

THE FIELDWORK TRAINING

Luke 9:1-9

Key Verse: 9:2

“...and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

In chapter 8, we learned who Jesus Christ really is. Jesus is God Almighty. Jesus is God who rules nature. Jesus is God who rules over evil spirits. Jesus is God who heals any kind of disease. Jesus is God who raises the dead. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” All we have to do is just believe in Jesus. Then we can experience his saving grace all the time. We can sing like a little child, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so; little ones to him belong, we are weak but he is strong.” Just believing in Jesus, who is God Almighty, is the way to happiness and victory.

Today we begin the study of chapter 9. Jesus’ focus changes from public ministry to the training of his twelve disciples. Sometimes we don’t like the word “training.” But without training, no one can grow to maturity in their inner person. This is especially true for Jesus’ disciples. Disciples are not born, they are made through Jesus’ training. We will study chapter 9 in five parts. In each part, Jesus trains his disciples with a clear point. In verses 1-9, Jesus gives his disciples fieldwork training. This part teaches us the principles of gospel ministry. More than that, it helps us to know the heart of Jesus better.

First, Jesus gave his disciples power and authority (1).

Look at verse 1. “When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases...” Until now, Jesus had primarily ministered to the crowds of people. As opportunity arose, he trained his disciples—during the storm at sea, through the raising of Jairus’ daughter and so on. But now Jesus puts the crowd aside and clearly focuses on training his disciples. It was to raise each of them as a great shepherd in Jesus’ own image. What a great hope Jesus had for each of his disciples!

Thus far, the disciples had been observers. But now Jesus gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases. They did not earn this or deserve it. It was freely given by Jesus according to his own plan and purpose. This is the same power and authority that Jesus himself had. Though they had never studied medicine, they suddenly had the power to cure diseases. They had the power to drive out all demons. Demons are known as the most stubborn creatures. It is harder to drive out demons than it is to evict a deadbeat tenant. But the disciples had the power to drive out any demon. With this power and authority the disciples could do the work of God. The disciples were not men of outstanding human qualities. They were rather ordinary men in many ways. But when Jesus gave them power and authority, they were fully equipped to do the work of God.

It seems that Jesus conferred his power and authority upon the Twelve only temporarily at this time (9:40). They were not ready to sacrifice their whole lives to serve God and others, like Jesus did. But Jesus gave them the privilege to experience the power of God. Jesus wanted them to realize his great hope for them to be shepherds like himself. They needed the hope of Jesus in their hearts to receive discipleship training. So Jesus gave power and authority to his disciples at this time. Likewise, Jesus gives us his power and authority at the right time.

Second, to preach the kingdom of God (2).

Look at verse 2. “...and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” There may be many good things that Jesus’ disciples could do. But Jesus did not give his disciples twelve good things to do. He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Healing the sick reveals the character of the kingdom of God. In fact, Jesus gave them one task: to preach the kingdom of God.

Why is it so important to preach the kingdom of God? It is because through the preaching of the kingdom of God, God’s rightful rule is restored in men’s hearts, and on earth as it is in heaven. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Then he made the first man Adam in his own image and put him in the garden of Eden, a perfect paradise. Adam simply obeyed God’s word and enjoyed utmost happiness and a timeless honeymoon together with Eve. Then the devil came and tempted them to disobey God. When they did, they lost paradise. Life became hard toil for survival among thorns and thistles with the pains of childbirth and child-rearing. In modern

terms, computer viruses of all kinds arose; there was no health insurance, and children became totally rebellious before finishing high school. To make matters worse, many kinds of terrorists began to cause trouble.

On earth everything was messed up. Man did not listen to God; woman did not listen to man; children did not listen to their parents, and the devil was going to and fro, seemingly as he pleased. There were now two kingdoms: God's kingdom and the devil's kingdom. The devil ruled the world of darkness through man's disobedience and the power of sin. Before the devil's power, men were helpless. But God did not abandon men. God told the devil, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel" (Gen 3:15). God promised to send a Savior who would crush the devil's head. He is Jesus Christ.

Jesus is God. But he gave up his heavenly kingdom, his power, glory and honor, and came down to this world. Jesus humbled himself and became a man. He lived a pure and ordinary life in a poor family. When he was about 30, he was baptized by John in the Jordan River. Then the Holy Spirit descended on him. It was the beginning of Jesus' messianic ministry. The first thing Jesus did was go into the desert and confront the devil in one-to-one combat. Jesus defeated the devil by standing on the word of God absolutely. Jesus glorified God and won the victory for all mankind. Then Jesus proclaimed, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news" (Mk 1:15). Jesus drove out the devil's power wherever he went.

To bring the kingdom of God to men, Jesus had to do more than defeat the power of the devil. Jesus had to defeat the power of sin and death as well. The only way was to offer himself as a ransom sacrifice on the cross. Jesus became the Lamb of God who died for the sin of the world. But God did not leave him in the grave. On the third day, God raised him from the dead. Through his resurrection, Jesus destroyed the last enemy of mankind, death. In this way, Jesus restores the kingdom of God. Whoever receives Jesus receives the kingdom of God in his heart. Jesus give men true peace and joy and the love of God while on earth. Moreover, Jesus gives men eternal life and a place in God's house where we will live forever with our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 14:2).

The glory and beauty of the kingdom of God is described by John in Revelation 21:1-4. It says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" To sum up, the kingdom of God is the solution to all the problems of all people, no matter who they may be. God's heart's desire and Jesus' purpose of coming into this world is to restore the kingdom of God to men.

