"Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God." 2 Cor. 1: 21.

The use of oil is more common in eastern lands than it is with us. The olive tree is one of the typical trees of Palestine. It is a wonderful tree. Its leaf is lustrous and seems always as if it had been bathed in the oil of its own olive tree, and the tree itself seems almost indestructible. It is usually crooked, gnarled, twisted, and almost torn to pieces. Nearly every tree is hollow, and often you see the larger part of the trunk apparently torn away, with perhaps a single root adhering to the soil; but above it rises a luxuriant mass of boughs and foliage seeming to be imbued with imperishable freshness. Some of the olives of Gethsemane must be at least a thousand years old; indeed the olive tree seems as if it could scarcely die.

It is a good type of the Holy Spirit and the soul anointed with His life and power. He may be exposed to all the trials of time; but, filled with the elixir of imperishable life, his leaf is always green, and he shall not cease from yielding fruit even in the parched land and the most inhospitable climate.

The ordinance of anointing with oil was one of the most common and significant ceremonials of the Old Testament. The leper was anointed, the tabernacle was anointed, the priests were anointed, the prophets were anointed, the kings were anointed, the guest was anointed, the sick were anointed. It was the special symbol of the Holy Ghost and the dedication of the person anointed to His service and possession.

I. THE PREPARATION OF THE ANOINTING OIL

We have a full account of this in Exodus 30: 23-33. "Take thou unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calumus two hundred and fifty shekels, and of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin: and thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil. And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot. And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy. And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office."

The method was particularly prescribed in every detail, and no counterfeit was allowed under the most severe penalties. It will be noticed:

1. That this oil was specially prepared. It was not ordinary olive oil; but other ingredients were added, chiefly perfumes, making it exquisitely fragrant, so that it not only was visible to the eye, but expressed to the sense of smell the sweetest suggestions of the divine presence, of which fragrance was always a peculiar sign.

The Holy Ghost has been prepared in like manner for His special work in us, just as the body of Jesus was prepared and His incarnation arranged for, so that He might come to us, not as the pure Deity alone, but as God manifest in the flesh. So the Holy Ghost has been prepared to dwell within us and to bring us into the presence of God in the way best adapted to our weak human nature.

The Holy Ghost who dwells in the believer is not the Deity who comes directly from the throne in the majesty of His Godhead. He is the Spirit that dwelt in the human Christ for three and a half years, the Spirit who wept in His tears, suffered in His agonies, spake in His words of wisdom and love, took the little children in His arms, healed the sick and raised the dead, allowed John to lean upon His bosom, and said to the sorrowing disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled." This is the Spirit, therefore, that comes to us, softened and humanized by His union with the blessed Jesus, and calling Himself the Spirit of Christ, so that in receiving Him we receive the heart of Jesus and the person of Jesus into our inmost being. How gracious of the Holy Ghost to come to us thus fitted to meet our frailty and our need and to satisfy the wants of all our being!

2. As the oil was fragrant and sweet, so the Holy Ghost brings to us the very sweetness of heaven. All these spices have, perhaps, some special significance. The myrrh used, as we know, for embalming the dead, suggests to us the comfort of the Holy Ghost; the cinnamon was sweet to the taste, and fitly expresses the delightful and joyful influences of the Spirit; and the cassia, a healing and wholesome ingredient, reminds us of the Holy Ghost as our Health Bringer and our Sanctifier.

3. The oil was not to be counterfeited or imitated. Neither can the Holy Ghost be imitated. Satan has always tried
to simulate the Spirit of God, and to get us to worship him instead of Jehovah. Even in the days of Moses men sometimes brought strange fire; but they were met with fiery judgment from the jealous God, who will not suffer His holy things to be profaned or confounded with evil. Men are still constantly in danger of accepting the false for the true. Spiritualism, Christian Science, and Theosophy come with their unholy imitations, but no deep discernment is needed to detect their disguises. He would be a bold man who willingly would be mixed up with these sorceries and Satanic delusions which leave a blister and a scar wherever they touch the soul.

There are other counterfeits less glaring and daring. Intellectual brilliancy, eloquence, and pathos often presume to imitate the operations of the Spirit and produce the impression which only He can bring. Music attempts to thrill our esthetic nature with the emotions and feelings which many mistake for real devotion. Architecture and art are called into play to impress the imagination with the scenic effects of sensuous worship. But none of these do the work of the Holy Spirit. People can weep under entrancing music and heart-stirring eloquence, and yet as much as before go out and live lives of cruel selfishness and gross unrighteousness. People can bow with a kind of awe under the imposing arch and before the vivid painting, or the impressive pageant of ceremonial worship, and yet have no fear of God before their eyes. There is no substitute for the Holy Ghost. He alone can produce conviction, divine impression, true devotion, unselfish life, and reverent worship.

