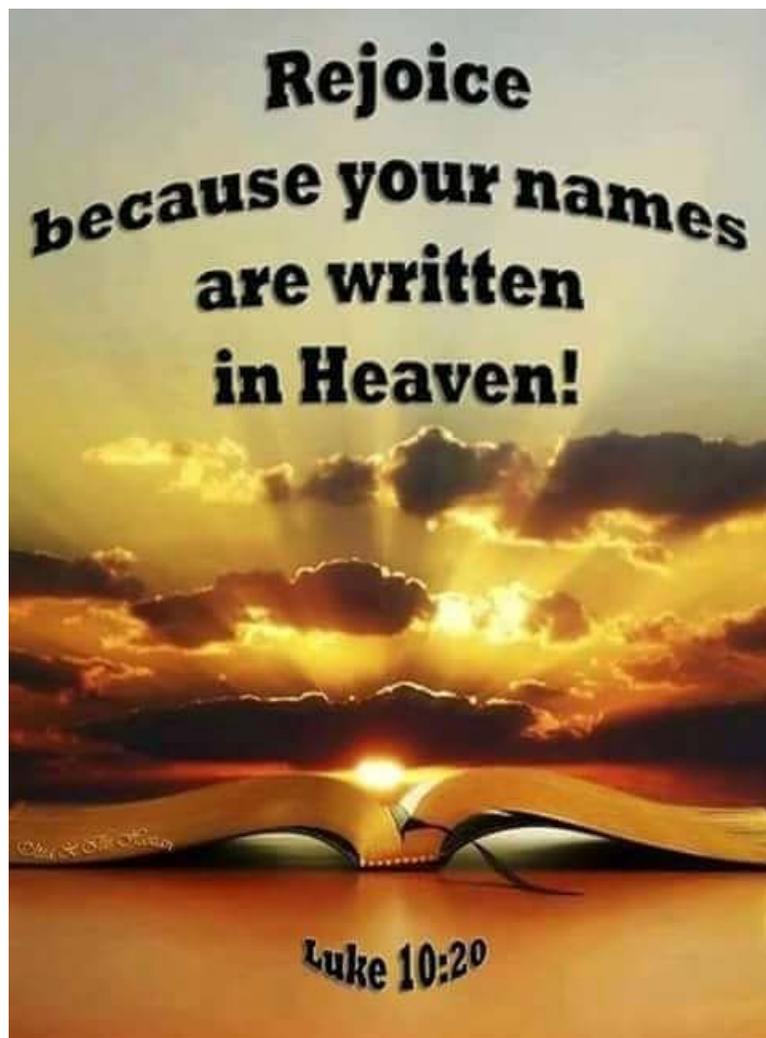


# **Rejoice**

Messages based upon the  
VCC theme for 2016



Published

**March 2017**

# Foreword

Our theme for the year 2016 was:

*Rejoice because your names are written in heaven!*  
Luke 10:20

During the year, I preached several sermons on the topic and felt that they would be valuable put into booklet form for wider distribution. But, thinking I didn't have time to write this booklet, I put it off as long as possible.

Thankfully, the motivation that came from the forceful comment of one of the congregation and the still small voice of the Spirit gave me no rest until putting pen to paper. (Somehow that sounds better than putting fingers to keyboard!)

No matter the imagery, I trust the result will be used of God to minister to hurting and needy hearts as only He can orchestrate.

In His grace,

  
Kevin Redig

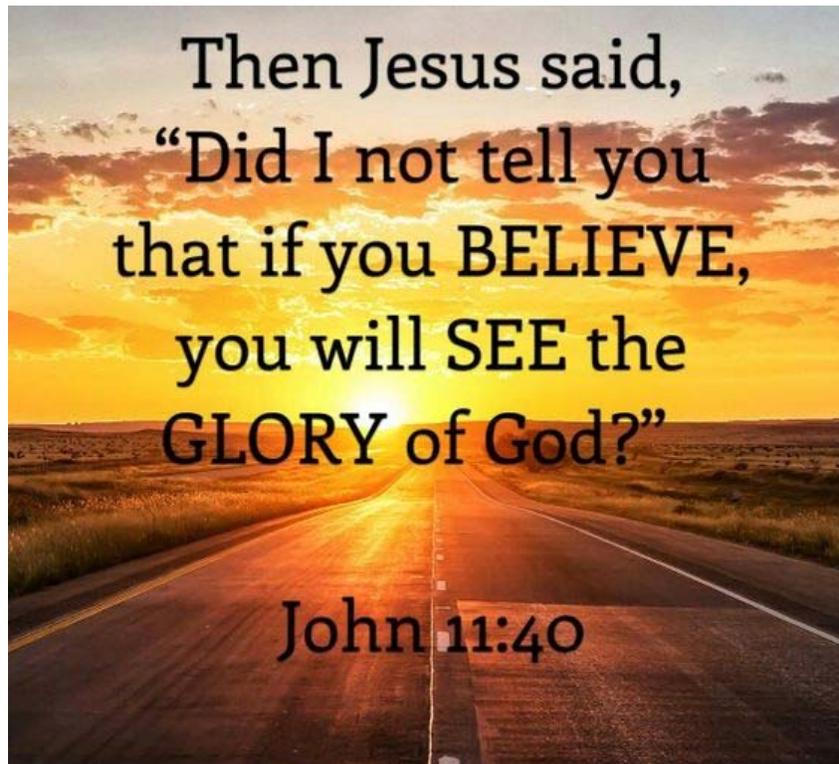


*All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).*

## Rejoice Introduction

This is a message driven by the need for every Christian to be engaged in personal evangelism. However, it also recognizes that we are not going to engage in sharing the *Good News* of the Gospel with others unless we are fully captivated by the message ourselves.

So the focus of this booklet is to impress you with the truth of what happens when a person places his or her faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. What happens, not just at some distant time in the future, but what we can know and in which we can persistently rejoice from the moment of faith forward. I trust by the time we are done with this discussion, you too will be rejoicing that your name is written in heaven.



