]. James says, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” [James 1:17]. So we have lots of reasons to rejoice—maybe health, maybe jobs, and family, and children, and friends, and cars, and stuff.

We have a lot of things to rejoice in, but spiritually speaking, we have this *huge* thing that we need to rejoice in, and often we don’t rejoice in it. We’re kind of like the little kid who asked for a whole bunch of things for his birthday. All [of his] relatives come and bring all those same things, and, oh, he’s excited about them. He opens them up, and, “Oh! I got my favorite whatever!” He’s really careful [with his new toys]. When other people want to touch [them, he says], “Wait, wait, wait! Careful! Careful, don’t break it. Here, let me hand it to you. Be careful. Be careful.” He puts [them] in his room on a nice, little shelf and makes them really neat because he just *loves* those things. They’re so exciting to him.

That’s kind of how it is when we first get saved, isn’t it? Man, we are psyched! We just want to tell everybody, “I’m a Christian! You should be one, too!”

They look at you, [and say], “You’re weird.”

After a while, [however, the kid’s] new toys lose their excitement and their joy. Soon they’re just toys, they get thrown into a box, they break, and [he] get[s] rid of them later. Sometimes we treat our salvation that way. At

first we're really excited about it, really thankful, but then after a while, it's, "Yeah, I'm saved," [in a flat, bored voice].

"Well, I can see you're thrilled about that."

"I'm not going to hell. I'm going to be in heaven with Jesus, forever." As Howard Hendricks says, [your] face would make a good frontispiece for the book of Lamentations.

But what do you suppose this great reason is for rejoicing? Our text tells us this morning. Answer [this] question in your mind, "[What is] my greatest reason for rejoicing?" Fill in the blank. Then let me ask you this: Is that what you rejoice over most of the time? Yeah, we're going to rejoice about a lot of things, but that one huge thing, that thing that towers above all other things, do you rejoice in it or does your rejoicing actually betray what you *say* is your greatest reason for rejoicing? You're more excited about your car, your TV, your hobby, your day off than you are about that great thing.

Let's look at what this great thing is. We're presently working through an account of the sending of the seventy. Some [Bible] versions say seventy-two. If your Bible has that it's because [the translators] couldn't make up their minds. The whole point is [that] Jesus is sending out these seventy, [or] seventy-two, disciples to different cities. He's going to send them out in pairs of two—thirty-five pairs of two. They are going to go around to the various cities [to which] Jesus is going to come. They have been given power to do miracles, authority to cast out demons, and they are going to preach the gospel as a first-flank maneuver to get people primed for Jesus coming after [them]. In [Luke 10:]1–12, Jesus gives [the seventy] all of this instruction, and at the very end of verse 12, He says, "I just want you to know, if they reject you, it will be more tolerable in the day of Sodom than for that city. If they reject you, and your gospel, and your miracles, it's going to go really bad[ly] for them."

Then He wants to give them a little encouragement because sometimes what's discouraging about sharing the gospel is [that] people don't always believe. You know how it is. There have been times when I've been so sure

someone was going to come to salvation. He was inquisitive, and he was asking questions, and I was telling him about the gospel, and I was very clear, very plain, my heart was racing, and then he didn't want to become a Christian. So Jesus, after He tells [the seventy], "It's going to go bad[ly] for those who reject you," He then says, "It's going to be bad for those who have already rejected Me." I think He tells them that because He wants them to know, "Listen, I'm the Son of God, I am the Messiah, and they reject Me, too. Don't be overly bummed that they're not believing, because [most of them] don't even believe Me. You just go do what you're supposed to do. But those who reject, they are going to be thrown down to hell!" If you were here last week, you remember [the] hair-on-end warning [He gives].

Then in [Luke 10:]17, where our text begins this morning, everything changes. [It is a] radical, pendulum, to-the-other-side, from-hell-to-heaven, from-unbelievers-to-believers [change]. Jesus totally switches, comes back around, and now He's going to tell them something very incredible. He's going to direct their minds away from judgment, away from hell, the punishment of unbelievers, to the glories and the greatest reason for rejoicing that believers have. As we approach our text, [remember that] in verses 1–12, and even on into verse 16, Jesus is telling them what to do, what will happen, or what has happened. But then in verse 17, [the seventy are] coming back. They've already gotten back. We've missed the whole journey. Luke just skips ahead to when they're back with Jesus. They've already gone, they've already preached the gospel, they've done their miracles, they've had their adventures, and now they're back.

