

Ezekiel's Valley of Dry Bones - Part 4

by Steve Evans

The sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit and to engage in spiritual warfare to demolish strongholds and to be empowered by God.

Duration: 36:30

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:5

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by sharing testimonies of individuals who have experienced transformation through their faith in Jesus Christ. He then proceeds to ask four individuals a series of questions about their repentance, belief in God, commitment to reading the Bible and prayer, participation in the church community, and confession of Christ. The speaker emphasizes the importance of having the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance in one's life. He also highlights the need for believers to be actively engaged in spiritual warfare and not be complacent or irrelevant. The sermon concludes with a call to present one's body to the Lord and allow the Holy Spirit to work through them.

Transcript

Let me just mention one other thing. I think it's tomorrow that Pearl and Gwynne are celebrating their 63rd wedding anniversary. Am I right? 63 years.

Seems just like yesterday, Gwynne, yeah? God bless you, let's give them a congratulation. Lord's been good, 63 years. Well, let's look now then at the, still on the Valley of Dry Bones, this is the fourth time we've looked at this chapter in Ezekiel 37, and Di read those words to us, that Ezekiel had been obedient and he prophesied as the Lord told him, and the bodies were formed out of bones, scattered bones, and bone came to bone, we've looked at that, tendons appeared over them, flesh came upon them, skin covered them, you know, something quite remarkable had happened, and this was the people of God, these were the people of God.

Something had happened, something remarkable had happened, there had been re-formation, if you like, bodies had appeared out of bones, but there was still something missing. There was no breath in them, it says in that verse that we read, in verse, the end of verse 8, the latter part, but there was no breath in them. And very often when we look at our own lives, and church life as well, we find that we haven't got, as we should have, the breath in us, I mean the breath of God.

We sing, wonderful hymn, breathe on me, breath of God, fill me with life anew, and this is where it comes from, it comes from this passage here, breathe on me, breath of God, fill me with life anew, that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do, and so on. We sing it, but so often perhaps the reality of it doesn't come to us, or not as it should, because a body can look okay on the outside, a body can look complete on the outside, but a body without breath in it, is a corpse. You know what I mean? Probably most of us have seen a dead body at one time or another, and not always a pleasant experience, but you see there the the form of the body, and we seem to identify my father, he died in a, going to church one night in the car, he had a heart attack, I had to go the next morning identify him, and he looked the same, there's no breath, and at that moment I knew he was really dead, it was a strange experience, he didn't respond to me in any way.

A body without breath you see, is a corpse. The Bible in the New Testament tells us about Christians, Paul writes about them, they weren't the best type that he was writing about, he said this about them, they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power of it, they deny its power, you see that can be a form without power, a form of God, it looks okay, if you've got the form, you've got the body, the outward look you know, but they deny its power, the power of godliness, it's religion without a real burning experience of Christ, and how many believers when you've read their stories, you know their biographies down through the ages, have come to that place where they say I need to know God's power in my life, in a very real way, I need to know the breath of God, now why do they say that? I dare to say that every person that God has ever blessed and mightily used in his service has come sooner or later to that point. Why have they come to that place? It's because they know that there's dryness in their lives, they know there's deadness in their life, just like these bones in this story here, they know that there's an element of formality, you know, outward show, but they're without, they're lacking something of the power, the life, the breath from heaven that God promises.

It's just like the children of Israel, you remember the incident in the Old Testament, they came out of Egypt with a mighty deliverance from God, and we are told that they were brought out so that they might be brought in to the land of Canaan, but for 40 years they were in the wilderness, and we are told in the New Testament in Hebrews that they did not enter into the land because of unbelief, they didn't get to where God want that generation, they didn't get to where God wanted them to be, they're in the wilderness, all of their Christian lives, except for two, Joshua and Caleb, they went in, and they were the believers amongst them, they were the anointed ones, but when you read these biographies of great Christians, you find that they've been thirsting for more of God, they've been crying out for reality, for the breath of heaven, for the Spirit's fullness, term it whichever way you like, and they've come to believe, and I believe, and I'm sure you believe, that it's God's will for us to know the fullness of the Holy Spirit, Christ has died for this, Jesus has promised the Holy Spirit in his fullness to every believer, he talks about the Holy Spirit being in our lives like a river of living water overflowing, he tells the woman at Samaria the water that I shall give him, he's talking about the Spirit, the water that I shall give you, or him or her, will be in him or her, like a river of living water, you'll never thirst again, you know we sometimes sing, don't we, like a mighty army moves the Church of God, the Honored Christian Soldiers, that him?

