

Text: Exod. 32:30-35

Title: "Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life?"

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Introduction: The Bible is a collection of books authored by the Lord. It is God's Word. 2 Tim. 3:16-17, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The Holy Spirit used the capacity of men to write as He wrote the books of the Bible. 2 Pet. 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

So, the book of Exodus is on the one hand the book of the human author Moses, but on the other a book that God wrote using Moses's authorship. Jesus believed this about His Bible. When Jesus quoted Moses's account of creation in Gen. 2:24, He did so by saying, "[God] said" (Matt. 19:3-6).

Similarly, God used David and other prophets to write the Psalms, the songs that God wrote. Peter mentions this in his prayer for protection from persecutors in Acts 4. He prayed, "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, 'Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?'" (vv. 24-25). God said this by David's mouth (Ps. 2:1). God wrote the Bible through humans.

In our passage this morning, which God wrote through the authorship of Moses, we have the record of a conversation between the Lord and Moses about another book God has written (vv. 32-33). These verses contain the fourth and fifth time the word *book* appears in our Old Testament. The third time is in Exod. 24:7, where that part of the law that Moses received on Sinai is called *the book of the covenant*. The life of the

redeemed is a covenantal life, and the book of the covenant of Exodus defines the covenant God established with Israel.

The second time *book* appears in our Old Testament is in Exod. 17:14, where the Lord tells Moses to write down in a book the account of Israel's battle against the Amalekites as a token of the promise that the Lord was going to eliminate for all time these enemies of His people.

The first time the word *book* occurs in our Bible is Gen. 5:1, where the names of the godly line of Seth are listed, the ancestors of Noah and of Abraham. The chapter is titled, "the book of the generations of Adam." What follows is a list of the names of God's people, which contrasts the worldly line of Cain in chapter 4. Cain's descendants are never given this title.

I think that Moses may have had this book of Genesis 5 in mind when he mentions a book of God containing his name. He asks the Lord to blot his name out of this book of the generations of God's people if God would only forgive the sin of his nation. God avers that only those who sin against Him would be wiped out of this book. We know, however, that Moses did sin at times against God, just like Adam, Noah, and Abraham had, so how is it that Moses was still in God's book?

The answer to that question becomes more clear as we trace this book of the names of God's people throughout Scripture. David called this book *the book of the living*. He prayed concerning his enemies, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous" (Ps. 69:28). Those who have their names in this book are called *the righteous*. David believed he was one of these in spite of his sin.

The prophet Isaiah describes further why sinners can have their names in God's book and be called righteous: "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for

them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, *even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem*. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning" (Isa. 4:2-4).

So some Israelites will be recorded in this book, written among the living, who are holy because the Lord has washed away the filth of their sin and purged their blood-guiltiness with a spirit of judgment and the burning of God's wrath.

Daniel explains that this blessed future of a saved Israel will come after a time of great trouble, and he speaks of God's book of names in his explanation: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1).

Malachi refers to this book and those written in it at the end of the Old Testament, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Mal. 3:16-18).

The righteous who worship the Lord are in God's book of remembrance; the wicked who refuse to worship Him are not. When we turn the page to the first book of our New Testament, we find it refers to a book with a title that is very simi-

lar to the one in Genesis 5: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). This list of names ends with Jesus, *Jehovah saves*, who saves His people from their sins by dying as God’s Lamb on Calvary in their place. Paul, like the prophets of the Old Testament, described his fellow-laborers in the local church of Philippi as “those whose names are written in the book of life” (Phil. 4:3).

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, gives the fullest truth about the names in God’s book and their relationship to Jesus Christ. We are told that God will not blot out the names of those who overcome sin by faith (Rev. 3:5); that the book of life is the book of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, slain from the foundation of the world in (Rev. 13:8); that those who will be deceived by the antichrist are not written in this book (Rev. 17:8); that those not written there one day shall be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15); and that those written in this Lamb’s book of life will enter the New Jerusalem in God’s eternal blessing (Rev. 21:27).

So this is the other book that God has written, the Lamb’s book of life, who was slain from the foundation of the world for sinners. It contains the names of the people of God, and I want us to ask ourselves this morning, as we read about this book in our passage, whether we can know from Scripture that our names and the names of those we love will be written in it on judgment day (v. 34). Our passage emphasizes three truths that will determine whether our names will be in this book.

I. A great sin causes a name to be wiped from the Lamb’s book of life (vv. 30-31, 33).

Illustration: Last Thursday my wife and I picked up a used printer for free for the church. The young man advertising the printer had an impressive business as a plumber. He had a number of new company trucks parked outside of a new huge warehouse of a barn. Across his parking lot stood a very

beautiful and newly built home. The young man is obviously a very hard worker who has built a successful business.

At the end of our conversation, I offered this new acquaintance a gospel tract, and he politely refused to take it. I urged him a bit asking what harm a quick read would do, and he insisted that what I was offering was just not for him.

