

## THE FUNCTION OF THE ANOINTING OIL

### **Before God, Anointing Oil Is Sanctification**

Leviticus 8 narrates how Aaron was anointed, and Leviticus also speaks of his subsequent ministry of offering sacrifices. Before David became King he too was first anointed with oil, by Samuel. Then he began to serve God according to the ministry God had given him (see 1 Samuel 16:12-13). All this clearly shows that ministry follows anointing. **For a person to have a ministry** before God, **he must first have received an anointing.** Even the Lord Jesus followed the same order: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord “ (Luke 4:18-19). So in looking through God’s word, we find that one who is useful in God’s hand must first have received an anointing from Him. If he has not been anointed, he can neither serve God nor work for God.

This matter of having the anointing oil may quite easily be viewed as an outward thing in the minds of God’s children. We may quickly link anointing oil with power, as Peter said (see Acts 10:38). It is true that anointing oil and power are associated together because God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. Indeed, the Holy Spirit and power are linked together, and the Holy Spirit is the power of God. Nevertheless, even though the Holy Spirit as power in man is the result of anointing, it is not all that God has in mind when He anoints. We should understand that the primary significance of being anointed is not that we have been granted power to speak in tongues or to do wonders and miracles. Rather, it is the fact that we have been set apart for God.

The anointing oil is mentioned many times in the Old Testament, but there we do not find it being linked with power. In the Old Testament, anointing has been one meaning; which is, that it signifies that the anointed belongs to God. Just as we say that such and such a book is ours and we stamp our seal upon it, so God says that this or that person is His and anoints him with oil. Anointing oil is applied to indicate separation: it is also to indicate sanctification: in short, it means that the person receiving the oil is being set apart to be entirely for God or to be holy for God.

This being entirely the Lord’s is the first condition of spiritual ministry. No one can have a ministry before God if he has not been sanctified unto Jehovah. In fact, only those who *are* set apart for Jehovah have any ministries. They alone can work for God. Whenever consecration ceases, work also stops. Whenever the “setting apart’ changes, then ministry changes too.

When the Holy Spirit came upon the Lord Jesus, the first consequence was not for Him to commence working; rather, it was the receiving of God’s recognition: “This is my beloved Son” (Matthew 3:17). This was the word spoken at that moment by God. Hence, anointing expresses God’s right of possession. Here is a person about whom God can say, “He is Mine,” about whom God can say, “He is to be sent and used by Me.” Only then do we see that there is power. Yet it is only natural that there would be power. And the result is that the poor shall hear the gospel, the blind shall see, the captives shall be freed, and the acceptable year of the Lord shall be proclaimed.

## **Anointing Oil Is Power Upon Others**

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then the Lord Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil. See again Acts 10:38. It says there that God anointed Him. What is this anointing? It is twofold: the Holy Spirit, and also power. This is both wonderful and precious. For the Holy Spirit upon *us* is the anointing oil, but upon *others* it is power. The power of the Spirit is discovered in others, but in you yourself it is the anointing oil. When the anointing is upon you, people touch power through you.

Consequently, **our consecration** before God naturally **produces power** upon others. So that the matter of power is not the first issue here, it is but the second. If the issue of *consecration* is solved before God, the issue of *power* on others is automatically resolved. Whenever consecration becomes a problem, power also becomes a problem. Anointing always gives power. This can be seen in David. This can also be seen in Aaron.

## **Anointing Oil Is Teaching in Us**

As you learn to serve God, you often discover one particular fact, which is, that when you stand up to speak, you clearly have the anointing upon you if you truly speak for God. You do not have to force yourself or to exert great strength in speaking. You know indeed that you have the anointing upon you. Your words are quite common and simple, and yet the more you speak, the more powerful are your words. You sense the anointing. And when you sense the anointing, others feel the power. On the other hand, sometimes when you are speaking, you feel like a blown-out tire. You sense no life and people do not find power. The difference is in the anointing. Where there is anointing, there is power. But when there is no anointing, there will be no power. Hence, anointing upon you yourself means quickening; in others whom you touch it means power.

“And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as the anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, abide ye in him” (1 John 2:27 mgn.). The word here is very comprehensive. The anointing shall teach us in all things. Divine teaching is vastly different from human teaching. Man’s teaching is very complicated, for it involves many reasons and many words. But the teaching of the anointing is not so. It does not tell you many, many things, nor does it use many, many words. **It teaches you quite simply by its presence or absence.** This is its characteristic. Suppose, for example, you today are going to do a certain thing. If this is of the Lord, then when you make a move, you have the anointing; and thus you know that this is right. If, on the other hand, this is something you should not do, you will immediately feel like a tire blown out. Then you likewise know that this is wrong. The teaching of the anointing does not employ or involve reasoning. To the contrary, were reasoning involved, our human mind would have to be replaced since our mind, being so inferior to God’s mind, has no way to understand His reason.

