

Law of Spiritual Increase

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon explores the law of spiritual increase through the story of a widow and her reliance on God's provision via the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 39:20

Scripture: 2 Kings 4:1-6, Matthew 6:33, John 13:34-35, Philippians 4:19

Topics: "Spiritual Increase"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the symbolism of the widow in the Bible and how it represents the church. He explains that the church is often oppressed and looked down upon by the world, just like a widow. The preacher also mentions the story of the widow who pleaded before an unrighteous judge, emphasizing the importance of persistent prayer. He relates this to the church's dependence on God's Holy Spirit for strength and provision. The sermon concludes by highlighting the spiritual condition of the people of Israel at that time and the faithfulness of the poor son of the prophet.

Transcript

Now we turn to 2nd Kings chapter 4. 2nd Kings chapter 4. We'll read from verse 1. 2nd Kings chapter 4 verse 1. And a woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant heareth Jehovah. And a creditor is come to take my two children to be bondmen. And Elisha said to her, What shall I do for thee? Tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thy handmaid hath not anything at all in the house, but a pot of oil.

And he said, Go, borrow for thyself vessels abroad from all thy neighbors, empty vessels, let it not be few, and go in and shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and pour out into all those vessels and set aside what is full. And she went from him and shut the doors upon her and upon her sons. They brought the vessels to her, and she poured out.

And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said to her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

And she came and told the man of God, And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy sons on the rest. During the lifetime of the prophet Elisha, he performed a number of miracles. And as you read these miracles, you will find that often times he came upon a very difficult situation.

Or may we say he came upon an impossible situation. And then by the grace of God, that impossible situation is turned into glory. Because the ministry of Elisha is a ministry of life.

It's a ministry of resurrection. So every time you find a miracle was done, it was to turn a desperate situation into a moment of glory. Now all these miracles performed have their spiritual meaning, significance in them.

So this morning we would just like to mention one of them. And in this incident, I think we are shown the law of spiritual increase. A woman of the wives of the sons of prophets cried to Elijah.

Elijah. Now she was wife to one of the sons of the prophets. Now we mentioned before that the sons of the prophets actually means young people who had a desire to serve the Lord.

And they came into these centers, training centers. Because during the days of Elijah and Elisha, it started with Samuel actually, you find there were training centers for young people who had the aspiration of serving God as prophets. And they were gathered there and be trained.

So one of the sons of the prophets died. And he left behind him a widow with two children. And worse than that, he left behind him a great debt.

And because of that, a predator came and threatened to take the two sons away from the widow to sell them as slaves in order to pay the debt. So this widow was in a very desperate situation. She came to Elijah for help.

In a sense, that widow represents the church today. So far as the church's relationship with the world is concerned, the church is like a widow. So far as the church relationship with the Lord is concerned, of course, the church is the bride to be.

So far as our individual relationship with the Lord is concerned, we are virgins, espoused to Christ. But corporately, the church is the bride to be to Christ who is the bridegroom. But when you look at the relationship of the church with the world, then the church is like a widow on earth.

In a sense, our Lord Jesus is not here physically. He has gone to heaven. And we are left behind in the world.

And of course, in the world, our situation is like the situation of a widow. The world will oppress us. They think that we have no help.

And they will do anything to us. And we are so helpless in a sense. You remember in Luke chapter 18, our Lord Jesus mentioned how a widow pleaded before an unrighteous judge.

And as the judge avenged for her of her adversary, not even that judge in the beginning wouldn't do that. In other words, what was a widow? Nothing in the eyes of the world. But it was because of her persistence, pleading, that finally the judge wanted to get rid of her.

And avenge of her adversary. So anyway you find here, the picture is that widow is the picture of the church on earth. So far as the world is concerned, the church is like a widow.

Oppressed. Looked down upon. Helpless.

Now of course, in application, spiritual application, you cannot try to apply every detail. Because in another thing, our Lord never has left us as orphans. He has never leave us, nor has forsaken us.

Even though physically He is not with us, but spiritually He is always with us. He is always with us. So far as that is concerned, of course, He has never left us behind as widows.

You know. And certainly He will never allow us to be in such destitute situations. Because He is full of grace and full of truth.

