

More Thrilling to Be Saved Than to Succeed

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the importance of finding ultimate joy in the salvation and assurance of having one's name written in heaven, rather than in ministry success or achievements. It explores the profound implications of having one's name in the book of life, highlighting God's sovereign choice, redemption, forgiveness, eternal security, and the inheritance of eternal life. The message urges believers to prioritize the joy of being saved above all other accomplishments and to live in a way that reflects this deep-seated joy in Christ.

Scripture: Luke 10:17, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:3, Romans 8:38, Philippians 1:6, Revelation 3:5, 1 John 3:1, Psalm 16:11, 1 Corinthians 15:54

Topics: "Joy of Salvation", "Assurance of Eternal Life"

Description

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Transcript

Jesus sent out 72 disciples to go into the towns where he was about to go and to heal the sick and say, the kingdom of God has come among you. And when he greeted them on their return, this is what happened. This is Luke chapter 10 and verses 9 and, or 19 and 20.

The 72 returned with joy saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name. And Jesus said to them, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy.

Nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Do not rejoice at the stunning power you have to liberate people from evil.

Rather, rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Let's pray. Father, that's an odd thing to say, and we need to know what it means for these graduates and the rest of us.

Come, Holy Spirit, and teach us. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Lord, do not rejoice in this power to deliver people from demons. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. What does it mean to have your name written in heaven? The Apostle John tells us the names are written before the foundation of the world in a book, and the name of the book is the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

In other words, to have your name written in the book is to be saved. It's the book of salvation. It's the book of the redeemed.

If your name is in the book, is your name in the book? If your name is in the book, these things are true of you or will certainly be. You are chosen by God in eternity. You are predestined for sonship in his family.

You are ransomed from every evil bondage. You are purchased for God's precious possession. Christ has taken your place under the punishment of divine wrath.

God has caused you to be born again and taken out the heart of stone and put in the heart of flesh. He has made you alive and given you the gift of repentance and faith. He has forgiven you all your sins and declared you innocent before God.

You are irrevocably rescued from the terrors of hell. You stand righteous in the court of heaven and have peace with God. He has adopted you into his own family as his own child, made you heir of eternal life to inherit everything that exists.

He is omnipotently, omnipotently committed to holding on to you so that nothing can separate you from the love of God. He will make every pleasant and painful thing work together for your eternal good. He will lead you in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

He will bring you safely to his eternal kingdom and present you blameless before the throne of God's glory. He will grant you to see the glory of Christ and be changed into his likeness. He will give you a new and glorious body for the enjoyment of all the endless delights of the age to come.

He will grant you to sit with him on his throne and share the universal rule. He will give you access to the very presence of God where there is fullness of joy and pleasures at his right hand forevermore. That's what it means to have your name written in heaven.

Now, why would Jesus say when these 72 returned rejoicing that the powers of darkness and the evil and the powers of destruction had fallen before them in Jesus' name, why would he say, don't rejoice in this, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven? Why would he say that? I don't assume that Jesus was giving an absolute prohibition of rejoicing over the rescue of people from satanic evil. And the reason I don't assume that is because five chapters later in the parable of the prodigal son, he tells us to rejoice when we are used to relieve people from everlasting evil. Join in singing, rejoice your brother's home.

So I don't assume that when he says don't rejoice in this, it is an absolute prohibition of being thankfully glad that we are instruments of liberation from Satan's evil. I take him to mean, therefore, that rejoicing in your salvation, that your names are written in heaven, is something more essential. It is a more essential joy that is a joy with deeper roots, a joy that is most durable, lasting, a joy with the greatest satisfaction, a joy that sustains and shapes all other joys, a joy that is unmistakable to those around you, a joy that cannot be suppressed, but marks your ministry, marks your life.

And he says, let that be your joy, that your name is written in heaven. Let that joy be this, that you are saved. Be more deeply, more durably, more gladly, more pervasively, more unmistakably, more irrepressibly thrilled that you are saved than anything.

