



~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing



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Worship Music

Prayer

Lord, I am so glad You don't choose only the intellectually brilliant. You are looking for anyone who has a heart to be used by You. Well, that's me, Lord. I want You to use me. I offer You everything I have—my good points, my weak points, my gifts, my talents, and everything else that I am. I want You to use me for Your glory. I've told You before, but today I'm telling You again that I want You to take my life and do something wonderful with me, fill me with Your will for me and plans in Jesus' name. Amen.

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If you have a prayer request...please e-mail it to us so we can pray for you...or a person.....

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1 The LORD told Joshua, "Don't be afraid and don't panic! 1 Take the whole army with you and march against Ai! 2 See, I am handing over to you 3 the king of Ai, along with his people, city, and land. 2 Do to Ai and its king what you did to Jericho 1 and its king, except you may plunder its goods and cattle. Set an ambush behind the city!" 3 Joshua and the whole army marched against Ai. 1 Joshua selected thirty thousand brave warriors and sent them out at night. 4 He told them, "Look, set an ambush behind the city. Don't go very far from the city; all of you be ready! note 5 I and all the troops who are with me will approach the city. When they come out to fight us like before, we will retreat from them. 6 They will attack us until we have lured them from the city, for they will say, 'They are retreating from us like before.' We will retreat from them. 7 Then you rise up from your hiding place and seize the city. The LORD your God will hand it over to you. 8 When you capture the city, set it on fire. Do as the LORD says! See, I have given you orders." 9 Joshua sent them away and they went to their hiding place west of Ai, between Bethel and Ai. Joshua spent that night with the army. 10 Bright and early the next morning Joshua gathered the army, and he and the leaders of Israel marched at the head of it to Ai. 11 All the troops that were with him marched up and drew near the city. They camped north of Ai on the other side of the valley. 12 He took five thousand men and set an ambush west of the city between Bethel and Ai. 13 The army was in position – the main army north of the city and the rear guard west of the city. That night Joshua went into the middle of the valley. 14 When the king of Ai saw Israel, he and his whole army quickly got up the next day and went out to fight Israel at the meeting place near the Arabah. But he did not realize men were hiding behind the city. 15 Joshua and all Israel pretended to be defeated by them and they retreated along the way to the desert. 16 All the reinforcements in Ai were ordered to chase them; they chased Joshua and were lured away from the city. 17 No men were left in Ai or Bethel; they all went out after Israel. They left the city wide open and chased Israel. 18 The LORD told Joshua, "Hold out toward Ai the curved sword in your hand, for I am handing the city over to you." So Joshua held out toward Ai the curved sword in his hand. 19 When he held out his hand, the men waiting in ambush rose up quickly from their place and attacked. They entered the city, captured it, and immediately set it on fire. 20 When the men of Ai turned around, they saw the smoke from the city ascending into the sky and were so shocked they were unable to flee in any direction. In the meantime the men who were retreating to the desert turned against their pursuers. 21 When Joshua and all Israel saw that the men in ambush had captured the city and that the city was going up in smoke, they turned around and struck down the men of Ai. 22 At the same time the men who had taken the city came out to fight, and the men of Ai were trapped in the middle. The Israelites struck them down, leaving no survivors or refugees. 23 But they captured the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua. 24 When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai who had chased them toward the desert (they all fell by the sword), all Israel returned to Ai and put the sword to it. 25 Twelve thousand men and women died that day, including all the men of Ai. 26 Joshua kept holding out his curved sword until Israel had annihilated all who lived in Ai. 27 But Israel did plunder the cattle and the goods of the city, in accordance with the LORD's orders to Joshua. 28 Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanently uninhabited mound (it remains that way to this very day). 29 He hung the king of Ai on a tree, leaving him exposed until evening. At sunset Joshua ordered that his corpse be taken down from the tree. They threw it down at the entrance of the city gate and erected over it a large pile of stones (it remains to this very day). 30 Then Joshua built an altar for the LORD God of Israel on Mount Ebal, 31 just as Moses the LORD's servant had commanded the Israelites. As described in the law scroll of Moses, it was made with uncut stones untouched by an iron tool. They offered burnt sacrifices on it and sacrificed tokens of peace. 32 There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua inscribed on the stones a duplicate of the law written by Moses. 33 All the people, rulers, leaders, and judges were standing on either side of the ark, in front of the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD. Both resident foreigners and native Israelites were there. Half the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and the other half in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the LORD's servant had previously instructed to them to do for the formal blessing ceremony. 34 Then Joshua read aloud all the words of the law, including the blessings and the curses, just as they are written in the law scroll. 35 Joshua read aloud every commandment Moses had given before the whole assembly of Israel, including the women, children, and resident foreigners who lived among them.

