

Dry Bones - Can They Live?

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[0 : 00] I want to address you on the subject of the valley of dry bones.

And we're going to turn to Ezekiel chapter 37. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word, that it is truth. It is life to us, Lord. We pray. Open it to our hearing, our understanding.

Lord, be glorified in your church. All across this world, Lord, we pray. And in our own church too.

Lord, be glorified, we ask. In Jesus' wonderful and precious name.

Amen. Ezekiel 37, reading from verse 1 through 14. 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 is full of bones and caused me to pass by them round about.

And behold, there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?

[1 : 08] 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 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 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. And say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me.

[2 : 19] 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.

Behold, they say, Our bones are dried and our hope is lost. We are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy 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 you 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 you in your own land, then shall ye know that I, the Lord, have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.

The dry bones are a picture of Israel, scattered and in exile. Their hope as a nation had been dashed because of their disobedience. This passage is a major prophecy which was partially fulfilled, you could say, when Israel became a nation in 1948.

We could apply this passage too for ourselves as the church, to the reviving work of God amongst his people, even today. Ezekiel was carried to a valley of despair, a dismal place, strewn with the bones of long-dead warriors.

[3 : 51] Ezekiel stood before a congregation of dry bones, a graveyard, spiritually dry, very dry, desolate. Likewise too, this world is full of deadness.

I was talking with someone recently that's talking about talking to an unsaved member of their family and saying they were dead, they were dead. There's a deadness there, a deadness, a despair.

There's no hope, there's no life in them. Webster's dictionary describes despair as the loss of hope and a feeling of hopelessness. It's the idea of giving up hope and feeling discouraged and defeated.

Now there's a tongue-in-cheek website on the internet that's called Despair Inc. It produces the opposite of motivational posters, with pictures of sinking ships and designs called demotivators.

Motivators. Despair Inc. slogan says we believe motivational products create unrealistic expectations, raising hopes only to dash them.

[4 : 55] That's why we created our soul-crushingly depressing demotivators designs. So you can skip the delusions that motivational products induce and head straight for the disappointments that follow.

There's one picture that they produced of what looks like a marathon race with runners running to the finish line and beneath the picture in big bold print is described defeat.

For every winner there are dozens of losers. Odds are you are one of them. Check out the Bible in contrast in 2 Corinthians 4, verses 8-9.

Paul writes this, he says, Let's go back to the graveyard.

Ezekiel's graveyard. It was a despairing site. Everywhere was barren, dry. What a hopeless site.

But there is hope. There is hope. Even in Ezekiel's graveyard, dry bones can come alive.

[6 : 12] God can revive our churches, our lives. He can restore the backslider. He can revitalize us and breathe his life back into us. In verse 11, they recognize their spiritual need, their hopeless and needy state.

Likewise, we too need that point where we acknowledge our lost hope, our deadness and our dryness, and our great spiritual need of his life and freshness.

God asked Ezekiel in verse 3, Can these dry bones live? Can God save my family? Can he save my neighbours? Can he reach across to the other side of the world and save a family in need?

Of course, God can. Ezekiel displayed his dependence on God. God, only you know the answer to that. And this is what Ezekiel said.

And it is what we say. Only God knows if there is any real hope. In verse 4, the wonderful source of hope is revealed. Hear the word of the Lord.

[7 : 20] What our nation needs is this fresh breath of God that causes life. The words of God created all things. In Genesis 1 and 2. It's how God produced life in Adam.

Genesis 2 verse 7. Breathing that breath of life. And it's how the Lord Jesus described, is described in John chapter 1 as being the life of God, as the word of God.

Preaching too, is that method that causes revival. In Romans 10, 12 through 14. 1 Corinthians 1 verse 21. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

1 Timothy 4 verse 13. Paul tells Timothy, give attendance. Devote yourself to this, to the reading, to the exhortation, to the doctrine, the word of God. God says to Ezekiel, prophesy to these bones.

There's no revival without the preaching of the word. Revival's chief identifying mark is the proclamation of biblical truth. Proclaim the word of God.

[8 : 26] It wasn't Ezekiel's eloquence. It was the word of the Lord. It was the word, the same word. The gospel of John declares was in the beginning. That word by which all things were made and without which nothing was made.

It was that same word the Lord God spoke in the beginning. Let there be light. And there was light. It was the word that is finally beyond all human words.

The word of God that brings life into being. The army and the valley were recreated. There was renewal. There was vitality. New life.

Dry bones can live again. They can. Brought back to life. God breathes life back into us. Freshness. The power of the Holy Spirit.

The very breath of God. Let the Holy Ghost, the breath of God, move in your valley. We see in Ezekiel's situation that flesh formed upon those dry bones and the skeletons looked alive.

[9 : 33] God tells Ezekiel, prophesies the wind to enter the skeletons and they became a vast army. Likewise, we can look alive, but nothing happens until God breathes upon us.

