

(Needed-Men of God) 4. an Anointed Man

by Zac Poonen

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is the power of God that rests upon a person, enabling them to accomplish God's will and to bring life out of death.

Scripture: 2 Kings 2:13, Isaiah 10:27, Zechariah 4:6, Matthew 3:16, Acts 1:8, Acts 10:38, 1 Corinthians 4:19, 2 Corinthians 3:5, Ephesians 1:19, Philippians 3:10

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Anointing"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the importance of the anointing of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling God's will in our service, emphasizing the need for the Spirit's power to rest upon us. He highlights that the unmistakable evidence of the anointing is power, not eloquence or emotional displays. Poonen stresses the necessity of discernment in distinguishing true anointing from counterfeit manifestations, emphasizing that spiritual vision comes through the Holy Spirit alone. He challenges believers to thirst for the anointing, maintain purity of motive, and have no love for the world, in order to be part of a triumphant remnant that brings life out of spiritual death.

Transcript

Elisha took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; and he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha" (2 Kings 2:13-15).

These sons of the prophets were not gullible people. They were students of the Scriptures and knew their Bibles well, and so they knew what it meant to be an anointed man. They recognised that Elisha was truly one such man-one on whom the Spirit of God rested.

Their recognition of this fact did not come from listening to any stirring sermon that Elisha preached or any spectacular testimony that he gave of his experience. No. It was when they saw the power present in his life, when they saw him dividing Jordan as Elijah had done, that they concluded that he was anointed indeed.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential if we are to accomplish all of God's will in our service for Him. It is not enough that the Spirit of God indwell us. We must know His resting upon us in

power. Even Jesus Himself needed to be anointed before He could go out to fulfil His earthly ministry (Matthew 3:16; See Acts 10:38).

If our work for the Lord carries on merely because we have managed to make the right contacts in America and have therefore sufficient money to go our preaching the gospel and to pay our hired evangelists, then we are wasting our time. In fact, if there is any earthly explanation for our ministry, we might as well close down our Christian work and engage in some secular employment, for our labours cannot accomplish anything for the kingdom of God. Our ministry should be of such a character that there is no explanation for its continuance apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the only type of service that is acceptable to God.

There is a lot of confusion among believers today regarding the real evidence of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. But it is clear from this incident in Elisha's life that the unmistakable evidence of the anointing is power. Other evidences can be misleading but not this.

We shouldn't mistake eloquence, emotional exuberance, excitement or noise as evidences of the anointing. No, it is none of these, but power alone. It was power that Jesus Himself received when He was anointed (Acts 10:38). And it was power, that Jesus told his disciples, they would receive when they were anointed:

When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power (Acts 1:8).

It couldn't be clearer than that, could it? Not tongues, not excitement, but power.

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, who were mistaking speaking in tongues for the power of the Holy Spirit, he said,

When I come into your midst, I am not just going to listen to your testimonies or to your speech (whether in a known language or an unknown), but I am going to see whether there is any power in your lives. For the government of God the Holy Spirit is manifested not in mere words but in real power (1 Corinthians 4:19, 20 - Paraphrase).

And so, brothers and sisters, we should never be satisfied with the mere fact that we can speak well or that we have a wonderful testimony to relate. The question that we should ask ourselves is: Do we have spiritual power or not? Alliterations are no substitute for the anointing, neither is a dynamic personality or a spectacular testimony any substitute for spiritual power.

It becomes all too easy for us in a day of scientific advancement to depend on electronic gadgets and machines and various types of audio-visual aids instead of on the Holy Spirit. Where the inventions of science can be used for the spread of the gospel, we may certainly make use of them. But we need to beware lest all unconsciously our dependence gradually shift from the Holy Spirit of God on to these material things.

It is fairly easy to find out where our dependence really lies. If it is on the Holy Spirit that we are depending, then we shall go to God again and again in prayer, acknowledging our utter helplessness without Him. Do we do that? I am not asking whether we go through a process that we call "prayer" to ease our consciences. What I mean is: Do we cast ourselves upon God and seek His face in earnestness (with fasting if necessary) until we are sure that His Spirit does indeed rest upon us in power for the ministry that He has called us to? And this is no once-for-all experience!

