

Hope of New Life
July 13, 2014
Allen Power

Ezekiel 37

- “*Dem bones, Dem bones, Dem dry bones!*” Remember the old song?
- “*The toe bone’s connected to the foot bone...foot bone’s connected to the ankle bone...etc.*”
- And every verse ends with the words: “*Hear the Word of The Lord!*”
- That song has been recorded by everyone from Fats Waller, to the Wiggles.
- We learned it as kids and we think of it as just an upbeat, fun, song.
- Ezekiel’s vision had a POWERFUL message for the Israelite captives then, and for US today!
- Sometimes we feel like life is a DEAD, DRY existence. We wonder if it can ever be fixed.
- Here’s the BIG IDEA: No matter how DRY and DEAD life seems, there’s HOPE of NEW LIFE with two POWERFUL forces God has placed within our reach.
- Let’s begin with the first three verses of Ezekiel 37:

Ezekiel 37:1–3 (ESV)

The Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel writes...)

37 The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. 2 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. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, you know.”

- God swept Ezekiel up into another vision. To a valley filled with bones. Miles of bones.
- A nation of soldiers left to the birds, the animals, and the hot desert sun.
- It says these were DRY bones.
- **Why do you think God had him walk all around looking at the condition of the bones?**
- The key word is DRY. The verse says VERY DRY. **What does that tell us about the bones?**
- We’ve all heard, and used, that term “*dry spell.*” It can apply to any part of our lives.
- **How would you describe a DRY SPELL in a marriage relationship? Friendship? Your professional life? How about a SPIRITUAL DRY SPELL for a believer? How would you describe that? How was your life like DRY BONES before you trusted Christ?**
- Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones spoke to the condition of the nation of Israel.
- It pointed into the future to the day when Jesus comes back and God fully restores Israel.
- This vision also has a message for our nation today.
- **Do you see any signs of Spiritual dryness in our nation? What are they?**
- What we’ll focus on mainly today is the INDIVIDUAL.
- As a believer: How can I find POWER and PURPOSE to REVIVE the DEAD, DRY BONES of my Spiritual life?
- For one who doesn’t know Christ as Lord: How does God promise to BRING LIFE to someone who is DEAD in their sin? Someone who feels dry but can’t figure out why.
- Back to Ezekiel’s vision. Verse three: **What does God ask Ezekiel?**
- **How was God testing Ezekiel with that question?**
- **If anyone else had asked Ezekiel that question how would he have responded?**
- **How did he answer God? What does his answer say about his knowledge of God?**

When life looks DRY, DEAD, and IMPOSSIBLE, God is asking: Do you TRUST that I can fix it?

- Look at verse four. **What did God tell Ezekiel to do?**
- Talk about the ultimate DEAD audience! It's one thing to preach or teach and have a few sleeping or some with their minds wondering, but this was a DEAD CONGREGATION!
- **At the end of verse four what did God tell Ezekiel to say to the bones?**
- "Hear the Word of The Lord" in verse four. Notice that word HEAR. While I was writing this lesson I stopped to notice some sounds. Tree frogs, conversation in the other end of the house. But for hours I hadn't noticed them.
- **Did my ears stop working? What did my brain do?**
- Even if sound is reaching our ears it may not be reaching our mind, much less our hearts.
- Ever say to your child, "Did you HEAR what I said?" Are you concerned their ears stopped working? **What do you mean?**
- The Hebrew word for HEAR in that verse is: שָׁמַעַ shâma', shaw-mah'; translated: *to hear intelligently (often with implications) of attention, obedience, etc.)*

It's not enough for God's Word to pass through our ears if it isn't reaching our HEART!
When we're in trouble we always want to make sure God is paying attention to US.
How focused are WE at paying attention to HIS WORD? Paying attention meaning living it out.

Here's a KEY POINT: When a believer is in a period of DRYNESS the first source of RENEWED LIFE is THE WORD OF THE LORD. For the non-believer, NEW LIFE also starts with THE WORD...the Gospel.

- In verses 5 and 6 God told Ezekiel, "Tell these bones what I'm going to do for them."

Ezekiel 37:5–6 (ESV)

5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 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."

- Verse seven: **What did Ezekiel do?** He shared the powerful, miraculous WORD OF THE LORD with a pile of DEAD BONES! **What happened next? But there was problem (v.8) what was it?**

Ezekiel 37:9–10 (ESV)

9 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." 10 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.

- That word BREATH is the Hebrew word רוּחַ ruach; it translates: breath, wind, and spirit.
- The WORD OF THE LORD was enough to get muscles and skin on those bones. But they were still just corpses.

Tony Evans in his book *Dry Bones Dancing* writes:

"It takes more than hearing and receiving God's word to remove the spiritual dryness from our

lives. You can hear the Bible preached all day long and still remain essentially lifeless. Without the Spirit's breath of life, you're still very much like a corpse, spiritually speaking. Being under the Bible is fundamental, but not sufficient. Hearing the Bible preached is absolutely necessary, but not enough. Memorizing verses is critical, but it won't change you. If you're ongoingly dry and there's no life in you, it's either because the Spirit of God isn't in you (and you're not actually a Christian), or because he's in you but not at work because you aren't living under the Holy Spirit's control."

