

SPIRITUAL MIXTURE IN MINISTRY (Part 2)

The last issue explained how spiritual ministries and gifts can operate from three different sources: the Holy Spirit, evil spirits, or the human spirit. These different sources can alternately work through the same person at different times. For example, in Matthew 16:16-23 the Lord Jesus said that the Apostle Peter had a revelation from God when he declared that Jesus was the Christ. However, when Peter shortly afterwards rebuked Jesus, the Lord revealed that the source of these new words was very different: *“But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan!’”*

In this article we will further study how this mixture of anointings can flow through a person’s life and ministry. Studying this can help us to keep our own ministries pure, as well as teach discernment for when spiritual mixture is infiltrating the churches.

A CHANGED LIFE RECEIVES A NEW ANOINTING

The Scriptures contain many examples of spiritual leaders whose changing character also brought about a change of their anointing. We can see this in the life of the Apostle John, who Christ referred to as a “Son of Thunder.” As a young man John had a judgmental, harsh spirit that wanted to call fire down on the Samaritans. John thought that they had God’s anointing to accomplish this, but the Lord Jesus corrected him and said, *“You do not know what kind of spirit you are of”* in Luke 9:55. Yet as John continued to walk with Jesus we find that John’s heart was changed until he was eventually entitled by the Church as “The Apostle of Love.” From being a zealous destroyer, John became an anointed healer and builder.

Saul of Tarsus was another young man who thought he was serving God out of the motivation of a righteous heart. However, his heart was proud and self-righteous, and was probably motivated by evil spirits while he was persecuting and imprisoning the Christians, Acts 9:1 & 26:9-11. Yet in the midst of this evil, Christ met with him and changed Saul. After years of preparation he became the humble Apostle Paul who received a mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit, Acts 13:9-11.

Samson had an unstable life that caused him to gain, lose, and then finally regain the anointing of the Holy Spirit. As a young man he was anointed by God with the spirit of might. However, to his surprise, he lost that anointing. He fell into repeated immorality and had his Nazarite vow of consecration to God broken when his hair was cut off. While he thought he would still keep his anointing, in Judges 16:20 we read *“But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.”* Samson lost the anointing and became a blind slave of the Philistines. However, as Samson’s hair began to grow again, so did his faith and consecration. He then regained the anointing of God’s Spirit to achieve his greatest victory, Jud.16:21-30.

A BACKSLIDER CAN RECEIVE AN EVIL ANOINTING

Christians usually understand the truth that a newly consecrated life can receive a new anointing of the Holy Spirit. As Acts 5:32 declares, God gives the Holy Spirit *“to those who obey Him.”* However, the opposite side of this truth is less commonly understood. God can also allow evil spirits to attack those who *disobey* Him. This is shown to us in the life of backsliding King Saul, where 1 Samuel 16:14 tells us *“But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from God tormented him.”*

The Bible gives us many warnings about anointed (but disobedient) servants of God who found that their anointing from God became replaced by an evil spirit. This can happen to anyone—even great kings, prophets, apostles, and holy angels—as we can see from the lives of King Saul, Balaam, Judas, and Lucifer.

The resulting mixture of anointings that can come upon a person’s life and ministry can be very confusing. Think of how difficult it must have been for the people under King Saul’s leadership to evaluate his ministry!

He started out anointed by the Holy Spirit in 1 Samuel 10:9-12. Saul prophesied with the prophets, and the people who were watching started saying, “*Is Saul also among the prophets?*” But after his repeated disobedience to God, the Lord removed the anointing of His Holy Spirit from King Saul and instead sent an evil spirit upon him, 1 Sam.16:14.

The next time we read about Saul prophesying, we find that he was under the anointing of an evil spirit. First Samuel 18:10 says, “*The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house....*” Saul then tried to kill David while prophesying under the anointing of this evil spirit.

