

# POWER AND AUTHORITY

LUKE 9:1-17

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# Power and Authority

Luke 9:1-17

Jesus has gradually been calling people to make a decision as to Who He is and He has been calling them into a deeper level of discipleship day by day. This will be a transitional chapter. It will bring a close to Jesus' Galilean ministry. By the end of the chapter, He will make His move towards Jerusalem.

In order to make sure that His disciples are ready for the march to Jerusalem, He will give them some on the job training. He will accomplish two things. First of all, He will ensure that the entire Galilean territory has a chance to hear the message one last time before He leaves the region and secondly, that the disciples will get a chance to get some ministry experience. So far, they have been just watching Jesus.

In the past I have always thought the disciples were a little mentally and spiritually challenged. However, for some reason, during my studies through Luke this time, I have come to respect them a great deal. I think we live in a culture where we sit and watch sports or talent events and judge the athletes or performers as if we are experts and as if we could easily do better. We watch a baseball player strike out or drop the ball and say things like, "He stinks." We watch a football player fumble the ball and say, "What a horrible player." We say these things as if we know what we are talking about. In reality, we have never tried to swing at a hundred mile an hour fastball. We have never gotten hit by a 250 pound solid muscle man running at us full speed. It is easy to talk and judge sitting on our living room couch. But in reality, life is a lot more challenging. As I think about the disciples and what Jesus put them through, I have to say they were indeed superstars. I would definitely have been scared out of my mind and confused the whole time. I really don't know if I could have made it.

Take for example this morning's passage. Jesus is going to tell them to do what He's been doing all along. Almost nonchalantly He sends them out on a mission to preach and perform miracles. And they did it! He is going to really stretch them beyond what they thought could ever be possible. It really is hard to learn on the job without any formal training.

It's like the applicant in his interview with the human resources director. The director asked him how much he wanted for a starting salary. The applicant gave him the number.

Shocked the human resources director said, "You certainly expect to be compensated well for a beginner!" The applicant replied, "Well sure! Work is a lot harder when you don't know what you're doing!"

The apostles must have been shocked when Jesus gave them their discipleship assignments. But we need to take these lessons seriously as well. The main idea of this morning's text is this. WE HAVE THE RIGHT AND ABILITY TO BRING HEALING AND SALVATION TO THIS LOST AND HURTING WORLD. If we truly want to call ourselves Christians, then we need to get up off the couch and practice our faith in the everyday world. We are ambassadors of God's kingdom and He has empowered us with His Holy Spirit to accomplish all He has prepared in advance for us to do.

## **BASIC DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING (VS 1-6)**

In verses 1-6 we are introduced to basic discipleship training. BEING A FOLLOWER OF JESUS MEANS THAT WE WILL HAVE TO GO WHERE HE SENDS US AND DO WHAT HE COMMANDS. Christianity is no democracy. We are subjects, servants of our King Jesus. There is no debate or no questioning His commands. Submission and obedience are expected of us. The sooner we learn to humble ourselves, submit to the Lordship of Jesus, and obey Him, the easier life gets.

In verses 1-2 the disciples receive their commission from Christ. Here is how Luke has been building to this. Jesus has been challenging the people to believe in Him. He has been calling them to a deeper level of belief and commitment. Now He is going to turn up the heat for discipleship. The Twelve also come to be called Apostles. The word apostle refers to one who is sent out on a mission. The Twelve will uniquely fill this role of Apostle. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul will be added to this special calling.

It's time for the disciples to step up into their new roles. I want you to notice what's involved in their commission and to remind ourselves that we too are commissioned. Jesus will call them, empower them and send them.

In the beginning of verse 1 we see Jesus calling these special disciples together. In other words, He has set them apart from all of the other disciples that have been following Him. When you and I gave our lives to Jesus in faith, we were set apart from all the rest of the unbelieving world to be witnesses for Jesus. In fact the word for church in Greek is *eklesia*. Literally that word means the called out ones.

We get our modern day word synagogue from the Greek word *synagogue*. That word means to gather together. We need to continually remind ourselves that church does not refer to a building or an institution. We are the ones who have been called out of the world to be gathered together by the power of God's Holy Spirit with Christ as our head. If you are a Christian, then you have been called by God.

Next Jesus empowered them. Jesus empowered the disciples for their ministry. He gave them power and authority. These are very potent words. Power is the word in which we get our English word dynamite from. The word is dunamis. It means the ability, the inherent ability to do something. Authority is the Greek word exousia. It means that one has the right to rule over something or someone. So Jesus gave the disciples the right to preach the Kingdom of God, to heal the sick, and to cast out demons. Because Jesus directly commissioned them, they had the right to do these things. So far, they have only watched Jesus do these things, but now Jesus passed on that authority to act on His behalf. It would be like a king giving authority to a local official to govern a town. The local official would have the right to rule that town because the king gave him that authority.