# Rejoice Chapter 1

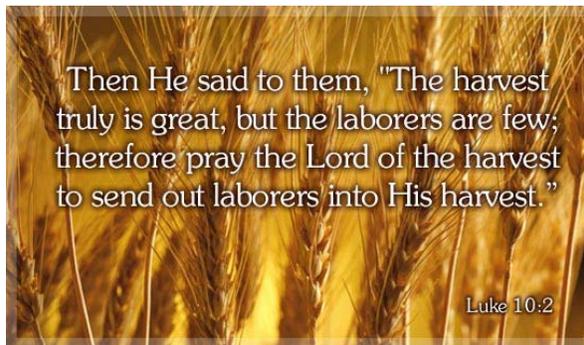
## Luke Chapter 10

Let's begin in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke with Verse 20. This verse will be our focus for the remainder of our time in Luke. This verse should arrest our attention because Jesus makes a point of correcting the thinking of His followers, and by way of application, corrects ours as well. In essence He says, "No, no, no—don't rejoice in that, *but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*"

Now the first thing you are likely going to want to know is, "What is going on here? What is the back story?" Read all of Luke Chapter 10 in order to get the context and then let me draw your attention to several things.

First, Chapter 10 is said to follow "these things." To what does that refer? Jesus has been doing miracles and much healing. He has begun to speak of His coming death. Some have rejected His claim to be the Messiah, while others have, in faith, received Him. And He has spoken plainly about the cost of discipleship.

So it is after this period of revealing His bona fides that, at the beginning of Chapter 10, He sends



out, in pairs, 70 of His disciples. He has encouraged them about the greatness of the harvest, the shortage of laborers, and the need for prayer. He cautions them about the need to be aware, for this world will not be their friend.

As we arrive at Verse 17, the 70 have returned and are bubbling over with excitement about their success in ministry, exclaiming,

*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.*

Jesus is interested in their stories and provides some commentary in response. But He sees the need to give them some guidance—to prioritize and redirect their thinking. In essence, He says, “This is what you should rejoice in. When everything is sorted out, this is of greatest importance and this is your fallback position no matter what else is going on!” And not only does Jesus prioritize the focus of the believer’s joy, there is something in this passage that causes Jesus Himself to be “*full of joy*.” So consider this fact, that which is to cause us to rejoice and that which caused Jesus to be full of joy are so seldom recorded in Scripture that it should really cause us to take note. It should cause us to dig into the text and try to understand as fully as possible.

One thing we should know by now: this is not the kind of thing we are going to learn from the world around us, but only from the Word of God. So return to Luke 10:20:

*...but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*

## **Our Reason To Rejoice**

Let’s start to examine this more closely. It is very clear that Jesus is helping His followers to establish priorities. For He knows that we are so prone to place the emphasis in the wrong place and on the wrong things. Even as Christians, we can sometimes get caught up in setting our affections on the very same kinds of things *the pagans* run after, like those mentioned in Matthew Chapter 6: food, drink, and clothing.

No, the guidance given for us in the Scriptures is to make sure our treasure is elsewhere:

*Do not lay up for yourself treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21*

John's first epistle equates certain kinds of attractions even more clearly with a pattern of thinking that is espoused by this world, but rejected by God.

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. . .the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life— is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.  
I John 2:15-17*

A second lesson that Jesus is teaching is to watch out that even *good things* do not become a snare to us. Hard work and success professionally and with respect to family are considered good things. So too is success in ministry through the proper use of our spiritual gifting. As a Bible teacher, it is easy for me to have a sense of joy when I know I have taught a clear and powerful message. Jesus is saying, "Be careful! Don't let even the proper exercise of your spiritual gifting be the thing in which you rejoice."

In essence, we are to set our affection upon the gift-Giver, and what we have in Him, rather than the gifts He gives. He is our foundation, and He is meant to be the ultimate source of the believer's joy.

Even when frustrated within the context of our Christian walk, even when we are thinking, “I am not doing for the Lord what I should be doing. I would be happy if only I could do. . .,” this passage is telling us to pause, think it through, and “*rejoice that our names are written in heaven.*”

Let me try to summarize for you. Do you see that Jesus has sorted the entire substance of our lives as Christians, and reduced it to joy in the reality of our eternal future with Him! This is a shared belief on which we should be rejoicing as a church fellowship, and this is what should motivate us as a church! Specifically, we should be inspired to work so that others would come to the same place, others would have joy in the one thing that doesn’t diminish and can’t be lost!

### Three Questions

Now this naturally brings to mind at least three questions:

- How do you get your name written in heaven?
- Can you know for sure that *pen has actually been put to paper?*
- Why does having our names written in heaven demand such a premium from Jesus?

Let’s carefully work through these one at a time.

**How do you get your name written in heaven?** From a Biblical perspective, the answer is straightforward—by faith in that which God has, in grace, provided. Here is proof that it is by faith:

*“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” So they said,  
“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved,  
you and your household.” Acts 16:30-31*

As you can see, I am suggesting that part of getting your name “written in heaven” is to be saved. And the means by which we are saved is clearly the question raised by the Philippian jailor, and answered by Paul in no uncertain terms when he says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. . .!*”

To believe is to choose to trust in something, and, in the plan of God, the object is all important. Do you see it? Our call is to trust, to accept as true, and the object of that trust is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. To trust in Christ is to place one’s faith for salvation in who He is (fully divine and fully man) and what He has done (gone to the cross in our place as payment for our sin).

Should you want more proof that we are saved by faith, just do a quick survey of the Gospel of John. Consider John 1:12, 2:23, 3:16, 4:13, 4:50, 5:53, 5:24, 6:29, 7:38. Chapter after chapter, and verse after verse, belief in the person and work of Christ is the means by which we are saved, receive eternal life, and have our names written in heaven!