After this, David escaped from Saul and went to the prophet Samuel for protection. First Samuel 19:18-24 tells us that King Saul sent men to arrest David, but the Holy Spirit fell on them and they did not fulfill their orders. So Saul himself went to arrest David, but the Spirit of God also came upon Saul so that he also prophesied under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Again the people said, “*Is Saul also among the prophets?*”

While Saul was prophesying again under the true anointing of God, the people could have become very confused. Was Saul still a man of God—perhaps even a prophet? Only when we study about the rest of his life does it become clear that Saul’s prophesying was not a sign that God was pleased with him and was restoring him. No, it was only because God was pleased with *David* that Saul was anointed again—to keep him from killing David! After that, Saul was continually under the anointing of evil spirits, such as when he killed the priests of God, repeatedly hunted David, then inquired of a witch, and finally committed suicide. But even during these backslidden years King Saul still led God’s people and often spoke like a good religious man. It must have been very difficult for the people to decide whether Saul was still a man of God or was a backslidden leader. And many times this same kind of mixture and confusion exists in the body of Christ today.

We will next examine how different sins can cause this spiritual mixture to enter into the life and ministry of God’s servants. If we allow sin to creep into our lives, we are also in danger of slowly losing the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon our ministry. Instead, we may become anointed by evil spirits that will try to destroy every good thing that God has already accomplished through us! Yet if we understand these things, the fear of the Lord can help keep us away from this dangerous mixture and sin.

PRIDE

Before mankind existed, God created the angelic hosts to serve Him. They were created pure but were also given the free-will ability to either obey or disobey God. The Bible tells us that Lucifer, one of the greatest angels, allowed pride to grow in his heart until he backslid.

Ezekiel 28:15 and 17 say of Lucifer, “*You were perfect in all your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you....Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor...*” Although Lucifer first began to backslide through becoming proud of his beauty and wisdom, he went onwards into deeper sin, Ez.28:16 & 18. His backslidings continued until he proudly rebelled against God, as recorded in Isaiah 14:12-14. From that time onwards the Bible no longer refers to him as being Lucifer, the *Light Bearer*. He had become the enemy of God and man, and is now entitled Satan (the *Adversary*) and the Devil (the *Slanderer*).

Pride was the first sin that came into the universe, and it still remains the most dangerous trap for Christians today. If the most glorious and wisest of God’s servants (Lucifer) could backslide because of pride, how can we assume that we will remain blameless? For this reason Paul warned in 1 Timothy 3:6 that a new convert should not be given a place of spiritual leadership in the church, “*Lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the Devil.*” Placing untested young converts into a ministry or into the worship team is dangerous, both for the person and the church. Even if they are very talented we must be sure that solid, godly

character is being built into their lives before they are entrusted with leadership. Pride is a danger for anyone—our only protection is humility, Mt.11:29, Mt.5:5, & Jam.4:6.

The Bible tells us the opposite accounts of two men named Saul in the Old and New Testaments. The Saul in the Old Testament began as a humble young man. He was told in 1 Samuel 15:17, *“When you were little in your own eyes, did you not become the head over the tribes of Israel?”* Yet instead of remaining little in his own eyes, after God made him a mighty king we find that Saul became proud and rebellious.

The second Saul in the Scriptures was Saul of Tarsus. His life was the opposite of King Saul. The Old Testament Saul began as a humble young man who became a proud leader, but the New Testament Saul began as a proud young man who eventually became a humble leader. While King Saul lost the humility of being “little” in his own eyes, in Acts 13:9 we find that when the Spirit of God had finished transforming the proud Saul of Tarsus he was renamed as Paul, which means “Little.”

Both Sauls of the Bible changed the anointings that they functioned under, depending upon how their characters changed between pride and humility. The anointing of the Holy Spirit was upon them both when they were humble, but the anointing of evil spirits was also upon them both when they were proud. What anointing do we want to have controlling our life and ministry? That can depend upon whether we let humility or pride grow within our heart.

