

## **Prayers**

### ***To God***

Lord God Almighty. Some people might say that I am mad to talk to you, but You are as real to me now as the air I breathe, the food I eat and the love I receive from those nearest to me. Speak to me today, Lord, in the work that I do, the things that happen to me and the conversations I have with others. But most of all, speak to me with the same voice that has illuminated my mind, gladdened my heart and quickened my conscience ever since I first met You. I praise You, Lord God Almighty for Your presence with me now. AMEN

### ***For myself***

How do you feel about what you are doing today? Describe this to the Lord in prayer and seek His wisdom and understanding for how you might change for the better.

### ***For others***

Seek God's mercy on your nation and others, that all might live with the blessings of peace, freedom, and justice.

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## **Meditation**

Have you lost?  
lost a vote, lost a job, lost an argument,  
lost out on doing something important for the Lord?

Be patient,  
For God will come when you least expect  
and show you everything He wants of you again.

Will you believe this?  
When others do not seem to see or want you?  
or when others cast their shadow of disinterest on you?

Stand firm,  
even though it hurts to feel rejected by your peers  
and days will have to pass before new opportunities arise.

The Lord of time  
has time enough to rework you within His master plan  
and give the chance for you to conquer where you lost before.

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## Bible Passage

### **Luke 9:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> When Jesus had called the twelve together, He gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, <sup>2</sup> and He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. <sup>3</sup> He said to them,

*"Take nothing for your journey, neither staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money, no, not even two shirts! <sup>4</sup> Stay at whatever house you enter until you leave, <sup>5</sup> but wherever they do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that town, as evidence against them."*

<sup>6</sup> Then they set out from there and went from village to village, preaching the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

<sup>7</sup> Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening and was puzzled, because some said that John had been raised from the dead, <sup>8</sup> by others that Elijah had appeared, and by yet others that one of the ancient prophets had arisen. <sup>9</sup> He said,

*"I beheaded John, so who is this about whom I hear such things?"*

And he then tried to see Jesus.

<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the apostles returned and told Jesus about everything they had done, and He took them away with Him privately to a city called Bethsaida. <sup>11</sup> However, when the crowds found out about it they followed Him, but He nevertheless received them. He spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed to be cured.

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## Review

After several chapters of stories about Jesus' ministry, Luke now begins a different phase of his Gospel. Our reading contains not just one story, but a report of a number of incidents. First, we read about the disciples being sent out on a mission (9:1-5), and then returning some time later to tell Jesus what they had done (9:10) after travelling around some villages (9:9:6). Then strangely, in the middle of this, we hear of Herod's puzzlement at the reports he has heard about Jesus. But why does Luke put these things together? Why are these very different story elements are thrown together like this?

Up to now, Luke's Gospel has focussed on telling us about Jesus work, and His ministry to people in Israel. Now, he changes tack and begins to report the consequences of Jesus' work. Firstly, he sends the disciples on their own mission, which is to be a copy of his own. However, alongside this, an significant question arises which will become ever more important as the Gospel unfolds. What do people think of Jesus? Very soon, Jesus begins to ask this question of the disciples themselves (9:18), but in this reading we hear about how the earthly King of Israel, Herod, reacts to Jesus. Luke wants us to look more deeply at who Jesus really was, what He came to do, and what He wants of His disciples.

So at the beginning of our passage, Jesus takes the new and remarkable step of handing His ministry over to the disciples. He commands them to go out and do themselves what they have seen Him do (9:1-5). This is quite remarkable, for Jesus trusts the disciples

completely with His power and authority! He does not question their abilities, He simply tells them to get on with it! The disciples are obedient and follow their Lord's command (9:6) and they return to him later to report on what happened (9:10), though we have to wait until later in the Gospel before we read more about this missionary activity (10:1f.).

Jesus firstly calls His disciples to His work of doing 'signs and wonders', that is, of casting out demons and curing diseases. It is interesting that this is the first and primary instruction. Jesus then adds to this the ministries of preaching the Gospel and healing the sick. What does Jesus mean by this? He means that Jesus' disciples should do no more or less than what Luke has recorded Jesus as doing Himself in His own ministry so far. We may have to work out how to apply such ministries to our own world and culture, but Jesus' example is clear enough in the Gospel, and is there for us to read and study.