It is by grace we are saved because we have a need and only God has the answer to that need. For the Bible is clear that we were all “*dead in our trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1) and therefore, “*like the rest, we were by nature objects of God’s wrath*” (Ephesians 2:3). How could it be possible for any of us to get out from under the wrath of God? The only answer is the grace of God:

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—  
and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—  
not by works, so that no one can boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9

So our salvation is by grace and through faith! Over and over again the Word of God speaks with great clarity on this subject.

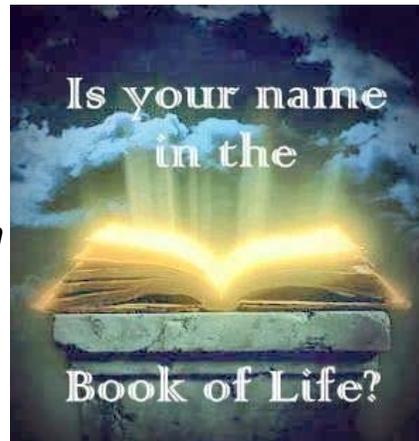
In fact even the opposite is made very clear: Jesus says it this way,

*"...if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins." John 8:24*

And is there any doubt that to die in one's sins is the antithesis of having one's name written in heaven? And just so there is no uncertainty, let's further strengthen the connection between one's salvation and having *one's name written in heaven*. In the fourth chapter of Philipians, Paul talks about two women,

*...who have contended at my side in the cause of the Gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are written in the book of life.*

These are co-workers in ministry with Paul. The fact they are ministering with him and contending for the Gospel leads one to reasonably assume they are believers. And look at how Paul describes them as those whose "*names are written in the book of life*." In fact, anyone whose name is not written in the Book of Life will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. (Revelation 20:15).



So in summary, I am suggesting that you get your name written in heaven, when it is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and this occurs when you place your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

**Can you know for sure that pen has actually been put to paper?** I hope that you see the significance of this question. I have talked with many people who are *hoping* they will go to heaven because of the good life they have lived, or at least a life they feel is better than most. But when pressed, they don't really know for sure. So back to my question: can you know for sure that your name has actually been written in heaven? Yes you can! Simply by resting upon the character of God and accepting the authority of the Word of God.

Let's consider first the character of God. He is faithful and true, He is good and merciful, He keeps His Word. God's promises are dependent upon who He is and not upon who we are or what we have done. Let me prove it to you:

*Every good and perfect gift is from above,  
coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,  
with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.  
Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of  
Truth that we might be a kind of first-fruits of  
His creatures. James 1:17-18*

"For I am the Lord, I do not change. . ." Malachi 3:6



And as for accepting the authority of the Word of God:

*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. I John 5:11-13*

This is the definitive passage with respect to the assurance of salvation that is meant to be cherished by every child of God. As I have already shown you, eternal life is based upon faith in who Jesus is and what He accomplished on our behalf. And our assurance that we possess this quality of life rests upon simply knowing whether or not we have believed, specifically, in the person and work of Jesus Christ! God wants us to know, with absolute certainty, whether or not we have eternal life.

Some argue that Christians with this kind of assurance are arrogant. Not at all, we are simply accepting what God has proclaimed. Furthermore, the Scriptures are equally clear that “*without faith it is impossible to please God.*” We please Him when we take Him at His Word regarding the truth of not only how we are saved but also our assurance that “pen has indeed been put to paper.” Our names are, most certainly, written in heaven.

**Why does Jesus place such a premium on rejoicing in having one’s name written in heaven?** Why does Jesus direct the focus of our rejoicing to this particular outcome? Why are we to put this first in terms of priority? Although certainly not the most important reason, it does bear mentioning that having one’s name written in heaven means that one has eternal life. And, one must come to grips with the duration of eternal life. This life is temporal, but a hand-breadth, comparable to the way the grass withers and the flowers fade (I Peter 1:24). On the other hand, the life that comes through faith in Jesus is eternal, everlasting, and without end.

Closely related is the truth that having one's name written in heaven is not something that can be lost, undone, or diminished. Matthew reminds us that moth and rust cannot decay what we have nor can thieves break in and steal it. (Matthew 6:20). Peter says it this way:

*He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. . .into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade— kept in heaven for you. . .* | Peter 1:3-6

The third and perhaps the most important reason having our names written in heaven is important is because that fact is part of what defines who we are as children of God. Have you ever noticed how *connected* people are to the image they have of themselves?

Why do so many famous athletes try to make a comeback, why do so many washed up actors and actresses make one more movie, and why do so many high profile business men simply languish away after stepping down from their positions of power? The reason is the same for all three, without their identity they feel lost. They need to come back to what made them famous or powerful and taste it one more time. Do you see that their identities are wrapped up in things that fade, can diminish, and will be lost? Even gifted Christians sometimes have trouble when the season for exercising their gifting comes to a close. And, should they become despondent about it, then it means they allowed themselves to be defined by their gifting rather than who and what they are in Christ.

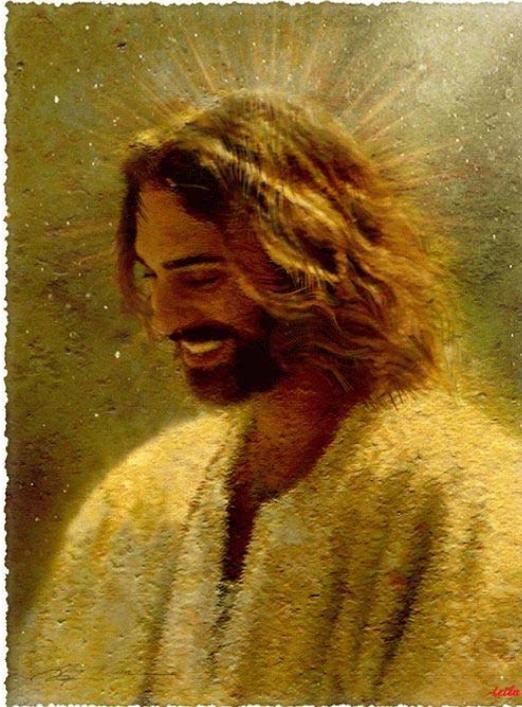
What actually should define us? Jesus is suggesting it is those things that accompany having our names written in heaven! Perhaps a personal example will help make this clear. My Mom died of the ravishes of dementia. For me, personally, it was very sad as she eventually even forgot the face and name of her oldest son. However, she placed her faith in the person and work of Christ in her later years, and as a result her name was written in heaven.

