

The Gospel of Luke

Luke 8:22-12:53

Power and Authority (8:22-9:17)

- The Power and Authority of Jesus (8:22-56)
- The Power and Authority of the Apostles (9:1-50)

Who then is this? Jesus, Faith and Fear: (8:22-8:56)

More than anything else, people were amazed by Jesus works of power and authority. The responses of those who encounter Jesus move very rapidly between fear and faith, faith and fear.

In Luke 8:22-56, Jesus demonstrates power and authority over the active presence of diabolic agents and influence in the natural and spiritual realms, over sickness and unclean conditions, and even over death. Jesus is called “Master” (8:24, 45) and “Son of the Most High God” (8:28).

In this section, people react to Jesus’ power and authority in two ways: fear and faith. The disciples are faced with the terror of the chaotic force of the sea. Jesus asks his disciples, “Where is your faith?” At issue is locus of the disciples’ faith and fear. When Jesus demonstrates his authority over “the wind and the raging waves”, Jesus gives them something truly to fear—Him:

Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?
—Luke 8:25

This question is left ringing without human answer until Peter’s confession in 9:20. In the meantime, the “legions” of evil demons know exactly who they are dealing with: the Son of the Most High God. And, they beg him for mercy! (8:26-33, cf. James 2:19) The crowds reactions are mixed, the people of the Gerasenes region asked Jesus “to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear.” (8:37). Those who are healed desire to be with him, and proclaimed his greatness to others.

The contrast with fear is belief. The woman with a discharge is commended because she fearlessly reached out and touched Jesus believing in his power to heal. Her faith is transformed to reverent fear as she falls down before him and declares his power! Jarius’ fear due to the untimely news of his daughter’s death is transformed to faith with Jesus encouragement, “Do not fear; only believe, and she will be made well.”

Fear and faith are inappropriate when directed to nature, demonic powers, sickness and death. What do you fear in this life? The opinions of others, the treat of sicknesses, evil oppressive powers, death? In a paradoxical way, we place our faith in what we fear and we have faith in what we fear. Jesus is the only one worth of our faith and fear—he has all the authority and power!

Who then am I? Disciples, Faith and Faltering

If Luke 8:22-56 is about the power and authority of Jesus over nature, demons, sickness and death, Luke 9:1-50 is about the power and authority given to the apostles:

“And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.” –Luke 9:1-2

The authority and power of Jesus is given to the apostles for ministry. They begin with some success in preaching and healing everywhere (9:6). Even the attention of the poser King Herod was garnered, his interest in Jesus piqued. (9:7-9)

However, the disciples’ strong start in mission quickly degenerates as they are called to exercise extraordinary faith in ministry. When faced with a massive hungry crowd and inadequate resources, Jesus urges them: “You give them something to eat.” Their worldly solution: “send them to the villages to find lodging and get provisions.” (9:12) Jesus Kingdom solution would again demonstrate the abundance of the Kingdom. He broke the loaves and fishes and “gave them to the disciples to distribute”. The lesson was again to look to Jesus and allow his power and authority to work through them. The twelve apostles each held a basket of leftovers in their hands.

With Peter’s correct understanding of the identity of Jesus, Luke turns his story to the 12 apostles’ growing understanding of their own identity and roles in the Kingdom of Jesus. From this point on it will become abundantly clear why the apostles need to learn how to minister in power and authority. Jesus would teach them:

“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” –Luke 9:22

The critical task for the apostles (and for Luke’s hearers) is to learn what it means to “come after” Jesus through cross-bearing self-denial and daily devotion to Jesus. (9:23)

Glory and Suffering

One of the most difficult things for the apostles to grasp is the paradoxical connection between suffering and glory, between humility and greatness. Not only do they have a difficult time grasping how this paradox applies to Jesus, but he would have them apply the paradox to themselves as his followers. Jesus certainly had proclaimed and revealed his glory to the apostles.

But he emphasized that in gaining “the whole world” one loses and forfeits himself. And that when a disciple denies self and takes up his cross daily and follows Jesus, the result is the salvation of one’s soul and kingdom of God. The bottom line is that the powers and authorities of this world are not going to recognize the glory of the Son. The disciple must make a tough choice between the world and the kingdom of God—to gain one is to forfeit the other.

Paul would teach very similar themes in the letters to the Corinthian church. Jesus knew his disciples needed reassurance of his majesty and glory, so took Peter, James and John up to the mountain of transfiguration where he revealed his Glory. But, even in the midst of the glory the discussion was about “his **exodus**, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” (9:31) Peter in wanting to remain in the goodness of the glory, misspoke. Again the divine voice of the Father affirms the Messianic Lordship of Jesus (cf. Psalm 2, 2 Sam. 7). However, this time the Divine Voice is directed at the disciples rather than Jesus: “Listen to him!” The way of the cross is a spiritual battle, the disciples need to trust and obey the way of the master.

The “next day” after the transfiguration glory, the disciples falter in the battle against demonic powers. Jesus is told “I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” Jesus expresses growing impatience with the denial and corruption in the hearts of the disciples comparing it to the faithlessness and corruption of the Israelites in the Wilderness after the Exodus (cf. Deut. 32:4-5):

Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” --Luke 9:49

The power of the divine mission comes from humility, obedience and faith in the crucified way of the Lord. The “majesty of God” is revealed in humility and lowliness. Jesus needed this one fact to “sink into their ears” He is the example: “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.” (9:44) Suffering is the path to glory. But, they were dense in their understanding.

“They did not understand the saying, it was concealed from them, so that they may not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.” --Luke 9:45

In contrast, they continued to have majesty and glory on their minds as they were arguing about “which one of them is the greatest.” (9:46) Jesus again emphasized that the one who is the greatest is the one who is the least among them.

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. –2 Cor. 12:9-

The Journey to the Throne: To Jerusalem and the Cross (9:51-19:27)

The largest section in the Gospel of Luke is often called the “travel narrative”. Luke uses this portion of his Gospel to address several key issues and theological challenges for his reader. For this section we will use the following structure²⁵:

Outline of the Travel Narrative	9:51-19:27
Intro: On the Way	9:51-56
<i>Transition #1: The Cost of Following Jesus</i>	9:57-62
The Do's and Don'ts of Christian Discipleship	10:1-12:48
<i>Transition #2: The Cost of Following Jesus</i>	12:49-53
Understanding the Jewish Rejection	12:54-14:24
<i>Transition #3: The Cost of Following Jesus</i>	14:25-34
Seeking the Lost: The Gospel for all People	15:1-19:27

²⁵ Outline adapted from Tan Geok Hock, *Is there a Structure to Luke's Travel Narrative?* (Thesis submitted to the Seminari Theoloji Malaysia) 2012.