

Restoring Life

Introduction

The book of Ezekiel is an interesting book to study. If you remember, Ezekiel was taken into Babylonian captivity around 597 B.C. and prophesied for the Lord for about 22 years. He was a contemporary with Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego although they lived and worked in different areas of Babylon.

What makes Ezekiel unique however is that Ezekiel was used by God as a sign to the captives. Rather than just preach God's message to the people as most of the prophets did, Ezekiel performed certain actions to graphically depict what God wanted shown. God revealed messages to Ezekiel in visions and gave him signs to perform before the people (i.e. laying siege to the model city for 430 days).

One of the visions that God reveals to Ezekiel is found in **Ezekiel 37:1-10**. Imagine how Ezekiel must have felt as he stood there among all these dried up bones that had been sun-baked and then God telling him to speak to them and the bones begin to move and form skeletons on which muscle is then placed... Truly an amazing sight.

The point of this vision for the people was that God was going to **Restore Life** to His people. He would take the bones of what had been His people and He would breathe life into them again. I believe there are times today when restoring life is needed. The breath of life has been taken and there needs to be a restoration.

In today's lesson, we are going to focus on 4 areas of **Restoring Life**.

- Of A Christian
- Of A Church
- Of A Family
- Of A World

[Let us begin our study by talking about **Restoring Life**...]

I. OF A CHRISTIAN

A. BRINGING A LOST SOUL BACK TO CHRIST

1. "Restoring" a brother (**Galatians 6:1** "*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted*")
2. What greater service could we render to someone than to help them back to God? (**James 5:20** "*let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins*")
3. How many family members, friends, or former members of this congregation do we know of who are no longer faithful in their service to God? Maybe the time has come to "breathe" life into them again with the Gospel of Christ! (Note: we will talk more about this later in the lesson)

B. RESTORING OUR OWN CHRISTIAN LIFE

1. "What do you mean 'restoring my own Christian life'. I'm here aren't I?"
2. Simply being here doesn't mean we are alive
 - a. In **Mark 11**, Jesus sees a fig tree and He goes to it wanting figs. However, when He arrives He finds that the tree is bearing no fruit so therefore He curses the tree

- b. At first glance, the tree appeared to be alive and thriving. However, the true life of a fig tree is to bring forth fruit. If it is not bringing forth fruit, it is not truly alive in the fullest sense
 - c. The same thing can be said of our own spiritual life. From the outside it can appear that we are alive
 - a. We attend services every Sunday and Wednesday
 - b. We don't do some of the grossly immoral things that others do
 - d. But in order to truly be alive we must be bearing fruit
 - a. Consider **John 15:1-8** – we glorify God when we bear fruit!
 - b. What kind of fruit?
 - **Galatians 5:22** *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...”*
 - e. Having life in Christ is more than sitting on a pew every Sunday and Wednesday!
 - f. Having life means active service in God's Kingdom
3. There are signs that we should watch for that indicate our Spiritual Life is fading
- a. Apathy/Laziness
 - b. No Desire to Study
 - c. No Desire to Pray
 - d. Focused More on Worldly Things (i.e. job, school, recreation, money)
 - e. Simply Going Through the Motions of Service (c.f. **Isaiah 1**)
 - a. As we evaluate our own individual spiritual life, if these signs are present then we should be deeply concerned!
 - b. We need to once again breathe life into our dead (or dying) spiritual bones!
4. Breathing Life Involves...
- a. Daily Communication With God
 - a. Reading – (**1 Timothy 4:13**: *“Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine”*)
 - b. Praying – Examples: Daniel, Paul, Christ
 - c. Meditating – the idea here is that God's thoughts and God's will is constantly on our mind.
 - b. Being About God's Work
 - a. Our purpose in this life is to *“serve God and keep His commandments”* (**Ecclesiastes 12:13**). If we are busy doing the Lord's work our body will stay refreshed and vibrant.
 - *“pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness”* – **I Timothy 6:11**
 - *“Add to your faith...”* **2 Peter 1:5-8**
 - *“Go into all the world and preach...”* – **Mark 16:15-16**
 - b. The saying “idle hands are the devil's workshop” definitely applies for us in our spiritual life!

[Consider the explanation of the vision given to Ezekiel in **Ezekiel 37:11-14**. *“I will put my Spirit in you and you will come to life”*. What a wonderful thought that God can breathe life back into us and make us vibrant and active again. Are you ready?

But there are other areas where life needs restoring. Consider restoring the life...]