You can imagine those disciples going out. Think about it. They're going out in pairs of two, and Jesus said, "Here are the cities [I want you to hit]," and He assigned cities to each of them. Remember, He said, "Don't talk to anybody along the way. Get to your city, preach the gospel, do your miracles, cast out the demons, and get back here." So they're on their way.

You can imagine the conversation that they're having along the way. One says to his traveling companion, "What kind of miracles do you think we're going to do?"

“I don’t know! I’m sure we’re going to be able to heal people like Jesus, and cast out demons. That’s what He said.”

“Oh, man, I can’t wait. Do you think we’ll feel anything?”

“I don’t know! I’ve never done a miracle before.”

“Me either. Man, I can’t wait to look at their faces. I love to see that. When Jesus would heal somebody [when we first got to a town, people’s] jaws would just hang open. I love that part! I love that part when they just start praising God, saying, ‘Man, God is good!’ And the weeping mothers! I hope I can restore sight to a blind man! That would be so great!”

The other guy says, “Yeah, or somebody who’s really crippled up.”

They’re going, “Yeah, let’s go! Let’s go!” They’re encouraging each other. They’re thinking about what they’re going to do, and then they go out and they do it. We don’t know how long they [went] out, we don’t know how many cities were assigned to each of them—all of that is left out [of the text] by Luke. We’re just told in [Luke 10:]17 [that] they’re back. Look in your Bibles and follow along as I read Luke 10:17–20.

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”

In these verses, we’re going to [see] four [things about which] Jesus says, “Don’t rejoice in that,” and then the one ultimate thing, the one great reason, [in which] believers should always and continually be rejoicing.

Let’s look at the first [of the] four things you should not rejoice in. Look at verse 17: “The seventy returned with joy.” Again, Luke has just skipped ahead: we’ve missed the whole adventure, we don’t even know what happens, but they’re all back together again. Look at the middle of verse 17:

They were saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” In order to understand this, you [need] to understand the Jewish mindset. Jews believed in angels and demons. Most people today know what angels are. They think they’re women [with wings] that sit on top of Christmas trees. That’s the idea that most people get. They [see them as] a nice little fiction, like fairies, and trolls, and gnomes. That’s the kind of idea that people have. Even though there are television shows about them, they aren’t any more convincing [to people] than *Star Trek* [is].

People [today] have an idea about angels and demons, but the Jews believed [in] them. They believed in them thoroughly because angels had such a huge part in their history. All Jews believed in them, and believed in demons, and some Jews even worshipped angels. Paul addressed that in Colossians. They were so caught up in angels that they actually worshipped them and needed [to be] rebuked [see Colossians 2:18–23].

As we learned a while back in our series on angels and demons<sup>1</sup>, demons are nothing more than fallen angels, angels who have rebelled. They’ve been around since creation. They are wise and powerful beings who have perfected the art of deception, delusion, lies, false doctrine, tricking people into thinking that bad is good and good is bad, [and] doing everything they can to steal glory from God. They can outsmart any human. They are stronger than any man. Listen to what Peter says in 2 Peter 2:10[–11]. He’s describing false teachers, and he says:

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- <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2006/20060212>
- <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2006/20060219>
- <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2006/20060326>
- <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2006/20060402>
- <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2006/20060423>
- <http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2006/20060507>

And especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

Here the false teachers are described as “daring, self-willed” Why? Because “they revile angelic majesties.” Peter says, “Can you believe it? They would actually revile an *angel*?” Are we talking demons here or are we talking holy angels? Well, Peter doesn’t say, but Jude does. In Jude [1:]8–9, we have a very similar text, again talking about false teachers. It says, “Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.” Then he gives an example of how foolish that is. He says in verse 9: “But Michael the archangel,” now, if you don’t know what an archangel is, archangels are like super angels. Archangel is highest rank of angel. Michael is called the prince who is assigned by God to protect the nation of Israel [see Daniel 10:13, 21, 12:1]. He is the biggest, baddest good angel there is. [Jude 1:9] says, even Michael the archangel, “when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” He wouldn’t even revile him. Even Michael the archangel respects Satan, [and] respects other angels because they are so powerful.

It would be kind of foolish if you went to Africa armed with a feather duster to try and take a lion cub away from its mother, or maybe to go up into Alaska with a butterfly net to capture a grizzly bear cub away from its mother. That would be foolish. You would wish you never tried.

The seventy were aware that demons were powerful, and they were strong, and they were to be feared and not messed with. Yet Jesus gave them authority over these incredibly strong beings. This, [as I have mentioned before in regard to miraculous sign gifts], was a special situation for a special time, for a special purpose in a certain location. These special

gifts, these powers, they aren't normal for all believers. The point here is that these men returned rejoicing. It's obvious [why they're rejoicing]. You would say, "Yeah, they were rejoicing. They got to tell demons what to do."

