

Start Walking in Miracle-Working Power

We're called to walk in the same miracle-working power as Jesus did. And we will—when we understand the Holy Spirit anointing that's in us.

The word *anointing* today has acquired a broad meaning among believers. It is used to denote a general blessing, but we need not be too strict about it—providing that it does not convey a wrong piece of theology. It can speak of a prayer for help, strength, guidance and so forth. When people offer to give us “an anointing” by laying their hands upon us, for example, we need make no great objection.

Scripturally, however, there is no such thing as an anointing, only *the* anointing—the anointing of the Holy Spirit or baptism with the Spirit. *Holy Spirit* anointing is fully scriptural.

In the Old Testament all who served God had to be anointed. This is replaced in the New Testament by the Holy Spirit—given for all believers. “Anointing” is just one of the synonyms for the baptism in the Spirit used in Scripture.

The idea of anointing oil originated in the pouring of ointment upon Hebrew priests to ordain them for service. Theirs was a special anointing oil described in Exodus 30, used only for the Lord's tabernacle and priests. Kings of Israel were also anointed for service.

Most commentaries say Old Testament prophets were anointed as well. In fact, none of them ever were because they were never appointed—as if to an office—like priests or kings were. They were independent men of God, not socially appointed leaders. God chose them and gave them the true anointing with His Spirit. Nobody “made” prophets.

By divine command Elijah should have anointed his servant, Elisha, but he failed to. God Himself anointed Elisha with the Spirit. The true anointing is always given by the Lord.

Oils and precious ointments were emptied upon priests and kings as mere symbols or acknowledgments that God's Spirit had chosen to rest upon them. God was the originator, and such men were therefore called "the anointed of the Lord" or "the anointed of God."

The Anointing's Source

Today among believers the anointing comes through a sovereign act of God. The disciples and apostles were never anointed with oil. In the New Testament, all Christians received the Holy Spirit for their work of service. Oil was never poured upon Jesus except by a woman for His burial (Matt. 26:12).

Before the day of Pentecost, Hebrew priests were anointed and carried the fragrance of the oil with them; but since Pentecost believers instead carry the "Spirit of Christ." It was written about those who were in the presence of the disciples: "They realized that [the disciples] had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). They recognized from the disciples' lives that the true anointing had come.

As Christians, our anointing flows out of Christ's anointing, and we receive it only from Him: "Of His fullness we have all received" (John 1:16).

We may pray and lay hands on people to be baptized in the Spirit, as the apostles did (Acts 8:17), but we must realize that a believer cannot (and need not) give his or her anointing to someone else. The anointing comes out of Christ's fullness, not somebody else's fullness. I want my own anointing from God, not a secondhand anointing. To bestow "an anointing"—even as a temporary effect—is foreign to Bible thought. Jesus alone is the baptizer.

I once, by nothing less than divine leading, found myself far from where I should have been, staring at a house in Clapham, London. The nameplate outside referred to George Jeffreys, whom many consider to have been the greatest British revivalist since John Wesley.

This man had filled the greatest halls and pioneered, in the face of universal opposition, the glorious message of Jesus Christ as Savior, healer, baptizer and coming King. I could hardly believe it—I had just read one of this great man's books. Was he really there?

I dared to go and ask—and he heard my voice and invited me in. There he prayed with me, and it was as if his “mantle” had come upon me, to use a scriptural expression. God heard that man's prayer for me. I was already baptized in the Spirit—already anointed—but sometimes we lack language to describe all that God does.

I know that making contact with Jeffreys and hearing his prayer for me was a special experience. It brought me a sense of equipping and readiness for service. I had just that day left Bible college to begin my full-time service for God. God had called me to His work, and now this special experience seemed to cover me.

But “anointings” are not to be expected every time we meet a special evangelist or teacher. For me, it was one time only—after my call—when I met a man who had done the same work as God wanted me to do. Some experiences, which we may call anointings for lack of a better expression, may come as the assurance of God to a particular call, such as with Elisha.

As I have mentioned, the only people anointed were those selected for a particular task, especially that of priest or king. For them, the anointing was not a mere experience for emotional enjoyment. Nor did it signify that a special level of holiness had been attained.

The anointing came with their appointing—anointing and appointing go together. The anointing was given solely to equip and condition ordinary people to serve the Lord. It was not available apart from service.

Today the anointing is for all believers, for all are to serve. We are “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9). Note carefully, though, that anointing is not a kind of emotional pleasure. It comes into activity when we serve.

Any strong man does not feel his strength while sitting down; he feels it only when he exerts himself. David did not feel anointed in any particular sense, but when he faced Goliath he knew he was. Samson became strong only when he went into action for God, for it was then that the Spirit of God came upon him (Judg. 14:6)

We ought to particularly remember that anointing is likened to perfume in Scripture. Psalm 45:8 is often quoted to refer to Christ: “All Your garments are scented.” Scripture calls Jesus “the anointed One” (Dan. 9:25). Peter answered Jesus and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). Jesus is as exclusively anointed as He was exclusively the Son of God.