If it is not gadgets, then our dependence may perhaps be on money. I am told that in a certain evangelical group in our land, there is a competition among the workers as to who can raise the most funds in public meetings. When a Christian organisation degenerates to that level, it becomes obvious what they consider to be the most essential things in their work. It reveals where their dependence truly lies. Money is the really important thing, and so they beg and plead with people in public meetings for money, before preaching the gospel to them. What a shame! Can anyone imagine Jesus doing that? And yet they say they are representing Him.

If such folk would spend even half the time they spend begging for money, in crying out to God for the power of the Holy Spirit, infinitely more would be accomplished through their labours.

Let me suggest a question that we can ask ourselves to test whether our dependence is on money or on the anointing of the Spirit.

Would we be as much disturbed if God removed the anointing from our lives, as we would be if our supporters cut off their financial support?

Alas, we are often more eager to check whether we have received our full monthly salary than we are to check whether the anointing oil of God is upon us or not. Why is this so? Because we feel that Christian work can carry on even without the anointing but not without money. Whether we say so or not, our actions betray our inmost thoughts.

When we compare ourselves with the early church, what do we see? They had no electronic gadgets to help them preach the gospel, they had no rich businessmen to back them financially and they had no acceptance in social circles. But yet they accomplished great things for God, because they had the one thing that was most essential, without which all else is valueless. They had the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Hence they succeeded where we often fail.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is the most desperate need of the Christian Church and of Christian leaders today. And I am referring here to the genuine anointing that brings power-not the cheap counterfeit that many are boasting of and satisfied with.

God's work-His real work-is still done, as of old, not by electronic power nor by economic might, but by the power of His Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6).

Discernment

I have already mentioned some of the subtle ways in which Satan is attempting to fool Christian workers in these days. His deceptions appear to be on the increase as the return of our Lord draws near. In such a day, how essential it is that we-especially those in positions of leadership in the Christian Church-have the gift of discernment, to distinguish what is truly of God from what is not, the real from the counterfeit, and also to know what is God's highest purpose for His Church in our day.

Yet discernment and spiritual vision come through the anointing of the Holy Spirit alone. They do not come through human cleverness or intelligence or even through seminary training. It has pleased the Father to hide these things from the wise and the prudent and to reveal them unto babes-to those who depend on Him helplessly, acknowledging, "Lord, although we are clever in many things we are stupid when it comes to spiritual matters."

Jeremiah, in his day, had the discernment to see through the superficial revival that took place in Judah during King Josiah's reign and prophesied that God would send His people to Babylon. Ezekiel, similarly, was able to see the real reasons why God had to send His people into the Babylonian captivity. The reason why these men were able to see what the other professional religious folk of their day could not see, was just this that Jeremiah and Ezekiel had the anointing of God upon them.

With very few exceptions, conditions in most churches today are exactly similar to the conditions prevalent in the midst of God's people in the days of the Babylonian captivity. We need men of spiritual vision in such a day; and if the leaders among God's people lack spiritual vision in this crucial hour, the people will most certainly disintegrate (Proverbs 29:18).

Oh how desperately we need the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed the supreme essential for our work in the Lord's vineyard today.

The Name of Jesus

Elisha, we read, smote the waters of Jordan with Elijah's mantle. If we consider Elijah here as a type of Christ taken up to Heaven and Elisha as a type of the Church left behind on earth to carry on His ministry, then the mantle of Elijah must be a picture of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that He has committed to His Church. Jesus has given us the way, just as Elisha used the mantle to make a way through the River Jordan.

However, it is not just a matter of repenting the Name as though it were some sort of magic charm. Many use His Name in that way, but nothing happens. There is no manifestation of power and no removal of the mountains that block up the way.

Gehazi once took Elisha's staff and under instructions from Elisha, laid it on a dead child. He may also have at that time cried out in an authoritative manner, "In the Name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, arise from the dead." But nothing happened.

God doesn't just listen to the words that a man says. He looks at his heart. The power of the words depends on the type of man that uses them. God knew that Gehazi's heart was not set on the glory of God but on the world and on personal gain.

