

THE CALL (AN OINTING FROM GOD)

The Renewed Church:

Luke 24:47-49, John 20:19-23

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Bethany Church

Wesley J. Gabel

Do you know how mothers have that sixth sense about their children? Not too many fathers possess it, but I've watched it work in women and especially in my wife. While I could get caught up in conversation and not have a clue what was happening with my children, that was rarely if ever the case with my wife. Instead, she even heard silence. More accurately, she especially heard silence. One day when our daughters were little, they became too quiet. Mother immediately dropped her chores and looked for them. What she found was daughter #2, Debbie, looking like a ghost. Daughter #1, Sarah had anointed her with baby powder, and Debbie was white from head to toe, except for her eyes. She looked like Casper. Sarah had also doused herself. She looked like a grandma. Before doing anything else, mother had to snap a picture. It is now one of those precious memories we have recorded.

Now, dousing your sister with baby powder is not a good idea. The powder stings your eyes and makes an awful mess. Besides, who wants to look like a ghost? The idea of ghosts spooks us. Older English Bibles call the Holy Spirit *the Holy Ghost*. That makes many people apprehensive. Not too many of us are interested in being visited by a ghost. Consequently, many Christian believers are wary of the Holy Spirit rather than eager to welcome him as the

promise Jesus gave us. In fear, most of us relegate him to history. Yet as you read the Bible, you discover that life is dependent on God breathing his breath into our lives. Breath is another word for Spirit. In the New Testament, you discover in bringing about the healing and redemption of humanity, that the Holy Spirit is everywhere involved and everywhere recognized as the leader. God's Spirit is essential to life. God's Spirit is the essence of a Christian. The term Christian refers to "one who is anointed with God's Spirit." We were made to share God's Spirit. We were made to be one with God, but you can only be one if you share the same spirit, the same heart, the same vision, and the same aspirations. That doesn't happen automatically. Humanity is alienated from God, estranged from the Spirit, often grieving him and resisting him.

A week ago, we looked at the challenge we face as believers in the American church, which is desperately in need of renewal. We looked at how we American believers often focus on religious practices rather than on God's presence. Religious leaders of Jesus' time made that same mistake. They rejected Jesus because they didn't look for God's presence. They focused on practices. Paul told Timothy to stay away from people like that. He wrote:

They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. (2 Timothy 3:5, NLT)

John Wesley was once asked if he feared that Methodism might die out. He did not fear that. Instead, pointing to this same scripture verse and using a different translation, he feared Methodists would exist "***having a form of godliness, but denying its power.***"

Jesus' vision for us was radically different. He did not expect us to live as mere believers. He didn't want us to just believe. He wanted us to become exhibits of his power. Like items in a courtroom that reveal the truth, he wanted us to be in life a revelation of the truth.

Listen to the words Jesus gave his followers as he appeared to them after his resurrection:

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. (John 20:21, NLT)

Jesus blessed them with peace. Then he gave them his own commission. He said, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” That statement not only gives us the same commission; it also speaks of the same equipping. To be sent like Jesus means to be sent with the same physical limitations and also the same spiritual power. We are completely flesh like Jesus. We are subject to every evil attack like Jesus. Yet Jesus was amazing because of the work of God’s Spirit through him. He was anointed. Listen to what Jesus did and said.

Then he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:22, NLT)

Jesus was commissioning them, and Jesus was equipping them. Same commission! Same equipment! Do you remember the time when Jesus read from Isaiah in his home synagogue? He read:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come. (Luke 4:18-19, NLT)

He sat down after reading that and said, ***“This scripture has come true today before your very eyes!”*** (Luke 4:21). Do you realize that what he read is both your assignment and your equipment as well? What Jesus said about himself, he wants to say about you! ***“This scripture has come true today before your very eyes!”*** Say to the person next to you: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has appointed me. He has sent me!” Is that true?

To show how critical, even essential Jesus considered this, he told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they actually received this anointing:

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:49, NIV)

Jesus chose an interesting term to describe this experience. Probably, Jesus spoke these words in Aramaic. However, Luke was meticulous in his account of Jesus' ministry and teaching, he used the Greek term *enduw*. We get our English word *endue* from it. Literally, to be endued is to enter into a garment. Luke used the term elsewhere to describe a man who was so dominated by demons that he did not wear clothes (Luke 8:27). Mark uses the word to tell about John the Baptist's camel hair clothing (Mark 1:6). Paul uses the term to let us know that one day we will be clothed with a new, imperishable body (2 Corinthians 5:3). In other words, the disciples were to stay put until they had been dressed in power from on high.

Now clothes may not make a man or woman, but they often equip them. There are suits for some work, and bib overalls for other work. They have different purposes. There are uniforms and all kinds of clothing for different missions. Believers were not to attempt their mission until they were properly dressed. Jesus commanded that. It was essential.

What would it mean for us to be dressed with power from on high? Well, you get a good picture from observing Jesus who did nothing until he was anointed with the Holy Spirit and also from watching his followers in Acts who also waited until they were similarly clothed. When Jesus was first anointed or clothed with power, the Spirit led him away from people. It appears that he spent time getting acquainted with his new clothes. He first spent 40 days in fasting, prayer and in struggles with temptations. After this spiritual war he returned to minister in Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14). He knew what he was doing with those clothes. He knew the Spirit and readily received direction. When the disciples first were clothed with power, they had already observed Jesus with his clothes. Additionally, they were in a house praying, perhaps even fasting. They were first led outside where they spoke to people in their native languages about God's mighty works. Their new clothing enabled them to speak in such a

way because they hadn't learned those tongues (Acts 2:1-4). Can you imagine the excitement? A huge crowd was attracted and three thousand non-believers put their faith in Jesus. After this, these same disciples spent an extraordinary amount of time in prayer (and also probably in fasting). There were times of great healing. There were even times when healing came from touching the hem of Jesus' robe (Luke 6:19), a handkerchief of Paul (Acts 19:12) or from darkening by the shadow of Peter (Acts 5:15). With these kinds of experiences, it is easy to understand why Jesus said to a father whose son was hopelessly ill, ***“Everything is possible for him who believes”*** (Mark 9:23, NIV).

When you combine the call with the command, when you combine the call that we are sent by Jesus just like he was sent by the Father, and you combine it with the command to wait until we are clothed with power from on high, you cannot argue that their experience was the exception and ours is normal. On the Day of Pentecost Peter declared that this gift is ***“for you, your children and all who are far off”*** (Acts 2:39, NIV).

Have you been dressed with power yet? Have you received this anointing? I see only two conditions for it in the scripture. *First*, we must come to terms with our sins. Unless we face our sin and unbelief, we cannot repent. It may be easy to say we sin, but it is tough to face the swath of carnage our sins create. Until we face that, we have no concept of forgiveness. We think God is right to accept us, not merciful. The *second* condition is baptism in the name of Jesus for forgiveness. This condition is not about water or ritual. It is about receiving a new identity and hope from Jesus. In baptism who *you “were”* is gone and who you *“are”* is born. Do you have that new identity? Are you forgiven because of Jesus? If so, ask for these new clothes. Ask for the anointing and he, the Spirit of God, will come. That's a promise... from God.