

The Simple Truth Series # 8

Our Personal
Ministries



Part 2. **THE TIME OF YOUR ANOINTING.**

Part 3. **MINISTERING YOUR GIFT IN LOVE.**

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'And expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.' Acts 18:26.

This study is divided into 3 parts.

Part 1, '**Allowing God's Gifts to Fulfil their Ministries,**' is concerned with Ministries in general, using the five-fold Ministry of Apostles (Missionaries), Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers, as examples.

Part 2, '**The Time of Your Anointing,**' is concerned with when and where your Anointing comes, and why no-one can have a Ministry they are not called to, and Anointed for, which happens too often unfortunately.

Part 3, '**Ministering Your Gift in Love,**' is concerned with how to Minister, because anything not done in Love, is done in a wrong spirit.

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Part 2.

THE TIME OF YOUR ANOINTING

Because we are fore-ordained to our Ministries, each person and their Ministry are inseparable. You can take the person out of the Ministry, but you can never take the Ministry out of the person, because it's part of their makeup. And, no one else can take your place. If you do not fulfil your Ministry, it will be left undone. The reason why none of us can choose our own Ministry, is because we would all choose something we excel at. That's the way of this world. Success breeds success, so they say, but the Lord doesn't do it that way.

1.

'for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'

1 Corinthians 1:26-29, tells us, *'For you see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His Presence.'*

The Lord does choose the wise, the mighty, and the noble, at times, but mostly, He chooses fools, the weak, the base, the despised, and things that aren't. Why?

In 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Paul says, *'And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.'*

This world uses our strengths, but the Lord uses our weaknesses, because, if I do something I'm good at, it glorifies me; but, if the Lord uses me to do something I can't do, then it glorifies Him. So, that's the sort of person He chooses, someone who is incapable of doing the job He has called them to; so that His strength can be made perfect through their weakness, and that glorifies *Him*.

3.

When you look back through the Bible, those are the sort of people He chose. When He wanted someone to stand against Pharaoh, and free several million slaves, He chose Moses. We're told that Moses was *'the meekest man on the face of the earth.'* (Numbers 12:3). And he was tongue tied. (Exodus 4:10). He kept telling the Lord he couldn't do it, but when he said that, it showed he was the perfect man for the job, because God's strength could be made perfect through Moses' weakness.

Samson is portrayed as a big muscly guy, who could take on an army. But Samson wasn't like that, because, if he was super strong, it wouldn't have made any difference when Delilah cut his hair off. Samson was a sissy. He would have weighed twenty kgs with his pockets full of rocks. He was a mummy's boy, with a little girlie voice. People would trip him up, and he'd say, "Leave me alone you guys, or I'll tell my mummy." But when his Anointing came on him, he was invincible, because God's strength was made perfect through his weakness.

The Lord's disciples weren't religious leaders, or people steeped in the Bible. They were common labourers. St. Paul wasn't a great orator. 2 Corinthians 10:10, tells us, *'His bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible.'* That wasn't much of a recommendation for the Apostle to the Gentiles, but that's who the Lord chose, because His strength could be made perfect, through St Paul's weakness.

Philippians 2:13, tells us, *'...it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.'* Because it's the Holy Spirit that does the work through us, what He wants, is for us to surrender completely, and let Him play us like a fiddle. That's the ideal, to let Him have His way. And, we all have the same Holy Spirit, but each of us have a different Anointing of the Holy Spirit, at a different time, for a different purpose, depending on what our Ministry is. Our Anointing is the Presence of God in us for Service, and it's *there*, while we are *in* Service.

In 2 Kings 3, we read where Jehoshaphat and Jehoram went to war against Moab. But their armies ended up in a desert, with no water. Jehoshaphat was a Godly man, so he asked, *"Isn't there a prophet of the Lord, that we may enquire of the Lord by him?"* So, they went to Elisha's home. But Elisha didn't have a Word from the Lord for them, and he knew he couldn't just summon the Holy Spirit any time he felt like it. But his Ministry had been a learning curve, like all of our Ministries are, and he had learned that if he could just create the right *atmosphere*, it would attract the Holy Spirit. So, he called, "Bring me a minstrel!" They brought a musician to him, and he asked, "Could you play That Old Rugged Cross real softly for me, please Brother?" And, when the minstrel played, Elisha felt the Presence of the Lord, and he felt his Anointing come, then he had *'Thus Saith the Lord,'* for Jehoshaphat and Jehoram. *'And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord was upon him.'* (2 Kings 3:15).