Elisha's heart was different. He sought God's glory alone and so God could commit His authority to him. And so when Elisha prayed, the dead child arose immediately. When he smote the waters of Jordan with the mantle, they parted into two.

I have met people who use the Name of Jesus and keep on repeating it (sometimes at the top of their voices), but nothing happens. They have reminded me of the prophets of Baal who shouted and screamed on Mount Carmel. The kingdom of God is not manifested in mere words (no matter how loudly or how authoritatively spoken), but by power. If Elisha had not been an anointed man, he could have hit the waters as hard as he liked, with the mantle, but nothing would have happened. It would have been just a waste of time and energy! The anointing of the Spirit is indeed essential if we are to use the Name of Jesus with real power.

In Acts chapter 3, we find Peter using the Name of Jesus; and God's power was manifested. The lame man began to walk. It was so obvious a miracle that no one had to go around showing people the man's medical reports in order to convince them that he had been healed. There was nothing uncertain or shady

about that miracle. There was no doubt left in anyone's mind as to whether or not a miracle had actually taken place-as is so often the case with "miracles" wrought by some 20th-century healers!

We find right through the Book of Acts, the disciples using the Name of Jesus again and again to remove every obstacle that came in the way of their fulfilling God's purposes. They really knew the anointing. And that's why the Acts of the Apostles ends with the "unhindered" (New American Standard Bible). The gates of Hell could not stand against such a powerful Church.

Resurrection Power

Elisha dividing Jordan is symbolic of a ministry of life that conquers and overcomes spiritual death. The waters of Jordan, in the Bible, are symbolic of death. And the parting of the waters is therefore symbolic of triumph over death.

In the ministry of Elisha, from this point onwards, we find him engaged again and again in bringing life out of death. In Jericho, he brought life into the barren land there. In Shunem, he brought life into the barren womb of a woman. Later, he brought life into a dead child. He once brought life into a pot of deadly food. He ministered life to a leprous general's dying body too.

Elisha's power never faded away. Even after he was dead and buried and his body had disintegrated, when a dead man was thrown into his grave, the dead man arose! This was Elisha's ministry-bringing life out of death wherever he went. This was a direct result of his being anointed.

This is the type of power that the anointing of the Holy Spirit brings-power to bring life out of death, resurrection power. This alone is the unmistakable evidence of the anointing. We read of this power often in the New Testament. Paul writing to the Ephesian Christians, says that his prayer for them is that they may know this power. He goes on to tell them that the greatest manifestation of God's power was not in creation nor in the miracles recorded in the Bible, but in the raising of Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-23). Writing to the Philippian Christians. Paul tells them that his own desire is that he may know more of this resurrection power (Philippians 3:10).

This, I am convinced, is the power that Jesus said His disciples would receive when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8) - resurrection power, the power to bring life out of spiritual death. And God desires to communicate this to us too.

This, brothers and sisters, is the mark of the anointing. Not some experience, not some utterance, but the power to bring spiritual life out of death wherever we go. Is our ministry accomplishing this? This is the acid test whether we have the anointing or not.

Alas, so often Christians, instead of ministering life are ministering death. The heathen in our land are so often driven away from the Lord instead of being drawn to Him, because of the bickering and quarrels, the lack of integrity and other un-Christlike habits that they see in the lives of those who profess to be born-again Christians. How we need to humble ourselves before God and ask for His forgiveness for bringing reproach upon His Name by our behaviour.

Let us not glory merely in the fact that we are "evangelicals." If we are not careful, we can end up like the church in Sardis, having a name that we are alive but in reality being dead (Revelation 3:1).

It is not enough that the creed we repeat and the statement of faith we sign are Scripturally sound. We may be able to sign the most fundamental statement of faith. So can the Devil! He knows the Bible well and so he is no modernist. He is a thorough fundamentalist as far as doctrines go! It is not much use therefore taking credit merely for our fundamentalism.

Doctrines are important. God forbid that I should decry their value. But over and above doctrine, the thing that counts with God is whether we are ministering spiritual life or not.

The Apostle Paul could say that through God's help, he was an able minister of the New Testament, ministering spiritual life (2 Corinthians 3:5, 6). He didn't just boast that he was a fundamentalist. Neither did he merely talk of his experiences-either the Damascus Road one or the Straight Street one. No. He demonstrated the reality of his fundamental beliefs and of his spiritual experiences by constantly bringing life into situations of spiritual death.