Be more thrilled that you are saved and that you are gifted or educated or competent or productive or successful or famous or powerful or fruitful in the name of Jesus even. Do not rejoice that with degree in hand, you are equipped to make a difference. Let's say it more carefully, because Jesus didn't say it carefully.

I'll say it carefully. Jesus just said it and expected me to do some work. So let's say it this way, when you take your diploma and rejoice in the commons for years to come, when you take your diploma and rejoice to enter a world for the good of others and the glory of God, do it in such a way that people will say his truest joy is to be saved.

Her truest joy is to be saved. Those Bethlehem graduates, they are thrilled that their names are written in heaven. It's all over them.

Everything comes from that. So back to the question, why did Jesus say this? Don't rejoice in ministry success, but that your names are written in heaven. Why did he say that? Why does this matter? You Bethlehem people only talk about joy.

Why did he say this? Seven reasons with two-sentence explanations for each one, so it's okay. Legalism, authenticity, zeal, glory, love, death, shame. Number one, legalism.

To the degree that we are not thrilled to be saved, we will move toward legalism. If ministry is not the overflow of joy in Christ, it will be an achievement, and it won't be in Christ. If our work is not coming out of joy in him, it will be a desperate striving for joy.

Two, authenticity. To the degree that we are not thrilled to be saved, we will not be able to commend Christ with authenticity as the all-satisfying Savior. There will always be this niggling sense of inauthenticity in your ministry and your witness.

If he doesn't satisfy me, what am I doing? Preaching and teaching and trying to lead people to him. What's the point? Three, zeal. To the degree that we are not thrilled to be saved, our zeal for worthy causes will be distorted and out of tune.

The cause may be totally righteous, but it will be missing the melody of God's all-satisfying presence. People may admire your stature as a warrior, but the music of your life will not sound like the pleasures of knowing Christ. Four, glory.

To the degree that we are not thrilled to be saved, God will not be glorified in our vocations the way he ought to be because the fullness of his worth and beauty and greatness are known and shown only where he is manifestly felt as the deepest, sweetest, most durable joy in life. Five, love. To the degree that we are not thrilled to be saved, to that degree will our love for other people become compromised because what is love? But to labor at any cost to ourselves to give people what is best for them, what is fully and eternally satisfying, the labor of love, that labor of love, is weakened by every degree of joy we do not find in our own salvation.

Six, death. To the degree that we are not thrilled to be saved, we will approach our own death without peace. We will be tormented late at night with the nagging fear that we loved his service more than himself.

Are we real? Am I real? Just a parenthesis here, sweet parenthesis. My last email interchange with Tim Keller, who died today, revolved around this text, and I did not plan it that way. We reveled, we were reveling together, and he reminded me, you know, John, Martin Lloyd Jones found this text, Luke 10 20, to be his greatest comfort in the last hours of his life.

My name is written in heaven. I can't look back on a successful ministry and get any peace. My name is written in heaven.

That's the last thing Tim Keller said to me. So dear graduates, I promise you, Tim Keller would promise you, hundreds in this room would promise you, in 60 years from now, you will be very glad if you spent your life reveling in the Savior more than his service. Six, seven, finally, shame.

To the degree that we are not thrilled to be saved, how will we face the Lord? On that day when he asks us, what did you enjoy most about the life I gave you? If we cannot say, you, you were my most essential joy, how will we face it? So I say with Jesus, to the graduates and the rest of us, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. And if you do, if God gives you the grace to live that way, feel that way for the next 60 years or so, you will be delivered from legalism.

You will minister with authenticity. Your zeal will have the melody of heaven. God will be glorified in your life.

You will taste the sweetness of loving people. You will face death without fear, and you will face the Lord without shame. Father, perform that miracle of delighting in you more than anything so that when we sing a song like all glory be to Christ, we know how to get there.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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