

ESF Lord's day service message
11/6/2016

The Restoration of Life

Text: Ezekiel 37:1-10

¹ *The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. ³ He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"*

I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know."

⁴ *Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ⁵ This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶ I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"*

⁷ *So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.*

⁹ *Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'"* ¹⁰ *So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.*

The Chicago Cubs won the 2016 World Series championship last Wednesday night (Nov 2, 2016). They did it in one of the most dramatic fashion in the history of baseball ever. What made their win so special was that they won after the longest drought of a championship in baseball history, since 1908. In more than 100 years, generation after generation of many cubs' fans who wished to see a championship died without ever seeing their team win. During this World Series, they were trailing by 3 games to one to the Cleveland Indians. Their chances of

winning the championship seemed to diminish at that point. But they started winning one game at a time and pushed it to the 7th game. In the 7th game they beat the Indians by a score of 8 to 7 and won the World Series championship. Their win made all Chicagoans and their fans around the world as joyful as a dead person that came alive from the grave.

But the joy of winning such a championship will last for just a while. There is a more dramatic win and a more lasting joy. That is winning in the game of life. It is winning the lost souls. It is bringing the dead back to life.

How can this be possible? How can we obtain such a win and such joy in the game of life?

There was a time when Israel was in captivity in Babylon. At that time God showed Ezekiel a vision. In the vision, he saw many bones in the open valley and they were very dry. And God showed Ezekiel another vision. It was a vision that God would restore the dry bones to life.

Through these two visions, God showed Ezekiel how the dead could be restored back to life. With this word, God teaches us how we can receive restoration of life.

Use your dead life to seek God with all your heart

Before God showed Ezekiel the restoring power of life, God showed him the dry bones (Verses 1 -3). What were the dry bones?

Who are they? Verse 11, they are God's people. "These bones are the whole house of Israel." At that time Israel was in Babylonian captivity. They were the slaves of Babylon. And they were living like dead people, who did not have any hope.

Such dry bones signify all the hopeless conditions of men who are living under the captivity of failure, powerlessness, sickness, of heavy burdens, and sins.

The reason God showed Ezekiel the dry bones before He gave life-restoration power to him was to let him realize that there was no human power or wisdom that could give such people hope. And in doing so Ezekiel might seek God with all his heart

As God showed Ezekiel the hopeless condition of the dry bones, God shows us our hopeless condition before He shows us the way of restoration. Even if we know God and we believe in God, there are times when we become like dry bones. Our lives are pounded by sickness, brokenness and sudden disasters. We become completely powerless. We feel like we are dead although we are physically alive. But God does not give up on us. God uses such a powerless situation in our lives to let us see that there is no power in us to restore our dead life. Before giving us the power of restoration, God wants us to realize and confess that we have no means whatsoever to restore our dead life.

Only when we acknowledge that it is impossible for us to restore our dead life, can we seek God with all our hearts. And when we seek Him with all our hearts, we can receive God's power of restoration:

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

(Jeremiah 29:13)

God is asking us when we become powerless like the dead: *What are your "dry bones?" With what impossible burden have you been laden? Can you restore your dead life? Do you realize that it is impossible for you to restore your dead life? Then seek my restoration power with all your heart.*

Restore your dead life with the word of God

After God showed the dry bones to Ezekiel, God told him to prophesy to

the dry bones with His words. When Ezekiel prophesied the word, the dry bones began to move and come together to form bodies. ⁷ *So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone.* ⁸ *I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them*

God uses His word to restore our dead life. Without God's word, there would be no restoration of life whatsoever. People who live without God's words are physically alive but spiritually dead. They are exactly like the dry bones here - being cut off from God; without hope, without change, and without the power of life.

Many people today are really hungry and thirsty not because of physical food but because of a lack of God's word. Many people are living as dry bones because they are starving for the word of God. And many people do not even recognize the reason why they are starving, why they don't have real energy in their lives. That is what the prophet Amos said in Amos 8:11, *"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land— not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.*

So what the dry bones need to restore their life is not money, not medicine, not education. What they need for the power of life is nothing but the word of God.