That's why the music we play for Worship is so important. Because it creates the atmosphere that attracts the Holy Spirit. We have the Lord's promise, *"For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."*

(Matthew 18:20). But even though we have that promise, if the atmosphere isn't right, He won't be there. The thing about Congregational songs, is that they get everyone singing in unison, and it's that unity that attracts the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is typed as a dove in the Bible, because that's His nature. If you do anything suddenly, or loud, around doves, whew whew-whew, the doves are gone. They come back when the atmosphere is peaceful again. That's why we feel so bad, when we lose our temper, and fly off the handle. Because whew-whew-whew, the Holy Spirit has left us, and our spirit is aware He's left. When we make that right, He comes back, and we feel good again. And that peaceful atmosphere that the Holy Spirit loves, is what Elisha was creating, because that's where His Anointing comes.

Paul was different, because Paul was an Apostle, or a Missionary as we call them today. A Missionary's Anointing doesn't come when he or she is in a quiet place with God. It comes when our Missionary friend is surrounded by the lost: because the plight of the lost passing by on their way to hell, is what stirs the Holy Spirit in them, as we read of St. Paul. *'...his Spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.'* (Acts 17:16). So, they both had the same Holy Spirit, but they both had a different Anointing of it, for a different purpose. Elisha's Anointing came when he was in a quiet place, so he could receive a Word from the Lord. But Paul's Anointing came, when he was surrounded by the lost, so he could give them the Word of Salvation.

Galatians 5:19-20, tells us about the works of the flesh. These aren't things the Holy Spirit does through us, they're things our carnality does. Verse twenty has the word, *'Emulations.'* It means, 'To want to equal, or be better than others.' The reason we emulate others, is because we aren't content with ourselves. We feel that what we do isn't good enough. So, when we see someone else do something that we think is good, we copy it. You see that with children. One of them does something, and it makes the adults laugh. Another child sees that and thinks, "It pleased them, and made them laugh," so, they do it too. Then a third child does it, in your face, and the second child does it a second time, but, by then you've had enough, and you tell them so. It was funny when the first child did it, but it lost its humour, when everyone else started copying them. That's how the Lord feels, when He sees us copying each other. He just wants us to be ourselves. He doesn't expect any of us to be any more than just what He created us to be, with all our faults and failings. There are only two abilities we need to have to serve the Lord, availability, and dependability and if we have these, He will provide everything else.

2.

The Prophet's anointing.

Our friend the Prophet, goes somewhere quiet, and waits-and waits-until the Lord takes a step toward him. And that's it, that's what he lives for, the Holy Presence that's there now, with him. And, that's where his Anointing comes, in the Holy Place, in the Lord's Presence.

3.

The Missionarie's anointing.

Our Missionary friend Paul's Anointing didn't come so he could hear a word from the Lord, like Elisha the Prophet. It came, so he could speak a Word, and tell those lost people in Athens, "Hey, there's a door here! Jesus is the door, and if you enter in by Him, you'll be saved." I had a friend who's calling was to be a Missionary, but he chose to become a Pastor, and you can take the person out of the Ministry, but you can never take the Ministry out of the person. Because his calling was to be a Missionary, he had to satisfy that calling he had on the inside. So, he spent about three months of every year overseas, in Africa, and Asia, because that's where his calling was, and that's where his Anointing came. It didn't come standing behind a pulpit in New Zealand. It came among the unsaved masses in foreign lands.

4.

The Evangelist's Anointing.

