

Ezekiel

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Date: 26 September 1983

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[0 : 0 0] With the Lord's help this evening I will direct your attention to the chapter that we read the prophecy of Ezekiel the 37th chapter and verse 3 the prophecy of Ezekiel chapter 37 verse 3 and he said unto me son of man can these bones live and I answered O Lord God thou knowest and he said unto me son of man can these bones live and I answered O Lord God thou knowest Ezekiel was given some remarkable revelations again and again we read as in the beginning of this chapter the hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord that is an important point for us to consider and I believe that the same is true today of the people of God as the eternal spirit instructs them and shows them things which otherwise they could not know we should be quite clear that the real religion is hidden from men apart from those who possess it men may attempt to make some effort to understand the life of God in the soul but if we do not possess the life of God in the soul then we shall not understand it it may be that some of us in earlier days thought that we did understand it until God began to work in our hearts and show us what real religion was

Saul of Tarsus thought he understood what religion was when he hailed the men and women to prison and persecuted them even unto the death thinking that he did God's service but it was when the spirit of God looked down when Jesus himself looked down from heaven and spoke to him that he was a living person and he had different views of God different views of himself different views of his needs different views of his salvation amongst these various revelations that were given to Ezekiel is this one familiar to many people about the valley of dry bones and the word says lo they were very dry now there are two points in the verse that we have read to you this evening and he said unto me son of man can these bones live that's the question and I answered

O Lord God thou knowest now shall we find God asking us a question which we feel quite inadequate to answer sometimes this is very real in the experience of the souls of God's people they feel as dead as these dry bones and it seems a virtual impossibility that there can never be life again some would more than infer that once you believe that you're born again that there will be never any question of the evidence of life in the soul some of us have been thankful for this account of the dry bones the psalmist said no man can keep alive his own soul and there are times when the people of God feel that their life the life of their soul is very very low this does not mean to say that they remain in that place for long but long enough to make them realise from whence their life comes he said unto me son of man can these bones live it is possible that the outside the structure of my religion can be lively and be really living we are familiar doubtless with what we call a lesser religion as distinct from a living religion and sometimes the people of God may feel that they haven't even a lesser religion let alone a living religion and yet they still possess the life of God in their soul the dead know not anything but the living know that they shall die and that is a very important thought for our consideration we should not come forth with the situation here described without there being life in the soul and neither

God would God put it to us God does not speak to dead people in these kind of circumstances I know he quickens the dead he passed by the child in another passage of this prophecy cast out in his blood and he said live and a miracle was performed but here a vision was given to Ezekiel that described the whole house of Israel in themselves a great question is can these bones live in themselves the people of God find that they have no power no life nothing at all and they are virtually dead as the bones and dry as the bones sometimes if this question were put to us we should not know how to answer in the same way that the prophet did not know how to answer except that he said oh

Lord God thou knowest what a blessing that God knows how is it that God knows well God knows because he is the creator of all things not only is he creator of all things in the original creation when Adam was created but he is the creator of all things in spiritual Israel no person that is of spiritual Israel is anything else but a person that has been created we find in the 8th of Romans and the whole creation grown it until now and that creation is the new creation why does the creation grow well it is because they cannot command life in themselves this is not at all a pleasant experience to feel that you have no life in your heart no life in your prayers no life in your thoughts no life in your conversation oh the creation will grow under these circumstances but in this vision the Lord showed

[10 : 36] Ezekiel the answer he showed him that these bones could live would live and did live and not only so they would live forever they were representative of the whole house of Israel not just part and so we have to notice that what is spoken here is spoken about everyone who is of the whole house of Israel that is those who are the church of the living God the body of Christ can these bones live now the question is very pointed and it may be the feelings of our soul this evening according to our experience during the day can these bones live now it is

God's purpose that we should feel the lack of life in ourselves in order that we may know what life is we find in John's first epistleations of those that live that live who whoever know it's in the Colossians if ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. When Christ who is our life shall appear then shall he also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication and cleanness inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness which is idolatry. But this is the point.

When Christ who is our life shall appear then shall he also appear with him. It is when Christ appears that we shall be able to give a very clear answer to this question. Only because of the spirit of revelation given to us as much as unto Ezekiel.

