

Chapter Nine

Anointing

In Chapter Two I defined anointing as *God putting His seal, His approval upon a person or ministry, so that there is an eternal impact on the lives of those being ministered to.*

There is no question that He anoints some ministries and amazing results are seen which no man could have engineered. At this moment (in 1999) for example, there is a Reconciliation Walk taking place where small numbers of believers are retracing the steps that the Crusaders took nine hundred years ago. Those early *Christians* are remembered for the murder, rape and thievery that they conducted on their march across Europe en route to Jerusalem to set the Holy City free from the Muslims. Almost every Muslim or Jew they could capture was put to death. They sowed the seeds for the hatred and misunderstanding that the Muslim of today has for the Christian. The present day pilgrims have a very different agenda. Everywhere they go, they approach the Muslim leaders with a written apology which is read in Arabic, English and the local language. There are no strings attached, just a humble identification and recognition of the wrongs done so long ago under the banner of the cross. At the end of 1999, they anticipate arriving at Jerusalem with their message of repentance and reconciliation. The response of the imams and mosque leaders has been one of amazement and acceptance, some even likening the coming of these Christians as an *epiphany* - a public visitation of God to His people. National newspapers, television and radio have carried many positive reports to all the people of their countries.

There are men and women whose names are associated with this wonderful event but they are all eager to stay in the background as God moves upon the hearts of the Muslim peoples of Europe. Truly His anointing is upon this ministry.

I'm sure you can also think of ministries where God's pleasure is evident and where great eternal impact is being made. However, there are so many other programs, birthed not in the heart of God but in the mind of man. The initiator may be sincere and earnest in his commitment to this work - and God may give a measure of *success* to honour his faithfulness - but there is little or no anointing. I have even been part of large ministries where I saw so many examples of unethical conduct and humanistic thinking, all in the name of promoting the Gospel. Political pressure was brought to bear on people, jobs were threatened, circumstances were manipulated, half truths were told (they're no different than lies!), just so that we could continue our program without too many hitches. Souls were saved - isn't God's grace wonderful? - but then men believed that the ends justified the means, and continued to plan their next program on the same, shaky foundation. How much more of God's grace might we have seen if we had maintained integrity and humility before Him? There are many people today with large 'ministries' who would have been just as successful if they had initiated a secular business. The ministry is built on their charisma or business acumen, rather than on the charismata and unction of God. This is surely one of the key reasons why so many in our churches are superficial in their faith and failing to be the overcomers that Jesus calls, and expects, us to be; why so many churches and pastors are struggling and why the gates of Hell are

prevailing against much of what we call church; why such little impact is being made on the secular humanistic thinking of our governments.

We desperately need men, women and programs with God's anointing. ***Why should He anoint those programs which He has not initiated, and those people whom He has not equipped and released into the ministry in which they are involved?*** He has burdened people, has equipped them and is waiting for them to be released into His ministry so that He can demonstrate His glory through them in great anointing.

Sometimes it is not the laity who need to be released, but the clergy! I visited the home of Jim and Cathy, a young couple in Queensland, Australia. Jim was a consultant for small businesses who were thinking of expansion and who needed an expert insight into potential dangers of such a move. He told me how that for a few years they had struggled financially, as some companies would not use him due to his refusal to be involved in 'greasing the palms' of company directors. Jim and Cathy attended a church where the attendance rarely topped forty people. One year he and his pastor took a missions trip to Papua New Guinea, the nearest undeveloped nation off the north east coast of Australia. On returning home, Jim was exuberant in telling the stories of how the Lord had anointed their ministry, especially that of their pastor.

"Cathy," he said, "our pastor had a great anointing on him while ministering to the people of Papua New Guinea. The Spirit of the Lord wonderfully used him and many people came to faith in Christ. We need to send him there more often but I know that he cannot afford it and neither can the church at present. Can we stretch our income to put some money away each month, in order to build a fund for sending pastor on a mission trip more often?"

This they agreed to do. They would release their pastor into his appointed ministry. When Jim told me this story one year later, he added an amazing postscript. In that one year, his business had received income *ten times* what they had received in any previous year and not only had they been able to send their pastor a few times to Papua New Guinea but had also been able to fund several others from the church to accompany him in ministry! The work load for Jim was just the same but the companies that now employed him paid commissions far greater than he had ever received before. Not only was God anointing their pastor's ministry but He was also anointing Jim and Cathy's ministry of 'giving with liberality'.¹ Jim might never be a preacher or an evangelist but he has found his ministry and is greatly fulfilled, flying like the eagle.

