

ESF Lord's Day service message
2/2/2025

Growing in the Holy Spirit

Ezekiel 47:1-5

The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. ² He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side.

³ As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. ⁴ He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. ⁵ He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross.

A cynical young medical student confronted a pastor and said: "I have dissected the human body, and I found no soul."

The pastor said, "That's interesting. When you dissected the brain did you find a thought? When you dissected the eye did you find vision? When you dissected the heart did you find love?"

The student answered thoughtfully, "No, I did not."

The pastor said gently, "Of course you believe in the existence of thoughts, of vision, and of love. The human soul is the totality of man's existence in relationship with God. Just because you cannot find it on a medical analysis does not mean that it does not exist."

As human soul exists although it is not visible, so the Spirit of God exists although the Spirit is invisible. If the Spirit of God exists, what

does the Spirit do in our lives? If the Spirit works in us, what will happen to our lives? Today's words give us answers to these questions.

In this text, the water that comes out from the temple is the Holy Spirit. The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as water for life.

Jesus says in John 7:38-39, "*Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.*" *By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive....*

With this text God shows us how he blesses us through the water of the Holy Spirit and helps us keep growing.

The ankle-deep water of the Holy Spirit

God's messenger led Ezekiel to the water that was ankle- deep. The ankle-deep water represents the Holy Spirit who leads us to the beginning stage of our spiritual life.

1) Ankles are where the whole body stands upon. It speaks of a foundation. What is the foundation of our spiritual life? It is to be born again spiritually. The Holy Spirit provides us the foundation of faith by opening our spiritual eyes to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. 1 Corinthians 12:3, *....no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.* When Jesus taught Nicodemus how a man can be born again (how an unbeliever can believe in Jesus as the Savior), he says "*no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit*" (John 3:5).

It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to be spiritually born again so that we can accept Jesus as our Savior. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to build our faith upon Jesus as the foundation. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:11, "*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" Jesus Christ is the only foundation on which we build up our faith and grow spiritually.

Have you accepted Jesus as your Savior? If you have, you have evidence that you are spiritually born again by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has given you the foundation upon which you can build up your faith. Be confident of the foundation and keep building your faith upon that foundation.

If you have not accepted Jesus as your Savior yet, open your heart to the voice of the Spirit and accept Jesus as your Savior now. And your faith will start growing upon a solid foundation.

2). Getting into the ankle-deep water also means that we take just a small step of faith. In terms of spiritual growth, it is a baby step. Walking through water that is ankle deep requires a minimum of effort on our part. All we must do is taking off our shoes, rolling up our pants a bit, and move easily through the water. The depth of water is so shallow that we can easily move in and out of the water. After we come out of it, we roll down our pants and put on our shoes; people cannot even tell we've been in the water.

We all experience this stage of ankle-deep faith. We do not need to sacrifice our time or money to serve the Lord. We do not need to change our old lifestyle that much. We go to church at our own convenience. We do not commit ourselves to coming to worship the Lord every Sunday. Whenever we have work to do, parties to attend, or games to watch on Sunday, we feel free not to come to church on Sunday. We are in and out of spiritual matters so quickly that most people do not see a difference in us at all.

Although all new believers start their faith from this stage, this is not the spiritual stage the Holy Spirit wants us to remain. The Holy Spirit leads us into the next step of spiritual growth. If you have remained in this stage, the Holy Spirit is encouraging you to move on to the next stage now. Follow the guidance of the Spirit and step into the next stage of spiritual growth.

The knee-deep water of the Holy Spirit

The messenger of God led Ezekiel to the water which had increased to knee level.

1). By leading Ezekiel to the knee-deep water, the Spirit led him to the level of commitment of faith that is a little more than ankle-deep faith. Just as knee-deep water is a little harder to walk in, so is serving the Lord in the next stage of growing in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit encourages us to serve the Lord not with on and off commitment but with consistent commitment.

Following the Holy Spirit in knee-deep water means that we must commit to serving the Lord a little more than we have committed. The Holy Spirit encourages you to give a little more time to do some ministry. The Holy Spirit encourages you to be a little more generous in your financial giving to the Lord's ministry or mission. The Holy Spirit does not force you to do so against your free will. The Holy Spirit convicts your heart of doing it joyfully and willingly. Then just follow such conviction of the Holy Spirit. You will experience the movement of the Holy Spirit in your lives more freely.

2). Also, the water of the Spirit that reaches up to the knees signifies the Holy Spirit who blesses us through our prayers.

The Holy Spirit works through our prayers. We can experience the blessings of the Holy Spirit more fully through our prayers.

When Elijah prayed, God sent the fire of the Holy Spirit to destroy all the false prophets of the idol Baal (1 Kings 18:16-40). Through prayers we can receive the Holy Spirit's powerful fire with which we can overcome the powers of false gods in this world.

When Daniel prayed, God sent him the presence of the Holy Spirit who shut the mouth of hungry lions who could have devoured him in the den he was thrown into (Daniel ch.6). Through prayers we can receive the

presence of the Holy Spirit who shuts the mouth of the devil attacking us like a roaring lion.