Everything denoted by the anointing of the Jewish tabernacle, priests and kings is fulfilled in Jesus. Christ is our Priest-King. He carried the purity and odor of heaven, that evocative and subtle beauty of spirit that makes Him the Anointed One, distinguished from all others.

He drew people, not merely by power or “charisma,” in the popular sense, but by love, moving in the atmosphere of His own holiness, which people had never breathed before. If we can put it this way, Jesus was God’s alabaster box of perfumed ointment, broken for us on the cross and now filling the world with His fragrance.

It is absolutely necessary to understand that the Holy Spirit

is “He”—not “it.” The Spirit is not an impersonal force, a sort of spiritual electricity. The anointing of God is not just power or gifts but the Holy Spirit Himself.

When Jesus healed the sick, it was not just sheer voltage power He wielded. It was also the power of His conquering love. He healed the sick by His stripes—that was the secret wonder of His anointing.

He healed a withered arm, even though He knew it would provoke men to plot against His life. He risked everything and went to any lengths, even to a Roman cross, for the sake of those who suffered.

Jesus had heartbreaking pity that forgot self and became so identified with the sufferer that He shared suffering in order to ease others’ pain. When some of us are willing to feel the same anointing of love that Jesus had, then perhaps fewer people will go unhealed. I know of no profanity worse than healing the sick in Jesus’ name to get rich, make a name for oneself or obtain the gratification of wielding power.

A New Anointing?

In Scripture God never anointed anybody twice. David was anointed of the Lord through the prophet Samuel. Later Israel’s elders did anoint him a second time, but that was to confirm their acceptance—not God’s—of his kingly authority. The anointing through Samuel was the divine anointing.

Jesus was anointed by God, not by John the Baptist or any other man. When the woman poured ointment on Him in Matt. 26:12, He said it was for His burial. Normally priests and kings had only one anointing, and it came at the beginning of their career.

But today some Christians sing, “Oh, for a new anointing!” and pray for “another Pentecost.” The whole concept of another (and a new) anointing—as if the original anointing had faded

away—is strange to New Testament thought of the eternal Spirit.

Perhaps you know Christians who talk about “one baptism, many fillings.” Some charismatics and Pentecostals do. Let’s ask a few simple questions about this:

When someone says that they have been baptized in the Spirit, how long does it last? A week? An hour? Six months?

Does the Holy Spirit leak away like power from a car battery? Is the baptism with the Spirit only one drink, and we need to go for another and another, like cups of tea?

Also, how should we know when the Spirit has gone and we need another renewal? For how long can we say, “I am Spirit-filled”? What signs are there when we are and when we are not?

The anointing renews *us*; we do not renew it. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of newness. And 1 John 2:27 says: “The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you.”

We can pray with our hands laid upon our friends to bring God’s strength and blessing, but we must not suppose we can “top up” a person with the Spirit each time, assuming the endowment they once received has died away. The Holy Spirit does not evaporate!

If we are doing the work God called us to, then the anointing rests upon us without ever becoming less. We receive it moment by moment, like a waterfall fed by a never-failing river. All that is usually necessary is that we release His energies by working in His name.

The anointing is not given to make us as conspicuous as Joseph in his coat of many colors, so that we “stand out.” There’s a TV commercial in which a young woman with a very bad cold, who cannot smell, sprays herself with more and more perfume. When she opens the door to her admirer, her perfume overpowers him

and knocks him down.

It is human to want overwhelming power, to bring an impact that everybody can feel. John the Baptist wore conspicuous clothing, a rough garb and ate peculiar food. This told everybody he was a holy prophet.

Jesus did neither. He dressed inconspicuously and ate anything set before Him. Many were awed in His presence, but it came from His concern and love for men and women—that is why they fell down and worshipped Him.

In ourselves, sinful and limited, we are utterly incapable, either by personal ability or holiness, of becoming the temples of the Spirit, but still we are His temples. We wonder and worship. When that mighty Spirit takes up His abode with us, then oils, hands or anything else put upon our outer flesh are only tokens of His indwelling greatness.

What I have tried to teach in this article cannot be learned like you would by studying for an examination. It must enter the heart and flow out in life—it must “take root downward, and bear fruit upward” (Is. 37:31).

The inward Spirit is seen by outward effects—physical indications of an inward and spiritual cause. To hanker for mere power in order to show off is corrupting, odious and not fragrant.

The real power of God comes only with the Holy Spirit, who reveals the loveliness of Jesus, the Anointed One, and His graciousness.

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