II. OF A LOCAL CHURCH

A. A CHURCH WITH NO LIFE IS OF NO USE TO THE LORD

1. Consider the warning against Sardis – **Revelation 3:1-6**
 - a. It would be a tremendous compliment for the Lord to view a local church as living. But how horrible to have the Lord say “*but you are dead*”
 - b. What could we say? Are we ignoring the signs?
2. Signs that the breath of life is needed in a local church
 - a. Saints are more concerned with reputation than with character
 - a. The LORD told Samuel, in regard to choosing a king to succeed Saul, “*Do not look at his appearance or the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart*” (**I Samuel 16:7**).
 - b. Sometimes a church is so enamored with impressing others that they focus on externals – an impressive facility, big numbers, entertaining worship, etc. – at the expense of the *weightier matters* of justice, mercy and faithfulness (**Matthew 23:23**). They are alive in their own estimation, but not in the eyes of God
 - b. Worship and Service is more “going through the motions” than heartfelt
 - a. Unfortunately, many congregations set up shop and “keep house for the Lord.” They assemble like clockwork and pride themselves for their soundness in the faith
 - b. Yet how would Jesus measure them if their commitment to the Lord is waning or if they do not evangelize the lost? The church at Ephesus was commended because they could not tolerate evil men, but they were condemned for leaving their “first love” (**Revelation 2:2-4**)
 - c. Local church members turn a deaf ear to the truth
 - a. Ezekiel was told, “*And they come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people, and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. And behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not practice them*” (**Ezekiel 33:31-32**)

(If these signs are present then a local church needs to consider its “life” and make some changes)

3. Restoring the Life of a Local Church ...

- a. Involves Every Member!
 - a. Membership in a local church is more than a seat on a pew and a name on a roster – it’s a commitment to serve God and to help the body grow
 - b. As an example, look no further than the church in Jerusalem in **Acts**
 - **Acts 2:41-47** (notice all the references to the sum of the people)
 1. vs. 42 – They (referring to the 3000)
 2. vs. 43 – Everyone
 3. vs. 44-47 – 6 references to “all”
 - **Acts 4:32-35**
 - c. This was a team effort! Everyone was involved

- d. If a local church today is dying, every last member must be involved in restoring life
- b. Involves Demanding Truth...
 - a. And accepting nothing less
 - Why is this important? B/c when saints lack a desire to be told the truth, we are setting the stage for abandoning New Testament Christianity all together – being Christians in name only.
 - Why? B/c there is a direct connection between truth and life: Jesus Christ (“*I am the way, the truth, and the life...*”).
 - 1. If we cut ourselves off from the truth then we are also cutting ourselves off from the life!
 - b. We should demand truth even when it hurts
- c. Involves Active Service
 - a. What better example than the Thessalonians?
 - **I Thessalonians 1:3; 7-8; 4:9-10**
 - **II Thessalonians 1:3**
 - b. Even having said all of that, what does Paul tell them in **I Thessalonians 4:1,10**? “*Excel still more*”
 - c. What’s the point? Living churches are active churches!!
 - d. Active In:
 - Unifying the Body
 - Edifying the Body
 - Glorifying God in Worship
 - Supplying the Needs of the Needy
 - Evangelizing the Lost

[Breathing life back into a dead or dying congregation is not easy but is by no means impossible. With God’s help and the determination of the saints the lamp stand does not have to be removed]

III. OF A FAMILY

- A. IN TODAY’S SOCIETY, GODLY FAMILIES ARE THE EXCEPTION
 - 1. Single parent homes are on the rise
 - 2. “Step” families are more and more common
 - 3. And while some of these are for reasons which are acceptable (death of a spouse, scriptural divorce) the overwhelming majority are not
- B. HOW DO CHRISTIANS KEEP THE BREATH OF LIFE IN THEIR FAMILIES WHEN THE WORLD IS SO WICKED?
 - 1. We do it God’s way! – **Deuteronomy 6**
 - a. God is still interested in families – **Deuteronomy 6:1-3**
 - a. He wants fathers, sons, and grandsons to live wisely...to multiply greatly...to enjoy divine prosperity. He still wants that
 - b. Moses then proceeds to give them three ways their families could survive. These three guiding principles are as potent today as they were in the days of Moses. We could continue to develop a strong family if we would remind ourselves and our families of these three statements on a regular basis.
 - c. I would encourage you to take your Bible, open to **Deuteronomy 6** and circle the following three words:

- a. *hear* (v. 4)
- b. *love* (v. 5)
- c. *teach* (v. 7)
 - They form the basis of the three principles that keep a family strong

C. BREATHING LIFE INTO OUR FAMILIES INVOLVES

1. **Hearing the Truth Continually – Deuteronomy 6:4**

- a. The foundation of the Hebrew faith was based upon two primary truths:
 - a. Jehovah is unique, unlike any and all other deities
 - b. He is Unity
- b. Strong families lean hard on certain unshakable facts, and this is a major one
 - a. To amplify the statement, families should in essence say: “The Lord is our God. We acknowledge His presence, His uniqueness, His place, and His right to rule over us. We seek His will, we endeavor to walk in His way”
- c. Families who hear the truth continually don’t float and drift aimlessly. They pull together
 - a. When times get tough and the way seems uncertain, repeat this verse to yourself or to your family. Say to your spouse and kids, “The Lord is our God. We must trust Him without reservation. All that is happening is in accordance with His plan and we have to trust Him.”
 - b. You don’t need a family counselor or Dr. Phil or Oprah. You have God