Jesus was 'born of the Holy Spirit' unlike any of us who need to be 'born again' of that same Spirit so that we, like He, might be called sons of God. The Spirit of God dwelt in the man Jesus. Truly He was the incarnate Son of God. The *Word* (God's revelation of Himself) had become flesh and dwelt among us. One day, Jesus came to his cousin, John

¹ Romans 12:8

who was baptising people in the Jordan. His was not a baptism of regeneration, nor of public confession of faith, but of repentance and returning to the orthodoxy of the Law.

“Baptise me, John,” said Jesus.

“I cannot baptise *you*, Jesus. It is you who must baptise me!” said John.

“Baptise me, John,” Jesus said again, “So that all righteousness might be fulfilled.”

So John baptised Him.

“ and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove and a voice came out of Heaven, “Thou art My beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.”²

Immediately He was led *by the Spirit* into the wilderness where he was to spend forty *silent* days. They are silent only in that we have no record of what happened until He is tempted by Satan at the end of that time. Speculation does no harm unless we make it doctrine, but I have often wondered why the Holy Spirit should so lead Him. I have come to believe that the forty days were spent in communion with His Father, where He learned of the path that was set before Him, the journey via Gethsemene and Calvary which alone could purchase our redemption. He was given His *ministry*.

On returning to his home town of Nazareth, Jesus entered the synagogue, took up the Scriptures and read,

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because **He has anointed Me**
to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me
to proclaim release to the captives,
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are downtrodden,
to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord.”³*

... and this He began to do. He did not allow Himself to be sidetracked by the demands and wishes of others.

When John was cast into the dungeons beneath Herod’s palace, he anticipated that his cousin Jesus would do something about it. After all, wasn’t He going to set up His kingdom on earth? Wasn’t He going to overthrow the Roman empire with its Herods? Wasn’t He going to set the captives free? After a short time it became evident to the Baptist that Jesus was not going to come - indeed, He didn’t even send a get-out-soon card to His imprisoned relative! John called some of his own disciples and asked them to search for Jesus and when they found Him to ask Him this question. “Are you really the Messiah or should we look for another?”

John really must have been peeved at Jesus’ apparent lack of concern, for no one could have been more assured that John himself that Jesus is the Messiah. He had prophesied,

² Matthew 3:16,17

³ Luke 4:18f

had seen the dove and had heard the voice declaring Him so. Note the reply that Jesus sent to John.⁴

“Go and tell John what you hear and see.

the blind receive sight and the lame walk,

the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear,

the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.

.... and blessed is he who is not offended by Me!”

In other words, “I am doing exactly what I was called, equipped and anointed to do!”

If Jesus needed to be anointed to carry out His ministry, **how much more so do we?**

He was *filled* with the Holy Spirit from birth, but needed the *anointing* of the Spirit before He would start His ministry!

There is a major difference between these two experiences of the Holy Spirit, and we fail to understand it to the weakening of the ministry of the Body of Christ.

At the New Birth we were ‘baptised *by the Spirit into the Body* of Christ.’⁵

This first happened to the disciples three days after Calvary when Jesus came to them in a locked room and *breathed upon them*, saying, “Receive the Holy Ghost!” (Greek *aorist imperative tense*, demanding immediate effect). They were ‘born again’ as I was nearly two millenia later at the age of seventeen, when the same Holy Spirit entered my life. This is what we call justification.

John told the people of One coming after him who would baptise them with the Holy Ghost and fire. This had been the promise of the Father to which Jesus referred as He instructed His disciples to “tarry in Jerusalem until you receive power from on high”⁶. This first happened on the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Calvary, when the one hundred and twenty gathered in the Upper Room were mightily empowered when the glorified Jesus baptised them with the Holy Spirit. This baptism is *by Jesus into the Holy Spirit*. Clearly the Scriptures are speaking of two different experiences.

It is God’s will for every believer to be filled with the Spirit. This is both a crisis and an ongoing experience subsequent to conversion.

We are exhorted by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5: 18 to ‘keep on being filled with the Spirit’. Evidently, though the baptism (initial filling) of the Holy Spirit is a sovereign act of the Lord, we are responsible for the continuing filling. There is something *we can do*.

Paul continues with what are three evidences of the Spirit-filled life:

v19: a worshipping attitude;

⁴ Matthew 11:4-6

⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:13

⁶ Acts 1:4,5

v20: a thankful attitude;

v21: a servant attitude.

The rest of chapter 5 and most of 6, are examples of how to live out this Spirit-filled life in our relationships with our spouses, children and fellow workers.

Sadly, we have mistaken this filling (or baptism) with the Holy Spirit for the anointing of the Spirit.

The former is a filling - within you; the latter is an empowering - upon you.

The former is the equipping in preparation for service; the latter comes after releasing into service.

The former now depends upon our attitudes and openness; the latter is still sovereign.

