

Dery bones

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[0 : 00] Read and hear God's word in the prophecy of Ezekiel chapter 47 and we shall read verses 1 to 14.

Ezekiel 47 verses 1 to 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 was full of bones, and cast me to pass by them round about.

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

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 you shall live.

[1 : 28] And I will lay sinnes 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 an eyes, and behold, I shamed him, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

And when I beheld, lo, the sinners and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above. But there was no breath in me.

Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say unto 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. And I breathed him into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, and exceeding great army.

[2 : 53] Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, behold, they say, our bones are bright, 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 you in your own land. Then shall ye know that I, the Lord, have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.

Amen. Now, seeking God's help, let's turn to Ezekiel chapter 37. And we will consider the section that we read, taking us the basis of our meditation, the words of verse 3.

[4 : 19] And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.

Now, the previous chapter speaks of the nation of Israel being restored to a right relationship with God.

And in the passage before us tonight, we read further of what we may expect to happen when God brings his people back to himself.

And I would like tonight to try and look with you at this very well-known portion of the Old Testament, bearing in mind that it has many lessons for the Christian believer, who may have wandered away from God, and also many lessons regarding the subject of sinners being saved.

And I would attempt to look at the passage with you, seeing in some detail the illustration brought before us in verses 1 to 10.

[5 : 47] And then very briefly the explanation that we're given of the illustration in verses 11 through to 14.

And it may be that the best way of looking at it is by simply going through the narrative and praying that the Holy Spirit will apply its message to each of our hearts.

And we begin by seeing in the first verse, the man who was used of God to bring this message to the people.

And there are one or two very interesting things that we're told concerning this man. We read that Ezekiel is a man on whom the hand of the Lord is.

He is in the grip of God's hand, and he is guided by the hand of the Lord.

[6 : 58] Further, we read that he is in the Spirit. The hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord.

And as God surveys his church in all ages, he looks for men and women who are in the control of the Spirit.

I said, I said, I said, I said, John, and he's an old man by this time, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.

And surely every believer would acknowledge that we need to be continually filled by the Spirit. The believer is baptized in the Spirit and needs an ongoing fullness of that Spirit.

And the believer is called upon to walk in the Spirit, to live his life in accordance with the revealed mind and will of the Spirit, as we have that in the Scriptures.

[8 : 18] And God promises, them that honor me, I will honor. And it has often been the case that God has used men and women who are walking in his way, who are filled with his Spirit, to further his own cause on earth.

Of course, we know that God is well able to work without such as we are. And yet, it is a fact that it is people, just as we are, men of like passions, whom God has used down through the centuries to bring his own kingdom forward in the world.

O for the floods, in our dry, parched land, O for our mighty revival, O for our sanctified, fearless band, ready to wait its arrival.

How many of us, tonight, are longing to be the kind of Christian believers that God would have us be?

Is it not the case that so often we impoverish ourselves by failing to live in accordance with God's revealed word?

[9 : 54] Ezekiel is in the Spirit and he receives a vision from the Lord. John is in the Spirit on the Lord's day and he also receives a heaven-sent vision.

The scriptures tell us that where there is no vision, the people perish. And the scriptures also tell us that if we who are called by the name of belonging to God shall humble ourselves and pray and seek his face and turn from our wicked ways, when the Lord says, I, he says, will hear from heaven and I will heal their land.

I will forgive their sins. And surely tonight, if we long for God to work in lives in this time and wherever our lot in life may be cast, surely we need to ask ourselves as to whether or not we are living as God wants us to live.

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves pray, how many of us tonight know anything of what it is to have a vision of men and women in the light of their eternal destiny?

How many of us tonight are gripped by God to this degree that we're pleading with him who alone can save to bring his people into his kingdom?

[12 : 04] What we ask next, what is it that this man carried out in the spirit of the Lord sees? What is the mission field for which this man is so concerned?

And we have a vivid description of the mission field before him in verses 2 and 3. And behold, he says, there were very many in the valley, that's very many dry bones.

He set out in the midst of the valley, full of bones, and he sees that there are very many of them, and lo, very dry.

God shows him the kind of situation that confronts him. The valley is full of very dry bones, and the whole picture is a picture of desolation and perhaps even destruction.

And it is a picture that would dissolution many a Christian believer and many a Christian preacher. Because the emphasis in these verses is on this, the very dry condition of these bones.

[13 : 39] Why is it that they're dry? It may be that they're dry due to their exposure, due to the environment in which they're to be found.

It's an open valley, exposed to the wind and to weather and maybe even to violence. But the important thing is that they are very dry, there is no life there.

That's the picture that we have in our minds of this mission field. They're lying there as yet unburied in an open valley.

And that is a graphic description of the state of man away from God.

