

The Valley of Dry Bones

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 July 2016

[0:00] The Valley of Dry Bones The valley of dry bones and a revival in a graveyard.

! The prophet Ezekiel was carried off into an obscure valley by the Spirit of God. He had given a vision of a valley of death. All around him he was surrounded by these bones. The bones of the dead.

Desolation and death on every side. These sun-bleached bones. Dead men's bones all around him. And I'll take it as the story starts in verse 1 of Ezekiel 37.

Let's just try to capture the scene as we read. Verse 2. The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley, which was full of bones.

[1:21] And caused me to pass by them round about. And behold, there were very many in the open valley. And lo, there were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?

And I answered, O Lord, God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord, God, unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

So I prophesied, as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a noise. And behold, a shaking. And the bones came together, bone to his bone.

And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above. But there was no breath in them. Then he said unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, Son of man.

[2:48] And say unto the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon thee, swain, that they may live.

So I prophesied, as he commanded me, and the breath came into them. And they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.

And behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost. We are cut off for our parts.

Therefore prophecy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves. And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place in you your own land.

[4:05] Then shall ye know that I, the Lord, have spoken in, and performed it, saith the Lord. What a sight, what a scene it was.

And it was a reality at these times, in this time of the world, where battles were often fought, that sometimes the slain enemies' carcasses were just left out to rot, for the vultures to come and pick the bones.

And a corpse not properly buried was considered an accursant thing. It was a curse. Cursed by God.

So there's lots of pictures here, in these dry bones. These dry bones are a picture of the nation of Israel. Defeated, dry, lifeless.

Israel, scattered, and in exile. And the valley of dry bones, we could consider too, is a symbol of a people who were once alive to God.

[5:13] And the nation of Israel, forsaken. Israel had forsaken the Lord. And their hope as a nation was dashed because of their disobedience.

And this passage we read here, in this chapter, one could consider some partial fulfilment here, in that Israel has become a nation in 1948.

You could see now Israel is more its own entity in the world. Whereas for many hundreds of years it wasn't. We could also apply this passage in a general kind of way to the reviving of God's people. A reviving work of God amongst his people. Ezekiel was in this valley of despair. A dismal place. Strayed with the bones of long dead warriors.

And Ezekiel stood here, as he was perhaps standing amongst the bones. Standing there in this virtual graveyard. This spiritually dry, very dry place.

[6:23] A desolate place. A desolate place. And we could think of that in our times of the world we live in. It's a desolate, dry place, isn't it? Australia. It's the driest nation. The driest continent. And South Australia is apparently the driest state. It's very dry.

Thankfully we've got some rain coming. We've got some rain coming. Amen. But this world is a very dry place, isn't it? It's a dry, dead place.

There's no hope, no life. Outside of God. And Webster's Dictionary defines despair as the loss of hope.

A feeling of hopelessness. Despair. A loss of hope. And in our world today, many have lost hope, isn't there? We see many that we bump into down our streets.

[7:28] You can see it in their eyes. There's no hope there. They're empty. Lifeless. They're walking dead. Walking our streets. And this idea of giving up hope.

Of feeling discouraged and defeated. It is very real for many people. There's a tongue in cheek site on the internet called Despair Inc.

And it produces, if you've seen in offices sometimes they have these motivational posters. You know, with teamwork or various slogans about team building and such things.

And motivational kind of posters. And this organisation called Despair Inc. tongue in cheek has a bit of a fun dig at such motivational posters.

And it produces demotivational posters. Demotivational posters. And the slogan of this company is, we believe motivational products create unrealistic expectations.

[8:38] Raising hopes only to dash them. And so they've got pictures of sinking ships and all these designs called demotivators. I was going to show some of them but I didn't bring my slides there.

But one of them for example is perseverance. And it's got a picture of a car heading towards this great big tornado. Driving into the tornado. And the slogan is perseverance.

The courage to ignore the obvious wisdom of turning back. The obvious things turn back. Don't persevere. Give up. Give up. And another one is, it's got a picture of some people rowing a boat. Like people in a canoe. What do they call it when there's lots of people in a boat? Rowing. Rowing. Yeah. Rowing along in this row boat.

And the slogan is, it says, get to work. You aren't being paid to believe in the power of your dreams. Forget believing in the power of your dreams.