GREED

Another danger that has caused some of God’s servants to lose their anointing is greed. Judas Iscariot is the most well-known example of this in the Bible. Judas was an apostle who knew the power of the Holy Spirit (Mk.6:7; 6:12-13) but he allowed greed to grow in his life. In John 12:6 we are informed that Judas was the treasurer. However, this scripture also reveals to us that he stole from the offerings.

Perhaps Judas at first told himself that he was only borrowing money that he would later repay, or that he was giving himself a modest salary for his good work. Yet sin grew in his life until in John 12:4-6 he was openly complaining about a missed opportunity for him to secretly steal more. Eventually he was so controlled by greed that he decided to sell Jesus, at which point John 13:27 tells us “Satan entered him.” Instead of remaining anointed by the Holy Spirit, Judas became possessed by Satan!

This same temptation faces the servants of God today. Whenever an anointed ministry arises, money will also begin to flow in to help support that ministry. Yet even when someone is anointed with a mighty apostolic ministry, if greed enters in, that ministry can find God’s anointing replaced with human or even satanic power.

We also learn about the danger of greed from the life of Balaam. He called himself God’s servant and declared that he had victory over greed. In Numbers 22:18 Balaam said that even if King Balak offered him a palace full of silver and gold, he would only obey the word of God.

However, if we read the entire story about Balaam (in Numbers 22:1 - 25:9, Revelation 2:14 , Jude 11, and Numbers 31:8), we find out that the opposite was true. Greed caused Balaam to keep asking God for permission to go to King Balak, and although God allowed him to go, it was not God’s perfect will. Balaam partially obeyed God by prophetically blessing the Israelites, but he also disobeyed God by counseling King Balak on how to corrupt and defeat Israel. As a result, Balaam died under the sword of God’s judgment, just as he had earlier been warned by the angel.

Balaam thought that he had control over his greed. He thought he could stay within God’s permissive will while attempting to gain the king’s rewards. However, the sin of greed deceived him to his own destruction, for he ended up using satanic wisdom to provide powerful counsel to the enemies of Israel.

LUST

Another danger that has led many Christian leaders to exchange God's anointing for demonic spirits is the sin of lust. The Old and New Testaments mention two Jezebels who used the lusts of the flesh to control men and introduce demonic religion. (Study 1 Kings 16:31 & 2 Kings 9:22, as well as Revelation 2:20 & 24.)

Solomon's life is a clear example of this danger. When he was a young, innocent king, he loved the Lord and was anointed with the spirit of wisdom, 1 Kgs.3:3-12. Solomon built the temple of the Lord and taught godly wisdom that is now part of the Bible. Yet as he became a great king, Solomon indulged himself in many lusts. As he testified in Ecclesiastes 2:10, "*Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not hold myself from any pleasure.*" And those pleasures included many pagan wives and concubines.

First Kings 11:4 tells us, "*when Solomon became old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods.*" Then the anointed king who built the glorious temple of God began to build pagan temples! Instead of writing more of the inspired Scriptures, secular history states that backslidden Solomon turned to fortune-telling. Solomon exchanged God's anointing for the demonic because of the sin of lust.

Like Joseph in the book of Genesis, a servant of God must flee immorality to keep His anointing and blessing. Potiphar's wife tempted Joseph when she arranged circumstances so that they were alone together. To avoid similar situations a minister should guard himself from temptation by not privately being with or privately counseling someone of the opposite sex. Surveys have been taken of ministers who fell into immorality. Many of them fell because they were privately counseling someone of the opposite sex that they first emotionally, and then physically, became involved with.

As a young minister, Billy Graham established a policy to help guard himself from temptation and rumors. Anytime he met with or counseled a woman it was always in a public place with another man of his staff. Even during President Clinton's infidelity crisis, when Mrs. Clinton wanted to privately talk with him, he suggested that they talk in the White House cafeteria. Largely because he has guarded his integrity, surveys during the last 50 years have repeatedly shown Billy Graham to be one of the world's most respected men.

