

8. The Anointing of the Spirit

Grace + Holy Spirit = Power

Warm-Up Question: Have you ever had a task for which you felt ill equipped for, or you felt was beyond your capabilities? How did you handle this?

In 1977, just after I had become a Christian, I found myself among a group of passionate believers who genuinely loved the Lord. This close-knit group of believers had banded together to live in community and pool their resources. At first, this seemed like an ideal situation. As time went on, some of the members of the church began to question the actions of those in leadership. They preached one thing, but their lives, which were lived out in front of us, were in contradiction to the message they preached.

The spiritual gifts were still flowing in the meetings, but many of us sensed that there was deliberate manipulation at work, and we were concerned. Genuine questions were regarded as criticism and accountability was dissuaded by Old Testament teaching using texts, such as **"Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm" (Psalm 105:15).**

The false teaching they were espousing was that they, the leaders, were anointed, and the rest of the members of the church were not, or certainly not to the same "level." They were not to be questioned! The context of the verse they quoted in Psalm 105, however, refers to the time when Abraham was protected from harm at the hands of the King of Gerar (Genesis 20). They were taking it out of context. The Scripture, as they were interpreting it, was being used to stop criticism and accountability of the leadership.

As I continued in my own study of the Scripture, I came to believe that I was in a cult, and God led me out of that group, although I was saddened to leave some of my good and close friends behind in order to disconnect. It left me with questions about the anointing of God and how this anointing functions in the life of every believer. I believe God has anointed all of us since we all have the life of Christ in us as children of God. Jesus is anointed of God, so we carry His anointing.

I have observed, however, that there are those whom God seems to anoint for a task that carry His presence in a very powerful way. I have also noticed that there are times in my life that His anointing seems more obvious, more tangible. Why is this? What is this thing that we call the anointing of God? These are the questions that I will attempt to answer in this study.

In the Old Testament, it is certainly true that certain individuals were anointed with oil symbolic of the Holy Spirit's empowerment for certain tasks that God gave them to do. For instance, when Aaron was anointed High Priest, the anointing oil was poured upon him for this new responsibility, as it was with every priest (Leviticus 8:1-12). When a new king was appointed, such as David, it was a one-time anointing for his task as king (1 Samuel 16:13). Likewise, when a prophet was set apart for his ministry, again, it was a one time anointing (1 Kings 19:16).

It is not true, though, that the Spirit only anoints some Christians. Things changed when *the* Anointed One came. (The name, Christ, means “Anointed One.”) We now live in the age of the Spirit. In the New Testament, all believers have been brought into union with Christ and are anointed with the Holy Spirit (John 14:17). There is one worldwide Body of Christ where each one has differing gifts, which God has divinely distributed to us. We are to use these gifts to build up the body of Christ and to be the expression of Christ to this world. The body of Christ is a multi-faceted jewel reflecting different aspects of the life of Jesus empowered by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:10). There are differing levels of anointing and different gifts brought about by the work of the Spirit in you and through your responses to His leading. This is what Paul the apostle wrote:

¹²Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but **all its many parts form one body**, so it is with Christ. ¹³For **we were all** baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and **we were all given** the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴Even so the body is **not made up of one part but of many**. ¹⁵Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, **every one of them**, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are **many parts, but one body** (1 Corinthians 12:12-20 emphasis mine).

Paul is using the analogy of a person’s body, comparing it to Christians in relationship with one another. What is Paul trying to tell them about body life? What are we to take from this analogy in regard to how we treat each other?

Every one of us who are Christians have been baptized into the body of Christ and have an anointing to further the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world. Some have a ministry that is seen, such as an eye or a hand, while others play a part that is not seen such as the heart, or part of the blood supply—very needed ministries that are not noticed by men, but of course are seen by God. We will each have our reward in accordance with our faithfulness to the calling.

John the apostle writes to believers, saying, “**but you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth**” (1 John 2:20). He doesn’t say that some of you know the truth, but in his use of the word “all,” John is saying that all his readers know the truth because of the anointing of the Spirit that is upon all believers. In a few verses later, John says,

But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him (1 John 2:27).

In 1 John 2:20, we are told, “You have an anointing (*Chrisma*) from the Holy One.” As Christ is the anointed one, the One on whom the Spirit was poured out, so we Christians are anointed ones in the sense that we partake of the Spirit of Christ. Christ’s Spirit in us helps us to discern truth from error, the message of Christ from the message of Anti-Christ. Earlier in John’s letter, he wrote that the spirit of Anti-Christ was already at work in the early church. Already there were heretics in their midst who were starting to preach another gospel by denying that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and that He was God manifested in the flesh.