O Lord thou knowest. And we do read in the 25th Psalm the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. And he will show them his covenant.

And whilst we may say Lord God thou knowest surely the desire of our soul is deeper and we want God to tell us to explain to show us the truth in respect to the important matter as to whether these bones can live.

[14 : 07] Have we come to the conclusion that if they do live if they are to live it will be a miracle. Sometimes the expression is used the miracle of grace.

Yes the new birth is a miracle and the life the life that continues is a miracle. If the Lord withdrew his power if we took away breath then we should die.

It is so naturally he taketh away their breath and they die. And it is so spiritually he taketh away their breath and they die.

But you see in both these cases there is a divine appointment with the children of God when he takes away their breath materially physically then it is because the work of grace is done.

And they are ready to join the celestial throne and enter into life in the fullness and glory of it. But with respect to the spiritual life though we may pant yet that breath is never taken away.

[15 : 36] some of the scriptures are worth worthy of our close notice as the heart panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after thee.

Now panting is when breath is coming short or in spasms. If we should link prayer with breath with prayer for I believe one speaks truly when he says prayer is the Christian's vital breath.

Can these bones live? If there's no breath in them if there's no prayer in them maybe if there's no panting in them but God appears and gives them the breath he says come oh breath as he said in your situation sometimes come oh breath and you've lived you've lived in your prayers you've lived in your faith you've lived in your hope because there has been life communicated from heaven and satisfied you in this point that we live by our abiding in him and he abiding in us if you eat not my flesh and drink my blood there is no life in you this feeding upon

Christ can be described not in a natural way that we may eat and drink sitting at a table but in that way whereby the life of Christ is attached to the soul so that you live in that way it is not a good illustration but we know that before a child is born the life of it is maintained by the mother and that life that child grows in the womb by the vitality and life that is in the mother now this would not be would not do to make this a full illustration but it may serve to show us this that we live on

Christ because Christ dwells in us and we dwell in Christ may the great point is the union which exists between Christ and his people a union Christ in you the hope of glory a union with Christ in the eternal deity you see friends it means that when you're born again that God dwells in you that's the life that's the life see too many people's religion consists in their fleshly efforts their fleshly devotions their fleshly practices about the apostle tells the apostle john no it records this concerning the teaching of our lord jesus christ it is the spirit that quickeneth the flesh profiteth nothing that's one of the questions we have to learn and one of the ways in which we learn it is to know something about this question son of man can these bows lift and i answered oh lord god thou knowest now i think some of you at least would know how you wondered sometimes whether the bones the doctrine that you have in your soul that has been precious to you will really stand the test rest because sometimes everything fades away do we realize it is a wonderful miracle for any person to get to the end of their journey on this earth and still be living our life is hit with

[20 : 39] Christ in God beyond the reach of harm and who can tell the feelings of the souls of God's people when they feel exactly as it is described in the few verses around about our text then he said unto me son of man these bones are the whole house of Israel behold they say our bones are dried and our hope is lost we are cut off for our parts which literally interpreted from the original is it is all up with us now that's an extremity do you think all the people of God come to that extremity they come very near to it all up I'm finished I'm finished and if the

Lord does not have compassion upon me I'm finished you see the children of God when they come down to the end of their journey are sometimes very tried because they cannot summon up that life that they desire to feel they cannot summon up that brightness upon their faces they cannot summon up that freedom in prayer they cannot summon up the wonderful praises that they desire to give unto God and there they are languishing as if were wondering if these bones will be able to live whether the precious doctrine that has been their very life and soul in times past as to whether it has died out before they have died themselves it is a very solemn experience to feel that our religion will die and last that there should be some people's religion which does die and they do not seem to be concerned about it but maybe some of you might be afraid that your religion will die before you come to the end of your journey and therefore you will become an apostate and prove at last that the work of

God was never begun but we have this great point and I answered oh God God thou knowest it is has been said that John Newton was getting toward the end of his life when he penned those well known words that disappoint I long to know after it caused his anxious thought do I love the Lord or no am I his or am I not now we need to have a great care in looking at these words because I fear sometimes that people have completely misunderstood them they have almost taken it as a mark of grace if they are living all the while in an uncertain place