All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily and we are complete in Him. So we cannot apply, you know, in all detail when you come to spiritual application. We can only hold on to some major essential points.

Now anywhere you find the widow here represents the church. How does it come about that the church today is in such destitute situation? A widow with two sons. The love of death and the predator has come to take away the two sons.

Now how comes that the church today is in such destitute? I think probably if we look at it from another angle. You know, in our generation the widow represents the church in our generation. We inherit as it were from the former generation all these deaths.

The son of the prophet who died was a godly man. He had a desire to serve God. And why was he so poor? Evidently it reflected the spiritual condition of the people of Israel at that time.

The children of Israel had no desire for God. For the things of God. And because of that they neglected to support these sons of the prophet.

These young people really had a desire to learn to serve God. But nobody cared. That's the reason why the sons of the prophets were so poor.

And they incurred such death. So actually you find it reflected the low spiritual condition of the children of Israel at that time. But this son of the prophet even though he was so poor in poverty, in death, yet he was faithful to the very end.

But he left behind an impossible situation. Now dear brothers and sisters, I do not know how you feel. But as I look back I can see that the generation before us is a more godly generation than the generation we are in now.

You find among older people very godly people. Even though in the former generation many were not clear on salvation even. Many did not know much spiritually.

And yet you do find that the former generation was a more godly generation than we are today. They feared God. They were pious.

They were more orthodox and scriptural than probably our generation. But unfortunately they did not know too much of life. Of the life of Christ.

In other words you'll find even though they feared God and yet they still live in their flesh. Good flesh. They try to serve God with their good flesh.

You'll find good works, Christian works and all these things going on. And yet you'll find there isn't much of real life there. Isn't that something that can represent the former generation? And because they try to serve God in their good flesh they put themselves under the law.

And they were sold to sin. Who were their predators? Who is the predator? I think the predator is the flesh. Because in Romans chapter 8 Paul said we are not debtors to the flesh.

To live in the flesh. In other words we can be debtors to the flesh. If we depend on our good flesh instead of depending on the new life.

If we depend on our good flesh to keep the commandment of God. To serve God. We will find ourselves debtors to the flesh.

And we will find ourselves being sold unto sin. And I think probably that is the reason. Not because our former generation was not godly.

But unfortunately it's more of the righteous self than of the real spiritual life of Christ. And the result is an almost impossible situation is left with our generation. Now how is this situation to be corrected? Fortunately this widow knowing her helplessness.

She went to Elisha the prophet. And you notice Elisha here in a sense represents Christ. When the church is in a destitute situation.

When we find ourselves in debt. When we find ourselves not even able to keep our children. When we find ourselves in such spiritual poverty.

And under such spiritual oppression. It is well for us to go to the Lord. And ask for help.

And you'll find the answer of Elisha was rather strange. Because when she came to her and said and asked for help. Now Elisha said to her what shall I do for thee? Tell me what has thou in the house? She came to Elisha for help.

She was looking for help from outside. And yet Elisha said what do you have in the house? Elisha knew that she had nothing. If she still has something in the house she couldn't come to Elisha.

But still Elisha said what do you have in your house? In other words how often when we come to an impossible situation we look for outside help. But the Lord would turn us to within. And say what do you have in you? Sometimes we forget what we have in us.

Actually what we have in us is sufficient to turn the situation into glory. But we do not know. So here you'll find Elisha said what do you have in your house? And she said thy handmaid had nothing in the house but a pot of oil.

Now isn't it strange that she should have a pot of oil in the house? Of course not a large pot. It must be a small pot. Certainly that pot of oil is not cooking oil because she has nothing to cook with.

She has nothing. And certainly this oil is not for anointing herself. She was a widow.

She is immune. Why is it that in her house there was still a pot of oil? I think probably that pot of oil is the trademark of the son of the prophet. You know a prophet is supposed to anoint kings and priests.

And this young man you know he was trained to be a prophet. So evidently he got a pot of oil with him. You know hopefully that one day when the Lord will really call him to be a prophet then he can use that oil to anoint kings and priests.

To anoint people. But he died. And for sentimental reasons the widow wouldn't part with that pot of oil because that reminded her of her husband.

Of her husband's life. Of her husband's aspiration. So probably that pot of oil was kept home for that reason.

