

In a seminary mission class... Herbert Jackson told how (as a new missionary) he was assigned a car that would not start without a push. After pondering his problem... he devised a plan. ... He went to the school near his home... got permission to take some children out of class... and had them push his car off. ... As he made his rounds... he would either park on a hill... or leave the engine running. ... He used this ingenious procedure for two years.

Ill health forced the Jackson family to leave... and a new missionary came to that station. ... When Jackson proudly began to explain his arrangement for getting the car started... the new man began looking under the hood. Before the explanation was complete... the new missionary interrupted... *"Why, Dr. Jackson, I believe the only trouble is this loose cable."* ... He gave the cable a twist... stepped into the car... pushed the switch... and to Jackson's astonishment... the engine roared to life. ... For **two years** needless trouble had become routine. ... The power was there all the time. Only a loose connection kept Jackson from putting that power to work. ... **[P A U S E]** ...

Loose connections in their fellowship and daily walk with Christ... are why many Christians are spiritually weak. ... Their life ends up being a big mess. ... If you are trying to live your life without Christ's power... then realize that is probably why you have a **mess**.

In our passage from Luke's Gospel (today)... Jesus commissions His disciples and sends them out (two-by-two) all over Galilee. Part of His commissioning was giving them power to heal people's diseases... and to cast demons out of people. He also endowed them with authority.

The “apostles-in-training” had assisted Jesus (but up until now)... the Lord had done all the ministering. ... The Twelve brought people to be healed... and Jesus touched their diseased or distorted bodies. ... The Twelve probably took care of Jesus’ physical needs and arranged the details of His travel... so He could concentrate on teaching. ... The Twelve observed... listened... questioned... and learned... but Jesus instructed. ... It was Jesus who cast out the evil spirits. - **All that would now change**. ... The time had come for His trainees to put their learning into practice. It was time for the Twelve to enter the battle... firsthand. This was their “solo flight.” ... **[P A U S E]** ...

Do you realize that the Lord has given these tools to you and I... and He has sent us out (just as we see Him do in our passage)? ... Some Christians don’t have a clue of what I am talking about right now. ... But please hear me! ... God has empowered each believer to serve... to surrender... and to glorify Him in being Christ’s “sent-ones” to a hurt and dying world.

None of us are to be a dead-beat Christian that sits like a bump on the log wondering what to do next. You do not have to go through life *spiritually powerless... puny... pale... panicky... pulverized... perplexed... puzzled... and without a purpose*. ... No, no, no, that is not what God has intended for you and I. ... You and I have a job to do... and we have a daily battle to win with our flesh! ... That is why we have been empowered by the Lord who is our source of strength. ... Use the power He has given to you.

Jesus gives His disciples Power. And there is another tool that He also gives – **authority!** POWER and AUTHORITY! ... Don’t underestimate the

value of having authority. ... Authority can help people do what is right and stop what is wrong. ... Authority gives force to a person's words.

When Christian Herter was governor of Massachusetts... he was running hard for a second term in office. ... One day... after a busy morning chasing votes... he arrived at a church barbecue. ... It was late afternoon and Herter was famished because he did not get any lunch that day. ... As Herter moved down the serving line... he held out his plate to the woman serving chicken. ... She put a piece on his plate and turned to the next person in line.

"Excuse me"... Governor Herter said... *"do you mind if I have another piece of chicken?"* "Sorry," the woman told him. *"I'm supposed to give one piece of chicken to each person."* *"But I'm starved,"* the Governor said. "Sorry," the woman said again. *"Only one to a customer."*

Governor Herter was a modest and unassuming man... but he decided that this time he would throw a little weight around. *"Do you know who I am?"* he said. *"I am the governor of this state."* *"Do you know who I am?"* the woman said. *"I'm the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along, mister."* (LISTEN!) - authority gives **weight** to your words!

We have been given authority to do God's will today as we continue through the difficulties of life. Our authority is in the area of spreading the Gospel. We have the authority as the Lord's ambassadors and the authority of the Scriptures to tell people what is the TRUTH. With the Bible... we can sincerely and honestly say, *"Thus saith the Lord."* ... The Bible is our authority in matters of faith and practice.

With authority... you can tell people that Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven. There is no other way no matter what people think... no matter

how much they scoff... no matter if they believe there are other ways to Heaven. Christ is the only way!

Pray with me please... and then we will turn to our passage in Luke...

- PRAY -

Luke 9:1-11

In verse one... we see that Jesus bestowed on His disciples the ability to perform miracles of healing... and (earlier) I made the point that Jesus has sent you and I out – just as He did His twelve apostles. But I do need to make an important distinction... (using Scripture to do so.)

The gift of healing was a “sign gift.” ... A sign gift points to the legitimacy of the messenger. It shows that they **are** from God. This sign gift served as the credential of the apostles – it demonstrated that they **were** who they claimed to be.