[9:43] Get to work. So it's kind of, they're kind of contrary to what you'd normally see in motivational posters. But the point is for example, there's one that looks like a marathon race.

With these runners running towards the finish line. And in big bold print, it says, defeat. For every winner there are dozens of losers. Odds are you are one of them.

So, you know, in other words you're going to run the race but you're not likely not going to be the one who wins it. You know, demotivation. Loss of hope. It's a reality, isn't it?

You know, it's easy to be overwhelmed by disappointment. You know, some try to give you a false hope by these motivational things that can also lead to disappointment.

Because it's unrealistic sometimes. But in the Word of God we know that we can have hope. There is hope for us in Christ. Amen? There is hope.

[10:42] In 2 Corinthians 4 through 8 through 9 it says, We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Cast down, but not destroyed. We've got hope. There will be tough things. We will go through some hardship.

We will go through some distress. Some persecution. Some trouble. But we will not be forsaken. We will not be destroyed. And thank God this book that we have in our hands is jam packed with God's promises of hope.

God's blessings. God's guidance for life. And for those despairing. There is hope here. There is hope in these pages. Hope for those dead in trespasses and sins.

Hope even in the graveyard. Back to the graveyard with Ezekiel. It was a despairing sight. It was barren. It was hopeless. It was dry. And Ezekiel was noticing that, verse 2, there were very many.

[12:01] There were very many. There were very many. But very dry. Very many. Very dry. Very many. Very dry.

It was a mega church. You could consider it. There was lots of dry bones. This was a huge gathering of dead warriors. The dead. And these bones were very dry. There was no hope of life. It was completely hopeless. You know, in some ways, there's churches full of dead bones, isn't there? There's very many, but they're very dry. But thank God, God can revive our churches. God can breathe his life back into us. He can revive our lives and revitalize us.

And in verse 11, we see that the people here recognized that they were dry. It says in verse 11, our bones are dried and our hope is lost.

They realized their spiritual need. That they were hopeless and in a needy state. And we too need to do that, brothers and sisters.

[13:19] I put to you that as a church, as God's people, in many churches, in many places, we all need God's reviving. God's enlivening his freshness, his life.

In verse 3, God asked Ezekiel, can these bones live? The answer was obvious. Of course not. Of course not, we would say.

Without divine intervention. Can these bones live? Naturally speaking, of course not. They're dead. Very dry.

Very dry. Very dry. Very dry. Very dry. Very dry. Very dry. Very dry. Very dry. Very dry. Very dry.

Very dry. Can these dry bones live? Can God save your family? Can the Lord save your neighbors? Can he reach out across the other side of the world and save a family in need? Of course he can.

[14:22] He can. All things are possible with God. All around us are the living dead. Where we live. And walk.

In the shopping centers. The walking dead. Down the streets. The walking dead. You know, you don't have to watch a zombie movie. They're all around us.

That's how it is. But all things are possible with God. Amen. Even the dead can be made alive again. And Ezekiel displays his dependence on God.

It says, he says, God only you know the answer to that. You know, can these bones live?

That was the question. Verse 3. And Ezekiel answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. God knows those who can be made alive.

[15:26] And really, brothers and sisters today, our only hope is revival. Our only hope is in God. The wonderful source of hope is revealed.

Verse 4. Again he said unto me, prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. What our nation needs is to hear the word of the Lord.

It's the breath of God that causes life. As it was way back in Genesis 1 and 2. The words of God created all things. This is how God produced life in Adam.

In Genesis 2 verse 7. John 1. We see the Lord Jesus is described himself as the life of God, as the word of God. And preaching is that which God has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

You know, I feel foolish preaching sometimes. And inadequate, unworthy, incapable. But it's by the foolishness of preaching that God has chosen to save them that believe.

[16:44] The word of God is critical, it's foundational, it's essential, it's the method that God has ordained. Preaching the word.

And also we're to give attendance to the word. To devote ourselves to reading it. That's 1 Timothy 4.13. 1 Timothy 4.13. Give yourself to reading the word.

Studying the word. To exaltation. To doctrine. So God said to Ezekiel, prophesy to these bones. Go and preach to these bones, he said.

It was a tough congregation. It was a hard call that Ezekiel had, wasn't it? Sent to go and preach to a load of dry bones. You know, someone said it's bad enough to preach to people who occasionally nod off asleep or who occasionally daydream during the sermon.