4. The oil must not be poured on man's flesh. It was to be used exclusively for the consecrated and separated ones. No stranger was to receive this anointing. It was the badge of separation to God. Thus the Holy Ghost comes upon the separated, dedicated, consecrated heart. You cannot receive it upon a carnal and fleshly soul. God will not dwell in a sinful spirit. You must separate yourself from evil, dedicate yourself to Him, and be crucified with Christ to self and sin before He will make your heart His abiding place. His promise is: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and a new spirit will I put within you." Then he adds, "I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

You cannot get power from God until you receive holiness. Simon Magus wanted this power from the Apostle Peter; but his wicked heart received only God's terrific rebuke and the awful words, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Men are still trying to get power without holiness, but it can only bring disappointment and danger. In their search for power they will probably end where Simon Magus did, with the unholy power of the wicked one and the curse of a holy God. The Spirit's first work is to cleanse us, to separate us, to sanctify us, to dedicate us wholly to God. Then as the property of God, He takes possession of us for God and uses us for His service and glory alone.

II. PARTICULAR CASES IN WHICH THE ANOINTING OIL WAS USED

1. The anointing of the leper is described in Leviticus 14. This represents the Holy Spirit's cleansing and consecrating work upon the sinner. This poor leper outside the camp represents our worst estate, and it is for such sinners that the Holy Ghost has come to bring all the fullness of Jesus.

First, the poor leper must be met and welcomed, and then brought by the priest inside the camp and under the cleansing water and sprinkled blood; then the anointing oil is applied, and he is touched over the blood-mark that has already been given, upon his right ear, his right thumb, and his right toe. This means the consecrating and the filling of all his powers of apprehension and reception represented by the ear, all his powers of appropriating faith and holy service represented by the hand, and all his steps and ways represented by his feet. All these are dedicated to God and taken possession of by the Holy Ghost.

The oil does not come first, but the blood. Then the oil is placed upon the blood. The Holy Ghost comes only to those who have received Jesus. There is no spiritual power apart from the cross and the Savior. Those higher revelations and deeper teachings which discard the blood of Calvary come from beneath. Like the ancient St. Francis, we can always know the true Christ by the print of the nails and the spear. However, we need the oil as much as the blood. Our ears, our hands, and our feet must be divinely quickened, possessed, and filled before we can rightly hear and understand for God, rightly appropriate the things we know, rightly work for Him, and walk in His holy ways.

But this is not all. This is but a drop of oil. We now read that the remnant of the oil was poured upon the head of him who was to be cleansed. This is a much larger filling. The very word "pour"means a fullness of blessing, and the remnant of oil means all the oil that was left, all that was in the priest's hand. We know that the priest is no one else than the Son of God, the Mighty One, who holds the ocean in the hollow of His hand, and, therefore, the rest of the oil that the palm of His hand can hold is an ocean of infinite fullness. It means that all the oil, that Jesus himself had, is poured upon our head. The same anointing came upon Him that He also shares with us.
All this for a poor leper!

Beloved, have you received the remnant of the oil?

2. The anointing of the priest is unfolded in Exodus 29: 7-21, and Leviticus 8:12, 30. Here we find a different application of the oil. It is applied to the priest with the object of fitting him for service in waiting upon the Lord and ministering in His presence. We also must receive the holy anointing, not only for cleansing but for service. We are not fit to represent God in the world or to do any spiritual work for Him until we receive the Holy Ghost.

You will notice a double operation here in connection with the oil. First, Aaron is anointed, and then afterwards his sons are anointed with him. Aaron is anointed alone, even as Christ received the baptism of the Holy Ghost first upon Himself on the banks of the Jordan; and then later He shed the same spirit upon His disciples. Even as He, we may receive this divine anointing. The oil that falls on Aaron's head goes down to the skirts of his garment. The Spirit that was upon Him He shed upon His followers. Standing in their midst, He breathes upon them and says unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and then He explains the great enduement and the great commission by the strange and mighty words, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

This is our true preparation for the highest of all priestly ministries, for prayer, and for every other service in which we would represent God or bless men. Even the Master did not venture to go forth to fulfill His great commission until He could stand before the world and say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me: because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, . . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." For any man to presume to represent the Son of God, to stand between the living and the dead, to acts as ambassador for Christ, to bear salvation to dying men, to bring men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God without the anointing of the Holy Ghost, is the most daring presumption and the most offensive impertinence to the God whom he misrepresents and to the men on whom he imposes.