And I can tell you one thing. Although for a time she lost the identity she had built temporarily as an intelligent, loving, and extremely capable individual, the fact that her true identity became associated with having her name written in heaven means she doesn't have any trouble remembering the face of her Lord and Savior now!

### **Jesus' Cause to Rejoice**

As we conclude our time in Luke Chapter 10, I would like to show you something in Verse 21, where it tells us "*Jesus rejoiced.*" Do your own search, and you will see

that this is only rarely attributed to Jesus in the Scriptures. What is it that could have caused this response by our Lord to be noteworthy enough to be recorded in Scripture? Verses 21-24 give us the answer. First, there is a very clear statement of appreciation for the way God's gift of salvation is not for the power-brokers or intellectual elites, but, rather, for those who will humble



themselves, like a little child, and come in faith (I Corinthians 1:18-31). I don't know about you, but I decided a long time ago that I am more than satisfied with being identified with those who choose the foolishness of the cross rather than the wisdom of this world. For it is the message of the cross in which resides the power of salvation for all who believe. (Romans 1:16)

Second, the image embedded in this passage is about what it is that gives Jesus joy—His followers engaged in ministry from a foundation of knowing their eternal destiny is settled. In fact, it was perhaps this “*joy that was set before Him*” that was in Jesus’ mind as He “*endured the cross.*” (Hebrews 12:1)

And then, there is the issue of the initiator of the salvation in which we are to rejoice! A deep Christian thinker once said:

*A marvelous hard thing it is to bring a dull and shifting heart to cry with feeling for mercy. (Sibbes)*

I find this to be very true. In fact, I think the Word of God teaches that it would never happen if God hadn’t acted first! For He saw the plight of man, He saw the helplessness of man, and He sent his Son.

*“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. . .”* John 6:44

*“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”* John 12:32

*“. . . He (the Holy Spirit) will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. . .”* John 16:8

Do you see it? It is not that we sought Him, but that He sought us! In fact, the Father, Son, and Spirit are all involved in drawing man to the point of faith, which, in turn, leads to reconciliation. In fact, this is part of my own testimony. I was a good moral person who believed in God, and believed that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of mankind. But I was still separated from God, without eternal life and without hope for the future. The reason—I had learned these things as statements of religious truth, but hadn’t applied them to myself personally. I had not yet seen myself as a sinner before a holy God, and personally in need of a Savior.

After all, I was a good moral person, better than most. And then Mercy called my name and God's grace addressed my need. I heard the good news of God's love for me, and Jesus' death on my behalf. I heard it from those who were sent, just like Luke Chapter 10. They placed a premium on having one's name written in heaven—theirs and mine—just like in Luke Chapter 10.

As I became aware of my need for salvation, and God's provision of salvation in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Father drew me through the witnesses He sent. The Son drew me through the finished work of the cross. The Spirit drew me by convicting me of a need that only faith in Christ could address. As I said—Mercy called my name. For mercy is not getting what you deserve, while grace is getting what you could never earn or deserve.

So I swept aside my upbringing, moral code, good works, sincerity, and everything else in which I was trusting and placed *all my eggs in one basket*—faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. And when I did so my sins were forgiven, and my lack of righteousness was replaced by His righteousness. He will not disappoint, for *He is the Way the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father, but through Him.* (John 14:6)



And do you know what else happened? Jesus rejoiced over me—can you believe it? And on the authority of God's Word and His unchanging nature, I rejoice that my name from that moment on has been written in heaven. And yours can be too, if you will but turn and believe. Believe in who Jesus is—the Son of God who came and took on humanity—and what He did—died in your place to pay a sin debt that you could never pay. In His death on the cross, He provided a way for all who believe to have their names written in heaven for all eternity. Is Mercy calling your name?

# Rejoice Chapter 2

## Mark Chapter 10

We are going to go from Luke Chapter 10 to Mark Chapter 10 and continue to investigate the topic of personal faith in Christ and what's at stake with respect to belief or unbelief! What we are going to learn as we turn to the pages of Mark's Gospel is just how difficult it can be, on the receiving end, for a person to come to faith in Christ.

### Understanding the Alternatives

It is one thing to understand how simple it is for a person to change his or her eternal destiny, it is another thing altogether for an individual to choose to believe. It is not that it is hard for a person to exercise faith, rather, it is that there is often a great deal of reluctance to do so.

Let me explain further, there is a condition at which a person must arrive in order to choose salvation. For this is exactly the point at which the Philippian jailor had arrived when he threw himself at the feet of Paul and Silas, and in a moment of desperation, asked this question:

*Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Acts 16:30*

So how does a person come to this point? The answer is simple—repentance! Specifically, there has to be a *change of mind*—a change of mind about one's lack of standing before a holy God, a change of mind about who Jesus is and His significance to us, and a change of mind about the proper object of our affections when it comes to eternity. Now a person may not have reached equal clarity on all three of these points, but something needs to prompt a change of mind in order to bring a person to their knees—literally, as in the case of the jailor, or figuratively within the soul. And when a person reaches this point, our study has already prepared us for the answer given in Acts 16:31:

*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. . .*

It is that straight forward! The jailor believed, and he was saved. We can add to our understanding by looking at John 5:24:

