

Week-3

“Dry Bones”

Many pastors, who have preached the Word of God for a lifetime, love a sermon Ezekiel preached in a graveyard, which could have been killing fields where many people were massacred. We read that Ezekiel was led out to a valley covered with dry bones. (Chapter 37) Ezekiel's commission from God was to preach to these bones.

Figuratively speaking, this is the challenge a pastor often confronts when he stands in front of his congregation on Sunday. One pastor said that when Jesus Christ returns, his congregation will be the first to be resurrected because the Apostle Paul wrote that the “dead in Christ will rise first”. (1 Thessalonians 4:16) He sometimes wonders, can these dead bones live? Can I preach in such a way that I and my message will be energized by the Holy Spirit, and spiritual life transfused into the lives of these people?

When Ezekiel obeys the commission of his Lord to preach to the dry bones: “He (the Lord) asked me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ I said, ‘Oh Sovereign LORD, you alone know.’ Then He said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones and say to them, “Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to

life.” (37:3–5) The people of Judah were like dry bones. The challenge God placed before the prophet Ezekiel was, “Do you think these dry bones can live?” In the Scriptures, God consistently challenged prophets about their vision. Observe that Ezekiel did not say, “Yes, I have the faith to believe they can live.” Instead, he said, “Lord, You alone know.” The prophet did not commit himself to God because he did not really believe the bones could live. Then God said to him,

“Preach to the bones!” So Ezekiel starts preaching to the bones. After some preaching, Ezekiel says there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones started coming together. After the dry bones came together, Ezekiel had a congregation of skeletons, with no sinew or flesh on them. Ezekiel was commanded again, “Preach!” As he preached, sinew and flesh were added to the skeletons. When Ezekiel got that army of skeletons with flesh and muscle, he still had not answered God's question, “Can these bones live again?” These corpses were still not alive. There was no breath in them. So the commission came from God, “Preach to the Breath!” In the Bible, the words for air, breath and spirit are the same words.

The Breath here is the Holy Spirit. This is a great principle you will find throughout the Bible: apart from the Holy Spirit, the preacher is attempting the impossible. Any true prophet knows that if the Spirit does not come to him and lift him up and put the hand of energizing unction, or anointing upon him, what he is attempting to do is impossible. When

Ezekiel preached to the Spirit, the Breath came into those corpses and they became a mighty army. The primary application to the Jews of what Ezekiel was commissioned to preach was essentially this: “I can and will restore you from your captivity experience. I can and will lead you back from Babylon, back to your homeland. I will restore the fortunes of Israel.”

The second application of this great message gives us a picture of what is involved in the great ministry of building the Church today. The preaching of the Gospel builds the Church. The dry bones represent the lost. Of the more than six billion people on earth today, how many of them know about Jesus Christ? How many of them are alive with Jesus Christ? How many of them know what it is to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit, and to be converted by the Spirit of God? Very few. This is the challenge facing the Church today. The devotional application of Ezekiel's dry bones sermon is

this challenge: can the church of Jesus Christ be energized by the Holy Spirit to implement the Great Commission and take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost people of this world?

Are you one of the dry bones? Are you lost because you have never heard or believed the Gospel of salvation? Does this message apply to you because you only look alive but lack “real life”? Do you have the Breath of God’s Spirit in your life and ministry? No matter what your circumstances may be, they are probably not as difficult as the circumstances Ezekiel woke up to every morning. If God could make the dead bones live for Ezekiel, He can do that for you and me.

If the Spirit does live in you, what are you doing to build the Church? You do not have to be a preacher to share the Gospel with others. You must believe that the Spirit of God will anoint the Word of God as you share it with another person. It has been said that an evangelist is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. If you are one of those beggars telling another beggar where the bread is, spiritually speaking, you must understand the powerful combination of prayer and the sharing of the Word.

In chapter two of the Book of Acts, we read that the disciples lived together in a great spiritual community. They shared their possessions and ate their meals together — they practiced a pure socialism. The apostles were waiting tables, or managing a foodservices program, which was taking them away from their pastoral ministry. We read that they made a very important decision. They elected the first deacons and said to them, “You tend to this business, and we will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.”

God mightily blessed their decision as the apostles prayed and preached the Word. This is the same powerful combination Ezekiel used in his ministry. Someone has said that when we meet together, if nobody is changed, then nothing happened. When we preach the Word, if we are simply giving out information, nothing will really happen to those who hear. However, if we will follow the example of Ezekiel and the apostles, we will discover that when prayer precedes our preaching, something will happen. The lives of people who hear the Word will be changed forever.

When you proclaim the Good News God gives you to proclaim, when you “preach to the bones,” also preach to the Breath, the Spirit. You must look to God the whole time you are preaching or sharing the Gospel with another person for the energizing unction of the Spirit to energize every word you speak. When His power energizes you and your words, those “bones” will come to life.