She must have sold everything else no furniture nothing everything else but that pot of oil was still there. It was her last link with her husband. So she said I have nothing but a pot of oil.

Now dear brothers and sisters we all know oil in the scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit. We may be very destitute. We may be deprived of everything.

We may have nothing in our house. But dear brothers and sisters at least we have that pot of oil in the house. Individually speaking we have the Holy Spirit who dwells in each one of us.

We who have believed in the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit. And he never leaves you nor forsakes us. He is always there.

That pot of oil is always there. Collectively the Holy Spirit is in the church. But oftentimes you find our interest our concern of the Holy Spirit is more of a sentimental reason than of a practical reason.

In other words we know the Holy Spirit dwells in us. And in a sense we do respect the Holy Spirit because he is God. And yet we do not know what he is in us for.

We know the Holy Spirit is the seal is the pledge of our inheritance. When we believe in the Lord Jesus we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in us serves as a pledge of our full inheritance.

We know that. And yet we do not know that it is the Holy Spirit in us who will bring us into our full inheritance. Beginning now.

How often our thinking of the Holy Spirit is more sentimental than practical. We know the Holy Spirit is in the church. And the Holy Spirit in the church represents the head.

And yet somehow we do not know how to recognize his authority. How to yield ourselves to him and let him manifest his glory. Dear brothers and sisters no matter how low you are no matter how spiritually destitute you are you may come to a point when you cannot be lower.

You are like that widow. Or collectively no matter how we may be in our spiritual air you cannot be lower in how we look for outside help. But God will direct our hearts to one thing.

We have the Holy Spirit. There is sufficient supply within us if only we know how to use it. Just a pot.

Never forget you have that pot of oil. But why is it that the supply of the Holy Spirit the abundant supply of the Holy Spirit is not experienced? We have the Holy Spirit in us but why is it his abundance is not experienced? What holds it up? And you'll find the secret. The pot of oil is there but it requires empty vessels.

So Elijah says you go to your neighbors and borrow as many empty vessels as you can. And then you shut the door and pour the oil. Thankfully this widow followed the instruction.

So she and her sons went around to their neighbors and borrowed as many vessels big and small vessels empty vessels as they could you know. And then they brought them to the house shut the door and they poured the oil. And the oil filled every empty vessel.

Until the last vessel was filled and there was no more then the oil stopped. Is there not a real lesson for us today? We have the Holy Spirit in us. Individually and collectively.

But sometimes we we do not experience the abundant supply of the Holy Spirit. As if he is not sufficient. How often we feel that we cannot meet our situation.

We are destitute. We are poor. There is no way out.

And yet we know the Holy Spirit is in us. We know he is able but somehow it doesn't work. Why? The reason is we do not have empty vessels.

We need to be empty. That's what if we are empty before God then the Holy Spirit will fill all the empty vessels. But where do you get the empty vessels? Borrow from your neighbors.

Our neighbors are our brothers and sisters. You know I sometimes feel it it's really amazing. God give us our brothers and sisters not only to wash our feet but to empty us too.

We really feel we need our brothers and sisters. You know we cannot live alone. This widow if she did not go to her neighbors she wouldn't have empty vessels.

How we need our brothers and sisters. We cannot live by ourselves. We need to go to our brothers and sisters to borrow empty vessels.

How? Oftentimes we thank the Lord you know when we are very low you know. We thank the Lord when we come to the meeting and we feel ourselves a little bit cloudy. Then some brothers and sisters you know in their prayers or in their song in their testimony how they lift our spirits up.

How they clear our atmosphere. How they refresh our spirits. Oh we thank God for our brothers and sisters before they wash our feet.

But do we ever thank God for our brothers and sisters that they empty us? Sometimes we come among our brothers and sisters and we feel we are quite spiritual. We feel we are very full and our brothers and sisters really reduce us and empty us. And when our brothers and sisters try to empty and reduce us how we rebel against that? We feel we are much better than what they think.

We feel we are quite full, quite spiritual, quite knowing, quite good. But then our brothers and sisters well a little bit blunt, little bit too honest with us and probably God just used them. And how often you come among your brothers and sisters and you find instead of filling you they empty you.

They make you feel you are nothing. You are nobody. You won't get these empty vessels from the world.

