

# **NEEDED – MEN OF GOD**

**Zac Poonen**

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## **PREFACE**

This book contains the substance of a series of messages delivered at the Evangelical Fellowship of India's 20th Anniversary Conference at Vellore in January 1971.

I do not speak here as one who has attained, but as one who is seeking grace from the Lord to press towards the mark, painfully conscious of the fact that I have a long way yet to go.

It has been my conviction that the Word of the Lord must be spoken faithfully, even if in the process the messenger himself is challenged by that Word. I therefore consider these messages as God's Word to my own heart first. They convict me at more than one point.

It pleased the Lord to bless this Word at the Conference because many all over the world were praying. It is now sent forth with the prayer that it may prove a blessing to many more.

The messages are reproduced here in their spoken form.

***Zac Poonen***

*"What the church needs today is nor more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use... The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods but through men. He does not come on machinery but on men. He does not anoint plans but men..."*

*Natural ability and educational advantages do not figure as factors in this matter; but capacity for faith, the ability to pray, the power of thorough consecration, the ability of self-littleness, an absolute losing of one's self in God's glory and an ever-present and insatiable yearning and seeking after all the fullness of God - men who can set the church ablaze for God; not in a noisy showy way, but with an intense and quiet heat that melts and moves every thing for God.*

*God can work wonders if He can get suitable men."*

- E. M. Bounds

## CHAPTER ONE

### MEN OF SPIRITUAL CALIBRE

Throughout the centuries, the men and women whom God has been able to use to rout the forces of darkness, to make a lasting impact upon the heathen for His Name and to establish a testimony for His glory, have always been few in number. The blessings of God are received by many, but the working remnant that labours together with God has always been a small group. Out of Gideon's army of 32,000, God could use only 300. The proportion has been about the same throughout church-history. Few are willing to pay the price of being part of that remnant.

The eyes of the Lord, I believe, are running to and fro throughout our land today looking for such men - men of spiritual calibre - whom He can use to glorify His great Name where it is at present being reproached.

In a similar day in Israel 2500 years ago, when the Name of Jehovah was being dishonoured, God sent a message to His people saying, "The heathen shall know that I am the Lord...when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezek. 36:23). Implied in that message was a promise, but a promise dependent on a condition. The heathen would know that Jehovah was the true God, but only when He was sanctified in the lives of His people.

God is looking today for men and women who will allow Him to be so sanctified in them that people around begin to recognise it and an impact is made upon them for His Name. We find this exemplified in the life of a man of God who lived in the 9th century B.C. As we look at his life, we shall find at least three things that should characterise the 20th-century servant of God.

Elisha was a man of like passions as we are, yet he made an impact upon his generation for God. In the record of his life given us in the Scriptures, there are three occasions where we read of the impression he made upon others. Let us look at these one by one.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A HOLY MAN OF GOD

"And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that *this is an holy man of God*, which passeth by us continually" (2 Kings 4:8, 9).

The woman who made this observation was "a rich and influential woman" (Amplified Bible). She was no gullible person, easily taken in by appearances. Elisha had visited her home frequently and she had watched him day after day as the heathen watch us. She finally came to the assured conclusion that Elisha was a holy man of God.

Brothers and sisters, when others watch us, if they are not able to come to this same conclusion, then whatever else we may say or do will be of no avail. I am not referring to the impression we make on people who know little about us, but on those who meet us frequently, those with whom we live, those who know us through and through.

What is the impression we make upon others? Do they consider us as merely smart and witty and eloquent or perhaps as having dynamic personalities? These qualities are essential and excellent when found in salesmen, but we are *not* called to be salesmen. We are called to be primarily holy men and women of God.

In our churches and Christian organisations, we have many preachers and soloists, and theologians and administrators. Thank God for every one of them. But do we have holy men of God? This is the important question. Only when we get holy men and women will we have any real revival.

I think it is true to say that we usually end up becoming the type of people we have really longed to be, in our hearts. If we had really yearned to be holy men and women of God - and remember, God sees the deepest longing in our hearts and answers that - we would assuredly have been such.

And so if we are not holy today, perhaps the reason is that our real ambitions have been otherwise. Maybe we are satisfied with being just smart and dynamic and with having administrative acumen. It is easy to say we desire holiness above everything else, because that is the right thing to say. But like God's people in the days of Isaiah and Ezekiel, the deepest desire of our hearts and the profession of our lips may be poles apart (Isa. 29:13; Eze. 33:31).

We may preach *one* blessing or we may preach *two*. But no theory of sanctification and no testimony of past experiences can ever be a substitute for a genuinely holy life - a life that possesses "the holiness which is no illusion" (Eph. 4:24-J.B. Phillips).

We know that in India, some of our non-Christian friends have a very high moral standard. If they see a lower standard of holiness in us than what their religion teaches them, how are they ever going to be drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ? How sad yet true it is that some devout non-Christians often manifest a greater degree of integrity and uprightness than many Christians do. We should be ashamed of this fact and fall on our faces before God and beg for His mercy.

We need genuinely holy men and women in our churches, and especially among our Christian leaders. Apart from them, all our efforts to reach our country for Christ will be in vain.