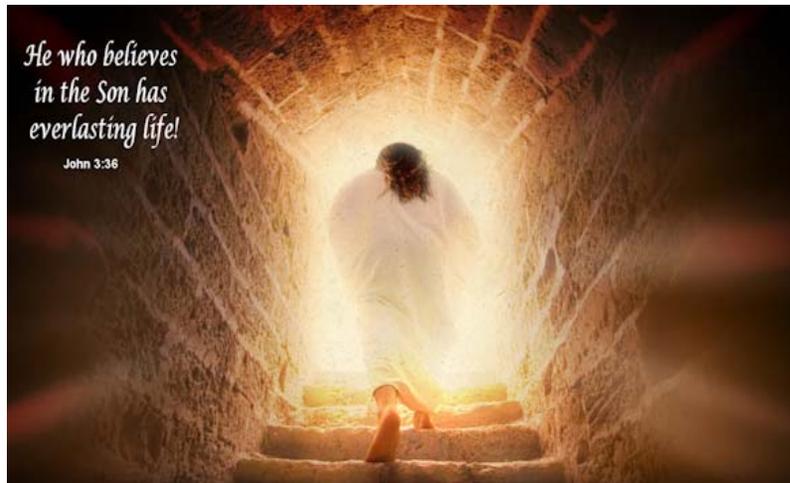
*“...he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”*

Once again, life comes from hearing and believing, and now note that there will be no future judgment for the person who exercises faith in Christ, for they have “*passed from death into life.*” The Greek verb in this phrase indicates something that has occurred once and for all and has no need to be repeated.

Now we need to be equally clear that there is an alternative—to fail to repent and therefore fail to turn in faith to the Lord. The Bible calls it unbelief, and here are its consequences.

*“...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”* John 8:24

*“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”* John 3:36



In short, if you do not turn to Christ in faith, you will leave this life as you started it, on the Broad Road headed to destruction. For remission of sins is found in no one else but Christ! All that is left, without Christ, is a fearful expectation of judgment from a holy God.

It is irrational to say, "A loving God would never condemn anyone to hell!" Our loving God provided a way of salvation at the utmost sacrifice to Himself. When a person spurns such a gift, he or she should have no other expectation than judgment. God didn't have to provide even one way for us to be reconciled to Himself. The marvel is that there is any way at all! To be apathetic towards His provision, or to expect Him to adjust to our sensibilities is nothing more than the height of vanity.

So I hope you can see why I strive to be so clear on the means of salvation, sometimes summing it up as "*faith alone in Christ alone.*" That makes the issue for every single one of us, have we trusted in Christ and Him alone for our salvation? Are we enamored with the work of Christ on the cross and not what we bring to the table?

Far too often we treat our relationship with God like a job interview, here is the benefits package and here is what we bring to the table as a perspective follower. No, no! It is much closer to see it as the hymn-writer did,

*Nothing in my hand I bring,  
simply to Thy cross I cling.*



So for those who have trusted in Christ, this is what unites us: our shared faith in the unsurpassed object of Jesus Christ. This is the real basis of our fellowship including our shared joy that our names are written in heaven.

## Background to the Message

By now you are no doubt eager to see what is in store for us in Mark 10. I want us to understand the narrative centered around Verses 17-27, but, in order to do so, we have to go back to at least Verse 13. (Please read Mark 10:13-27 carefully.)

In this text we see there were those who brought young children to Jesus. It was the custom of the day for Him to have drawn them close, hugged them, and prayed a blessing upon them. Apparently, the disciples thought Jesus was either too busy or too important! Did you notice the response of Jesus?

*He was greatly displeased. . .*

(I can't help but wonder what that might have been like?)  
As Jesus explains further, He goes on to say,

*"Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive  
the kingdom of God as a little child will  
by no means enter it."*

By this time, you should be thinking, of course! For children have this ready capacity to trust and accept, while adults are more distrustful and more accustomed to requiring a show of merit, an ability to earn. But, we have learned that it isn't about our doing or meriting or earning, but, instead, it is about our receiving what God has provided for us through Christ.

Jesus is simply teaching that there is no access to heaven apart from child-like faith. This very issue is more important than you might think. For there are some well known Bible teachers who claim that the level of commitment is so high in order to become a Christian that it can really only be made as an adult. Commitment is very good for a Christian, it is just not part of becoming one.

And notice how the Bible actually teaches exactly the opposite of this false concept. For, as we have just read, the Bible teaches that unless an adult exercises faith in the same way that a child does, he or she cannot be saved. This is ample motive to make sure that we are trusting in Christ alone by faith alone and not holding on to our good works or religious practices.

To close this section, did you notice how Jesus did take the children into His arms and bless them?



### **A Man with Eternity on His Mind**

Now it is very important that we have Verses 13-16 clearly in mind as we move into Mark 10:17-f. Verse 17 introduces us to a new character. In Verse 22, he is declared to be rich. In Matthew 19:20, he is described as young, and in Luke 18:18 as a ruler. So when taken collectively, we often refer to this narrative as *Jesus and the Rich, Young Ruler*. It is clear that this young man has eternity on his mind, but the way he is approaching it reveals a number of things. Consider these points:

- Did you notice how he addresses Jesus—as “good teacher.” This would have been very unusual in that day, and Jesus calls him on it immediately.

You see he was using a term that would typically be ascribed to God and Him alone (see Psalm 118:1). The problem here is that there is no indication that this man actually believed that Jesus was the Son of God. In short, this man needs to change his mind about who Jesus is. That's the part of repentance that is necessary before salvation is really a possibility.

- Next, Jesus lays down a partial listing of the Ten Commandments. The man feels he is on solid ground now as he attests that he has kept them all from "his youth," probably a reference to age 12, the Jewish age of adult accountability. No doubt this man is very sincere, and thinks his standing is good before God. But what about,

*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the Law; rather, through the Law we become conscious of sin.* Romans 3:20

The very commandments of the Law mentioned by Jesus, properly applied, would have shown this young man that, try as he might, he fell short of the standards of God. This man also needs to change his mind, repent, about his standing before a holy God.

