

THE ANOINTING DIVINE

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Chapter 1: The Promise of the Father

*'O, to be like Thee, Lord, I am coming
Now to receive the anointing divine!'*

That last clause might well be taken to compass and cover what we are going to consider at this time — the anointing divine. We will look at some fragments of Scripture:

"And behold, I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

"And, being assembled together with them, He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said He, ye heard from Me; for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:4).

"Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:13).

You will have noted that the coming of the Holy Spirit is so frequently referred to as "the promise of the Father", and if you study the contextual references to that phrase, you will find that the gift of the Holy Spirit was a promise with a very long history — that is, it dates right back to Abraham. In this one fragment Paul stated quite clearly and definitely that the promise made to Abraham would have its fulfilment by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

That promise of God was repeated again and again through the Scriptures, and it revived, or had a special emphasis, in the prophets. You will find Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Zechariah all have something quite strong to say about the coming of the Spirit or the Day of the Spirit.

"The promise of the Father" was a long-standing promise, and therefore, a long-standing hope. The point, of course, which is so impressive, is this, that while Christ is the central and supreme figure in all the Scriptures, all the meaning and value of Christ, in every respect, was only made effective here by the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself said that would be so: If He "did not go away, the Spirit would not come"; it was "expedient that He should go away" for that very reason, surely indicating and implying that all that He had come to do, and did, waited for its practical effectiveness in the coming of the Spirit. Christ's life, Christ's work, and Christ's power as Son of Man here, was dependent entirely upon the anointing. He fulfilled all His ministry in dependence

upon the anointing, by all that the anointing meant. It was true in His case, and the Word of God bears that out abundantly, it must be all the more true, certainly equally true, in the case of the church; that the church's life and work, ministry and power rest solely upon the anointing of the Holy Spirit. And what is true of the whole, is true of every part, every individual. We may have everything that Christ has said and done; we may have it all, but it means nothing without the anointing. That, of course, is well-known from the fact that He had given His teaching in great fullness; He had done His mighty works; He had lived His wonderful life; He had died His tremendous death; He had risen again in triumph over death. (And we might think that is enough to get on with, and to go out with), but at that very point, with all that present, He says: "Tarry": 'don't go yet; depart not from Jerusalem yet; wait, that is not enough!' "... till the Spirit come". That is tremendously impressive.

That is where we begin; it is not fresh light, I am aware of that, but we must be impressed, I feel, more than ever, with the tremendous thing that has happened in the giving of the Holy Spirit. I trust that that is what we are going to be impressed with more than ever in these chapters.

The Holy Spirit Given by the Father to the Son

The next thing for us to note is that the Holy Spirit was given by the Father to the Son on the completion of the whole cycle of redemption. He left the glory: He came 'out of the ivory palaces'; "He emptied himself"; He laid aside His garments of glory; He came here and accepted the situation of a bond-slave, the fashion of a man; carried through His great mission, and completed redemption; and returned to the Father, carrying with Him that completed and finished work. At that time the Father, according to these words, gave Him the Spirit: "Being therefore, at the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit ...". The giving to the Son of the Holy Spirit therefore was God's seal upon a finished work. If therefore, you or I are to come into the good of the Holy Spirit as God's gift to the Son, it will be God's gift to faith in Christ and His perfected and finished work. That is a statement of fact, but it is also a challenge.

So many of our lives are powerless and bring little honour to the Lord. We are weak and deficient not because He has not provided the Holy Spirit to make it otherwise, but because we are not resting fully and finally upon a perfected work done by the Lord Jesus. Put in another way, while we are in doubt or are in any way weak as to this matter of Christ's perfected work of redemption, the Holy Spirit stands back. It is a terrible thing for a Christian, who is really an heir of the Holy Spirit, not to be living in the good of the gift of God, the promise of the Father. Settle this whole matter, that there is nothing more to be done, "He has by one offering, perfected (made complete for ever!) them that come unto God by Him" and you have cleared the way for the Spirit. Live in

any other way that raises a question about that — uncertainty about your redemption, your salvation, your acceptance, which means raising a doubt as to whether Christ has done it all, and the Spirit stands with a veil over His face, grieved. That is a terrible state to be in.

And so I repeat that the Holy Spirit was given to the Son as the Father's seal upon the accomplishment of the entire circle of redemption, and the Holy Spirit is given to us, abides with us, and makes His presence real with us when we rest upon the ground of God's giving of the Spirit to His Son — the work finished!

The Spirit of Sonship

Then we go on. The next thing we note is the *particular* significance of the gift of the Spirit. "And coming up out of the water, and praying, the heaven was opened, and a voice came out of heaven, saying, "Thou art My beloved Son." The particular significance of the gift of the Spirit is that He is given as the Spirit of sonship. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." It is true in the case of Christ Himself as Son of Man. In His incarnation, the Holy Spirit indicated by coming upon Him that He was God's Son, that *this* One is marked out in sonship; it is true of Christ Himself. It is true in the same way of the believer. It is by the receiving of the Holy Spirit that we receive sonship. We are born into the family; we are marked out as sons of God. The Spirit of sonship — we have more to say about that later. For the time being, let us note what that indicates. It does represent a momentous thing in the history of this creation; it represents and indicates no less a thing than God restarting a divine family, of which Christ is the first. Think of that! God restarting a divine family.

The first Adam was created by God, put on probation by God, but was never adopted. Adoption comes by way of fulfilled probation to the satisfaction of God. The Last Adam was born, probationed, and adopted! The giving of the Spirit to Him was the adoption, that is, the attesting of Him as God's Son. So the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption and He is called in the Word the Spirit of adoption. That means, in this family which God has recommenced in His Son (a tremendously significant thing in the history of this whole creation) God has started over again to build a divine family — sons of God.

Paul makes a tremendous thing of that, as you know, in his letter to the Romans. He says the whole of this old, fallen and cursed creation groans and travails in pain. What is it groaning for? "Waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God". "And we who groan within ourselves, are waiting for our adoption." That is, those who are sons shall be manifested.

So the Holy Spirit is the seal and sign of sonship, of membership of the family, of being in this new thing that God is doing, of which He is, in a peculiar sense, the Father. It gives new emphasis, significance, to the very words used: "the promise of", not God,

but “the Father” — “the promise of the Father”, implying sonship in its fulfilment, carrying with it sonship, when the promise is fulfilled. It is all so bound up together as a whole.

The church is Christ in a corporate way. Paul says in 2 Corinthians: “We are anointed in Christ ... and (God) has anointed us in Him.” The church is in Christ, is Christ corporate, by the Holy Spirit. And so, the Holy Spirit coming brings us into the Body of Christ, and it is in the Body of Christ that sonship is attested by the Holy Spirit.

Adoption Into God’s Family

Further, all the divine values and interests are bound up inseparably with sonship. Be very clear about that. Let me repeat, all the divine values and interests are bound up with sonship. It is the one thing that God has ever had in His heart, in His mind, in the creation and existence of man. God has vested all His interests in sonship. This matter of sonship is immense in its significance. There is no greater and higher thought in this universe than sonship. That brings us back to the beginning and I would that we recognized it in a new way, to take account of the tremendous significance of a new birth, of one person being born anew into the family, receiving the Spirit, and entering into sonship. It is what Christ came for and He leaves us in no doubt whatever as to its meaning and significance. He will repeat three times over: “There is joy in heaven among the angels over one sinner that repenteth.” He will put into the balances all the traditions and oracles, the visions, the prophets and the law, and all that has been in the Old Testament, on the one side, and on the other: “You must be born again.” And that all goes for nothing if this is not true (and that is not a small ‘all’). No, this is what Christ came for, to bring this family into being through adoption. That is the mighty work of the Holy Spirit, to bring about the birth into this family.

It is no small thing for one to be born again. This is a matter which has suffered perhaps as much as any, if not more than any matter in the way of prejudice. This whole matter of evangelism has suffered much by the cheapness associated with it. It has suffered much by worldliness being allied to it. It has suffered immensely by not relating to all that God means by having sons, in being made something in itself, just ‘being saved’, just being born again. It has suffered much through prejudice of an inadequate apprehension of what it means to be ‘born again’ in the family of God. It is not less evangelism that is needed, but what is needed is the fulness of the meaning of a soul being saved. It should be given its tremendous significance from heaven’s standpoint as being all that ever Christ came for, and all that ever the Holy Spirit came for. The church would be a very different thing, and Christians would be very different people if only there was from the beginning a greater knowledge of what is involved in being brought into the family of God or receiving the Holy Spirit, which is the same thing.

Enmity Against God's Children

Yes, there is a tremendous significance about this matter. In this life you and I will probably never fathom that significance. If we did but understand our own history and experience, and the experience of all the Lord's children, we should understand what it means to have received the Holy Spirit. You see, the presence of a divine seed in this earth, in this cosmic realm is the occasion of a bitter controversy. You ask, what is all the trouble about, all the conflict, all the pressure? What is it all about, that this world is in a turmoil and a ferment? What is all this experience of ours, of suffering, and trial, and adversity, and conflict, and pressure? The answer is: the presence of a divine seed in this universe.