Our Evangelist friend, has a ministry similar to the Missionary, except that the Missionary is an Evangelist, a Pastor, and a Teacher, all rolled into one. Our Evangelist friend's Spirit is also moved by the unsaved masses, on their way to hell. But he doesn't have to go to the other side of the world for it to happen. He only has to walk down his own street, and see the unsaved there, for the Holy Spirit to be stirred in him. I've had two good friends who were Evangelists, but they both became Pastors. And, even

6.

though they were Pastors, every Friday night, both of them would go to the corner of a Street, in different towns, and share the Gospel with everyone who went past, because that was their calling.

Our Evangelist friend can leave home to go and share the Gospel, at a park, a beach, a street, or, anywhere else the Holy Spirit leads him. And, the Spirit in him is stirred, by the plight of the unsaved passing, and his Anointing comes. He opens his mouth, and the Lord fills it. And that's where he lives! There, with the Holy Spirit speaking through him. And he's having the time of this life, because, that's his Ministry, calling the Lost to repentance. People are asking questions, and he seems to have the answer on the tip of his tongue. And, he doesn't care about the scoffers, and hecklers, because they're his ministry too. They need Salvation. He may be there two, three, or four hours, and as he's going home, it feels like he's walking on air. And his wife asks "How did it go?" He replies, "Fantastic!" And she asks "Well, what did you speak about?" He says, "About...um? About...ah?" But he can't remember, because the Anointing has left him. It doesn't come in the kitchen at home. It comes on the street, among the unsaved, and talking about it in the kitchen, isn't the same as living it on the street.

5.

The Teacher's Anointing.

Our Teacher friend, gets a thought, or a Scripture, and then it seems as though a tap has been turned on, and it's pouring out, Scriptures, stories he's read, experiences he's had, quotes from others; and the holy spirit is taking them, and putting them all together, like a mosaic. And he's trying, trying, trying, to record it all somehow, to contain it, so he doesn't lose any of it. And his Anointing is upon him, and he's rejoicing, and praising God, as he sees things he never knew before. And that's where he lives, under that Anointing, and he's having the time of his life there. Then, he gathers it all up, and goes and stands behind a pulpit with it. But it isn't the same there, because our Teacher friend, and our Prophet friend, are both like chefs.

A chef can be out in the kitchen, cooking up a storm, and she's getting excited, because she's being inspired, by the taste and the smells of the ingredients she's using. She thinks, just a little bit more of this, just a little bit more of that, and that's it. It's perfect. So, she dishes it up on plates, and she comes out into the restaurant, and serves you a plate. But it isn't the same. There isn't the same atmosphere, when she serves you a plate in the restaurant, as there was back in the kitchen, while she was being inspired, by the smells and the tastes of the ingredients.

And that's the way it is for the Teacher, and the Prophet. When they're in the Lord's

Presence, it's inspiration. But, when they're standing behind the pulpit, it's just, 'the Word.' I've had friends who were Teachers, and I've heard them say, "I wish I could give it to you the way I received it!" But they can't, because there isn't the same intensity of the Anointing in the pulpit, as there was, alone in the Presence of God.

6.

The Pastor's Anointing.

Our Pastor friend's Anointing doesn't come when he's on the foreign Mission field, like the Missionary. And, it doesn't come when he's all alone with the Lord, like the Teacher, and the Prophet. And it doesn't come on the street corner, like the Evangelist. But it comes when he's behind a pulpit, before the flock, that the Lord has given him to Shepherd; because *they* are his Ministry, they're his calling, and that's where he lives!

7.

Only You are called to your Ministry.

So, each Ministry has a different Anointing, at a different time, for a different purpose. And it creates a problem, when one of these Ministries think that everyone else should do what they do, how they do it. There's a problem, when our Prophet friend thinks everyone else should just go to a quiet place, and wait, and wait, until the Lord appears to them. And it creates a problem, when our Evangelist friend says, "All you need is a Bible, and your Anointing! You don't need all those stupid notes you go writing!" But our Evangelist friend doesn't need references, and quotes, and dates, like our Teachers, and Pastors do. And it creates a problem, when I try fulfilling someone else's Ministry, with the wrong Anointing, because, we all have the right Anointing, at the right time, for our own Ministry.

