

“All Dried Up?”—Ezekiel 37:11-14

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “All Dried Up?”, is Ezekiel 37:11-14 ➤ *Then Yahweh said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O My people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O My people. And I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How is your “quality of life?” Many people may answer this question by considering their physical circumstances of wealth or health; having plenty or being in need; being content or discontent; being physically capable or physically challenged; if one is happy or depressed. The “quality” of one’s life is very subjective and relative because it is usually rooted in personal “desire.” Aristotle is quoted as saying: “It is the nature of desire not to be satisfied, and most human beings live only for the

gratification of it.” (Curtis, Brent; Eldredge, John. The Sacred Romance: Drawing Closer to the Heart of God (p. 123). Thomas Nelson.) Thus, your “quality of life” may appear very lacking—even horrible—in the wake of unfulfilled desires while, at the same time, you may basking in many blessings.

While there are circumstances outside of your control which can affect your quality of life, much of the time it is affected by your choices made in the midst of your desires. The circumstances of God’s people after 597 BC were not the most desirable as they were either living exiled in Babylon from their homeland and temple in Jerusalem or living under Babylonian oppression in Jerusalem. The reason for such poor “quality of life?” Their continual choices which cut them off from a proper relationship with the LORD. Choices such as their refusal to repent with the desire to live in obedience to Yahweh; worshiping other gods (i.e. idolatry); pursuing selfish sinful pleasures—all brought the LORD’s punishment upon them in His fatherly love and desire for them to be reconciled to Himself again.

In our text Ezekiel proclaimed a message of the LORD’s deliverance for His people who were feeling hopeless and “dead” by the use of a picture of a *valley . . . full of bones* which were *very dry*. Through instructions received in this vision Ezekiel watched as the LORD formed these dry, dead bones into living, breathing people by His Holy Spirit. (cf. Ezekiel 37:1-10) In verse 11 of our text Yahweh told Ezekiel *these bones*

represented *the whole house of Israel*. Behold, they say, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.” In other words, His people were **spiritually** all “dried up,” feeling without hope because of Yahweh’s disciplining action in their lives. This action had been described through Moses in Deuteronomy 32:39 → The LORD says: See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god beside Me; ***I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand.*** This is why these bones are also described as the bone of people who have been *slain* (cf. Ezekiel 37:9)—slain by Yahweh.

This “strange work” (cf. Isaiah 28:21) of Yahweh’s, where He needs to affect your “quality of life” adversely in order to break your rebellious sinful nature, will make you feel all dried up spiritually. It is no picnic to live fighting God in your life, feeling anger and guilt all the time. It is filled with satanic delusion, thinking you’re in control while living out of control. It leaves you despairing not only of your eternal soul but of life itself. In such a state the devil gets a “foothold” and strives to tell you that you’re hopeless when actually you’re helpless. Through such “captivity” the LORD kills our sinfully arrogant idolatrous rebellion, bringing us to repentance, in order to bring us back to life in perfect relationship with Himself again!

Notice the LORD allows you to be all dried up spiritually so that **He**

can fill you with new life through confession and absolution! Many people live as “dead” people because they either lack the life-giving presence and power of the Holy Spirit in their lives in unbelief or they are Christians resisting the Holy Spirit by refusing to live in obedience to the LORD and His Word. Romans 8:5-8 contrasts the two different ways of living: *Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Thus, bringing new life from death is totally Yahweh’s doing, as expressed throughout the verses of our text. The words *I will* are reinforced in six phrases. It is a picture of spiritual resurrection which also looks forward to the ultimate fulfillment in the resurrection of our bodies on the Last Day! In Verses 12-13 the LORD promises: *Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O My people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O My people. Your forgiveness of sins . . . your eternal salvation . . . your relationship with Jesus . . . your new “quality of life” spiritually . . . are all yours because of the LORD’s doing!*

How does this happen? He says in verse 14 of our text: ***I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall live.*** As the LORD gives us His Life-giving Spirit, we trust completely in His Will for our lives as revealed in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ for eternal life (i.e. justification) **and** we are empowered to live life in obedience to His Will now (i.e. sanctification). When He says *you shall live* He's not just talking about eternal life. He's also talking about living life in obedience to Him each and every day. This is what it means to *know* that He is Yahweh. Thus, we will not live as dead people, all dried up spiritually.

The Holy Spirit you received in your baptism empowers you to live daily as your faith is nourished through God's Word. This is why staying connected to God's Word is so vital. Notice in this vision Ezekiel was instructed to *prophesy*—to speak *the word of the LORD*—to the bones and the breath to resurrect them to life as the Holy Spirit worked through that Word. Remember . . . the reason God's people in our text ended up in a condition of hopelessness and spiritual deadness was because they refused to depend upon and trust God's Word in the first place. According to Hebrews 4:12, God's Word *is living and active* as the Holy Spirit works through it to create a new life of faith and good works. Jesus spoke of the work of *the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father would send in His name* as the One Who *will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.* (cf. John 14:26) Resisting God's

Word is resisting the Holy Spirit and visa versa. It is vital to hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest God's Word so the Holy Spirit can perform His work in and through you!

Oh . . . by the way, God's people did experience a partial fulfillment of this promise in our text as the Holy Spirit worked repentance and faith in their lives. His promise to place them in their own land happened when Cyrus, king of Persia, freed the Israelites and they rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple under Ezra and Nehemiah in 538 BC. However, that historical physical fulfillment was evidence of Yahweh's steadfast love for His sinful people and His faithfulness to His promise of the spiritual rebirth that took place in their hearts through repentance and faith. Thus, their "restoration" actually took place before they came back to their homeland as the Holy Spirit breathed new life into them already in Babylon.

When God speaks His Word of promise to you, depend upon the Holy Spirit's working obedience to His Word in your daily life. He wants you to live—not be spiritually dried up. Your life will be filled with a different "quality" with a new perspective given by the Holy Spirit. It will be filled with the desire to be obedient to the Word of God as He gives the empowering Spirit to do so. When you fall into disobedience He continues to give you the empowering Spirit to convict you of your sin and to bring you to confession so that you receive absolution and new

life in Christ. He also gives you the faith to confess in the words of Philippians 3:20-21 → *Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself. Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.