

Title: Why Tell Dead Sinners to Hear?

Scripture: Ezekiel 37: 1-14

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**Ezekiel 37: 1: The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, 2: And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were very many in the open valley*; and, lo, *they were very dry*. 3: And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.**

In the immediate context, it speaks of the resurrection of the whole house of Israel out of Babylonian captivity, when they would once again be delivered to their own land in the days of Cyrus. (v11-14)

Prophetically, it speaks of when Christ came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel first—he called out his disciples and began calling his elect in Israel. He called a great multitude at Pentecost, even more later on. Then turned to his elect Israel among the Gentiles. Christ makes Jew and Gentile elect one as he did the two branches of Israel when he called them out of temporal bondage. He shall not finish until all Israel—Jew and Gentile—are called and made one in him.

But what we will focus on today is my favorite application and that is how each of God's elect are regenerated in the new birth through the preaching of the gospel.

Several times recently, as I was preaching, this passage came to my mind. When I am preaching, declaring sinners are born dead in trespasses and in sins unable to give themselves life, declaring they are nable to make themselves believe on Christ, I often wonder if those who are lost are saying to themselves, "Why then do you call on me to hear, repent and believe if I am dead and unable to do it?"

**Subject:** Why Tell Dead Sinners to Hear?

**Proposition:** The reason we preach and call dead sinners to hear the word of the Lord is because God commands it and God promises that as we preach his works, God shall cause his elect to live and know him.

## **GOD SENDS HIS PREACHER**

First, understand that God sends his preacher to his people—**Ezekiel 37: 1: The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones...**

When hearing the truth that God saves his people through the preaching of the gospel some often ask, "Well what if a sinner is in some remote place unable to get to where the gospel is preached? Or what if the sinner dies before they hear the gospel." God is sovereign over heaven and earth. A sparrow does not fall to the ground without his consent. A hair of your head does not fall without his permission. The kings heart is in his hand. (Mt 10: 29-30; Pro 21: 1)

It is the hand of the LORD who sends God's true preacher to God's people—"The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD..." And God sends his preacher exactly where he will have him to go, because God knows where his people are—"...and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones..."

Brethren, wonder how many valleys there were in that land. Yet, the LORD set Ezekiel down in the midst of this valley. Paul attempted to go to Asia to preach but was forbidden of the Holy Spirit. When he tried to go

to Bithynia, the Spirit suffered him not. But the Spirit sent him to Macedonia where he found Lydia by a riverside. (Acts 16: 6-15)

When he received opposition at Corinth, Paul wondered if he should depart—“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.” (Acts 18: 9-10)

Philip was led of the Spirit down the old Gaza highway out in the middle of nowhere in the desert. There God made his path cross with the Ethiopian eunuch. “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” (Acts 8: 29) He preached the gospel to him and God saved the Eunuch.

You see cases where one preacher just seems like the obvious preacher for a particular church. God may send that preacher to another country and bring a preacher from another land to that church. It is God who sends his preacher and sets him down in the valley where God will have him to be.

### **GOD PREPARES HIS PREACHER**

The Lord prepares his preacher by making his preacher know the power is not of us but of God—**Ezekiel 37: 2: [the LORD] caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.* 3: And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?**

God caused Ezekiel to become well-acquainted with these bones—to pass by them round about. It looked like a battle had taken place in this valley. The bones were separated, scattered round about. “Lo, they were very dry”—bleached white; dead for a long time. God made Ezekiel walk around awhile and see just how dead, dry and scattered those bones were.

A long time ago Satan entered the garden and Adam disobeyed God and killed the whole human race. We all were scattered, separated from God, scattered round about separated from each other. Adam’s race has been dead a long time.

God makes his preacher become acquainted with what men are by nature. We must know that every sinner in this world comes into this world that same way: no spiritual life, no ability to give ourselves life, no will to have life.

“There is none righteous, none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God, none that doeth good, no, not one!” (Rom. 3:10-12).

“(In my flesh) dwelleth no good thing!” (Rom. 7:18).

“They that are in the flesh cannot please God!” (Rom. 8:8).