To protect ourselves from immorality the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:28 that we must guard our eyes. Looking at pornography (including corrupt movies) has caused many ministers to lose the anointing and come under bondage to evil spirits. Job guarded himself in this manner, for in Job 31:1 he said, "*I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I stare at a young woman?*" As a wise minister once said, "The first time you glance at a woman is usually part of normal life, but the second look is sin."

UNFORGIVENESS

Just as forgiveness has great liberating power, we find that unforgiveness can bring deep bondage. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 18:34-35 that if we do not forgive others, then our Heavenly Father will deliver us over to tormentors. These tormentors are evil spirits that will continually trouble our hearts and minds with the remembrances of the wrongs that were done to us. They will seek to fill us with unforgiveness, anger, revenge, and bitterness.

The antidote to unforgiveness is the cross. Just as the Lord showed Moses a tree to throw into the bitter waters to heal them (Ex.15:23-25), so we need to have the Lord reveal to us a tree—the cross—that we should apply to every bitter experience in our life. When we can genuinely say, like Christ, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing," then the bitter experiences of life will become sweet through the healing power of the Spirit. Either the release of the Holy Spirit—or the torments of evil spirits—will be at work in our hearts depending upon whether we embrace forgiveness or unforgiveness.

RECOVERING THE ANOINTING

As we have seen, great leaders such as kings, apostles, and prophets can lose the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Yet if this happens, God will often seek to use judgment to bring them into repentance and restoration.

We have already considered how Samson lost the anointing and became a blind slave in the Philistine prison. What a great humbling came to Samson! He was helpless and was mocked while the god of the Philistines was declared triumphant. However, Samson allowed this humbling experience to work repentance and rededication into his life. As his hair (the symbol of his consecration to God) began to grow again, so did his faith and consecration. He regained the anointing of God's Spirit at the end of his life to achieve his greatest victory as he pulled down the temple of Dagon, Jud.16:21-30. Samson had not only regained the anointing, but also secured an eternal place for himself in the "Hall of Fame" of the Hebrews 11 heroes of faith. Out of failure he was still able to salvage a noble testimony.

David fell into sin and spiritual mixture during a season of his life when he had become a middle-aged king. He was probably motivated by evil spirits when he had Bathsheba's husband killed, and clearly had this motivation when Satan moved him to number Israel in 1 Chronicles 21:1. But he recovered his leadership and his standing before God through these difficulties.

When Nathan the prophet first exposed David's sins and prophesied the judgments of God, David responded with confession and repentance, 2 Sam.12:5-20. As we read Psalm 51 we can further see how he sought for a clean heart and pleaded that God would not take His Holy Spirit from him. We can also study how David responded to God through the next years of judgment through humility, accepting the punishments, and through seeking God, 2 Sam.12-19 & 1 Chron.21. The result was that spiritual mixture was purged out of David's life. He not only kept his leadership and anointing until the end of his life, but even into the ages to come. For when we study the prophecies about the coming millennial kingdom of Christ upon the earth, we find that not only will the twelve Apostles rule as governors of the provinces of Israel (Mt.19:28), but David will again rule as the king of the nation, Jer.30:9 & Ez.37:24-25. While David suffered much for his sins, as a man after God's own heart, he was still able to hit the mark of the high call of God for his life and for eternity.

The Scriptures compare our hearts with gardens. We must be careful what we plant, for we will reap a harvest, whether good or evil. Galatians 6:7-8 declares, "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that will he also reap. For he who sows to the flesh will reap corruption...*" We can see how this principle worked in the life of King David. He only committed adultery once, yet it was then committed ten times back upon him, 2 Sam.12:11-12 & 16:21-22. He also only killed one man; yet two of his sons were murdered while bloodshed spread through his kingdom, 2 Sam.12:9-10, 13:28-29, & 18:5-15. David reaped a multiplied harvest of punishment and pain, yet the judgment of God was also His mercy to help bring full repentance and cleansing to David.

