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The Anointing

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"Now He that establishes us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God; who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:21,22).

"And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all the things. And as for you, the anointing which ye received of Him abides in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true..."(1 John 2:20,27).

"Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him"(Acts 10:38).

The subject of the anointing may be especially appropriate to a time when many are reaching out in the interests of other lives and seeking, in one way or another, to influence them in relation to the Lord Jesus. But the matter of the anointing applies to *all* the Lord's people. I think it unnecessary to spend much time in pointing out or emphasizing the necessity of the anointing with the Holy Spirit. It should be fully and clearly understood that nothing of an eternal character is possible without the anointing of the Holy Spirit. No effort of ours, however sincere and earnest and well-meant, can ever accomplish anything in the interests of the eternal well-being of others, apart from the definite operation of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In this world, in this dispensation, the Lord has shut up everything to the Holy Spirit. But, on the other side, that anointing makes great things possible.

The Meaning of the Anointing

So we will not spend time over the necessity. Let us take that as settled, and spend a few minutes on the meaning of the anointing. Here is something about which we all need to be quite clear. There is

a difference between having the Holy Spirit within us, and knowing Him as the anointing. The anointing is the *active* aspect of the Spirit's presence with us and in us. Of course, they are not two different things. It is one Holy Spirit. But there are two aspects to this matter. Let us put it like this: The Holy Spirit has come and is here with definite, clear and positive purpose. He is the Spirit of purpose; purposefulness is the character of the Holy Spirit. He is always represented as being active, energetic, in the way of doing something. That is His nature, that is His character. The Holy Spirit has not come just to be here, and He has not come into us just to be in us. He has come with purpose, to fulfil purpose — not only in us, but through us. But it is possible for us to have the Holy Spirit dwelling within, and yet for Him to be latent. In many children of God the Holy Spirit, although present, is latent: that is, He is not active. In many Christians there are few, if any, marks of the Holy Spirit, signs of the energy of the Holy Spirit, or features of the working of the Holy Spirit, though they have received Him and are born again. It is strange, is it not, that such an one as the Holy Spirit can be present within, and yet be passive?

Now that is the aspect of just *having* the Spirit. But when you look through the Bible — and there is a very great deal about this in both Testaments — you will find that the word 'anointing' always relates to *activity*, to some phase or aspect of action — to ministry, to service, to warfare. Priests were anointed to serve, kings were anointed to rule, prophets were anointed to proclaim, and so on. Jesus was anointed to preach the Good Tidings (Luke 4:18), and to go about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the Devil (Acts 10:38). God anointed Him. You see, when you touch the point of anointing, you touch the very active aspect of the Holy Spirit. This works in two ways. The Holy Spirit is there; He is of that disposition: and yet He does not become active and positive until *you* do. Until you get into line with the Holy Spirit in purpose, He does not express Himself as the anointing. It is very important to realise this. The Spirit would be active, would be energetic, would be doing, but He will not do so apart from us. It is when we begin to be active that we discover the energy of the Holy Spirit.

Some of us were really Christians, were truly the Lord's, for years, but, while the Spirit was within us through new birth, He was latent — until that day came when we began publicly to testify, and then we leapt at once into an altogether new experience of the Holy Spirit. We found that the Lord was with us, and we began to experience the Lord. It was not at that point that the Lord came into our hearts, it was not at that point that our Christian life started. But there had been this latent kind of Christian life, until — what ought to have been right at the beginning — we moved out with the Lord, and we discovered that the Holy Spirit meant much more than we had ever known Him to mean. He was there, but it was as though He could not spring into action until we did; confirming this, that the anointing relates to action. It is the active aspect of the Holy Spirit.

It may be that you are in this latent state. There is nothing happening. You are praying that the Holy Spirit will do this in you and through you, you are praying that you may be used, but you are waiting, you are just waiting for something to happen, waiting until the Holy Spirit moves you. And all the time He is waiting for you. He is there, waiting until you do something. When you move, you will find to your surprise that it is not you doing it after all. Somehow or other you become one with the Holy Spirit, and His energies move in and take charge. Beware of the loss, the prolonged loss, that may come by that inactive aspect.