The good news, John says, is that the Holy Spirit teaches you! We already looked at this when we were examining the role of the Holy Spirit. The anointing of God within us teaches us by showing us what is true and what is not. The anointing helps us to separate, or discern, the false message from the true message. There is nothing “secret” that is kept from the average Christian and revealed to only the “inner circle.” That is what some teachers were doing at the time, claiming to have superior knowledge. Beware of people who have a similar attitude today, claiming that they have divine revelation, which is only to be shared with a select few.

We do not see the Holy Spirit functioning like this in the New Testament. The early apostles gave away everything God gave them. The statement, “We do not need another teacher because the Holy Spirit is our teacher,” does not mean that we have no use for Christian teaching from others; it means that a believer is able to discern and reject what is false by the witness of the Spirit of Christ from within.

The better we know the truth, the more easily we will be able to identify a lie. One thing of which we need to be aware in the days in which we live is just how rare it is for Christians to abide in the Word of God. Is it any wonder that people are led astray? There are so many voices to which we can listen with the saturation of books written about Christianity and spirituality.

When Chairman Mao of China initiated his great purge against intellectuals and against the church in 1966, he killed many of the leaders and teachers of the Bible, but the church in China wasn’t hurt by this; in fact, it actually grew exponentially as individual believers began to rely more on the Holy Spirit. If persecution and separation from other believers were to occur, I believe John in the passage above is saying that all you need is the Scripture and the Holy Spirit within to lead you into all truth. There is a “know-so” within when you hear teaching that is balanced and has a firm foundation. Have you ever heard teaching that does not ring true? Paul writes in one place, “**The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children**” (Romans 8:16). Paul also wrote to the believers stating: “**We have the mind of Christ**” (1 Corinthians 2:16). What that means is that we think in tune with the Spirit when we have a heart for God and His Word. The Spirit puts within us the desire to act and be like Jesus.

When you hear the word “anointing,” what comes to mind? How would you define it in terms of how you recognize a spiritual anointing when you see it in another person?

What is the Anointing?

Literally, the word translated *anointing*, or unction is the application of ointment or oil. We are told that when a person is sick, they are to come to the elders of the church and have them anoint them with oil and the prayer of faith for the sick person would make the person well (James 5:14-15). The application of oil is symbolic of asking the Lord to come and heal. The oil itself is not the healing property, in my personal belief. It is the Lord coming upon the person and healing him or her.

An anointing of the Holy Spirit is an impartation from God to man of a grace—gift of healing, wisdom, power, love, and creativity to enable people to extend God's kingdom as ambassadors on earth in the power of the Spirit, not of one's own abilities. When an anointing of the Spirit comes on a person, a task that before had been very difficult is now quite natural and much easier. When Moses was approaching burnout by trying to care for over two million people wandering for forty years in the wilderness, he was so tired out he wanted to die. God took that pastoral Spirit that rested on him and the wisdom he had acquired, and He imparted it to seventy other wise leaders. It wasn't something that man did; it was totally an impartation of the Spirit to the seventy. This was the beginning of the Sanhedrin:

Moses...gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and stationed them around the tent. ²⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do it again (Numbers 11:24-25).

The Gifts and Calling of God are Irrevocable

²⁹for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29 NIV).

²⁹For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn (Romans 11:29 NLT).

I like to think of the Spirit's anointing to be like a steam train. A lot of energy is exerted to get the train going, but once that steam train gets going, the momentum is greater. For most people it is a process of learning from the Scriptures what they have been given by God. Bit-by-bit they perceive the anointing they have received, and they begin to step out in faith and do what God has put before them to do. For others, the Spirit's empowerment is similar to a fast sports car. When God comes and touches some, they are off at a fast speed right from the beginning. If the Spirit has come to you in the latter way, be careful not to be so busy doing the work of God that you put off learning and growing as you meditate on God's Word.

There are some individuals that don't put any more coal into the boiler, and the fire can burn down low, but the train's momentum is so great that it keeps on going for some time until burn-out begins to happen. **The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out (Leviticus 6:13).** When you've run out of coal, some people put all kinds of strange fire into the boiler to keep the energy level up, but if it is not the fire of

God, it becomes the fire of the flesh. Even though a person has resorted to fleshly strength to get the work done, God will still work and honor those who have come in faith to receive something of the life of God—the gifts and calling of God are not withdrawn. One man has said, “If the Holy Spirit was taken completely from the Church, 90 percent of the work would go on as if nothing had happened.” We must be careful that we do not lean on the arm of flesh to do the work of God. **“Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the LORD” (Jeremiah 17:5).**

¹⁰The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and **irrigated it by foot** as in a vegetable garden. ¹¹“But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, **drinks water from the rain of heaven** (Deuteronomy 11:10-11).

