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Rev. H. H. Barber

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Power Over Demons and Disease

...the gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 9, verse 35.

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

This morning my sermon emphasized that Christianity is more than words, more than ideas, more than concepts, more than a creed. Rather Christianity is a force, a dynamic life-changing power. Our text tonight follows naturally from that emphasis this morning and adds to that emphasis. I read here chapter 10, verse 1. *And when [Jesus] had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.* In chapters 8 and 9 of the gospel according to St. Matthew we have clustered together for our consideration a great selection of the miracles of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Those two chapters read like a triumphal procession.

Jesus, according to John 5:33-39, pointed to four witnesses demonstrating his messiahship, the validity of his claim to be the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. And those four witnesses according to John 5:33-39 were, first of all, John the Baptist. He bore witness to Christ. Secondly, the Father who broke the silence of the

heavens to witness to the person of Jesus at his baptism in Jordan. Thirdly, Jesus spoke of his works of power as being proof that he was what he claimed to be. And fourthly, he said search the scriptures. They testify of me. *In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.* Jesus called four witnesses before the witness stand to demonstrate that he was and is the heaven sent Saviour, the Messiah, fulfilling the Old Testament prophets that Jesus is the hope of the world. John the Baptist, the Father, the scriptures and the works that he did. Well, if you want to read about the works that he did there is no better place to turn to than Matthew chapter 8 and chapter 9. In chapter 8 we read about his cleansing a leper in verses 2, 3, and 4. When we come to verse 5 we read about Christ healing the Centurion's servant. In verse 14 we read about Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law of the fever that had incapacitated her. In verse 16 of Matthew, chapter 8, we read at evening time they brought to him many that were possessed with devils and that were sick and he healed every one of them. In verse 24 of that beautiful chapter we read about Jesus stilling the storm on the sea and demonstrating his power even over nature. In verse 28 of Matthew, chapter 8, we read of Jesus delivering the two demoniacs in the country of the Gadarenes and restoring them back to sanity and back to their families and back to normal living. Well, that's chapter 8 of Matthew.

We move into chapter 9 and the list goes on. In verse 2 we read about Jesus healing a man who was brought to him sick of the palsy, paralyzed on his bed. In verse 18 you read about Jesus healing the daughter of the ruler. They said that she's already dead but Jesus said she's just sleeping. I'll go and rouse her from sleep. And they laughed him to scorn. But Jesus raised the girl from the dead. In verse 20 of that chapter we read about the woman with the issue of blood who pressed through the crowd and touched the hem of his garment and virtue flowed into her and suddenly she was made whole. In verse 27 of Matthew, chapter 9, we read of two blind men whom Jesus delivered from their blindness and they looked into his lovely face.

In verse 2 of chapter 9 we read about a man who was mute and deaf and Jesus set him free from his bondage. In verse 35 we read a general statement that Jesus healed every sickness and every disease among the people. What a list of miracles. What an

exciting list of supernatural works of power; cleansing the leper, raising the palsied man from his bed of affliction, healing a fever, casting out demons, raising the dead, curing a woman who had suffered for long years from bleeding ulcers or pernicious anemia, opening the eyes of the blind, unstopping the ears of the deaf, yes, even speaking the word of power and the storm winds sobbed to silence and the boisterous waves slunk back into a placid lake. Jesus is the master. Jesus has power.

I think it was the French atheist Voltaire who said, remove the miracles from the Gospels and in one generation you will have the world at the feet of Jesus. The kind of Jesus that he was talking about would be absolutely useless to the people who would be at his feet. What good is a Saviour who can't save? What good is a Redeemer who can't redeem? What good is a Deliverer who can't put the shattered pieces of my life back together again to make life worthwhile and to bring the joy and the peace that I need into my heart?

Miracles are to be expected when you are dealing with an Almighty God. Some years ago I was interviewed on CBC Radio in this city. The interviewer was trying to get me to say the miracle stories of the Bible may have been fantasy. It was a phone-in radio show and an elderly man from this city phoned in and he said, "Don't you know sir that a God who cannot work miracles is a God not worth serving?" I agree totally with that friend who phoned in on that talk show. A God who can't work miracles is a God who is not worth serving. As Steve and Rosemary sang last Sunday night from this pulpit, I Believe in Miracles for I Believe in God.