Now, what I am going to say can be wrongly interpreted, but what I mean is quite true that wherever there are Christians, there will be trouble — make no mistake about it! The presence of Christians in this universe is the occasion of all the trouble. There are many illustrations of this in the Old Testament. All the trouble in Egypt was because God had a divine seed in Egypt and in the end, like Jonah's whale, Egypt was glad to vomit them out! Babylon was glad to get rid of them! It is like that; their presence represents something of tremendous disturbance and challenge. That explains our trouble! Until this thing is brought to its final issue, (we shall probably be speaking about that again later) the trouble will go on. Once we have it all to ourselves, then it will all be at rest. And we are going to have it all to ourselves; that is the end. The sons are going to possess. The end of this controversy is going to come about, and we shall be on top then indeed; there will be no one underneath! It will be settled. In the meantime things become more and more acute, and it is the very presence of this divine seed that is the occasion of all the controversy. Yes, it is no insignificant thing to be a child of God and to have the Holy Spirit.

The Bible teaches that all these immense issues of life, conflict, work, service, can only be secured and carried through by the anointing. It teaches this in type and figure in the Old Testament, in many forms and representations, and in the history of God's people. The Spirit's presence was the guarantee of reaching the divine end. The withdrawing of the Spirit meant that the people lost the thing for which they were the people of God. But, what is set forth there historically and typologically, is infinitely more true spiritually in our own dispensation. We are only going to get through, survive, fulfil our mission, do our work by the anointing. There is no other hope. If it was true of Jesus, it is true of the church, and of every believer.

For the present, what are our conclusions? First of all, the Holy Spirit brings into this world and universe, a different and a unique kind of manhood, or creature, or creation — something different, the like of which is not to be found anywhere else. A different kind of creature, person, order of being, spiritually, first of all. It ought to be very evident to you and to every true child of God that whatever there may be of the old, deep down

in the deepest part of our being, there is a difference from all others who are not in Christ. We know it, we are aware of it; it is the most real thing in our consciousness and experience that we are different. A difference has been made; it is a difference as stark as that between light and darkness; between life and death. However much that consciously means to us, it is the basic fact of our very existence as the people of God. Something has been done, has happened, in us; we may not understand or be able to explain, but it has happened in us. Those who have not come that way cannot understand us, and it is no use trying to explain ourselves to them, they never will understand until they come the same way. That basic, initial difference, which is the mark of sonship, of the Spirit's presence and operation, is the thing on which the Spirit works continually, all the way through our lives. But it begins in a spiritual way; it is a spiritual thing. It is also a moral thing. I use that word in its largest sense; a difference has been made morally. I want to say something more about that now.

It is something that you and I have got to see, and then lay hold of, that the presence of the Holy Spirit results in a moral difference in us. And by that I do not only mean that it makes us more 'moral', decent people, respectable people. I mean by that that it brings into us a dignity which is the beginning of something which at last is going to be consummated in 'kingship'. It is the spirit of kingship that has been introduced. The presence of the Holy Spirit, making any man or woman a member of this reconstituted divine family, gives to that man and woman a dignity which distinguishes them, or should distinguish them, (I say it with care) a 'superior' order of people in this universe. Safeguard the words 'superior order'; don't let us think wrongly of ourselves, more highly than we ought to think, as being some very important people. But, here is the spiritual truth. It is a most dignified thing to be a member of the family of God. Could a higher and greater dignity be conferred upon anyone? We are children of the Great King of the Royal Family, destined to reign. It is this that is introduced with His gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now note that the one thing which Satan has always sought to do, by any conceivable means, is to dishonour and degrade the sons of God, to bring reproach upon the Father by way of the children. Look at Israel in Egypt! Do you know how the story begins about Israel in Egypt? It begins like this: "Now these are the names of the sons of Jacob ... went down into Egypt" — sons of a 'prince with God'; sons of an anointed man. Of that people in Egypt, God said: "Let my son go." You see, in figure, here are the sons of God. But look, if Satan is typified by Pharaoh, and his kingdom by Egypt, what is the one thing he determines? To degrade and make slaves of them and make them use their strength and their lives to bring '*kudos*' (glory, renown) to the prince of this world. That is a long story with many sides and aspects. What may be true in the historical sense in the Old Testament is exactly what is happening now! What is all this work of the enemy about, upon you and upon me, the pressure and the harassment, the confusion, and what not? What is it all about? To make us cringing, self-despising, self-

pitying, all sorry for ourselves, people who are afraid to lift up our heads and look the world in the face! Isn't that true? Is not that the effect that suffering, adversity and trial can have upon us? They rob us of our spiritual dignity as 'princes with God'. The devil is doing it, and he is trying hard at this thing, there is no doubt about it! How shall we lift up our heads? How shall we be what we are from God's standpoint — sons of God? How shall we be in the ascendant, reigning in life? How shall we be freed from all this that makes us in the eyes of men such a despicable crowd? By the anointing, only, but truly! That is why He is given, to bring this dignity among the people of God. No, not pride — God forbid! Not conceit or self-sufficiency, but, yes, with our head, perhaps bleeding from many a battering, yet not bowed; our spirits wounded in the conflict, but not finished! "Though I fall, yet shall I rise"! That is the Spirit of Christ!

That is what I mean by a 'moral' difference. Oh, I take this to my heart, do you? We need the Spirit, but we have the Spirit! What is required? You and I must recognize, first of all, what a thing God has done in giving us the Holy Spirit. It is a fact! We have to recognize the ground on which He has given the Spirit — the finished work of His Son, "... has given us the Spirit". And then, with both hands, by faith, we *lay hold* of the gift. In the hour, the day, that is dark, contrary and difficult, and we are tempted; let us, by the grace of God, say: 'But, I have the Holy Spirit dwelling within me, and that is the answer!' We have the answer because of the anointing. "Anoint the shield and the battleaxe" — there is great fighting in the anointing.

I must leave it there, but do remember that all our discipline, conflict and travail is bound up with this matter of sonship. The transforming from the one old type, to the new type in Christ, is by way of terrible discipline and travail, which is a painful process of going through the transforming course and work to be changed from one likeness to another. But you see, that is exactly what Paul meant in words, perhaps, as familiar to us as any words in the Bible: "All things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose." What good? All things? Yes, this discipline, this suffering, this affliction, this adversity, this seeming frustration — all this, all these things — what are they doing? They are the stuff of our transformation by which we are being changed from one form to another; from what we are in ourselves to what we are in Christ. It is infinite good! God has hold of it all; God works that good in all these things to them that love Him.

Chapter 2: The Unspeakable Value of Having the Holy Spirit Within

Reading: Luke 4:1-14

Continuing in the way of our earlier meditation, we will read now from the gospel of Luke.

“Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon Him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased” (Luke 3:21-22).

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me ...” (Luke 4:18).

The Wilderness

So we continue to consider, with the Lord’s help, this matter of the divine anointing. Jesus spent six weeks in the wilderness fasting. We are not told what He was doing during those more than one thousand hours. While, no doubt, much of the time was spent in prayer, there must have been much thought, meditation, and adjustment to what was involved in that anointing. We might spend a little while trying to get inside of that tremendously significant event and time; surmising perhaps, deducing. And I think we shall not be far from the truth in the conclusions to which we may come.

We begin by recognizing that in the background there was a consciousness in Christ of being here in this world as a man of destiny, as one with whom tremendous issues were bound up in the purpose and counsels of God. He had a peculiar sense in Him of His relationship with God as His Father that had been with Him, it seems, from boyhood. And there was in Him a Spirit of purpose, of mission, and of tremendous destiny. Strange and uncommon forces had been at work in His spirit through His life, a sense of urgency. He had a deep-down sense of mighty things being bound up with His being in this world. That was His consciousness at this particular time in the wilderness.

Then there arrived the day when He knew in His spirit, by the same urge and constraint, that a crisis step had to be taken. That movement of the Spirit sent Him to the Jordan. Undoubtedly He was being guided in His movements, for one reason, because those movements so exactly corresponded with many Scriptures of the Old Testament which had to be fulfilled. His movements had in them many prophecies. We know how Matthew was able to discern that; how frequently Matthew said: “... that the Scripture might be fulfilled”; “... it was written in the Scriptures ...” And here he is, so to speak, marking off the Scriptures that were being fulfilled by these various movements, activities and utterances of the Lord Jesus. So we are on safe ground when we say that the Spirit who had given those Scriptures was guiding Him into fulfillment of those Scriptures, and that His movements were all according to plan and all according to the

Word. Here, in the wilderness, it comes out so clearly that it is the Word that is governing. He is moving in accordance with the Word, the fulfilment of the Scriptures.

In the consciousness of this day having arrived to take the great, precipitate step, He went to Jordan, brushed aside John's objections and insisted upon being baptized. His baptism implied the greater context of the cross, with the fulfilment of the Word of God, and obedience to it in every step and movement. He knew what His baptism implied and involved — the cross! It was with the cross and all its significance in view, undoubtedly, with that full, comprehensive, and deep meaning, that the Holy Spirit came upon Him. The Holy Spirit was heaven's attesting and seal of approval from the Father. What might we have expected immediately afterwards? Well, whatever we would have expected, the next thing is not according to our expectation at all; it is the wilderness. There is a mighty consciousness of destiny and mission; an absolute and meticulous obedience to the Word, and a complete, undeniable capitulation to the way of God. Heaven answers that. The Spirit breaks through the cleft heaven, and comes upon Him. And then the wilderness! That is not what you expect. You have gone as far as that; you have got all that as your foundation; then you don't expect the next thing to be the wilderness! Whether you expect it or not, very often it is the way.