We Christians profess to be indwelt by the Spirit of God. But let us not forget that He Who indwells us is called the *Holy* Spirit and that His primary function is not to give us gifts but to make us holy.

When Isaiah saw a vision of God, he heard the seraphim around the throne crying out, not "Almighty, Almighty, Almighty," nor "Merciful, Merciful, Merciful," but "Holy, Holy, Holy." Anyone who has seen such a sight will realise that it is no light thing to be a servant of such a God. Holiness is an imperative necessity in the life of one who is called to represent the High and Lofty One Whose Name is Holy.

The fact that our God is an infinitely holy God should be the greatest incentive for holiness in our lives. "Be ye holy, for I am Holy," says the Lord. If we strive for holiness merely because we want God to use us, our motive is selfish. We should desire to be holy because our God is Holy, quite regardless of whether He uses us or not.

As Elisha moved around, this was the impression he made upon all with whom he came into contact - that he was a holy man of God. People might have forgotten his messages and even the three points of his sermons, but they could not forget the impact of his life. What a challenge this should be to us! How we should covet that, more than being just eloquent in our sermons, wonderful in our exposition of the Scriptures and able in our administration of affairs, we might above all be holy men of God. People cannot easily erase from their memories the impression made upon them by such men.

As I have moved around this land of ours, I have met many Christian leaders and missionaries with wonderful gifts and abilities. I have met exhibitionists and extroverts. But I have met very few to whom I could look up as holy men of God. I hope I am wrong in my assessment but I have a fear I may be right.

The fact that God uses a man in His service is no indication that the man is holy or that his life is well-pleasing to God. God used an ass once to deliver His message, He used the ass's master, Balaam too, to prophesy, even though the man himself was corrupt. If God uses a man to minister His Word, it is often because of His mercy and because He loves the people to whom the man ministers, not necessarily because He is happy with the man's life.

No, we do not have to be holy men in order to minister the Word impressively. But we do have to be holy men if we are to be a part of that remnant that carries on God's battles behind the scenes and cooperates with Him in building that which cannot be shaken or burnt for all eternity.

I've asked myself why we have so few holy men and women in our churches and I've come across at least three reasons for this. There may be more.

## Guile

The first reason I'm sure is the wide prevalence of guile. The first step to practical holiness is always a freedom from all guile and hypocrisy.

No man can be a holy man of God if he does not strive with all his heart to remove guile from his life completely. The remnant pictured in Revelation 14:1-5, are described as having no guile whatsoever. Very often, there is more guile in us than we think. There is not one of us who will not have to confess, if we are honest, that we often seek to give a better impression of ourselves to others than is really the case. We need to get rid of this habit. We need to

battle against it constantly and put it to death, if we are to be really holy. We should strive to be transparent and to be known as we actually are. I know this is not easy. It is a life-long battle to be always free from all guile. But this is the first step, and there will never be any revival anywhere without this. We are only fooling ourselves if we think that God is going to answer our prayers for revival if we don't make a determined effort to get rid of guile from our lives.

It is guile that hinders real Christian fellowship too. All too often, hidden grudges and an unforgiving spirit are harboured in the hearts of Christian leaders and missionaries. Beneath an outwardly pleasant facade of spirituality are these slimy evils of the bottomless pit. These must be exposed and forsaken if we are to be holy men of God.

Guile and hypocrisy were the sins that Jesus condemned more than any other. "Beware," He told His disciples, "of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy." When this sin appeared in the early church, God dealt with it drastically. He immediately slew the couple involved, lest the whole lump be leavened by this little leaven (Acts 5).

I have often read and meditated on Jesus' testimony about Nathaniel, "*Behold a man in whom there is no guile.*" I have wondered whether there is any greater commendation we could covet than that. We need to ask ourselves whether God can say the same about us. Alas so often He cannot - for He sees in us the sins that we have carefully tucked away from the eyes of our fellow-men.

Blessed indeed is the man in whom there is no guile.

### **Lack of discipline**

A second reason for the lack of holiness in our day is that we do not rigidly discipline ourselves. The New Testament places great emphasis on the discipline of our bodily members - especially of the ear, the eye and the tongue. In Romans 8:13, Paul says that we cannot enjoy spiritual life if we do not mortify the deeds of the body through the power of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, he tells us how severely he disciplined his own body. No matter what experience of sanctification we may have had, we still need to discipline our bodily members, as Paul did, till the end of our lives, if we are to be holy.

We must be disciplined about the kind of conversation we give our *ears* to. We cannot afford to spend our time listening to gossip and slander and then expect our ears to be attuned to hear God's Voice.

Our *eyes* need to be disciplined in what they are permitted to look at and read - especially in these days. More than one missionary and servant of God has fallen into immorality because he did not habitually control his eyes. How many more are perpetually falling in their thought-life, because of indiscipline in this area. "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," should be our constant prayer (Psa. 119:37).

Our *tongues* too need to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps there is no greater spreader of spiritual death in the Christian church than the human tongue. When Isaiah saw God's Holiness, he was convicted chiefly of the way he had been using his tongue. Apparently he had not realised this until he saw himself in God's light.

Jeremiah was told by the Lord that he could be God's mouthpiece only if he was careful about the way he used his tongue - if he separated the valueless from the precious in his conversation (Jer. 15:19).

