

Offers  
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Ezekiel 37:1-14

Could you use some good news? I could! Why don't we start by sharing some good news? What good news do you have to share?

Years ago there was a hit song called, "A Little Good News Today." The premise of the song was wishing for a day when there was more good news than bad news. Wanting to see a headline that said:

*"Not much to print today, can't find nothin' bad to say", because  
Nobody robbed a liquor store on the lower part of town  
Nobody OD'ed, nobody burned a single buildin' down  
Nobody fired a shot in anger, nobody had to die in vain  
We sure could use a little good news today."*

Those songwriters thought things were depressing in 1983 but the world hadn't yet heard of COVID-19 and Ronald Reagan was celebrating "Morning in America." They had no idea how much we'd need a little good news in 2022.

When we were last together I made the point that before people can really grasp the good news of what Jesus has done for us they have to understand the bad news of why we needed a Savior. The Israelite refugees in captivity understood the bad news of their current physical situation but they still didn't understand the real bad news of their spiritual situation. Spiritually, the nation of Israel was D-E-A-D "doorknob dead!" God used Ezekiel to deliver that bad news followed by this good news: the one true God isn't in the renovation business; He's in the regeneration business. God doesn't make bad people good; He makes dead people alive spiritually. We call that the new birth. THAT is some good news!

Again, you can't appreciate the good news until you grasp the bad news. God gave Ezekiel another bizarre vision to dramatically illustrate people dead in sin.

**Ezekiel 37:1-14 (ESV) — 1** 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." **4** Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. **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." **7** 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. **8** 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. **9** Then he said to me, "Prophecy 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. **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."

- A valley filled with dry, disconnected bones. You can't get much deader than that. You wouldn't pick up a wrist bone and feel for a pulse or put a mirror in front of a skull looking for breath.
- Can you imagine how Ezekiel was feeling in this hopeless situation?
- The average rational person would be asking, "*Lord, you want me to preach to this pile of bones?*" Ezekiel would obey because he believed in God's Sovereign power to do the impossible in a hopeless situation.
- This strange vision was actually a graphic illustration for Ezekiel of what God had just said in chapter 36. In the first twenty-one verses God recited to Ezekiel how the people of Israel had "defiled" their land by evil living.
- Then in verse twenty-two, God said tell them, "*I am bringing you back, but not because you deserve it. I am doing it to protect my holy name...*"<sup>ii</sup>
- He said, Ezekiel, tell them: "*I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land.*"<sup>25</sup> "*Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols.*"<sup>26</sup> "*And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.*"<sup>27</sup> "*And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.*"<sup>iii</sup>
- The rest of the chapter was all about their new life back in Jerusalem.
- Before Ezekiel could deliver that good news, God needed him (and the people of Israel) to understand the bad news of their spiritual deadness.
- This prophecy and its meaning applied to the people of Israel at that time and place and will one day be totally fulfilled for Israel when Christ returns.
- It is also a picture of God's plan to offer eternal life in Christ to everyone.
- Back to 37:3. God asked Ezekiel a rhetorical question: "*Can these bones become living again?*" Ezekiel: "*Sovereign Lord, only YOU know that.*"
- Question: How is this valley of dry bones a picture of salvation? How does God's question and Ezekiel's answer apply to the conviction of sin?

- The question God posed is the question on the heart of every unsaved person when the Holy Spirit convicts them of their sinful state.
- The Holy Spirit reveals the “dry bones” of their life and that person cries out: *“Can these bones live again?”* Only God can make that happen.
- Notice, even after God put muscles and skin on those reassembled skeletons, they were still dead because they had no breath.
- How does that apply to the spiritual condition of many? What does the breath represent in the salvation story (see John 20:22 below)<sup>iv</sup>?
- Sadly, a lot of people appear to be alive but the Spirit of God isn’t in them. They are a good looking “corpse” but spiritually they are the walking dead.
- There is an obstacle to receiving God’s gift of new life in Christ. We can’t access God’s gift of new life until we recognize we are dead in sin.
- The problem: No one wants to look at a pile of dry bones!
- The valley of bones is a picture of the spiritual condition of people and it’s a hideous sight! We expect cemeteries to hide the bodies. We want cemeteries to be nice “parks” that cover up what’s underground.
- We don’t want to see the dry bones of sin in our world or ourselves so we hide it from view to avoid the scene. Sometimes even the most “religious” people are guilty of that.
- In **Matthew 23:27 (ESV) — 27 Jesus said**, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.” Instead of recognizing that the Son of God was there to give them new life, they were trying to cover up the “dead bones” of their sin. They were good looking corpses but spiritually walking dead.
- Let’s apply this to our lives today. How does this apply to being certain of our own salvation experience? How would it apply to how we look at those who are unsaved? How might sharing Christ with others feel a little like Ezekiel preaching to the bones? How can we be like Ezekiel in sharing?
- How do you think this applies to a follower of Christ whose spiritual life has become a little dry and dead?
- To be clear: I believe in eternal security. If we’ve truly been saved by trusting Christ as Savior and Lord, we don’t lose that when we sin. He made us alive forever. Even though that is true, Christ-followers have periods of spiritual dryness. We don’t need to be “re-born” but we do need to have our relationship with God “reenergized” as only He can do.

#### So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Before anyone can receive the good news of salvation, they need to understand the bad news: we are all born spiritually dead.
- Ephesians 2 says, *“you were dead in the trespasses and sins”<sup>v</sup>* [bad news] *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,<sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved”<sup>xi</sup>* [GREAT news!]

- We serve a risen Savior Who isn't in the renovation business but the regeneration business. He doesn't make bad people good; He makes spiritually dead people alive forever.
- He does this so that we will know that He is the LORD (v.6) and that we *"may know him and the power of his resurrection."*<sup>vii</sup>
- We need to look at the dead spiritual condition of our world, but this lesson shouldn't make us depressed. Instead, we should rejoice about the potential for every lost person we know to be reborn from death to life.
- That should make us excited to share what Jesus has done for us and what He wants to do for them. We might feel that sharing Christ with them is as impossible as speaking to dry bones. This text reminds us that God can bring the dead to life even when it seems impossible to us.
- Those of us who have new life in Christ should also be encouraged to know that we can access the "re-energizing" of the Holy Spirit when our spiritual life becomes a little dead and dry. If we'll say like Ezekiel, "only You, God." He will revive our relationship with Him.
- At a time when we sure could use a little good news, the good news of salvation is STILL the BEST NEWS of all!

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<sup>i</sup> Source: LyricFind Songwriters: Rory Michael Bourke / Charlie Black / Tommy

Rocco A Little Good News Lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group, BMG

Tyndale House Publishers (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Eze

36:22). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Eze 36:24–27). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iv</sup> **John 20:22 (ESV) — 22** And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

<sup>v</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Eph 2:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>vi</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Eph 2:4–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>vii</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Php 3:10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.