

## Status Worth Rejoicing About

Harmony M.B.C., April 26, 2009 (Morning)

Robert P. Myers

Luke 10:16 He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

Luke 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

Luke 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

Luke 10:19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

**Luke 10:20** Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

In the midst of a world full of harm, it would appear that lethal danger threatens on every corner. In fact, this is true. And, because this is true, some of the most encouraging and comforting thoughts about the hazardous life here on earth are those thoughts brought to us when we think on the extreme protection afforded to us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I don't believe the words from Him in this text were spoken just for those 70 faithful men who went out to make Israel aware that Messiah had come. True enough, they did face a lot of conflict and probably a good deal of resistance among their Jewish brethren, and they needed this kind of encouragement. But notice that the words He spoke to them are written down for our admonition...those of us who are at the end of the age. Because they are written down, the bible teaches us that they are also for our use and encouragement.

The encouragements included those words spoken in verse 19 in which He mentions protection from sinister critters of the earth...serpents and scorpions. It is noteworthy that our Lord did not promise to protect them from poisonous spiders, or lions, or bears, sharks, or mean dogs, nor maybe a dozen other denizens of the earth that could cause them harm. I say it is noteworthy because we can assume that He would protect them from all of these as well, yet they are not mentioned. Somebody may assume that it could have been because there were lots of snakes and scorpions around...maybe more than these other dangerous animals. I don't think there was. What I do believe is that He focused on serpents and scorpions because Jews viewed these two animals as symbolic of spiritual threats. So, Jesus called up images of things that had spiritual symbolism attached to them. I believe He did this to call attention to the powers of darkness that would be hounding these men. Notice that almost in the same breath He points them to "**all** the power of the enemy." He makes the enemy to be singular, and He is obviously talking about the devil. In fact in Matthew 13:39 He plainly tells them that the enemy is the devil in the parable He is teaching. Not as though the devil is the only enemy, but that he is the chief enemy of the righteous. The spiritual serpents and scorpions, servants of the devil, both mortal and demonic, are also enemies of the righteous.

Now at the point of our text, we find the 70 returning and telling Christ with joy that even the devils are subject to them through His name. This is a great thing! I wonder how many of us today have come to know that this is just as true for us as it was for them. We sometimes believe that we are just along for the ride here on earth. Our grasp of how powerful the name of Christ is seems to have become diminished when compared to these 70 witnesses. But every now and then we taste of that power when we draw near to the Lord and plead with Him in a spiritual state in which we feel He is truly hearing us and our confidence in Him stirs to a faith empowering pitch. In times like those, our souls soar with these 70 and we wish for the times when we can go there again. But our carnal frame often holds us down.

So, it is a great joy to see the Lord act in our behalf. It gives us great joy to see the works and efforts of the devil knocked flat on the ground as only Christ is able to do. But, as with the 70, we should listen to Jesus' admonition about this kind of rejoicing. This is what I want us to do this morning. Look at what He says in verse 20 and be thoughtful for a little while about what He is really telling us. May the Holy Spirit now help us to notice these things from our Lord's lesson:

- I. In our rejoicing, let's avoid the pitfall of rejoicing over personal power and achievement
- II. In our rejoicing, let's not be misdirected
- III. The primary cause of rejoicing is to be about our standing before the Lord

- I. In our rejoicing, let's avoid the pitfall of rejoicing over personal power and achievement
  - The Lord is not telling us that we cannot allow ourselves some satisfaction in instances when we are spiritually successful (notice in v. 21 of this chapter that even Jesus rejoiced in the unfolding of events here and the display of God's power)
  - We should always rejoice in the Lord when we see some spiritual success occur on earth
  - However, within this arena there is always a potential trap: the danger that we will begin to savor how powerful we are
  - This is a danger if we lose sight of how these things come about
  - The 70 apparently had kept hold of the fact that they were able to do these things because they were done in Jesus' name, but there was still a danger of focusing too much on a temporary achievement; of being tempted regarding the proxy-power they had.

- II. In our rejoicing, let's not be misdirected
  - In a sin cursed world, a skirmish won against Satan today can bring short-lived joy, because we have to face him again tomorrow
    - > Have you ever noticed how quickly a snare set by the devil can dash the kind of joy you get from seeing him bested. Joy and discouragement are like the hills and hollows here in Tennessee.

- III. The primary cause of rejoicing is to be about our standing before the Lord: "...but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (Mention the cultural practice of listing someone in a book of births, naming parents, etc. so as to establish right to inheritance, etc.)
  - This fact carries so many positive implications that it demands rejoicing. Implications include:

- > You have been chosen
- > You have been made fit to be an inhabitant of heaven and eternity
  - Your name written there ensures a glorious reception for you
- > You have eternal standing with God
  - Heaven is the jumping off point for the rest of your life
- > Your welfare has been planned out by Him
  - He has been planning your life including its eternal aspects
- > You have an eternal inheritance with God
  - As a joint heir with Christ, great possessions await you
- > That is where Jesus Christ is waiting to receive His brothers and sisters
- > Satan has no standing in heaven and will not be there
  - Christ's encouraging words in our text are all offered by Him because believers live in an environment that Satan has access to
  - Satan has temporary ruling power here where we currently live
  - The slightest interference by him will never take place in heaven