These prophets could not afford to be careless about the way they used their tongues, or they would have forfeited the privilege of being God's spokesmen. They could not indulge in loose conversation, idle chatter, gossip, slander and criticism and get away with it. They would have lost their calling thereby. This could be one reason why we have hardly any prophets in our day.

Watchman Nee has said in *The Normal Christian Worker*, "If a Christian worker talks inadvisably about all sorts of thing, how can he expect to be used of the Lord in the utterance of His Word? If God has ever put His Word on our lips, then a solemn obligation is upon us to guard these lips for His service alone. We cannot offer a member of our bodies for His use one day and the next day take it back for use at our own discretion. Whatever is once presented to Him is eternally His."

As in the human body, a doctor can often assess our state of health by looking at our tongues, so too in the spiritual realm, James tells us that the way a man uses his tongue is a test of his spirituality (Jas. 1:26). He makes bold to say that if a man can control his tongue he is a perfect man (Jas. 3:2).

### **No time for God**

A third reason for the general lack of holiness in our day is the fact that we do not spend enough time alone with God. No man can be holy unless he determines that the most important thing in his life is to spend time in the Most Holy Place with God. This is our highest priority.

Moses' face shone, but it was only after he had spent forty days alone on the mount with God. He was holy man of God because he knew his God face to face. So with Elisha. He could refer to God as, "Jehovah before Whom I stand" (2 Kings 3:14; 5:16). He knew what it was to meet God often face to face and it was this that made him holy.

In our day, things move around us at such a tremendous pace that we can be so easily caught in the hustle and bustle of activity and end up with having no time to spend alone with God. It is thus that the Devil saps us of our spiritual vitality. He makes us put such a premium on activity and on committee-meetings that the Most Holy Place is neglected.

It has always been a challenge to me to read of the times when Jesus got away from men to be alone with His Father. Once at the end of a busy day of preaching and ministering to the physical needs of thousands, He went off by Himself into a mountain to have a quiet time with His Father (Matt. 14:23). On another occasion after He had worked late into the previous night healing the sick, He arose early and went into a solitary place to pray (Mark 1:35). Such is the example given us by the Son of God Who was busier than any of us could possibly be. Who among us would dare say in the light of this that we can do without time spent waiting upon God?

Because Elisha knew what it was to stand before his God frequently, he also knew how to rebuke sin fearlessly. He told the King of Israel, fearlessly, exactly what God thought of him. He confronted even his own co-worker Gehazi, with his sin, when the latter fell a prey to covetousness. And Elisha did this without trying to be tactful or diplomatic and without beating around the bush.

There is a place for diplomacy and tact, no doubt, but there are also times when a faithful and fearless rebuking of sin is what is needed. Why is it that there are so few among us who speak out against the sin and worldliness and compromise in Christian circles that is so widespread in our day? I fear the reason is that we seek the praise of men and hence do not desire to offend anybody. Such a carnal desire in turn, stems invariably from the fact that we spend too little time in the presence of God, learning His fear.

It is essential if we are to be prophets of God that we speak out against all compromise that lowers the standards that God has laid down in His Word, and that we stand against all that God Himself is against. We shall have to take this stand not only as individuals but also as a body of believers. If we as a body of evangelicals do not speak to the church in India with a prophetic voice in this day, we shall be failing in our responsibility before God.

Speaking out with a prophetic voice against all that comes short of God's highest purpose for His church, may perhaps reduce our numbers, but God has always been more interested in quality than in quantity. We don't have to make the narrow way any broader than God Himself has made it.

The prophets of old were always misunderstood and rejected by the people of their day, and the same fate awaits any who would be prophets today. But we can take courage from the wise words of A.B. Simpson, that great man of God, who founded the Christian and Missionary Alliance. He said, "*The true measure of a man's worth is not always the number of his friends but sometimes the number of his foes.*" Every man who lives in advance of his age is sure to be misunderstood and often persecuted. Therefore, we must expect often to be unpopular, often to stand alone, even to be maligned, perhaps to be bitterly and falsely assailed and driven 'without the camp' even of the religious world."

God is looking today not merely for preachers, but for prophets who will speak His Word faithfully, as did the prophets of old - men of whom it can be said like it was said of Elisha, "The word of the Lord is with him." (2 Kings 3:12).

But there is no short-cut to such a ministry. Prophets are not made in a matter of moments like instant-coffee. They are not produced by seminary training either. We must know what it is to wait long hours in God's presence seeing His glory, hearing His voice and being transformed into His likeness.

Yes, we must be holy first before we can be prophets.

### **Praying for revival**

Brothers and sisters, before we continue praying for revival, we need to ask ourselves first whether we are willing to pay the price involved in being holy men and women of God.

Often when we pray I fear that God has to tell us to stop praying. Yes, there are times when God does not want His children to pray. He told Joshua once, "Don't pray Joshua. You're wasting your time." And until Joshua got up and exposed Achan's sin publicly and set things right in the camp of Israel, God refused to listen to his prayers (Josh. 7:10-13).