You may see someone's Ministry, and think, "Any fool could do that!" Okay, go ahead, show us what it's like, when a fool does something that they aren't called to do, and they aren't Anointed for. When we know when our Anointing comes, and where our place is, then we know what our limitations are; and that makes the Lord's part a lot easier, because He isn't continually having to pull us back into line, to where we are supposed to be.

8.

8.

The Ministry you aren't called to.

Even though we can't have a Ministry that we haven't been called to, any one of us can do something we aren't called to, for a *season*. As an example. If the Pastor of a Church dies suddenly, someone has to take over until a new Pastor is appointed, because the Lord can't work in a vacuum; He needs a member of His body to work through. So, a Brother, or a Sister, could step up behind the pulpit, and the Lord would use them, and He would bless what they do.

They may be there for two or three weeks, or two or three years, but that doesn't make them into a Pastor from then on. It's like my foot. If my leg's itchy, and I can't scratch it with my hand, because my arms are full, I'll still scratch it with my foot, but that doesn't make my foot into a hand. And no matter how many times I scratch my leg with my foot, it will never become a hand, because it wasn't created to be one. We can only be what God has created us to be.

9.

The Perfection of the Body.

It is important, for each of us to find out what the Lord has called us to do, and to serve Him in that way. Because there is a reason, *why* He has given each of us, the Ministry that we have. And each one of us have an Anointing that comes at a certain time, for our particular Ministry.

Our bodies are not complete, unless every part is functioning normally. We can go around limping. We can live with one arm in a sling. We can live with a patch over one eye. But we can't wait to get back to normal, because that's how we function best.

And, the body of Christ is the same. It will never be complete, until every member is in their place, playing their part. But the problem we face, is that so many Christians are saying, "I can't". "I can't." "I can't do *anything*." But that's OK, because it's good to know what our personal limitations are. The Lord is just longing to hear that from our lips. He wants us to admit our weaknesses. He wants us to admit our lack. He wants us to admit our limitations. Because, that puts us in the perfect position to surrender to Him, and allow His *strength* to be made *perfect* through our *weakness*.

Part 3.

MINISTERING YOUR GIFT IN LOVE

1.

Sacrificial love

It may seem to us as individuals, that what we do isn't important in the bigger picture. But all of our Ministries are a part of God's Plan, and every part of His Plan, is an *important* part of His Plan. With the Ministry that we're given, there comes a responsibility to fulfil it. No-one else can fulfil your Ministry as well as you can, and the Lord expects each one of us to fulfil what He has appointed us to do. It's good to know that we have a Ministry, and it's better to know what it is, but the most important part, is knowing *how* to Minister. Philippians 2:13 tells us, '*It is God who works in you.*' So, if God is working through us, and God is love, then anything God does through us will be done in love. And anything we do, that isn't done in love, is done in a wrong spirit. And because God is love, love is the only motive there is for Ministry. Any other motive is the wrong one. You can't have a Ministry without love, and you can't have love without having a Ministry, because love causes us to be concerned about others.

You can't love, without *giving* something, and giving something *up*. If we go through the list of virtues love has in 1 Corinthians 13, you find that to do any of them, involves a sacrifice. And, it's a sacrifice that only love can make, because love is sacrificial. That's why the Bible tells us that love is patient, love is kind, love bears, believes, hopes, endures, because love is sacrificial. And to Minister in the way God has called us to Minister, involves Ministering in love, and that always involves some measure of personal sacrifice from us.

2.

The life and death of the Ministry

Every Ministry begins with three things. Firstly, there's a person, an individual. There

can be co-founders of a Ministry, or there may even be a group of founders. But you'll find there was one person who saw something, and what they saw was a vision. That vision was the first glimpse they had of that Ministry. It may have been a prophetic vision, or it may simply have been, that someone looked around the Church and realized, "Hey, we've got thirty children here under the age of ten, and no Sunday school. I could start one in the back room we don't use, then the children could learn things at their own level." That's a person getting the vision. Five years later that person is still the Sunday School teacher, and loving it. And they can look back at that beginning and realize, "That wasn't just me wanting to start that, it was the Lord calling me into service, to my Ministry."