Then they went back to Ai, now this time under the direction of the Lord. Joshua sent part of the army around the other side of the city to hide in ambush. And then he said, "We'll come to the city like before and attack it with a frontal attack, and then we'll pretend like we are retreating as before. We'll start running and let them chase us. And after they've all come out and chase after us, then you fellows come from your hiding places and take the city."

So Joshua sent some of his troops around behind the city to lie in wait. And so in the morning, he with his troops came up to the gates of the city, and the king came out against them with his men. And Joshua and his men began to retreat. And the king called all of the men out to pursue them, "Let's wipe them out this time". And they began to pursue Joshua and his men. And they began to run back towards Jericho, and then after all of the men were drawn out of the city, Joshua raised his spear, and the men were hiding in wait. When they saw the signal, they came swooping upon the city that was devoid of men. And they set the city afire, and as soon as they saw the smoke from the city rising, then Joshua and his men stood firm and they started to fight, and these fellows turned around. And they saw the city in flames and their heart was gone, no more heart to fight. And the men of Ai, and the city of Ai, and Bethel were then taken by Joshua and by his troops. Guided now by the Lord, they are successful.

Doing it and trying to do it by their own ingenuity they failed, by their own abilities. But now directed by God they experienced the victory.

So they came then to Mount Ebal, they moved on through. Now we're on about the middle of the land. Mount Gerezim and Mount Ebal, and there as they were commanded to do "When you come into the land you're to stand there in the valley, you're to read the law of the Lord to the people.

And verse thirty-four,

Afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. And there was not a word that Moses commanded, which Joshua did not read before all the congregation of Israel, with the woman, and the little ones, the strangers that were conversant among them (Jos 8:34-35).

So they told them the conditions by which they would be blessed of God, the conditions that would bring the curse of God. The conditions by which they could be established in the land, the conditions by which they would be driven from the land. The blessings, the cursings all conditional upon their obedience to the commandment of the Lord.

So we get next week into chapter nine. Shall we stand?

May the Lord be with you and bless you, give you a good day tomorrow. May He strengthen you by His hand. May your life just really stand out as a unique, beautiful example for Jesus Christ. God keep you from the accursed thing, that could spoil your witness and your testimony. May you enter into a new dimension of relationship with Him, walking after the Spirit, experiencing more and more of the neat joys of the victory of Christ within your life, as He gives you victory in those areas where you have been struggling so long in vain. May you begin to really enter into the glorious victory through the power of God's Spirit. May the Lord be with you and give you and your family just a very special, beautiful day as you celebrate God's love, and the gift of God's love, Jesus Christ. We love you, and we thank God for the privilege of serving you, representing Him, feeding you in the knowledge of Him. What a joy. What a blessing, what a privilege.
(Through The Bible C-2000 Series; 1979-1986; Chuck Smith; OT and NT; Commentaries)

XII. HEART PREPARATION NECESSARY

"For nothing reaches the heart but what is from the heart or pierces the conscience but what comes from a living conscience."--William Penn