Are you reaping a bad harvest from your past sins? Humbly endure the shame and pain. Let a deep repentance and cleansing work into your heart. Remove the corrupt roots out of your heart as you consecrate yourself afresh to the Lord. Hope in His mercies. Then a fresh anointing can come upon you to enable you to plant a new crop. As Galatians 6:8-9 goes on to say, "*...but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*" The Lord can bring you into His multiplied blessings if you persevere until the time of the new harvest. Restoration is not always quick, but it's good fruits can last for eternity!

KEEPING A PURE HEART

While judgment can help bring repentance and restoration to a backslidden life and ministry, God has a better plan for those who will follow Him fully. That plan is that we never have a season of backsliding. The Lord wants to take us onwards throughout our life “*from glory to glory*” and “*from strength to strength*,” 2 Cor.3:18 & Ps.84:7. The Lord has made available to us all that we need to be overcomers through every battle of life. We can keep a pure heart and keep the pure anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus said in John 14:30, “*the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.*” If we are pure of heart, like Jesus, then the Devil will find nothing in us that he can control. Even on the day of the cross the Lord Jesus was still in control as He willingly laid down His life to bring salvation to mankind. We likewise can always be more than conquerors through all of life’s difficulties if we will only maintain a pure heart that is filled with His Spirit.

Hebrews 1:9 mentions two reasons why Christ was given a great anointing. We read there, “*You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than all Your companions.*” The Lord Jesus had this superior anointing because he both loved righteousness and hated wickedness. These are also important keys for us to be greatly anointed and have the joy of the Lord as our strength. It is not just enough to love righteousness. Many people love righteousness but also love sin! For example, Samson and Solomon both loved God, but they also loved ungodly women. We must love righteousness and also hate wickedness if we want to gain and keep God’s anointing upon our life.

The reason why people sin is because they love the pleasure it brings. We need to guard our heart with the fear of the Lord, knowing that the temporary pleasure of sin is far outweighed by the multiplied harvest of suffering and grief that we will reap. (Study Proverbs 16:6 & 2:29-32, and Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 & 12:13-14.)

DISCERN SPIRITUAL MIXTURE

As we consecrate ourselves to God and seek to understand His ways, the Lord will develop our spiritual discernment. This can enable us to not only keep our own lives and anointing pure, but also the ministries and churches that we are responsible to help lead. This is crucial for two reasons.

The first reason is that Scripture warns us that there will be great deception in the last days. Christ spoke of this in Matthew 24, Paul similarly warned of it in 2 Thessalonians 2, and the Apostle John also declared these things in Revelation 13. The body of Christ needs increasing spiritual discernment to more than outpace the increasing spiritual deception of the last days. Otherwise there will be many casualties in the spiritual battles that are increasing around us. Ministries that are full of spiritual mixture and sin will lead many into deception and defeat.

The second reason we need to develop our spiritual discernment is so that we will be able to lead the churches into the purity and revival that our Lord has purposed for His bride. Before Christ returns he will prepare a glorious church that will be holy and without blemish. It will also be a triumphant church that will overcome the forces of hell and will gather a great harvest of redeemed souls. (Study Ephesians 5:27, Revelation 19:7-8, Matthew 16:18, and Isaiah 60:1-5.)

BECOME A CO-LABORER WITH CHRIST

With consecrated lives and growing spiritual discernment we will find ourselves increasingly becoming co-laborers with Christ. His anointing will enable us to be overcomers in both our personal lives and in our ministries.

Will you help prepare a glorious church as a bride for our Lord Jesus? Will you help equip the army of God for victory and great rewards? We are living in exciting times, yet these are also difficult days in which we need all the purity and power of the Holy Spirit. By God's grace and through His anointing let us help build Christ's glorious, triumphant Church!