- Then in Verse 21, Jesus focuses the issue for this young man by telling him,

*"One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me."*

This is one of the few recorded times in Scripture when a person went away sad after an encounter with Jesus. The reason, he didn't like the choice given to him by Jesus. It wasn't at all what he expected. He came for affirmation that he was going to heaven, and left with a choice he couldn't bring himself to make. This is an immense problem for the young man, but it is also going to challenge our thinking. For on its face, doesn't this somewhat contradict what we have been learning?

## Application of the Lesson

This encounter between Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler is instructive, especially if properly taken in context following His comments on receiving the kingdom of God. Let me give you three *lessons learned* from this encounter:

**1. The Wrong Object.** Jesus is not telling the Rich Young Ruler how to be saved. Rather, He is setting him up regarding his need for a change of mind (repentance) regarding the object of his affections. Jesus is revealing in whom or what the young man is placing his trust. For there is one thing he lacks and that is placing his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! How can we be certain that this is really a trust issue? Look at Verse 24. Jesus reveals for us what is going on in the heart of this young man:

*"Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!"*

Do you see it? It is a trust issue, and the problem is having the wrong object of trust. Notice, there is nothing said about the rich young ruler's sin. That is not to say that sin is not an insurmountable problem for every member of the human race, it is, at least from man's side. But God has dealt with this problem at the cross (or will, if the young man comes to belief).



The problem is that the young man is trusting in riches rather than trusting in Christ. And the only way any of us can receive God's gift of salvation is through faith alone in Christ alone. The rich young ruler has a long way to go, for he is trusting in his wealth and his external conformity to the Law. For him, his wealth is an idol. What he needs to do is to *change his mind* about both his standing before God and what (or who) it is that can actually save him! This is an ongoing problem for mankind and will continue to be so until the Lord returns.

For there will always be a sharp distinction between faith and works. The Philippian jailor asked, "*What must I do?*" The rich young ruler said, "*these I have kept. . .*" However, the Word of God says"

*...believe in the One the Father has sent...*

Ultimately, this is an issue of belief versus unbelief.

The medical community says that heart disease is the number one killer in the world. When it comes to eternity, I would have to say it is unbelief that is the chief malady of man. For faith in Christ is the stumbling stone, the rock of offense. People would rather trust in wealth, religion, or simply pursue the flesh. They think they can either put off deciding on the Gospel until later or dismiss it with impunity. It is a wonder that anyone gets saved, and no one would if God were not at work calling, convicting, and reaching out through His witnesses.

So, as I have stated before, getting to the point of considering the claims of the Gospel is the crux of the matter for every lost person whether it be the rich young ruler or the thief on the cross. And once there, salvation belongs to those who choose to place their faith, to trust, in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

**2. Our Role Model for Ministry.** Jesus leaves us a remarkable role model for ministry! I am going to shift our discussion a little bit by returning to a verse we overlooked—Verse 21. Think for a minute how you would respond to what the rich young ruler had to say. I know that I would be tempted to Biblically crush his response. How did Jesus respond? In Verse 21 it says,

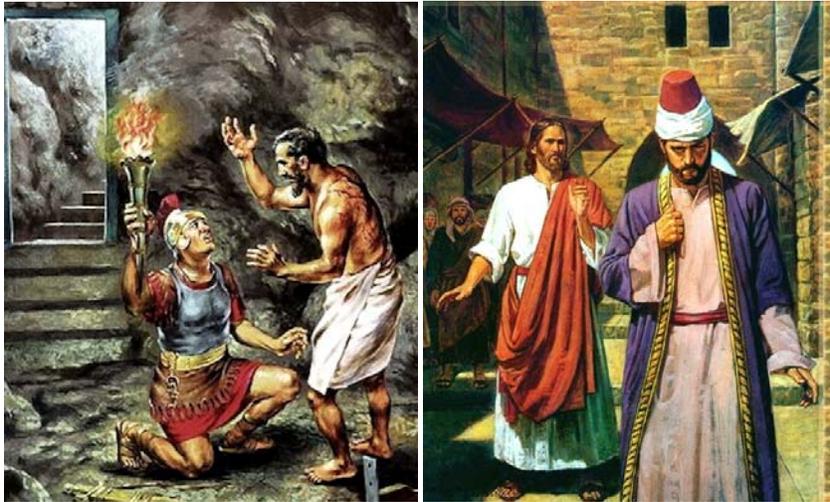
*Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him. . . .*

What a key reminder and example for us. You see, no matter what kind of response we get from a lost person, we have to keep in mind that they are a person for whom Christ died. (II Peter 2:11) We must remember that Jesus is not willing that any should perish but all come to repentance! (II Peter 3:9) Furthermore, the cross will always be foolishness to those who are perishing (I Corinthians 1:18), and it will not be until they come to faith that they see it as the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). So, don't be the least surprised when a lost person manifests foolishness. Just do what Jesus did and love them. This is our first challenge—to love those lost and confused people the Lord brings to us.

Here is a second challenge: to make sure we don't confuse loving them with a failure to speak the truth to them. Notice, in the context, Jesus' love did not mean He said, "You are so moral, so sincere, such a seeker, I am sure there is a place in heaven for you."

Agape love is to work for the best interests of another at a sacrifice to ourselves. Jesus tells the young man what he needs to hear in order to get his attention, even though it is going to cause him sorrow. Jesus doesn't sugar-coat it, and notice how the truth was hard on the larger audience who heard it as well. Jesus shares the Gospel and the recipient leaves in sorrow while his followers react in incredulity. This happens when the Gospel is clearly presented, so don't be surprised if you catch it from believer and unbeliever alike. There is a lot of confusion about the truth in the world in which we minister.