And so we need to ask ourselves when we come to the throne of grace, whether God is listening. Perhaps He isn't. We still haven't settled matters with that brother with whom fellowship has been broken. We continue to show partiality to the rich and the influential in our congregations and refuse to confront them with their sins. We still haven't humbled ourselves and confessed the sham and pretense that there is in our lives. Our tongues are still uncontrolled. We are seldom found in the Most Holy Place. Our hearts have not yet come to the point of yearning to be holy men and women of God at any cost. Of what value are our prayers then? For, after all, it is only the fervent prayer that comes from a *holy* man that avails much before God (James 5:16).

May the Lord search our hearts.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A SERVANT

"Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord that we may inquire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, *which poured water on the hands of Elijah*" (2 Kings 3:11).

Elisha is referred to here as the one who used to pour water for Elijah to wash his hands - or in other words, one who carried out the duties of a servant.

This would certainly not be a complimentary way of introducing a prophet of God according to 20th-century standards. Many preachers today would feel offended if they were introduced thus to an audience.

Elisha had done many other things besides pouring water for people to wash their hands. He had divided the waters of Jordan into two and he had also healed the plague caused by the water in Jericho. These were remarkable miracles indeed. Yet he is introduced here as a servant. And I don't think he minded being given such a title either. His ministry as a servant to Elijah must have been so conspicuous that this was the impression that others retained in their minds about him. Hence the king's servant here refers to Elisha as a pouerer of water.

Brothers and sisters, this is what we are called to be too - servants of others. Jesus Himself was One Who poured water and washed His disciples' feet. He said, "I did not come to be served but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). He told those who coveted places of leadership on earth and in Heaven that His kingdom would be different from earthly kingdoms, and that those who sought to be chief in His kingdom would have to be servants of others.

Every servant of the Lord must be a servant of men, or else he forfeits the honour of being a servant of God.

There are two things that I can think of that are contrary to the nature of a servant. One is a desire to be well-known and famous. The other is a bossy attitude towards others. We see the opposite of these two in our Lord Jesus:

"He made Himself of no reputation... and He took upon Him the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7).

Let us consider these two things.

#### Desire for recognition

We may have got rid of the desire to be big and famous in the world, but may secretly long to be well-known and accepted in evangelical circles. Perhaps it is a desire to be known as a revivalist or as an outstanding Bible-teacher. Or it may be that we want others to know that people are always blessed through our preaching. Or perhaps it is the desire to be known as the Superintendent or Director of a progressive denomination or mission. Whatever it be, all such longings are contrary to the spirit of Jesus. And it is often because such carnal longings still lurk in our hearts that God is hindered from letting all His fulness flow into us and through us to others.

It is a sad fact indeed that in Christian circles today, there is an unhealthy craze for popularity. And this has given the death-blow to what little spirituality we possessed. This disease is so widespread that if we are not constantly alert and battling it, we can be infected by it all unawares.

Christian leaders and preachers in our day are no longer like Paul, the filth and garbage of the world (1 Cor. 4:13). They are more like filmstars and V.I.Ps (Very Important Persons). They are written-up, photographed, boosted to the skies and glorified. And what is worse, many of these men (who owe everything to grace alone) love to have it so! They love to be recognised as leaders in Christendom. It is true that we can't prevent others from publicising us and our work. But may God deliver us from having any secret longing for such publicity. May we be delivered from any desire to be known as anything other than servants, those who pour water for others.

Jesus Himself shunned popularity. When the people of His day wanted to make Him a king, He avoided them and got alone with His Father. He didn't want the acclaim of men. He didn't want to be a V.I.P. on this earth (John 6:15). He, Who was the perfect expression of the Father's glory here, hid Himself and avoided earthly fame and honour. How much more should we mortal men do the same. The true servant of the Lord will follow in his Master's footsteps here.

Apart from the craze for popularity, I find that there is also a lust for statistics in Christendom today. Like the headhunters of old who counted scalps, many present-day evangelists have become slaves to the carnal desire to

count heads and hands and decision-cards, and then to boast (albeit subtly) about these numbers. The Devil sees this desire in us and plays upon it to lead us astray.

One example will illustrate what I mean. In a certain part of India, gospel meetings were once held and a well-known evangelist invited to preach. Many raised their hands and signed decision-cards. These statistics were given wide publicity in many parts of the country and people praised God for the "revival" that had broken out. A year later, I happened to meet the person who was responsible for the follow-up of these "converts," and I asked him how things were. He said that there was hardly any change in the general condition of the churches and that all the people he had visited seemed to be very much in the same state as before. There had been an emotional stirring no doubt, during the meetings, but no permanent change. Some people had apparently raised their hands so as not to disappoint the preacher who had come from so far away to preach to them! Others had raised their hands hoping thereby to establish a more intimate contact with this "famous" preacher later on, by telling him that they had been saved in his meetings! Others had come forward merely to have a closer look at the evangelist! That was the inside story of this marvelous "revival" and this is fact, not fiction.

Brothers and sisters, that is a perfect example of what I would call "*apparent success*." The Devil used it to fool many. Hardly anyone had been saved, hardly anyone made any holier and yet the evangelist and the organising committee all rejoiced in a "marvelous breakthrough for God" in that area! If in that series of meetings, no one had raised hands of signed decision-cards, the preacher and the organising committee would perhaps have felt so humbled that they might have sought God's face in prayer and fasting, and then something of real spiritual value would have been accomplished. But the Devil effectively prevented that from happening by keeping everybody happy with apparent success. He got everybody thinking that hundreds of souls had been delivered from his grip when they had not.