Like a mighty army moves the Church of God, you've probably seen the the corruption of that song, somebody wrote, like a mighty tortoise moves the Church of God, and it goes on to say, we are not divided, all one body, we, and it says that the other way around, you know, we are so divided, rent apart by citizens and all this, which isn't it, and very very often that's so true, but what God had in mind here, when he dealt with Ezekiel and his people, is that the Church of God, the bones of Israel if you like, would

become a mighty army in his service, he wanted them to live and know the power of the breath of God in them, and when we read on it says they stood on their feet a mighty, a vast army, you know we can't move at all without the breath of the Spirit, everything in the New Testament depends upon the empowering of the Holy Spirit, everything, the life and ministry of Jesus did, he was anointed as I've said many times after Jordan when he was baptized, by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and Jesus's life was mightily empowered, he went about doing good we're told in Acts, and healing all would be oppressed by the devil, when did it start?

I know he was already divine, I know he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, I know he had the Spirit, but there came a time in the life of Jesus when he knew the anointing and the appointing of the Holy Spirit and God upon him, because the first thing he said when he preached was this, after that experience the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me and he knew it, he died through the Spirit, we are told who through the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit offered himself, he was raised from the dead in the power of the Holy Spirit as I read from Romans, the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, his birth was in the Holy Spirit, Mary was anointed and overpowered by the Holy Spirit, that's not the right word we know what I mean, and she conceived Christ through the Holy Spirit, Joseph and all the others around at that time, they also prophesied and spoken or anointed by the Holy Spirit, something was happening and so it has ever been in the Christian Church, people have been anointed by God, sought God, men, women, teenagers, older folk, you might have heard of Pastor C, he was a Chinese scholar, C-H-S-I, the book called Pastor C is in the bookshop there, he was an opium addict as well as being a great Confucian scholar and he was wonderfully converted, but sometime after his conversion, he realized that there was more to be had, he says this about him in that book, in thought and prayer over the Word of God, Pastor C had learned that there is a baptism of the Spirit, different from the regeneration of the soul at his conversion, alone at night in his home, he waited upon God and heaven itself one night seemed open over that little room, the promise for him was fulfilled, I will pour my spirit upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground, a wonderful outpouring of the Holy Ghost took place, life divine and more abundant, life that is joy, light, victory and love, triumphing over self as well as sin, flooded his soul, he records in his diary, in his journal, three times that night he records the Holy Spirit descended, filling and overflowing my heart, this was way before the Pentecostal period, this was back in the 1800s, but this was a man and you can read the book I've got at home is a previous edition of Pastor C and he's got a forward recommended by Dr.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, following that experience of the anointing of God, the breath of God coming upon him, a wonderful ministry followed for that man, conversions took place, he spoke to the churches were formed all over that part of China, people were healed, people were delivered from evil powers, from demons, a whole breath of God if you like, breathed over, blew over a whole area of China, we see it today a century and a half later in the terrific phenomenal growth of the church in China, not just through his heritage but many others who experienced the same thing.

I'm told, I've told you this before, 30,000 people today in China would come to faith, today and every day, there's over a thousand an hour, I know it's a big country, a huge population but there's a wonderful move of the Spirit, the Spirit of God is breathing upon that land and we need the breath of God, brothers and sisters, upon us and within us.

