

Ezekiel 37

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[0 : 00] Can we read another passage now as we find it in the New Testament? This is in Paul's letter to the Ephesians and chapter 6. Paul's letter to the Ephesians chapter 6 and reading from verse 10.

Ephesians chapter 6 reading from verse 10. The passage where we read of the armor of God. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground. And after you have done everything, to stand.

[1 : 10] Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from this gospel of peace.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me, so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.

Pray that I should declare it fearlessly, as I should. Pray that I should say, that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Lord.

[2 : 39] Lord Jesus Christ, with an undying love. Amen. And may the Lord add his blessing to that reading of his portion of his word. We'll sing again this time in the Scottish Psalter version of Psalm 95, which you'll find on page 357 of the blue book, Psalm 95.

We'll sing from the beginning of this psalm, and we'll sing to the verse marked 6, 5 stanzas.

O come, let us sing to the Lord. Come, let us everyone a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation. Let us, before his presence come, with praise and thankful voice, let us sing psalms to him with grace, and make a joyful noise.

The tune is Gainsborough, and we'll sing these verses to God's praise. O come, let us sing to the Lord. Now, before we turn our minds to these passages of God's word, can we have a short word of prayer together?

Our gracious Lord, we have your word open to us. At this time, your Bible is open before us, and we are about to think of what your word speaks to us.

[3 : 55] We pray that you would open our hearts and minds and ears to hear what you would have to speak to us. Guide us in our thoughts. Guide us in our hearts.

But most of all, guide us towards yourself, we pray, so that we would hear what you would have to say to us. And make use of it. For we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. The Valley of Dry Bones. It's a very solemn and awful vision that we have before us here.

Have you ever seen dead bones yourself? Have you ever seen dead bodies? Terrible sight.

Something that's awful to behold.

Well, this is what we have before us. Just now, in this vision, in this image that Ezekiel describes for us. And the horror of it is amplified by the magnitude of the destruction before us.

[5 : 03] We have here a valley of death. A valley where dead bodies are laying. Bones are laying. An awful picture.

An awful picture. That it was the hand of the Lord that was upon Ezekiel that brought him out by the Spirit and set him down in the middle of the valley.

And he led him to and fro. And I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley. And God asks the question. Can he live? Can these bones live?

Can these bones live? Well, this morning, we were at the beginning of Ezekiel's ministry to the people of Israel in exile. And here we have a picture that God explains to us is a picture of the state of the people of Israel.

This picture describes the spiritual condition of the people of Israel. The God's people have turned their backs on the way of God.

[6 : 12] They have decided they are going to follow their own way. They may hold some ceremonial representation of what God wants them to do.

But spiritually, in their hearts of hearts, they had turned to their own way and had left the way of God.

And although they were warned about it, they decided that they were going to do what they wanted to do themselves. They were a rebellious, stubborn, and awkward people.

Do we know any rebellious, stubborn, awkward people? Do you know what it's like when you're dealing with somebody that's stubborn, that's awkward, that's a pain of the highest order?

Well, spiritually, the people of God were in this state. And this picture we have here is a picture of the people of God as God saw them.

[7 : 22] And he asked Ezekiel, can these bones live? Can these bones live? O Sovereign Lord, you alone know. So he says something to Ezekiel, he says, Ezekiel, prophesy, speak my words to these bones.

And you think to yourself, well, I'm going to speak what God says for me to speak. And I'm going to speak to these bones. I know I can't make dead bones live. You know that if you spoke to dead bones, you can't make any difference there.

It sounds like a nonsense thing to do. Because these bones are a simile of the spiritual death that was afflicting the people of Israel.

But what happens when the prophecy of God is spread out, is given to these dead bones? Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

This is what the Sovereign Lord says. I will attach tendons to you. Make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin. I will put breath in you and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

[8 : 40] After all the warnings, after all the preaching and teaching of Ezekiel over these five years, we have here a picture of the dried remnants of Israel.

They were undone. They were in fear. They were in anguish. They had turned their backs on the Lord and the Lord's judgment had come upon them.

The temple had been demolished. Everything that represented to them their strength in Israel had been overrun by the heathen nations. And we sang that psalm this morning of the people of Zion in exile singing to the Lord.

God was angry with Israel and he removed them from his presence. And they were dead. They were spiritually dead. A people without hope. Totally demoralized.

Lost. In a foreign land. In a land that was alien to them. And that was antagonistic to their religion.

[9 : 46] To their way of life. As it was traditionally lived by the children of Israel. And there Ezekiel wasn't just left up there.

