

The Focus of Proper Joy

Luke 10:17–20

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

Main Point

Don't simply be in awe of your ministry's success; instead, rejoice in the grace of God.

I. Introduction

- A. We as human beings are prone to rest on our laurels. We often take great pride in our work. When something is well done, we can easily inflate our view of ourselves.
- B. Ultimately, nothing can be done apart from Christ. All things which we do are fueled by the power which God Himself supplies (cf. Phil. 4:13). If our strength or ability comes from the Lord in the first place, then our joy and our admiration should not be in ourselves but in the God who worked through us (Phil. 2:13).
- C. But we can go a step further: *none of us deserve to work in the labor force of the Lord*. We all deserve nothing less than the judgment of God (Rom. 6:23). Yet in mercy Christ reached down and saved us through His atoning sacrifice (Titus 3:5).
- D. Therefore, when we are rejoicing in our alleged abilities or successes in our work for the Lord, we are misplacing our joy. *Our joy and awe and adoration should not be in our ministry success but in our receiving mercy and grace in the first place.*

II. Exposition

A. The Ministry of the Seventy (10:17)

1. The disciples were unable to perform some ministries in the previous chapter (9:37–41).
2. These seventy (or “seventy-two”) returned from their ministry with joy because they saw that even the demonic realm was in submission to them and their commands.
3. They knew that their success was due to the power of the name of Christ, not their inherent abilities or goodness.

B. The Defeat of Satan (10:18)

1. Jesus saw Satan “fall like lightning from heaven”—either indicating:
 - a) Literal Fall—He saw Satan in the past fall in his rebellion (see Isa. 14)

- b) Metaphorical Fall—He saw Satan’s power diminishing as the followers of Jesus exercised His dominion through their ministry
- 2. Satan’s hold as the “prince of the power of the air” weakens and diminishes as the power of Christ is unleashed through the unfolding of His kingdom plan in human history.

C. The Protection of the Servants (10:19)

- 1. Christ granted the seventy followers authority and power to trample on the “serpents and scorpions”—a metaphor for the demonic hosts.
- 2. The Lord would protect and preserve His faithful servants.
 - a) Not all of Christ’s followers were protected from losing their physical lives over the course of church history.
 - b) Nevertheless, all of Christ’s followers are ultimately spiritually protected to the very end for which He receives all the glory (cf. Phil. 1:20).

D. The Joy of the Saved (10:20)

- 1. It could have been easy for the seventy to be excited about the success of their ministry—we all get excited at the successes which the Lord brings us!
- 2. Jesus said that the seventy should rejoice “because your names are written in heaven.”
 - a) In the Old Testament God often spoke of a book in which He recorded the names of His followers (cf. Exod. 32:32–33; Dan. 12:1).
 - b) This book (or registry) is the book which contains the names of the those who are citizens of heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20; see also Heb. 12:23; Rev. 13:8).
- 3. Far better it is for God’s people to rejoice and be in awe at the mercy and grace they have received than for them to rejoice in the successful ministry they may enjoy.

III. Truths

- A. Rejoice that your successful ministry comes only through the power of Christ.
- B. Rejoice that your successful ministry defeats the enemy through the power of Christ.
- C. Rejoice that your successful ministry is protected by the power of Christ.
- D. Rejoice that your successful ministry is done by people amazed at grace of Christ.