I believe we can say that John Newton in this place had come under a time of great trial now it wasn't a trial in providence but it was a trial in his soul and he described it very aptly when he says if I love why am I thus why this cold this dark life is framed how they sure can they be worse who have never heard his name and that was the reason why he was so perplexed and why this point was so strong in his heart because you see he had his own views of what he thought religion was and religion wasn't turning out according to his views and how much of our distress has caused because our religion is not turning out according to what we thought it should be we thought surely we should enjoy a constancy constancy in prayer and have joy in our hearts and rejoice in the

Lord all way listen to the word of God follow the precepts yes that's true and we still want to do that and we don't want to lower that standard at all but there's another side to it there's a part of us that is our old nature which is all the while trying to kill the new and because it is so powerful and Satan is willing to inject his own what shall I say his own person into our very being we find that we are overwhelmed with the deadness of our old nature so the apostle the Pope John Newton goes on could my heart so hard remain prayer a task and burden proved every trial give me pain if I knew a saviour's love you see things weren't working out according to what he thought they should be when

[26 : 37] I turn my eyes with him all is wild and vain is dark and vain and wild filled with unbelief and sin can I deem myself a child now we pause here to make this point that we need if we look at this as the negative side we must also have the positive side what is here described is perfectly true but only becomes acceptable if we know something of the positive side you see this part can be imitated imitated you can find people with a long face and speaking about the hardness of their heart and the lifelessness of their frame they've learned it they've been in the company of our people and they've learned it but one thing they haven't learned that is that their very spirit groans under this power which seems to stifle the life of

God in their souls if I pray or hear or read sin is mixed with all I do and then he asked the question you that love the Lord indeed tell me is it thus with you then he begins to tell us another side yet I mourn my stubborn will find my sin a grief enthrall should I grieve for what I feel if I did not love at all you see when the bones are dry it may be that our love to God is very little too and you see since love answereth all things the children of God may wonder just how they stand love to the Lord is very very important you will remember that the Lord said to

Peter lovest thou me more than these when the Lord said the third time he came back to where the prophet Ezekiel was he said Lord thou knowest thou knowest that I love thee and only the Lord himself could know that for sure now maybe if our bones are dry our religion seems to be epping out then we shall come and say oh Lord thou knowest thou knowest whether I shall survive whether my love will ever be refreshed and renewed now the great point this draws us towards is this the power of the resurrection the power of the resurrection the apostle prays that I may know him and the power of the resurrection now he would never have needed to pray for the power of the resurrection if sometimes he had not felt his religion to be at a low end but then

I might just continue with John Newton's hymn he goes on to say could I joyous saints to meet choose the ways I once abhorred find at times the promise sweet if I did not love the Lord and now you see here comes the distinction you find in your own soul there's something that still pants after Christ himself and you can identify yourself with the psalmist's desires when he said as the heart panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after thee O God O when shall I come and appear before God the living God Lord decide the doubtful case thou who art thy people's son shine upon thy work of grace if it be indeed begun

Jour■ the bones there they were they couldn't make bring themselves to be living creatures the bones there they were they were dry and they were very dry and who could do anything with them.

[32 : 34] But God could and God did. And this describes the whole health of Israel. And remember that by the power of God they stood upon their feet.

And that looks impossible. And it looks impossible in our cases sometimes that we could ever stand upon our feet again.

A number of times friends I have preached my last sermon and I was finished. Then you see we have to ask this question can these bones live?

And when this question is put to us Lord God thou knowest. And there's only one way that we can know what God is thinking and what God's knowledge is.

And that is by his powerful working. And maybe some of you would know what it is to be feeling as dead as these dry bones and then at the appearing of Christ at the preaching of Jesus Christ the very soul is warmed and the very heart is stirred and the love unto Christ is encouraged so that you believe now that life has come back again.

[34 : 15] Now there's no question of this ebbing and flowing in life like we might see with a person that comes near to the gates of death and then is revived again.

Oh no because this life is secure this life is eternal life but our feeling of it may alter sometimes in order that we may realize that it is God that is our life.

Gee God he who is our life when he shall appear then we shall be like him. And when Jesus appears unto his people what a difference it makes.