But Ezekiel was sent to go and preach to the dead. Preach to the dead. There is no revival without the preaching of the word. And so we see right through history that revival happened as the word of God was declared faithfully, truthfully, soundly.

[18:00] It's the chief identifying mark of revival was the proclamation of biblical truth. And the vital power of God's word is what we need today.

Ezekiel was told proclaim the word of God. And it wasn't Ezekiel's eloquence. It wasn't Ezekiel as the man that made revival happen.

It wasn't Ezekiel. It was the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord. That word, the same word that was in the beginning.

The word. By which all things were made. Without him was not anything made that was made. That word where the Lord said, let there be light.

And there was light. That word is the same word we can hear and declare and receive. It was the word that made all the difference.

[19:05] Beyond all human words. Beyond all human effort. The word of God. That is what brings life into being. So it's something we ought to be mindful of.

And be encouraged tonight. That where you are here with the word of God is the right place to be. Because that's where God will bring life.

So Ezekiel preached the word. And what happened next. We see the army in the valley. Recreated. God did a transforming work.

In the bones. Brought renewal. New life. Vitality. So this dramatic sign of Ezekiel 37.

prompts us to consider. How God's life transforming work. Can happen. Even in those. Who would think are a lost cause.

[20:04] I know. I was talking to someone before. We want to think. Someone. They're hopeless. No one's hopeless without. Amen. Amen. Be encouraged. Amen.

He's outside of the reach of his hand. His arm is not short so that it cannot save. Amen. He can reach to the gutter most. Amen. To the utter most.

And. No one is too hopeless. If God. Wills. If God. Wills. And this dramatic sign shows that dry bones can.

Live again. Dead people. Can be brought back to life. There might be people in your life who think. They're too far gone. Too far gone. They've gone too far.

No one can save them. But. God can. Amen. Amen. He's come to seek and to save that which was lost. God.

[20:59] We might give up on them. But God. Is still able. He's still able. He's still able. And so it's all thanks and praise to God.

That by his power. By the power of the Holy Spirit. He can breathe life. Back into dead people. And it's all about letting the breath of God. The Spirit of God.

Move in your valley. In your valley. You might have people. In your. Circle of acquaintance. You think. They're too. Far away from God.

But. God can do. A work. Beyond. Our understanding. And that's what God did back in Ezekiel's day. That flesh formed on these dry bones.

And these skeletons looked alive. They looked like. Carcasses. They actually had body. A flesh. On these dry bones. And then God tells Ezekiel.

[21:57] To prophesy to the wind. Prophesy. Prophesy. Prophesy. Prophesy. Prophesy. Prophesy. To the four winds. To enter the skeletons.

And they became a vast army. Likewise. We can look alive. You know. We can look. Like we're a living body. A living body.

But nothing happens. Until. God. Breathes. In us. That's what we need. We need the spirit of God. Verse 7. So I prophesied as I was commanded.

And as I was prophesying. There was a noise. A rattling sound. Whoa. There was a bit of rattling going on.

And the bones came together. Bone to his bone. Something happened. When Ezekiel did. What God told him to do.

[22:52] Obedience. Helps revival to come. Now. Ezekiel could have said. Oh. There's no point. The dry bones. The dead bodies. But. Ezekiel did.

What God told him to do. What God commanded him. And even in this. This bleak situation. God moved.

It was ordered. It was brought to disorder. You can imagine those bones were all scattered. Bone came to bone. The leg bone was connected to the hip bone.

They all started to come together. Didn't they? Amen. The bone to his bone. The skull bone to the neck bone. And the. Whatever bone. You know. They all started to come together.

Order was brought out of this. And it sounds a bit like a new. New world order here. Order was brought out of chaos. But. There was these bones all scattered. And then God brought them all together.

[23:50] They started to. Come together. When. The preacher. Was obedient. Order. Came. To this chaos.

To this chaos. And as this preacher. Faithfully preached the truth. There was a rattling. Things will happen. You know. When God. Works. Things get shaken up a bit.

And. Sometimes the word of God rattles people. You ever been witnessing to someone. And you can see they're getting rattled. No. No. No.