Even the believer, when we wander away from God's way, what happens? we become very dry and we resemble the dead.

[14 : 50] It may be next to impossible to detect life at all. And if it's a description of the believer in that condition, how much more is it a description of the person who has never known God.

That person has no spiritual sap, no spirituality whatsoever. Now, again, to go to the Christian first, we, by exposing ourselves, look to the enemies that are around us and that are within us, can easily find ourselves in this terrible situation.

The world, the flesh, the devil, sin, Satan, selfishness and so on.

And we, if we are exposing ourselves, will soon find that there will be an effect. What is the scripture demand of the believer to abstain from every appearance of evil, to keep clear of anything and everything that smacks of sin?

What about the kind of situation where you may not be sure if a certain push of action, if a certain involvement is sinful?

[16 : 33] perhaps the safest course there is this, the tip that's given to drivers regarding overtaking on the roads, if in doubt, don't.

Go to God's word and be led by that alone. And so even the Christian can find himself and herself in this kind of dry and apparently dead condition.

But what about the vast multitude who don't know God at all? In spite of all its religion, there are many in this island.

In spite of all its religion, there are many in this town. in spite of the presence of many fine Christians, there are many in this congregation who are in a similar state.

There may even be very many. And so the question arises, is there any hope for such? Perhaps the hope is this, that although they're dead, they're not yet buried.

[17 : 51] And it is to such that we preach the word of life. We preach it to those who are dead, but not yet buried, knowing that our God is able, well able, as we'll see shortly, to quicken the dead.

And it's this question that arises in Ezekiel's mind, planted there by God himself, that surely arises in the mind of every exercised Christian, concerning the kind of scenario before us here.

Can these bones live? Is there any hope for them? Now perhaps it's very important and instructive for us to notice that that question is implanted in Ezekiel's mind by God himself.

And he said unto me, son of man, can these bones live? Ezekiel is aware of Israel's need.

Ezekiel is aware of the fact that the people of God have wandered far away from God. He knows that they're dead.

[19 : 23] He knows that they're very dry. And God makes them ask this. God implants this question in his heart and in his mind.

And surely this question concerning the lost around us and the lost among us arises in the heart and mind of every child of God.

Those who are concerned about the plight of the many who are heading to perdition, the many who are on the broad road that leads to destruction.

The many who may have little or no thought of God, the many who may have no desire even after God, they're blind and they're dead and they're dry.

They don't realize the seriousness of their situation. And believers are often moved to ask concerning such, is there any hope for them?

[20 : 38] Can they ever come to life? And surely that concern is one that is implanted within the Christian breast by God himself.

And it is a concern that belongs to the person who realizes the true condition of the Christless heart. the person who realizes that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

The person who realizes that man cannot save himself and that man is in this sorry state brought before us here, is a person who is concerned as to whether or not there is any hope for such.

And so we ask, is there any hope? What is our hope for such? Surely at last we can bring it down to this.

[21 : 45] With men it is impossible but not with God. With God nothing is impossible.

Yes they may be far gone in sin. Yes they may be turning a deaf ear to every plea that is made to them to consider their situation.

And you may be here tonight in that very condition turning a deaf ear to the gospel pretending that things aren't as bad as the Bible depicts them.

You will not listen to the pleading of the preacher but the preacher is thankful very thankful that he can plead with God for the salvation of many to whom or with whom he's not able to plead concerning the things of God.

Let me put it another way. We can speak to God about many to whom we cannot speak about God and for that we're thankful.

[23 : 05] He is the God of the impossible. He is the God who brings life. In Jesus Christ he came into this world of men and we hear in the gospel according to John that the father and the son quickeneth whom they will.

And we have this incentive given to us as we seek to preach to dead men and women that the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God and they that hear shall live.

I said Jesus am the resurrection and the life. And Jesus tells us I have much people in this place. And so we praise God as we look at lost souls that what we are not able to do he is with God nothing shall be impossible.

And if you've come to realize tonight your inability to serve yourself let me again bring before you the truth that what you cannot do God can and God does and pray God he will.

[24 : 47] But whatever means that God uses to bring life to the dead in this situation before us tonight.

We've seen the man we've seen the mission field before him now we see the means that God is pleased to use to bring life about.