He was in amongst them. He was led two and four. To see the magnitude of the spiritual death. Of the death that was part of and partial of the children of Israel at that time.

He led me back and forth among them. And I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley. Bones that were very dry. And we could say that this picture shows us that death has triumphed. Death reigns. This was Israel. Dead. Cursed. In terms of the Jewish law and the Jewish tradition. Bones and dead bodies were anathema.

They were awful. They were cursed. And this is the state of Israel. And this is the state of the nation of Israel. To whom Ezekiel was challenged to prophesy.

[10 : 47] To preach the word of God. Preach to the Lord. Preach says the Lord to these people. And prophesy and say to them.

This is what the Lord wants you to hear. And this is now the hope. That Ezekiel was able to give them.

Because we have there the sad state of the children of Israel. And here we have the message of God. The salvation that is being offered. To these children of Israel.

Oh my people says the Lord in verse 12. I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them. I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you my people will know that I am the Lord. When I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my spirit in you. And you will live. I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I.

[11 : 46] The Lord have spoken. And I have done it. Declares the Lord. What an image that must have been. When he prophesied to these dead bones.

And he heard the sound of the wind. And he saw the tendons coming. And all the bodies coming together. And eventually they were there ready.

And the breath came in. And the spirit came in. And filled these people with breath. And these bodies became alive again. And they were standing up a strong and valiant army for the Lord. And there we have in the Old Testament. This example to us of what the foolishness of preaching. In our own modern context is surely. Because you look at this situation.

And transpose it into 2006. Take a helicopter and put on spiritual vision.

[12 : 44] And look down on Aberdeen. Look down on the great cities of the United Kingdom. And the towns and the villages of our own land today.

And look down upon every person. That exists in Britain today. And look down on them. The way that the Lord would be able to look down on them. And spiritually discern their conditions.

How many of these people that we would look down upon? Are living. Vibrant. Spiritually alive beings.

So if we could. And go up there. And look down on the city of Aberdeen. How many vibrant living souls are there in Aberdeen?

Praising the Lord of Lords. The King of Kings. Or how many. Have turned their backs on God.

[13 : 44] And are following their own path. And are dead. Spiritually dead. This evening. In exactly the same way as we have here.

The children of Israel described for us. The state of the children of Israel. But there is salvation. There is hope.

And Ezekiel. This young man. 30 to 35 years old. Was given the task. To go and prophesy to these dead bones.

He was going to speak to these dead people. And he was going to show them. What God says. What God is. Saying. Isn't that the role.

That he was given. Speak to these bones. Prophesy to these bones. Speak to them. The words. The message. The gospel. That I am giving you.

[14 : 45] You go and give to them. And we saw there. Him prophesying to these bones. And something started happening. The spirit of God moved.

And these dead bones. Became bodies. And breath entered these bodies. And these bodies became alive again. Well when I read these words.

And I compare and transpose that image. Into the 2006. That we are living in today. And we see. The message of Acts chapter 3.

Repent then. Turn to God. So that your sins may be wiped out. That times of refreshing shall come. Do we not see. The role of ourselves as Christians.

As the church. To speak to these people. Who have turned their backs on God. To say he doesn't exist. He is irrelevant. It is all mythology. Should we not just speak to them.

[15 : 47] These words of Ezekiel. These words of Paul. These words of Christ. And say to them. Salvation is at hand. Because that is.

The good news that Jesus has given us. To share. Among the dead bones. The dead souls. Of people in our communities.

We are. After all. God's ambassadors. We don't have prophets. Among us today. In the way that Ezekiel. Was a prophet. We don't have the apostles.

Among us today. The way. James and John. And the. Eleven. Disciples. We don't have these people. With us today. But we have. In the passage.

That we read. In Ephesians. We have there. A letter. Written by God. To the church. At Ephesus. And we have there.

[16:47] This challenge. To share. Salvation. With dead people. Maybe not. Dead. Physically. Maybe as alive.

Physically. As we are. But people. Who are dead. Spiritually. God. Loved the people. Of this world. So much. That he gave. His only son.

So that. Everyone. Who has faith. In him. Will have eternal life. And never. Really die. John 3. 16. Be ready.

Let the truth. Be like a belt. Around your waist. Let. Let God's justice. Protect you. Like armor. And that. I think. Is the challenge. Of the words.

That we have here. This evening. We see. The horror. Of sin. We see. The horror. Of the spiritual condition. Of people. Around us.