The things of God don’t need to be pumped up. In the above verse, God was speaking to the Israelites through the prophet Moses, saying that in Egypt the pumping up of water with the foot watered the land; whereas, the land that God gives is watered from heaven. Of course, God is speaking on two levels through His Word. The things of God do not need us to pump up the energy level by any means other than by the Spirit Himself. I have been in times of prayer at large conferences where a leader has resorted to the energy of the flesh by trying to tip me off balance in the hope that I will fall back and make him look good. “Don’t resist the Spirit,” I have been told, when I have just taken a step back from being overbalanced. Listen, when God is touching and filling people, I want whatever He wants to give me, but not by resorting to the energy of the flesh. We don’t have to make God look good, He is good! It is not our job to manufacture what God wants to do. We merely invite Him to have His way and do our best to remove whatever would hinder the Holy Spirit at work (wrong attitudes, pride, unbelief etc.)

So you can heave a sigh of relief! It is not up to you to “work up” the anointing! The anointing is not a feeling, nor is our emotion or lack of emotion reliable indicators that the anointing is present. Some of my lowest times in my Christian life have been times when God has either spoken into my life or used me to accomplish something. We are tempted to use our feelings as a gauge to measure anointing. Think of Jesus in His life on earth. He was anointed for a task. When He was about to complete His task here on earth, He was at His lowest point emotionally. His soul was sorrowful, even to death, but He accomplished on the cross what the Father sent Him to do, and it meant eternal victory. He may have been at His lowest point emotionally, but He still chose to do the will of the Father. Emotions are not good or bad. It’s just that we cannot trust our emotions to discern spiritual things; we need to look at the outcome and fruit of a ministry or a person to see anointing.

The anointing is given for a purpose. When God anoints, He has a plan in mind. He has a job for you to do. When the Holy Spirit works, He works through people. That is how He has chosen to do His work. If that were not true, He would not need to use mankind, He could just finish the work and come and get us and wrap things up now! When the

Holy Spirit is working, He works through an individual. He uses our spirit as our spirits are one with Him. “The human spirit is the lamp of the LORD that sheds light on one's inmost being” (Proverbs 20:27). Just as electricity in a light bulb is conducted through electric wires, the Holy Spirit uses the spirit of a man or woman as a “carrier” to reach another person to touch another spirit. All of us who have received Christ have His Spirit. However, whether God can use us to carry out His purposes has less to do with our spirit and more to do with our willingness to act. If we are focused on other things, we will not be as sensitive to the Spirit of God.

Watchman Nee wrote a great deal about the “outer man.” Though I would not agree with everything he wrote, he knew about the inner man and the outer man, and he makes a good point. He states that the Lord is seeking to work from the inside, through the spirit of a man regenerated by the new birth. Satan, though, is attempting to work from the outside, through the soul. Nee believed that the “hard shell” of the outer needs to be broken. “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24). Nee’s thought is that, before any seed can bear fruit, it has to be broken open, and the life that is within the seed can then bear fruit. Just like the picture of the alabaster vial of precious ointment was broken when Jesus was anointed, sometimes we need to go through a process of brokenness before the life of God, that anointing of the Spirit within us, flows out to others. If we are prideful or have unbelief or hurt, God, in His grace, will take us through a time when He has to minister to us first before the anointing can break through and flow out to others. “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). God says He is near to those who are broken and to those who have a contrite heart.

When a person experiences brokenness, what are the possible results? How does God use this time for the benefit of the believer? Does this depend on the response of the believer?

This is why God allows some people to go through a terrible experience of brokenness—the Lord has His reasons, which are often way beyond our mind to receive. The Father wants to flow through us to touch others. We know this is true. What remains is giving Him permission and access to use us. That is our part of the equation. This brings us to another important point about the anointing. If you are a believer, the anointing of the Spirit is within us. It’s not something we need to reach outside of ourselves to attain.

How do I get a Greater Anointing?

How is the anointing that is on us to be increased? I do believe in receiving prayer and calling out to God in our dry spells. The Lord is not far from any of us. He is the great I AM THAT I AM, the all-sufficient One. You only need to call out to Him; He is the Helper that will come alongside of us when we are low and in need of strength and power.

³⁰Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly,

³¹Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; They will mount up

with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary (Isaiah 40:30-31).

The Hebrew word that is translated **gain new** strength is the word *chalaph*: it means to pass on or away, pass through. The thought is that of exchanging your weakness for His strength. Sandy (my wife) and I have had times of brokenness and despair in our lives at different things we have had to endure on the way to what we do now. When we have grown tired and weary, we have been brought to the place of crying out to the Lord for His enablement, His provision, and His power. We are no different to any in the body of Christ; we can all come to the God who loves us to receive of His supply, whatever our need.