I want to urge you, ask him for more of the Holy Spirit, as a believer you know you have the Holy Spirit, I have the Holy Spirit but we can ask him for more, according to his promise and he hasn't died, Christ has not died for us to be full of self but to be full of himself, that's why Christ is, that's the purpose, that's why

Paul used to write that I pray that Christ might be formed in you, it's the Holy Spirit, we need the breath of God, you know without this churches and individuals are just like these people in this passage, they look as if they're alive but there is no breath in them, having a form of godliness but not knowing its power, you see we can become satisfied without knowing the power of God, that's the great danger isn't it, in any of our churches or not on our lives, we

can be satisfied with what we've got and we haven't got it all, we need to know the power of God in all its fullness, there's a TV program which I've watched once or twice from America, it's called the hour of power, I like the title in a sense but you know we need more than an hour of power, we need as Paul said be constantly filled with the spirit, an hour a week isn't enough for God to do his work in our lives, an hour a week or two hours a week or one meeting a week or two meetings a week or three meetings a week isn't what God is looking for, Christ's spirit is for 24-7 every hour of every day and every night that we are yielded to him, so the Holy Spirit lives in us, you know it almost almost sounds blasphemy to say it you know but God is in us, that's what the Bible tells us,

Christ in you says Paul, the hope of glory, little song we sing sometimes is this isn't it, it is no secret what God can do, what he's done for others, he'll do for you, believe that, do you believe he might not use you like he used Pastor C, but you believe that what God has done for others in filling their lives with the Holy Spirit with Christ, he can do for you, you can be filled with Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, well that's my first point that these people, these bodies needed breath, now the second point is this, is that God's people as a result of that are to be a fighting force, they stood on their feet, at the end of verse 10 it says a vast army, a restored army, remember these bones all lying down there in the valley all over the place had been an army once, they'd been

defeated, the corpses had rotted and only the bones were left, they'd been scattered around by the wild animals who devoured them and so on, that's all it was left and here they come back to life, the spirit and the breath of God comes into them now and they stand on their feet we are told, a vast army, God has them back where they should be, you see Ezekiel has prophesied in faith to these lifeless bones and breath entered them we are told, they came to life, stood on their feet, a vast army, do you know when Evan Roberts went back from this area from Newcastle Emlyn in the 1904-05 revival he went back to Lougha where he was from near Llanelli and he got the young people in the in the vestry of the church there, some of you been there, I've been there once and he had them pray, now Evan

Roberts had been anointed by God himself just up the road here in Blaenarnechers you know, he prayed Lord bend me, bend me, break me, God had dealt with him and he went to these young people they were and he said that they needed the Holy Spirit, he told them, they believed in a sense you know but they needed more, he said pray this prayer, send the Spirit for Jesus Christ's sake, one after the other around the room, around that little vestry, that's how this revival got going, most of them prayed out loud, some of them prayed silently and they passed on in chain prayer, after they had finished some were being moved, he said pray this now he says, send the Spirit now, more powerfully for Jesus Christ's sake, before long you know those people were very much aware that the breath of the

Spirit of God had come upon them, young people, you read this about it, all were moved powerfully in their spirits and some were lying on the ground crying for mercy and saying this, no more Lord Jesus or we die, no more, we haven't prayed that have we, we are praying Lord more, send the Spirit now more powerfully, that's what we need to pray, I'm so grateful for every touch of the Spirit of God we've known in this place, in our prayer meetings and times together, you know it would be great if the time came where we'd be

saying no more Lord, we're going to die, if the Spirit moves powerfully upon us like this, you see the Spirit had come to Lachah and to Wales at that time, Jesus says when he comes great things will happen, but here with Ezekiel as he prophesied the Spirit comes, the

breath of God comes, says three things that then happened, first of all they came to life, isn't it wonderful to see life in churches, I'm so glad when I see life here in Mount Zion, in your singing, in your worshipping, in everything that we do, we need more but it's so great to see it, you go to some places, some churches, there's no life at all, it's so sad, it's like being in the midst of the dry bones, but there they are, they came to life we are told, then they did something else, they stood up on their feet, a vast army, so they were alive, they were standing and they were ready to fight, they were ready for battle, now it's a tragedy isn't it, when you go to churches or whatever and you feel there's a sense of deadness, you feel that people not standing and are certainly not in

the fight, God's people in name at least have become a pushover, an irrelevance, something from a battle in the past that happened many years ago, but not anymore, not when the spirit comes, these bones have suddenly become a fighting force again, look out Israel, look out the nations around, God's army is on the move, you see what's happened, the spirit has got a body he can use, that's all he wants, the spirit needs your body, individually I mean to start with, Paul says in Romans 12, present your bodies to the Lord, spirits live in bodies in our world, we are not disembodied spirits, my spirit lives in me and the Holy Spirit wants to live in our bodies, but there's another sense in this in which this happens, the Holy Spirit wants the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit wants to live in

