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Email: info@austin-sparks.net

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The Meaning of the Anointing

by T. Austin-Sparks

*First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazine, May-Jun 1943, Vol. 21-3.
Extract from ["The School of Christ" - Chapter 7.](#)*

What is the meaning of the anointing of the Holy Spirit? It is nothing less and nothing other than the Holy Spirit taking His place as absolute Lord. The anointing carries with it the absolute lordship of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit as Lord. That means that all other lordships have been deposed and set aside; the lordship of our own lives; the lordship of our own minds, our own wills, our own desires; the lordship of others.

The lordship of every interest and every influence is regarded as having given place to the undivided and unreserved lordship of the Holy Spirit, and the anointing can never be known, enjoyed, unless that has taken place. That is why the Lord Jesus went down into Jordan's waters, into death and burial, in type, taking the place of man in representation, from that moment not to be under the government of His own life in any respect as He worked out the will of God, but to be wholly and utterly subject to the Spirit of God in every detail.

Jordan's grave set forth the setting aside of every independent lordship, every other lordship, every other influence, and if you will read the spiritual life of Christ in the Gospels you will see that it was to that position that He was every moment adhering. Many and powerful were the influences which were brought to bear upon Him to affect Him and govern His movements. Sometimes it was the full force of Satan's open assault, to the effect that it was necessary that He should do certain things for His cause, or for His very continuance in life physically. Sometimes it was Satan clothing himself with

the arguments and suasions of beloved associates, in their seeking to hold Him back from certain courses, or to influence Him to prolong His life by sparing Himself certain sufferings.

In various ways influences were brought to bear upon Him from all directions, and many of the counsels were seemingly so wise and good. For example, with regard to His going up to the feast, it was urged, in effect: It is the thing that everybody is doing; if you do not go up you will prejudice your cause. If you really want to further this cause, you must fall into line with the accepted thing religiously, and you only stand to lose if you do not do that; you will curtail your influence, you will narrow your sphere of usefulness! And what an appeal that is if you have something very much at heart, some cause for God at heart, the success of which is of the greatest importance. Such then were the influences that were beating upon Him. But whether it be Satan coming in all the directness of his cunning, his wit, his insinuation, or whether it be through beloved and most intimate disciples and associates, whatever the kind of argument, that Man cannot be caused to deflect a hairsbreadth from His principle. 'I am under the anointing; I am committed to the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and I cannot move, whatever it costs. Cost it my life, cost it my influence, cost it my reputation, cost it everything that I hold dear, I cannot move unless I know from the Holy Spirit that that is the Father's mind and not another mind, the Father's will and not another will, that this thing comes from the Father.' Thus He put back everything until He knew in His spirit what the Spirit of God witnessed. He lived up to this law, this principle, of the absolute authority, government, lordship of the anointing, and it was for that that the anointing had come.

That is the meaning of the anointing. Do you ask for the anointing of the Holy Spirit? Why do you ask for the anointing of the Holy Spirit? Is the anointing something that you crave? To what end? That you may be used, may have power, may have influence, may be able to do a lot of wonderful things? The first and pre-eminent thing the anointing means is that we can do nothing but what the anointing teaches and leads to do. The anointing takes everything out of our hands. The anointing takes charge of the reputation. The anointing takes charge of the very purpose of God. The anointing takes complete control of everything and all is from that moment in the hands of the Holy Spirit, and we must remember that if we are going to learn Christ, that learning Christ is by the Holy Spirit's dealing with us, and that means that we have to go exactly the same way as Christ went in principle and in law.

So we find we are not far into the Gospel of John, which is particularly the Gospel of the spiritual School of Christ, before we hear even such as He saying, "The Son can do nothing of himself". "The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself." The works that I do are not Mine; "the Father abiding in me doeth his works".

"The Son can do nothing out from Himself." You see, there is the negative side of the anointing; while the positive side can be summed up in one word - the Father only. Perhaps that is a little different idea of the anointing from what we have had. Oh, to be anointed of the Holy Spirit! What wonders will follow; how wonderful that life will be! The first and the abiding thing about the anointing is that we are imprisoned into the lordship of the Spirit of God, so that there can be nothing if He does not do it. Nothing! That is not a pleasant experience, if the natural life is strong and in any way in the ascendant. Therefore Jordan must be there before there can be an anointing. The putting aside of that natural strength and self-life is a necessity, for the anointing does carry with it essentially the absolute lordship of the Spirit.

You notice the issue of that in 2 Cor 3:16. "When it shall turn to the Lord", when the Lord is the object in view, "the veil is taken away, and we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed into the same image . . . even as from the Lord the Spirit", or "the Spirit which is the Lord". You are in the School and you can see Christ and learn Christ; which is being transformed into the image of Christ under the lordship of the Spirit. "When it shall turn to the Lord", when the Lord is our object in view! But with us, with us Christians, with us very devoted, very earnest Christians, what a long time it takes to get the Lord as the sole object. Is that saying a terrible thing? We say we love the Lord; yes, but we do love to have our own way as well, and we do not love to have our way thwarted.

Have any of us yet reached that point of spiritual attainment where we never have a bad time at all with the Lord? Oh no, we are still found at the place where we so often think it is in the interests of the Lord that our hearts go out in a certain direction, and the Lord does not let us do it, and we have a bad time; and that has betrayed us absolutely. Our hearts were in it. It was not easy, absolutely easy and simple for us to say, Very well, Lord, I am just as pleased as though you let me do it, I delight always to do Thy will! We are disappointed the Lord does not let us do it; or if the Lord delays it, what a time we go through. Oh, if we could only get at it and do it! The time is finding us out. Is that not true of most of us? Yes, it is true.

We do come into this picture, and that just does mean that, after all, the Lord is not as verily our object as we thought He was. We have another object alongside and associated with the Lord; that is, something that we want to be or to do, somewhere we want to go, something we want to have. It is all there, and the Holy Spirit knows all about it. In this School of Christ, where God's objective is Christ, only Christ, utterly Christ, the very anointing means that it has to be Christ as Lord by the Spirit.