The Devil is fooling many with apparent revivals among believers too. People come to the altar and weep and cry, but without yielding their wills and lives to God. Some others come to the preacher and tell him what a blessing his messages have been to them. The preacher goes away secretly delighted that he too is a revivalist like Wesley and Finney! He shares the news of the "revival" with others under the pretext of wanting them to praise God for it, when all he is interested in really is to let others know how God has used him. Does he go into the secret place alone with God and claim deliverance for the souls to whom he has preached? No, he thinks they are already delivered. Hence, he neglects to pray after the meetings are over. He is too busy advertising the "revival."

It is thus that many Christian workers are being fooled today by the enemy - not because they are liberal in their doctrine but because they love advertisement and statistics. The Devil succeeds in such situations because he sees this desire for fame and publicity in the hearts of preachers and committee-members alike. He knows that the evangelists are keen to maintain their reputation before others as great soul-winners and that the committee-members are eager for people to realise that their labours have produced much fruit. And thus he achieves his diabolical ends.

What has been said above applies equally to missions and denominations also that glory in statistics.

Would that we were more convicted of our carnality in such matters, as David was, when he counted numbers once and gloried in them (2 Sam. 24). May the Lord give us vision to see through all that is merely superficial. May He deliver us from the spirit of the advertising world, for it always spells doom to a work of God. If we are not free from such carnal desires and lusts we shall find that the Devil succeeds in fooling us in one way or another.

One of the hardest things I have found in my life is to give a public testimony. I find it more difficult to give a testimony in public than to preach a sermon. For it is so difficult when giving a testimony either about one's life or about one's labours to avoid taking some of the glory to oneself.

I'm sure none of us would dare to take all or even the major share of the glory and credit to ourselves. Perhaps we take only 5% or 10%. Surely, we feel, that is not too much of a commission for all the labour we have put in!

Should it then surprise us when the glory of God departs and "*Ichabod*" has to be written over so many of our churches?

We must dread to touch God's glory. Our God is a jealous God and He will not share His glory - not even a small percentage of it - with another (Isa. 42:8).

Paul was once caught up to the third heaven but kept quiet about it for 14 years and mentioned it only when called upon to defend his apostleship - and even then gave no details (2 Cor. 12:2).

The one who has seen the glory of God will always hide his own face as Moses did at the burning bush and as the seraphim do around God's Throne (Ex. 3:6; Isa. 6:2). He will not want to be seen or known of men. Having seen God in all His glory, he will fear to touch that glory. He hides his face perpetually. He will not speak of himself or his work except where absolutely necessary; and when he does, it will be in subdued tones lest any of the credit should accrue to him. He will shun the carnal desire to speak of his dedication to God and of the marvelous experiences he has had and of the costly sacrifices he has made (which often go under the guise of a testimony), either in a public meeting or in a Christian magazine.

Another disease I have found in Christendom is an unhealthy coveting of positions of leadership. When I was in the Navy, I found some who thought nothing of climbing on the shoulders of others and of trampling people under them, if only they could get to the top. I thought I had seen the last of that when I left the Armed Forces. But I was both surprised and grieved, as I moved in Christian circles in our land, to find exactly the same thing even among evangelical Christians - a coveting of position and a clamouring for it. I found Christians scheming and campaigning to be Superintendents and elders and treasurers and to get on to Executive Committees of Christian organisations.

All this is contrary to the spirit of Jesus. The man who has seen the glory of God does not join the rat-race for fame - either in the world or in evangelical circles. He is too busy pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He desires only to pour water for others, to sweep the floor and to glorify his God here on earth.

Let us remember that greatness in man's eyes does not always mean greatness in God's eyes. Dr. A.W. Tozer once said that after thirty years of observing the religious scene, he had been forced to conclude that saintliness and church-leadership were not often synonymous. This is true in India too. Those who stand in the big pulpits of our land and who hold high positions in Christian circles are not often God's greatest saints. God's rarest jewels are usually found among the poor and the unknown in our churches.

God grant that the desire of our hearts will be to be great in His sight, even as John the Baptist was (Lk. 1:15). There was a reason why John was great in God's eyes. John's passion in life as he expressed it himself, was that Christ might increase and that he himself might decrease (John 3:30). He constantly sought to fade into the background so that Jesus might have the prominence.

God's heart is set on this, that in all things Christ might have the pre-eminence (Col. 1:18). If our hearts are also set on this one thing, that we ourselves should recede into the background and that Christ alone should be exalted, then assuredly we shall have God's power and authority behind us continually.

It is when we have other selfish aims and motives, perhaps not known to others but known to God, that God cannot in all faithfulness to His Holy Name commit His power to us.

Brothers and sisters, it is only through men and women who have the spirit of John the Baptist, that God is able to build His real church. There is a real church and there is a false one - a Jerusalem and a Babylon - as the book of *Revelation* makes abundantly clear. Jerusalem can be built only by those who efface themselves and who have the spirit of a servant, but Babylon can be built by anyone. Jerusalem will remain for all eternity, but Babylon will very soon be destroyed by God (Rev. 18:21).