In verses 4-9 there are two things that Ezekiel is called to do. The first of these is this he's called to prophesy he's called to proclaim to speak forth yes to these dry bones he's called upon to speak forth to them and to say to them O ye dry bones hear the word of the Lord and Ezekiel can speak to them with great confidence knowing that as he speaks he is doing God's will and he knows as the psalmist knew thy quickening spirit thou sendest forth then they created be and then the earth's decade face renewed is by thee the word of

God which goes forth out of his mouth will not return to him void but will achieve or accomplish the purpose for which it was sent forth and so we speak into dry bones knowing that God is able to do it faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God you might ask tonight if I'm a dry and dead bone what's the point of me coming to a place where a gospel is preached that I can't even hear or heed faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God God is able and God often does breathe upon men and women as his word goes forth and we see that the

Lord God encourages Ezekiel as he encourages all his ambassadors in all ages to go to this kind of people with this kind of message thus save the Lord God unto these bones this is a message for anyone tonight who's a bride dead born from the Lord God behold pay attention to this I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live and I will lay sin upon you and will bring up flesh upon you and cover you with stem and put breath in you and ye shall live what a word of encouragement concerning this kind of passion ye shall live and ye shall know that I am the Lord he promises to breathe upon them and his breath to enter into them and we see as as as as as as as preachers that the preaching produces an effect he goes into this kind of mission field knowing that this is

[28 : 51] God's word regarding them he obeys he does as he's told and if the Lord hadn't encouraged him it might have seemed ludicrous to speak to such people there have been many instances in the history of the Christian church where it seemed ludicrous to speak forth the word of God there's one story comes to mind concerning an individual I think it was in Canada who was asked to go and preach on a particular Lord's Day to a group of lumberjacks working in a forest when the good man arrived he discovered that the lumberjacks had gone and yet he was convinced that God had given him a message to proclaim and so he started out there in the forest preaching a sermon with nobody around and he felt foolish and he felt constrained to declare the word of the

Lord long afterwards that same preacher was night on day on a street by a certain individual and this individual asked him if he was a preacher of the gospel and he acknowledged that he was and then he was asked did you preach in Canada on a particular rotation and the preacher was flabbergasted dumbfounded he said yes but I thought nobody was aware of that you might have thought that you were preaching to nobody but I was there we discovered we left early and there was a kind of mix up with the dates and we discovered that we had left some tools behind and I was sent back to collect the tools and as

I arrived at the location I heard this man preach and I hid behind a tree and I listened and I could see the man but he couldn't see that I was there and I didn't want to embarrass him by making myself known and I was brought to Christ through what I heard that day and I want to thank you who was the preacher on that occasion from the bottom of my heart for leading me to the Lord it seemed a waste of time and yet it was something that he simply had to do and God hones them that honor him and the same is true here as we look at the experience of Ezekiel he preaches he proclaims as he was commanded and as he speaks forth the word of life there is an immediate effect as

I prophesied there was a noise and behold a shaking and the bones turned together born to his bone and when I beheld lo the sinners and the flesh came up upon them and the thin covered them above sounds so promising many of us would have marked them down and the slate has been saved by now on account of the semblance of life that is there but then we read these words but there was no breath in them and that reminds us that we may be affected by the word that is preached there may be reformation in our life but we must go beyond simply being outwardly affected by what we hear reformation and resolution may be fine in its own place but it's not enough there's more than that required and it is that awareness that causes

Ezekiel not only to preach but to pray then said he unto me prophesy unto the wind prophesy son of man and so to the wind thus saith the Lord God come from the four winds o breath and breathe upon these slain that they may live come and breathe upon them that they may live so I did as I did as I prophesied as he commanded me and the breath came into them he not only proclaims but he prays for the spirit of God to do the work it's the spirit that quickeneth the flesh profiteth nothing the word says

[34 : 48] Jesus that I speak unto you our spirit and life and we need tonight to remind ourselves in this evangelistic weekend that without the spirit we can do nothing and every child of God should be pleading with the spirit to blow and to breathe into the lives of those who are dead without him we can do nothing how many have prayed tonight for the breath to come from the four winds that may be a reference to the fact that Israel was to be gathered in it is certainly a reference to the fact that the Israel of God the church of Christ is gathered in from all nations from the north and from the south and from the east and from the west and we should be thankful that it is only the spirit who is able to do this work but

God promises to send the blessing of the spirit on those who ask for it listen to the words of Isaiah for I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground it's not finished there I will pour my spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring and thus the spirit blows what happens in answer to this prayer they lived and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army we see the mighty army like a mighty army is the church of

God and as you look through the scriptures you discover again and again how the church is described in military terms and how the head of the church himself is described as being the captain of the army of the Lord of hosts he is our head he is our commander he is our king the church is described in the song of Solomon as looking forth as morning fair as the moon clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banish again and again the Christian life is described in military terms in the word of God and every Christian knows that he and she is in a battle situation but praise