Now He is in the wilderness, and what we note here is the focal point of Satan's attack. Satan focused his attack upon the question of Sonship — there is no mistaking that. Varying his methods and means of attack, coming along different lines, the one thing that is present every time is: "If thou be the Son ...". 'If what was said there at Jordan was true ...'. That is the focal point of every kind of Satanic attack. That is what he is after; that is the thing that matters. But, when we have said that, it is not just the fact of Sonship that Satan is attacking. It is the significance of Sonship; what Sonship implies, signifies and involves. Sonship involves and implies personal and family inheritance and heirship!

That consciousness of the Lord Jesus was not just a 'feeling', just a sense, but it was a mighty knowledge, a mighty intelligence. Read later, and you have a phrase like this: "Jesus knowing that His hour was come ... that the Father had delivered all things into His hands ...". "All these things will I give thee" — all things.

Heir of All Things — The Inheritance

Paul, with that amazing revelation and insight, tells us the full story of the counsels of God from eternity, "to sum up all things in Christ". "By Him, through Him, unto Him were all things created." Is the thought Sonship? Yes, what it implies for Himself personally, as the Heir of all things: "Whom He appointed heir of all things". But not only for Himself, but for this family which God as Father, by Christ, was reconstituting — this divine family, the family of which the Word quite definitely says: "Ye are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ" — We! This inheritance, this heirship which is signified by that

word 'Son' — that is the focal point. It is not just the position or the office or the title, it is what this is going to lead to, if it is not subverted. Tremendous! And that is why that was made the focal point; it carried with it no less an issue than world dominion and universal authority. Notice that Satan used that word: "All this authority will I give you." The last word of the risen Lord is: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth." Now, that is the involvement here; yes, dominion over this world, and universal authority, as vested in Sonship. That meant an immediate and direct challenge to the prince of this world. Sonship meant that, and always means that. Therefore the Son must be tripped up somehow! He must be, in some way, ensnared!

Well, let us leave it there for the moment, and go back to Jordan. The Jordan meant that that destiny for Himself, and for His fellow-heirs, and all this divinely intended purpose, was only to be reached by way of the cross. And He knew it, and accepted it, and was committed to it. But, that was no small committal. He knew quite well that way in all its meaning and implications. That way, in its spiritual and moral significance, would be the most devastating way to His humanity. It would mean that 'His soul' would be "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death". It would mean that He would be "in a great anguish, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood down to the ground". It would lead to being 'forsaken of God' for one terrible, overcome by emotion, eternal moment — a moment like an awful eternity in despair and outer darkness. This was what was involved: He was human; He was a man; and He could shrink from all that, and cry out of His humanity: 'Is there no way out? Is there no other way? Oh, that it might not be necessary! That this cup might pass from Me.' Not going back upon His commitment, but the awful battle of that commitment, and all that it involved now in full force breaking upon Him. The baptism meant that! The great end would only be reached along that line, by the way of the cross.

The Enemy's Strategy

Was that what He was fighting out in the wilderness? Was that the great battle that brought Him to physical exhaustion, over those many long-drawn-out hours of day and night? Was that it? Was He facing it all? If we are right in our surmise that it was that, then we can understand the diabolical and cruel attack of the enemy — 'There is another way. You need not go that way; You can have it all without the cross!' Are we right? I feel that that uncovers the whole thing. Yes, that was the battle; that was the meaning of the wilderness. Satan was saying in other ways and words: 'It need not be; there are other ways of reaching Your end, and realizing Your destiny. Use Your divine power to save Yourself!' That was the sting of the serpent, when He was actually on the cross: "Save Yourself!" From beginning to end of this great conflict it is: 'The way, the way out, the way through, is "Save Yourself"; You need not go that way!' Or, 'Do something to make an impression on men, by some trick: "Cast Thyself down." Suddenly appear among the crowd as out from Heaven. Make a tremendous

impression; You will catch them! You will not have to argue that You came from heaven; it is patent! Or, failing that, 'Cede to me some right of world-dominion; acknowledge me as the prince of this world, and come alongside of me in my government of this world. You will get it all!' And all that in the hour of physical exhaustion and weakness! You have only got to know something of a tremendously exhausting time, over some soul, over some spiritual interest, over some tremendous emergency in the things of God, and be at the point of fainting with weariness, to know how cruel and cunning the devil can be — and so it was! Well, you can have it all without the cross; you need not go that way, that is all. What a value he gave to the cross, if that is what he meant!

So, I think the meaning of it all is divulged. The Lord Jesus won! He won that fundamental battle. Although the time will come when its desperate and terrible reality will break upon Him again, the foundation of His victory is laid in the wilderness. He will be able to say in the day of His most terrible ordeal: "The prince of this world cometh to Me, but hath nothing in Me"; 'That was settled in the wilderness; I got through all that then; I accepted the cross in principle and meaning then.' He won the fundamental battle and came from the wilderness, strengthened by the Spirit and by angels.

And now, what do we come to? No wonder there was such authority in His steps, in His Spirit, and in His ministry. The whole issue is that of authority: the way of authority, the way of divine power, the way of the anointing, which is only another way of saying the same thing. The anointing operating in power and authority! And from that time, He is a Man in authority. "The Spirit of the Lord God Jehovah is upon Me ...". You see, He is not a weakling, a man defeated, with a question. No, He goes onward — it is amazing how everything is in His hands — right into the Judgment Hall. The authority was not with the high priests; the authority was not with Pilate; they are like pawns in His hands; it is with Him. He is able to say, concerning His life: "No man taketh it from me; I have authority to lay it down, and take it again, and this authority I received from My Father." At the very beginning He has this kind of authority — and how we need it! It springs out of the settling of major issues fundamentally, leaving no place for a divided mind or heart. The man or the woman who has a question has no authority; they are ever and always pulled between two ways — a divided heart! There is no power or authority in that life; there is no impact coming from it; it does not register. But here is One who knows where He is going, and knows where He stands, and knows what He is after; He has settled things. We have got to settle some things, as far as possible, once and for all, in principle, if there is going to be power and authority.

When I use that word 'authority', I do want you to recognize that in Christ's life here on this earth, it was not 'official' authority at all, it was moral and spiritual. And it is like that with us. We have no position, no recognition among men, no official authority, but there is a greater than the official, there is a spiritual. That man, that woman, young or old, *knows* — that is all there is to it — they know where they stand. They *know* the way

they are taking, they *know* what they mean. They have settled certain fundamental issues and this has delivered them from a divided mind and a divided heart. That brings in tremendous moral strength and authority. It is not the fierceness or forcefulness of a strong natural mind; it is the settledness of a heart in God. That, I believe, lies behind the words: “He came from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit” — in the power of the Spirit!

All this speaks to us, because we have already said that in so very much of what was true of the Lord Jesus, we are involved. There are only a very few things concerning the Lord in which we have no place. We have no place in Deity which was His. We have no place in atonement, which He wrought, thank God! There are very few things, though, in which He is unique. In most of the things that were true of Him we have a place. And at this present time we are occupied with this one thing of which Paul speaks, that we have been ‘anointed in Him’. The anointing which was His, was His as Head for and of the Body, and we inherit that anointing, when we are “baptised in one Spirit into one body”. We come into the anointing. But you see how the anointing works. The anointing has as its goal no less a thing than being: “joint-heirs with Christ” to the “all things of God”, and dominion with Him in reigning for ever and ever. It is tremendous, what we are called to. While it may be true that the atoning aspect of His cross is His and His alone, there is such a thing as “filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His Body’s sake, which is the church”. It is only another way of saying that there are aspects of the cross in which we have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. The way to this great destiny is this way, and there is no getting out of it except Satan’s way of compromise: ‘Come down! Save Yourself!’ We are left with only those two alternatives.

What was Satan trying to do in that wilderness? First of all, he was seeking persistently to bring the Spirit of Sonship into question. But do recognize that that is one of the things in which we are involved with Christ. I don’t know whether you have any exercise about that matter, but I make this confession to you, in the consciousness of the intensifying stress, pressure and suffering, I have feared how I might finish up, and have found myself praying many times that my faith might hold out and that I should not at the end come under a cloud of doubting my sonship. That is an issue that is a very living one. I don’t want to frighten you, or make things difficult, but that is what the Lord’s people have had to face right at the end: the dark cloud of physical and mental exhaustion, through suffering, creeps over the mind; the light of God seems to fade out, and the great question of sonship is raised. It is a terrible issue! Well, if that sounds too terrible, (for young people especially it makes things look very difficult), let me remind that you have the Holy Spirit! It brings me back to why we are speaking about this at all — the tremendous importance and unspeakable value of having the Holy Spirit within. John said to Christians in a time of terrible persecution and suffering, when all the questions of faith were rising: “The anointing which you have received abideth in you.” It is a tremendous thing for the conflict to have the anointing. We cannot make too much

of the importance of the Holy Spirit dwelling within. So, rather than be frightened at what I have said, remember that the Spirit of Sonship Himself is in you! And rest upon Him; stay upon Him; count upon Him; believe in Him.

This is not a matter of being a very clever person, or a very intelligent person, or a very gifted and able person: this is something for the 'nothings' and the 'nobody's'. And I say that with a tremendous background of the Word of God; the anointing will never function while self-importance is on the throne. The very functioning of the anointing Spirit requires that we ourselves are at a discount. It was at the point of exhaustion and weakness that Christ came out triumphant, because the Spirit and heaven ministered to Him in His weakness. Go back to your Old Testament. Remember when the spies went over to the land and came back with their majority report; they said: "We were in their eyes as grasshoppers, and so we were in our own eyes." All right, that is not such a terrible thing! That is really not a bad thing at all! If Joshua is really a type of the energies of the Holy Spirit, then he made the grasshoppers drive out seven nations mightier than themselves! Do you feel like mere grasshoppers? There is a famous football club in America, who have won some wonderful victories, and they have named themselves 'The Grasshoppers'! Be a grasshopper if you are desirous of winning the victory! You see, it is the Holy Spirit, 'not ourselves at all'; the Holy Spirit in us and through us, Who is the mighty energy — "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

The first thing, then, that Satan was trying to do, was to bring the Spirit of Sonship into question. Oh, be guarded on that matter. The second thing that he was trying to do was to sabotage the supreme issue of sonship, that is, spiritual authority.

And lastly, he was trying to nullify the inherent potentiality of sonship, namely heirship, the inheritance, possessing the kingdom. That is what he was trying to do; he is always trying to do that. If Jesus had not been anointed at the Jordan, it would have gone ill with Him in the wilderness. "But ye have an anointing" — "ye have an unction ...". If you really have come into the true meaning of being a child of God, you have the Spirit. I know the various theories and interpretations of this whole matter.

But now I simply say this, that no new birth can take place without the Holy Spirit. If the new birth is an inward thing, the Spirit does it inside, and with the new birth the consciousness of a new inward government is established. And that is no other than the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Some of us, years after we were saved, came into a new experience of the Spirit, a fuller experience of the Spirit. But we knew in those days before, (when we were doing many things that today we are horrified at ever having done), that working within that we never had before we were the Lord's. That throne of judgment; that adjudicating on matters; that troubling of us at certain times. We learned much before we ever came into a greater understanding by the very *fact* of the Spirit. Now you can go away if you

like, and become involved in all these contentions about the doctrines of the Spirit, but let us rest on this, that if we are children of God, the Spirit of God is in us. "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God." That is where we begin the Christian life. We learn much as we go on. But I say this to you, the point upon which so much of the confusion and misunderstanding rests is just this, that it is a matter of the measure of the Spirit's liberty and way in us more than anything else. And if any of us have at any time had a crisis, come into some fuller knowledge of the anointing, (as we truly have, and a very big crisis it has been), it was not because of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it was because the cross was allowed to do some more drastic work in us, to make way for the Spirit. The cross always does that. The measure then of the Spirit's power in our lives, the measure of the functioning of the anointing, the measure therefore of our victory over the enemy, and of our coming to that end for which we have been born by the Spirit, will be the measure in which, like our Master, we have faced the meaning of the cross, accepted it, capitulated to it and fought out its issues if necessary. Where this world is concerned, and our own interests are concerned, and every other question, let us have no divided mind about these things. The Lord help us!

Chapter 3: The Holy Anointing Oil

Reading: Exodus 30:22-33

We have been led at this time to give attention to the matter of the Holy Spirit, particularly as the Spirit of anointing. Now we are going to look at one particular aspect of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, that is, the holy anointing oil, the symbols of which we have in Exodus 33.

The book of Exodus, as you know, is divided into two main sections, first of which, according to its title, has to do with the exodus itself, the bringing of the people out from Egypt. And that section ends with their arrival at Sinai. The second section begins at Sinai, and has to do with the constituting of the people as God's holy nation, constituted firstly by the law, and secondly by the tabernacle. The tabernacle overshadowed everything, and when the tabernacle came into view, the anointing was brought in. This anointing, or this Holy Spirit coming in as the Spirit of the anointing had three aspects: firstly, the sacredness of everything; secondly, the unity of everything; and thirdly, the vocation and function of everything. How much of that we shall be able to consider now we must wait to see, but we want to look at this holy, or sacred oil.

The Oil

The oil is the chief and primary factor; indeed, it is the all-inclusive and fundamental factor of everything in this large section of the book. From what we have read alone, we are surely impressed with the fact that the oil is something very sacred, and it makes everything that it touches very sacred. It makes everything holy unto God. It speaks of God's very presence where it is, and it speaks of God's rights in everything, and by everything that it touches. The anointing is something which always moves God to jealousy. You will call to mind familiar words in Psalm 105: *"He rebuked kings for their sake, saying, 'Touch not Mine anointed'."* It is interesting to notice that in the Psalm, in the first place at least, it is related to Abraham, and the story there is very impressive. Abimelech nearly lost his life by unwittingly touching the anointing, and was rebuked of God: "Touch not mine anointed." It is interesting in that connection to see that Abraham, although we have no record of his ever officially being anointed, is called 'the anointed' by God. But, the point is that it is the anointing that stirs God to jealousy. Wherever it is, there is that which moves God to His depths.

The Sanctuary

The sanctuary is here with all its vessels, and from the time they were anointed with this sacred oil, the penalty of unlawfully touching every one of them, was death. It was what we call 'sacrilege'. For an unanointed person to touch anointed things, it meant they would come immediately into touch with the jealousy of God. And that for the person was a terrible thing. The Lord held these things in such high esteem because of the

anointing. This is not new light, but there is something here that you and I need to be able to discern. And so we do lay very great emphasis upon the sacredness of the anointing; the sacredness of anything and everything that comes under the anointing.

Now, of course, we do not live in Old Testament times when the literal oil was used. But we know as one of the elementary lessons of our Christian knowledge, that that all pointed to the dispensation in which we live. It was all a type and figure, a symbol of the Holy Spirit in the day when He would come. Now that He has come every one who is really born of the Spirit of God, and is joined to the Lord Jesus, one Spirit, comes into the anointing. In the New Testament, it is God's thought and God's act, that when people believe, the Spirit comes upon them. There is the Day of Pentecost; there is the house of Cornelius — "as Peter spoke unto them, the Holy Spirit came upon them." We have many instances of this spontaneous action of God in response to faith in the Lord Jesus. And the great declaration on the Day of Pentecost was: "Believe ... repent ... and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." So, if we are really true believers, in the sense that through faith we have been joined to the Lord one Spirit, we constitute the sanctuary: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of the Holy Spirit ... the Holy Spirit dwelleth in you?" Or again, "... groweth into a holy temple in the Lord". We are that — the sanctuary; we take the place of the tabernacle of old, the greatest reality of which is: 'God is there'! And God was there in this, that the anointing oil was upon everything. It was the anointing in type; God the Holy Spirit had associated Himself with that whole system and its personnel so that every part of it, by the anointing, was sacred to God.

Now, I repeat, that we have something to recover in this matter. Even today in religion, in the systems of religion, it is like that. They have their symbolic representations; some, a crucifix; some, a Madonna; and many other symbols like that in their system and in their places. And if anybody were to go in and smash, or even scratch or injure one of those representations, however small, it would raise an outcry — 'a sacrilege!' There is that in the world, there is that in the systems; a strong reaction to anything like that; even the State takes action to guard against such things. All that is in another realm. In our age and dispensation, it is not *less* than it was in the Old Testament. The spiritual reality is not a lesser thing than the symbolic representation. We can injure, scratch, hurt and damage the 'vessels of the anointing', children of God, one another, without being aware that we are committing sacrilege in the House of God. In a word, God is jealous about the least part of the Body of Christ that is under the anointing. God will, sooner or later, if He waits in patience, show His jealousy in some form of judgment. If people in this world, in their religious sense, are sensitive about these symbolic representations, and are stirred to anger and heat at what they call 'sacrilege', ought there not to be among us something that corresponds to that? I am not making up something; this is the true exposition of Scripture. You and I, if we are the Lord's, have the Holy Spirit in us, and the presence of the Holy Spirit makes us sacred to God, and we ought to recognize that. And we should not damage a child of God just as we would

not go into some religious building and smash its representations. No, we should shrink from it!

And I do truly believe that if you and I walk in the Spirit, in true correspondence to the anointing, the Holy Spirit will touch us when we touch that which is anointed. This is a tremendous thing for God! It may be that the absence of the power, operation and manifestation of the Holy Spirit is because He is injured in this way. The Holy Spirit has to look upon Christianity today, and see in it all the rivalries, jealousies and factions; one section against another; and one man against another. Christianity is like that, and the Holy Spirit has to stand back. Christianity is suffering today because the Holy Spirit is not committing Himself. It is all very well to pray and appeal for 'revival' while the Holy Spirit says: 'Put your relationships right, and I will come in.' What is true in general may be true in particular, that the Spirit is limited and arrested; indeed, is offended and has to stand back because there is not this recognition of the sacredness of one another to the Lord if we have the Spirit, and sacredness of everything that is of the Lord. The anointing may be grieved because the things and the people of God are too cheap. And if the anointing says one thing, it means 'preciousness' wherever it is — the 'preciousness of this ointment'; it is *precious* ointment. It makes everything precious to God, and we are inclined not to recognize the preciousness of everything and everyone that is of God. Rather, as I have said, to regard the 'vessels of the sanctuary' too cheaply. That is you, that is me, the Lord's people, very precious to Him. It matters to the Holy Spirit how we regard all that that comprises His dwelling-place. It matters to Him what sacredness we put upon the things of the Lord, and the people of the Lord. It so matters to Him, that He will, or will not commit Himself on that matter alone. Many a life is tied up, and is only released into life when it gets right with another child of God with whom it has been out of fellowship. Pray and struggle as you will, the remedy lies just there with that person, in that matter of fellowship. What is true of that is true of many things. We have got to recover or have a new sense of the sacredness of the 'vessels of the sanctuary'.

Specific Ministries

There are specific ministries particularly anointed for special purposes, to whom the Lord may point and say, 'Mine anointed', in some particular way, as He did with Abraham and Moses. It was because of the anointing that the Lord so fiercely came out against Aaron and Miriam on one occasion, just because of the anointing. It was a bad day for those two, and Miriam in particular, when they touched the 'anointed of the Lord'. On another occasion a great number met the fire of God, and were swallowed up when the earth opened its mouth, just for touching the anointing. All this is in the Bible, not to say that this will happen to you, that you will literally become a leper like Miriam, or the earth will open its mouth and swallow you up. But it is all there to say: the anointing in God's eyes is a very, very holy thing. You must be very careful when you

are in the presence of the anointing. We do need a new sense of the awe and sacredness of what has come under the touch of the Spirit of God. There are many things we could mention, such as the Word of God, the Table of the Lord and the assembly of God.

The Word of God: We shall know the committing of Himself through the Holy Spirit in power and in life just insofar as we recognize the sacredness of the Word of God. You cannot play with the Word of God and you cannot be superior to the Word of God. The Word of God is a holy thing with God. May it not be that the Word of God, the Scriptures, have become too cheap in Christianity. Men just play with the Bible with their own minds and very often discredit it. It sometimes seems that they will give to it as little honour as they can. Well, that is not true of us, nevertheless, let us remember that the Word of God is Spirit-inbreathed, therefore it is sacred; it is anointed.

The Table of the Lord: How sacred this is, because the Spirit is in it.

The Assembly of God: How sacred is this matter of the 'assembly of God' — our comings and goings in fellowship. You cannot come in without reverence, without godly fear; we must learn how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God for the Spirit is there! Oh, that we were alive to this, that when we come together, the chief reality about our coming together is that the Holy Spirit is there. There is something very sacred about the assembly of God, about fellowship.

And it is true about any ministry that may be under the anointing. It is not something for us to criticize, tear to pieces, and regard lightly. If the Holy Spirit is in that ministry, it is something very sacred, and sooner or later God will bring us to account for that ministry. Suffer the solemnity of it, but you see we do need this sense that we are in something that is not formal or theoretical, but is something very real, when we come to the anointing.

I want to close with a word about another aspect. There is so much more here, of course, but notice the 'aroma' of the sacred oil — 'sweet savour', or 'sweet smell'. Where the anointing is, there is the 'aroma' of Christ. The presence of the Holy Spirit would make things beautiful. Being masculine, I am always a little hesitant to use that word 'sweet' or 'sweetness' about people. I don't mean by that sentimental, sloppy, or that sort of thing. But, suffer the word; where the Holy Spirit is, something of the 'sweetness' of Christ should be present; a 'sweet savour', a 'sweet smell' — something that is of the beauty of the Lord. When this anointing oil was put upon everything, and upon the persons concerned, the atmosphere was delightful; you did not want to leave. That atmosphere was refreshing. But how much of our Christian life is unlike that; it is cold, almost repulsive. There is a lot about Christianity and the way Christians go on that is repugnant, unattractive! The anointing is not like that — there is the aroma of the 'ivory palaces'. "Thy garments smell of myrrh, cassia and aloes ...". The presence of the Holy Spirit in you and in me and in the church ought to make it a lovely place; it ought to

make us refreshing; people coming in ought to feel refreshed; there ought to be something that they can delight in. As we say of natural things, of flowers, and perfumes — what a beautiful scent! In a spiritual sense that should be true of the people of God, if the Spirit is present.

There are other aspects I can only hint at as I close: 'myrrh', as well as 'cassia' and 'calamus'. The presence of the Holy Spirit always brings in the spirit of selfless sacrifice; unselfishness; selflessness. Myrrh speaks of the sufferings of Christ; but what were they for? The sufferings of this world were taken on by Him. Yes, He took on our sufferings as well as our sins. And where the Holy Spirit is, there is always a true sympathy with suffering, a real heart sensitiveness to sorrow. It should be like that, that we carry upon our hearts the afflictions and the trials of the Lord's people everywhere, and enter into them. Myrrh is a part of the anointing.

"It is given", said the apostle, "in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29 KJV) And so large a part of our suffering for His sake is our entering into the suffering of others. Sacred oil! May we be 'anointed' ones!

Chapter 4: Vocation

I want to bring you back again to the words in the gospel by Luke 3:21:

“Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon Him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.”

“And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me ...” (Luke 4:17, 18).

I am going to stop there; what follows will occupy us later. I just want to add to that a word from 2 Corinthians 1:21:

“Now He that establisheth us with you into Christ, and anointed us, is God, who also sealed us and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

In pursuing our reconsideration of this great and important matter of the anointing with the Holy Spirit, we are now going to focus our attention upon perhaps one of the most important features of this matter. That is, that the anointing always relates to one thing, and that is vocation.

We read that the anointing came upon the Lord Jesus and then He himself declared why the anointing had come upon Him: “... because the Lord has anointed Me to preach ...”. The anointing of the Holy Spirit concerns vocation. If you want to change the word to ‘ministry’ you can, but ‘ministry’ is too often limited in our conception of it; vocation is perhaps a more comprehensive term. May I point out here again that the Scriptures that we have read, to which many others could be added, make it quite clear that what was true of the Lord Jesus in this respect is also true of the church. I take it that Paul’s message, which was to the church in Corinthians, is a message to the whole church. Because, in between the Lord’s own personal anointing at the Jordan, and this passage in 2 Corinthians, we do have the day of Pentecost, the day of the anointing of the church for its mission in Christ. That is quite simple and self-evident. But I do want you to grasp this thing, not as something said, but with realisation. Now, there is a lot of difference in knowing a thing in a way, and realising that you possess it or you know it. You have a lot of things without exactly realising what you have, or the value of what you have. And it is this realisation, beyond the statement of truth, that I trust will come to you.

You and I, if we are ‘in Christ’ as this word in Corinthians says, are supposed to have the anointing in Christ. “He which establisheth us with you into Christ, and anointed us (in Christ)”; we are all supposed to be anointed people. It is not what you feel like at the moment; it is the divine fact. Are you in Christ? Then, if that is true, you have been brought into the anointing which is on Christ. You inherit that very anointing which came

on Him after His baptism. You are an 'anointed' person. As we said earlier, there is nothing greater we can conceive than that we should be people anointed with the Holy Spirit, if only we knew what that means. However, here is the truth.

Then, if the anointing which is upon us in Christ is true, it is with vocation in view, The great governing factor of the anointing is vocation. It brings us into divine purpose; it means that every one of us is in Christ for a purpose. There should be no person in Christ without a purpose in life, by the Holy Spirit. We may need instruction and enlightenment to understand what it is, but I am taking pains for the moment to underline and emphasise the fact. If you are not aware of the fact, altogether without the explanation and the interpretation, then you should raise the question of no less a thing than your place in Christ and the meaning of being in Christ. When you came to the Lord, if you did not have begotten in you a sense that life had taken on a new meaning, that there had come into your consciousness a meaningfulness in life, then there was something wrong with your new birth, for this goes with your union with Christ. That could be put in various ways: now there is something for which to live; now you are under constraint to do something; now there is a goal towards which you have to move! It can be put in many ways, but they all amount to this. You have started on a line which has a meaning, and that is the very Spirit of vocation. You will do something; you will aim at something; you will have an objective in life; you find that you are under some constraint. So the presence of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of the anointing, carries with it and is inseparable from vocation!

I have commenced with the individual fact that we make a personal matter of this; we are not passengers; we are not 'things' to be carried along by some institution or organisation. We may be very small cogs in all the works, but the whole thing would be thrown out if we did not fulfil our function. We have to realise that and I think there are far too many who have not this sense of being under the Holy Spirit's urge unto something.

But I want to carry that beyond the personal and the individual, because we, as individuals, only receive it in a larger setting, really. If we come to the New Testament, for instance, a whole lot of individuals were involved; but really they came into their personal sense of divine initiative, drive, urge and motive because the corporate church came into a mighty compulsion and propulsion by the Holy Spirit. First of all, the church was taken up in this matter, and it is very obvious that a tremendous sense of commission and vocation came with the Holy Spirit. On that day of Pentecost, and from that day, the church is a 'thing' with a purpose and a motive; a tremendous driving-force; and all the individuals derived their own personal sense of meaning from that whole. We shall come back to that presently. Now, what is the essential, indispensable justification for the existence of churches, local expressions of the whole? Why should the people of God be gathered together in smaller or larger numbers or companies in

any given place? What is it that justifies their existence? What is it that really is the basis of their being there at all? Is it just to meet together and have nice fellowship, help one another along, be some nice little thing in that place, happily going on, or miserably going on, occupied with themselves, ministering to one another, nursing one another, is that it? Well, those things may come into it, but the local companies are only part of the one church universal. And the purpose, nature and justification of the church universal, which passes to the church local, is vocation. Any local company that is not really fulfilling an anointed vocation is not justifying its existence. The Lord brings local companies into being, not to be something in themselves, not to be an end in themselves, and not just to look after themselves, but with a vocation to fulfil in the world around them. And they must be there with this sense of responsibility and mission beyond themselves, this sense of vocation. The whole Bible could be taken to show that that is true. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because ...” — because — what follows is a purpose — “because the Lord has anointed Me” to ... something.

Vocation Under the Anointing

Having said all that we come to the vocation under the anointing. I am loath to depart from that, without making quite sure that you really have your hand upon this matter. If your life is truly under the government of the Holy Spirit, it will not be a ‘dead end’. If any company of the Lord’s people is under the government of the Holy Spirit, it will not be a dead end! If you are where you are because the Lord has led you there, and that is how it ought to be, you are there with a divine vocation, for the fulfilment of which you can count upon the anointing. In your profession, in your business, in your home, and in your assembly, as a part of it, this is a law, that there is something more than the thing itself. You are called into a vocation if you have received the Holy Spirit, and that gives meaning to life. If we take ourselves out of the hands of the Holy Spirit and choose our own way, and go where we think we should go, and make our own decisions in these things, very often we get into a backwater; we are out of the way, and there is nothing coming of it. We have to be very sure that we seek first the Kingdom of God. That is only another way of saying that we move by the Spirit in what we do, or we might find ourselves out there with no more meaning than what we are doing day by day, for time! This is the meaning of the anointing.

The Bible falls quite naturally into three aspects of the anointing. These three aspects are, in the divine conception, inherent in the very creation of man. Adam was created to be the vessel, vehicle and instrument of divine vocation, and vocation in three forms. But Adam let it go and tragically lost his divine vocation. There are depths of meaning here, which might be even dangerous to try and fathom. But there are hints of something tremendous in this matter. There was, the Bible reveals, an anointed cherub who covers, whose name before his fall was Lucifer, the “son of the morning”, now known as Satan. There are strong hints that his vocation had to do with this creation,

and he forfeited it by taking things into his own hands, out of the anointing. If the anointing means one thing, it means absolute dependence upon God. It means that everything comes from God, and not from the person concerned. It means that God is most jealous to keep things in His own hands; that is the meaning of the anointing. God must maintain the overall government of things by His Spirit. The anointing was violated in that way, and that high place was forfeited. Adam was then created and would have come into the anointing to fulfil the great purpose of adoption if he had not failed and missed the 'anointing'. There is a last Adam which God brings in and anoints with that very object. And so the Bible opens out along these three lines: first, with the creation of man, and the object of his creation; then, the development of a nation, to be the object lesson of what the anointing means as to vocation. The people of God also failed in all three senses. And then Christ and the church which is His Body are brought in, as God's success in this thing which has been inherent in the creation of man from the beginning.

Kingship

What is the anointing? First of all, it is dominion. If you like, it is rulership, government, or, to take the Old Testament title, kingship, royalty, in a divine sense. It has not been sufficiently recognised that the anointing of the Lord Jesus on the Jordan side had this threefold vocation included and involved, and the first aspect of it was government, authority, kingship, rulership, dominion! We have seen that this was what the enemy was trying to undercut.

Government or kingship is one of the major lines of the Old Testament. But kingship is not something official now; it is not something that is temporal, as we understand it in the temporal realm. Kingship is a spirit; royalty is a nature; dominion is something of a spiritual kind. First of all, recognise that the Old Testament naturally opens up along that line, as one of its three lines. It begins with Adam: "Thou madest him to have dominion." And then you find that before the thing assumes the form of official position, it has already existed in a spiritual and a moral way. It is tremendously impressive.

Abraham, as we have seen, is spoken of as one of the Lord's anointed in Psalm 105, "*the Lord's anointed*". Well, Abraham stands in the presence of kings of this earth, and Abraham is superior. These kings of the earth are cringing and bowing to Abraham. Morally and spiritually he is, so to speak, head and shoulders above them. In the presence of these men, he is the king!

Israel — what is Israel naturally, from the standpoint of this world looking on? We know quite well what the nations thought of Israel naturally! What about Balaam being hired by Balak, thinking that this people could be just completely subjugated, brought under, despised? But Israel, there and then with all that they were or were not naturally, all their weaknesses and imperfections and faults, rose to tremendous stature at that very

point: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob!" "The shout of a king is among them"! Israel rises to spiritual and moral standard in the midst of the nations, embodying the principle of the anointing which was dominion, kingship. Before there is anything official, it must be moral and spiritual.

So we could go on. How true it was of the Lord Jesus! All the rulers were baffled, nonplussed and defeated in His presence. They cannot handle this Man; they cannot humiliate this Man spiritually and morally, whatever they do. He is over them all the time. That is true of the church, when moving under the anointing.

Now, that is all objective. What about you? What about any believer? Is this not true, that when a man or a woman receives Christ into the life, (which is but one way of speaking of 'receiving the Spirit') immediately that happens, without any reasoning, or calculation, or thinking about it at all, a new spirit of elevation begins to work in that life. You have seen it; I have seen it — a poor fellow in utter rags, never having worn a decent collar at all; a miserable, wretched creature, dragging himself about; his home could not be called a home, but rather a hovel; his wife and children in the most deplorable state, in poverty and misery because of sin. I have seen that man born again, and within a week, coming to the meeting with — as a first step — a nice clean white bit of scarf tied round his neck, and his clothes brushed down a bit. I have seen that go on until he had a decent collar and suit, and shoes to wear; and his home was beginning to change together with his children and his wife. No one ever said anything to him — not a word. It happened! It happened from within! I want to say that that is the spirit of royalty at work; the spirit of heavenly 'aristocracy' at work in the heart; the spirit of glory — for that is what belongs to kings — glory! And the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Glory. Now that may be an extreme illustration, but it is a very true one; it happens again and again. A sense of shame comes in because of certain things, perhaps ways of speaking, old habits and so on, which are perhaps slow to fall off. But there is now a sense of shame and blushing coming in which was never there before; there was never a consciousness before that the thing was wrong or doubtful. What is true in such extreme cases is a principle and a law of the Spirit-governed life. If you are governed by the Spirit, if you are under the anointing, you cannot be slovenly. You cannot be careless in your life and habits and dress. You cannot have an untidy home, a disorderly state of things, for which you are responsible. It ought not to be. You ought not to need anyone to point out that that is wrong. "The Spirit Himself", says John, "dwelling in you teacheth you." "You have no need that anyone teacheth you; the anointing teacheth you all things." And this is one of the things that the anointing teaches: it makes of a disorderly life an orderly thing and that is what you expect to find in kings' households. It makes of disreputable life a reputable thing; it tidies up life all round. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Kings, of princes! It is a spiritual and a moral thing, you see. The point is that the anointing means elevation, and it always does lead to a higher level of life. It lifts, it ennobles, it refines, it makes for God's gentlemen! This is

the Spirit of kingship, and this is the law of government and ascendancy. You see, it is far better to have it like this than to have the office and the title, and for the condition to be just a contradiction. No, princes in Israel are first of all spiritual and moral people, before they are official. The anointing means that!

It is just amazing how Jesus could fit into any situation, poor and rich, ignorant and learned. He fitted right in, but it was the anointing that did it!

Now, you see, His anointing is for kingship, which in this dispensation, is a spiritual and a moral thing; it is the mighty power of elevating people, taking them from the dung-hill and setting them among princes.

So, the anointing for us should mean a growing refinement and an increasing sensitivity to what is fitting, what is becoming, what belongs to the palace, for we are children of the King, sons of God. Well, that can be viewed in two ways; it can make you feel uncomfortable, and seem to be a legal imposition again which is going to make life difficult. If you take it like that, you have missed the whole point. The law of the Word of God is always positive: "Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." In other words, if you live by the Spirit, it will happen! This is what will happen! Mark you, what happens or what does not happen reveals just how much we are being governed by the Spirit.

So, kingship, with all its wonderful meaning, does not mean self-importance nor making an impression by our own effort, but just *being* different.

Now, we may anticipate the other aspect of the anointing, which is the vocation. Have you grasped the point that what I have been saying is a vocation, a ministry, a service; it is something that really is ministry. I believe it is far more effective in this world to be a person of spiritual dignity and character like this, than it is to go round with your Bible preaching and taking meetings! If you are a person who walks in the Spirit, with this character, a person of spiritual strength, who will not descend to a mean thing; who will not contemplate anything that is petty or despicable, but be morally above it, like Nehemiah, who said: "Should such a one as I flee?" That is the spirit of the king! If you are such a person as that, and this dignity is found in your home, your home is a dignified place. Wherever you have any influence and power at all, that is shown in the orderliness and refinement of character, that is a tremendous testimony to the Lord. Put it the other way round; see how the Lord is let down when it is not like that; what the Lord loses. This is vocation: to *be*, to be!

I am speaking largely to responsible people. You will recognize that the law of the Word of God is, always and in all matters, that the person has got to *be* the thing before they get the name, the title or the office. You have got to *be* an elder before you can be made an elder. You have got to *be* a prince before you can be called a prince. That is a law of the Word of God — you have got to *be* this! And it is the anointing which makes for this reality.