You remember how the Tower of Babel (the beginning of Babylon) came into being. Men got together and said, "Let us make us a name" (Gen. 11:4). The king of Babylon, years later, spoke in the same vein, "Isn't this great Babylon that I have built by my power and for my honour" (Dan. 4:30).

Any believer who has this same desire to make a name for himself and to exalt himself in the eyes of men, possesses the spirit of Babylon and what he builds through his labours can never last for eternity. And brethren, this spirit, alas, is found in the highest echelons of evangelicalism.

This was the spirit that Lucifer had. He wasn't satisfied with the position God had given him. He wanted to go higher, and he lost his anointing thereby. He was once the anointed cherub but he ended up as the Devil. And he is not the only one who has lost the anointing in this manner.

The Spirit of Christ is contrary to all this. Though He was God, yet He humbled Himself and made Himself of no reputation for our sakes. And the Bible says, "Let this mind be in you also..." (Phil. 2:5-8).

May God root out from our hearts all desire to be known and accepted by men. Let us not go around trying to make contacts in order to widen our influence and to make ourselves more well-known in evangelical circles. Let us not strive to get ourselves invited to foreign countries as "spiritual prodigies from heathen India."

If we are going to be like Jesus, we shall spend our time with the common folk, with ordinary men and women, as Jesus did, and not go around seeking to cultivate the friendship of evangelical leaders alone all the time. The Bible says, "Don't try to act big. Don't try to get into the good graces of important people, but enjoy the company of ordinary folks" (Rom. 12:16-Living Bible).

May God keep us low. The safest place to be at, is the foot of the cross.

### A bossy attitude

Our Lord was a servant, but alas, Christian leaders and missionaries today are often masters - bosses and *Sahibs* (Masters). We may not be able to prevent others from calling us "*Sahibs*" perhaps, but the question is whether we desire to be *Sahibs* in our hearts.

We need to re-learn the lesson that Jesus sought so patiently to teach His disciples. To them He said, after washing their feet, "In this world the kings and great men order their slaves around...but among you the one who serves you best will be your leader. Out in the world the master sits at the table and is served by his servants. But not here! For I

am your servant" (Lk. 22:25-27-Living Bible). Oh, how these words should convict us of our bossy attitude to those under us. How we should be humbled by the example of our Lord. May the Lord remove from us all false, worldly ideas of self-respect and dignity and race-superiority that we may yet be having. May He teach us afresh that the real mark of greatness in the kingdom of God is to be a servant, a pourer of water, as Jesus was.

May God help us to take the low place not only now but right through till the end of our lives. Let us never seek for honour and respect and obedience from our fellow-brethren at any time, not even when we feel we are senior workers in the Lord's vineyard. In our attitude to others, may we always recognise that they are the masters and we are the servants - even if our official position in the administrative set-up of our church is higher than theirs and even if we are senior in age and in experience. The higher we go, the more it becomes our responsibility to serve others.

2 Corinthians 4:5 is a very challenging verse in this connection. Paul says there (paraphrasing his words). "We preach two things: By our lips we proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord. By our life we proclaim ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."

Brothers and sisters, this is our twofold message; and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder. This is the full gospel. May we never be guilty of proclaiming only half of it, for only when this message is proclaimed in its entirety will the heathen begin to see Christ sanctified in us. It is the lack of this that hinders so much of the Lord's work in our land today.

If we are to be servants, we have to be genuinely humble. We shouldn't mistake condescension for humility. It is easy to have condescension. Even selfish politicians have that. We can have a conceited opinion of ourselves in our hearts that we are big people and then condescend to fellowship with lesser folk and mistake that for humility. No, that's not humility at all.

Genuine humility involves my recognising that in God's eyes there is no difference whatever between me and anyone else. All the natural distinctions that exist between me and others are caused by circumstances and environmental factors etc., and have all been eradicated at the cross. The cross of Jesus reduces us all to zero. If that has not happened in my life, it only indicates that I have not yet begun to esteem others as more important than myself, as Philippians 2:3 commands us to. Once we have been reduced to zero, it becomes easy to take the low place, willingly and joyfully. And it becomes easy then for God to accomplish His *full* purpose through us as well.

As long as Moses (at the age of 40) felt that he was to be the leader of God's people, God couldn't use him (Acts 7:25). God had to take him out into the wilderness for another 40 years and break him. Finally, Moses came to the place where he said, "Lord, I'm not the man for this job. I'm unfit. I can't even speak" (and he really meant it; it wasn't just false humility as it often is with some folk who say similar things!). It was only then that God could use him, for Moses had now come to an end of himself. At the age of 40, in his own strength, all Moses could do was bury one Egyptian under the sand. After God had broken him, he buried the whole Egyptian army under the Red Sea. Such is the result of brokenness.

It is not enough that the Lord take the five loaves and bless them. They must be broken before the multitude can be fed. This is a process that has to be repeated in our lives constantly. God takes us, blesses us, breaks us and uses us. Then we tend to get exalted because we have been used to feed so many. So He has to take us and break us again. And this process goes on all through life.