- KEY POINT: God uses the combination of His Word and His Spirit to bring LIFE to people. If we're believers in Christ we have His Spirit living in us. But are we living like we do?
- We don't have time in this lesson to explore living under the control of the Holy Spirit.
- A topical series of many weeks wouldn't cover it all. Recently in my personal study I've been digging deeper into the subject of living in the POWER of the Holy Spirit. Since time is limited, I'm giving you a video link to a sermon from Charles Stanley on Walking in the Holy Spirit:

http://www.intouch.org/broadcast/video-archives/content.aspx?topic=Walking_in_the_Holy_Spirit_video

Notes for that message: <http://www.intouch.org/Content/1/LP100425.pdf>

- Here are three good first steps to more of the power of the Holy Spirit:
 1. Begin by asking God to make you sensitive to His Holy Spirit He placed in you when you put your trust in Christ as Savior. Slow down and LISTEN for that still, small voice.
 2. Take your study Bible or concordance and read everything you can on what scripture tells us about the Holy Spirit. Examples: John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:8-14; Galatians 5:16-26.
 3. Search for a great book on the subject by a writer/teacher you trust.

Here's the point:

- Some are all about Bible knowledge but lack the POWER of the Spirit
- Others are all about the Spirit with no depth in the Word of God.
- The key to RENEWAL and RELIEF from DRYNESS is BOTH: His WORD, interpreted by His Spirit, and OBEYED by you and me!

Ezekiel 37:11–14 (ESV)

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.' 12 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. 13 And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. 14 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."

- **What got these Israelites into the mess they were in? What turned the nation into DRY BONES? How does verse eleven say they felt?**
- Though God had to discipline them. God always planned to restore Israel. That plan isn't yet concluded until Christ returns. It's also His plan for YOU and ME. He wants to turn our DRY BONES into a LIVING, VITAL relationship with Him. He painted that picture in verses 23-28. The Lord spoke...

Ezekiel 37:23–28 (ESV)

23 They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

24 “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. 25 They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. 26 I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. 27 My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 Then the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”

- Verses 23-28 speak to what God will do for His children when we obey Him.
- Let’s quickly scan these verses...**what are some of the promises that apply to US today?**

So, What’s The Takeaway?

- Does your relationship with God seem as DRY as a valley of bones? Very dry?
- How is that effecting your relationships here on earth? Your passion for living in general?
- If you’re not in a dry valley now...you WILL BE some day. We all go through it.
- In this vision God shows us the two major elements of LIFE GIVING RENEWAL: The Word of The Lord and The Power of His Spirit.
- For the unbeliever, the Word and the Spirit work in tandem to provide ETERNAL LIFE.
- For those of us who ARE followers of Christ, the same two are our SUPERNATURAL REMEDY when our life is DRY and seems DEAD beyond REVIVING. (Bonus Material below)
- God help us this week to dive deeply into His Word, and beg loudly for His Spirit.
- If we will, God promised in chapter 36:26-28...

Ezekiel 36:26–28 (ESV)

26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

BONUS MATERIAL:

Sometimes as believers when we’re in a DRY SPELL SPIRITUALLY we need to “cut ourselves some slack” and understand how “dry spells” work. In Root of the Righteous, A.W. Tozer has some wise words on this. He writes:

Probably nothing else bothers the earnest Christian quite so much as the problem of those dry spells that come to him occasionally, no matter how faithfully he tries to obey God and walk in the light. He can never predict them and he cannot always explain them. And there lies the difficulty.

It might comfort one who finds himself in the middle of an emotional desert to know that his experience is not unique. The sweetest and holiest saints whose feet have graced this earth have at some time found themselves there. The books of devotion which have come to us from

the past almost all have at least one chapter dealing with what some of them call "aridity" in the Christian life. The very word itself tempts us to smile in sympathy, for it so perfectly describes the experience so many of us know only too well. Our heart feels "arid" and nothing we can do will bring the rain. It is good to know during such an internal drought that it has been a common experience with the saints.

One reason for our distress at such times is the knowledge that sin is one cause of aridity in the life; we naturally reason that if sin brings drought and we are suffering a dry spell, then we must have been guilty of sin whether we knew it or not. The way to deal with the problem is to remember that sin is not the only reason for dryness. If after an honest examination of our lives we are sure that we are not living in a state of disobedience and that no past sin is unforgiven, we may dismiss sin as the cause of our dry condition.

...

Normally we may expect some degree of spiritual joy to be present most of the time. Fellowship with God is so delightful that it cannot but provide a large measure of joy; but we are talking now about those times when our joy fades out and the presence of the Lord is felt feebly or not at all. Such times demand that we exercise faith. Moments of great spiritual delight do not require much faith; if we never come down from the mount of blessing we might easily come to trust in our own delights rather than in the unshakable character of God. It is necessary therefore that our watchful Heavenly Father withdraw His inward comforts from us sometimes to teach us that Christ alone is the Rock upon which we must repose our everlasting trust.

A.W. Tozer, Root of the Righteous

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Root-Righteous-A-Tozer/dp/1600660177>