"Get out of that person, [and] get into the abyss!"

We're never told to cast out demons, or bind Satan, or revile angelic majesties in any way. The seventy could do this, and they rejoiced in it, and understandably so. Look at [Luke 10:]18: Jesus comments, "And He said to them, 'I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.'" This is a weird little phrase. This has caused interpreters a lot of grief. If you look at commentaries, everybody is trying to guess what it is. There are some different [opinions]. One of the "good ones" is that Jesus is saying, "Before, in history past, I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning." There are some problems with [that]. One, it makes it sound like Jesus is boasting.

You know [how] when guys get together, [they] say [things like], "You know, I've got a car with this big [of] an engine"?

Another guy says, "Well, mine's this big."

[This opinion regarding Luke 10:18 proposes that] the [seventy were saying], "Yeah, the demons were subject to us!"

[Then Jesus was responding with], "Yeah, but I saw Satan fall from heaven. I was there." See, that doesn't work very [well] with Jesus' character, with His nature, [or] with the context. Besides, that's not what the Scriptures teach. See, a lot of people have this idea that when Satan fell *morally* from heaven he was permanently cast down to earth. They confuse his being expelled from heaven with his moral fall. We should not confuse those two things because they're two totally different events. We saw this before [in other sermons]. Satan morally fell shortly after creation [and] before Genesis 3:1, when he is in the Garden deceiving Eve in the form of a serpent. But, we see him in heaven in Job 1-2, right? When [the sons of God] come to give an account, the angels give an account before the Lord, and Satan is among them. We see him again in Zechariah 3 accusing Joshua in that vision in heaven. We also see him again, or at least he's implied, as one of the forces of darkness in the heavenly places in Ephesians 6. Then

in Revelation 12 he is the accuser of the brethren who is before the throne of God accusing [them] “day and night” [Revelation 12:10]. That doesn’t sound like an expulsion, does it? It’s not. But, in Revelation 12, it says [that] at that time in the Tribulation he is cast down to earth and then he goes forth with great rage because he realizes his time is short.

So, Jesus couldn’t be referring to that because it hasn’t happened yet. So the question is: What is He referring to? A lot of bad interpretations have been offered, [but] I think the best one is [the following]. You need to ask yourself, “What does Jesus say this in response to?” [The seventy] say, “Even the demons are subject to us,” and Jesus says in response to that, to their being sent out, healing the sick, casting out demons, preaching the gospel, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning,” that is, “when you did that.” All I think He’s saying is this: “When I sent you thirty-five pairs of miracle-working, demon-exorcising evangelists out, Satan’s kingdom received a huge blow, [it] was brought down.”

The word “fall,” when [Jesus] says, “I saw Satan fall,” can be translated to “fall under judgment, to collapse, or to come to ruin.” That makes it a little [more] understandable, doesn’t it? “When you went out and did your evangelizing, when you exposed the errors of darkness, when you brought the light to people, when you cast out demons, Satan’s kingdom received this great collapse,” all over that area, all of a sudden in one time, like lightning. Lightning always happens suddenly, and strikes in an area where you don’t expect, you can’t predict it, and that’s what happened with Satan. That’s all I think [Jesus is] saying there. If you can find another, better interpretation, that’s great. That’s the one I think works best. He’s figuratively [saying] that when they went out and did their works, it was like [Satan] was kicked off his throne.

Look at the beginning of [Luke 10:]19. Jesus says, “Behold.” Whenever Jesus says “behold,” that word means “listen up, listen carefully, pay very close attention because what I’m going to tell you is *really* important.” “Behold,” and now Jesus mentions these four things [in which] we’re not to rejoice. First look in the middle of verse 19: “I have given you authority to

tread on serpents.” There are two ways this can be taken. Either He’s saying, “You can go around, walk through the Valley of the Rattlesnakes, they can bite your ankles, and it won’t hurt,” or He’s using it figuratively. Serpents represented evil because it was Satan in the form of a serpent who deceived Eve. Serpents were often pictured as evil, cunning, crafty, and dangerous since they delivered a deadly sting.

