

Reasons We Rejoice, Part 3

Luke 10:19-2019

In the tenth chapter of Luke, that's where we are, verse 19: "Behold, I've given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you." In context, and in light of the previous verse, it's not too hard to get the interpretation, the meaning of this verse. Jesus just spoke about Satan's fall in verse 18, and this verse continues the same line of reasoning. In verse 19, Jesus here guarantees his disciples, and we'll note it's in the strongest way possible in the Greek language, he is guaranteeing the ultimate safety of his disciples. This is really Jesus' ironclad promise of protection.

Okay, so with that, let's see, six more reasons to rejoice. And we're going to learn how Luke 10:19 applies to us today. So we're going to continue the numbering we started last time, so these six reasons for rejoicing, they are going to start with number 19. They were number 1 through 18 last week, 19 through 30 this week.

Number 19: the joy of Jesus' provision. The joy of Jesus' provision. When Jesus says there, "I have given..." he's using a perfect tense verb. He's pointing back to an action that was already completed in past time, but the results of that past action have continued on right into the present. Okay? So the gift that he had already given, they've had it with them the whole time. It's been ready and available for their use.

So why do we rejoice in a perfect tense verb? Because we can see that Jesus is attentive to our needs preemptively. He's preemptive in his protection of us; he's preemptive in planning for us. He has planned for, he's provided for, he's already given what we need before we, before we even know that we have any need at all. He's taken care of it. He's, he's made the arrangements for us; he's given the gift. He's planned for and taken care of everything.

Not only that, but we know that when Jesus provides for us, what he gives is perfectly suited, it's all-sufficient to meet the exact need for which he gives the gift. "His divine power," 2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has granted to us all things that

pertain to life and godliness." He's taken care of it all; he's arranged everything. And further, when Jesus gives gifts to us, the gifts that he gives are always permanent, as in, he will never take them away. That's what James 1:17 says. It says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of lights, with whom there is no variation, no shadow due to change."

So the immutable gift-giver gives immutable, irrevocable gifts. That applies to this gift of authority as well, along with the outcomes of this authority. In fact, let me make one more point about the perfect tense verb. Jesus said, "Behold."

"Behold" is getting their attention, "know this. I have given you authority." Now think about the timing of this. He tells them not before he sends them out on the mission; he tells them when they come back. He tells them after they've returned, which means this gift of authority, a gift that he had given them in the past, "I have given," perfect tense, completed action in the past, the results of that action continue with these disciples to the very present moment.

In other words, his gift of authority remains with these disciples. It was there all the way through their mission, and when they returned, when there are no demons around, they've got that gift, and that gift is going to continue into the present. It is never to be taken away.

Now we're going to hold onto that thought and consider next, number 20, number 20: the nature of the gift that he provided. The nature of the gift that he provided, and that's number 20 is the joy of authority. The joy of authority. What a gift! What a gift! Jesus has granted the disciples authority. It is, it is an authority that is greater than the demonic authority. It's an authority that is greater than the authority of Satan himself.

It's interesting because Satan seems like this, almost all-powerful being, but you notice when you start knocking over the dominoes of his demonic kingdom and the hold that they have over human souls, Satan comes falling down. He's perched up on top of others.

It's in, completely the inverse in God's Kingdom. God is not propped up. He is the source of all power, all authority. He's

the source of all being. We're propped up on our king, not the other way around. Every other kingdom of the world, including Satan's, the king is propped up on the authority of his kingdom. Not so in God's kingdom.

It's by this gift of authority that Jesus has secured both the temporal and eternal protection of his people. In exercising this gift of authority, by faith, you can see that the seventy-two represent the first fruits of the church. These seventy-two and what we see here is something that we can hold on to and put into practice as well. Their mission had come to an end, right? But Jesus said, "Behold, I have given you authority," an authority that continues. So they represent us, they represent future generations of those who will believe. Because when we trust Christ, and when we put this gift of authority into effect, we are likewise protected.

Beloved, it's the same thing with us. Like these disciples here, Christians have authority from Christ, and as long as we're acting within the bounds of our circumscribed and prescribed authority that he's given us, we draw into the situation, into any situation, we draw the power of God himself. It's not our

own personal, creaturely power that protects us from the threat of harm.

When we face a threat from a power that's greater than ourselves, whether human or demonic, it is the infinite, limitless, absolute power of our God that responds to that threat. Like a divine bodyguard, he is the one who comes to the Christian's aid. He is the one who silences the threat, who stills our hearts and comforts us. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will," what, "fear no evil," right?

Just as we noted, Jesus has granted his disciples authority in verse 19. The gift of that authority was given in the past, and yet it remained with these disciples even after their mission. And he did not take it away. During Jesus' earthly ministry, he gave his disciples authority, and that brought divine power to bear, according to God's will to cast out demons. That was visible evidence, visible evidence of the superiority of divine power over demonic power. That's what people need to see.

This validated the, the coming Kingdom of God and its, its authority over illegitimate kingdom of Satan. But when Jesus died on the Cross, in a turn of irony, Satan thinking he had won victory over the Son of God, in turn, he was dealt the ultimate death blow. Hebrews 2:14 says, "Through death he," Christ, "destroyed the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil." That's a turn of events he did not foresee.

Now the nature of the authority that is ours today, listen, we wield an authority that's even greater than the authority of these seventy-two. And you say, "How's that?" Listen, they had the authority to cast out demons. We have the authority to preach the Gospel. The Gospel that we preach not only has the power to drive away the demons, but it has power to do something absolutely miraculous, and that is to save the sinner.

When the good see the Gospel takes root in a life, when it effects salvation, demons flee as the sinner is justified, as he's declared righteous before God, never to return. All the sinner's sin is forgiven because Jesus paid the penalty that was due his sins when he died on the Cross. That one stranglehold, that ace in the hole that Satan and the demons had over the

sinner's life, which is death, it's been taken away. "Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?" The repenting, believing, believing sinner is set completely, totally, permanently free.

That is how this authority remains with us today. Like the seventy-two, we also exercise the authority that Jesus has, has given us to preach the Gospel. We drive demons away, and for us it's not just demon expulsion, which could be temporary. What we do is sinner conversion, which is permanent. We don't affect it by our own power. God does by his. And when he works, when he acts, no one can reverse his hand.

The word of the cross accomplishes an even greater work whenever a sinner is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, whenever a sinner is converted by the power of God. We take our marching orders from the one who said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." He is the one who commands us to go out, then, and make disciples. And when we do that, when we obey, when we put this into effect by faith, walking in faith, we're protected by his power. We're protected.

The only question, then, is this: Will we use the authority he's given us, or not? Because if we shy away, if we're cowards about it, we'll never, we'll never see this put into effect. We'll never see the outcome of his protection. We'll never come back with rejoicing. We'll just stay coward in our homes, watching Netflix. Who wants that? Let's get out there. Let's get out there and see. Show courage. Put his authority to the test, and preach the Gospel.

Well, that was a longish point number 20, and they're not all going to be that long, I can promise you. They'll get a little shorter. Here's another one, number 21. Number 21: the joy of physical protection. The joy of physical protection. The disciples rejoiced in the physical protection that was afforded by Jesus' gift of authority, and that's that phrase "to tread on serpents and scorpions." Treading on serpents and scorpions. So what are we talking about here? So treading on serpents and scorpions, do we now owe all those snake-handling cults a word of apology because they were, they're not so crazy as we thought they were? That treading on serpents, are they right after all?

No. That's not what we're seeing here, but I want to show you why. When Jesus speaks of serpents and scorpions, he's talking here about demons. It's a figure of speech, it's a metaphor, it's picture, a word picture. Literal serpents, literal scorpions, in my opinion, they have to be about the most repulsive of creatures known to mankind.

I know there are some who like to make pets out of them, and feed them, but you know, those people usually end up dead. You usually find them on the news. "It was such a nice snake; it was such a wonderful, loving snake." And then they find it wrapped up around their owner, right? There was a time in my life when I used to track down those who smuggled drugs and humans into this country, and in the desert badlands near the border, I'd follow sign, most often at night, cutting for sign in the darkness.

And while giving chase in pursuit of these people, it was common for me to happen upon one of these little gifts, these little creatures, coiled up, partially buried in the sand, sidewinder, sidewinder rattlesnake or some poisonous and nasty looking scorpion. And maybe it's me, but my reaction upon happening upon

these things was never, "Aawww." Nothing cuddly, nothing cute about snakes and scorpions.

To me, in fact, quite the opposite. My initial gut instinct was to pull back, to recoil, and draw my gun. My second impulse was to send those creatures back into the abyss from whence they came. It didn't ever once cross my mind to put one of these little creatures in my pocket and take it home and feed it and nurture and give it as a gift to one of my kids as a pet.

Listen, because of that natural impulse that we all feel, you're laughing because you know what I'm talking about, because most of us, all, you know, find it, find these creatures vile and repulsive and abhorrent and fearsome.

The Bible, for good reason, uses snakes and scorpions as symbols of demons. They're a very ready picture, especially for Israel. These are seventy-two Jewish evangelists who are sent out. They get this word picture; they understand that Israel wandered for 40 years in that place that Moses referred to as quote, "the great and terrifying wilderness, with fiery serpents and scorpions, thirsty ground, where there was no water."

Jesus said, "When you cast out a demon, it goes wandering in waterless places, looking for somewhere to land," and, if, if it comes back to the host and there's no new nature, there's no Holy Spirit indwelling that person, no conversion, "it finds the house swept, put in order, and he brings in seven more demons more wicked than himself," right? "Waterless places," a desert.