In Paul's life, as in Elisha's, there was no fading away of the power. There was no losing of the anointing in later years, as seems to be the case with so many servants of God in our day. Paul and Elisha never came to a stage where all they could do was to glory in what God did in days of yore. They constantly lived in the present enjoyment of the anointing and of God's power. Their spiritual strength instead of waning, waxed more and more. As their days, so was their strength. Their light shone brighter and brighter until the perfect day. What a blessed way to live! And yet this is the path that God desires all His children to walk in (Proverbs 4:18).

Elisha lived in constant touch with God and this was why he was always able to bring life out of death wherever he went. And so people came to him with their problems and their needs. He didn't have to go looking for a ministry. He didn't have to go around asking people to sponsor him and to invite him. No. Opportunities for ministry came to him in abundance, without any fleshly efforts on his part.

It was the same with John the Baptist. People from Jerusalem and from all the state of Judaea and from all the regions around Jordan travelled long distances to listen to him-even though he never advertised himself and never did a miracle.

These men were anointed and they lived constantly under the anointing. That was the secret. Nothing else.

But if the anointing of the Spirit is so important, why doesn't God give it to all His children? The reason is just this that very few among them are willing to pay the price to receive it.

There were reasons why Elisha was anointed, and I can think of at least three.

Thirst

No one can doubt the fact that Elisha thirsted for the anointing. He coveted it more than anything else in the world.

In 2 Kings 2:1-10, we read how Elijah tested him on this point. He first told Elisha to stay on at Gilgal, while he himself moved on. But Elisha refused to leave Elijah. Then Elijah led him 15 miles west to Bethel, and then 12 miles back to Jericho and then a further 5 miles east to Jordan, testing Elisha's persistence and earnestness at each stage. Finally, Elijah asked him if there was any one request he could grant him before he left. And Elisha said,

I want only one thing. That is why I have been following you all this time. That is why I wouldn't leave you, even when you tried to shake me off. I want a double portion of your spirit.

Elisha longed for the anointing with all his heart. He wasn't going to be satisfied with anything less. And he got what he asked for.

I believe God often leads us, as Elijah led Elisha, to test us, to see whether we are going to be satisfied with anything less than the full anointing of His Holy Spirit. If we are going to be satisfied with anything less, we shall have only that much. God does not give this anointing to the smug and complacent believer who thinks he can get along very well without it.

But if we realise that this is the one thing we need above all else, if like Elisha we are willing to follow on until we have it, if like Jacob at Peniel we can say in sincerity,

"Lord, I will not leave You until You bless me with this blessing,"

if we really crave for and covet this power of the Holy Spirit, this resurrection power, then we shall indeed receive it. Then we shall truly be Israels, having power with God and with men.

God often allows failure and frustration to come into our lives just to show us how much we need this anointing. He seeks to make us realise that in spite of being evangelical in doctrine and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we yet need to know the Spirit of God resting upon us in power.

It is no easy matter to have the anointing. When Elijah heard Elisha's request, he didn't tell him, "Oh, that's an easy thing you've asked for. You just kneel here and I'll lay my hands on your head and you'll get it." No. Elijah told Elisha, "You have asked for a hard thing." Yes, it is a hard thing. We have to pay a price for it. We must be willing to forsake everything in the world for it.

We must covet the anointing more than anything else on earth—more than money and comfort and pleasure, and more than fame and popularity and even success in Christian work. Yes, it is a hard thing indeed. But this is what it means to thirst. When we reach that stage, we can go to Jesus and drink and, as the Scripture has said, rivers of living water will then flow through us in many directions bringing life out of death wherever they flow (John 7:37-39; Ezekiel 47:8, 9).

If we have received the anointing, we must be careful not to lose it at any cost. We can have it and then we can lose it, if we are not careful. Let us indulge in unkind criticism or in loose conversation or in unclean imaginations, or let us harbour pride or a grudge in our hearts, and the anointing is gone.