When the disciples in Jerusalem prayed, the Holy Spirit anointed them and poured powerful gifts unto them (Acts 2:1-13). They received the gift of speaking in foreign languages, the gift of preaching, the gift of evangelism, the gift of healing and many other gifts to serve the Lord victoriously.

Through our prayers, the Holy Spirit anoints us and gives us his blessed gifts also - the gift of speaking in foreign tongues, the gift of healing, the gift of praising, the gift of teaching and preaching, and many other gifts with which we can serve the Lord and people joyfully.

Do you want to keep growing in the Holy Spirit? Do you want to be a consistent believer who can make a difference? Then, be a praying person. Pray for the church. Pray for people who are sick and need God's miraculous healing. Pray for people who need to be saved. Pray for people who are suffering. Pray for your spouse and children. Pray for your friends. Pray for yourself.

The waist-deep water of the Holy Spirit

The divine messenger led Ezekiel to the depth of the river that had increased to waist level. The water covered about half of the man's body. The water had a much greater effect on the walk of Ezekiel. In the waist-deep water, he slowed down. He was not able to walk as freely as he did in the ankle-deep water or knee-deep water.

At this stage of growing in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit encourages us to serve the Lord with even more commitment.

Now the Holy Spirit leads you to commit more than to hearing sermons or participating in fellowships. The Spirit calls you to sacrifice more of your time. The Spirit encourages you to reach out to people around you. The Spirit convinces you that you can also be trained to be a leader. The

Spirit encourages you to read and study God's word more seriously, pray more earnestly and be concerned for a part of God's work that he has entrusted you with.

As the Holy Spirit leads you into a waist-deep walk with him, there will be obstacles in your path. There will be those who will not commit themselves to serving the Lord as you do and will tell you that you are foolish for being so radical for God. There will be those who will not agree with your conviction or your obedience. There will be those who will even try to convince you that you cannot do what God is telling you to do.

When the Spirit leads us to this stage of growth, he wants us to surrender more of our lives to him. He encourages us to let go of our strength and put the control of our lives on him. When we follow the Spirit's lead at this stage and let him control our lives more, the Spirit will enable us to overcome all hidden obstacles and enjoy more fruits of the Spirit.

Jacob was a man of strong will. He did not know how to surrender his will to God. One day he wrestled with God's angel. Then God broke his hip joint and Jacob lost his natural strength. He surrendered to God and God changed his name. When he lost his natural strength, he received the power of the Holy Spirit. He became bold and courageous and tasted lots of fruits of the Holy Spirit (Genesis 32:22-33:20).

Do you want to grow more than just knee-deep in your blessing of the Spirit? Do you want to receive more blessings from the Spirit? Follow the encouragement of the Holy Spirit. Stand firm when you face resistance and obstacles while you live by faith. Overcome them with the power of the Holy Spirit. You will grow to reach the stage of waist deep faith.

The water of the Holy Spirit that is swimming depth

Finally, Ezekiel was led to the depth of the water that covered all his body. Ezekiel had reached a place where he had to place himself under the full control of the water.

He had to swim in the water to stay alive. Swimming in deep water signifies the full and abundant experience of the blessings of the Holy Spirit. It is a demonstration of a life filled with the Holy Spirit.

But at this stage of growing, you may get scared of the depth of the water. When the water covers all your body and you do not know how to swim, you feel that you are drowning. The Spirit may lead you to a task which is out of your ability to manage. The Spirit may lead you to face an obstacle which overwhelms you. The Spirit may put you in a situation which is impossible for you to overcome. The Spirit may encourage you to accept the cross although you fear taking up the cross.

But when the Spirit leads you to this stage, he also teaches you how to swim so that you can not only stay alive, but eventually enjoy swimming. When you swim, the water becomes your blessing. You enjoy the water. If you just follow the Holy Spirit's lead, he will teach you how to manage the impossible situation, overcome the impossible obstacle, accomplish the impossible task, overcome the fear of the cross and receive the power of the resurrection.

When God led Joshua and the Israelites across the river Jordan without a boat or bridge, he challenged them to step into the water of the river. It was impossible for them to swim across the river. But they surrender themselves to God's command. They stepped onto the edge of the river although they did not understand how God would help them cross the river, and God divided the river and let them cross the river (Joshua chapter 3).

This is the stage where God wants all his children to be! God wants us to totally surrender ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit. If we do

that, the Holy Spirit will enable us to swim in deep water where we have never been able to swim. The Holy Spirit will empower us to overcome all troubles and difficulties which are beyond our personal control.

Do you want to receive the full blessing of the Spirit? Do you want to enjoy a life filled with the Holy Spirit? Do you want to overcome impossible obstacles with the power of the Holy Spirit? Do you want to accomplish a great task which you cannot do by yourself? Do not give up when you face an impossible task. Do not surrender to fear in front of overwhelming troubles. Remember this word: *'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6)*

Believe that with the power of the Holy Spirit, you can overcome them. The Holy Spirit will enable you to overcome them. The Holy Spirit will enable you to enjoy swimming in deep water.