[17:43] But have we become. Inured. To it. Have we become. Blinded. Possibly. To it. Because. When we read. Ezekiel. Do we just relate. And relegate.

That. To the old testament. It's irrelevant. To us. Well. I would say. That it isn't. Because. It's the stark. Image. Of the reality.

Of so many souls. So many people. In our communities. Possibly. Even. In our families. And why not. Ask the question.

To everybody. In here. This evening. Spiritually. With respect. To our relationship. With God. The father. In our souls.

Are we looking. To the Lord. Recognizing. That we're sinners. Recognizing. That he's great. Are we looking. To him. And in recognition.

[18:38] Of our sins. Asking his forgiveness. And in asking. For his forgiveness. Are we committing. Ourselves. To him.

Are we committing. Ourselves. On day to day. Basis. To live our lives. In accordance. To the way. That he wants us. To live our lives. That's a hard question.

For anyone. To ask. And I'm sure. Everybody in here. Who has come. To our saving knowledge. Of God. Who has come. To recognize. Jesus. As that friend.

Of friends. Who has saved me. From my sin. I think most of us. Will say. Well. I'm not doing. A very good job. In that regard. I can't remember. The last time. I prophesied.

To dead bones. I can't remember. The last time. Quite. That I spoke. To somebody. Who has no interest. In the Bible. No interest. In Jesus. And. Asked them. To come and meet.

[19:37] My friend. Jesus. I can't remember. The last time. Maybe I did that. Is that where we are. Maybe. It's a question. And it's a hard one.

To answer. In so many ways. It's hard for us. To take something. That was written. So long ago. Something that people. Look at us.

Being dated. And being. Out of fashion. That. Well. I'm a sophisticated. 21st millennium. Person. Why are you coming to me.

With. This stuff. It's not relevant. But we have. This ministry. As we.

Who are believers. Have received mercy. We. Do not lose heart. We have removed. Renounced. The hidden things. Of shame. And we don't walk. In craftiness.

[20:31] Nor handling. The word of God. Deceitfully. But. By manifestation. Of the truth. Commending. Ourselves. To every man's. Conscience.

In the sight. Of God. And this sword. That we have here. This Bible. This sword. Of the spirit. That we have. We should be. Piercing it.

Into the consciences. Of people. Around us. We have. Lawgivers. In our land. Who are now. Passing laws. That are in total. Disagreement.

With the word. Of God. We are seeing. Laws now. That are totally. Opposite. To what the Bible. Wants. People's. Lives. To be. Whether it is.

Down to. Hedonistic. Lifestyles. Whether it is. Down to. Greed. And the lust. For riches. And money. As opposed to. Looking after. The poor. You look at.

[21:27] The society. We are living in. Today. And compare it. To the life. Of Christ. Himself. When Jesus. Walked in this world. He had very little. He had nothing. That he could say.

He owned himself. Other than the clothes. He stood up in. He had nothing. And of what he had. He shared. He healed. He cared for people.

And then we take this picture. Of Ezekiel. And we see there. The state of the people around him. And we see here. The message of salvation.

That he was giving them. And he. Through the foolishness. Of prophesying. Of prophesying. Was the agent. Through whom.

The spirit worked. Now isn't that an amazing. Position to be in. That you. Could actually. Be the agent. That the holy spirit.

[22 : 24] Uses. To bring life. To somebody. Who's dead. If you could go. And take somebody. Who's dying. To a.

A medic. Or a doctor. Who could cure. That person. If it was within your power. To do so. You would. Unless you're a very hard. Hearted.

Cruel person. You would take that. Sick person. And if it's within your power. To take him to. Somebody who's cured him. Of this illness. You would do it. This is the challenge.

That we have before us. As Christians. As church people. Because that is. The mission of the church. To bring. Sick people. Dead people.

To the healer. Jesus. Well. Poor Ezekiel. He was a prisoner of war. He was a refugee.

[23 : 21] Taken from his own country. By force. And in a foreign land. He was sent. To speak to his own people. And his people were stubborn.

But they were his people. And sometimes. It's far easier. To go to another land. And take the gospel message. To the Indians. In Brazil.

And. People have done that. And they're called to do that. And sometimes. That's easier. But isn't it harder. Sometimes. For us. To speak. To our own people. To our friends.

To our families. To our neighbours. Because. We. They'll know then. We're Christians. And they'll laugh at us. And think we're. Out of date. Quite often.

That's a very real fear. For so many of us. And so many of us. Who may be in a professional capacity. You know. Wouldn't want to compromise. Our ability. To work with people. If we know.