The world will praise you maybe. They will either persecute you or praise you. But it is only with your brothers and sisters.

It is only in the church. It is only in the house of God you will find God can use your brothers and sisters to really empty you. To make you empty vessels.

Sometimes you are pretty high and when you come to the brothers and sisters suddenly you find you drop a thousand feet. They make you feel you are really nothing. You think you have something and sometimes you feel well you really well have good give a good message and lo and behold some brother or some sister will come to you and said you are in the flesh.

Thank God for your brothers and sisters. Have you ever thanked God that they empty you? There is no better place to be empty than in the church. That is what the church really is.

It is not a social place where everybody tries to say something good. It is a real real place where people learn to be real. To one another.

And that is the way to get empty vessels. But unfortunately how we resist that. And that is the reason why you don't have enough empty vessels.

You do not know fullness because you refuse the way to wholeness is through emptiness. This is a spiritual law. There is no ultimate.

Now that is the one thing. The other way that your brothers and sisters can empty you well it may not be they do something directly to you. But you know when you fellowship with your brothers and sisters then you begin to realize how little.

If you shut your door just between you and the Lord after a month you think that you have grown a lot. You have known a great deal. Then you begin to come to your brothers and sisters and you begin to hear this brother or that sister giving a testimony or giving some words or in their prayer or in their praise or in their spirit.

Suddenly you begin to realize. I wonder if that kind of experience comes to you. They empty you now you know.

It is through fellowship that you are empty. But how can you go and borrow from your neighbors if you are at odds with them. That's why among brothers and sisters how we need to love one another because it's only when we love one another we can borrow from one another.

And how precious is the fellowship of the saints. I often feel I still feel very strongly there is nothing that builds up God's people more than fellowshiping with one another. The ministry of the word works out but it's indirect.

It is the fellowshiping of the saints that really does the real work especially this work of emptying. Thank God this widow borrowed many empty vessels. Dear brothers and sisters borrow as many as you can.

Every brother and sister may give you an empty vessel. Any brother and sister may empty you. Expect that and with these empty vessels then you'll find shed the door and pour from that pot of oil.

Of course shed the door means go to the Lord. Lord I am now emptied by my brothers and sisters. I have nothing now.

I'm really nothing. I look to you. I look to your Holy Spirit to fill me to supply me with all that I need to meet every situation.

And dear brothers and sisters when you go to the Lord in that manner you'll find the oil will pour and pour until you finish the last empty vessel and then we'll stop. So after this miracle happened the widow went to Elisha and said now we have well I don't know how many and how many vessels of oil now in her house. Must be a great number.

So she came to Elisha and said now what do I do? Elisha said you sell these oils. Pay your debts and the rest for you and your sons. In other words when the Holy Spirit fills us it is more than enough to pay off all our debts.

And there will be more more for the days to come. So dear brothers and sisters this is the law of spiritual increase. We have the Holy Spirit in us individually and comfortably.

Whenever we have problems whenever we experience poverty spiritual poverty I believe the Lord will redirect our attention to the Holy Spirit. And if only we are willing to be emptied then we will find the abundant supply of the Holy Spirit. You know Paul in the letter to the Philippians mentioned about the the supply of the Holy Spirit.

Now do we know the supply of the Holy Spirit? If we know emptiness we will know the supply and that is the solution to our spiritual poverty. Both individually and collectively. So may the Lord help us.

Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father how we praise and thank Thee that Thou has put in us Thy Spirit. And there is no limit to His supply. Oh how we praise and thank Thee that the Holy Spirit is in us and would never leave us nor forsake us.

Ever ready to supply all that we need. But oh Lord we ask that Thou will remind us, Thou will turn our attention to Thy Spirit that we may know the supply of Thy Holy Spirit in our lives both individually and collectively. Oh Lord if it is Thy law that it is through emptiness that we can be filled then Lord empty us.

Teach us how to borrow from one another empty vessels. Teach us how to be humble before our brothers and sisters. Teach us how to thank Thee for our brothers and sisters.

For Thou does use them to empty us. To bring us to a point to see that we really are nothing. We have nothing.

Oh how we praise and thank Thee. Lord Thou must be everything to us and to Thee be all the praise and glory. In Thy precious name.

Amen.

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