fullness in the body of Christ, then he can use us, then the spirit can make the body function when we're all holding the head, then we're fighting the Lord's battles, isn't it a tragedy when Christians are not fighting the Lord's battles, they're fighting the wrong battles, they're fighting other Christians, it happens sometimes, fighting about forms of worship, old or new, ancient or modern, secondary theological beliefs and they're using the wrong weapons to do this, they're scheming, there's an uncontrolled tongue at work, this is the flesh, Paul says be careful, he says we do that, don't bite each other because you're going to devour each other, why do we do this, it's because we're not being led by the Spirit, the breath of God is missing, there's a lovely verse in Scripture which

says this, the battle is the Lord's, but there's a battle, that is spiritual warfare and perhaps most of us Christians don't know much about this, but Paul did, he told us, listen he said, there are principalities, there are powers, there are rulers of darkness, we are there to demolish these strongholds, we have to be wrestling and struggling and the weapons of our warfare he said are not carnal and fleshly, they're of God, what's he talking about in all of that, he's talking about the spiritual battle that this army needs to fight, so it was in Ezekiel's time, how often scheming has taken place of fighting the Lord's battles in the Lord's way, how often have you heard people say, oh he said this or she said that and I said, that's the flesh, that's gossiping, that's personality clashes

and the wrong sort of battle, that's character assassination, we are not immune to these things and the world laughs and sneers and says, see how those Christians hate one another, and hell laughs and heaven weeps, the Church of Jesus Christ devours itself, weakens itself, brothers and sisters we got a fight on our hands, but let's make sure we're fighting the right battle, with the right enemy, for the glory of God in the Holy Spirit, it's spiritual warfare but he's fighting in the spirit, not in the flesh, Christ came to fight a battle, he said I've come to destroy the works of the devil, let me tell you this, we fight mainly on our knees, there's one thing I've had to learn, I'm still learning, I still have to learn it, it's that battles are won on

your knees, not in any, not anywhere

else, who sent me, somebody sent me just, just yesterday, this week, I think it was, I think it was Fred Hoddinott, he's not here today, he said this, God answers knee mail, that was good, God answers knee mail, I'd be reading the biography of Derek Prince, a great man of God who's died now, and he spent one day every week of his life in prayer and fasting, on special occasions he fasted for 21 days, you're beginning to faint at the thought, and I am, but God used him mightily, let me compare him with General Eisenhower, when he was President of the United States, just following World War two, and there's a great need for them, for the nation to seek God, he called the day of prayer and fasting, well done President Eisenhower, and he went and played golf all day, who will get the reward

in heaven, it'll be Derek Prince, it won't be the General Eisenhower's, it'll be the people who realize that God answers knee mail.

Let me finish with this third point, following this battle, these people are back in the land of blessing, the end of verse 12 it says this, I will bring you back to the land of Israel, I will bring you back to the land of Israel, you see it's God telling Ezekiel and these, this army if you like, that he's going to restore everything, he's going to get them back to blessing, isn't that wonderful? You see all of this is happening so that God can bless, get you back to the land of blessing, he says I'll bring you out of the graves, I'm gonna bring you out of the graveyard and into the land of blessing, there's a lovely picture in the New Testament, Lazarus he died, four days dead, Jesus says Lazarus come forth, and he did, then he says he was bound hand and foot with a cloth around his face, he wasn't completely free you see, he had seen the mighty work of God but there's more to come, Jesus said take off the grave clothes and let him go. I wonder how many of us believers are still carrying around the bondage of death, the marks of death still about us, not fully released from the grave of sin and all that it means. The marks of death still upon us, dead works, all these things, all my people says God in verse 12, I am going to open your graves, I'm gonna bring you out of that situation you're in, however deep your grave, however imprisoning it might be, however final it might seem and doesn't the grave seem final, God will bring us out of it, that's the promise to the people and I will not just bring you out of the grave, I'll bring you back to the land of Israel, I will put, here it is, my spirit in you and you will live.