"In the morning was more engaged in preparing the head than the heart. This has been frequently my error, and I have always felt the evil of it especially in prayer. Reform it then, O Lord! Enlarge my heart and I shall preach."--Robert Murray McCheyne

"A sermon that has more head infused into it than heart will not borne home with efficacy to the hearers."--Richard Cecil

Prayer, with its manifold and many-sided forces, helps the mouth to utter the truth in its fullness and freedom. The preacher is to be prayed for, the preacher is made by prayer. The preacher's mouth is to be prayed for; his mouth is to be opened and filled by prayer. A holy mouth is made by praying, by much praying; a brave mouth is made by praying, by much praying. The Church and the world, God and heaven, owe much to Paul's mouth; Paul's mouth owed its power to prayer.

How manifold, illimitable, valuable, and helpful prayer is to the preacher in so many ways, at so many points, in every way! One great value is, it helps his heart.

Praying makes the preacher a heart preacher. Prayer puts the preacher's heart into the preacher's sermon; prayer puts the preacher's sermon into the preacher's heart.

The heart makes the preacher. Men of great hearts are great preachers. Men of bad hearts may do a measure of good, but this is rare. The hireling and the stranger may help the sheep at some points, but it is the good shepherd with the good shepherd's heart who will bless the sheep and answer the full measure of the shepherd's place.

We have emphasized sermon-preparation until we have lost sight of the important thing to be prepared--the heart. A prepared heart is much better than a prepared sermon. A prepared heart will make a prepared sermon

Volumes have been written laying down the mechanics and taste of sermon-making, until we have become possessed with the idea that this scaffolding is the building. The young preacher has been taught to lay out all his strength on the form, taste, and beauty of his sermon as a mechanical and intellectual product. We have thereby cultivated a vicious taste among the people and raised the clamor for talent instead of grace, eloquence instead of piety, rhetoric instead of revelation, reputation and brilliancy instead of holiness. By it we have lost the true idea of preaching, lost preaching power, lost pungent conviction for sin, lost the rich experience and elevated Christian character, lost the authority over consciences and lives which always results from genuine preaching.

It would not do to say that preachers study too much. Some of them do not study at all; others do not study enough. Numbers do not study the right way to show themselves workmen approved of God. But our great lack is not in head culture, but in heart culture; not lack of knowledge but lack of holiness is our sad and telling defect--not that we know too much, but that we do not meditate on God and his word and watch and fast and pray enough. The heart is the great hindrance to our preaching. Words pregnant with divine truth find in our hearts nonconductors; arrested, they fall shorn and powerless.

Can ambition, that lusts after praise and place, preach the gospel of Him who made himself of no reputation and took on Him the form of a servant? Can the proud, the vain, the egotistical preach the gospel of him who was meek and lowly? Can the bad-tempered, passionate, selfish, hard, worldly man preach the system which teems with long-suffering, self-denial, tenderness, which imperatively demands separation from enmity and crucifixion to the world? Can the hireling official, heartless, perfunctory, preach the gospel which demands the shepherd to give his life for the sheep? Can the covetous man, who counts salary and money, preach the gospel till he has gleaned his heart and can say in the spirit of Christ and Paul in the words of Wesley: "I count it dung and dross; I trample it under

my feet; I (yet not I, but the grace of God in me) esteem it just as the mire of the streets, I desire it not, I seek it not?" God's revelation does not need the light of human genius, the polish and strength of human culture, the brilliancy of human thought, the force of human brains to adorn or enforce it; but it does demand the simplicity, the docility, humility, and faith of a child's heart.

It was this surrender and subordination of intellect and genius to the divine and spiritual forces which made Paul peerless among the apostles. It was this which gave Wesley his power and radicated his labors in the history of humanity. This gave to Loyola the strength to arrest the retreating forces of Catholicism.