Hebrews 4:12, *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

When Jesus raised people from the dead, He used nothing but the word. He raised Lazarus from the dead with the word, "Lazarus, come out" (John 11:43). He raised a dead girl with the word, "My child, get up!" (Luke 8:54). Jesus' words have the power of eternal life (John 6:68).

God's word guides and sustains us just as it did for Ezekiel and his dead people. If we are actively involved with God's word, the power of God will see us through our impossible circumstance as well. The word of God will hold us together in times of brokenness. The word of God will bring together the events and resources we need to cope. It is God's word in us that makes it happen.

There was a sister who was struggling with alcohol addiction. She did everything she could to set herself free from the addiction. She was hospitalized for detoxification and rehabilitation. She joined a religion that promised healing and donated large sum of money to the religion. She went to Sedona Arizona to receive the power of unknown spirits. But none of these worked. She lost all hope of ever getting out of the addiction. One day she came to our church seeking counselling. When she told me her story of addiction and sought counselling, I did not know what to do and what to say. I just prayed for her laying my hand upon her head.

From that day on she came a couple of times a week to continue to receive counselling. As a pastor all I could do was giving her the word of God and pray. Some weeks later, she came to me and exclaimed: Pastor yesterday after I received the word your taught me, I went back to my apartment. As soon as I opened the door of my room, all the alcohol bottles turn to moving snakes. It was so scary that I almost fell down on my back. And I heard a voice say, "You will never touch or drink alcohol again." Since that day, 9 years have passed. As the Lord told her, she has never touched or drunk alcohol again. This is the power of the word of God who brings the dead back to life.

Do you want to see life-changing power in your life? With a hungry mind, listen to the word of God when it is preached and taught to you. Keep reading memorizing and meditating on the word of God. Do you want to see people around you being transformed? Share not your opinion or your word but the word of God with them. Don't water the

word of God down. Let them hear the word of God by all means. Then the word of God will bring the power of transformation.

Pray to God for anointing you with the Holy Spirit

Although the word of God has the power of life, the word alone cannot make complete restoration for the dry bones. When the word was prophesied, the dry bones had physical forms and shapes but they did not have life yet. The word in verses 7- 8 shows the condition: *So I prophesied as I was commanded.... I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.*

To restore our hopeless life back to a powerful life, it is true we need the word of God. We need Bible studies. We need to hear the word in worship services. We need to share the word in fellowships. All those things are good and necessary, but there must be one more crucial element. It is to receive the breath of God-the Holy Spirit. The word of God brings new life back to the dead. The Holy Spirit keeps a new life alive.

Even if we do everything we possibly can as a believer, without receiving the power of the Spirit, we still will remain mainly in the level of flesh. Without being anointed by the Holy Spirit, we believers will remain as carnal Christians, who have no spiritual power, who cannot experience supernatural power and freedom.

Then how can we receive the breath, the Spirit of God? God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the breath. When Ezekiel prophesied to the breath as God commanded him to do, the breath entered people and they came to life and became a vast army. *Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’’ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.*

There was communication between Ezekiel and the breath. The breath is the Spirit of God. In other words, there was prayer and verbal claiming of the powerful work of the Spirit. To receive God's revival in our lives, we have to receive the power of the Spirit. To receive the power of the Spirit, we have to pray and verbally claim the powerful work of the Spirit.

Jesus encourages us to ask God for the Holy Spirit with confidence that He is our heavenly Father who is willing to give us His Spirit:

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11: 11-13).

When we see the people in the church of the first century, we do not know the names of most of the believers except the apostles and their disciples. The bible does not emphasize their names, but their prayers. Through the prayers of so many ordinary believers, the church not only overcame all their trials and persecutions, but also demonstrated the power of life in people's lives. By their prayers, they were anointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1- 4). And they overturned the curse of the tower of Babel which was the language barriers (Acts 2: 5-11). They became bold to witness to all unbelievers and persecutors (Acts ch.4). They healed the sick (Acts 5:12-16). They sent missionaries to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:1-3).

When we pray, God pours the power of His Spirit into our lives. And when the Holy Spirit works in us, we will see many positive changes in our lives which we have never seen before.

Let's ask ourselves honestly today. *How is my prayer life? Where am I seeking the power of change, power of transformation?* If we are actively praying these days, let's expect to receive the power of God's breath.

If we have not prayed that much, let's start praying today.