I want to finish with five questions, say amen to these quietly or out loud, it's up to you. Is this what we need? Is this what God can do? Is this what God wants to do? Now it gets more difficult, is this what God will do? This is where faith comes in, this is where we take the promises, the pattern, the pictures of what we have in the Old Testament for us, for our day, they're not just there as a history book. Let me ask the final question, is this what God will do for you? I believe he will, you know, there's no one here he's not interested in, I believe God will, what God has done for others, he'll do for you, let's pray.

Lord we thank you for what Ezekiel did when your hand was upon him, how he preached and prophesied, the mighty revival took place, your spirit breathed upon those bones and breath came into those bodies and your people became a mighty army alive and standing for you, you opened the graves and brought them out and brought them into the place of blessing. Lord you know we want to be there, we have said now as we have responded to you that we believe that not only can you do this but that you will do this, you will do this also for us, for me, because of Jesus and for him to be glorified. So Holy Spirit we pray, breathe upon us, fill our empty and dry lives by faith in Jesus Christ, live in us we pray and may this scripture come to life in our lives, in our fellowship, in our land for your glory.

Amen. Now we've got two things that are going to happen now, we're going to have, we're going to remember the Lord's death as we come around the table but just before that we're going to welcome some new folk, four people here into the membership of the church. So we'll sing the first verse in quodas of King of my life I crown thee now and I'll ask those four people then to join us here on the front seat.

King of my life I crown thee now, thine shall the glory be, lest I forget thy thorn crowned brow, lead me to Calvary. Lest I forget thy love for me, lead me to Calvary. Let's pause there, we'll carry on singing.

Please take your seats. Well it's my privilege and pleasure to welcome into membership Ken and Sandra Gilbert, Barry Denton here and Vince Jones. You know probably most of their stories or their testimonies, two here have been baptised in recent months and you heard their testimonies then of how they've come to faith and a renewed faith perhaps in Jesus Christ and have taken the, gone through the waters of baptism as a sign of what they have experienced and what they believe.

Sandra and Ken from the London area and have got quite interesting stories, perhaps they'll be able to tell you in fuller detail at some other time. I was reading Ken's grandfather's story, converted in Wormwood scrubs in London. He looks like a criminal doesn't he? But it's a wonderful testimony and from there the family were blessed and Ken I believe brought up or in contact with the London City Mission in his younger days and Sandra as well and her story as well is quite a lovely one.

They both have faith in Jesus Christ as do the four here now before me. So I'll just ask some questions to the four of you, you can respond as four by saying I do or I do with his help sometimes and I'll say these questions. I ask you before God and this congregation, have you repented of your sins, renounced all evil and turned to Christ? We have, yeah.

Do you believe in God your Heavenly Father, in Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour of your life and in the Holy Spirit your helper and guide? Do you promise to be faithful to Christ and to seek his will for you through reading the Bible and through prayer? Do you promise to join in the fellowship of this church, to share in its work and worship and to give of your time, talents and money for Christ's work here and in the world? Do you promise to confess Christ before others, to serve him in your daily life and to walk with his help always in his way? May the Lord bless you and enable you faithfully to keep these promises. Can I address the congregation now? This isn't a marriage service by the way. I'm using the book which is quite helpful and quite nice.

I don't normally but I will today. Brothers and sisters in Christ, having heard the profession of faith of these friends and the promises made by them, let us stand to signify that we welcome them into the full privileges and membership of the church here at Mount Zion. Let us uphold them in our prayers.

We need to pray for them and support them in every way that they may grow in grace because we're not the finished article yet are we? We need to grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God. You haven't come into a perfect church with perfect members, perfect officers and a perfect pastor. Not by a long, long way.

You probably know that by now anyway. But we welcome you in the name of Jesus Christ to his body here. The God of all grace who has called you to the Christian life and faith, confirm and strengthen you with the Holy Spirit and keep you faithful to Christ all the days of your life.

If you could just shake my hand as I welcome you on behalf of the fellowship into the church membership here. Oh sorry Ken, he's had an operation on his hand. I extend to you on behalf of the fellowship here at Mount Zion, the right hand of fellowship as a sign of your acceptance by this congregation into the full privileges and responsibilities of members of the church here of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you real peace for his glory.

Amen. Please be seated.

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