Our great need is heart-preparation. Luther held it as an axiom: "He who has prayed well has studied well." We do not say that men are not to think and use their intellects; but he will use his intellect best who cultivates his heart most. We do not say that preachers should not be students; but we do say that their great study should be the Bible, and he studies the Bible best who has kept his heart with diligence. We do not say that the preacher should not know men, but he will be the greater adept in human nature who has fathomed the depths and intricacies of his own heart. We do say that while the channel of preaching is the mind, its fountain is the heart; you may broaden and deepen the channel, but if you do not look well to the purity and depth of the fountain, you will have a dry or polluted channel. We do say that almost any man of common intelligence has sense enough to preach the gospel, but very few have grace enough to do so. We do say that he who has struggled with his own heart and conquered it; who has taught it humility, faith, love, truth, mercy, sympathy, courage; who can pour the rich treasures of the heart thus trained, through a manly intellect, all surcharged with the power of the gospel on the consciences of his hearers--such a one will be the truest, most successful preacher in the esteem of his Lord.

XIII. GRACE FROM THE HEART RATHER THAN THE HEAD

"Study not to be a fine preacher. Jerichos are blown down with rams' horns. Look simply unto Jesus for preaching food; and what is wanted will be given, and what is given will be blessed, whether it be a barley grain or a wheaten loaf, a crust or a crumb. Your mouth will be a flowing stream or a fountain sealed, according as your heart is. Avoid all controversy in preaching, talking, or writing; preach nothing down but the devil, and nothing up but Jesus Christ."--Berridge

The heart is the Saviour of the world. Heads do not save. Genius, brains, brilliancy, strength, natural gifts do not save. The gospel flows through hearts. All the mightiest forces are heart forces. All the sweetest and loveliest graces are heart graces. Great hearts make great characters; great hearts make divine characters. God is love. There is nothing greater than love, nothing greater than God. Hearts make heaven; heaven is love. There is nothing higher, nothing sweeter, than heaven. It is the heart and not the head which makes God's great preachers. The heart counts much every way in religion. The heart must speak from the pulpit. The heart must hear in the pew. In fact, we serve God with our hearts. Head homage does not pass current in heaven.

We believe that one of the serious and most popular errors of the modern pulpit is the putting of more thought than prayer, of more head than of heart in its sermons. Big hearts make big preachers; good hearts make good preachers. A theological school to enlarge and cultivate the heart is the golden desideratum of the gospel. The pastor binds his people to him and rules his people by his heart. They may admire his gifts, they may be proud of his ability, they may be affected for the time by his sermons; but the stronghold of his power is his heart. His scepter is love. The throne of his power is his heart.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Heads never make martyrs. It is the heart which surrenders the life to love and fidelity. It takes great courage to be a faithful pastor, but the heart alone can supply this courage. Gifts and genius may be brave, but it is the gifts and genius of the heart and not of the head.

It is easier to fill the head than it is to prepare the heart. It is easier to make a brain sermon than a heart sermon. It was heart that drew the Son of God from heaven. It is heart that will draw men to heaven. Men of heart is what the world needs to sympathize with its woe, to kiss away its sorrows, to compassionate its misery, and to alleviate its pain. Christ was eminently the man of sorrows, because he was preeminently the man of heart.

"Give me thy heart," is God's requisition of men. "Give me thy heart!" is man's demand of man.

A professional ministry is a heartless ministry. When salary plays a great part in the ministry, the heart plays little part. We may make preaching our business, and not put our hearts in the business. He who puts self to the front in his preaching puts heart to the rear. He who does not sow with his heart in his study will never reap a harvest for God. The closet is the heart's study. We will learn more about how to preach and what to preach there than we can learn in our libraries. "Jesus wept" is the shortest and biggest verse in the Bible. It is he who goes forth weeping (not preaching great sermons), bearing precious seed, who shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Praying gives sense, brings wisdom, broadens and strengthens the mind. The closet is a perfect school-teacher and schoolhouse for the preacher. Thought is not only brightened and clarified in prayer, but thought is born in prayer. We can learn more in an hour praying, when praying indeed, than from many hours in the study. Books are in the closet which can be found and read nowhere else. Revelations are made in the closet which are made nowhere else.

