

Hope for the Hopeless

Ezekiel 37:1-10 HCSB The hand of the LORD was on me, and He brought me out by His Spirit and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. (2) He led me all around them. There were a great many of them on the surface of the valley, and they were very dry. (3) Then He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I replied, "Lord GOD, *only* You know." (4) He said to me, "Prophesy concerning these bones and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! (5) This is what the Lord GOD says to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live. (6) I will put tendons on you, make flesh grow on you, and cover you with skin. I will put breath in you so that you come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD." (7) So I prophesied as I had been commanded. While I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. (8) As I looked, tendons appeared on them, flesh grew, and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. (9) He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man. Say to it: This is what the Lord GOD says: Breath, come from the four winds and breathe into these slain so that they may live!" (10) So I prophesied as He commanded me; the breath entered them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, a vast army.

Introduction:



¹The Devil was having a yard sale, and all of his tools were marked with different prices. They were a fiendish lot. There was hatred, jealousy, deceit, lying, and pride - all at expensive prices. But over to the side of the yard on display was a tool more obviously worn than any of the other tools. It was also the most costly. The tool was labeled DISCOURAGEMENT. When questioned, the Devil said, "It's more useful to me than any other tool. When I can't bring down my victims with any of the rest of these tools, I use discouragement, because so few people realize that it belongs to me." Satan is never happier than when he sees people giving in or giving up to despair and becoming lost in hopelessness.

Have you ever felt like your whole world was caving in around you and there was absolutely no hope? Have your troubles seemed to mount up insurmountably? Cheer up! I have good news. There is hope for the hopeless!

I admit,

I. There are situations, which appear to be totally and absolutely hopeless.

- **Ezekiel 37:1-2 HCSB** The hand of the LORD was on me, and He brought me out by His Spirit and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. (2) He led me all around them. There were a great many of them on the surface of the valley, and they were very dry.

This passage was a metaphor of the nation of Israel in their Eastern captivity and Diaspora. The nation was virtually dead. It was lifeless, scattered, and as bleached as this conquered army's corpses, which were strewn across a battleground. There was no way humanly possible that they would ever arise from this defeat. It would be impossible!

However, I want you to consider a child's faith. ²A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon. He asked a boy in the dugout



¹ <http://www.turnbacktogo.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/lucifer-an-angel-of-music.jpg>

² <http://cdn-write.demandstudios.com/upload//1000/200/60/3/41263.jpg>

what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing - we're behind."

"Boy!" said the spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged." "Why should I be discouraged?" replied the little boy. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet!"

Those of us who are disciples of the Master acknowledge that the Devil seems to be leading so far in this inning but the game is not over yet! We are about to step up to bat and it's going to be an amazing victory!

In the midst of his troubles, Job once said,

- **Job 7:6-7 HCSB** My days pass more swiftly than a weaver's shuttle; they come to an end without hope. (7) Remember that my life is *but* a breath. My eye will never again see anything good.



He said this because he felt abandoned by God. I tell you, there is no greater state of hopelessness than of man without Christ.

Jean-Paul Sartre wrote: "*Man can count on no one but himself; he is alone, abandoned on earth in the midst of his infinite responsibilities, without help, with no other aim than the one he sets himself, with no other destiny than the one he forges for himself on this earth.*"

As you can see, those apart from God have a feeling of meaningless and abandonment that they cannot explain.

As the apostle Paul put it,

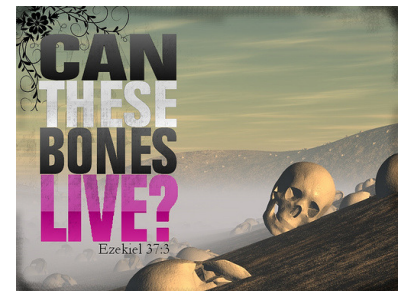
- **Ephesians 2:12 HCSB** At that time you were without the Messiah, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, with no hope and without God in the world.

II. God alone holds the answer to hopeless situations.

- **Ezekiel 37:3 HCSB** Then He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I replied, "Lord GOD, *only* You know."

³From man's perspective only one answer could come from the prophet's lips, "Life is impossible!" It would have been absurd to suppose that these dead bones could ever live again. But it was God who asked the question and God alone knows the answer.

- **Matthew 19:25-26 HCSB** When the disciples heard this, they were utterly astonished and asked, "Then who can be saved?" (26) But Jesus looked at them and said, "**With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**"



God actually delights in doing the impossible! The Methodist pastor Charles L. Allen once said, "*When you say a situation or a person is hopeless, you are slamming the door in the face of God.*"

There are no hopeless situations. There are only people who have grown hopeless about them.