[24 : 16] If we know. They're very. Anti-pathetic. To the gospel. They're very anti-God. And if they see us. As being godly. Or Christians. Maybe they'll. Not take us seriously.

But then again. That's what Ephesians speaks of. Finally. Be strong. In the Lord. And in his mighty power. Because after all. We read this morning.

About this God. This God. Who's all powerful. This is the God. With. With. For whom nothing is impossible. This is the God. That cannot be stopped. In any of the works.

That he wants to do. We can't put barriers. In his way. And stop him. Because he's all powerful. But he has chosen us. His people. To challenge the world.

And to challenge them. As to their state. And he has chosen us. To share salvation. With those around us.

[25 : 17] And it's all about relationships. With ourselves. Isn't it? It's all about how we relate. To the people around us. First of all. We have to relate.

To this God. That we discussed. And explored this morning. What is our relationship. With him. And having that relationship. And that basis.

For living our whole lives. What are our relationships then. With our families. With our neighbors. With our friends. With our colleagues. Because you read.

Ephesians then. And see how. You are expected. To go into the front line. And go into a battle scenario. And fight. For these people's souls.

And sometimes. That. Is so difficult to do. Because they are fighting against you. Because they are not interested. They are not interested. Because they are stubbornly. Sticking. To their way of life.

[26 : 15] But Ezekiel here. He was prepared for that. These people. You are going to go to Ezekiel. Are going to be stubborn. Well I am going to make you strong. They are going to be hard.

Well I am going to make you harder. Dead bones. Prophecy to them. And he was obedient.

To that command. He was obedient to it. He prophesied. And you see there. The miraculous work. Of the Holy Spirit. Well let's think about it. The relationship. Of our society. With God himself. It is a frightening thought.

If we compare. The number of people. In Aberdeen. The city of Aberdeen. Who are. Worshipping the Lord. This evening. And compare that number.

[27 : 11] With the number. Who aren't. Who are out. Worshipping. Their own way of life. Following their idols. Whatever they may be. It is a frightening thought.

For those of us. Who are concerned. For the souls of people. Because. God here. In Ephesians. As God sent.

The prophet. Ezekiel. He prepared him. For the mission. Ahead of him. For the work. That was ahead of him. We have here. The provision. That God has made.

For us. To go forth. With what we might see. As the foolishness. Of speaking. About God. Well here. He has provided us.

With that armor of God. So that we can go. Into the world. And spread. This message. Of salvation. So that we can win. Souls. For Christ.

[28 : 08] So that we can win. Hearts. And minds. Not through. Our own works. We are. But the agency. Of the Holy Spirit. To bring people.

To. This. Jesus. So that the spirit. Can then work. In their hearts. And it's a wonderful thing. To know. And to realize.

That no matter. Where you are. The state. The world is in. The message. Of salvation. That we have. The Savior. Jesus himself.

Is with you. He is there. With you. Because he has sent. His Holy Spirit. To be with us. As we share. This gospel. As we prophesy.

To these dead bones. But Ezekiel. Made the effort. To go in among the people. And he went in there.

[29 : 03] And spoke to them. He spoke to them. Of this. Message of woe. And despair. He warned them. Of the dangers. That they were in. They saw. The destruction.

Of Israel. They hadn't listened. To the prophets. Before. And it looked. As if they weren't. Listening to the prophet. Now. But the spirit. Of God. Moved.

The spirit. Of God. Moved. And the people. Became alive. They were revived. And they were revived. Because somebody. Took the gospel.

Took the truth. Of Jesus. To where they were. Christian brothers and sisters. Is that not. Our responsibility. To share Jesus with others.

Are you sitting here. This evening. And maybe you don't know yet. This saviour Jesus. It's a great thing. For you to sit. And read the bible.

[30 : 03] It's a great thing. For you. To hear. The story of Jesus. And the story. Of salvation. That's available to you. Because all you have to do. Is repent.

Of your sins. Turn to God. And he will wipe away. All your sins. And make you alive again. Let the mighty strength. Of the Lord.

Make you strong. Put on. The full armor. Of God. So you can. Defend yourself. Against the devil's tricks. You're embarking.

On another. Christianity. Explored course. Now that's a great. Asset. It's been used by the Lord. So. Marvelously. In other areas. And here.

As well. I think it's been blessed. It's an opportunity. For us. To take people. Together. And to share. This gospel. Of salvation. With others.