The kingdom of God is the only living hope for all mankind. Men cannot live without hope. But the things of the world cannot be a living hope because they all perish, spoil, and fade away. The kingdom of God gives us a living hope. Peter said, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." (1Pe 1:3). This living hope enables us to live holy lives as pilgrims while we eagerly long for the kingdom of God.

The disciples' main task was to preach the kingdom of God. Through their preaching, the kingdom of God comes into the hearts of those who repent and believe. This is Jesus' way to advance the kingdom of God on earth. Sometimes we wonder if it is really that important to preach the kingdom of God. Sometimes we wonder if we should keep delivering the same message, the message of the kingdom of God again and again. Then we must repent. Preaching the kingdom of God is of first importance to God and to all mankind. St. Paul understood this and said, "...how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Ro 10:14-15)

Not only must we preach the kingdom of God, we must pray for the kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven. In Luke 11:2 Jesus taught us to pray, "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come." This is why we pray for America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Recently, ungodly people wanted to remove the words "one nation under God" from the pledge of allegiance. What can we do? We can pray to have 1,000 one-to-one Bible studies and 500 Sunday worship service attendants in Chicago UBF. It is to expand the territory of the kingdom of God for God's own glory.

Look at verse 2 again. Jesus sent his disciples to heal the sick. Jesus heals his people. We need many kinds of healing. Most of all we need spiritual healing. When the people of Israel had been liberated from bondage in Egypt, they were going through the desert and became very thirsty. At last they came to a place called Marah where there was water. But it was too bitter to drink. So they began to grumble and complain against Moses. They were bitter, like the water. Then God showed Moses a piece of wood and he threw it in the water and the water became sweet. Likewise, God promised to heal his people when they obeyed his words. Jesus heals our spiritual sicknesses. This healing ministry reveals the character of the kingdom of God.

Third, the principles of doing gospel work (3-5).

In the first part, we thought about what the disciples should take with them. It was the power and authority of Jesus to drive out evil spirits and to cure diseases. In the second part, we thought about what the disciples should do: preach the kingdom of God. In this part we learn some principles in doing God's work.

First of all, depend on God alone. Look at verse 3. "He told them: 'Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic.'" It seems that the only thing Jesus allowed them to take with them were the clothes on their backs. Other than that, they could take nothing for the journey, not even an extra T-shirt, not to mention a suitcase or traveler's checks. Jesus wanted to train them to depend on God alone, not on their own ideas about what was needed or material things. The power and authority he had given them was sufficient. Aside from that, they needed nothing more. Likewise, when we do God's work, we must depend on God alone and preach the kingdom of God clearly. Then we can experience the power of God. There is one young man who has studied the Bible only a short time. But in his one-to-one Bible study he preaches the kingdom of God with an absolute attitude, depending only on Jesus. Then his sheep obey the word and experience the power of God in their souls through Bible study. On the other hand, another young man always buys his sheep a Big Mac first and studies the Bible second. His sheep are not growing spiritually but only physically. We must not depend on anything else when we serve God's sheep. We must teach the word of God depending only on Jesus.

Secondly, "stay there." Look at verse 4. "Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town." It is human nature to improve our conditions and circumstances constantly. It could be a temptation for the disciples to find a better house to stay in while they preached the gospel in a village. Maybe they could find a house that served better food or had kinder members. But in doing God's work, we must learn to "stay there" and overcome difficulties and problems that arise. When Missionary Don Kuper's family left as missionaries, they went to Paraguay first and supported themselves as English teachers in a school. Soon their situation changed and they could no longer support themselves. It was a temptation to come back to America where they could enjoy a secure life. But they decided to "stay there"—somewhere in South America—and continue to be missionaries. Finally, God led them to Argentina and established them as leaders for a new pioneering ministry. They were blessed when they decided to "stay there."

Thirdly, don't compromise. Look at verse 5. "If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." This was not a license for the disciples to speak harshly to others. But it is a clear instruction not to compromise the gospel message. The gospel of Jesus is absolute. Mark 16:16 says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, whoever does not believe will be condemned." If the gospel is not welcomed, gospel workers should not change their message or begin to employ worldly methods. They must simply shake the dust off their feet and leave. Those who reject the gospel message are responsible for their own souls. By the way, this does not mean that we can abandon difficult sheep.

Fourth, Jesus' disciples shook the region of Galilee (6-9).

Look at verse 6. "So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere." The disciples did not calculate or hesitate. They simply set out in obedience to Jesus' words and depended on Jesus' power and authority alone. Then God worked mightily through them. The gospel message resounded throughout Galilee and many people were healed of their sicknesses. Suddenly, each of the disciples was an apostle with sheep under his care who had received the word of God and healing through their ministry. Now they were beginning practical shepherd life.

The effect of the disciples' fieldwork training was indeed great. It was as though twelve little Jesuses were going around Galilee instead of just one. People were trying to explain it, saying that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead or that Elijah had appeared or that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. When Herod the tetrarch heard this, he was perplexed and frightened to death. He had beheaded John and thought it was the end of him. But Jesus' resurrection power, working through the disciples' fieldwork training, made him realize that death is not the end. God's justice prevails. To the evil and unrepentant King Herod, the coming of the kingdom of God was not good news. It was a sign that the kingdom of God conquers all unrighteousness.

In this passage we learn that Jesus gave his disciples power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases. Then Jesus sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. In simple obedience, they went out and preached the kingdom of God. And God worked mightily through them. May God bless each of us with Jesus' power and authority to do the work of God. May God help us preach the kingdom of God as our first priority through one-to-one Bible studies. May God spread the kingdom of God until America becomes a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.