No. No. No. No. No. No. No. It's a comfort zone doesn't it. That's what happened here. You know. There's lots of thoughts about revival. You know. I suppose it's somewhat of an American feature is having revival meetings.

[24:53] Special meetings. and I've heard there's some good things going on in a particular place in America at the moment. It's a revival. But really it's not about as organising a revival to happen as much as God doing a sovereign work, isn't it?

But there was a story told about some special, what they call revival meetings, where some churches had got together and some pastors were discussing the results with one another.

And the Methodist minister said, the revival worked out great for us. We gained four new families. The Baptist preacher said, we did better than that. We gained six new families.

And the Presbyterian pastor said, well, we did even better than that. We got rid of our ten biggest troublemakers. No, it was just transfer growth.

It was just, all the disgruntled ones went to the other churches. And that's what happens in some places, isn't it? It's not revival, really. But we need a bit of shaking up, a bit of waking up, don't we?

[26:01] A bit of movement out of this deadness. And that's what happened in this graveyard. We think about revival.

And just, there's a story, someone described revival, what it kind of looks like. And it's quite a familiar saying, but I'll read it.

If all the sleeping folk will wake up, if all the lukewarm folk will fire up, if all the dishonest folk will confess up, if all the disgruntled folk will cheer up, if all the depressed folk will cheer up, if all the estranged folk will make up, if all the gossipers will shut up, if all the true soldiers will stand up, if all the dry bones will shake up, if all the church members will pray up, then we can have revival.

And the Spirit of God wants to breathe life into His church. The breath of life. And God can do that in our church, in this church, which is His church.

And God is putting muscle and tendon on bones and covering them with flesh. But we need a work of the Spirit of God. The work of the Spirit of God. And it will happen as there's obedience, as we declare the Word, as we are faithful to the Word, and to the hearing of the Word.

[27:29] Do we want revival? Or church as usual? We need to seek God. Revival has been defined as an act of bringing back to life, of restoring.

It's God's holy and sovereign work in an individual's life that replaces all that is spiritually dead with what is spiritually alive. You know, those dry bones, very dry.

God had to bring life back to them. They couldn't stay the same. They had to be made alive. And brothers and sisters, our Word, our lifeline is the Word of God.

And I just want to exhort each one, mums and dads, children, young people, the Word of God. This is our source of life, the Word of God.

And we need to get back to the Word as much as we can, take time for the Word of God. And because God wants you, I know Pastor Adam mentioned this this morning, God wants each of us to reach our maximum potential.

[28:40] Our maximum potential. Sometimes we can be stunted in our growth. But God wants us to be reaching our maximum potential.

And it's as we take the Word, as we receive God's Spirit, His empowerment, we can become what the bones became.

What did they become? An exceeding great army. Dead, dry bones, scattered, a valley of death, became a vast army, standing to its feet.

An exceeding great army. Verse 10. God is raising people up to be part of a great army. And what does that mean?

It means we all have work to do. And when you join the army, you get a job to do, don't you? They all get a different responsibility. They get trained in different roles, in different responsibilities.

[29:47] God's purpose is to raise up an army. Not a lot of wussies, but fighting men and fighting women. We've got to enter into combat. And we have a very real enemy.

We have a supreme commander. We have a cause that is out of this world. And there's no excuses for shirking.

It's time to mobilize the troops to get ready for duty. Friends, today, we're called to service. We're called to action.

We're called to be an exceeding great army. And we can be victorious soldiers. We're not going into this battle to lose.

We've already won. We're on the winning tide. And we're called to be ready, willing, armed for conflict. The battle lines are drawn all around us.

[30:44] We're living amongst the living dead. A fight is being waged. There's many falling. We need to enter active duty and arm ourselves and advance.

Be a Christian who advances so that you're not in the same place you were last year. You've made some progress. You're advancing. You're going forward.

entering into combat, into spiritual warfare. There's no time for slumber. God wants to deploy his army. And you are that army.

You know, you might say, preacher, I feel like I'm one of those very dry bones at the moment. But God can do his work in you and in your family, in your situation, in your circumstances.

What does it take? The word and the spirit. That's what happened. And God is calling us to the front lines of this battlefield to press the fight where it's the thickest.

[31:51] And you might say, I don't really want to get shot at. I don't really want to have to go in out of my comfort zone. But that's what we're here for, isn't it?

