

# Ezekiel 37:1-14

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Date: 08 November 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] And well, good morning, church. For those that don't know me, my name is Mike. Yeah, welcome to Shoreline. We're so glad that you're here. If this is your first Sunday, welcome.

! We've been in the book of Ezekiel the last few weeks, so you can turn to Ezekiel chapter 37 in your Bibles. And I want to ask you this. Have you ever misdiagnosed a problem and, you know, thrown at it the wrong solution that either did nothing or actually made matters worse?

Maybe you've done that in a relationship before. No, probably not anybody here. A few years ago, my car's windshield wipers stopped working. And so if I had thought the problem was a blown fuse, I could have kept replacing the fuses over and over and over again until AutoZone was out of stock, and it wouldn't have fixed the windshield wipers. The problem was the motor was dead. Thankfully, I didn't keep replacing fuses. I got a new motor and was able to get it working. You see here in Ezekiel chapter 37, God makes it clear to the exiled nation of Israel and then also to us the real problem that needs addressing. They were, and we are, dead. So today we're in a part four of a brief four-part series centered in the heart of the prophetic book of Ezekiel. This book finds the Jewish people in exile, away from their homeland in the foreign nation of Babylon because of their sin and rebellion against God. What he had warned them would happen, you know, way back in Deuteronomy, it came to pass. They were defeated by their enemies, then cut off from both their homeland and their God. But God calls the priest, Ezekiel, to fulfill the role of prophet. And as we've seen now in chapters 34, 35, 36, to preach a message of hope to hopeless Israel. So Pastor Matt did a fantastic job of summarizing the whole book of Ezekiel in his opening sermon. So check that out.

And then both Pastor Matt and Pastor Dave of the last few weeks have preached powerful messages expounding on the beautiful promises that we find here in Ezekiel. So if you have not had a chance to listen to those three sermons, I commend them to you. So with that, let us read Ezekiel chapter 37.

We're in verses 1 through 14. And I answered, So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling. And the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them.

[ 3 : 54 ] Then he said to me, So I prophesied as he commanded me. And the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet an exceedingly great army.

Then he said to me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost. We are indeed cut off.

Therefore, prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you into the land of Israel.

And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live.

And I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord. Father, this is an incredible word from you.

[ 5 : 05 ] And we ask that by the power of this word, and the power of your spirit, you would change our hearts this morning. Pray this in Christ's name.

Amen. So the first thing we're going to do here, we're going to seek to understand, using both the context of this passage, and our imaginations, exactly, you know, what this vision is, and what it would have meant to exile Israel.

So I'm asking you to engage your imaginations this morning. Can you do that with me? We're going to press in here, and try to understand this. So let's just work, we're going to work through this.

The first verse there, the hand of the Lord was upon me. See this phrase, the hand of the Lord was upon me, it marks significant junctures in the book of Ezekiel. It's kind of just like an indicator, like okay, lean in, press in here, something different is about to happen.

And he brought me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the middle of the valley. So the fact that Ezekiel is brought out in the spirit of the Lord, this clearly signifies a supernatural event, right?

[ 6 : 14 ] It's a divine vision received by Ezekiel from the Holy Spirit. The word valley there could also mean plain. Picture just a giant flat expanse.

Now it's likely this valley was by the Kebar Canal, or Kebar Canal, and this is where many of the Jewish exiles were living, and the site of many of Ezekiel's visions throughout this book.

So what does Ezekiel find in this valley? It was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry.

That word behold, it means to see or observe a thing or person, especially a remarkable or impressive one. You'll notice that word is used in this passage several times for good reason.

So I want you, if you can, I want you to close your eyes, and I want you to try to imagine this remarkable scene here. Okay? Close your eyes. Engage your imagination here. You're standing in the middle of this giant expanse, okay?

[ 7 : 24 ] And all you can see on every side of you are human bones. piles of bones for miles. And these bones are very dry, which means that the people whose bones they were have been dead for a long time.

You can open your eyes for a second. Keep the picture in view. So actually, Dr. Doris, where's Jake? Where'd he go? Dr. Doris told me that it could take years for bones to dry out.