- **Psalms 42:11 HCSB** Why am I so depressed? Why this turmoil within me? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise Him, my Savior and my God.

As the songwriter put it, "*God and God alone reveals the truth of all we call unknown. All the best and worst of man won't change the Master's plan; it's God's and God's alone.*"

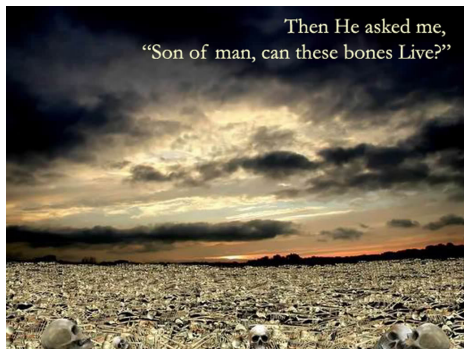
³ http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2048/2314258753_09c67a1f01.jpg

*God and God alone is fit to take the universe's throne. Let ev'rything that lives reserve its truest praise, For God and God alone."*⁴

No one is hopeless whose hope is in God. Have you ever been in despair? My friend, the answer is simple. Quit looking at your changing, fluctuating, unpredictable and nerve-wracking circumstances and focus on steady, constant, immutable God.

A pessimist finds a problem in every opportunity, but believers know that there are opportunities in every problem. So don't despair, for God is the answer.

III. God's Word gives new direction.



- **Ezekiel 37:4-8 HCSB** He said to me, "Prophesy concerning these bones and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! (5) This is what the Lord GOD says to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live. (6) I will put tendons on you, make flesh grow on you, and cover you with skin. I will put breath in you so that you come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD." (7) So I prophesied as I had been commanded. While I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. (8) As I looked, tendons appeared on them, flesh grew, and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

It would appear absurd to address "dry bones". Picture Ezekiel standing in the middle of the battlefield among the corpses preaching to piles of bones. But God's ways are not man's ways. The prophet speaks at the Divine command the Divine message. He speaks for God and they who listen hear the voice of God. And I tell you! When God's Word goes forth, things begin to happen.

- **Hebrews 4:12 HCSB** For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart.
- **Romans 10:17 HCSB** So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.
- **Romans 15:4 HCSB** For whatever was written before was written for our instruction, so that through our endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope.

Every conflict Christ had with Satan, Jesus overcame the obstacles by using the Word of God. In each and every recorded case He declared, "It is written." As it is written,

- **Psalms 119:105 HCSB** Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.

The Word of God is a window to those in the prison of hopelessness through which they can look and see the light of hope and get direction for their lives.

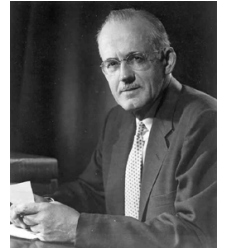
IV. God's Spirit gives new life.

- **Ezekiel 37:9-10 HCSB** He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man. Say to it: This is what the Lord GOD says: Breath, come from the four winds and breathe into

⁴ [© 1984 River Oaks Music Company (a div. of EMI Christian Music Publishing)]

these slain so that they may live!" (10) So I prophesied as He commanded me; the breath entered them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, a vast army.

⁵A.W. Tozer, in "Born After Midnight"⁶ wrote: *"Religious instruction, however sound, is not enough by itself. It brings light, but it cannot impart sight. The assumption that light and sight are synonymous has brought spiritual tragedy to millions. The Pharisees looked straight at the Light of the World for three years, but not one ray of light reached their inner beings. Light is not enough. The inward operation of the Holy Spirit is necessary to saving faith. The gospel is light but only the Spirit can give sight."*



- **Romans 8:10-11 HCSB** Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through His Spirit who lives in you.
- **2 Corinthians 3:17 HCSB** Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

The Spirit's control is able to replace sin's control. The Spirit's power is greater than the power of all your sin. If you have the Holy Spirit on the inside, you can stand any kind of battle on the outside. As it is written,

- **1 John 4:4 HCSB** You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.
- **John 14:16-18 HCSB** *And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. (17) He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive Him because it doesn't see Him or know Him. But you do know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you. (18) I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.*

⁵ http://www.cmalliance.org/whoweare/archives/photos/aw_tozer2.gif

⁶ Christianity Today, Vol. 41, no. 5.