Verse 7, And so I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound. And the bones came together. Bone to bone. Obedience helps revival to come.

As Ezekiel prophesied, as he was commanded. I prophesied as I was commanded. Into a bleak situation. And as a result, we see bone came to bone.

There was order. There was restructure. There was this bringing back to life out of this deadness and chaos. And likewise, it happens today in the soul that trusts in him.

There was a story about some special revival meetings that had concluded. And three pastors were getting together, discussing the results of this shared crusade. And a Methodist minister said, the revival worked out great for us.

[10 : 39] We gained four new families. The Baptist preacher said, we did better than that. We gained six new families. And then the Presbyterian pastor said, well, we did even better than that.

We got rid of our ten biggest troublemakers. Now that's not the kind of revival we're talking about here. But there's that revival that is the reviving of God's work.

A revival that is a shaking up and an awakening, a movement of God, a movement out of deadness into life. It's been said, 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 desperate, 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.

The Spirit of God is breathing into His church the breath of life. God is putting inside us life, His life. He's putting muscle and tendon and bones and covering them with flesh.

He brings life by His Spirit and through the Word. Will we have revival or church as usual? What is revival? Revival has been defined as the act of bringing back to life, of restoration.

[12 : 03] Revival is that holy and sovereign move of God in an individual's life that replaces all that is spiritually dead with all that is spiritually alive. From death to new life, our lifeline is the Word.

Verse 10, it was an exceeding great army. God has designed that you be a part of His exceeding great army.

God is raising up this great army. God's purpose is to raise up an army. Not a load of wussies, you could say, but fighting men, fighting men and women, armed for combat, ready for battle, with a very real enemy.

Now, I've been thinking of late of what's happening in our world at this time, and they're calling this virus an invisible enemy. Friends, we do have an invisible enemy. Very much so.

And we have a cause, we have a supreme commander, we have a fight to take to the front line.

There's no excuses for shirking. It is time to mobilise the troops for duty, for service.

[13 : 06] As we've been talking of late and as I've put in recent broadcasts, there's a move, there's a feeling, there's a sense where we must tell people we must tell people while we can.

The time is now to be a witness for Christ, to stand up for Christ and tell your family, tell the ones you love about the message of salvation while they have time to turn to him.

It's time for action. And friends, we should be an exceeding great army, an army of victorious soldiers ready and willing for armed conflict.

The battle lines are drawn and the fight is being waged. Are you a part of the army of God? Get back in active duty. Arm yourself and let's get on the advance now.

There's no time for slumber. You know, I've been thinking of late of some of the wartime themes of Churchill talking about this is their finest hour of talking about that we'll fight them on the beaches, we'll fight them on the landing grounds.

[14 : 06] We need to have a bit of fight back in the church too. We need to be fighting the forces of evil. We need to be fighting the spiritual forces of wickedness in high places and standing for Christ.

We need to be armed and dangerous for the kingdom of God and filled with his spirit, filled with his life. God wants to deploy his army to get us back onto the front lines to press the fight where it's the thickest.

And friends, I just urge you today to be that army as in Ezekiel's day, as it were, a valley of dry bones can be made alive again. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your church, for every believer, for our families, our situations, Lord.

We know it is a time of trouble in the world and yet, Lord, you are a very present help in time of trouble. Lord, we know that many have their hearts failing them for fear about what is going on in this earth at this time.

Lord, we know that we don't have a fear that causes us such anxiety, Lord. We can know a peace and a confidence and an assurance and an eternal hope.

[15 : 15] Lord, help us to pass that message on of that life that is life everlasting that our loved ones so desperately need. Lord, and this world all around us, Lord, let us be that light.

Let us be that army that you're calling, that you're raising up. Lord, if there's anyone in the sound of my voice who's yet to trust you, anyone who's backslidden, Lord, get a hold of them.

Get a hold of them, Lord. Lord, we pray that each one might know the grace of God, that they might know the conviction for their sin. They might know their great need of the Holy Spirit, of your saving grace.

Lord, help us, Lord, to simply trust, to confess our need of you, to lay ourselves down for you to take us up. Lord, to be yours, to be made alive, to be born afresh, to be born anew, to be born again. Lord, that the Spirit of God might breathe fresh life into our souls and make us live eternally. Lord, and for this church too, that you would revive us again and be glorified in the church of God.

[16 : 23] Help us, Lord, to be a force to be reckoned with. Lord, for your glory. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen. God bless you today and I trust you've been encouraged by this word.

May the Lord use you and encourage you and lift you up. Support your church if you can. Be a part as much as you can. Join it with us as much as you can.

This time is the time for us to rise up and to be that church of God, to be that great, that exceeding great, that exceeding great army.

God bless you. God bless you.