[30 : 58] Others. Who are in this state. That Israel. We're in. Despair. Maybe. People. Who have no hope. People. Who may even. Be depressed. Christ. Is this not.

An opportunity. For us. To bring Christ. Before their eyes. Before their hearts. And let them. Make that choice. It's a solemn thing.

To place. Christ. Before people. Recognizing. And realizing. That the people. Have that choice. To either. Turn away. And remain.

Dead. In their sins. And know. That if they die. In that condition. They'll go to. A lost eternity. It's an awesome. And solemn thing. But the wonderful thing is.

That salvation. Freedom. And heaven. Is available. Free of charge. All they have to do. Is turn to God. Repent of their sins. And follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

[31 : 56] It's that simple. And if we are. Faithful. And obedient. To this. Commission. Given to us. To go forth.

With this gospel message. To prepare ourselves. To go out there. And to take the good news. And wield the sword of the spirit. Salvation.

Will follow. Because the Lord himself. Will work. It might not be something. That we be aware of. But it would be something. That we would be doing.

In obedience. To God's word. Never stop praying. Especially for others. Always pray. By the power of the spirit. Stay alert.

And keep praying. For God's people. And I pray. That the Father. And the Lord Jesus Christ. Will give peace. Love. And faith.

[32 : 51] To every follower. May God. Be kind. To everyone. Who keeps on loving. Our Lord Jesus Christ. You're here in Bon Accord.

You're in a difficult position. You're still without a pastor. But you're united. In purpose. Aren't you? You are God's people. In this city. And you take students.

In here. And many students. I'm sure. Have been blessed. In this congregation. Over the years.

You are united. Aren't you? In the work of the Lord. Be encouraged.

To know. That. Ezekiel himself. Was given something. That looked like. An impossible task. He saw the state. Of the children of Israel. But he recognized.

The offer of salvation. That he was responsible. For giving out. To the people. Christian brothers and sisters. That's our responsibility. Also. To share this salvation.

[33 : 51] Among our friends. And if you're here this evening. And you don't have this salvation yet. Ask Jesus. Now. Come to him. And ask him. To make you alive in him.

Ask him. For that free entry. Into heaven. He'll give it to you. If you truly ask him properly. It's a wonderful image.

Death. Becoming life. These skeletons. These dead bodies. Becoming alive again. The decay is gone.

The wonderful life. Is replacing it. And that's the truth. The simple truth. Of the Bible's message.

Come unto Jesus. And you will be saved. But don't leave it till tomorrow. Now is the day of salvation. Come to him tonight.

[34 : 48] Let us share Jesus with others. Now. While there is still time. And wouldn't it be a wonderful. And exciting thing.

To be involved with others. Around the world. In this most exciting. Of mission fields. Amen. Let us pray together. Our gracious Lord.

We pray. That you would help us all. To recognize. That. Although the situation. In Ezekiel's day. Might have looked hopeless. To him. He might have seen. All these dead bodies.

Around. But he was obedient. To you. And he prophesied. And he saw. Your spirit moving. And these dead bodies. Became alive. And we recognize.

That your word. Challenges us also. To be willing. To share. The gospel of Jesus Christ. To be salt. And to be light. In the world. Help us. Therefore.

[35 : 42] To share. This message. Of salvation. With others. Help us. To be. Brave. And valiant. To trust God. For we ask it. In Jesus name.

And for his sake. Amen. Can we. Close our service. This evening. By singing. To God's praise.

In Psalm 23. In the traditional version. Of the psalm. We'll sing. To the tune. Criment. And this is a psalm. Of comfort. For God's people.

Many over the generations. Have been comforted. By it. And wouldn't it be wonderful. To think of the shepherd. Taking so many more people. From this great city. Into his own.

House. And into his own. Flock. The Lord's my shepherd. I'll not want. He makes me down to lie. In pastures green. He leadeth me. The quiet waters by. The tune is criment.

[36 : 36] The Lord's my shepherd. I'll not want. We'll stand to sing. Amen. Well I'd like to thank you all.

For your very warm welcome. And hospitality. Today. And let's pray. That the Lord. Would bless our time together. Let us close with prayer. Our gracious Lord. We. Give you thanks. For the gospel message.

That Jesus Christ. Is there for us. This day. That if we can. But knock on his door. He would open it. To us. And we could truly sing. With our hearts. And know that.

Our dwelling place. Would be with him forever. And this is true. For all those. Who accept Jesus. As Savior. And trust him. With their very souls. Bless the people here.

We pray. Bless us all. For we ask it. In Jesus name. And for his sake. Amen.