How we need to covet this brokenness. When a small atom is broken, what power is released! What power could then be released in our land if the leaders in our churches and their congregations were broken by God.

### **The distinguishing mark**

In these days of counterfeit, when the false looks so much like the true, I have often asked myself what the one unmistakable distinguishing mark of a true servant of God is.

Is it the power to do miracles? No. Demons can do miracles. Is it the ability to speak in tongues? No. Demons can copy that too. It is none of these primarily.

I have come to the conclusion that it is *the spirit of the cross* that marks out the true follower of Jesus. The true servant of the Lord is one who has accepted the cross in his life - a cross that has slain his self-esteem, self-confidence, self-centredness and everything else of himself, and that has reduced him to a nonentity. This is the only clear mark by which we can distinguish the one who is really serving the Lord from the one who is serving himself. Other evidences can be deceptive.

### **We reproduce after our kind**

Are we being bothered by troublesome people in our churches today, by snobbish elders and bossy deacons? May it not be that we are reaping the fruit of what we have sown through the years, and that we are reproducing exactly after our kind? The snobbishness and the pride that we had (and still have) in our hearts are now becoming evident in the lives of our spiritual progeny. That shouldn't surprise us, should it?

And so, when we cry out, "Lord, send us a revival," the Word of the Lord to us is, "If my people who are called by My Name shall humble themselves and pray...then I will hear from Heaven...and heal their land" 2 Chron. 7:14). Oh, how our land needs healing. Let us not say that God is delaying the revival. The hindrance is found in us, brethren. May God find among us those who are willing to be servants and pourers of water.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### AN ANOINTED MAN

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

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

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

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential if we are to accomplish all of God's will in our service for Him. It is not enough that the Spirit of God indwell us. We must know His resting upon us in power. Even Jesus Himself needed to be anointed before He could go out to fulfil His earthly ministry (Matt. 3:16; See Acts 10:38).

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

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

We shouldn't mistake eloquence, emotional exuberance, excitement or noise as evidences of the anointing. No, it is none of these, but *power* alone. It was power that Jesus Himself received when He was anointed (Acts 10:38). And it was power, that Jesus told his disciples, they would receive when they were anointed: "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power" (Acts 1:8). It couldn't be clearer than that, could it? Not tongues, not excitement, but power.

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, who were mistaking speaking in tongues for the power of the Holy Spirit, he said, "When I come into your midst, I am not going to just listen to your testimonies and your messages (whether in a known language or unknown), but I am going to see whether there is any real power in your lives. For the authority of God (the Holy Spirit) is manifested in power and not in mere words" (1 Cor. 4:19, 20-Paraphrase).

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

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

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

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

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

Let me suggest a question that we can ask ourselves to test whether our dependence is on money or on the anointing of the Spirit. Would we be as much disturbed if God removed the anointing from our lives, as we would be if our supporters cut off their financial support?

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

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

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

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

### **Discernment**

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

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

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

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

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

### **The Name of Jesus**

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

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

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

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

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

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

In Acts chapter 3, we find Peter using the Name of Jesus; and God's power was manifested. The lame man began to walk. It was so obvious a miracle that no one had to go around showing people the man's medical reports in order to convince them that he had been healed. There was nothing uncertain or shady about that miracle. There was no doubt left in anyone's mind as to whether or not a miracle had actually taken place - as is so often the case with "miracles" wrought by some of today's healers!

We find right through the book of *Acts*, the disciples using the Name of Jesus again and again to remove every obstacle that came in the way of their fulfilling God's purposes. They really knew the anointing. And that's why the *Acts of the Apostles* ends with the word, "*unhindered*" (NASB). The gates of hell could not stand against such a powerful church.

### **Resurrection power**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is not enough that the creed we repeat and the statement of faith we sign are Scripturally sound. We may be able to sign the most fundamental statement of faith. So can the Devil! He knows the Bible well and so he is no modernist.

He is a thorough fundamentalist as far as doctrines go! It is not much use therefore taking credit merely for our fundamentalism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Thirst

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

In 2 Kings 2:1-10, we read how Elijah tested him on this point. He first told Elisha to stay on at Gilgal, while he himself moved on. But Elisha refused to leave Elijah. Then Elijah led him 15 miles west to Bethel, and then 12 miles back to Jericho and then a further 5 miles east to Jordan, testing Elisha's persistence and earnestness at each stage. Finally, Elijah asked him if there was any one request he could grant him before he left. And Elisha said, "I want only one thing. That is why I have been following you all this time. That is why I wouldn't leave you, even when you tried to shake me off. I want a double portion of your spirit."

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

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

But if we realise that this is the one thing we need above all else, if like Elisha we are willing to follow on until we have it, if like Jacob at Peniel we can say in sincerity, "Lord, I will not leave You until You bless me with this blessing," if we really crave for and covet this power of the Holy Spirit, this resurrection power, then we shall indeed receive it. Then we shall truly be "*Israels*", having power with God and with men.

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

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

We must covet the anointing more than anything else on earth - more than money and comfort and pleasure, and more than fame and popularity and even success in Christian work. Yes, it is a hard thing indeed. But this is what it means to thirst. When we reach that stage, we can go to Jesus and drink and, as the Scripture has said, rivers of living

water will then flow through us in many directions bringing life out of death wherever they flow (John 7:37-39; Ezek. 47:8, 9).