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:27 that he kept the members of his body severely disciplined, lest after having preached to others he himself be disapproved. I believe he was referring here to the possibility of his losing, not his salvation, but the anointing. I have never ceased to marvel that the mighty apostle Paul, after establishing so many churches, doing so many miracles and being so mightily used of God, yet stood in danger of losing the anointing if he were careless, then where do we stand?

We need constantly to pray, "Lord, whatever else I may lose in life, never let me lose Thy anointing."

Purity of Motive

A second reason why Elisha was anointing was that his motives were pure. The glory of God was his only concern. This is not stated in so many words anywhere, but it becomes very evident as one reads the

record of his life. The need among God's people was so great and the reproach upon God's Name hurt him, as it had hurt Elijah before him. And he yearned to be anointed in order to fulfil a ministry for God in that land that would remove the reproach upon that glorious Name.

Impure and self-centred motives are often the reason why many of God's children are not anointed. Most Christians are happy if they are right outwardly, but God seeks truth in the inward parts. He sees whether we are concerned about His glory or our own. He sees whether the reproach upon His Name hurts us or not. If our hearts are not burdened and hurt as we see the Name of God being reproached in our land today, then I wonder whether God will ever anoint us at all.

In Ezekiel 9:1-6, we read of God marking out certain people as peculiarly His own. The ones He marked out were those who wept and sighed at the sins they saw among God's people. These constitute God's remnant and these are the ones He anoints-those whose hearts are concerned about His Name and who seek to glorify Him alone.

No Love for this World

A third reason why Elisha was anointed was that he had no love for this world. This becomes evident in his dealing with Naaman. When the latter offered him money, he refused to take any payment for the miracle he had performed. Elisha had no love for this world or for money, He didn't seek personal gain in the Lord's work.

Gehazi, on the other hand, provides us with a striking contrast. He was Elisha's assistant even as Elisha had been Elijah's. And if Elisha could have received a double portion of Elijah's spirit and carried on Elijah's ministry, surely Gehazi too might have been able to receive Elisha's spirit and carry on Elisha's ministry. But he didn't get the anointing. He got leprosy instead. Why? Because God saw his heart. Despite all the outward appearance of being spiritual, there was deep down in Gehazi's heart a desire for personal gain. He may have entered the Lord's work sincerely at first, but very soon he began to think in terms of material advantages too. He thought he could accumulate material wealth as well as receive the anointing. But he was mistaken. Many Christian workers have made the same mistake.

May the Lord deliver us from ever trying to use our position or our ministry in any church or Christian institution as a means of personal gain.

An unbeliever once told me that he had observed that it appeared to be quite a profitable thing nowadays to be in Christian work. He quoted the example of a certain Christian worker, who hadn't been too well-off when he was in secular work. But now he had such abundance. He was getting pots of money from America. He had built his own house and was now living in such luxury. And on top of all this he was an evangelical too, assured of a place in Heaven. Surely such men are not serving God.

When Christian work brings material profit to us, brethren, we have to examine our lives again and see whether we are really following Jesus. Usually we will find we are not.

Watchman Nee has said that if in our going out for God there is no cost involved, no sacrifice made, then we have to question seriously whether our call is really from God.

Let us ask ourselves whether there is any love for the world and for its pleasures and comforts and riches in our hearts. God cannot anoint us if there is.

A Triumphant Remnant

God is looking for men and women in our land today whom He can anoint with His Spirit—a remnant that is willing to pay the price to receive and restrain that endowment of power.

The waters of Jordan symbolise to us today, the spiritual death that is enveloping our land through the working of the powers of darkness. God is looking for a triumphant remnant among His people who will go through this and bring life out of death. He is seeking for a people who will use the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to put to flight the forces of the Enemy and who will go through every obstacle unhindered; people who will make a way through every Jordan and raise up a highway for our God in this land. Then we shall see the longed-for revival in our churches, and the heathen will know that our Lord is indeed the true God.

The anointing alone can break the yoke of the Enemy in our land (Isaiah 10:27). The Name of Jesus has been committed to us. But do we have the anointing?

Oh, that we might thirst for the power of the Holy Spirit in our life and our ministry, so that we may glorify God, fulfil His will and bring in His kingdom.

May He find in our midst, many who are willing to pay the price involved in becoming holy, humble and anointed men and women of God. Amen.

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