3. The anointing of the tabernacle represents something higher than even cleansing or service; namely, the indwelling and abiding presence of God Himself in the believer, as His consecrated temple. We read the full account of it in Exodus 40: 9-16. As we have seen in a former chapter, it is a great day: it marks a special era in their national history. It was on the first day of the first month of the second year. It marked a new departure and a higher experience. The glory that had hitherto marched in front of them or shone above them in the cloud or on the mountain, was henceforth to be brought into their very midst in the Holy of Holies. But before that presence could come and dwell among them, that tabernacle, that was to be its shrine and home, must be completed according to the divine commandment in every part, and then presented to God in the solemn ordinance of anointing.

It was definitely laid at the feet of Jehovah, and the sacred oil was poured upon it, as a symbol that God Himself now took possession of the sacred edifice and was to make it henceforth His personal abode. Then the cloud descended and the tabernacle became the very throne of the divine presence.

And so, when we present our bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God," we become the sacred abode of the Holy One. Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transfigured, is the apostle's inspiring message to such consecrated lives. Life henceforth becomes a transfiguration and we go forth shining like the Master, with the glory of the inward presence which the world cannot understand, but which the angels perceive, and which makes the consecrated heart the house of God and the very gate of heaven. Beloved, have we come to this also? Have we reached the glory of this mystery, which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory?"

Ancient minds in heathen lands dreamed of something like this, when they cut in marble their ideals of beauty and grace and then called them gods. It was the dream of the human heart, trying to bring God down in union with man. But Jesus has accomplished it through His incarnation in our image and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our hearts, the incarnation of the Father in Jesus and the incarnation of Jesus in us by the Holy Ghost.

This is the climax; this is the consummation; this is the crowning glory of redemption; and all that which is now being realized in the individual, shall yet, some glorious day, be gathered together into the whole number of glorified and transfigured ones. Then when the whole Church of Christ shall meet and the body shall be complete, and the building shall be crowned with the glorious headstone, then the universe shall look upon a spectacle for which all ages have been preparing, the infinite and eternal God, enshrined in glorified humanity. And the heavens shall cry, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."
There are three or four other instances of anointing, to which we shall briefly refer, inasmuch as they will be considered more fully in a later chapter.

4. The ancient prophets were anointed. Thus Elisha was called to his high office. And thus we are called and qualified by the Holy Ghost to present the will of God, to bear the Word of God to our fellow-men.

5. Kings were anointed, as David was set apart by the anointing oil to be God's chosen king. Likewise we are anointed kings and priests unto Him -- a royal priesthood of love and victorious life, to bear upon our brow the majesty of the saints of God as the joint heirs with Christ in His coming kingdom.

6. The sick were anointed for healing. The Holy Ghost becomes to us the quickening and health-bringing power, who imparts the life of Jesus to our mortal frames, expelling disease and bringing us into the divine and resurrection life of the Son of God.

7. Guests were anointed. We read in the twenty-third Psalm the beautiful picture of the guest sitting at the table of the royal banquet and exclaiming, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." We find Jesus complaining to the Pharisee, "My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she hath anointed my feet." The ancient host received his guest with great courtesy and took him into the bathroom, where the stains of the wayside were washed away, where fresh garments were put upon him. Then sweet and fragrant oil was poured upon his head.

So the blessed Holy Ghost not only becomes our guest; but He turns around and makes us as guests, and then anoints us with the sweet, fragrant oil and feeds us with the heavenly banquet of His love.

A missionary of the Northwest tells us that once in a while he and his wife used to visit the Indians and have a little feast with them in their homes. The missionary's wife would tell the Indian mother on Sabbath at the little chapel to be ready for her on a certain day that week, and to prepare her best for dinner. The poor squaw perhaps would answer that she had nothing worthy of the missionary save a little fish. But the missionary would tell her to prepare what she had and to have everything clean and bright, and it would be all right. So on the appointed day the missionary would arrive, and she would take from her dog-sleigh bundle after bundle of things. There were tea and coffee, there were sugar and bread, there were potatoes, and perhaps butter and little delicacies that the poor savage never had seen before. When all was ready the missionary husband would arrive in another dog-sleigh from visiting the stations, and then the feast would begin, and they would dine together. The missionary and his wife were the real host and hostess, and the poor Indian family ate of things that day that they had never tasted before; and the missionaries found their joy in the joy which they brought.

Ah, that is the way that our precious Lord loves to do with us. We take Him into our humble home, and we give Him our best, although it is very poor at the best, and He condescends to accept it; and then He brings His best -- all that heaven affords -- and He feeds us out of His bounty, and it is true, as He promised, "I will sup with him and he will sup with me." He takes what we have to give, but He brings His richer gifts to us; and as we sit at His table and feast upon His love we say with the Psalmist, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."