But authority is not enough. Jesus gave them the ability to preach, heal the sick, and cast out demons. He transferred the power to them. Now they would be able to do what Jesus did and preach what Jesus preached. They had the right and ability to offer people a restored relationship with God.

Lest there be any confusion, listen to some of Jesus' last words on earth concerning the church:

*"18 ... I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. 19Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20 / NLT).*

We have been called by Jesus. He has empowered us for ministry by filling us with His Holy Spirit. And He sends us to this lost and hurting world with the message of salvation, reconciliation, healing, and wholeness. The disciples had no experience or training. At this point they were no more than two years or so into traveling with Jesus. We have over two thousand years of history and faithful examples of ambassadors for Christ. Let me emphasize this. We have been called. We have been empowered. We have been sent. People come to church for all sorts of reasons, and that's okay. However, as we grow and mature, we come to realize that we should not come to church to "get something out of it." We should come to church to get prepared to accomplish the missions Jesus has for us. We have power and authority to bring salvation and wholeness to the people we meet every day. That's our purpose as believers.

In verses 3-5 they receive instructions from Jesus. I want to point this out up front. This is not meant to be normative for all missionaries. Jesus wanted their first mission to be a faith mission. Jesus wanted to teach the disciples three things by sending them on this mission. First of all, the mission is urgent. In other words, they will not have a long learning curve. Jesus will be headed for Jerusalem shortly where He will be executed and taken away from them. So they need to get up to speed quickly. For us, evangelism is urgent because Christ will be returning soon, and once He

returns there will no chance for people to repent. The time is short. We need to be about the business of rescuing as many people as we can. Secondly, He wants them to learn that no matter what, He will provide for them. He instructed them to take nothing with them. In other words, Jesus wants to teach them that He will provide for them. One of the major things they will learn is that God will often provide for us through His people. I can tell you that many times, it won't be pretty, but God will always provide for us; not necessarily the way we want it or expect it, but He will provide. Oftentimes it takes a great deal of humility to be at the place where we need God's people to care for us even so we can just barely survive. I say this passage is not normative because I have seen this misused so often it makes me want to cry. Some churches believe that missionaries should go out on a wing and a prayer and they should simply trust God to provide for them. They use this as an excuse for not supporting them. I have seen churches not support pastors. Their families have suffered a great deal. This is not what God expects of us. God expects us to care for our missionaries. We need to support them with prayer, but we also need to support them with money and care. You guys have treated me and my family great throughout the years. But there are churches who don't support their pastors and that is sinful. God designed the church, the Body of Christ, in such a way that we provide for our specially called people through the graciousness of the rest of us.

Thirdly, Jesus wanted to make sure the disciples understood that not everyone wants to hear the Gospel message. In fact there will be people who are antagonistic to the Gospel. Jesus told the disciples not to worry about it. If you look at verse 5, you may miss the significance of this if you don't know the customs. We already know that Jews were very careful to remain ceremonially clean so they could always be ready to worship. When they had to travel out of Israel into foreign territories, they would be concerned that they may have touched something unclean. So when they approached the Israeli border, they would shake the dust of their feet and all their garments so they would not bring any contamination back with them.

Here Jesus is trying to reach His chosen people, the Hebrews. But if they refuse to receive His message, the disciples are to treat that city as if it were a pagan city. They were to shake the dust off their feet. This would be a real tragedy. Unfortunately, there are a great many people who continue to reject Jesus.

Jesus wanted the disciples to understand that it was urgent that they prepare to carry on His ministry. It was imperative they trusted God to provide for them and protect them. And they had to have realistic goals. Some people will receive the Gospel, but others will reject it. And so along with the power and authority Jesus gave them, verse 6 describes their response. They obeyed Jesus. They spread out through the region of Galilee, preaching salvation and healing people. It must have been exciting for them to see

people healed physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The mission hasn't changed. That's why we exist. God placed us here in Roger's Park for that reason. We are here to preach the Gospel and to bring physical, emotional, and spiritual wholeness to the people right here. Again, it's great to come here to be saved and healed. But that's not where we should stay. Once we have been saved and healed, it's our duty to carry on the mission of Jesus here. We need to be bringing people here to hear the Gospel, to get saved and healed, and then in turn that they become ministers of this Good News. There is no question about this. BEING A FOLLOWER OF JESUS MEANS THAT WE WILL HAVE TO GO WHERE HE SENDS US AND DO WHAT HE COMMANDS.

At this point Luke is going to use the literary technique he used before. He will drop the story of the disciples going out on their first solo mission and insert the story of Herod's response. And then he will pick up the story of the disciples' mission trip again in verse 10. That means that Herod's response is meant to be connected to the disciples' mission.