Application: I drove away from that beautiful barn with its plumbing supplies remembering what Jesus said about building and filling beautiful barns. He said that one of these days, every owner of every beautiful barn is going to have his soul required of him; he is going to die. He said that God has a message for barn builders: “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (Luke 12:20). Gods of gold lead to a great sin, causing many names to be wiped from God’s book.

This is what the Israelites had done (v. 31). They had made a god of gold while Moses received God’s law on Mt. Sinai. When we make someone or something other than the true God our god, like gold, we commit the sin that causes our name to be wiped out of God’s book. This is sometimes called *the sin of final unbelief*. The true God deserves to be our God, and when we deny Him that, we commit the great sin.

C. H. Spurgeon spoke of this sin of unbelief as the unforgivable sin because it is the one sin for which Christ did not die: “And now to close this point—for I have been already too long—let me remark that you will observe the heinous nature of unbelief in this—that it is the damning sin. There is one sin for which Christ never died; it is the sin against the Holy Ghost. There is one other sin for which Christ never made atonement. Mention every crime in the calendar of evil, and I will show you persons who have found forgiveness for it. But ask me whether the man who died in unbelief can be saved, and I reply there is no atonement for that man. There is an

atonement made for the unbelief of a Christian, because it is temporary; but the final unbelief – the unbelief with which men die – never was atoned for. You may turn over this whole Book, and you will find that there is no atonement for the man who died in unbelief; there is no mercy for him. Had he been guilty of every other sin, if he had but believed, he would have been pardoned; but this is the damning exception – he had no faith” [“The Sin of Unbelief,” www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0003.htm].

To die in the sin of unbelief, with someone or something other than the true God as your god, is to be wiped out of God’s book. Israel needed to turn from their god of gold. So do we.

II. A great love prays for names in danger of being wiped from the Lamb’s book of life (v. 32).

Illustration: When I was a kid, I used to like to play war with my friends. We pretended we were soldiers who shot pretend enemies with pretend guns. We had a lot of fun. The experience of combat veterans, of course, gives these real soldiers a different perspective on war. It is not pretend, and it is not fun. But a great love of fellow countrymen causes them to make great sacrifices to keep our nation safe and free.

Application: As I read about the level of devotion Moses expresses to the Lord for his people who need forgiveness, I feel like I have been like a kid playing around with witnessing by comparison. I cannot say that I have ever truly been willing to be wiped from God’s book so that someone else could be saved. The Apostle Paul experienced this level of love for his lost nation: “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:1-3). The praying love of Moses and Paul were great blessings to their nation.

Illustration: The man who refused my tract on Thursday also explained to me that his wife and one of his brothers were believers who were trying to witness to him like I was trying to. I told this young man that he should be very thankful for their care, because the Lord loves him and is using their love for him to chase after him. He did not seem to disagree with my assessment.

Are we that person for someone else, who loves them, perhaps not quite like a Moses or a Paul, but who loves them enough to pray for their salvation and do all we can to be a good witness to them for the Lord? Are we willing to carry a great heaviness and continual sorrow with us over their lost condition in unbelief, concerned that they may be wiped from the Lamb's book of life on judgment day?

III. God's Angel leads those whose names are never wiped from the Lamb's book of life (vv. 34-35).

Application: Moses could not save the people from God's just judgment, but God's Angel could. Our KJV translators rightly capitalize the word *Angel*, for this is a special angel indeed, known to the pages of Scripture as *the Angel of the LORD*. This Angel would mediate between holy God and sinful people in such a way that the people would be blessed with the Promised Land rather than consumed (33:2-3). He is the Angel who Jacob said had redeemed him from all evil (Gen. 48:16). In Malachi 3:1, this Angel is called *the Angel of the Covenant and the LORD whom ye seek*. The promise is that He would come, and come He did when Jesus Christ was born.

Conclusion: Zechariah 3:1-5 tells us what this Angel of the Lord does for sinners to keep their name in God's book of life. He is the LORD who confronts Satan with the LORD's rebuke (v. 2). He takes away our filthy garments and clothes us with His righteous robes (vv. 3-4). He puts a priestly mitre on our head and gives us eternal life (v. 5).

In the days of Zechariah, Joshua was Israel's high priest who had sinned and needed forgiveness. In the days of Moses, Aaron was Israel's high priest who had sinned and needed forgiveness. Our Exodus passage reminded us that it was Aaron who had made Israel's god of gold (v. 35). In both cases, it was the One whom God has sent to save sinners who could provide the forgiveness that kept their names in the Lamb's book of life.

The same is true in our day for sinners like you and like me. Will you make the true God your God truly? Will you believe? Will you ask the Lord Jesus, God's divine, saving Angel, to save you from your sin? Will you find your name written in the Lamb's book of life on judgment day, or will it have been wiped out?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching