

## Chasing the Anointing

I've received many questions concerning what is called "chasing the anointing of the Lord." This happens when a person follows after first one and then another and then another of those who manifest a special grace or anointing for signs in their ministries. I'm asked what is the fruit of such activities? What about the confusing messages administered verbally and through actions by those ministers while practicing in seemingly anointed ministry? There is a lot of expression in some circles about "seeking an open heaven experience" in order to some how go to a higher level in the spirit. This higher level is sought for various reasons such as to become closer to God or solve all ones earthly problems. I have witnessed this to some extent and have heard much more through inquiring people.

I grew up in a different time. One might say it was a time like 1 Samuel 3:1, "when the word of the Lord was rare." When I got out on my own and began to seek the voice of the Lord, there was no one to teach me. I had, in fact, been taught earlier that it was not even available to hear the voice of the Lord. We had been taught that all manifestations of the spirit including miracles and revelation ceased to be available when the last of the apostles died, or if not then than certainly when the canon of scripture was closed. However, I was ready to really step out of the rut and find out for my self if these things were true. As an analogy this time might be likened to the "dry time" of the depression era and then moving into the financial abundance of today. We can not fully understand what it was like for people during the depression. Yet they paid the price for us to have what we now often take for granted. Similarly, we can not understand all that the Christians who have gone before us have been through, but they did "plow the field."

Just as true, it is remarkable to me the experiences that some of the new crop of spiritual men are having. Some of these younger ministers and believers are stepping into a anointing that was only dreamed of by some in the past. But the fore-runners "went ahead and plowed the hard ground." Some are now having heavenly experiences that just a few short years ago were almost unheard of and some of these same people have only just come to the Lord in the past few years.

The anointing is very attractive to people. But the Bible says nothing about the anointing pleasing God. It clearly says that it takes faith to please Him (Heb 1:6). In the healing revival of the 50's there were many men and women with the anointing. But, when the anointing was removed by the Lord, only a few could continue their ministries with faith alone. Many fell when the anointing was lifted. A number of well known ministers from

that period were able to re-adjust, continue on, and bring much blessing to the Body of Christ. I also believe they pleased God. If I can adapt something from the “Unsinkable Molly Brown”, “I have ministered under the anointing and I have ministered without the anointing, and I’m here to tell you under the anointing is better”. I very much desire the anointing. But the anointing is not guaranteed. It’s our job to use the anointing when it is supplied to grow in faith, which is pleasing to God.

Some individuals who travel to many more conferences than I, have expressed strong concerns about what is sometimes presented. Many have expressed concerns because some of the things being witnessed are feared to be dangerously close to witchcraft and new age. Let me explain a little about heavenly experiences.

I was thinking of the spiritual experiences of the early fathers. Peter had some of the most strategic heavenly experiences, experiences which continue to have effects upon the Christian church to this day. Yet when speaking of his experience with Jesus, Moses, Elijah and the Heavenly Father on the mount he told us that the written scripture is “our more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet 1:19). The apostle Paul likewise had tremendous experiences in the third heaven. Yet he was very humble about recording these, saying that he did not feel free to write about them (2 Cor 12:4). He also said that he needed to be careful about boasting about his experiences (vs 5) something that I believe we should take heed to. I believe that the posture that both Peter and Paul are patterning for us is one of humility and the fear of the Lord. Romans 12:16 states, “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion”. The scriptures clearly say to associate with humble people, and this has been my goal. I have been astonished in my years how difficult it is for some people to discern true humility. It has been said that the more pride a person is willing to allow in their life, the less able they are to recognize true humility.

It is the written word which makes known Christ to us and it is paramount to a successful Christian experience. Peter said that the written word was our confirming word of prophecy. But it takes time to receive the word of the Lord through the scriptures. The Holy Spirit guides us and teaches us and makes known Christ through the pages of the Word. This is the foundation which all prophecy and prophetic experiences must rest upon. I have seen examples in my years of some who had great gifting and anointing, but lost it all for lack of a well laid biblical foundation. Even true prophesy must be balanced with the truth of the prophetic word. The Lord expects us to know what is written and how to apply it correctly. After all, Jesus had some very important supernatural visitations in the wilderness to which He needed to respond with “it is written.” Without a strong foundation of the word there can not be strong discernment (Ps 119:125; Prov 1:1-7). Without discernment we are susceptible to being blown around by the winds of the

seasons of men (Eph 4:14). Of course the fear of the Lord also is pursued through achieving that same biblical foundation and there is no substitute for that.

There is something that comes with the experience and learning of being tried and tested. I know of one minister who began his ministry with such an anointing that he gathered crowds of people almost from the beginning. Yet when he was hosted in an area that was not as densely populated he was disappointed in what he thought was a low turn-out. This actually was a good showing for the area, but he had experienced such large crowds from the start that he had little experience for smaller groups. Jesus ministered to smaller groups more deeply than to large groups. No matter who you are there will be times when the crowds don't turn out, or a good showing for a particular area will be smaller than in other areas. It is usually true that it is easier to feel anointed when there are a lot of people, but I see Jesus being as apostolic with the smaller groups as he was evangelistic with the large. We really need all ministries released to the body of Christ, and they all do not manifest equally under all circumstances.

Jesus gave a lesson about judging (discerning) ministries. He said we would know by the fruit. However, it took me a long time and much heart searching to learn to discern the fruit of the minister, and not of the ministry! Let me explain. Early on when I would see signs, wonders, and healings in a particular ministry I would consider that good fruit. So I felt free to follow or support that particular minister. However, as one who is in ministry, I often see things that others don't get to see. From that vantage point I have been disappointed, and even burned a few times by trusting in this type of fruit. I kept seeking the Lord, and have come to the conclusion that I did not have an understanding of what He meant about the fruit. I had to learn to discern by looking for a different kind of fruit – the fruit of the minister, not of his ministry. The fruit of the minister's spirit is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal 5:22, 23). Some of the things I witnessed just did not fall into the category of the fruit of the spirit.

There is something to be said for "an inheritance gained hastily at the beginning will not be blessed at the end" (Prov 20:22). Once while ministering in an Asian nation I had the misfortune to come into an area a short time after a well known minister had been there from the USA. He had left some bad feelings and a bad witness behind. He had actually checked out of his hotel and booked a flight home without letting his host know, or properly canceling any of his meetings. When he was finally located and asked what was going on he said that his gift and anointing were not being appreciated since his offering was too small. This same man fell into sexual sin of a grievous nature a few years later which became quite a scandal to the Body of Christ. A lot of prophetic folks who were closely related to him were in a position of wondering why they didn't see this coming.

Had I been motivated by anointing or what seemed like external success, I may have done just that. However, by this time I had come to a place where I no longer discerned a ministry based upon the supernatural wonders which were apparent, wonderful though they were. The fruit which was most apparent to me in this person was not the fruit of the spirit but that of boasting and pride in his anointing. So I took the Lord's advice about discerning according to the fruit. I think it was Einstein who said that there were few things more dangerous than premature success. I believe this is why the apostle Paul exhorted us not to put a novice into leadership because they are extremely susceptible to becoming puffed up (1 Tim 3:6). Of course, there are exceptions to just about every guideline. Paul put both Timothy and Titus into important positions, but it was clear that they were in a disciplined, defined relationship with him as a spiritual father to them.

This leads me to a related point on spiritual fatherhood. We may really have missed the boat on this one. It's true that some other cultures do show more respect for their elders. But they also have their own problems, like so much violence against everyone that the few who make it to "old age" are rare and therefore precious. We are so blessed with health and life (comparatively) that we sometimes take life and experience that comes with it for granted. So even after all these years we still "have not many fathers" (1 Cor 4:15). Just as there are fewer who seek faith compared to those who seek the anointing, there are more who seek teachers than there are those who are open to spiritual parenting. Being discipled comes with a higher cost and commitment, as does being a spiritual parent. But the bible clearly gives credit where effort is put forth by giving promise and blessings to those whom will honor their parents, be they natural or spiritual. There is a difference between obeying and honoring. Also a difference between obeying and submitting. There may be some laws which a Christian can not obey, but as a Christian a person must submit (honor) them. We must always acknowledge the authority which is delegated. One must just make a choice, understanding that there may be a price to pay for not obeying. But if it is done with the proper heart, it is not rebellion, which of course the Lord disdains.

There also is a difference between rebellion (stubbornness) and determination. Those who have determination will show it through their faith. As their faith becomes full they are pleasing to God as faithful. I am finding that there is great need for understanding in the body of Christ on how to properly honor and treat a spiritual father. As an example, Jesus said that if we want to be great, we must become a servant. As it has been said, "the way up is the way down". It is not a rare thing to witness self-promotion of ministry gifts today. Paul clearly said that "God has displayed the apostles last." Those desiring to manifest true apostolic ministry should keep this in mind. Conversely, however, in teaching the church in Corinth about church order he said, "God has appointed these in the church: first apostles" (1 Cor 12:28 – emphasis mine). How do these two seemingly opposite positions, expressed by the same writer, fit with one another? I think they have to be taken in context. It is needful that those endeavoring to function apostolically to

place themselves last. But if the church wants the benefit of apostolic ministry the church is going to have to accept them as first in honor or respect. I suppose it is up to the teachers to bring this forth, because if it is left to the budding apostolic ministries it may justly cause concern over motivation. It is the same with spiritual fatherhood. One must be low in order to truly have the proper attitude, yet a father must be honored, submitted to, if he is going to function as such. It is only the son who understands this and gives honor where honor is due who will reap the benefits. (I use the word "son" here in the biblical sense of a child eligible for an inheritance, not in the sense of gender, since either a male or female may be a spiritual "son"). In this light both of the sons in the parable of the Prodigal missed the opportunity offered to them. The father said "all that I have is yours," but neither truly received the benefits of what was available to be used on behalf of the father and others. There are those today who want to be different and receive the honor that the Lord gives to those who learn to recognize and honor their fathers.

There is a great biblical blessing which comes to those who follow after those who have set an example of faith and humility (Heb 12:1). The scripture tells us clearly to "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb 6:12). Clearly the anointing can come and go at times and in seasons, but faith always makes a way and pleases God. We can discern this through the fruit which is produced, and Jesus said that the sign of a true disciple was to produce spiritual fruit that would remain. There is an old Japanese proverb that states - "if you want to know the character of a man, look at his friends." Those who have truly befriended the Lord will always manifest the fruit of the spirit, regardless of the presence of the anointing. The greater the challenge that is ahead for a person, the greater the impartation and anointing that is required at the beginning; but it is faith that pleases God. One of the main reasons that the Lord gives the anointing is so we may grow in faith. It is often said, "the anointing breaks the yoke." But the Lord is very interested in what we do once the yoke is removed, and this is to produce fruit. I am among those who encourage the people of God to earnestly desire the best gifts - yet never forget the more excellent way (1 Cor 13:1). As we are chasing the anointing, keep in mind the more excellent way which is to have the fruit of Love. I like to say that our gift will make room for us, but what we do when we enter the room is determined by our character. Keep in mind it is not possible to have our destiny imparted to us. We must strive to achieve it by faith and relationship with the Lord. The Gifts and the anointing are given; the Fruit of the Spirit is produced through maturity.