(You see) when the church got under way (*before the New Testament was in written form*)... the sign of an apostle was the fact that he could perform the “sign” gifts. ... Peter could heal the sick and raise the dead. ... Paul could heal the sick and raise the dead. ... To do this was **proof** that they were true apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Now this is important... please hear me. You may not agree with me – but let’s use **Scripture** to determine our belief.) ... Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. This took place before He died upon the cross. ... **[P A U S E]** ...

Today the important thing is not healing. If you will read the Epistles carefully... you will see that even though Paul had the gift of healing...

toward the end of his ministry - he apparently did not exercise it at all. In the 2nd to last letter that he wrote... Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake (1 Tim. 5:23) - but Paul did not heal him. ... Paul himself had a "... thorn in the flesh ..." (2 Cor. 12:7)... and though he asked God to remove it... God did not remove it. ... Also he wrote to Timothy, "... Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick" (2 Tim. 4:20). Why did not Paul heal his friend Trophimus? ... Paul... you see... had come to the end of his ministry... and the sign gifts (even then) were no longer normal and expected.

I think that our Bibles demonstrate that when Scripture became a part of the church... the gift of healing became less and less common. (Don't get me wrong! I am not saying that God doesn't do miracles today. I believe that He does. But this is what I AM saying – because it is what Scripture shows. ... Sign gifts (miracles) are NO longer the credential to determine if a person is truly sent from God. Authority moved from sign gifts to the pages of Scripture - the Word of God. (Here is why I say that.)

Toward the end of his life... John warned that **correct doctrine** was the determining factor in discerning if a person was a man of God.

2 John 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting,*

Again... we see that it is doctrine (which we now have in Scripture) that are proper credentials... as Paul wrote to the Galatians.

Galatians 1:8 (ESV)

⁸ *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.*

What does Paul give as the test...? The performance of miracles...? No. **Scriptural truth** is the way we know if a person is God's messenger. Here is even more of what the BIBLE says...

1 John 2:18-26 (ESV)

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. ²⁰ But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ²¹ I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. ²⁴ Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. ²⁶ I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

1 John 4:1-6 (ESV)

¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

The Bible declares how we are to recognize a true messenger of God. It is determined by whether or not their message is true to Scripture...! Sign gifts are no longer the measurement. Miracles do not prove that a person has been sent by God. (Here is why this is so **important**...) Just before

Christ returns... Satan will enable his false messengers to do amazing things. Look at what the Bible says!

Matthew 24:24 (ESV)

²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (ESV)

¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

But here in our passage... when Jesus sent His apostles out... (**before the completed Scriptures were available**)... the people knew the disciples were from God... because of the miracles they performed. (Now let's move on...)

Luke 9:2

Their real work was not to heal the sick and cast out demons (as useful as that was. It demonstrated that they were truly God's messengers.) But the credentials are not as important as the message. ... Their greatest work was to preach the kingdom of God.

What did they preach? The great emphasis of their preaching was that **the kingdom had come**. Jesus would later say, "*But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you*"

(We will see that in Luke 11:20). ... Kingdom power indicates the presence of the kingdom.... Luke also records that in answer to the Pharisees' question about when the kingdom of God would come... Jesus replied:

Luke 17:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, ²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

The grand truth is... the kingdom of God - is the reign of God... (the sovereignty of God.) ... The apostles were to preach the kingdom of God and its nearness to all. ... They were to tell men and women that they were under it and could come into it. ... They were to tell them that its benefits were available if they turned to God... and allow Him to rule inside their hearts. ... They preached that God can reign within us.

Jesus commissioned His disciples with Power and Authority... and the message of the Kingdom of God. He also gave them these instructions:

Luke 9:3-4

The reason Jesus ordered them to travel light was to learn to trust Him for everything. ... Faith in Him was to be the foundation of their ministry. And so it is with us.

(Let me confess something to you.) ... I sometimes have to catch myself... and repent from wrongful thinking about how nice it would be... if our church had more resources. "*Oh... if we only had more finances... and more gifted people that are excited about our ministry... THEN we could really accomplish things for the Kingdom of Christ...*" ... But in our passage today (and at the Last Supper) we see Christ was teaching His

disciples what a wrong focus that is! Significantly... at the Last Supper... Jesus followed up on the journey we are studying today. On His final night with them... He called their attention back to what they experienced... and asked them if they lacked anything when He sent them out. They answered, “*Nothing*” (22:35).

The truth is that so many American churches today suffer from having too much. ... Peter and John... in Acts... could say:

Acts 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ ...“*I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!*”

Today much of the professing church can say **neither**. ... But Jesus (in today’s passage) was training His disciples to walk by faith. Talk about a difficult trip! ... Men who would follow these instructions would need extraordinary faith... trust... and confidence in God’s care over their lives. He was commanding and expecting them to live by faith.