So, we have a person with a *vision*. And, because they have a vision for the Ministry, that gives them a *passion* for it. And, it's that *passion* that keeps it going through the difficulties and disappointments that befall it, because that passion is the life of the Ministry. And when the passion leaves it, the life leaves it. So, for that reason, the use-by date for Ministries, is the death of their founder. One hundred percent of all Ministries should be buried with their founders, because that Ministry was a vision the Lord gave that person, in response to the needs of a particular place, and time. But what happens too often, is that the founder of a Ministry dies, and a member of their family inherits the Ministry. But even though that person is well-intentioned, they don't have a vision for it, so they don't have a passion for it.

And, ten years later, you'll find there are half a dozen tired old people, who are either relatives, or close friends of the founder; they are in a tired old building, and they're trying to keep this tired old Ministry alive, because of the respect they have for its founder. But they're having to continually resuscitate it, because it's been dead on its feet for years. And, because they don't have a passion for it, it isn't a Ministry any longer, it's just a burden they're bearing. But what they should do is bury it, and get their own vision, because the Lord has something worthwhile for every one of us to do, and it doesn't include flogging a dead horse. He gives each one of us a vision, for our own time and place, and that is what he requires from us, nothing more and nothing less.

3.

Being faithful to your calling

He told Noah to build this big Boat, and He said, "You warn everyone, that water is going to rain out of the sky, and it's going to flood the earth, and anyone who isn't in that boat will drown." And, for the next hundred and twenty years, that's what Noah

did. Every day, of every week, of every year, that's what he told them. Same old, same old, thing. And when people saw him coming, they'd make fun of him, "Here comes the old one-track record. Water's going to fall out of the sky. Gonna flood the earth. You have to get in my boat, or you gonna die. Get a new song Noah!" No! Noah didn't need a new song. He didn't have to tell them something different every week. He just had to tell them, what the Lord told him to say. The Lord does not require any of us to do any more, than just what He has personally asked us to do. If He has asked you to tell the world "Jesus saves." Then, tell the world "Jesus saves." Don't add "and Jesus heals." "And Jesus is Lord." That's someone else's Ministry. Just be faithful to what He has called you to do, and He will bless it; because, when you're doing that, you're fulfilling your part of God's plan.

4.

God's answer is today's answer

When the Lord moved in a certain place a hundred years ago, that was good, because, that was His answer to the needs of that day. But this is a different day. The world is a different place, circumstances are different, people are different, and the needs of today are different. So, we can't revive what they had back then, and expect it to cure the ills of this day; because it won't. The Lord will give someone a vision, in answer to the needs of this day. He always has, and He always will. And He does it in answer to prayer. Because, prayer is like love. You can't have a Ministry without prayer, and you can't have a lot of prayer, without it causing a Ministry, because God acts in answer to prayer. And, prayer is the foundation of every Ministry. It's easy to pray too little, but we can never pray too much.

When Moses met the Lord at the burning bush, the Lord told him to go to Israel and tell them he was there to deliver them. So, he went down and said, "Pack your bags guys, we're out-a here." Then Moses went to Pharaoh and said, "The Lord God said, Let my people go!" Pharaoh replied "I don't know any Lord, and I'm not letting anyone go." So, Moses found himself being escorted off the premises, and he thought, "That didn't go so well. Maybe we need to go to plan B?" No! Second Samuel 22:31 tells us, '*As for God, His way is perfect.*' His plan A is always perfect. He never has a plan B, and plan A will work out perfectly, if we will just be patient, and let the Lord work.

5.

Passion and perseverance with...patience

Our Ministries take off with a hiss and a roar, when we see the vision, and get the passion that starts them, and we're all fired up with enthusiasm. So, we go around merrily planting seeds for the Lord, and we expect it to be like Jack and the Beanstalk. Whew! Whew! Whew! Through the roof, and up to the sky overnight. But there aren't any magic beans, and when we don't see anything happening immediately, we get discouraged, we lose heart, and we give up. Philippians 2:13 tells us, *'It is God who works in you...'* So, it isn't me doing God's work. It's God, doing God's work, through me. But when He's working through me, He isn't working to my timetable, He's working to His *own* timetable, and none of us know what that is. So, we have to be patient, and let Him work.