**3. Understanding the Stark Contrast.** There is a contrast in these two passages that is so stark it should keep us from sleeping at night! To what two passages do I refer? I am referring to the contrast in response and outcome in the two chapters we have studied so far. First in Luke 10, the emphasis is on salvation that follows faith.



While Mark 10 is the sad message and eternal sorrow that is the outcome of unbelief. In the case of the Philippian Jailor, he has cause to rejoice because his name is written in heaven. But in the case of the rich young man, there is only sorrow because His future can be summed up as:

*...it is appointed unto man once to die and then judgment* Hebrews 9:27

Now perhaps you are thinking, I'm not sad. In fact, I'm pretty happy with how I am managing the details of my life. My response would be: does your management of the details of your life allow you to rejoice no matter what life throws at you in terms of health, relationships, and so on? Do you have a joy that you cannot lose?

You see, some know they are sad, and by that I mean that they are deeply concerned about what comes next after this life. But there are also others who have found temporary substitutes to gloss over the reality that is coming. I can tell you this for certain: one minute into eternity each of us will realize, one way or the other, that there is no substitute for the real thing when it comes to cause for rejoicing!

So in closing this chapter, I would simply like to ask, "Is your name written in heaven?" If so, then you have cause for rejoicing. Furthermore, you have a calling to engage the world in which we live with the good news of the Gospel. And along the way, no matter what kind of response you might get, to love those for whom Christ died. In doing so, you will be following in the footsteps of the One who both redeemed us and loved us with an infinite love!



# Rejoice Chapter 3

## John Chapter 16

One more investigation to complete our trio on the topic of joy and rejoicing. Our passage is John 16:22, which says,

*“Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”*

Before I try to make any application from this passage, let's make sure that we correctly understand its context. John Chapters 13-17 contain the final instructions of Jesus to His disciples just prior to the crucifixion. These instructions are often referred to as the *Upper Room Discourse*. Now in the immediate context of Chapter 16, Jesus is speaking specifically of His death and resurrection. When He says, “*a little while and you will not see me*” (Verse 16) and “*you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice*” (Verse 20), He is referring to His coming death and burial. And then when He immediately adds, “*and again a little while, and you will see me*” (Verse 16) and “*but your sorrow will be turned to joy*” (Verse 20), He is now referring to His resurrection three days later.

So then, the joy that the disciples will feel upon the resurrection of their Lord and Savior is something that they will never lose, in part, because it begins a new depth of relationship with the Father through the Son. For example, in the immediately following verses, the followers of Christ will have a new access to the Father in terms of prayer. And then Chapter 16 closes with a very clear word from Jesus regarding the future of Christians everywhere:

*“In this world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33

Now here is a very simple question for us: does John 16:22 have any application outside of the disciples who saw Jesus following the resurrection? In other words, was it only those who heard this promise spoken and saw the resurrected Jesus who were going to receive a joy that could never be taken from them? Or, does this somehow have application to Christians down through the centuries? I think it absolutely does upon the authority of Scripture.

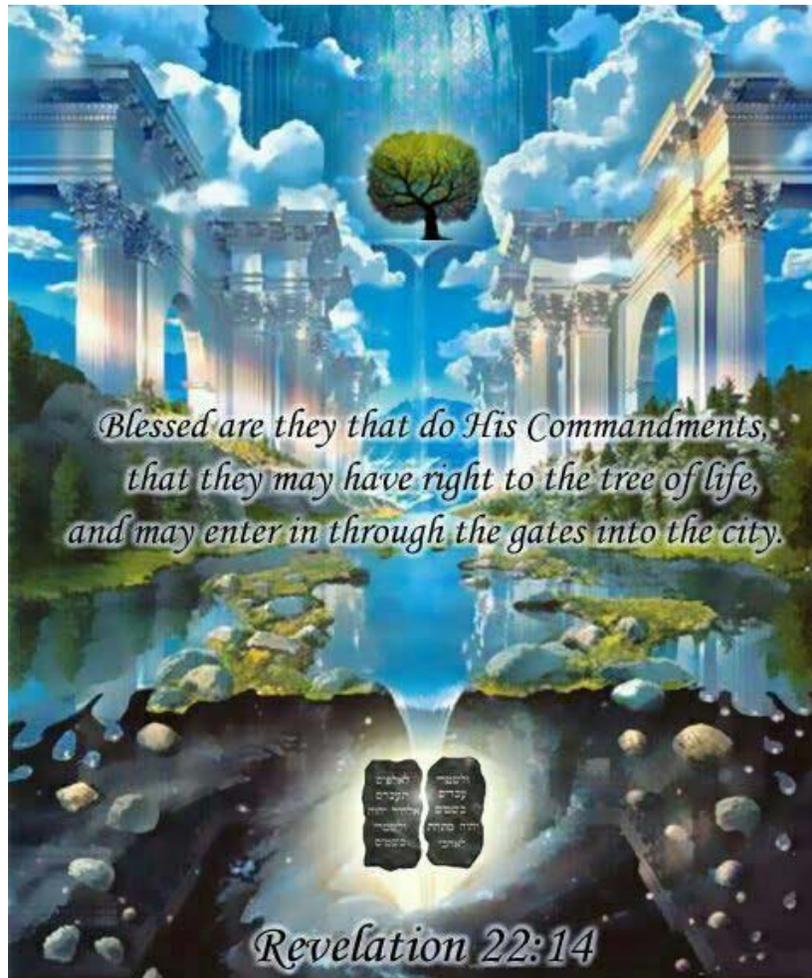
Jesus, in John 17, defines eternal life as knowing the Father and the Son and then prays for not only His disciples but for all those who will believe in Jesus through their witness to the truth—that's you and me. (John 17:3, 20) Furthermore, Ephesians 1:18-19 includes Paul's prayer that we would all more fully know the

*...hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. . .*

Do you see the connection? To “*see Him again*” is to more fully know Him and the blessings that accompany such knowledge. Knowing Him cannot help but lead to rejoicing and joy. And a joy that comes from knowing the Son is a joy that can never be taken from us! With this being the case, let me leave you with a few things to consider as the application of Verse 22:

- Christianity does not promise a present environment that is conducive to joy, but a present reason for joy! Consider these very same disciples to whom Jesus said “*your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.*” Nearly every one of them was going to die a martyr's death in the ministry. Jesus promise to them wasn't that their circumstances were always going to be joyful. It was not a promise of prosperity, health, or perpetual happiness. Rather, the life of Christ within and the promise of an eternal home were cause for ongoing joy and two things that could never be taken away—even by physical death.