Often before you ask for a greater anointing, you should sit down and ask yourself what you would do with more of the Spirit. The Lord gives greater responsibilities to those who really catch what He is doing and throw themselves into the work fully. His passion is to build His church worldwide, to see the whole body of Christ disciplined, equipped, and trained. This same passion is something that should burn in our hearts, too. He always gives more to those who love the things that God loves and hate the things that God hates. As you use what you have, you will find that God gives you more (Matthew 25:29). This is just a spiritual principle that holds true to whatever God gives us.

Elijah trained Elisha, but when Elijah knew that God was taking him home, he asked Elisha, his protégé, what he would like Elijah to do for him. His answer was for a greater anointing of the Spirit:

⁹When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?” “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” Elisha replied. ¹⁰“You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah said, “yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not” (2 Kings 2:9-10).

God is willing to impart a greater portion of His Spirit, but are you willing to walk in it and believe that you have received? When Elisha saw his master, Elijah, being taken up to heaven, there now was a walking out of what he believed. When he came to the bank of the River Jordan, would he swim across, or would he call upon the Lord as he had seen Elijah do?

¹³Elisha then picked up Elijah’s cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. “Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over (2 Kings 2:13-14).

I would ask of you as to why you would like a greater anointing. A greater anointing leads to a greater spiritual battle one enters into. Francis Frangipane, the writer and speaker, says that when one goes to a new level, he encounters a new devil. What he is

talking about is that a greater responsibility on you brings about a totally different level of spiritual warfare on your life. God wants to give, but do we have the necessary character base to receive the greater anointing?

There are those ministers of the gospel who have entered into a ministry beyond their anointing level and have found success before they are ready. There is nothing more dangerous to the spiritual life than this. A new level of fame and visibility brings attack from a different kind of demon. Every advance of the kingdom of God is challenged, so it must not be entered into lightly. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two disciples to minister in His name and heal the sick (Luke 10:9), they returned to Him telling Him of the way demons had submitted to them. Jesus told them not to focus on the fact that demons had reacted and submitted to them, but for the disciples to focus on the fact that their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:18-20).

With every level of leadership comes a need for a new level of character, integrity, and humility. Let God promote you and not you yourself. Some of you that read these words, will be powerfully used of the Spirit, but be careful for the enemy will challenge your advance and will suggest that you take onboard thoughts of pride. His thoughts are very subtle.

[Have you ever experienced a breakthrough after a difficult time in your Christian life? How did this breakthrough come about and what was the result? Can you attribute it to anything?](#)

Now there is also such a thing as impartation, and I do not want to give the impression that a greater impartation of the spirit cannot be given from one person to another through the laying on of hands (Romans 1:11). We do see this in Scripture, and I have been in meetings, or in a one-on-one meeting with another person, when I felt that a greater measure of the Spirit had been imparted to me. In my opinion, this has more to do with the joining together of our spirit to the Lord's and especially when we are with other Christians in a unified spirit. When we share fellowship in a place of humility and unity, God will often increase our anointing because it is His blessing (Psalm 133).

At the Vineyard, we speak about trying to see what the Father is doing and blessing that. That is because we want to work along with what God is already doing. Think of it in terms of giving the Holy Spirit a clear pathway in which to flow. Some of you reading these words are seeking a breakthrough in your own life. I would encourage you to cry out to God. Is there any crisis in your life, which you have found unsolvable?

Perhaps, it is a dry season in your life from which you want to be delivered? Ask the Lord for breakthrough. Do not be surprised if you sense the Holy Spirit speaking to you about something that He wants you to do. Perhaps, you need healing, and He wants to start that work in you as you are reading these words. Ask Him to come with His counsel and deliverance. To cry out to God can be a humbling experience. That is why we often resist it. We want people to think that we have it all together. You don't need to be loud, but it's ok if you are. It is not the volume of our voices, but the sincerity of our hearts.

However, there is power in crying out to the Father. “Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress” (Psalm 107:6). If you are in a group situation, I would suggest the group to stand and think about what their need is. Is there difficulty in your life? Is there need for a greater awareness of the Spirit, a greater anointing of the presence of God on you and in you? I would suggest you count to three and all call out in unison to God concerning whatever need you have. Call on the Lord with your voice.

Prayer: Come, Lord. Fill us with your Spirit. We cry out to you for more of your Spirit on your people. We need you!

Keith Thomas

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com

Email: keiththomas7@gmail.com