Jesus' instructions for mission are straightforward. When on His service, His disciples are to put aside material welfare and comfort, and no compromise should be made with the basic Gospel message (9:3-5). The particular things Jesus mentions here, such as taking no money, food or spare clothing, are a challenge to His disciples to trust Him completely. This is essential for all forms of mission, though how it all works in our modern world may well be very complex. We must trust God in the age of the internet and incredibly fast travel, for example. Yet if we release our cares to Him, then we will be able to rejoice in Jesus' provision, and be blessed by it. Neither should we think of this work as something for ministers, pastors, priests or missionaries. All who own the name of Jesus will find fulfilment in yielding to His call, whatever our earthly life and work..

Now, let us look at what Luke says about King Herod. As a King, he wanted to know the details of everything that was happening in his kingdom, and he wanted to find out more about Jesus given the reports he had heard. Was he a prophet, like the ancient prophets of Israel (9:8)? But Luke hints strongly at something else. He tells us that Herod had already ordered the slaughter of John the Baptist, a prophet who had overstepped the mark by confronting his authority (9:9). Like his father, the ruthless Herod the Great, who talked to the 'wise men' about Christ's birth in Bethlehem before slaughtering the children in Bethlehem (Matt 2:16f.), Herod was not going to tolerate any competition for the affections of the people. He wanted to know about Jesus in order to root out any obstacle to his own authority within Judea.

Luke makes no further mention of Herod here, though later on in the Gospel, we hear more about his desire to kill Jesus (13:31) and he is present at Jesus' arraignment before Pilate before His crucifixion (23:7f.). Nevertheless, Herod's questioning merely mirrors that of all Judeans, who want to know who Jesus is. For different reasons, they all sought a 'Messiah', and they wanted to know whether this was Jesus. So by writing about Herod, Luke reminds us of this important question about Jesus, and also reminds us of Jesus' coming death at the hands of Herod, Pilate and the Roman army. It is therefore not surprising that here, Luke reports Jesus' commission to the disciples. Ultimately, His earthly followers will have to do His work after His death, and the sooner they come to terms with this the better!

Lastly, Luke reports that Jesus wanted to take the disciples away on a retreat to talk with them about their mission, but this does not happen. The crowds are on hand with their persistent desire for healing and the love of God, and Jesus does not turn away from them. So Jesus ministers again to the people, and the disciples observe from their master that human need must not be ignored. The Gospel must be preached so people can see the evidence of God's love.

In the broad sweep of human history we may judge all manner of things to be important, but Jesus knew that the Gospel alone is important for each individual who hears it. Nothing can be allowed to stand in its way.

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## Going Deeper

### Notes on the text and translation

#### **V1    *'power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases'***

##### Other translations:

*'authority to drive out all demons'* (NIV)

The NIV translation adds the words 'to drive out' in order to make the sentence read better, but it is not there in the Greek original. It is better to think of this sentence as Jesus giving 'power and authority' for two things, firstly over all demons and secondly to heal people, no more, no less. The authority of God conveys everything necessary for the ministry of Christ, who could do these things only for the same two reasons; the authority of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

#### **V3    *'no, not even two shirts!'***

##### Other translations:

*'no extra tunic'* (NIV)

*'do not have even two tunics'* (New American)

Luke clearly emphasises this instruction, and I have done the same in my translation. I have preferred the word 'shirt' to 'tunic' because the equivalent garment today is a shirt.

#### **V11    *'but He nevertheless received them'***

##### Other translations:

*'He welcomed them'* (NIV)

*'He received them'* (NRSV)

The Greek verb implies that Jesus received the crowds despite his desire to be with the disciples alone, so I have added the words '*but*' and '*nevertheless*' to make this clear; '*but he nevertheless received them ...*'.

## Further Comments

### ***Mission and the Kingdom of God – the authority***

At the end of this passage we read a report that despite sending the disciples off to do what He commanded, Jesus continued to do the same things for the people who came to Him, speaking to them and healing them. We should perhaps accept that the Gospel work always continues whatever our personal achievements.

Also, Jesus' authority came exclusively from the Father, for as He said Himself, '*I can do nothing without the Father*' (John 5:19). Of course, the same is true of us, and when Jesus asks us to preach the Gospel and heal people, He is doing no more than asking us to do what He does as a man, which is to be a channel of God's authority and love to others. It would be good if we saw ministry in these terms lest we think we have any merit in doing what Christ has asked of us.

This passage puts together a large number of important Gospel themes; preaching, teaching, healing, the authority of God, deliverance ministry, the raising of the dead, and much more. If we are to fully understand it we must make sure that we have an understanding of these things from the rest of the Gospel record, for this passage itself is not sufficient to study all these things. The mission of God lies in putting together everything God has required of us and everything He has shown us in Christ, which is recorded in the Gospels!