Sometimes as grace is given and Jesus Christ is lifted up on the pole of the everlasting gospel through the preaching of it you know our hearts have been warmed and we've come perhaps into the house of God in a very distressed state a lifeless state and we couldn't even look up and we couldn't say a word in prayer hardly but just a groan and then when Jesus was set forth the very life was before us and the very life was communicated to us and the life that was set before us outside of us had its repercussion of the life of God that was inside our souls and that's the way God answers this point and I answered O Lord God thou knowest we should be fully aware that the Lord God will not speak to us you'll excuse the expression in a way where he says well that's my secret the Lord as I've already said the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him he communicates to them his secret and if you should ever say

O Lord God thou knowest I'll be assured that God will show you that which you desire to know that which you must know we find John in the revelation using the same words that thou knowest and only God does know and it may be that our hearts this evening are in that place where we need God to tell us that he loves us and one way in which we shall know that he loves us as if he revives our drooping spirits will not thou revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee now the life of God in individual people is peculiar to themselves those who possess the life of God when they meet will I believe feel that life of God is there you may feel tried sometimes as I do that you can meet people that seem to be well versed in religion have had their names many years on the church book and yet when you speak to them there's no response to them in your heart and yet you might speak to another person despised and just a few sentences they matter will immediately cause your soul to flutter and you feel a union now that union is Christ in each person and it is very solemn when there are those that are well thought of and yet you do not feel that union to them you do not feel

[38 : 25] Christ in you operating to them why well it is a solemn consideration and we shall only mention it we shall not pursue it it's a solemn consideration does it mean that with all their profession Christ isn't well in the other person I answered O Lord God thou knowest now the Lord is infallible and what's more he is not a man that he should lie nor the son of man that he should repent therefore he will tell you the truth not only by word but also by action now we can read in John Newton's words one evidence though it is a low evidence yet it is a sure evidence Lord decide the doubtful case you want to know the worst of the matter you see sometimes people they shrink from the worst how many people there are that think they might have that dreadful disease of cancer and they won't go to the doctors and they won't ask they say don't tell me don't tell me well maybe there's some people in religion like that who fear the worst and don't want to know for the person with the life of God in their souls like John Newton he wanted to know Lord decide the doubtful case thou art thy people's sun shine upon the work of grace if it be indeed begun and you see one evidence of life is warmth in the soul people the disciples on the road to Emmaus were very dispirited after the crucifixion of their Lord and they thought everything had gone wrong then the Lord drew near and he began to expound to them in the scriptures in answer to that question ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to have entered into his glory beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself and those people those two disciples that might well have thought that their bones were very dry that the very life had departed out of their life

Jesus Christ had gone they had seen him crucified upon Calvary tree and there he was laid in the tomb the very person that had been their life their inspiration has now gone they had no leader but as the Lord Jesus spoke drew near to them and went with them and spoke with them so we read did not our heart burn within us why did it why did it do you think the heart of Pilate would have burned within him do you think the heart of Herod would have burned within him do you think the heart of Judas would have burned within him these people were blessed with the life of God in their soul and and when the life even Jesus himself was speaking to them and explaining to them the truth of the scriptures why their very heart warmed yeah it got so warm as it burned and what was the effect of that he made as though he would have gone further but they said abide with us for it is the war evening the day is far spent and he went in the tarry with them so you see there was an experience that was to be a reviling experience the power of the resurrection yes the same resurrection power that raised

Jesus Christ from the dead there the very resurrection himself was speaking unto these disciples and they felt that same power of the resurrection and when we come to consider this word son of man can these bones live the answer that we will put Lord thou knowest and God says I will show you that you may know what I know and that will be by the power of the resurrection the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life I am the resurrection and the life because I live ye shall live also and that's the way God shows us that we are alive now sometimes when the Lord comes into the souls of his people in reading the word of God are and have you not felt sometimes that in reading the word of God there's been no response and you begin to wonder whether your religion is gone altogether and then and then suddenly

Jesus himself draws near the spirit of God descends upon your soul touches your heart and he gives you the answer that you are so concerned about because your bones are so dry he says now I know and you shall know you shall know you shall know by the power of my resurrection you shall know that the the life of God is in your soul because of the voice of my my resurrecting power you will rise too this is a secret unknown to the children of God who can describe it I say who can describe it true religions more than notion something must be known and felt and you see the power of the resurrection the doctrine of the resurrection is not just something that we believe that we think about on Easter day it is an experience we do believe in because we know it's true we know that we've been raised out of the dust we know that being dead in sins if there was ever to be life given to us it was by no lesser power than the power of the resurrection because