I once knew a dear man in the Navy, who was an out-and-out Christian. He visited many ports around the world, and he once happened to be in a certain port through the Lord's Day. He hadn't very much time to find a place where he could meet with the Lord's people, but eventually he found himself in a Quaker meeting. 'Now you know', he said, 'the Quakers always sit silent and wait for the Spirit to move; but, strangely enough, the Holy Spirit always moves me — and I couldn't keep quiet!'

He was a live wire! But I think you see the point. The Holy Spirit is an active, energetic Spirit, but He waits for us. Nothing happens until we 'gird up the loins of our minds' — until we move and commit ourselves. This is simple and elementary, I know, but it is so possible to have this passive and unsatisfactory life when we might be knowing so much more of joy and satisfaction. If only we would launch out into the deep, commit ourselves, we should discover that the Holy Spirit has not to come. He is already there, just waiting.

The Basis of the Anointing

What is the basis of the anointing? Do remember that the basis of the anointing is deep, inward separation. It is the inward separation from Satan's kingdom, with all that that means. Now Satan is referred to in the Scriptures, as to the position which he held before his fall, as "the anointed cherub that covereth" (Ezek. 28:14). He was anointed, somewhere, in high and holy responsibility; he was in responsible heavenly ministry by the anointing. It is a very profound and altogether incomprehensible thing, this anointing before the world was; but the Spirit of God was active, as we know, before this world order came into being. But here is one who was anointed for ministry. He lost his anointing, he lost his position and he lost his ministry, through pride — pride working out in jealousy. He lost it all.

The basis of the anointing is deep inward separation from anything which in its nature belongs to Satan's kingdom, especially pride. "Jesus of Nazareth" (that is the name of humiliation), "God anointed Him". Here is the empty One, the self-emptied One, who says: "I am meek and lowly in heart". God anointed *Him*. That is how we must approach the service of the Lord, or any ministry: in deep self-emptiness, deep humility and meekness, in deeply conscious dependence upon the Lord, inwardly separated from any ground that Satan could hold, that is his own. That is the ground, the basis, of the anointing. Meekness is the greatest essential in the activity of the Holy Spirit.

"Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). That surely relates to the activity of the Spirit, not to the Spirit as passive. You don't have to quench a fire if it is latent; you only quench it when it is flaming, if you are going to quench it at all. The Holy Spirit is active. We need to be very watchful, at all times, against quenching the Spirit. I feel that this is a word that needs to be taken to heart. There are so many ways of quenching the Spirit; I may indicate two. We can quench the active work of the Spirit by, on the one side, frivolity, talkativeness, lack of circumspection. How often the Spirit has been quenched and a great opportunity been lost because of excitableness, talkativeness, frivolity, unholy lightness in talk and behaviour, streams of empty words. The Spirit is so often grieved by that. "Quench not the Spirit". On the other side, it is equally possible to quench the Spirit by an artificial soberness, sombreness, heaviness. Some dear children of God seem to think that anything in the nature of joy is dangerous to the Spirit, to the spiritual life.

Now you see, between these two there has to be a balance: which means that the Spirit is the Spirit of self-control, or, if you like to use the word, the Spirit of balance. It is a matter of keeping the balance: joy and seriousness kept in equal measure. And that just means watchfulness, does it not? — that is, sensitiveness to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not going on with His work if there is something that is grieving Him. The way, therefore, for effective and fruitful service under the anointing is to be sensitive to the Spirit. We cannot be too sensitive to the Holy Spirit. There are so many things to take the keen edge off sensitiveness. And we shall need that, if we should at any time be seeking to help another, either to the Lord, or in their spiritual life. We shall need to be in an attitude of leaning hard on the Spirit; not to our own understanding, but to the Spirit; a silent but earnest prayer going on in our heart all the time as to the manner of our influence, the wisdom of our words; being very sensitive to the Spirit.

We have only to recall the example of the Lord Jesus, the Anointed One Himself — how, while not sombre or heavy, or artificially serious, but very natural, very balanced, capable sometimes of a really humorous touch, He was all the time so sensitive to the Father and to the Spirit. How apt and how fitting, how wise, was all that He said and did! And our passage in 2 Corinthians 1:21 implies that the same Spirit as was upon Him is upon us. The same Spirit is with us to do the work, if He has workmen who are adjusted to Himself. May the Lord give us to know the anointing in a very real way, where it is all the Spirit's work, although operating through us.