The Lord is not asking us to do anything different. He is asking us to live by faith, too. ... This is what honors Him. This is what I need to remember. Maybe you do too. Let’s keep trusting Him! Faith is an essential tool for the difficult trip of being sent out by Christ to our community! **[P A U S E]**

Right now... I am going to read through some devotional sayings about faith that I have collected. I think it would be very appropriate for us. Please try to loose yourself in these thoughts concerning faith. Be inspired.

* Faith is not a shelter against any difficulties, but belief in the face of all contradictions and complications. During

an especially trying time in the work of the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor wrote to his wife, “We have twenty-five cents—and all the promises of God! His faith was in God.

* Faith is the capacity to trust in the Lord while not being able to make sense out of everything in your life. Some things won’t make sense, but faith enables us to wait until the fog and confusion clear.

* Like an arid sponge soaks up water, faith draws the poison from every grief. It takes the sting out of every loss, and quenches the fire of every pain.

* Faith is also the conviction that God does not and will not ever tell any lie to us. He is the epitome of truth. The character of God is the foundation of our faith. His word to us is enduring and eternal because they are true.

* Faith is our acceptance of God’s acceptance of us. In fact, no faith is genuine faith which believes that something extra needs to be added to the death of Jesus to make us acceptable to God.

* Faith is what brings an empty man to God, that he may be filled with the blessings of God.

* Faith will not always get for us what we want, but it will get what God wants us to have and need.

* Faith means believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse.

* Faith is a humble, self-effacing grace because it makes the believer nothing in himself and his own abilities, but it does make God to be everything.

Jesus also prepared His men for the inevitable. They had seen the poor reception Jesus received in the country of the Gerasenes (8:37). ... If

people rejected the Son of God... certainly they would reject His representatives (His special envoys). If they proclaimed the gospel in the synagogue of a city and the leaders rejected their message or asked them to leave... the Twelve were to leave.

Luke 9:5

The act of shaking off the dust of a place symbolized a complete break in association. Jews leaving Gentile soil often shook the dust from their feet as a token of rejecting Gentile uncleanness. Jesus used the image to encourage the Twelve to put rejection behind them and to pursue their cause wherever opportunities arose.

Jesus knew before the disciples departed that rejection would be waiting for them in a number of towns. He encouraged them to spend little time trying to overcome objections and more time finding receptive hearts.

Not everyone *wants* the truth. Not everyone will like what you have to say or how you get something done. Don't fear what people think or say in response. If you do... you'll spend more time thinking about what critics think than what Christ thinks. Ask God for thicker skin.

Luke 9:6

This passage indicates that the disciples must have covered a considerable territory in Galilee. They did as Jesus had told them to do... which scholars estimate would have taken about 6 months.

The result was quite a shaking! It was tremendously successful. The entire population of Galilee – including Herod - was asking “Who is this Jesus?!” They were wondering: Who exactly was He? Was He just one

more prophet or holy man? Or was He really some kind of invasion from the world beyond?” Their perplexity set the stage for the great truth that would become so evident after Jesus’ death and resurrection—this was God’s Son sent from Heaven!

Luke 9:7-9

Herod’s conscience was no doubt convicting him... and he was wondering if perhaps God had sent John back to judge him.

Herod kept trying to see Jesus; but Jesus did not make it a point to go out of His way to mingle with the high and mighty. ... Jesus called the evil king a “fox” and was **not** intimidated by his threats (Luke 13:31–32). When Herod and Jesus *did* finally meet... (when Jesus was arrested and condemned) Herod hoped to see a miracle... but the Son of God did nothing... and said nothing to him. (Now back to our passage...)

Luke 9:10-11

Jesus gave the men a chance to unwind and “give an account” of their experience. The Twelve returned to Jesus full of good news and wonderful tales. The Lord decided that they needed a respite (a spiritual retreat)... to go somewhere where they could be away from the crowds.

What made the need even more urgent (as Mark 6:31 indicates) was the fact that a boisterous and demanding crowd... with people constantly coming and going... was making *even* **eating** impossible. Result: “Privately” (that is... “all by themselves”)... Jesus... the Twelve... *but* **no one else** - take off.

He chose a desert place called Bethsaida Julias (a small town that Herod Philip had renovated and renamed after Julias... the daughter of Emperor Caesar Augustus.) The place was outside of Herod's jurisdiction.

But the retreat was short-lived. The multitudes found out where Jesus had gone and followed Him. By the time the crowds caught up with Jesus and the apostles, they were in the remote hill country on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus didn't rebuke the crowd or say, "*Why don't you leave us alone? Give us a break—we're trying to get just a little time to ourselves!*" Ever the accessible and patient Savior... He welcomed them and continued His ministry of proclaiming the kingdom of God and reversing the effects of evil. Certainly the crowd was inconsiderate; yet our Lord graciously received them — taught them and healed those who were ill. ... **[P A U S E]** ...

Jesus had the ability to carry on...

What about you...? Do you believe that Jesus has sent you out... on a mission for Him... and that He has given you all the power and authority to do that work...?

Apply your faith and believe that He has!