God one day the church militant will be swallowed up in the church triumphant the question for each one of us tonight is are we in the Lord's army whose side are we on is God for us he is for his people and on account of that all things work together for their good he loves them they love him they are the called according to his purpose God is for us the church can say is he for you who is on the Lord's side who will serve the king are you tonight a member by the grace of God in this mighty army described for us in this passage that really is what we're coming to in the application of this message where do we stand in the light of all that is brought before us here are we dead or alive

are we under the dominion of a commander who will bring us to hell or are we enlisted by God's grace in the army that will perform exploits for him and as members of that army Paul in Ephesians 6 tells us very very clearly the equipment that we need and the kind of service that we are to render well that is the illustration as we have it in this passage but now very briefly the explanation if it's not been clear enough already brought before us in verses 11 to 14 then he said unto me before we go into that note it's an exceeding great army that the church of God has described as being an innumerable multitude at last that no man can number how tragic that many who hear the message of the gospel and who are commissioned to join the army decline you know that in the past and in some places still to refuse to enlist in the service of the king has its own inevitable consequences if justifiable reason for refusing to enlist cannot be given how much more is our refusal to enlist in the army of the king of kings an offence that will inevitably lead us to pain the consequences of our lost eternity because in this instance and regarding this commission there can be no justifiable reason for refusing to enlist none whatsoever and the army has been gathered in from all the ages and from all the nations and is being gathered in tonight what are you doing with the commission that comes your way as the gospel which we've been commissioned to proclaim is addressed to you well having said that let's have a quick look at the explanation brought before us and I just want to mention three things very very quickly first of all in verse 11 we see the mess in which

[42 : 49] Israel was found Israel is in a bad way in the 11th verse but they're aware of it they're aware of the fact that they're in a mess they appear to be beyond recovery and when the spirit of God convicts very often one's hands are thrown up and one is plunged into despair we're convicted we know the situation in which we are before God we believe God's testimony concerning us how many tonight in this place are in the state where you're crying out as they cried out our bones are dried our hope is lost man's extremity

God's opportunity he's brought you to see the mess that you're in has he if he hasn't we pray with him know that he will even as we speak bring you to see your need the undone mess of your lost condition why bring people to that in order that the miracle which God is able to perform will be acknowledged and accepted it that's the second thing we have the mess now we have the miracle in verse 12 therefore prophesy and say to them to those who are aware of being in a mess and I hope there's someone like that here tonight God can do a miracle for you 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 the Lord God is still able and the Lord God is still active in bringing this miracle about he is still Jehovah Jehovah there is still provision for men and women in a mess God's provision is here in Jesus Christ you may be despondent as Israel was you may be dejected and depressed you may be in despair but God still has a people in that kind of condition whom he sees as his own and in whose lives he produces a miracle the psalmist said about the graves devouring mouth our bones are scattered round as wood which men do cut and cleave lies scattered on the ground dead in trespasses and sin but

God is the giver of life that's why Jesus came I have come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly but he says here too I shall bless you in your own land now there is of course a literal fulfillment of these words in the history of Israel but there is also here to be a spiritual fulfillment of these words yes and a literal one too in the experience of every believer he will bring every child of his to the place prepared for to the promised land who will he bring there those who delight themselves in God delight yourself in God he will do your hearts desire to you and the psalmist goes on to say and so you in the land shall dwell and verily have food if you be willing and obedient well are you and

I are we you shall eat of the fat of the land of the fruit of the land if not if you refuse and rebel what then according to Isaiah's words you will be devoured by the sword for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it but we have the miracle here that God promises to do he is faithful that promised who also will perform it and finally what's the motive in our teaching and what's the motive that lies behind God performing this miracle in people's lives and you shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves oh my people and brought you up out of your graves and shall put my spirit in you and you shall live and

[48 : 37] 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 you shall know that I am the Lord what I say I do what I promise I

perform you will know me and you will glorify me in your lives you will begin to live in accordance with the purpose for which you were created in the first place you will begin and continue to glorify me and to enjoy me forever well there we have it how many of us can say tonight that out of the mess that our lives were in a miracle has come about out of the chaos

God has brought about a new creation if that's true then it will reveal itself in our seeking to live lives that are all together to the glory of God to God be the glory great things he has done and all the people of God said Amen to these words do these words find an echo in your own heart tonight let us come to God in prayer O Lord our God we pray that thy world would have addressed each one of us tonight and arrested us those of us who are spiritually sleeping awaited us to an awareness of our need of walking in the way of God in order that through us yes even through such as we are thou mayest work in the lives of others

O Lord we pray tonight that out of the spiritual graves in which so many are to be found thou wouldst bring life Lord send the breath of heaven down upon us quicken us revive us in order that we might truly live the kind of life that honors thee and brings good to our own souls forbid it Lord that after studying the scriptures together tonight any in this place should be content to remain lying dry and dead in the open valley Lord save the people before it is too late for Jesus sake Amen