Moses spoke of a literal wilderness, but the wilderness has always been viewed figuratively as the haunt of demons. Serpents and scorpions, creatures of the wilderness, are visual symbols of evil, demonic, dangerous spirits. We find that same imagery in Revelation 9 and 12 and 20 as demons take on the form of scorpions and having stings and biting. The bite of a snake, the sting of a scorpion, they're vivid pictures of demonic harm, which is painful and deadly.

For all who refuse to repent and believe the Gospel, for all who follow this world, who follow the ruler of this world, listen, they're under the power and influence of these repulsive and deadly beings, these demonic spirits that intend them nothing but harm, that, these demonic spirits that delight, actually, in

killing those who are created in the image of God. That's what they, that's what they, they thrive to do.

For believers, though, believers have nothing to fear. Nothing. Jesus clearly said here, "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions." Literally, it's to walk over the top of them all, and mostly without even knowing it, without any harm coming to us, slithering, biting serpent demons, skittering, striking scorpion demons, we just walk right over them. We don't even know what it was there.

A guarantee of physical protection from demons, oh, yeah, that's a cause for joy. I'm certainly glad. We just keep on walking, trusting God, preaching the Gospel, and we're going to walk over the top of them all, like we, we're wearing very sturdy boots through which a scorpion and a snake cannot bite.

But the next reason for joy, even greater, far greater. Number 22: the joy of spiritual protection. Twenty-two, the joy of spiritual protection. Jesus' gift of authority provides protection from, as it says there, all the power of the enemy.

All the power of the enemy. So what is that about? And how is it different than the harm that comes from serpents and scorpions?

That imagery of serpents and scorpions illustrates the pain and fear of death and physical harm, being bitten by a snake and have the poison, or being struck by a scorpion, the poison flowing through, that causes all kinds of symptoms that are, that are pretty nasty and painful. That's power. It's power in a targeted, specific, destructive use.

But this statement, "all the power of the enemy," it's a far broader concept. It's what Jesus intends here, for us to think further than just pain, harm, and literal injury and death. He wants us to think about the power of the enemy and our protection, which is all-encompassing, which is comprehensive. So just to clarify this, as we think about all the power of the enemy, what is power? What are we talking about when we refer to power?

Power refers to the ability to project force, the ability to influence people, to influence situations, to make one's will come to pass. That's power. Power ensures that a cause will have

its desired and intended effect. So for Satan and his demons, their power is in the ability to influence mankind, and in a very specific way.

It's actually a very simple plan and strategy on their part, but for Satan and his demons, their power is in their ability to influence mankind, to get them to commit sin, to get them to stay in sin, to be deceived by sin, to continue in sin. They know that it's our sin that puts us with, at odds with a holy God. So if they can keep us pursuing sin, you know what? They'll keep us in opposition to God. That's what they want to see. They want nothing more than God, their creator as well, to turn against those whom he created in his image. This is what you might call spiritual sadism, as they take pleasure in the pain and suffering of those created in God's image.

As I said, all unbelievers are under the influence of demons. Satan is "that spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience," according to Ephesians 2:2. They're led astray, all unbelievers are led astray and under the influence of deceitful spirits, according to the doc, doctrines of demons, 1 Timothy 4:1. All unbelievers are deceived. They think they're

free, but that's just a deception. That's just a mirage. The freedom that they chase is just further and further steps into deeper, deeper prison. They're actually enslaved to Satan. They're chained to their sins, and they're speeding their way moment by moment into judgment and eternal death, eternal death, "where they, their worm does not die," and the pain is not snuffed out.

As believers, though, we have been set free from enslavement to Satan, set free from enslavement to sin, Romans 6:7. The weapon that demons use to project their power and exert their influence is sin, and we, according to Romans 6, we're dead to it. God said, Romans 6:14, "Sin will no longer have dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace." As believers, we possessing now by God's grace, we possess a new nature, we have new affections, things that we now love that we didn't love before, things that we now hate, like sin, that we didn't hate before, but loved. God has given us new affections; he's given us a will that's truly free, finally able to obey and pursue true freedom, true joy in obedience because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, because of the power of his Word.

So we're now able to stand up against demonic power. We're able now to resist demonic influence. We have authority over all the power of the enemy, to stand firm in righteousness and not enter into temptation. We're able, beloved, not to fall. We are able not to sin. We're not victims. We're not victims of our past, we're not victims of our upbringing, we're not "I can't help it because I have an addiction." None of that is true for us.

What's true for us is that we have the power to obey. We have the power to pursue freedom and joy in the Spirit and the Word. That's what Paul tells us in Ephesians 6. That's what the full armor of God is for. "Put on the whole armor of God," why, "so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil." And in particular, we're able to raise that shield of faith and keep it raised "in order to extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one." We just snuff 'em out every single time. We're able not to sin. We're able to stand firm, not give in to temptation, not enter into temptation, not fall, not sin.