## **WHO IS JESUS (VS 7-9)**

In verses 7-9 Herod asks the question, "Who is Jesus?" EVERY PERSON HAS TO PERSONALLY ANSWER THE QUESTION AS TO WHO JESUS IS. This is really the most important question for any human being because that is how we will be judged. The disciples must have been doing great because word reaches Herod. Herod Antipas was the ruler of the region of Galilee. This is his territory. This is his house and he wants to know what is going on. In verse 7 we see that some people think that Jesus was simply a great moral teacher. Some people felt that John had been raised from the dead and that he was back to teaching what it meant to live ethically and morally. Today, many people think Jesus was a great moral and ethical teacher. But they do not believe that He is God or that His religion is no more superior or inferior to other great religions or ethical teachings. But the point is this. Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh and He claimed to be both unique and superior to all other religions or philosophies. Listen to what Jesus says:

*"6 ... I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6 / NLT).*

If this is not true, than Jesus is a liar and cannot possibly be a great moral teacher. No one can read the teachings of Jesus and call Him a great moral teacher if they do not believe that He was God in the flesh. Since He claimed that for Himself, if it isn't true than Jesus was a fraud.

In verse 8, some thought Jesus was a great prophet. Some identified Jesus with Elijah or another great prophet from the past. We have already talked about this so I'll just summarize this point. The Jews believed and still believe today that Elijah will return to announce the coming of the long awaited Messiah. So some felt that Jesus was ushering in the Messianic age.

Today, Muslims and other religions think Jesus was a great prophet, but that's all He was, another prophet in a string of prophets throughout the ages. But Jesus made it clear to the people He was identifying Himself as Jehovah. If you remember from our study through the book of Exodus, God said His Name was "I AM". Listen what Jesus says about Himself when the religious leaders challenged Him:

*"58I tell you the truth ... before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58 / NIV).*

Jesus was not just another prophet in a long line of prophets. Jesus was God in the flesh. And that's the only other option. Jesus is the promised Messiah. Let's look at verse 9. Herod knew that it couldn't be John the Baptist. He saw his decapitated head brought to him on a platter. Herod wanted to see Jesus but didn't get to yet. He will see Jesus face to face later. Many people refused to recognize Jesus for Who He was. Romans, Jews, and all sorts of other people rejected Jesus. And even today all sorts of people reject Jesus. In fact our popular culture and educational system is becoming more and more Antichrist every day. But there are many that come to see and receive Jesus for Who He is; the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is Lord and Savior to all those who come to Him in faith. Have you made up your mind yet as to Who Jesus is? Please do not waste time because time is running out. **EVERY PERSON HAS TO PERSONALLY ANSWER THE QUESTION AS TO WHO JESUS IS.**

It seems as if life with Jesus is anything but boring. In verses 10-17, the disciples will return from the basic discipleship course and Jesus will enroll them in the advanced discipleship training course right away. **OUR FAITH MATURES AS GOD STRETCHES US AND STRENGTHENS US.** This is simply a principle of life. We only grow and get stronger as we push ourselves beyond our limits. That's the way body builders build muscle. They push and tax their muscles until they tear. Then they heal and become stronger and harder. When we run, we have to continually push ourselves beyond our limits in order to go farther and faster. That is also the way we gain knowledge. We must force ourselves to study more and push ourselves. And that is the way we grow as Christians. God pushes us beyond our limits out of our comfort zones. We learn patience as God brings people and situations into our lives that force us to use and develop greater levels of patience. We don't know how much we can stand unless God pushes us beyond our perceived limits. Let's see how Jesus does this with the disciples.

## **ADVANCED DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING (VS 10-17)**

In verses 10-11 He invites them to recall God's faithfulness in the past. Now Luke comes back to finish the story of the disciples' first mission. This verse will serve two purposes. First it will bring closure to the first mission and Herod's interest. Secondly, it will springboard us into the next section. When the twelve apostles return, Jesus gathers them together and debriefs

them. He wants them to process what they accomplished and what they learned. They enjoyed great success and indeed were so successful they got the attention of Herod. Their ministry of healing and Gospel preaching forced people to come to grips with Who Jesus was. They healed the sick, cast out demons, and saw people give their lives to Jesus in faith. They experienced the power and authority given to them by Jesus. They experienced God's miraculous provision through people.

We should be people who look back in order to go forward. We should not romanticize the past or get stuck in the glories of the past. Mike Ditka used to say that living in the past is for cowards and losers. Jesus invites us to look back at the faithfulness of God in our lives, in order to give us confidence and courage to face future missions.

Verse 11 gives us some insight into the nature of Jesus. Jesus and the disciples were spending some real quality time together. But when people appeared with needs, they met them and ministered to them. Jesus and the disciples were not selfish about their time, energy, money, or possessions. And the early church imitated their attitudes.

