

Are You Resting in the Lord ... Or Sweating?

Here's an honest confession: I struggle to rest in the Lord when I'm doing His work. The apostle Paul told the Philippians: "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). It is a wondrous truth that God uses flawed human vessels to do His will. But He can't work through us if we are anxiously trying to do the job ourselves.

In Old Covenant times, God instructed the priests to dress in linen garments instead of wool so they wouldn't perspire while they worked. Ezekiel 44:18b says: "They shall not gird themselves with anything which makes them sweat." God doesn't need our perspiration to accomplish His purpose. He can't work through us if we are anxious, fretful or pursuing our own agendas.

He works through people who trust Him. Our job is not to strive in the flesh but to rest in the Spirit. If you want God to use you powerfully, you must learn the difference between the sweat of the flesh and the sweet oil of heaven. There is a big difference.

As I have prayed for more of the Holy Spirit's power in my life, I've realized that we often manufacture our own version of the "anointing" so it looks like God is blessing what we do. Often this is because we have a distorted understanding of what the true anointing of God looks like. We must discover the following truths:

The anointing isn't in numbers. We place so much importance on church size today, yet God doesn't seem impressed by crowds. I have nothing against megachurches, as long as they preach the gospel (and some of them do a better job of it than small

churches). But we're headed for disaster if we think seating capacity reflects God's approval. Stop striving to fill chairs and just minister to the people God brings!

The anointing isn't in eloquence. Some people have an uncanny way with words (including non-Christian motivational speakers), but persuasive skill isn't the same as spiritual anointing. The oil of heaven is holy; it brings conviction and repentance. True preaching doesn't exalt preachers – it crucifies them and focuses all attention on the Son of God. Stop trying to be a celebrity and just let God speak through your brokenness.

The anointing isn't in looks. In today's evangelical scene, we worship what's cool. Rock star pastors are expected to be sexy, and everyone in the praise team needs trendy clothes. There's nothing wrong with dressing to reach your audience, but I hope we don't think the Holy Spirit is impressed with hipness. The grandmother with orthopedic shoes might have a word from the Lord for the congregation – but will we allow her on the stage? Today, we need a demonstration of the Spirit more than we need a show.

The anointing isn't in technology. I love to use digital graphics when preaching. But some of the most anointed meetings I've been in were in poor countries where we didn't even have reliable electricity, much less projectors and big screens. When genuine anointing falls on a preacher, he or she can talk for two hours without having to entertain.

The anointing isn't in emotionalism. In many churches today, lack of anointing creates a vacuum that is filled by screaming and other forms of religious theater. It doesn't matter what is preached – it is "anointed" as long as the preacher punctuates it with enough volume and the people shout back. Remember: Backslidden Israel shouted so loud that the earth quaked, but by the end of that day the Philistines had plundered them (see 1 Sam. 4:5-11). The anointing isn't

determined by volume!

The anointing isn't in contrived manifestations. I love it when the Holy Spirit does miracles. But when people fake the supernatural in order to get an audience response (or a big offering), I run for the door. If we had the fear of God, we would never pretend to have the anointing by stretching the facts in a testimony, pushing people to the floor or sprinkling glitter on ourselves and pretend it is "glory dust."

Charles Spurgeon referred to the Holy Spirit's anointing as "unction," and he said this of it: "Unction is a thing which you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless." Let's turn away from every false form of anointing and ask God to soak us with His heavenly power.

Rest in the Lord. Pray and surrender your heart to His will. Trust Him to work through you. Instead of sweating and striving, relax and be a conduit for His powerful presence. {eoa}

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