XIV. UNCTION A NECESSITY

"One bright benison which private prayer brings down upon the ministry is an indescribable and inimitable something--an unction from the Holy One If the anointing which we bear come not from the Lord of hosts, we are deceivers, since only in prayer can we obtain it. Let us continue instant constant fervent in supplication. Let your fleece lie on the thrashing floor of supplication till it is wet with the dew of heaven."--Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Alexander Knox, a Christian philosopher of the days of Wesley, not an adherent but a strong personal friend of Wesley, and with much spiritual sympathy with the Wesleyan movement, writes: "It is strange and lamentable, but I verily believe the fact to be that except among Methodists and Methodistical clergyman, there is not much interesting preaching in England. The clergy, too generally have absolutely lost the art. There is, I conceive, in the great laws of the moral world a kind of secret understanding like the affinities in chemistry, between rightly promulgated religious truth and the deepest feelings of the human mind. Where the one is duly exhibited, the other will respond. Did not our hearts burn within us?--but to this devout feeling is indispensable in the speaker. Now, I am obliged to state from my own observation that this onction, as the French not unfitly term it, is beyond all comparison more likely to be found in England in a Methodist conventicle than in a parish Church. This, and this alone, seems really to be that which fills the Methodist houses and thins the Churches. I am, I verily think, no enthusiast; I am a most sincere and cordial churchman, a humble disciple of the School of Hale and Boyle, of Burnet and Leighton. Now I must aver that when I was in this country, two years ago, I did not hear a single preacher who taught me like my own great masters but such as are deemed Methodistical. And I now despair of getting an atom of heart instruction from any other quarter. The Methodist preachers (however I may not always approve of all their expressions) do most assuredly diffuse this true religion and undefiled. I felt real pleasure last Sunday. I can bear witness that the preacher did at once speak the words of truth and soberness. There was no eloquence--the honest man never dreamed of such a thing'but there was far better: a cordial communication of vitalized truth. I say vitalized because what he declared to others it was impossible not to feel he lived on himself."This unction is the art of preaching. The preacher who never had this unction never had the art of preaching. The preacher who has lost this unction has lost the art of preaching. Whatever other arts he may have and retain?the art of sermon-making, the art of eloquence, the art of great, clear thinking, the art of pleasing an audience?he has lost the divine art of preaching. This unction makes God's truth powerful and interesting, draws and attracts, edifies, convicts, saves.This unction vitalizes God's revealed truth, makes it living and life-giving. Even God's truth spoken without this unction is light, dead, and deadening. Though abounding in truth, though weighty with thought, though sparkling with rhetoric, though pointed by logic, though powerful by earnestness, without this divine unction it issues in death and not in life. Mr. Spurgeon says: "I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into word what is meant by preaching with unction. Yet he who preaches knows its presence, and he who hears soon detects its absence. Samaria, in famine, typifies a discourse without it. Jerusalem, with her feast of fat things, full of marrow, may represent a sermon enriched with it. Every one knows what the freshness of the morning is when orient pearls abound on every blade of grass, but who can describe it, much less produce it of itself? Such is the mystery of spiritual anointing. We know, but we cannot tell to others what it is. It is as easy as it is foolish, to counterfeit it. Unction is a thing which you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless. Yet it is, in itself, priceless, and beyond measure needful if you would edify believers and bring sinners to Christ."