2. **Loving the Lord Fervently – Deuteronomy 6:5-6**

- a. Upon reading that, what jumps out at you? “all...all...all”
 - a. Such repetition emphasizes totality. The parents love for God is total not partial; unquestionable not casual. There is fervency here.
- b. Our love for God must be complete
 - a. It is impossible for us to transfer to our children a principle that we don’t totally embrace
 - Can’t transfer honesty if I am dishonest
 - Can’t convey the necessity of clean lips if I habitually practice profanity
- c. Our love for God must be an all-encompassing love, a deep down dedication.
- d. It will be “on your heart”, not simply a nice sounding religious idea washing around in your head

3. **Teaching Our Children Diligently – Deuteronomy 6:7-9**

- a. This was not the first time such an exhortation was made – **Deuteronomy 4:9**
 - a. The task of “indoctrinating” children was the responsibility of the home, not of some institution combined with a group of professionals.
 - b. Unfortunately, what we are seeing today are a lot of people who may have been taught Biblical facts, but somehow their learning lacked authenticity.
 - c. Perhaps what was really missing was the diligence (“*and you shall teach them diligently to your children*”)
 - The word diligent in English is an adverb, but in Hebrew the root term is a verb that means “to sharpen”
 - A literal reading would therefore be “... *and you shall sharpen your sons*”

1. This isn't a passive action; it is a very aggressive and assertive involvement in the educational process...all within the family setting
- b. God's desire is that there be a conscious, consistent, transfer of God's truth from the older to the younger in the family.
- c. **Deuteronomy 6:7** – *“Sharpen your sons when you talk of them, as sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up”*
 - a. There is a big difference b/w lecturing and just talking
 - The Hebrews had a term for lecturing and a term for just talking. The term for just talking is the term used here!
 - b. We are to talk of spiritual things just like we would talk about anything else
 - That's what is implied here in this verse
 - That is what will make our Christianity authentic.
 1. It isn't a Sunday lifestyle! It is a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, etc. lifestyle
 - It becomes so natural that Christ and spiritual things fit into the conversation as naturally as anything else does.
- d. Read **Deuteronomy 6:7** again
 - a. Did you notice how comfortable that sounds?
 - b. Christianity is designed for everyday living
 - Society has made it a “Sunday religion”.
 - But true-to-life Christianity is designed for Tuesday afternoon just as it is for Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon.
 - You don't put on special garb or dress up.
 - It fits after meals as well as it does at bedtime. That's what makes the teaching in the home so authentic.

[There is no school that families can go to and earn a degree in family strength. Families become strong not because they have gone to school and learned the rules, but because the parents chose to be different. Because they inculcate biblical truth in everyday life, conducting their relationships in the realm of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. **Proverbs 24:3-4**]

[The final area to which we will talk about **Restoring Life** is that...]

IV. OF A WORLD

- A. IT IS NO SECRET THAT THE WORLD TODAY IS RAMPANT WITH SIN
 1. Crime is increasing
 2. Homosexuality is condoned and encouraged
 3. Morality is trampled underfoot
- B. THE SITUATION TODAY IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL
 1. They got to a point that God was an after thought
 2. Religion was something to be done to appease their conscience
 3. What did God do? He destroyed them! Why? B/c they didn't serve Him
 - a. You look at the nations of Israel and Judah and you will notice some amazing parallels to the world today.
- C. WE NEED TO TAKE ACTION BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

1. There are souls of people that we know personally who are lost in sin
 - a. Family Members
 - b. Friends/Co-workers
 - c. Neighbors
 - d. Postman, Doctor, Dentist, the check-out lady at Wal-mart, etc
 2. When Jesus spoke of the “*fields being white unto the harvest*” He was speaking of right now! Look around and we will see multitudes of people who need to hear the good news of the gospel
- D. WE NEED TO TAKE ON THE ATTITUDE THAT “IF I DON’T TEACH THAT PERSON THE GOSPEL, THEN NO ONE WILL”
1. Too many times we take the opposite stance (“If I don’t teach them then surely someone else will”)
 2. But remember, Jesus gave **YOU** the task of reaching the lost – **Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20**
 - a. Did you notice that I said “reaching” the lost? – Evangelism is more than sitting down at a table and opening the word and teaching someone. Evangelism reaches so much farther than that
 - a. Evangelism is bringing someone to services
 - b. Evangelism is inviting someone to your house for a study and asking another person to lead it
 - c. Evangelism is handing out Bible message cards
 - b. Active work in evangelism is so much more than what we typically think
- E. IF WE WANT TO RESTORE LIFE TO THE WORLD...
1. Then we must be active in spreading the Seed (i.e. The Word)
 - a. Like the Thessalonians – **I Thessalonians 1:8** (Teaching)
 - b. Like the Philippians – **Philippians 4:15-16** (Financial Support)
 2. We must work together
 - a. While “personal” evangelism is good...
 - b. “Team” evangelism is better – **Ephesians 4:10-12; 16**
 - a. Where 1 can reach 5, 5 can reach 25

Conclusion

Considering the 4 areas we have talked about today, let’s end by reading again from **Ezekiel 37:1-10**. Do we need to be restored to life? Are our spiritual bones laying, baking in the sun? God can breathe life back into us! We can once again be living and active in His service. Do you need to come to Him now? Do you need to be baptized into Him to have your sins washed away? Do you need your strength renewed by ridding yourself of your sins and asking His forgiveness? Why not come now?