[45 : 47] I live ye shall live also you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins you hath he made alive now when Jesus Christ was laid in the tomb well how could he be resurrected the world has got the victory the Jews have had the last word the Romans were satisfied that the imposter who called himself a king in opposition to Caesar well that was the end of that saga but no oh no a day came three days after when Satan was to be completely confounded when all his schemes were completely destroyed the power of the resurrection he might have heard of it but did he believe in it the disciples couldn't understand it and maybe you can go back to a time in your life when you didn't understand the power of the resurrection you thought it was just something confined to a particular day in the history of the world and in the church when Christ in a remarkable way arose from the dead but the power of the resurrection is transmitted to everyone who are members of

Christ's body that they may know that they are alive that they are alive and live by Christ dwelling in them just one word as we look at the last verse of this hymn let me love thee more and more if I love at all I pray if I have not loved before help me to begin to die now surely that's a living desire a desire for the power of the resurrection to deliver you from the coldness of your heart and the hardness of it that you may rejoice in Christ Jesus and that those passages in the scripture rejoice in the Lord and again

I say rejoice that is the life of your soul it is no comfortable situation our own experience to be dry and dead look on these bones so dry and dead thy sweetest softest influence shed on all our hearts abroad you see friends here was the desire the desire of life to know the life of God you see we cannot be content to be the dry bones now when you hear some people talk they are quite content to be dry bones they like the experience they think it is one that is acceptable amongst the church of God and they don't understand the experience why don't they because there's no desire they look at it they think upon it they receive it in the letter but they have no conception of it in the power and the kingdom of God is not in word but in power and I answer

O Lord thou knowest to whom was the appeal made it was made unto the Lord God who knowest all things one of the most remarkable scriptures I feel is in Isaiah where we read this concerning the Lord he is that one that declares the end from the beginning now you see naturally when we begin something I know men may boast but we cannot say for certain that he will come to the conclusion that we expect to come to but when God begins the work of grace in your soul he can tell you at the start that you'll endure to the end he who have begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of

Jesus Christ so the people of God they have confirmations again and again that they have the life of God when does Jesus come into the soul when is the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost then you know whether you're living because you're attached to the living and your desire is to the living the living says Hezekiah the living he shall praise thee as I do this day and in Hezekiah's case in one respect we could say that he was in the valley of dry bones why well you see his religion was false I don't say it was false basically but he has got into that place when it came to this that God said unto him there shall die and not live immediately he turned to his works he said remember oh Lord remember oh Lord what the salvation which is through

[52 : 06] Christ Jesus oh no he said nothing of the sort he said remember oh Lord how how I I I beseech thee how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart and have done that which is good in thy sight but how quickly was Hezekiah put on the right heel you see he saw in a moment he felt in a moment that he was wrong that he was short and that God had said put your house in order your spiritual house in order and he wept he wept sore now have you wept sore you see the dead do not weep the dead do not weep but Hezekiah wept he saw that now death faced him he was founding his hopes for eternity on a false foundation and how merciful God was to him in that he came and told him to put his house in order for he should die and not live and he would die and not live unless he did put his house in order and Hezekiah wept sore and then he went through a very painful trial but he came to this oh Lord by these things men live and in all these things is the life of my spirit so will they recover me and make me to live now the trial was not the life of his spirit no doubt it might have exercised his spirit but the life of his spirit was

Christ moving in him raising up those spiritual faculties which come forth under trial that patience of his perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing and then again the trial of your faith be much more precious than of gold that perish it though it be tried by fire might be found might be found alive alive at the appearing of Jesus Christ can these bones live I said oh Lord thou knowest but what a blessing it is that God gives his people the answer not just by saying telling them yes that they will live because he lives but by communicating to them that they are alive by the power of his spirit dwelling in them amen to go and you not to him never

Less■i do you him Ooh him he doesn't and he you I he have him square he Broadwaytv me a better and I I live to Fox all