The point is, though, there is no sign of life here. There's no sign of life. And these very dry bones are scattered on the surface of the valley. They're not buried. They're on the surface.

Ezekiel realizes that he's standing here in the sight of a giant massacre. That's the picture. In verse 9, God refers to these slain. See, this is the aftermath of a bloody battle.

And this is significant for two reasons. First, this scene is clearly the fulfillment of God's promise of judgment upon Israel if they refuse to obey him.

[ 8 : 34 ] Deuteronomy 28, 25 and 26, God warned Israel, the Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies, and your dead bodies shall be food for all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth.

That's what would happen if they disobeyed him, if they turned in rebellion against him. And this is the scene before Ezekiel right now. See, these people, they were denied proper burial. Their bodies were left out in the open to rot away.

They have been defeated and disgraced by their enemies. Second, this would have been doubly revolting to Ezekiel, because as a priest of God, he was well-versed in the law, which declared one unclean for coming in contact with a dead body or with human bones.

That's from Numbers 19. So as much as we would already recoil in disgust at seeing a bunch of bones scattered about, he would recoil all the more. So do you have this picture in mind? You're keeping this image in mind here.

Verse 3, God refers to Ezekiel as son of man actually 90 times in the book of Ezekiel.

[ 9 : 41 ] The term identifies him as the creature before his supreme creator. Now God's question to Ezekiel here, it emphasizes the hopelessness of the situation from a human point of view.

And it anticipates the exile's own self-perception. If you look down in verse 11, he says here, Behold, they say, talking about Israel, they say, our bones are dried up and our hope is lost.

We are indeed cut off. So God's question here to Ezekiel is anticipating that perception that Israel has. Now how would you reply to this question? Son of man, can these bones live?

Ezekiel answers, Oh Lord God, you know. Now at first glance, I thought that seems a little dismissive, but it's actually not dismissive.

It's not rude. In fact, it's reverent. Ezekiel knows that for these dry bones to live would require a power far beyond man's.

[ 10 : 43 ] And he does not presume here to answer the question, but he commits instead the result to the Lord. Verse four, Then he said to me, prophesy over these bones and say to them, Oh dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

Thus says the Lord God to these bones, behold, I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you and will cause flesh to come upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you and you shall live.

And you shall know that I am the Lord. See, God answers, God answers his own question. Can these bones live son of man? Yes, they can.

And I will bring it about. The word for breath in Hebrew, it's Ruach. Probably pronouncing that wrong, Dave. You can correct me later. It's the same word that we translate as spirit.

So we could read verse five as behold, I will cause spirit to enter you. And verse six, and I will put spirit in you. See the title last chapter. Can these bones live son of man?

[11:52] Yes. And they will be beckoned to life through my powerful word and by my life giving spirit. So what does Ezekiel do? He prophesies.

He speaks God's word to the dead, dry bones. Now this would seem like utter foolishness. Yet, as we see in first Corinthians one, the foolishness of God is wiser than men.

So he prophesies. Verse seven. So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound and behold, a rattling.

And the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked and behold, there were sinews on them and flesh had come upon them and skin had covered them.

So as Ezekiel speaks forth God's word, what happens? Bones joined together with bones and tendons and ligaments are formed and skin appears.

[12:53] The process of death and decay, it's being undone. The recreation of these slain occurs. Only what's the problem? It's the next sentence say.

But there was no breath in them. So now picture here, lying before Ezekiel is an army of still dead, lifeless corpses, lifeless bodies.

Then he said to me, prophesy to the breath, prophesy son of man and say to the breath, thus says the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain that they may live.

So I prophesied as he commanded me and the breath came into them and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. Can you picture, can you picture this remarkable scene?

Before Ezekiel's eyes, by the power of God's voice and the spirit, a sea of dry bones is transformed into a massive army. So in this two-part act of assembling the bones by God's word and then bringing them to life by his spirit, a clear connection is made to the creation account.