- The fullness of joy that Jesus is talking about does not have its consummation in the present. But rather, it is fully realized in the future. But, what we have in Christ right now is certainly cause for joy: Christ within, remission of sin, an identity in Christ, and so much more. Yet, there is also much to come: face to face with the Lord (II Corinthians 5:8); a new body that is like His (Philippians 3:21); the last enemy overcome as death is swallowed up in victory (I Corinthians 15:54), and an eternity in His presence (Revelation 22).

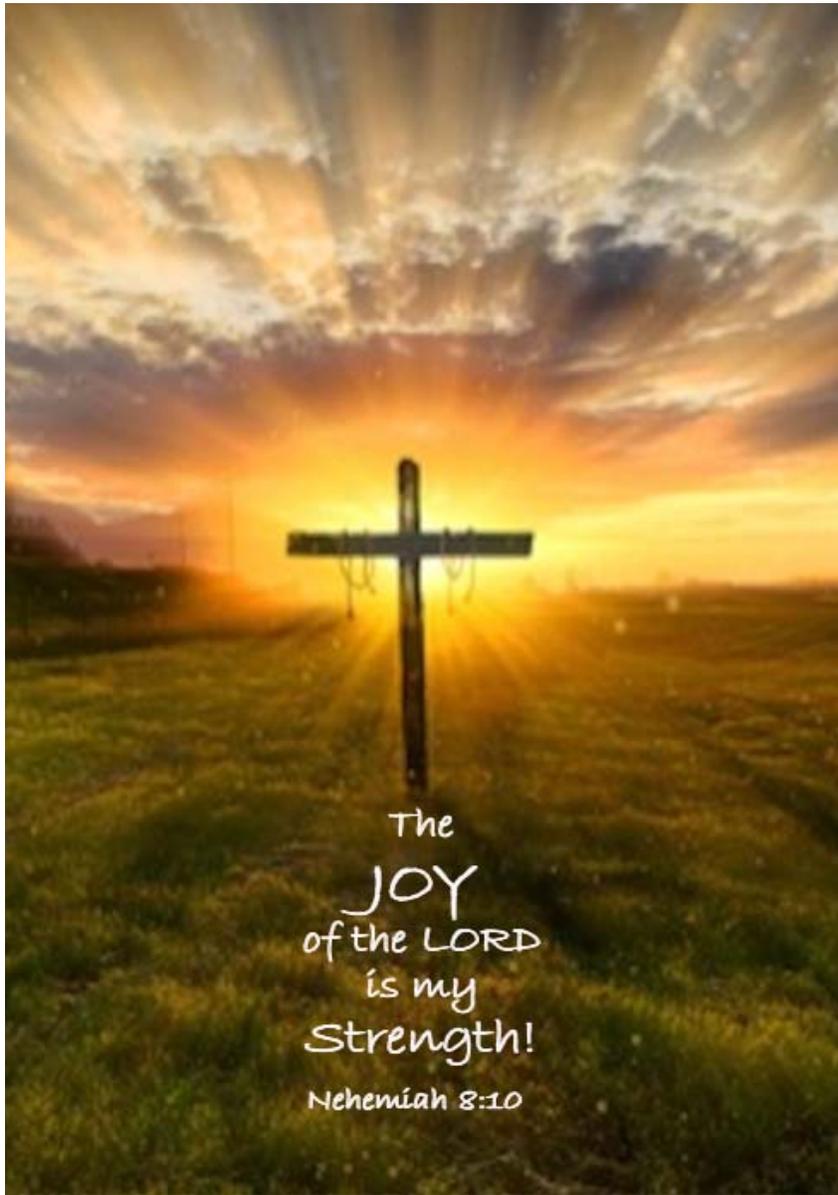


- In the meantime, the Scripture is very clear, we can expect tribulation. What else would we expect? We are in enemy held territory—the devil’s world (I John 5:19)—with a calling to represent the Lord Jesus Christ to the subjects of Satan’s kingdom. We simply need to keep our focus on two things: the calling is worthy and we know the ultimate victor. For we can be of “*good cheer*,” that is we can rejoice, in the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has overcome the world and its ruler!
- Lastly, everywhere you find joy or rejoicing on the part of this world, you will find that it is temporary, transient, and fleeting. The joy of the world is dependent upon things that come and go. John 16:22 is talking to us about what I might call a *supernatural* kind of joy. I apply that adjective simply so that you would realize that the kind of joy the Lord gives, the rejoicing that comes from knowing Him, is something that cannot be taken, cannot be lost, cannot tarnish, cannot grow tiresome. It can, however, be neglected and forgotten, and that is the reason for writing this little booklet.

For faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ leads to an eternal salvation, and that salvation means that our names are written in heaven. This is the one ultimate cause for rejoicing. No matter what else we might accomplish in this life, if we make it to the point of having our names written in heaven we have cause for rejoicing!

Furthermore, we have the high calling of bringing others to this same point of joy by sharing the Good News of the Gospel. It may involve tribulation now, but that tribulation cannot tarnish the joy that is within nor can it touch the environment of unspeakable joy that is coming. Might this be the foundation of our ongoing fellowship and ministry.

And all God’s people said, “Amen!”



The  
JOY  
of the LORD  
is my  
Strength!

Nehemiah 8:10

VISTOSO  
  
Community Church

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit...*John 15:5*

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