The Lord told Moses, *"I have heard the cries of My people, and I am come down to deliver them."* Israel hadn't just been crying out since last week. They had been crying out, for a hundred years, "Lord, deliver us." And, He heard their cries. He was aware of their plight. But He couldn't deliver them any earlier than He did, because he had fore-ordained Moses to lead them out of Egypt. So, He had to wait patiently for Moses' great grandparents to meet, and for his grandparents to be born. Then, his grandparents met, and his parents were born. Then, his parents met, and he was born. And the Lord wasn't going to plague a good man with bad things, so He had to wait until Rameses was on the throne. A man so heartless, and evil, that he would have new-born children killed. And, once all this preparation had taken place, He could deliver Israel.

There were men who prophesied to Israel, about their coming Messiah, and Malachi was the last of them. In Malachi chapter 3:1, it says, *'Behold, I will send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me: (Referring to John the Baptist.) And the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant.'* (Referring to Jesus). So, when Israel heard that, they thought, "Woah! He's coming soon!" And, they swept their houses out, and got ready to greet their Messiah. Then, they waited. And, the next generation waited. And, the generation after that. And, for four hundred years, the Heavens were silent. No prophecies. No Word from the Lord. Nothing! Because, God isn't like us. He doesn't make a noise just for the sake of making a noise. He doesn't do anything without a purpose. So, if He doesn't have anything to say, He won't say anything. And, for four hundred years, He didn't, because, He'd already said everything, He had to say, and, He'd already done everything, He had to do.

If you went and knocked on any door in Israel, and said, "Hey, it's awfully quiet out

there, what happened to your Messiah?" They would tell you, "We're waiting for Him." But, in reality, the Messiah was waiting for them. In fact, He was waiting for the whole world to prepare itself for His coming. He had to wait patiently, over those four hundred years, while the Greek language was passed from lip to ear, lip to ear, right across the known world; one person at a time, so there was a common language for the Gospel to be spread in, when He came. And, He had to wait patiently, while the Romans built their network of roads, one rock at a time, right across Europe and Asia, down into Africa, and through England, and up to Scotland, for the Gospel to travel on, when He came. He was waiting for us, to get the world ready for Him.

And, after this was all done, there were strange rumours going around in Israel, about the Hairy-man of Galilee. He lived in the desert, and ate locusts, and wild honey. And, he was baptizing people in the river Jordan. And, to a religious people like Israel, that caught their attention, because it was supposed to. That was God calling to them, "Come and see! This is the last link in the preparation, before your Messiah comes." And, when John announced, "*I am the Voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord.*" That was it.

All the preparation was completed. And, the Bible tells us, the *next* day, John saw Jesus coming, and he said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world.*" But John could never have said that, until those four hundred years of preparation were completed. We pray every week, "Lord, send a Revival!" And, when He starts one next week, it may not be in answer to our prayers of this week. It may be in answer to the prayers of fifty years ago. But they didn't know how much preparation was required, before their prayers could be answered, and neither do we. We get frustrated, and impatient, "C'mon Lord, can't You see You're missing a golden opportunity here?" No, He isn't. He never misses anything of the sort. His way is perfect, and, we just have to be patient, and let Him have His way.

But that's the way it always is. We get the idea, that we're waiting for the Lord to move; and He does want to make Himself known among us, but, anytime He doesn't appear to be moving, in answer to our prayers; it's either because He's moving in such a simple way that we're missing it; or else He's waiting, because the preparation isn't complete yet. It's good to have the passion and enthusiasm that begin our Ministries, but we need patience and perseverance to complete them; because, patience and perseverance will triumph, long after enthusiasm has gone cold, and given up the ghost. And, we need to be faithful, during those times of preparation, while nothing appears to be taking place. Now, we'll look at a couple of incidents in Moses' life, to illustrate our theme of 'Ministering your gift in love.'

6.

Ministering your gift in love

Israel had been crying out, “Lord, deliver us!” And He did. They were free! Liberty! On their way to the Promised Land. Hallelujah! And, Moses was doing what he had been born to do. He was leading them. It was Heaven on earth! But, they complained, continually. About the lack of water. About the lack of food. About how they had meat, and as much bread as they desired back in Egypt. About Moses’s leadership. About going through the desert.