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

The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:27 that he kept the members of his body severely disciplined, lest after having preached to others he himself be disapproved. I have never ceased to marvel that the mighty apostle Paul, after establishing so many churches, doing so many miracles and being so powerfully used of God, yet stood in danger of being disapproved by God, if he were careless with his bodily members. If that be so, where do we stand?

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

### **Purity of motive**

A second reason why Elisha was anointed was that his motives were pure. The glory of God was his only concern. This is not stated in so many words anywhere, but it becomes very evident as one reads the record of his life. The need among God's people was so great and the reproach upon God's Name hurt him, as it had hurt Elijah before him. And he yearned to be anointed in order to fulfil a ministry for God in that land that would remove the reproach upon that glorious Name.

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

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

### **No love for this world**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **A triumphant remnant**

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

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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A PRAYER

I could not close this series of meditations more appropriately than with a prayer written by A.W.Tozer, whom I consider to be one of the few prophets that the twentieth century has seen.

It is entitled *The Prayer of a Minor Prophet*:

"O Lord, I have heard Thy voice and was afraid. Thou hast called me to an awesome task in a grave and perilous hour. Thou art about to shake all nations and the earth and also heaven, that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. O Lord, our Lord, Thou hast stooped to honour me to be Thy servant. No man taketh this honour upon himself save he that is called of God as was Aaron. Thou hast ordained me Thy messenger to them that are stubborn of heart, and hard of hearing. They have rejected Thee, the Master, and it is not to be expected that they will receive me, the servant.

My God, I shall not waste time deplored my weakness nor my unfittedness for the work. The responsibility is not mine, but Thine. Thou hast said, "I knew thee-I ordained thee-I sanctified thee", and Thou hast also said, "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak". Who am I to argue with Thee or to call into question Thy sovereign choice? The decision is not mine, but Thine. So be it, Lord. Thy will, not mine, be done.

Well do I know, Thou God of the prophets and the apostles, that as long as I honour Thee Thou wilt honour me. Help me therefore to take this solemn vow to honour Thee in all my future life and labours, whether by gain or by loss, by life or by death, and then to keep that vow unbroken while I live.

It is time, O God, for Thee to work, for the enemy has entered into Thy pastures and Thy sheep are torn and scattered. And false shepherds abound who deny the danger and laugh at the perils which surround Thy flock. The sheep are deceived by these hirelings and follow them with touching loyalty while the wolf closes in to kill and destroy. I beseech Thee, give me sharp eyes to detect the presence of the enemy; give me understanding to distinguish the false friend from the true. Give me vision to see and courage to report what I see faithfully. Make my voice so like Thine own that even the sick sheep will recognise it and follow Thee.

Lord Jesus, I come to Thee for spiritual preparation. Lay Thy hand upon me. Anoint me with the oil of the New Testament prophet. Forbid that I should become a religious scribe and thus lose my prophetic calling. Save me from the curse that lies dark across the face of the modern clergy, the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity or the amount of its yearly offering. Help me to remember that I am a prophet; not a promoter, not a religious manager, but a prophet. Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambitions and deliver me from the itch for publicity. Save me from bondage to things. Let me not waste my days putting around the house. Lay Thy terror upon me, O God, and drive me to the place of prayer where I may wrestle with principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Deliver me from overeating and late sleeping. Teach me self-discipline that I may be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I accept hard work and small rewards in this life. I ask for no easy place. I shall try to be blind to the little ways that could make my life easier. If others seek the smoother path I shall try to take the hard way without judging them too harshly. I shall expect opposition and try to take it quietly when it comes. Or if, as sometimes it falleth out to Thy servants, I should have grateful gifts pressed upon me by Thy kindly people, stand by me then and save me from the blight that often follows. Teach me to use whatever I receive in such manner that will not injure my soul nor diminish

my spiritual power. And if in Thy permissive providence honour should come to me from Thy church, let me not forget in that hour that I am unworthy of the least of Thy mercies, and that if men knew me as intimately as I know myself they would withhold their honours or bestow them upon others more worthy to receive them.

And now, O Lord of heaven and earth, I consecrate my remaining days to thee; let them be many or few, as Thou wilt. Let me stand before the great or minister to the poor and lowly; that choice is not mine, and I would not influence it if I could. I am Thy servant to do Thy will, and that will is sweeter to me than position or riches or fame and I choose it above all things on earth or in heaven.

Though I am chosen of Thee and honoured by a high and holy calling, let me never forget that I am but a man of dust and ashes, a man with all the natural faults and passions that plague the race of men. I pray Thee, therefore, my Lord and Redeemer, save me from myself and from all the injuries I may do myself while trying to be a blessing to others. Fill me with Thy power by the Holy Spirit, and I will go in Thy strength and tell of Thy righteousness, even Thine only. I will spread abroad the message of redeeming love while my normal powers endure. Then, dear Lord, when I am old and weary and too tired to go on, have a place ready for me above, and make me to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting.

Amen. AMEN."

(Quoted in *A.W. Tozer* by David J. Fant Jr.).

May this be the prayer of your heart and mine.

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