Priesthood

We can pass quite easily to the second aspect of this vocation, which is that of the priesthood. Just as the kings were anointed, and were kings by the anointing, so the priests were priests by the anointing. Priesthood is another thing, right from the beginning, inherent in God's thought concerning man. Before there was ever the necessity for blood sacrifice, for atonement; before ever the sin question came in, requiring certain aspects of priesthood, the whole matter of standing between God and His creation mediatorially, intercessorily, was there. Man was created to be a priest in this sense, that here is God, and here is His creation, and there must be one in-between to communicate from the one to the other, to stand for the one to the other, communicating both ways. Adam was intended to be that, a king and a priest in this spiritual sense.

And so the Old Testament unfolds along the line of anointed priesthood. True, there has now come in this whole sin matter, calling in the entire system of blood sacrifices. But the principle remains that the anointing means that there is that between God and others by which He makes Himself known, communicates Himself, commits Himself, and which brings them into knowledge of God. Priesthood, as you know, first of all means mediation, that is, standing between. It also means standing between to minister from God to man, and from man to God. And then to teach: "The priests lips must keep wisdom" that is, must teach knowledge. The suffering aspect has come in now to priesthood; suffering is that with which the priest has to do. But when you have said all these things about it, the church is called into the place of Israel in this whole universe. Where Adam failed, where Israel failed, Christ has come in and brought His church into being to be 'a kingdom and priests unto His God'; "He hath made us a kingdom and priests unto His God"! It is not our title; it is not our office. Are you, young Christian, old Christian, whoever you are, are you taking this home to you, that as truly and surely as ever Aaron and his sons and his long line of sons, and the firstborn in all the households of Israel, were the priests in Israel, standing in this holy and sacred position, as truly as that, you are that in the thought of God? You are that! When you come to a meeting for prayer, you are coming on the ground of your priesthood, and may function under the anointing in intercession, standing there in your holy vocation, to minister from God to others, and bring others and their needs to God. What is true in prayer and intercession in that way (which is the great vocation of the church) is true in many other ways. We are here in this tremendous vocation — the individual or the local company standing there, not as an end in itself, but there between high heaven and Almighty God, and that city, and that neighbourhood, to minister God, to meet need out from God. Oh, what we could do if only we recognized our anointing!

The Ministry of the Prophet

I must leave that there, and pass quickly to the third and last of these aspects of the great vocation of the anointing — that is, that of the prophet. Again, the Bible opens up quite naturally along that third line: the prophet, anointed! Jesus was anointed King first, then He was anointed Priest. It was under and by that anointing that He went forward in a daily sacrifice unto the great consummate sacrifice of the Cross. The Great Priest offering Himself to God! What is true of His kingship, royalty and dominion, is true of His priesthood, as Mediator between God and man, is true in this third aspect, as Prophet. He was anointed as Prophet of the Lord; He gathered up into Himself the Old Testament line of prophetic meaning. “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you as he raised me up”, said Moses. And all the way through they were not only seeing and hearing their prophets, they were waiting for *the* Prophet! When Jesus came, and He asked, “Whom do men say that I am?”, some said, “*The* Prophet” that one of whom Moses spoke, ‘A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you; *this is* the prophet!’ Ah, but He was more so than they thought, far more so. By the anointing He was that; but what is the function of the prophet? It is to recall and recover all that has been lost, which is of God for His people; to recall the people to that, which necessitates seeing what it is that God wants; and to recover that which was lost and bring it back! A tremendous vocation! And dear friends, oh, that you would realise that in your local company, this is what you are supposed to be there for — to recall, and to recover! It means that as a company you must know what it is that God has ever been after, and that the people of God have lost. There must be within you, as it was within the prophets, a travail to get it back, and to get the people back. It is a vocation to proclaim and enunciate the whole counsel of God; that is the prophetic function. And if we are to take Jeremiah as any kind of indication, “to pluck up and to plant”, to have to root up is perhaps the most difficult aspect of prophetic work: “Every plant which my Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.” Look at Jesus doing the uprooting of the false thing which had not been planted of His Father. It is difficult work to do, and there is a destructive aspect to the prophetic ministry that will not tolerate that which man has put in the place of God. Those things which man has put in the place of God have to be rooted out. On the other hand, it is not all destructive, there is also planting to be done. We are wherever we are for this and it requires the anointing. It is a big thing to be in the anointing of Christ; it is no less a thing than the fulfilment of the whole divine revelation of the Scriptures from Adam to the end. Anointed for that!

But this is what will happen, and this is what makes it simple even if it sounds complex and difficult. This is exactly what will spontaneously happen if we are moving under the anointing. These things will happen, they will be the very nature of our being where we are, how it will work out. There will be a vetoing and a nullifying and a rooting out of things which are not of the Lord; and there will a planting of what is of God. I do not have to try to bring all these things about, and do them. What you and I have to do is to

live in the power of the anointing, and they will just happen! Oh then, for more anointed individuals, or more living in the power of the anointing, more local companies like that! Perhaps the Lord is just saying this to us to remind us, to pull us up over this whole matter, and show us that we are not here just to drag out a painful existence, and try to keep going to the end. The anointing means something more than that! It means spiritual and moral ascendancy; it means being God's vehicle of supply; it means recall and recovery as to all that God ever meant for His people.

Chapter 5: The Gospel of God's Grace

Reading: Luke 4:16-37

The Gospel of Grace

And so now we are to be occupied with the anointing in relation to the good tidings, that which we call the gospel. As you see, Luke puts this incident very early in the ministry of Christ. It would seem that the Lord had visited Capernaum; perhaps He had taken in Cana of Galilee, but had come very soon to Nazareth. Luke, in his record, wants to make clear that the Lord Jesus, at the very beginning of His great ministry of preaching and teaching, in the very first sermon that He preached, struck the note of grace. The whole subsequent score, the great harmony of the gospel, would be tuned to that keynote of grace! It was Luke's particular object to record the gospel of grace. He differs from the other writers of the gospels, particularly in that matter. Matthew will give us the gospel of the kingdom. It is not a different gospel, but it emphasises that particular aspect of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. Others will have their own particular object in writing, but Luke knew what he was after. So his gospel, in a peculiar way, was tuned to this great initial keynote — grace! It is Luke who alone writes of the Prodigal Son, that great story of grace; of the lost sheep, of the lost coin; and sets over the whole of this gospel, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." It is the gospel of grace, and so he puts the Lord Jesus here, as at the beginning, and records this: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings."

Grace is here. It is mentioned actually in that word once, but it is there in the original language covered by another English translation: "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord". Many of you will know that the original text is: 'the year of grace', the year of divine grace! That is what comes out here particularly. This is a sermon on the grace of God, recorded by Luke and made the foundation of all the ministry and work of the Lord Jesus. Grace was declared to be the object of the anointing, *the* thing for which Jesus was anointed. The very anointing of the Spirit then has grace as the object! For this dispensation, referred to as 'the year', *the* year which began when Jesus came, and will end when He returns. It is a long day; it is proving to be much longer than anybody expected. It is not a day of hours, but a day of centuries, nevertheless bounded by a beginning and an end. The character of this dispensation in which you and I live, this 'day', is grace, good news as to the grace of God!

Well, to begin with, Jesus said that He was anointed to *preach* good tidings. Grace is proclaimed and proclaimed with a mighty context. There is a twofold background to this declaration of the Lord Jesus, under the direction of the anointing Spirit. Firstly there is the background of Isaiah 61. Now, if you turn back to that chapter from which this prophecy is taken, you will find its connection there, that is, its literal and actual

connection of this very prophecy. And it is the prophet Isaiah who, in the first place, is speaking of himself; he is not, in the first instance thinking of the coming Messiah. He is saying of himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He (the Lord) hath anointed me to preach good tidings." Isaiah was the preacher of the gospel then. But notice the setting. The setting in Isaiah's day was the ending of the captivity of the Lord's people in Babylon. For seventy long, weary years they had been in exile because of their sin. After lengthy pleadings, entreaties, warnings and beseechings, they still went their own way. The prophet said: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Because of their persistence in their 'own way', and not in the way of the Lord, at last the threatened judgement had fallen upon them. They had been carried away into exile, into bondage, and, according to the prescribed time, they languished there for seventy years.

Exile in Babylon

Whatever may have been true of some, who may have settled down, and sought to make the best of the situation, or even to have a good time with all that Babylon could offer, there were those who never did so. There was a considerable body of those exiles who longed for home, who said: 'This is not home; we are in a foreign country; this is not the place to which we belong; this is not our life!' A little glimpse into how they felt is given us in such words as: "We hung our harps upon the willows, and said, How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?" No song in a strange land! They were a people in bondage; a people in weakness; a people deprived and stripped of everything that was really theirs by the will of God; bruised in spirit; imprisoned in body; blinded by frustration and disappointment; with an eternal longing in their hearts: 'Oh, to get back home!' Then the day came, the dawn of a day broke, and a sound is heard like a trumpet call; the prophet is crying: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ... the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings ...". What are the good tidings? "... sent me to proclaim release to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the year of grace of the Lord!" And can you imagine what those captives felt like when that morning they heard the cry: 'The day of your release has come!' You can 'go home', you can have all that for which your heart has longed these many years? You are free!!