There is a move in the church today, to once again recognise the ministry gifts of New Testament times such as the apostle and prophet. We have had no difficulty calling men evangelists, pastors or teachers but these other two recorded in Ephesians 4 have caused us some more concern. It is my belief that these ministries should be present in the church and evident by their anointing. Sadly however, I have been present too often when a speaker has ended his pulpit time by speaking out publicly, targetting individuals in the congregation with futuristic prophecies. Many of these have never come to pass and no one has held the prophet accountable for his wrong statements. As a pastor I have had to deal with several sad situations brought about in individual lives, by acting upon the prophetic advice of another. In Old Testament days, if the word of the prophet was not true, he was put to death! He spoke only when he knew he had God's anointing!

In parenthesis, I must commend the brother who had visited a town for ministry, leaving it with a strong word of a mighty outpouring of God's Spirit about to fall upon the churches. "If I were a pastor here, I would cancel my holidays" he said, "so that I might be available to the many who will come into my church in the coming months." Some pastors did just that, leaving their wives and children to go on holidays alone. However, as the year drew to a close it was obvious that nothing special had happened, so the local pastors' representatives sent a polite letter to the *prophet* asking if they had done something to divert God's blessing from their town. His reply was humbling, confessing that he had 'blown it' and had, as a consequence, cancelled other prophetic meetings for several months, placing himself under the discipline of his local church leaders. He asked for their forgiveness.

The best advice I ever heard about prophecy came from Floyd McClung of Youth With A Mission. He said, "if ever someone gives you a prophetic word, put it in the bottom drawer of your cupboard and lock the drawer. It was not given to you for present-day direction, but as a future encouragement." He went on to explain that, if the prophecy is from God, there will come a time when you may be in a situation where you need assurance. Then you will remember the prophecy which told you this would happen, with the result that you will have increased confidence that God has led you here.

The fulfilment of the prophecy is the only evidence of its anointing.

People are quick to claim anointing without regarding the cost of a lack of anointing. If false Old Testament prophets were put to death, one wonders how the Lord regards false New Testament prophets. How much of His best blessing do they forfeit?

A similar concern may be expressed about teachers. Paul constantly warned the early church about ‘false’ teachers, and how men would “*not endure sound doctrine but would want their ears tickled, accumulating to themselves teachers according to their own desires.*”

I have spent some time in Latin America where certain North American teachers are very popular, having many books and videos translated into Spanish and Portuguese. I have watched videos with my latino friends, where the teacher has made authoritative statements, not having biblical support. He makes five statements, the first three of which are biblically sound, but the last two are of his own imagination. His audience, however, are receiving all five as being biblical, and many pastors, not being experienced in personal study and biblical scholarship, are receiving this teaching as their doctrinal foundation. Influence a pastor and you influence a church - for good or for bad.

I have written earlier that the characteristic of an elder that differentiates him from a deacon is that he is ‘apt to teach’ (able and quick to apply the Word). An elder who teaches well is to be considered worthy of ‘double honour’⁷. His ministry is considered to be so valuable that the church places it above all others with ‘double honour’. Why?

Let us also add before answering the question, that elders (pastors and teachers) who fail in their ministry are to be disciplined in front of all the church!⁸ Double honour, double jeopardy. This does not apply to any other position in the church!

Let us return to the question. Why should a teacher receive double honour and not the prophet or the evangelist, or any other?

Let me suggest that the reason may be explained by the following examples.

If an evangelist does his work well, he will bring many new believers into the church. If he does his work poorly, he will add no new believers to the church. It is a *zero or many* result and is additive.

If a teacher does his work well, he will produce many disciples who will multiply themselves. If he does his work poorly, he will also produce many disciples, bad disciples who will multiply themselves. The result is many positive or many negative, both having potential to multiply.

“God has appointed teachers” wrote Paul. He went on to ask, “All are not teachers, are they?” We need teachers who are anointed by the Spirit to teach the hidden riches of Christ. Do not claim for yourself any of the ministry callings of the church such as pastor, teacher or prophet unless you have been released into such a ministry by others, recognising the evident burden and gifting you have received from the Lord. It is a dangerous thing to claim anointing where there is none. That is not faith - it is presumption, a sin.

⁷ 1 Timothy 5:17

⁸ 1 Timothy 5:20

There is a move today among disillusioned believers to start house churches. They are fed up with the hierarchal structure of their denominational church, believing it to be unbiblical and controlling. Sadly, too many of these churches end up in the same mold as the former church as authoritative, controlling 'leaders' come to the top. It is human nature to be controlling of those we consider weaker or less competent than ourselves. When the apostle Paul planted house churches in Asia Minor he appointed elders to oversee these fledgling congregations. That is a God-given ministry. The authority of the leader is not in his title but in his anointing as an elder. When he truly satisfies the Biblical requirements of an elder as found in Titus and 1 Timothy, there is great potential for that house church to grow under the Lord's anointing.