[14:08] Listen to these words from Genesis 2, verse 7. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

And the man became a living creature. See, in Ezekiel's vision here, God recreates man. And only the creator God could do it.

Only the creator wields the power to give life. And then God provides Ezekiel the meaning of this vision. Verse 11.

Then he said to me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, our bones are dried up and our hope is lost. We are indeed cut off. So we're given the key to the interpretation here.

The bones represent the nation of Israel. As we said, because of her rebellion against God, Israel has been defeated by the foreign nation of Babylon. The temple, the very symbol of God's presence, has been destroyed.

[15:10] And her leading citizens have been carried off into exile. So there in Babylon, they are separated from the promised land and separated from the very presence of God.

They are a hopeless nation. Dead, dry bones. No signs of life whatsoever. Yet God declares through this vision, there is still hope, for I am the God who brings life to the dead.

That's the kind of God that I am. Therefore, verse 12, prophesy and say to them, thus says the Lord God, behold, I will open your graves and I will raise you from your graves, O my people.

And I will bring you into the land of Israel and you shall know that I am the Lord. When I open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit within you and you shall live.

And I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. I have spoken and I will do it, declares the Lord. See, we saw in chapters 34 through 36, Israel was given these incredible promises of restoration as a nation, right?

[16:24] Of peace and prosperity, of life in the presence of God under a new covenant and under his loving, righteous leadership. But they were left wondering, how?

How in the world could this ever happen? And we see now, the answer comes in chapter 37. How will it happen? Because God will breathe life into fallen, hopeless Israel.

God will take what is dead and he will make it live. Through his powerful word and his life-giving spirit, Israel will be restored to the land and reunited with her God, her one true shepherd.

Amen. Amen. Please bow with me in a word of prayer. You're like, wait, no, Mike. Israel had questions out. Now I've got some questions here. Did the prophecy ever come to pass? Was Israel restored to the land? Why are you even telling me this story? What does this have to do with us? Turn to your family or your socially distant neighbor and say, we're not even halfway done, so pay attention.

[17:27] Go ahead. Yes, yes. I'm so glad you asked these questions, so let's dig into this together. So we looked at the meaning of the vision and I want to talk now about the fulfillment of this vision.

So when interpreting prophecy, we speak of multiple stages of fulfillment. A common analogy is a person looking off into the distance at a range of mountains.

So imagine a person standing, looking far off, and there's peaks in the distance and this person has no idea how far apart are those peaks. They have no clue. They just see the peaks.

There's three of them. Right? And so in the same way, when we're trying to understand prophecy in the Old Testament, these prophets, they foretell of future peaks of fulfillment, but they don't discern one peak from the other.

So we have to, in a sense, climb each peak to understand their fulfillment. So let me show you what I mean here. Ezekiel's vision in this chapter, it proclaims to the nation, there is hope, oh hopeless Israel.

[18:37] So does it come to pass? Well, we find in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, those books recount the regathering of the nation of Israel from exile, right?

The temple, it's rebuilt. It's rededicated. The wall around the city of Jerusalem, it's rebuilt. The nation repents of her former ways of rebellion and commits herself back to the Lord.

The prophecy is fulfilled, but only in small part. It's clear, if you read Haggai, Zechariah, it's clear this regathered Israel was not the glorious, peaceful, prosperous nation that's pictured by the Old Testament prophets.

Jot this down. Peak number one is God regathers Israel. There is hope, oh hopeless exiles. That's peak number one. God regathers Israel.

There is hope, oh hopeless exiles. So if Israel's returning to the land only fulfilled the prophecy in part, what else was it predicting? Well, hundreds of years later, an angel appeared to a teenage girl named Mary and her fiancé Joseph, promising that Mary would bear a son who would be called Jesus.

[19:52] This Jesus would save his people from their sins and would reign in the royal line of David forevermore. And Mary asked the angel, how will this be since I am a virgin?

And the angel answered her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. See, just as the Spirit breathed life into Adam, a creation, and breathed life into these dry bones, so the Spirit breathed life into Mary's womb and the second person of the Trinity became clothed in flesh.