Brethren, until a preacher learns this about Adam’s race he cannot be God’s preacher. “Wrong on the fall, wrong on it all!” What a man thinks happened in the garden determines what a man preaches. Until a man knows sinners are D.E.A.D in trespasses and sins, he will use some other means to make converts for himself.

But here is the spirit God gives his true preachers—“And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?” Judging by the appearance, no! Judging by Ezekiel’s inability to give them life, no! But listen to Ezekiel’s answer—**Ezekiel 37: 3...And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.**

Before Ezekiel was used of God in this valley, he was made to lay down all his vain understanding at God's feet and say, "LORD, thou knowest." And before God will use his preacher to declare his gospel, he will make him know "We are [not] sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor 3: 5) "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor 4: 7)

But I will tell you this, brethren, the greatest peace comes in knowing that even though this passes all my understanding and my ability, "O LORD God thou knowest."

## **GOD CHARGES HIS PREACHER TO PREACH**

First, God charges his preacher to preach the word of the Lord—**Ezekiel 37: 4: Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.**

He said, Preach to these bones and tell them to do to do what they are utterly incapable of doing, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD." Think how foolish this appears to the world. These bones are dead, dry bones. They have no life in them. They have no ears to hear. Why tell dead, God-hating, unwilling, unable, depraved sinners, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD?"

This is why I am preaching this to you now. Several times lately as I have preached from this pulpit, I told you, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be." Then I said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." I see this one or that one give me a blank stare as if to say, "Why do you tell me to do what you just told me I can't do?" Here is the answer. It is because the LORD said, "Prophesy unto these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD."

Here is the message I preach every time I stand here—**Ezekiel 37: 5: Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones.**" I preach "Thus saith the Lord God unto dry dead sinners." I preach to you what God says to sinners like you and me.

I preach the glorious doctrine of FREE WILL every time I stand here—**Ezekiel 36: 5: Thus saith the LORD God...Behold, I will...cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6: And I will lay sinews upon you, and [I] will bring up flesh upon you, and [I will] cover you with skin, and [I will] put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.**

You and I don't have a free will—God's will is the only will that is free. How do you think you have a will to give yourself life when God says, "I will cause breath to enter you and ye shall live." A sinner will hate this God but when God performs his will upon you, God says then "Ye shall know that I am the LORD."

This is the gospel by which he gives life to dead sinners. It is the declaration of God's will and works, not man's will and works—God says, "I will and ye shall; I will and ye shall!" Like sinews, God constrains us with Christ's love for his people because Christ made us righteous by shedding his own blood, God covers his child in the righteousness of Christ. God says this is how "ye shall live and ye shall know that I am the LORD!"

## **GOD CHARGES HIS PREACHER TO PRAY**

The second charge God gives his preacher is to pray—**Ezekiel 37: 7: So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. 8: And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in them. 9: Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto**

**the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.**

God commands his preacher to not only preach but to pray for the Holy Spirit to come, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

John 3: 5: Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Brethren, notice he says pray to the spirit saying, “Thus saith the LORD God, Come.” We have the LORD’s promise that he will send the Holy Spirit and give his people a new heart. He says pray to the Spirit saying, “Thus saith the LORD God, Come.”

Also, by commanding us to pray, he shows he will have his preacher live in constant dependence upon the Spirit of God to do the work. This is why Peter said, “We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6: 4)

### **GOD’S EFFECTUAL GRACE**

Through the means of gospel preaching and pray—utter dependence upon God—God comes and works effectually in irresistible grace—**Ezekiel 37: 10: So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.**

**Illustration:** Lazarus come forth!

Why did the LORD allow sin to enter and death by sin? It is because when he overcomes death by his power, when he gives his elect—his whole spiritual house of Israel life, when he makes you see you are cut off and have no hope in yourself, when he you raises you up by his free grace and brings you into your own land—heavenly Jerusalem, Mt. Zion, plants you in his church—then you shall know the great I AM and praise him!

**Ezekiel 37: 11: 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. 12: Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13: And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, 14: And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the LORD.**

We must do only these two things: preach thus saith the LORD and pray for the Spirit to bless the word. Christ says,

John 5: 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

**“Then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the LORD.”**

**Amen!**

