

Luke 8, 9, and 10 — The Lord's Perfect Labors, the Disciples' Failures, and the Seventy

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Luke 8 — Everything the Lord Touched Was Perfect

Luke 8 records the Lord's own labours. He went throughout every city and village — not some, not most, but every one — preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And in every place He went, what He did was perfect. The sower went out to sow, and the seed was the word of God, and the Lord was the sower. He commanded the winds and the water, and they obeyed Him. Invisible and visible things alike did what He said, because He was the perfect man — Luke's characteristic presentation of the Lord — the one in whom God's delight was found.

The man with a legion of demons was found, when the Lord was done, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. That is what the Lord did when He went everywhere: formerly demon-possessed people sitting at His feet, clothed, in their right mind. It was perfect. Every city and village. One hundred percent. The sower who sowed perfectly.

Luke 9 — The Twelve Sent Out, and Everything Went Wrong

Luke 9 begins with the Lord sending out the twelve. He gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. They went through the towns — not every city and village as the Lord had, but the towns. Already a smaller scope. And

what followed was a catalogue of failure.

Herod was perplexed — some said John was risen, some said Elijah had appeared, some said one of the old prophets. The message went out but was received in confusion. The disciples were given power to feed a multitude of five thousand and came back to the Lord saying, we have no more than five loaves and two fishes except we should go and buy meat for all this people. The Lord had to sit them down by fifties and feed them all Himself. They could not cast a demon out of a boy — a father brought his son to the disciples and they could not cast it out. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter wanted to make three tabernacles and honour Moses and Elijah on equal terms with the Lord Jesus — and the voice of God the Father came from the cloud saying: this is my beloved Son — hear Him. They could not satisfy the Father's heart concerning the honour due to His dear Son.

The contrast between Luke 8 and Luke 9 is a contrast between perfection and complete failure. Everything the Lord touched was perfect; everything the disciples touched in their own strength crumbled. And it is not an accident that this is written for us.

The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.
— Luke 10:2

Luke 10 — The Seventy, Sent with Different Instructions

Luke 10 begins differently. The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place where He Himself would come. Every city and place — that is where the Lord was going, and that is where He sent the seventy. Not the towns of chapter 9 but every city and place. And the instructions were different from those given to the twelve.

The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few — pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest. Go your ways; behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. The seventy were told to pray for more workers. This requires a humility the twelve did not have — you cannot pray for more unless you are willing to say, Lord, we are not enough. There is only 70 of us and we are insufficient. That was their commission: go, and pray for more.

The seventy returned with joy: Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. They had not been given authority over demons as the twelve were — but they found power in the name of the Lord Jesus. And the Lord said: I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Satan knew the work was going forward. Verse 21: in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes — even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. The Lord rejoiced. Thanks went up to the Father. He did not thank the seventy; the thanksgiving went upward, not sideways.

Verse 23: he turned to His disciples and said privately, blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. Happy eyes to see the good seed being sown, souls delivered, the name of Jesus honoured. And then the good Samaritan — an unexpected man, a despised man, who happened to have with him both oil and wine, and showed the love of God to a wounded soul lying in his path. The Lord's word at the end: go and do thou likewise.

Luke 3–4 and Revelation 4 — Dependence, Holiness, and the Casting of Crowns

Luke 3:21–22 shows the Lord Jesus at His baptism — praying, expressing dependence, and the Holy Spirit descending as a dove and the Father's voice saying: thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight. He was

qualitatively different from Adam. Adam was innocent — ignorant of good and evil, without the knowledge that comes from the fall. The Lord Jesus was holy: He had within Himself the power to cleave to what was holy and reject simultaneously what was evil, without any internal conflict, without anything in Him that responded to evil.

In Luke 4, the three temptations each addressed a real need or a real right: He was genuinely hungry; He would genuinely one day receive the kingdoms of the world; a bone of Him would genuinely not be broken. But He would not receive anything from anyone but the Father. Every temptation met with it is written — three times, all from Deuteronomy. His holiness expressed through dependence on the Father's word.

Revelation 4:9–11 shows the end of all faithful service: the twenty-four elders fell before Him that sat upon the throne and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: thou art worthy, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were and have been created. Whatever crowns He may choose to give — those are His crowns, won by His work through us. The only right response is to cast them at His feet. He is worthy. That is what the seventy did in spirit when the thanksgiving went up to the Father; that is what the three mighty men did when David poured the water out to the Lord. We will never reach heaven wishing we had been more like the disciples of Luke 9. We will reach heaven wishing we had been more like the disciples of Luke 10 — the ones who were as lambs among wolves, who treasured the name of the Lord Jesus, who prayed for more, and whose joy the Lord shared when the work went forward.