Well, my text says that Jesus called his twelve disciples to himself. After looking at the fields and seeing that they were white already to harvest, after being moved with compassion because he saw people fainting and scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd, Jesus in view of the whitened harvest fields, in view of the fainting needy multitudes, Jesus called his disciples to himself. And I read that he gave them power against unclean spirits and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. I read that he sent them forth to cover the towns and villages in the whole area around about. Apparently this was a special enabling that Jesus gave to these disciples for a special period of time. Jesus was doing his best, his human best, to reach out but the

need was so tremendous that he needed multiplied hands so he conscripted the disciples and he gave them power so that his works might be done through them.

As we look at our world today this story is being repeated. The fields are white already to harvest and people are like sheep scattered and going astray. And if we have any hearts at all, if we can be moved with the compassion of Christ at all, we will look upon the multitudes of our world and we'll be moved with compassion and we will be praying, O Lord, send forth labourers into your harvest. O God, there aren't enough hands around here to do the work. There aren't enough channels to meet the need of our world. In light of that kind of situation Jesus sent his disciples out and gave them power to do his works so that the people might be ministered to.

Now tonight in this sermon on power over demons and disease I shall not theorize. I will not attempt to give answers to questions, answers that God does not give to us in the scriptures. Questions like why are some people healed and others are not? Questions like why are some people healed and then lose their healing? Questions like why are some people mightily used in a miracle ministry and then die of the very diseases they saw healed in their services? Questions like why does God sometimes heal people whose lives don't seem to be totally lined up with the will of God and then allow godly old saints who have been faithful for years to continue suffering? There are a lot of questions and a lot of answers we search for and we struggle over. But I'm not going to pose as an oracle tonight. I'm a preacher of the word of God. I'm not a prophet with some special insight into the mysteries of the divine mind. My task tonight is simply to take the word of God and to break it, to expound it, the Holy Ghost being my helper.

My text tonight is this first verse of Matthew, chapter 10. Let me read it again. *When Jesus had called unto him his twelve disciples he gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.* I shall use this text in the next few moments as an opportunity to present ten points on the subject of power over demons and over disease.

The first point I want to make, and it's an exciting point, is just this. Jesus is the master. O blessed be his name. Thrill to it. Get excited about it. Jesus is the master. He has

power over all the powers of darkness. He has power over all the forces of Hell. He has power over all the powers of disease and sickness. Jesus is the master. We've already looked at Matthew chapters 8 and 9 where it is demonstrated fully that Jesus was the master. O blessed be his name. He never had to back away from a situation. He never had to apologize. You never read of somebody coming to Jesus and Jesus saying, sorry, your case is rather unusual. I'm not able to help you. Never once! O I want you to know that Jesus is the master. There is no case too hard for him. All power in heaven and in earth have been given to him. He's the absolute master. O blessed be his name. I delight in my Saviour. I glory in him, in his power, in his capability. He is the master.

The second point I want to make tonight is that he gives power to men. That is illustrated in my text. He gave power to his twelve disciples to cast out demons and to heal all manner of sicknesses. Acts 1:8 adds to this text when it says that *you shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you, in order that you may be witnesses unto me*. John 14:12 also adds a bit to this consideration where Jesus talks about *greater works than these shall ye do because I go to my Father*. Point number two is just this that Jesus does give power to men to do mighty works.

Point number three. He gives that power as he wills. There is a divine selectivity. There is a sovereignty about God's impartation of divine power. In 1 Corinthians 12 we read about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the manifestations, the operations of the Holy Spirit and then we read these words. *These also worketh that one and selfsame spirit dividing to every man severally as He wills*. God is sovereign in the bestowment of supernatural gifts of power. God uses some people in one type of ministry. He uses other people in another type of ministry. John the Baptist did no miracles the Bible says and yet Jesus said he was the greatest man ever born of women. Let me say to you: function in the slot where God has placed you. Bloom where you are planted. Fulfill the ministry God has given to you. Don't drop out from doing what you can do because you can't do something that is bigger and more influential. God is sovereign in the giving of his power.

Point number four. He gives power to men because he is moved with compassion on other men. That's what I read here in my text and in the verses surrounding my text. When Jesus looked out on the multitude and was moved with compassion then he calls some people and says, "Look, I need some help. The need is great. Take this power and minister in my name." It's because there is a needy world out there that Jesus Christ gives his power to men.

Why does he give his power? He gives his power to men so as to confirm his word. Mark concludes his gospel with these words. *And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following.* I wonder how many people are here tonight in Calvary Temple and you are serving God because somewhere back there last month, last year, ten years ago, whenever, you saw God's power in manifestation, perhaps working in the life of a friend, perhaps in your own life somebody prayed and God touched you and the power of another world was demonstrated, and to be honest you just couldn't rationalize it away. You knew it was God and ever since you've said I have to serve this God. I know that he's real. Well, Christ does give his power to men. He does it because of compassion for other men and he does it so as to confirm his word. His word is truth. But there are many people so dull of hearing, so earthly, so spiritually insensitive, so wrapped up in their own little world of interests that they don't have ears to hear or eyes to see the things of the spirit. And God in his mercy has to sort of break in upon them by a manifestation of his power to get their attention, to demonstrate to them that the word of God is indeed true and that Jesus Christ is indeed the Saviour. So he gives his power to men to confirm his word.