In verse 12 through the first half of verse 14, we can see God stretching our thinking. After healing many people, it seems as if a crowd had gathered and Jesus taught them. It started to get late, and out of concern for the people, they told Jesus it would be a good idea for Jesus to dismiss the people so they could get to a town and get something to eat and perhaps find a room for the night. Please don't miss this. This was a great suggestion and showed the disciples were concerned for the people's well being.

But then Jesus does it again. He does that crazy thing He does. He says to the disciples, "You give them something to eat." The disciples take a quick inventory of what they have. They have five loaves of bread and two fish ... oh, and not much cash. There were about five thousand men there so if there were women and children there, perhaps there could have been upward of six or seven thousand people there.

What's Jesus expecting from them? A new way of thinking. First, there is religious precedent. God fed the Hebrews in their journey from Egypt to the Promised land with supernatural bread called manna. He also provided them with quail (Exodus 16, Numbers 11). Elisha miraculously fed a hundred people with just a few loaves of bread (II Kings 4:42-44). Earlier, Jesus provided Peter with a miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11). So first of all, since they performed miracles of healing, perhaps they could multiply food or ask God to rain down bread from heaven.

Perhaps, they could have learned that God's people provide for one another. Some people believe this was the miracle. That as some people shared what

they had, others started to share their food with one another and people were fed. I don't think that was the miracle, but Jesus could have expected the disciples to think this way as well.

Or how about this? In the Gospel of John, Jesus told the disciples that His food was to do the will of God. Perhaps Jesus expected the disciples to get up and start preaching. They could feed people with the Word of God.

At any rate, Jesus was forcing the disciples to start thinking in different ways. All these experiences were in their brains somewhere, but Jesus wanted them to bring the miraculous into the front of their minds. He is stretching their thinking.

In second half of verse 14 through verse 17, He will strengthen their faith. I want us to pay particular attention to this. Even though Jesus will be the source of this miracle, He works it through the hands and feet of the disciples. He instructs the Apostles to have the people sit down in groups of fifty. So the disciples obey by organizing the crowd and having them sit down.

Now pay attention to the description of what Jesus does here. "Taking the fish and loaves, He gave thanks and broke them." This is the same type of language Jesus uses at the Last Supper. It is the language we use in our Communion services. One of the reasons we celebrate communion is to remember what Jesus did for us. When we take the bread, it is a symbol of the body of Jesus which was tortured and broken on our behalf. When we drink the wine or juice, we are reminded that Jesus' blood was shed to cover our sins. Another reason we celebrate communion is to proclaim our faith that Jesus is going to come back to get us. And finally, we celebrate communion to remind us that we are related to one another here. As Christians, we were all saved and redeemed the same way. We were forgiven of our sins by the blood of Jesus. God is our Father. We are united by the blood of Jesus and we are bound together by the Holy Spirit. So when we celebrate communion, we are celebrating and acknowledging that we are family. We are brothers and sisters in Christ.

After Jesus blessed and broke the food, He gave it to the disciples to distribute. Jesus again had the disciples stretching their understanding. How did they keep distributing baskets of bread and fish? How were there more and more bread and fish appearing? They were learning that all things are possible through Christ.

We think that we don't have much talent or gifts to serve God. Jesus taught the disciples not to depend on their own power, their own intelligence, or their own ability. They were to depend on God. It is God Who works in us and through us. We need to step up and be part of God's ministry here at

Devon Church. We all have time, energy, talents, gifts, and money. As we give of these things, God will multiply them by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Look at verse 17. When everyone finished, there were twelve doggie bags left over. Each disciple had a doggie bag to take with them. What do you suppose was in their mind as they carried their doggie bag back with them? Jesus was stretching their minds and strengthening their faith. What a wonderful experience. But these experiences will only come as we allow God to push us beyond our limits. **OUR FAITH MATURES AS GOD STRETCHES US AND STRENGTHENS US.**

It's amazing to me that God designed it so that you and I are the plan of salvation. He has entrusted the mission of rescuing the lost to us. I know this sounds like a pretty pathetic plan but that's the plan. If you and I do not witness to people and tell them about the love of Jesus, they may never get saved. **WE HAVE THE RIGHT AND ABILITY TO BRING HEALING AND SALVATION TO THIS LOST AND HURTING WORLD.**

We have been called and empowered by God to preach the Good News. We need to get about this business even though we may think we can't do it. The thing about God is this. As we start on this journey, He will push us and stretch us beyond places we never thought possible.

In ancient times, Spanish coins bore the imprint of the Pillars of Hercules and had the motto *ne plus ultra* engraved on them. The inscription meant "nothing else beyond." But after the success of Columbus in finding the New World, they changed the inscription to *Plus ultra* which means "more beyond." That's the way it is with our lives in Christ. Whatever heights we may attain, still there is always more to follow. Let's get about doing the will of God. Let's see how far He can stretch us and strengthen us.