Not only that, look at verse 19 again, [and] you’ll see that He says, “and scorpions.” Scorpions, like serpents, were feared by men just like they are feared today. Have you ever been camping in the desert and found a scorpion in your sleeping bag? No. That’s why you zip up the tent because you do not want them getting in. Scorpions can deliver sometimes-deadly stings. They’re dangerous; they’re to be feared. I think that all that Jesus is saying is that, “I’ve given you authority over those powers of evil, over those things that are dangerous.” Why would I say that? [It is] because of what He says thirdly. Look at the end of verse 19: “And over all the power of the enemy.” Now Jesus kind of interprets what He’s talking about and, if you read down a little bit further than that, you will see that He goes on to say that “the spirits are subject to you” [in] verse 20. That’s what He’s talking about. He’s talking about their authority because that’s what they’re rejoicing over. They’re rejoicing over their power over evil, over these things that they feared, and were dangerous in the mind of a Jew. They had the power of God to cast out demons, to heal the sick, to expose lies, to bring forth the truth, and that’s what they did.

Then He says, fourthly, at the end of verse 19: “And nothing will injure you” in the context of that. Why would He say that? Why do you think He would say that, “Nothing will injure you”? Do you think He’s saying, “You’ll never be persecuted from now on. You’re never going to have to worry about ever stubbing your toe, getting poked by a splinter, [or] cutting yourself shaving. Nothing. You’ll never have to get injured again”? Well, no, obviously not. He’s talking about, “And nothing *in the future* will injure you,” in relationship to their going out and casting out these demons, and healing the sick, and preaching the gospel. Why would they even think

that? [It is] because demons are powerful. Jesus is saying, “You don’t have to worry about reprisals.”

What if Jesus were to tell you, “Go fetch the lion cub with the feather duster or the bear cub with the butterfly net”?

You’d be thinking to yourself, “Now, Jesus, this is a little dangerous. No, it’s suicidal.” You see, to do something like that would be very dangerous, and you know it would be dangerous, and you’d be worried about doing [it] because you wouldn’t want to get hurt. Well, now, [the seventy] have just gone out and they’ve just dealt this huge blow to Satan’s kingdom. They preached the gospel; they’ve undone what Satan has worked to do. Their fear is, “I wonder if something’s going to happen to us.” No! Nothing is going to happen to you. Nothing’s going to injure you. There are not going to be any demonic attacks or reprisals.

I’m pretty surprised at how believers are sometimes fearful of this. If you are a believer, you don’t need to fear demonic attack. Yes, they can tempt you, yes, they can use unbelievers to maybe persecute you, but they’re not going to haunt you, they’re not going to get in your life, and get in your closet, and your toaster, and your car. You don’t have to go in there and chase them out of rooms, and sprinkle holy water, and do all this different stuff trying to make sure they don’t get you. They *can’t* get you. Listen to what the Scriptures say. Ephesians 6:11 [says]: “Put on the full armor of God, so that *you will be able to* stand firm against the schemes of the devil” [emphasis added]. God has given you the resources so that *you will be able to* stand against [the devil’s] schemes. Those are just schemes to tempt you, not possess you, or haunt you. James 4:7 says: “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and *he will flee from you*” [emphasis added]. He will flee from you. God says so, which means [that] if you submit to God, Satan will flee from you. First John 4:4 [says]: “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” The Holy Spirit and Christ are in you. You don’t have to worry about being possessed. You don’t have to worry about Satan getting you. You have God Almighty within.

First John 5:18 [says]: “We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one *does not touch him*” [emphasis added]. “The evil one does not touch” believers. That’s how it is. You don’t have to worry about demons getting you, sneaking up on you when you’re asleep at night, and haunting you, or whatever. They will not touch you. God’s Word is crystal clear about that. If you know Jesus, yes, they can tempt you, yes, they can entice you, yes, they can use other people to make your life miserable, but you don’t have to worry about any reprisals because you have the Spirit of God within you. You have the promise of God that they’re not going to hurt you.

This is what these believers [in Luke 10] needed to know. They had just gone out and undone [Satan’s work], gone into Satan’s domain. The same thing happens to you. You go out and share your faith, you witness to somebody, and you’re thinking, “Oh, Satan’s not going to like this,” he doesn’t, “and he’s going to get me.” No. He is not. He is not going to injure you. He will not touch you. That is the Word of God; that is the promise. You don’t even need to worry about that.

What if you don’t know Christ? Well, that’s a whole different thing. If you don’t know Christ, then it’s not that Satan is *going* to get you, [but that] he’s *got* you. You are held captive by Satan to do his will [see 2 Timothy 2:26]. The Bible calls unbelievers “children of Satan” [see John 8:44; 1 John 3:10]. Do you know why that is? It’s not because he literally gave birth to them, it’s that Satan is in rebellion against God, and unbelievers are in rebellion against God. Satan lives for himself; unbelievers live for themselves. Satan tries to undo the things of God; unbelievers try to undo the things of God. They are both on the same side, fighting against the same God, refusing to submit to the same God, refusing to give their Creator glory. The same. So in that way, they are children of Satan because he has deluded them, and, whether they admit it or not, they’re actually living for the very purpose that Satan lives. You need to come to Christ. You need to give your life to Jesus, and when you do that, then you receive the Holy Spirit, and then God changes you, and then the evil one does not touch you.

Turn to Acts 19. Acts 19 is a very fun text that I would like to preach on someday, but I haven't preached through Acts, and I haven't found that perfect moment for this unique text, but it is a good one. [Look at] Acts 19:13–16. Paul is at Ephesus performing miracles. There are some Jews there, they're watching Paul, they're seeing [him] do these miracles, cast out demons in the name of Jesus, and they're thinking, "Well, we could try that. We could do that." They're looking at Jesus' name as a spiritual incantation, like [it is] magical verbiage. [They're thinking], "Hey, it's working for this Paul guy. Let's try it." This is what we read in verse 13: "But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, 'I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.'" [These exorcists] didn't know Jesus. They were unbelievers, but they were seeing [Jesus'] name [as] an incantation that seemed to be working for [Paul], so [they decided to] try it out.

Look at verse 14: "Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, 'I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?'" That's when they realized they had the feather duster and they were standing in front of the lion. Look at verse 16: "And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." Imagine that one. One demon-possessed guy takes out seven men, gives them a sound thrashing, rips off their clothes, and then kicks them out the door into utter humiliation. I wonder if they ever used Jesus' name after that. Probably not. "Let's not do that one again." That's what happens when you don't know Jesus and you try to go up against the powers of evil. This is why Jesus wanted the seventy to know, "Nothing will injure you," and it's why He wants you to know the same thing. The evil one will not touch you.

You can see in all of this why the seventy returned rejoicing, can't you? They had some thrilling times, I am sure, doing miracles, and casting out demons, and having this incredible power working through them.

They came back, and said, “Man, even the demons did whatever we told them. Stand on your head! Into the abyss, out, in.” Who knows? I’m sure they probably didn’t do that, but yeah, they’re rejoicing. Yet, Jesus says, “Don’t rejoice in those things,” which is kind of interesting.

It’s like, “Why not, man? These are incredible!” Yeah, but there’s something that’s way more incredible, way more wonderful, way more exciting than that. What is it? Look at [Luke 10:]20: “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you.” Stop there. Is Jesus saying this: “Listen, don’t rejoice in these things or anything else. Don’t rejoice in your food. Don’t rejoice in friends, family, children, anything else. I don’t want you to rejoice in anything. Only this and this only”? Is that what He’s saying? No, that’s not what He means.

Let’s say you’re walking down the sidewalk. You’re just going for a walk, you’re getting a little exercise. You’re cruising down the sidewalk, and there [in front of you] is a dollar bill! You pick it up and you look around. No one’s around, and [you think], “I got a dollar!” You put it in your pocket, and you keep walking. Now you can buy. . . what can you buy with a dollar these days? A pack of gum, I guess. It’s better than a penny, which you [would] just leave there.

You’re walking down the street and you’re kind of psyched [that] you found this little dollar. But then, you turn the corner, and there’s a suitcase in the middle of the sidewalk. You’re thinking, “What is that?” So you go up [to it], and there’s a little card [that] says, “Open.” You open [the card] and there’s a little note in there [that] says, “I’m an older gentleman. I’ve worked all my life to accumulate wealth. I don’t have any family. I realize I’ve been selfish, I’ve never blessed anybody with my wealth, and so I have dropped off several suitcases around the city, and I’m giving you one of them. You can have the contents, and use it in whatever way you want.” Man, you throw that thing open, you pop open the lid, and it’s full of tightly packed \$100 bills. Now, that is exciting.

So you close it up, [and] you start dragging that thing home. Adrenaline is flowing, man. You bring it up the steps, bump, bump, bump, into the

house. You open up the door, and say, “Man, you won’t believe what happened! I found a dollar bill!” Is that what you’d say? Forget the dollar! You’ve got a whole suitcase of money. That’s Jesus’ point, His whole point. We get so excited about cars and stuff destined to perish [see Colossians 2:22]. We get excited about, yes, the blessings of God, and yeah, we should be thankful for them. Don’t get me wrong here. Jesus isn’t giving the universal command of “only rejoice in one thing,” but in comparison, your name being recorded in heaven outstrips all other things to rejoice in.

Look at the end of verse 20: “But rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.” That is incredible, and I think a lot of times we don’t really think about this enough. One thing that is such a blessing is to get around people who love to pray, and [who] love the Lord. You go to prayer meeting on Wednesday night, or maybe you’re just sitting around with a group of believers, you’re praying, and it always comes up: “Lord, thank You for my salvation. Thank You for saving me.” You hear people pouring out their hearts, “Oh, Lord, thank You for blessing me. I was such a sinner!” Believers who love the Lord rejoice, and continually rejoice, that their names are recorded in heaven.

What is that [“recorded in heaven”] a reference to? The Scriptures talk about this. They talk about God keeping records. You think, “Are these literal records?” I think so because it talks about books being opened, and things like that. For instance, in Malachi 3:16–18, we read this:

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. “They will be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “on the day that I prepare My own possession [(the word is literally “jewels,” or “treasure,”—when I prepare My own jewels or treasure)], and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.” So you will again distinguish be-

tween the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

The whole point is [that] God remembers the righteous, and He records them in heaven. He writes down their names in heaven. In Philippians 4:3, Paul, speaks of his fellow laborers in the gospel as those “whose names are in the book of life.” Jesus, speaking to the church of Sardis in Revelation 3:5, says, “He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Think about that. It is thrilling to go to Ellis Island and see your great-great-grandpa there in the registry, [where it says] that he came over from Ireland in 1902. That’s great. It’s neat to go to the World War II memorial and see your grandfather[’s name], or [to] the Vietnam memorial and see [the name of] a brother or an uncle who fought and died in the war. It’s great. But it’s nothing, it is *nothing*, compared to having your name recorded in the book of life, and to [having] your name confessed before the Father and the angels.

Think about what it’s going to be like. You finally get to heaven. You either die and get there, or [are] Raptured and get there, and you’re there with all the saints of all the ages, and there’s Jesus on the throne, and some angels bring this book. It is a huge book. Maybe it has a gold cover, and maybe it’s embossed with the tree of life on the front, who knows? They lay it on this big gold stand right in front of Jesus, and they pop it open. Pretty soon it comes down to the time when your name is called. You step forward, and Christ says to the angels, “Is his or her name recorded in the book?”

They turn the pages, and they say, “Yes, Lord. Right here, written in Your own blood.”

Then Jesus confesses you before the Father, and all the holy angels, and all the saints, and says, “This is my brother, my sister. I died for this person. His or her name is recorded in the book of life.” That is your greatest reason for rejoicing. Do you know why? [If] your name gets in that book, you get

everything with it. Everything. You get your name in the book, you get everything with it—everything that omnipotence and perfect wisdom can conjure up in your direction for all eternity.

Revelation 17:8 says those names were put there before the foundation of the world. Think about that. Jesus already knew the elect, had already chosen them, already predestined them to salvation, and all of a sudden, there you are, and your name is in that book. I'm telling you, there are masses of people—the majority of people—whose names are not written in that book. They will perish in hell. You know what? Your name didn't get in that book because you were good. God looked down, and said, "Oh, well, there's a sweet, kind, loving, wonderful creature. I'm going to save that one." No! You were enemies, you were hostile to God, you were estranged, you were engaged in evil deeds [see Colossians 1:21], and God, by His grace, because of His own purpose, not because of "the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy" [Romans 9:16], and only that and that's all, His free, sovereign choice, chose you, put your name in that book, [and] had His Son die for you.

One day you will see your name in that book, and with it, you will get all [that] the Scriptures promise and more that they don't even mention. Those "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN" [1 Corinthians 2:9], that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" [Romans 8:18]. God will give us blessing, incalculable blessing, because our names are in that book. It's just the indication that we are truly saved, so we get all the things that salvation brings us, everything because of that Lamb's book of life and because your name is in that book.

If your name is not in that book, you need to get it in there. You may be thinking, "But, Jack, you just told me it was written before the foundation of the world. I don't know if I'm one of the elect." Repent and believe, and then you'll know! That's what the Scriptures have to tell you: repent and believe [see Mark 1:15], and then you'll know. You will know. If you're

sitting out there and you're thinking, "I just don't know. I don't know if I'm saved, and I don't know if my name is in that book," you can know right now. Get it in there! It's like, "Well, I thought it was already in there." It is. "Well, why are you telling me it *will* get in there?" All I'm saying is [that] you'll know for certain it's there if you give your life to Christ.