Then, Moses went up Mt Sinai, into the Presence of God, for forty days and while he was there, Aaron made the golden calf. And, Israel danced around it butt naked, and worshipped it. The Lord knew what was going on in the camp, and He said, “That’s it, Moses, I’ve had enough! I’m going to destroy them, and I’ll start again, and make a great Nation from you” Moses said, “Yeah! About time too. I’ll get my machine gun, and I’ll help you!” Rat-a-tat-tat. No! Moses couldn’t do that. He begged, and pleaded with the Lord, to forgive the people. And he said, “If You can’t forgive them, blot me out of Your book.” (Exodus 32:32). In other words, take my life, but spare them. Moses was willing to sacrifice his life for them. These people who’d murmured, and complained, all the way. They were even going to stone him to death at one time. But Moses loved these people, because, they were *his* Ministry.

We all Minister to people, when it comes down to it. People are our Ministries. And, you’ve got to have a feeling for the people, you Minister to. Whether it’s a Missionary, among the lost, on the other side of the world, or, a Pastor with his congregation, or a personal worker, trying to reach the town drunk, on the main street, with the Gospel. Unless you love them, you can’t help them, because, it isn’t a job, it’s a Ministry from the Lord.

Why do you think a Missionary will travel to the far side of the world, and sleep in a bed with bed-bugs in it, and eat food that isn’t as good as what they feed their pets at home? It isn’t because they like to travel. It’s love. Love for those unsaved people. We’re told that fifty percent of all Missionaries return home within six months, and never return. Why don’t the rest leave as well? They could be sleeping in a proper bed, eating proper food, and living in a proper house. But when you are in the place the Lord has called you to, there is nowhere else on earth that you would rather be, than right there.

When Paul went on his first Missionary journey, he went to Lystra. The Jews there stoned him, and threw his body outside the town, leaving him for dead. But the Lord hadn’t finished with him, and we’re told he *‘Revived, and stood on his feet.’* Several years later, he made his second Missionary journey, and he went to...Lystra, of all

places. Was he a glutton for punishment? No. He was the Apostle to the Gentiles. Those people were his Calling. He loved them. And, nothing could stop him from going there, because he was ordained to it.

Every Ministry has obstacles, that only a God-given-calling, will ever overcome. Corrie Ten Boom had a saying, "Where He leads me, I will follow, what He feeds me I will swallow." If you know that the Lord has Called you to something, then you should also know, that He will protect you, within that Calling. Because, He never sends you out alone, He goes with you.

First Corinthians Chapter 13, the great love chapter in the Bible, can be summed up in two statements. Love never fails. And anything not done in love will fail. Why do you think an Evangelist will put up with the mocking, the scorn, the jokes? Not because he wants to be popular. But he was on his knees the night before, interceding, "Lord, whoever I get an opportunity to talk to tomorrow, open their hearts, their souls, their understanding. Let them see, that without You, they are hopelessly, and eternally, lost." And, that intercession is a part of every Ministry. Our Sunday School Teacher pleads, "Lord, the children are hearing it with their ears, but, open their hearts, so they can receive it."

Moses was pleading for the people. He was caught between a rock, and a hard place. Between an angry God, and an angry people. Between Heaven and Hell, trying to reconcile them. And, that's where all our Ministries stand. At the Cross, pleading, "*Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.*" But we will never do that, if our Ministries aren't built on love.

I had a friend who lived in a town, where a girl worked the streets, near his house. She was a prostitute. He befriended her, and he told her about the Gospel. And how good it was to know your sins are forgiven, and to know you have Eternal life. And she responded, she wanted to give her life to the Lord, but she was moving away the next week. So, my friend went to a Pastor in that town, and asked him if he would look after her. "Of course, he would," he said. But everything went wrong for the girl the first week there, and the Pastor didn't want anything to do with her. She got desperate, and took her own life.