It's why we're here. So, don't despair when you get a bit of flack. You get a bit of, you might even get some friendly fire.

You get Christians arguing with you, whatever it be. It's a fair bit of that around seeing. But, friends, we're called to battle, aren't we? It's what we're here for.

So, no matter how hard and how hopeless the situation might look like, you might feel like those very dry bones. God can make even dry bones to live again.

Amen? Logically speaking, can these dry bones live? Humanly speaking, no. But with God, all things are possible.

[32:54] And even these dry bones can live again. even those in your life, in your, amongst the people that you know, there might be people just like that.

That God can still do His amazing work. And God has power over desperate conditions, over death. You know, the church needs the Spirit of God to do a work.

Many churches are lukewarm, lifeless, dead. You know, I despair sometimes of our own church. There's much more, people aren't reaching their maximum potential. And it's, it's sad for me. I know I need to work hard. What is missing? The life-giving Spirit. The Word of God. We need to dig deeper. Press harder. Even in the Death Valley, in Death Valley, God can bring spiritual life.

[34:10] Prophecy to these dead bones. Witness to that one in your life. Your workmate, your schoolmate, your friends, your neighbours.

Prophecy to those dry bones. Those dead people that you know. Spiritually dead people. We're called to be His witnesses. God can bring spiritual life by His Word. By that powerful, life-giving Word. Try to hide the Word in your heart. Try to memorise some of those key salvation scriptures. So when the appropriate moment comes, you can share it. You can give that Word. God can work and as believers too. Let's be where the Word is. Where it's read, where it's preached, where it's taught, and where it's witnessed. And God can work even in the graveyard.

[35:12] Even in Elizabeth. Even in your street. Amen. And use you as the one who delivers that Word.

Because we can all be messengers. And we are meant to be messengers. We're meant to be the delivery boy. The delivery girl.

We're meant to be the one who transmits the message. So let's do that. God helping us. And as the Word is declared, as the Spirit does His transforming work, even the hopeless, even the very dry bones can be made an exceeding great army.

That's what He's done for you. Isn't it? I used to be very dry. A dry bone. God has made me alive. And you that believe, He's made me alive. Alive from the dead. Once you were lost, now you are found.

[36:29] Once you were dead, now you're alive again. It's God's work, isn't it? And all praise and glory to Him. And God can do that individually and corporately in our lives today.

He's the same God. It's the same Word. It's the same Spirit. Let's be encouraged today to make it real. Make it happen in our lives today.

Let's pray. our Lord and King, our Saviour, our Master, our Lord God, we look to you. We pray, Lord, for the loved ones and friends and family in our own lives.

We know there's many that seem to be in that very dry place. They're very dry bones and there's very many of them. We know there's many walking, living in the streets of our cities, of our community, who know you're not.

They're, as it were, dead in their trespasses and sins. Yet, Lord, you've called us to be as Ezekiel was, a messenger of that Word.

[37:37] Help us to deliver that Word as Ezekiel did, even when it seems like we're talking to a dead, dry bone, you can bring life by your Word and by your Spirit.

Help us to be, as such changed people, made into an exceeding great army, to be on the battle front and to not be afraid when we hear enemy fire, when we have to tackle some hardships, to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Help us, Lord, when we face the battle, to know we're actually in the right place, because that's where you've sent us to go. And help us, Lord, when the battle is hard, to know that you are with us, even in that very thick of the fight.

You've not left us, you've placed us there, and you're with us every step of the way to help us to fight and to march forward, to be that victorious army, because the victory is ours by faith.

We pray if there's any struggling here tonight, we pray if there's any feeling like they're a bit dry spiritually, that you would pour out your Holy Spirit, pour out that life-giving stream, those rivers of living water, Lord, we know it comes from you.

[39:18] Your Spirit is your heart for your people to have a filling of the Spirit, to have that wonderful blessing of knowing you, and of walking in your steps.

Lord, pray if there's any that are uncertain of their salvation, that they seek prayer tonight, so that they can know how they can be made alive from the dead, as they put their trust in you, as they find

that peace with you, as they find eternal life, because of their faith in the cross, as what you've done there at the cross, Lord, in dying for our sin.
and paying the penalty for our sin. Pray for everyone here tonight, that each one can find some truth to applying from what we've talked about here today.
In Jesus' name, Amen. God of God of you