You may be sitting out there, [thinking], "Well, I don't know. I don't know if my name is written there. I'm too great of a sinner." No, you're not! "Oh, you don't know what I've done." God does. The Scriptures say "while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us" [see Romans 5:10]. "Yeah, but I've really sinned." Oh, so your sin is greater than Christ's perfect sacrifice? "Uh, no." That's right. It's not. So that's not an excuse. "But I have questions. I don't understand predestination, and where did evil come from?" Well, who knows? Who cares? Get your name in the book! Know it's in the book, that's the deal. Let me ask you this: Do you think that you're going to find answers to those questions as you continually rebel against God, as you live in a spiritually dead state, or do you have a better chance of finding answers to those questions when you come to Christ, receive the Holy Spirit that illuminates the truth of God's Word so we can understand what God says? You believe that you might know [see 1 John 5:13], you don't know that you might believe.

Set that aside, and ask yourself this: Are you a sinner? Did Christ die for you? Does He say "whoever believes in Me will not perish but have eternal life" [see John 3:16]? Then do it! Then you'll know your name is in that book, and it's been in there before the foundation of the world. Receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't let your sins, and your lust for the world, and your excuses be a smoke screen, or some excuse, or procrastination method to try and keep you from doing what you know you need to do. Just do it today. Just give it up. Receive Christ, turn from your sins, believe in your heart that God raised [Christ] from the dead, and you will be saved. You'll know your name is written in that book, and it will never change, and it will be that way forever, and with it, you [will] get everything.

You get everything, and that's why it's your greatest reason to rejoice. I sat down [and] I penned out twelve [things that you know will happen because your name is in the book of life], because there's twelve apostles. Actually, I ran out of space. Here [they are]: [If] your name is in that book, that means [that] you are adopted into the family of God [see John 1:12]. That's kind of cool. You fellowship with the angels. You are going to fellowship with the angels, with angels! You will rule and reign with Christ forever [see 2 Timothy 2:12]. You will sing a new song in heaven [see Psalm 40:3]. You will never grow old. You'll never get sick. You'll never die [see John 11:26]. You will be perfect and holy, without sin. You'll never think another sinful thought again, nor will you do another sinful deed. You will worship the Lord in Zion. Some people say, "Well, where are you going to live?"

"I'm going to live in Zion."

You will fellowship with the saints of all the ages. You will witness the judgment of Satan, and demons, and the antichrist, and the false prophet, and all the unbelievers of all the ages who will not submit to Christ. You will serve Christ and rule and reign with Him forever. You will be a priest, and you will be a co-regent, a royal priest. That is, you will have both kingdom or queenhood, or however you want to look at it, you will be a priest and king to our God forever and ever. You will stand before Christ, "blameless with great joy" [Jude 1:24]. You will dwell in the New Jerusalem, the city of God described at the end of the Revelation [see Revelation 21:2]. You will see Jesus face-to-face, be able to talk to Jesus face-to-face, ask Him questions, and stand before Him "blameless with great joy." That's just the beginning, and [it's] all because your names are recorded in heaven, because you know Jesus, because you have salvation.

You may [be] sitting out there, and you may be thinking to yourself, "I realize I need to rejoice, but when you brought this up, it kind of made me convicted because I don't rejoice like I should. As a matter of fact, when I think back to last month, I can't even remember a single time when I was thankful about my salvation or rejoiced that my name was recorded in

heaven. So, what can I do?" Let me give you four things that will help you keep your mind focused on the things above, and rejoicing continually like Jesus commanded you to do in this text [in Luke 10].

The first may seem a little weird: Meditate on your sinfulness. Now, you [may] think, "That sounds kind of depressing, not rejoicing." No, it's the right thing because you will never understand how great God's grace is toward you until you understand how great a sinner you are. Cry out like Paul, "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" [see Romans 7:24]. [Get to the point where] you're just so sick of your sin, and "I did it again! I failed the Lord again! Ah!" When you get to that place in your life, and yet you know Christ died for you when you were ungodly, while you were an enemy, that you were the unjust, and Christ the just died for you, when you understand that, it makes you rejoice. You think, "Oh, Lord, You are so good. I am so bad." The clearer you see your "badness," the greater you will see God's grace and salvation, and that will make you rejoice.

Second, saturate your mind with the Word of God. We have so many things that try and get into our heads. [There are] all these advertisements [vying for your attention]. The other day I was at a store, and I was walking down the aisle, and there were some radios there. On one of them there was this lady advertising something, and I grabbed this thing, and I started flicking all the buttons just to turn her off. It's like, "Be quiet! I don't want to listen to what I need to buy. I've got plenty." Read the Bible. Go to a Bible study; get involved with a small group. Listen to sermons on CD or your MP3 player. Read good books that are saturated in the Scriptures. Get the Word of God in you, and when you do that, you'll be constantly reminded about heaven, and God's grace, and salvation, and it will make you rejoice.