So, my friend confronted the Pastor, and said, "You told me you would take care of her!" And, the Pastor replied, "She was a prostitute, she's just scum." That's what man sees, because man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. He looked at her, and said, "I thought about you, and I spoke about you, when I said, I am not willing that any should perish." And, love says what God says, because God is love, and love has God's characteristics. And, only love, can ever love the unlovable.

7.

Ministering your gift without..Love

All of Israel's needs, between Egypt, and the Promised Land, were a part of Moses' Ministry, because, he was their Pastor. And there's another incident we need to look at. It was a time when they needed water, and it is found in Numbers 20:7-12.

'And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather the assembly together, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth its water, and you shall bring forth to them water out of the rock: so you shall give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, you rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because you believed me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.'

Moses was told to 'speak' to the rock, but, as he walked toward it, something had changed. Maybe, the baby in the tent next door was crying all night. Maybe, there was a rock under his mattress, and he couldn't sleep. Maybe, he wanted quail for breakfast, and Zipporah fed him Manna. But, for whatever reason, he took his eyes off his Ministry, and looked at the human failings around him. And, as he strode toward the rock, he was muttering something about the "Stupid desert," and the "Stupid people," and the "Stupid water;" and the Holy Spirit should have spoken through him in love, to bring forth water for the people. But, instead, it was the man Moses, speaking in anger. And, the Bible tells us, that the *'Wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.'* (James 1:20). So, Moses stepped up to the rock, he yelled, "Must we bring you rebels water from this rock?" Then, he hit the rock twice, and water gushed out. And, the Lord asked, "What's this 'we' business Moses?" 'We' can't create water. 'We' can't save anyone. 'We' can't heal anyone. 'We' can only surrender ourselves, so God can, *'Work in us both to will and do of His good pleasure.'*

The culmination of Moses' whole life and Ministry, was going to be, when he took the first triumphant step onto the soil of the Promised Land, at the head of his people. But, the Lord said, *"Because you did that, you're going to see the land with your eyes, but you won't set one foot on it."* The Lord took that from him.

We could analyse what Moses did, and say, he was under a lot of stress, which was probably true. But, there's no excuse, because, that was Moses' Ministry, and he was

supposed to be Ministering in love. Anytime we don't Minister in love, we lose something, and it's something that can't be regained. Moses lost the privilege of leading his people onto the Promised Land.

Our Sunday School teacher loses something when she doesn't Minister in love, and she yells, "You horrible little brats, just sit down, and shut up, and listen to what I'm telling you!" And, the next Sunday, there are only three 'horrible little brats' there. "Where are the others?" She asks. "They said they aren't coming back anymore, because you're too grumpy!" And, they don't. But if she had been Ministering in love, that love would have covered a multitude of sins, and she would have seen those children, not as 'horrible little brats,' but as her God-given Ministry.

Our Pastor loses something, when he doesn't Minister in love, and he says, "I don't know why I waste my time talking to you lot. You never listen. Nothing ever changes." And, he loses their respect, because, yes, they are listening, and, yes, they are changing.

Paul said, "*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*" So, as long as we faithfully plant, or faithfully water, or do whatever it is we are called to do, God will faithfully give the increase. He will change hearts, and lives, and save Souls, and do all those things He does so wonderfully. All of our Ministries are just the same as John the Baptist's, we are preparing the way, so He can step in among us, and work.

8.

'For it is God which worketh in you.'

Second Corinthians 5:19 tells us, '*God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.*' Why was He doing that? Not because we wanted to be reconciled to Him, but, because *He* wanted us to be *reconciled* to Himself. When a Missionary goes to Siberia, it isn't because that Missionary wants to tell the Siberians about Jesus Christ. It's because the Lord wants them to know about Himself.

God's love is what motivates any God-given Ministry, and as 1 Corinthians 13 showed us, no amount, of Supernatural gifts, or knowledge, or faith, or sacrifice, can ever take the place of love. Because, love is the only thing that will never fail. And, as long as we Minister in love, our Ministries will not fail, and God will not fail us. We brought nothing into this world, and we will carry nothing out. And, in Eternity, the only things that will be remembered, from our earthly walk here, will be those things that were done in love.

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