But that's not the second peak. This Jesus, Paul says in Philippians 2, emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

But he didn't stay there in the grave, did he? Peter says in Acts 2 that God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

See, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' dead body was raised to life. But that's not the second peak. Why did Jesus take on human form?

[21:13] Why did he endure the agony of death on the cross? Why? He did it to save sinners. What sinners? Jewish sinners?

Well, certainly Jewish sinners, but not just Jewish sinners. He did it to save human sinners. All of us. All people, no matter the political party, no matter the gender, no matter the race or ethnicity, no matter the country, no matter the time in history.

And he did it because like exiled Israel, we are all dead. Mike, what do you mean we're all dead? Paul says in Romans 5, therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Ephesians 2 says, and you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you walked. See, the Bible teaches that the fundamental problem facing the human race is that we are all spiritually dead.

we are all cut off from the presence of God, separated by our sin. All hope is lost. A world filled with dead, dry, lifeless bones.

[ 22 : 41 ] There's no sign of life. And we think we can come to God by our own merit. He says, even your righteousness is like filthy rags to me.

You don't need to buckle up and try harder. You don't need a three-step plan to behavioral modification. You don't need your fuse replaced. You are dead.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

See the connection here to Ezekiel 37. Step one, Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your and my sin. Declaring then by His word, be justified, O sinner.

Be freed from your sin. Be reconciled to God. See, by this word, bone is joined to bone and ligaments and tendons form and flesh and skin appear.

[ 24 : 02 ] And then, step two, the Holy Spirit breathes into our hearts and declares, live. life. This is the second peak of fulfillment.

And all throughout the Old Testament, it's clear that the chosen people of God was never meant to be just ethnic Israel. God's promises would be extended to the nations.

And now, through the atoning work of Jesus Christ and the life-giving breath of the Spirit, all people everywhere can be raised from spiritual death to life and brought into the family of God.

Amazing. You know, Jesus demonstrated this. After he rose from the dead, he's with his disciples and he breathes on them. This is in John 20. He breathes on them and says, receive the Holy Spirit. The work was done, but they needed the Spirit's life. And our part in the process is rather simple.

[ 25 : 11 ] Run to Jesus in faith and repentance. Romans chapter 10. Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. If you haven't done that before, don't wait.

Today could be the day of salvation. Today could be the day when in faith and repentance you run to Jesus and life is breathed into your heart by the Holy Spirit. As Pastor Mike Kane says, for all your resurrection and life requirements, go to Jesus.

So jot this down. Peak number two. God redeems mankind. There is hope of hopeless sinners. So wait, there's still another peak?

[ 26 : 31 ] How could it get better than that? Yes, there is still a third peak in view because even though God has been bringing spiritual life to dead hearts and building his church over the last 2,000 years, creation itself and our own hearts are acutely aware that our experience in this life does not match up with the glorious picture in view in Ezekiel 34 through 37.

There is still pain and brokenness and tragedy and violence and death and disease. See, we yearn for freedom from it.

We yearn for freedom from the futility of this world. And even though for those who are in Christ we have been reborn as new creations, we know that like Israel living in Babylon, we are citizens of another kingdom.

Right? We are exiles and sojourners living in this world. We belong to a heavenly kingdom. Did you catch the change in metaphor in our passage for today?

God switches it up on Ezekiel from a valley of dry bones to a graveyard. He tells Ezekiel in verse 12 to prophesy this, Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people, and

I will bring you into the land of Israel.

[ 27 : 58 ] So this passage points forward not only to spiritual resurrection but also to physical resurrection. If the Lord doesn't return in our lifetimes, we will all die.

And likely be buried in a grave. But death will not have the final word, will it? Because our God is the sovereign creator God. He's the God who, as Paul says, gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

That's our God, church. And on that day when Jesus returns, all the saints from every tribe and tongue and nation will be raised from their graves and gathered as one before God the Almighty. This resurrection is foretold in Isaiah chapter 26. Your dead shall live, their bodies shall rise, you who dwell in the dust awake and sing for joy.

The glory of heaven is pictured in Revelation 21 by the Apostle John. Pastor Dave read the same passage two weeks ago. Notice here the Old Testament prophetic language that's repeated.