In view of all this, our sense of right and wrong must be judged according to the presence or absence of the anointing and not according to reason. All the children of God should learn a lesson here: in things pertaining to God we do not reason but look for a quickening sense from the Holy Spirit. Ofttimes as we attempt to do something, we can think of its reasonableness. But as we begin to do it, we feel as though we are accomplishing it alone since the Lord is not present with us. This indicates that there is no anointing. It also tells us we are wrong.

Take as another example your attempt to communicate to others. If you have no anointing, the more you talk the less the strength, and the longer you talk the emptier within. You sense an incredible dryness. On the other hand, if you have an anointing and a burden in you, the more you work the louder the amen inside you. You feel easy and light. You know that this is what God wants you to say and do.

Therefore, no child of God should make any move if he does not sense the anointing in him. Were he to move on his own, he would instantly feel dead. Without the anointing, the more active he is outwardly, the more chilly he feels within, and others cannot touch anything. But with an anointing, others can feel there is power coming out of him. So, then, the consequence of this anointing for God's servant is teaching and knowledge; and for others it is power.

Many brethren are seeking for power and many are seeking for life. The word of God tells us, however, that "death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Corinthians 4:12). All who seek life in themselves shall never find life, since it is death that works in us in order for life to be in others. Similarly, let us not look at ourselves to see if we have power. Let us simply ask ourselves, Do we have the anointing oil? Anointing in us means power in others. If we seek for power, power may not come at all. And if it does come, it will most likely be **only the external, miraculous and sensational kind of power**, not that spiritual power spoken of in God's word.

How sad that some of God's children are seeking a power that can be felt! They think if they are conscious of power, they have the assurance of being useful to other people. This is altogether wrong. For what we need to pay attention to is not power, but anointing. Do we abide in the Lord in obedience to the teaching of the anointing? Anything which is not done in accordance with the teaching of the anointing will not give life to people. We may say many words which please itching ears. We may even say many meaningful words. But without the anointing we will immediately sense there is neither spiritual reality nor life. Only when we ourselves have the anointing before God will people naturally be helped, touch life, and even touch the Lord himself.

There is another point we must take note of here. The anointing of which we have been speaking is not just for the individual, nor is it for an individual alone to experience. It is for the body of Christ. The precious oil which had been poured upon Aaron's head ran down upon the beard and came all the way down upon the skirt of his garments (see Psalms 133:2). Under such situation, you realize how good and how pleasant it is (see vs. 1). Consequently, we not only seek the teaching of the anointing in us individually; we also seek for the teaching of the anointing throughout the body of Christ. Believers do not receive merely the guidance of the anointing that dwells within them individually, they also receive the guidance of the anointing that dwells in the body of Christ. For there in the Body, the Lord orders and leads in many things. How, then, can we go against the anointing in the Body?

We can illustrate it in this way. A certain brother was scheduled to lead a meeting, but he felt empty within. So he asked another brother to take his place. On the way, that brother felt he should give his testimony. Ordinarily he did not like to give a testimony, but this time he did because the anointing in him felt that way. It so happened that evening that two friends who had not come to the meeting for quite some time were present. They had quit coming previously because they had heard the gospel a number of times but had failed to understand anything. That evening they were urged to come again, and the brethren were praying for them, asking God to give a suitable word. The result was that the brother's testimony, as guided by the anointing, was given especially for these two friends. This is an example of the teaching of the anointing working both in us as individuals and in us as a corporate body. Let us always remember that we can never sense God more than the anointing upon us. The measure of the anointing in us is the limit of our service to God. Any excess will cause loss. We can only keep within the boundary the Lord has appointed to us.

After we truly experience the anointing, we begin to know what the ministry of the word of God is. We come to know how to serve Him with His word. For when we have the anointing, we have His word. "Therefore, we serve God according to the anointing. It is God who causes us to notice what He notices. It is God who gives us word by which to serve Him and to serve His children.

Finally, I would exhort all you brothers and sisters here to consecrate yourselves thoroughly to God. All **ministries are based on consecration.** The anointing which God gives you proves you are His. With that anointing, you have the consciousness that you are His. You are the Lord's. With the anointing, you are aware of what the Lord wants you to do. And when you carry it out, there will be power upon other people. That power is not like the power we imagine in our mind which enables us to speak loudly in the pulpit or to perform wonders and miracles. No, this power enables people to touch life when you serve. This power is the result of none other than the divine anointing. May God bless us that we may abide in the Lord in accordance with the teaching of His anointing.

The Communion of the Holy Spirit by Watchman Nee