He gives his power not just to satisfy idle curiosity and certainly not to make celebrities out of the person who is the channel of the manifestation of that power, far be that from us. He gives his power so that men may believe. And he gives his power to glorify his own name and to confound Satan. That's what happened. You remember Moses was called from the backside of the desert to go down to Egypt to deliver the slave people from Egyptian bondage. He threw his old shepherd stick down on the ground and it became a writhing serpent. The magicians of Egypt said, "Oh, we can do that, too."

They threw their sticks down and they became writhing serpents. But Moses' stick swallowed the rest of them up and God was demonstrated to be sovereign and greater than all the gods of Egypt. God manifests his power to confound Satan and to demonstrate who he is.

God manifests his power not only to silence the devil but to silence human critics. Nothing stops the mouth of unbelief so quickly as an inescapable, an unexplainable demonstration of God's power. In Acts 4:21-22, after a mighty healing in the early church I read these words. *The authorities let the disciples go finding nothing how they might punish them for all men glorified God for what was done.* The man upon whom the miracle of healing was showed was above forty years of age and everybody knew it. The mouths of the critics were closed because of the manifestation of God's power.

My text says that Jesus gave power to his disciples. He still gives power to men because he is yearning over needy hearts, troubled people, confused people in our world. So God manifests his power to confirm his word. He manifests his power to stop the mouths of the critics. He manifests his power to demonstrate the greatness of his power over and above all of the powers of Satan.

He manifests his power in response to the prayer of faith. In James, chapter 5, I read: *If there be any sick among you let them call for the elders of the church and let them pray, anointing with oil, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise them up. If they have committed sin they shall be forgiven them.* God gives his power to men because he delights to answer the prayer of faith. God takes great pleasure in the petitions of needy people. He said *call on me in the day of trouble and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things that thou knowest not.* So he gives his power in response to the prayer of faith.

Jesus called his disciples and gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. I said that Jesus is the master. All of us know the Lord's Prayer. When you come to the conclusion of that pattern prayer it says this. *For thine is the kingdom and the power.* Pause there for a moment. *Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.* Jesus has power to drive out demons. Jesus has power to heal diseases. O let me declare it

with conviction and with joy. Jesus has power to transform sinners. Jesus has power to repair broken marriages, to bring love and harmony back where there is alienation and bitterness. He has power to heal broken marriages. He has power to heal broken lives. Wonderful Jesus. He has power to heal all broken things. Bring the broken pieces to Jesus. He is the master. *Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever.* O I want you to know whatever you need, whatever your situation, I want you to know that my Saviour is able to meet your need, to answer your question, to solve that problem, to make you more than a conqueror. He doesn't want you to be defeated. He doesn't want you to shuffle your way down the wrong side of the street in the shadows. He wants to give you his power and his blessing. He is the master and he gives his power to men. Blessed be his name.

I preached for the Assemblies of God of Argentina at their annual national conference in 1964. After a great rally service in a downtown stadium in Buenos Aires missionary Paul Sorenson told me the story of one of the young men who had been assisting in that very service. He said, "Brother Barber, that young man was born with his feet turned completely under. As a wee lad he hobbled along on feet so terribly twisted that actually he was walking not on the soles of his feet but on the top of his feet because they were turned completely under. His mother was a simple believer who just believed that God could do anything. If you were to ask that young man his first recollections in life he would tell you the first thing he remembers is of his mother tucking him in when he was just a wee guy, into his little child's crib every night, and then every night leaning over him and praying with the hot tears dropping off her face and splashing upon the wee lad in his crib, pleading with God to heal her little boy." Paul said, "Brother Barber, God did exactly that. There he was tonight in that service and if you had asked him to remove his shoes you would still be able to see the scales on the top arch of his foot where he used to walk on those pathetically crippled feet."

Jesus has power. He gives his power to men because he is moved with compassion, because he cares. O you are dear to him. He loves you. He cares about you.