### ***Mission and the Kingdom of God – practical considerations***

The practical considerations of mission are controversial; who can get anything done today without material provision? But if we look at this picture of mission in a different way, it is perhaps a reminder to us that we depend on God not the trappings of our culture. For example, today, we might think it impossible to do the Lord's work without electronics, music, video projectors, computers, and a vast array of culturally important machinery. The value of Jesus' words here lies in the fact that the mission of God is to be accomplished without such things. Indeed, it depends on one-to-one conversations and relationships whereby people are healed and demons cast out, and where people to whom these things happen are led to understand the love and mercy of God the Father who delights to help and save. We do not need material excess to do this task, just a readiness to do God's will and the desire to be obedient to God's priorities.

### ***Mission and the Kingdom of God – turning away***

The command of Jesus in verse 5 is to leave any place where the Gospel is not received. His words clearly refer to the various places where the disciples went to preach the Gospel, and we should note that Jesus did not say '*go to Jewish villages only*', or make any other demarcation. Jesus knew from his own experience that the Gospel was received by Jew and Gentile alike, and that the greatest opposition he received was in Jewish towns and cities. Is it possible that Jesus' words here were a crucial help to those who like Paul felt they had to leave the Jewish communities of the Roman Empire and preach the Gospel where God had never been preached before, to Gentiles?

### ***Mission and the Kingdom of God – reporting back***

In verse 10, we read that the disciples returned to Jesus to tell Him what they had done. It may not be evident here in Luke's Gospel, but Matthew and Mark both record the conversations Jesus had with the disciples after their first missions, and these were important times of teaching. See, for example, the famous parables of the 'Sower and the Seed' in Matthew 13, along with other key parables found within this chapter. For us, reporting back may be a matter of prayer, in which we tell the Lord what has happened and listen to His wisdom. It may also be about Christians getting together to learn from what God is doing in their midst, and sharing in testimony about the blessings of God. It is undoubtedly true that when people tell others about what God has done, the work of the Gospel shines more brightly in the hearts of believers.

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## **Discipleship**

### ***Application***

#### ***Jesus' commission of the disciples***

Every Gospel tells us that Jesus commissioned the disciples to do on earth the work that He began. Nearly always, they speak of Christ's call to minister the Gospel in preaching

and teaching, together with one or more of the 'signs and wonders' ministries such as deliverance, healing, or setting captives free (see also Matthew 10:1, Mark 6:7).

Our passage does not explore the full meaning of these activities of preaching, teaching and ministry, but we should learn from this pattern. Our task today must surely be to follow Jesus' lead and do the same things, and if we do not, then we fail to trust God or do His will. Most readily accept preaching and teaching as basic to the life of the church, but few engage with His ministry.

I suggest that we at least take our natural desire for the health of others and minister to each other as the Lord leads. Equally, let us all seek to deal with the evil around us and use all godly means to fight it, for this is what deliverance ministry means.

### ***Acting with power and authority***

Power and authority to do signs and wonders is an awesome responsibility. It should be handled with the humility and submission Christ showed in His earthly ministry; aggression was never part of Christ's commission. Jesus called His disciples to share the Gospel with compassion and offer His love in healing power wherever it may be received, and He told them to leave those situations where this Gospel was not received or opposed (Matt 10:14), and we should heed His advice.

### ***The task of mission seems impossible, but it is not***

We may think it impossible to live today by the strict limitations of Jesus' instructions. For example, we feel we need more than just one shirt on our back! The important principle undergirding Jesus' command however is this; the disciple must trust wholly in God's provision and show this by visible self denial. Remember, Scripture contains other guidance concerning practical mission, including the financial obligation of congregations; read about this in the letters of Paul, for example, 1 Cor 15:58f. And 1 Tim 5:18 et.c).

### ***Ideas for what to do***

- Ask yourself whether your own possessions get in the way of the Lord's call to you to mission. Consider performing a spiritual 'audit' (systematic assessment) of your belongings and their relevance to the Lord's call on your life.
- Pray about whether you have yet fully understood the Lord's call on your life.

### ***Questions (for use in groups)***

1. Discuss what you think Jesus means by 'casting out demons'. Does this mean the same to people today, and if not, why not?
2. What does this passage tell us about the work of God's people 'on mission' today?
3. Where do we find opposition to the Gospel today that might be considered to be like that of Herod to Jesus and John the Baptist?

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## **Final Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, empower us we pray to do Your work here on earth now. You know what needs to be done, and we are ready to do it. Come to us with the gifts, the power

and the authority to deliver the Gospel message, which in every generation has the capacity to change the world! Alleluia! AMEN

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