

Hear The Word of the LORD

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Ezekiel 37:1-14 The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it *was* full of bones. ² Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and indeed *they were* very dry. ³ And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." ⁴ Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!' ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. ⁶ "I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD." ⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but *there was* no breath in them. ⁹ Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, 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 breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. ¹¹ Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' ¹² "Therefore prophecy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ "Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. ¹⁴ "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*," says the LORD."

Stand outside in the middle of a storm. Watch the lightning strike the earth. It is power and beauty. It has been the dream of man from ancient times to grasp the lightning, to harness it, and to use it. In our day man has begun to do exactly that, every outlet in your house, every battery and generator, is a harnessing of the lightning. That is nothing compared to the glory and power of God that we saw in our Gospel reading.

In our gospel reading we with Peter, James and John saw something far more wonderful than the lightning. We saw the glory of Jesus. The glory which he had with the Father from before the foundation of the world. That glory and power God himself has wrapped and packaged and given to us in a form that we can use every day, in his word. We see the same glory and power of God on display as Ezekiel preaches the word of God and the power of God calls the dead bones to life.

"Prophecy son of man, prophecy to the dry bones."

What a pointless waste of time. Bones cannot hear. Surely God's word can do nothing for dry dead bones. And yet when Ezekiel prophesies as the Lord commands, the bones are given life.

How many times in our life do we say to the Lord, "This is pointless. Your word isn't going to change anything." Yet the word of God which brings bones to life can change everything.

What does God say to Peter, James and John? Hear Him.

What does God say to Ezekiel? Prophecy, prophecy to the bones.

The glory of God and the power of God is hidden in the word of God. The same glory and power which was revealed on the mountain top. The same glory and power which gave life to dead bones.

This word of God can

Answer our prayers and give life to the dead.

How does God answer our prayer?

Stop and think about that for a moment. If someone asked you how does God answers prayer? Or God never answers my prayers. What would you answer?

The prophet Ezekiel preached during the exile. He wrote and prophesied along with Daniel and others to the Jews while they were exiles in Babylon. Ezekiel, along with Daniel and others prayed that the Lord would deliver them from Babylon and return them to Judea. The nation seemed dead, and all hope seemed lost. They would never see their homeland again. Yet God showed Ezekiel that the Word of the Lord can give life in the midst of death, it can accomplish what seems hopeless.

How does God answer our prayers?

The children's catechism list five ways that God answers prayers, but primarily is this that he answers our prayers through his word. It is foolish of us to pray to God and then refuse to read his word. His word is the only place where God promises to speak to us. Yet how often do we pray to God and look around for an answer but fail to go to his word?

Consider the following scenario. A man and his wife, kneel on opposite sides of the bed for evening prayer. The wife prays for a better husband, the husband for a better wife. Both go to bed hoping God will change the other. Neither goes to the word of God wherein God by his power changes our hearts to give us a better marriage.

King David wanted so badly to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. He thought this was a good thing that he would do for the Lord. He put it on a cart. The cart hit a bump, and the ark was about to fall off. Uzzah reached out his hand to stop the Ark. As soon as Uzzah touched the Ark, he died. David was angry with the Lord that he would kill Uzzah. But God had given specific instructions in his word how they were to carry the Ark, and if David had done what God says in his word, Uzzah would not have died.

So often we pray and wonder why God hasn't answered our prayers when the answer is there in his word. Especially when it comes to spiritual things but also when it comes to earthly.

We pray that we need a raise, and God's word tells us:

Matthew 25:23 Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.

We pray for a better work environment; God's word calls us to be better to others.

We pray for a better marriage; God's word gives us the power to be a better spouse.

What did the Father tell Peter, James and John? **Hear Him, listen to Jesus.** It is his word that gives us answer. It is God's word that calls the dead to life and God's word which gives us answers to our prayers.

The Word of the Lord gives life to the Dead.

Ezekiel and Daniel and no doubt many others thought they knew what the problem was. It seemed obvious. The problem was the people of Judah were captive in the land of Babylon. God however revealed to Ezekiel that wasn't the real problem. God could have brought the people back from Babylon anytime, but there was a bigger problem, a spiritual problem. The people were spiritual dead. Giving them freedom wasn't as important as giving them spiritual life.

"Can these bones live?" God asks Ezekiel. The answer is yes; they can but only through the word of the Lord.

Ephesians 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

We so often forget what the real problem is. We get so fixated on the fact that we are captives or the sins of others, that we miss the real problem that we are dead in our own sin, dry bones who can do nothing for ourselves.

Ephesians 2:4-5 But God, who is rich in mercy, . . . even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Those bones in the wilderness might think their only problem is the hot sun or the coyote gnawing on them, but the real problem is that they are dead bones. The people of Judah might think their problem is slavery in Babylon, but the real problem is they are spiritual dead, unwilling to listen to God's word. We might have a whole list of things we think these are our current problems, but the only real problem is our sin and our unwillingness to "**Hear Him.**"

It is the word of God which has power to do the impossible and give life where there was only death.

Sometimes I tell the confirmation kids to lie on the floor and pretend to be dead. Then I tell them to raise their hand. Of course, that is trick question because dead men can't raise their hands. Dead men can't respond to any instructions. The bones can't respond to the words that Ezekiel preached, and yet the word itself gives them power to live.

So also, God through his word gives us life. We so often think the word of God doesn't change anything, when in fact it is the only thing that can change. Our only real problem is not just that we are sinners but that we are dead in our sins. God's word calls us out of our grave.

God's word might seem to us like a little thing. But God has hidden in his word the power to answer our prayers and give life to us who were dead.