[ 29 : 06 ] Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away. Jot this down if you're taking notes.

Peak number three is God restores all things. There is hope, O hopeless saints. God restores all things.

There is hope, O hopeless saints. It's this sure and certain promise of future glory in heaven, of an eternity dwelling with God and with his gathered people in a restored land that forms the rock-solid basis of our hope as Christians.

[ 30 : 25 ] Christian, do you feel today like exiled Israel? Do you feel beaten down and defeated? Do you feel cut off from the Lord?

Do you feel like all hope is lost? I know within this congregation there exists pain and grief inexpressible.

Many of us are dealing with grief and pain from the past. And many of us in this unprecedented year with a global pandemic and racial tensions and a politically divided nation feel like we've made it to November by the skin of our teeth.

Isolated, weary, overwhelmed, exhausted, depressed, hurting, seemingly hopeless.

Do you use any of those adjectives to describe yourself over the last few months? Christians, we do not grieve as those who have no hope, do we?

[ 31 : 33 ] Because there is for us an unshakable hope of future glory. It was declared over us by the blood of Jesus. It was breathed into us by the Holy Spirit.

And because of that, though we carry in our bodies pain and grief inexpressible, we are also filled with, as the Apostle Peter says, joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

So be filled this morning with hope, weary saints. So in our journey today, we've considered what this vision of dry bones meant for exiled Israel.

And we climbed the peaks of fulfillment together. We saw that God regathers Israel, there is hope, oh hopeless exiles. And peak two is God redeems mankind.

There is hope, oh hopeless sinners. And peak number three to come is that God will restore all things. There is hope, oh hopeless saints. Now I want to press this passage into our lives in two specific points of application as we draw to a close.

[ 32 : 45 ] Before I mention those points, if it hasn't been clear yet, I want to make the main point of this passage crystal clear. And here it is. Only through God's powerful word and life-giving spirit are his people enabled to live.

Got to take that from here. If you take nothing else today, take this, that only through God's powerful word and life-giving spirit are his people enabled to live.

love. I want to apply that to our lives in two ways. So the first is this, in your walk, the righteous live by faith. In your walk, the righteous live by faith.

See, one of the themes in Paul's letter to the Galatians is that the Holy Spirit is the source of power and guidance in the Christian life. The Galatians were fooled into thinking that though they came to Christ by faith and by the Spirit's power that their spiritual maturity would come about by their own hard work.

Listen to what Paul speaks to them. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish?

[ 34 : 02 ] Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Church, let's not be fooled into believing the same lie as the Galatians. Just as we were miraculously granted spiritual life by the powerful declaration of God's Word and the life-giving breath of God's Spirit, we can only live out that life by the same Word and by the same Spirit. It's so important in the Christian walk. See, if you belong to Jesus, you have been given the riches of heaven. The problem is that many Christians in their daily lives are rich but living poor. Rich but living poor. We're using our passage today, we are alive but acting as though we're dead. See, we fail to actually appropriate the riches, the life that Christ won for us in our daily lives because we fail to understand the continual dependence that we have on the Spirit and on the Word.

and I wish I had time for another sermon here but I don't and it's 1118. So how do we acknowledge, how do we acknowledge our dependence?

[ 35 : 34 ] Without going in detail, by walking the ancient paths, this is how we do it. Walking the ancient paths, what are those? It's reading the Word of God, it's meditating upon the Word of God, it's going before the Lord in prayer.

And I want to emphasize the last two because I think in this church we're really good at the first one and we're not as good at the last two. I know that's true for myself. I've been taught my whole life to read God's Word and how to do it and it is crucial, it is life, we have to read God's Word but I'm so quick to move on into my day.

Failing to stop and meditate on the law of the Lord, failing to go to the Lord in prayer, it's really easy for me to use my own logic and reasoning when I'm reading the Word and it's a lot harder for me to lean on myself when I go before the Lord in prayer because the very act of praying requires me to surrender myself to God.