XV. UNCTION, THE MARK OF TRUE GOSPEL PREACHING

"Speak for eternity. Above all things, cultivate your own spirit. A word spoken by you when your conscience is clear and your heart full of God's Spirit is worth ten thousand words spoken in unbelief and sin. Remember that God, and not man, must have the glory. If the veil of the world's machinery were lifted off, how much we would find is done in answer to the prayers of God's children."--Robert Murray McChyne

Unction is that indefinable, indescribable something which an old, renowned Scotch preacher describes thus: "There is sometimes somewhat in preaching that cannot be ascribed either to matter or expression, and cannot be described what it is, or from whence it cometh, but with a sweet violence it pierceth into the heart and affections and comes immediately from the Word; but if there be any way to obtain such a thing, it is by the heavenly disposition of the speaker."We call it unction. It is this unction which makes the word of God "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is this unction which gives the words of the preacher such point, sharpness, and power, and which creates such friction and stir in many a dead congregation. The same truths have been told in the strictness of the letter, smooth as human oil could make them; but no signs of life, not a pulse throb; all as peaceful as the grave and as dead. The same preacher in the meanwhile receives a baptism of this unction, the divine inflatus is on him, the letter of the Word has been embellished and fired by this mysterious power, and the throbings of life begin--life which receives or life which resists. The unction pervades and convicts the conscience and breaks the heart.This divine unction is the feature which separates and distinguishes true gospel preaching from all other methods of presenting the truth, and which creates a wide spiritual chasm between the preacher who has it and the one who has it not. It backs and impregns revealed truth with all the energy of God. Unction is simply putting God in his own word and on his own preachers. By mighty and great prayerfulness and by continual prayerfulness, it is all potential and personal to the preacher; it inspires and clarifies his intellect, gives insight and grasp and projecting power; it gives to the preacher heart power, which is greater than head power; and tenderness, purity, force flow from the heart by it. Enlargement, freedom, fullness of thought, directness and simplicity of utterance are the fruits of this unction.Often earnestness is mistaken for this unction. He who has the divine unction will be earnest in the very spiritual nature of things, but there may be a vast deal of earnestness without the least mixture of unction.Earnestness and unction look alike from some points of view. Earnestness may be readily and without detection substituted or mistaken for unction. It requires a spiritual eye and a spiritual taste to discriminate.Earnestness may be sincere, serious, ardent, and persevering. It goes at a thing with good will, pursues it with perseverance, and urges it with ardor; puts force in it. But all these forces do not rise higher than the mere human. The man is in it--the whole man, with all that he has of will and heart, of brain

and genius, of planning and working and talking. He has set himself to some purpose which has mastered him, and he pursues to master it. There may be none of God in it. There may be little of God in it, because there is so much of the man in it. He may present pleas in advocacy of his earnest purpose which please or touch and move or overwhelm with conviction of their importance; and in all this earnestness may move along earthly ways, being propelled by human forces only, its altar made by earthly hands and its fire kindled by earthly flames. It is said of a rather famous preacher of gifts, whose construction of Scripture was to his fancy or purpose, that he "grew very eloquent over his own exegesis." So men grow exceeding earnest over their own plans or movements. Earnestness may be selfishness simulated.

XVI. MUCH PRAYER THE PRICE OF UNCTION

"All the minister's efforts will be vanity or worse than vanity if he have not unction. Unction must come down from heaven and spread a savor and feeling and relish over his ministry; and among the other means of qualifying himself for his office, the Bible must hold the first place, and the last also must be given to the Word of God and prayer."--Richard Cecil