I've told you a delightful case of miraculous healing that moved my heart away down in Argentina. But God is at work here, not just in far-away places. You would be thrilled if

you could know and I wish you could know all of the calls I receive saying, "Pastor Barber I just want to phone to return thanks. God has miraculously intervened in my life, has touched me, God has answered prayer. Miraculously that friend, remember us phoning in and asking you to pray, or I phoned in and talked to one of your counsellors while your television program was on the air and they prayed with me and now I'm just phoning in to tell you that God has answered prayer and worked in mighty power. There's never a week goes by, several times a week, I am told of miraculous manifestations of God's power when people call or they write to give thanks to the Lord. He is still the master.

Jesus is alive. Jesus is alive. I said, "Jesus is alive!" He's here tonight. He's here in power. He loves you. He's not indifferent to you and your cares and your burdens and your concerns. He is the master. He has all power and he gives that power to men. O blessed be his name.

I've been talking about my Saviour's power. But before I finish tonight I want to talk for a moment or two about his cross. My sermon would be incomplete if I didn't talk about his cross. Billy Graham tells of a time early in his ministry when, after preaching one night to a great crowd in the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, Texas, and there was little response to his message. As he was leaving the platform a dear old saint came up to him and put his arms around him and said, "Billy, you didn't preach the cross tonight. Your message was good but you didn't preach the cross." The great evangelist went to his room and wept and made a resolve. He said, "O God, so help me, there will never be a sermon that I preach unless the cross is central."

I've talked to you tonight about power over demons and power over disease. Now I want to say to you that the most important message I can preach to you tonight is not that Jesus has power over disease and power over demons but the most important message I can share with you tonight is that Jesus died for your sins on Calvary's cross. And by giving his life a ransom for you, you can have heaven as your eternal home and you can have the forgiveness of your sins. You can know you are a part of the family of God. O I hope you experience a miracle of healing. I hope you witness some dynamic manifestation of God's supernatural power. I hope in your life or in the life of a friend

close by you will witness a cancer disappear or a paralyzed arm become strong and whole again. I hope you will. But if you never see or experience one of those demonstrations of supernatural power the important thing is that you have Jesus in your heart and you have his salvation. The greatest miracle of them all is the salvation of the sinner. If a sick body is healed, thank God for that. But that body is destined for the grave anyway. It is appointed unto man once to die. Miracles of healing, however wonderful, simply keep us going, sort of fix up the old automobile for a few more miles. But ultimately it's destined for --- Well, you know where, the old automobile. And these bodies sooner or later are destined for earth to earth, ashes to ashes. Thank God for the miracles of healing.

My uncle Alec, from a hospital bed, crippled with arthritis, God spoke to him and said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." My uncle told the attendants. Bring my clothes. I'm going home. God's power can make me well. I'm going to walk again. And he did. And he lived for long years and he didn't die of crippling arthritis. God healed him. I can talk to you from now 'til midnight about folks I've known, cases that I can individually prove and demonstrate the mighty power of God. O I know that Jesus has power to heal. I know that he has power to deliver, work miracles. But O the biggest miracle of them all is when a sinner finds the Saviour and when the Saviour finds the sinner and a name is written down in heaven and a sinner becomes a saint and a child of God and the old heart of unbelief is taken away and God gives you a warm tender heart of faith in the living God and heaven is your home and you have eternal life abiding in you. That's the greatest miracle of them all.

Have you received Christ as your Saviour? He died for you and now he says come unto me and I will give you rest. Now he says him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. Now he says whosoever is thirsty let him come unto me and drink. Will you come to Jesus with your troubled heart, with your burden of guilt, with your defeated life, will you come to Jesus?

Every head bowed please. Christian, pray with me, will you? Anybody else? Everybody else, you're welcome to join in.

Lord Jesus, I am sorry for my sins and I'm ready to quit my sins. I ask you to forgive me. I know that you died for me. And now I ask you to cleanse my heart and make me a true Christian. Thank you for hearing my prayer. By your grace I will live for you. I know that you believe that God answers prayer. You've asked him to forgive you. I just want you to thank him now that he's done exactly that. You've asked him to come into your life. I just want you to thank him that he has done exactly that. You say, "Pastor Barber, but I don't feel any surging tremendous overwhelming emotion." Don't worry about your feelings. God keeps his word. He honours his promises. He said *him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*. If you believe that God says what he means and means what he says and does what he says, then I just want you to thank him now that he's forgiven your sins. Will you do that?

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. You know, that's what it means when it says we're saved by faith. Faith takes hold the moment we just believe that God does what he said he would do and when we start thanking him --- I hear of people who tell me that they have prayed every night for years that God would forgive their sins. Yet I ask them if they are forgiven and they say I don't know. I hope I am. The moment of faith is the moment you just believe that God does what he said and you thank him for it.
Amen!