That is the first background that Jesus takes up, and says: 'Yes, but My good news is even better than that. This world is like that; you men and women are like that; you are exiles from your heavenly home, far from the Father's house, in bondage and captivity. The god of this age hath blinded your eyes; you are in a pitiable plight, more pitiable even than those exiles in Babylon. But listen! I have come with good news! This is the year of the Lord's release; this is the year of grace!' It was this gospel that He was anointed to preach. That is the first background of this wonderful first sermon of the Lord Jesus. And before I pass from that, I want to remind you that He said: "This day is

this fulfilled” — this day! “In your ears” — it is fulfilled. While there is no doubt in the first place that He was referring to that particular sabbath day in the synagogue at Nazareth, spiritually, it ushered in the day of release for all mankind.

The Year of Jubilee

But there is a second background, familiar to many of you. It is the background of the great festival in Israel, known as the Year of Jubilee. Once every fifty years in the life of Israel, a great festival took place, and it lasted for a whole year. During the fifty years, many a tragedy had been enacted; many a dark shadow had come in to spoil and blight the lives of the people. Here is a poor family, unable to meet its liabilities and pay its debts, and so under the law, this could be exacted in some way. A mortgage could be taken on their property; their inheritance of fields could be taken away and used to raise the crops and pay their debts, and they would get nothing out of it. A son in a family could be taken and put to false labour, and get no wages, to pay the debt. People during the fifty years were having that sort of experience.

And then, in the fiftieth year, the Year of Jubilee, what happened? With the first streaks of dawn on that first day of the Year of Jubilee, the trumpets of Jubilee were sounded! And those who kept the sons in bondage had to go to them and say: ‘You can go home! I can keep you no longer; it is the Year of Jubilee; it is the year of release; I no longer have any power to keep you.’ Use your imagination — the family at home, on this festal morn, preparing the home, and scanning the horizon for the return of that son who had been kept as a hostage against their debt. Many a home, many a broken family mended on that day. And the lawyer has to write across the Deed of Mortgage: ‘Cancelled!’ and send it to the poor people whose inheritance had been taken away. All that sort of thing was happening all over the land; it was the Year of Jubilee! All slaves must be released! All properties must be returned! Everything under judgment must be freed! And listen! What is that sound? The keys are turning in the cells of prisoners, and gates of the prison courts are being opened, and the jailers are saying: ‘You can all go now; it is the Year of Jubilee!’

That is the background that the Lord Jesus takes up, and says: ‘Do you think that was good news to the land, to those homes, to those people? Good news? When they heard those Trumpets of Jubilee, do you think they rejoiced? Indeed they did! But I have a better gospel than that! The gospel, the Good News that I have come to preach and proclaim, is better than the return from Babylon’s exile, and better even than the Year of Jubilee! It is the gospel of the grace of God, of eternal salvation. Yes, He has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor. Yes, the poor!’ It was a bad thing to be poor in Israel; the creditor could come and take away your son, your home or your land.

“He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the year of grace of the Lord.” So it

was proclaimed, with a tremendous background. But (and I don't think I am reading anything into this) what the Lord Jesus really did mean, and what it has proved to mean in this long-drawn-out day is, that what came with Him by the anointing is a better thing than Israel had in getting back to the land, and leaving Babylon; and a better thing even than they had in their Year of Jubilee once in fifty years. Fifty years may be a lifetime, but it is not eternity! What He came to give was eternal salvation.

We could dwell long upon the details: the prisoners and the blind people, the bruised people, and poverty; they all have a spiritual counterpart. But the sermon is not finished. Suddenly, a strange turn in the course of His discourse carries us away back into ancient Israel in the days of the two great prophets, Elijah and Elisha. And He says, as we have read: "Of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, and the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, when there came a great famine over the land. Unto none of them was Elijah sent, but unto Zarephath to the land of Sidon, unto a woman who was a widow." I wonder what Elijah would think about that. I don't know whether he knows about it now! He did appear with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration; he may know more than we think he does, but I am quite sure that if he knew, or when he does know, he will get a bit of a surprise that the Lord Jesus took that incident and used it in this way. What would Elijah say? 'Well, a terrible time followed my declaration that there would be no rain upon the earth by the space of three years and six months. There were many poor widows in Israel. But the Lord would never let me go to any of those poor widows to help them! However one day the Lord told me to go right outside the land of Israel altogether, to the land of Sidon, to a poor woman who was a widow. I had to go.' Well, we know what happened there. Elijah would say: 'I never realised what I was doing at that time! What was the meaning of it in God's mind?' The Lord Jesus has uncovered the hidden meaning of this. In the land of Israel they think they have a right to everything — of course they are *the* people! They have the oracles; they have the revelation; they have the commandments; they have all that which God gave at Sinai. They have it all; they are the people who have a right to everything! Self-satisfied, self-important — under judgment because of their pride and arrogance! They therefore are not suitable subjects of grace! You will never know the grace of God if you have any kind of mentality like that. You have to be like a poor widow who is regarded as an outsider, and you will know grace then. Now, it was a discovery for even Elijah, that he was enacting under the direction of the Spirit of God. He was enacting the gospel of grace in this sense that it is to those who are aware of their need, really conscious that if they are going to get anything at all, it will have to be the grace of God! Only people who have no sense whatever of merit in themselves, of right to anything at all, can speak like that: 'Tis mercy all, immense and free.' And it was a poor widow in the land of Sidon who came to know the gospel of the grace of God.

But the Lord Jesus does not finish there: "There were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha the prophet." Elisha had the anointing; he could, by the anointing, have

cleansed all the lepers in Israel, but he was not allowed to go to any of them. This took place in Israel when Israel was not in the state to know the grace of God. However there was one man who was a foreigner, an outsider altogether, Naaman the leper! And to him alone was Elisha sent and he, alone, an outsider, was cleansed of his leprosy by Elisha. The Lord Jesus is putting enormous emphasis upon this! The true gospel is the gospel of grace. On the one side, you have no place in this acceptable year of the Lord, this year of the Lord's release, this year of grace, and all that it means if you can still hope to find what you are after in any other direction than the grace of God. You are simply ruled out! On the other side, if you are such as the widow of Zarephath or Naaman the Syrian who is led and governed by this sense of poverty and sinfulness, you are the candidate for the gospel, the good news of the grace of God. And I think Elisha would be a bit surprised if he knew that what he did concerning Naaman the Syrian was going to be taken up by the Lord Jesus centuries after, and used as an illustration of the grace of God. He was enacting the very gospel of grace!

Grace Proclaimed in Nazareth

That gospel is proclaimed, illustrated and set forth in this vivid and forceful way by the Lord Jesus. But such is the heart of man, and how it is born out there in Nazareth. Here it is! By the anointing He is proclaiming the good news, the gospel of grace, the Year of Jubilee, the Year of the Lord's release! And they are not prepared to number themselves with the poor and blind and the imprisoned and the needy ones; they still stand on their religious dignity as *the* people, with the result that they reject Him who brought the good news of grace, and would destroy Him! Such is the heart of man; that is what men will do. They may go to church every Sunday, and in their religion say, 'God be merciful unto us! And God be merciful to me a sinner!' But you meet them immediately afterwards, and you say, 'Hello, you miserable sinner!' And see what will happen to you! 'Oh no, we are not having that!' That is what happened in the synagogue.

The Lord Jesus was trying on the one side to make them see that they were needing the grace of God and on the other side, that that grace of God had come to them that very day in His Person. But, their blindness is so great, and their imprisonment so strong; their exile from God so far, that they will take the very Messenger of grace and destroy Him if they can. Grace rejected! I am not surprised that Nathanael said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" That is Nazareth! But the Lord Jesus knew His own native town, the state of things there; He knew those people, their pride, prejudice and bigotry. (He had lived there thirty years.) This very sermon shows that He knew it and yet He makes that the very first place of His preaching of the grace of God! Marvellous, isn't it? We would say: That is the place to be left; never go there preaching good news; they will not have it! Indeed, you will find that they will more than reject it, they will reject you! Nevertheless...

The Son of God knew when He came into this world what a reception He would have: “He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not.” He knew when He came here that He would not be received. But He came! “Tis mercy all immense and free! But that is not the end of the story. Oh yes, they led Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built that they might throw Him down headlong ... “He came to Capernaum, a city of Galilee ... He was teaching on the Sabbath day. And there was in the synagogue a man which had a spirit of an unclean demon ... ”. You know the rest. How does this really finish? Like this: “There went forth a rumour concerning Him in every place of the region round about”!

Grace has been proclaimed; grace has been illustrated; grace has been rejected ... but that is not the end. Here grace is triumphant at last! There in Capernaum, grace triumphs. A poor devil-ridden, dominated creature is delivered! The people marvel at this and a rumour of Him went through all the region! What kind of a rumour do you think this was? What they marvelled at was grace: grace coming from His lips; grace coming from His hands; grace coming from His presence. Grace! “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to ... ” those who need grace — that is what it amounts to! Those who need it? Ah, no, those who *know* they need it! Their only hope is the grace of God! **“The year of grace” - “The year of release” - “The year of Jubilee”!**

Dear friends, that is the effect of the anointing. The Holy Spirit has assumed responsibility for that! It is the gospel of the grace of God. If you and I come under the Holy Spirit’s unction, we shall ourselves be children of the grace of God, and we shall be those whose supreme note, to which all life is tuned, will be: Grace, grace, marvellous grace!

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