In the Christian system unction is the anointing of the Holy Ghost, separating unto God's work and qualifying for it. This unction is the one divine enablement by which the preacher accomplishes the peculiar and saving ends of preaching. Without this unction there are no true spiritual results accomplished; the results and forces in preaching do not rise above the results of unsanctified speech. Without unction the former is as potent as the pulpit. This divine unction on the preacher generates through the Word of God the spiritual results that flow from the gospel; and without this unction, these results are not secured. Many pleasant impressions may be made, but these all fall far below the ends of gospel preaching. This unction may be simulated. There are many things that look like it, there are many results that resemble its effects; but they are foreign to its results and to its nature. The fervor or softness excited by a pathetic or emotional sermon may look like the movements of the divine unction, but they have no pungent, penetrating heart-breaking force. No heart-healing balm is there in these surface, sympathetic, emotional movements; they are not radical, neither sin-searching nor sin-curing. This divine unction is the one distinguishing feature that separates true gospel preaching from all other methods of presenting truth. It backs and interpenetrates the revealed truth with all the force of God. It illumines the Word and broadens and enriches the intellect and empowers it to grasp and apprehend the Word. It qualifies the preacher's heart, and brings it to that condition of tenderness, of purity, of force and light that are necessary to secure the highest results. This unction gives to the preacher liberty and enlargement of thought and soul--a freedom, fullness, and directness of utterance that can be secured by no other process. Without this unction on the preacher the gospel has no more power to propagate itself than any other system of truth. This is the seal of its divinity. Unction in the preacher puts God in the gospel. Without the unction, God is absent, and the gospel is left to the low and unsatisfactory forces that the ingenuity, interest, or talents of men can devise to enforce and project its doctrines. It is in this element that the pulpit oftener fails than in any other element. Just at this all-important point it lapses. Learning it may have, brilliancy and eloquence may delight and charm, sensation or less offensive methods may bring the populace in crowds, mental power may impress and enforce truth with all its resources; but without this unction, each and all these will be but as the fretful assault of the waters on a Gibraltar. Spray and foam may cover and spangle; but the rocks are there still, unimpressed and unimpressible. The human heart can no more be swept of its hardness and sin by these human forces than these rocks can be swept away by the ocean's ceaseless flow. This unction is the consecration force, and its presence the continuous test of that consecration. It is this divine anointing on the preacher that secures his consecration to God and his work. Other forces and motives may call him to the work, but this only is consecration. A separation to God's work by the power of the Holy Spirit is the only consecration recognized by God as legitimate. The unction, the divine unction, this heavenly anointing, is what the pulpit needs and must have. This divine and heavenly oil put on it by the imposition of God's hand must soften and lubricate the whole man--heart, head, spirit--until it separates him with a mighty separation from all earthly, secular, worldly, selfish motives and aims, separating him to everything that is pure and Godlike. It is the presence of this unction on the preacher that creates the stir and friction in many a congregation. The same truths have been told in the strictness of the letter, but no ruffle has been seen, no pain or pulsation felt. All is quiet as a graveyard. Another preacher comes, and this mysterious influence is on him; the letter of the Word has been fired by the Spirit, the throes of a mighty movement are felt, it is the unction that pervades and stirs the conscience and breaks the heart. Unctionless preaching makes everything hard, dry, acrid, dead. This unction is not a memory or an era of the past only; it is a present, realized, conscious fact. It belongs to the experience of the man as well as to his preaching. It is that which transforms him into the image of his divine Master, as well as that by which he declares the truths of Christ with power. It is so much the power in the ministry as to make all else seem feeble and vain without it, and by its presence to atone for the absence of all other and feebler forces. This unction is not an inalienable gift. It is a conditional gift, and its presence is perpetuated and increased by the same process by which it was at first secured; by unceasing prayer to God, by impassioned desires after God, by estimating it, by seeking it with tireless ardor, by deeming all else loss and failure without it.

How and whence comes this unction? Direct from God in answer to prayer. Praying hearts only are the hearts filled with this holy oil; praying lips only are anointed with this divine unction. Prayer, much prayer, is the price of preaching unction; prayer, much prayer, is the one, sole condition of keeping this unction. Without unceasing prayer the unction never comes to the preacher. Without perseverance in prayer, the unction, like the manna overkept, breeds worms.

(Power Through Prayer; EM Bounds; Chapter 12-16; Edward McKendree Bounds (August 15, 1835 – August 24, 1913) was a clergyman of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and author of eleven books, nine of which focused on the subject of prayer.)

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 340-341)

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