Psalms 1 says that the one who meditates on God's Word day and night is like a tree planted by streams of water.

that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither. That's a picture of life for the one who meditates on God's law day and night and that's how the 150 chapter book of Psalms opens up on urging us to meditate on God's Word and all throughout the Psalms we see pictures of prayer and it was neat, I did not tell the white king gets to do this, but Psalm 32, which they read, which Megan read for us earlier, is a beautiful example of how going before the Lord in prayer invigorates the life of God in us as his spirit changes us.

[ 37 : 26 ] See, in Psalm 32, the psalmist is dealing with sin and he says, my bones were wasting away because I was silent before you. Well, what happens? He goes to the Lord in prayer and as he prays, the spirit breathes life into him and he feels the forgiveness of the Lord.

He experiences it for himself. He appropriates the riches of being a child of God in his daily life. Just one more example.

Psalms 73. The psalmist is despairing, right? He sees the prosperity of the wicked. What does he do?

He goes before the Lord. He goes into the sanctuary where the presence of God is and as he does that, what happens? His perspective is changed.

His heart is awakened to life and he knows the truth of God's word that he blesses the righteous, that the favor of the Lord is bestowed on the righteous, not the wicked.

[ 38 : 28 ] So just two examples in the Psalms of dealing with sin, dealing with despair. The psalmist knew the truth of God's word, but when they went before the Lord in prayer, when they meditated on the truth, it impacted their heart.

See, God uses truths from his word by his spirit to change us. So church, you cannot walk the Christian life in your own strength, and we've heard this so many times before.

We cannot walk the Christian life in our own strength. Go to God's word, meditate upon it, go to the Lord in prayer. You will find life.

God will use that to breathe life into you by his spirit. I need to cut myself off here. That was in your walk, the righteous will live by faith. Finally, in your witness, so in plant, but God gives the growth. It's a reference to 1 Corinthians 3. So in plant, but God gives the growth. Church, is there anyone in your life that you deem as too far gone to receive Christ? Question, how do you get more dead than dead?

[ 39 : 39 ] God is in the business of raising the dead, and only he can do it. What is impossible with man is possible with God, for the almighty creator God.

So in your witness, don't fool yourself into thinking on the one hand that anyone is too far gone. The apostle Paul was murdering Christians. He became the greatest missionary that we've known. And on the other hand, that it's your own clever arguments, your own tactics, that will win people to Christ.

So first, just real quick, two things. Preach the gospel without hindrance to whomever God calls you to. It might seem like utter foolishness, like you're preaching to dry bones, but he's calling you to do it.

So preach his word. It is powerful. It is effective. He will use it by his spirit. And secondly, pray for their conversion. Pray for your unsaved friends and family and coworkers.

Their conversion will only come about if God's spirit breathes life into their dead hearts. This is the only way it will come about. And remember that as Ezekiel prayed, he was actually praying when he prophesied to the four winds. He's praying to the Holy Spirit, breathe life into these bones. As we pray, God's spirit moves and works.

[ 40 : 59 ] finally, as I close, you may have noticed the repeated phrase here, which is repeated 50 times throughout the book of Ezekiel. And Pastor Dave expounded on it last week, so check that out. The phrase is, and you shall know that I am the Lord. It's like a drumbeat in Ezekiel.

Then you shall know that I am the Lord. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. Friends, when the impossible is brought about, when the dead are raised to life, there is no mistaking the source.

Mark Dever says, God's power over death is his signature as our creator. Love that. God's power over death is his signature as our creator. And this redounds to his fame and his glory among the world.

And he alone is worthy. So may it be so. Please join me in prayer. Father, what else is there to say? God, your word is powerful and your spirit gives life. So I pray, Lord, that as we go from here, that you would use this word, deepen it into our hearts, breathe your life into us.

[ 42 : 18 ] Lord, by your power, may we rely on you for conversion, for daily life in the Christian faith. Lord, may we rely on you. God, may we see the glorious picture of hope that you offer us through this vision of a future glory in heaven that awaits us. God, this is all for your glory because only you are worthy.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. God, may we stand with us. Amen. Amen. You