Third, remember what Paul says in Colossians 3:1–2: "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." Go home and stick a note on your mirror, and put one on the dash of your car [that says], "Think about

heaven.” When you’re driving on the freeway, instead of turning on the news and hearing the same bunch of junk every single day, with the same guys who are trying to be funny, just turn it off, and ask yourself questions [about heaven]. “What’s it going to be like when I see Jesus? What’s it going to be like after that? What are the angels actually going to look like? Are they going to be like those made-up women with little lace wings that sit on top of Christmas trees, or are they going to be something else? What’s my first conversation with the Apostle Paul going to be like, and Stephen, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Daniel? What’s my wife going to look like in heaven when she’s not my wife anymore? How is that going to be? How am I going to treat other people in heaven? When I see my wife there, [is] it going to be weird not being married to her anymore, or my husband, or [to talk to] people who have died [before me]?” Just do that. I’m telling you, you’ll have plenty to think about. Keep your mind fixed on the things above, [and] pursue those things.

Fourth: Fellowship with other believers and talk about these things. It’s so great to get together with other believers. You’re sitting down for dinner, [and someone asks], “So, tell me. How did you come to the Lord?” People share their testimonies, and, “So, what’s the Lord been teaching you?” You all talk about, “Oh, I’ve been reading this in my Bible study,” or “Oh, I’ve been studying this. I’ve been reading this good book,” or “listening to these good tapes,” or whatever. Talk about the things of the Lord and what God is doing in your life. Rejoice in that. These are all things that will help you rejoice.

Charles Spurgeon, in his devotion[al] *Morning and Evening* writes in the morning entry of January 10 these words. Just think about [this]. We’ll close with this.

Doubting one! thou hast often said, “I fear I shall never enter heaven.”

Fear not! all the people of God shall enter there. I love the quaint saying of a dying man, who exclaimed, “I have no fear

of going home; I have sent all before me; God's finger is on the latch of my door, and I am ready for him to enter."

"But," said one, "are you not afraid lest you should miss your inheritance?"

"Nay," said he, "nay; there is one crown in heaven which the angel Gabriel could not wear, it will fit no head but mine. There is one throne in heaven which Paul the apostle could not fill; it was made for me, and I shall have it."

O Christian, what a joyous thought! Your portion is secure; "there remains a rest."

"But cannot I forfeit it?" No, it is entailed. If I be a child of God I shall not lose it. It is mine as securely as if I were there. Come with me, believer, and let us sit upon the top of Nebo, and view the goodly land, even Canaan. Do you see that little river of death glistening in the sunlight, and across it do you see the pinnacles of the eternal city? Do you mark the pleasant country, and all its joyous inhabitants?

Know, then, that if you could fly across you would see written upon one of its many mansions, "This remains for such a one; preserved for him only. He shall be caught up to dwell for ever with God."

Poor doubting one, see the fair inheritance; it is yours. If you believe in the Lord Jesus, if you have repented of sin, if you have been renewed in heart, you are one of the Lord's people, and there is a place reserved for you, a crown laid up for you, a harp specially provided for you. No one else shall have your portion, it is reserved in heaven for you, and you shalt have it ere long, for there shall be no vacant thrones in glory when all the chosen are gathered in.

That's something to rejoice about, so let's pray.

Father, we are so grateful that You save us. That is our greatest reason for rejoicing, that though we all, like sheep, have gone astray, and each of us is turned to his own way [see Isaiah 53:6], You have caused the iniquity of us all to fall on You, and You have called us all to repent and believe, and You have saved many of us. Father, we know that Your promises never fail, that there is that crown, there is that place prepared for us in heaven. And so, we don't need to worry about what this life may bring us because we are sure of the hope of eternal life because You, in Your blood, penned down our names in Your book of life, and it can never be erased. Father, we ask that if there are people here who have never repented of their sins, who, for whatever reason, have [not placed] their faith in Christ, Father, I beg You to open their hearts, give them a desire for Jesus that is unquenchable. Help them to cry out in their hearts, and say, "I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died for me, and I receive Him as my Savior. I believe He rose from the dead." Father, save them, and change them, and give them that peace, and that assurance, and that perpetual reason for rejoicing that their names are recorded in heaven. Blessed be Your name for saving unworthy sinners. May we always rejoice in our salvation. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

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