

Introduction:

- Week #5 in our series on Restoration. They seem to be getting better each week!
 - What do you want restored in 2016? Write them down.
 - God heart for us is a heart of restoration. Job 42, Zech 9:12 He restores twice what was stolen.
 - Is 61. The great exchange. Ashes for crown, spirit of heaviness for garment of praise. When that happened the people arise build, repair and revive.
 - The process of restoration. 5 steps.
- Today I want to share. Restoration: He has heard our prayers.
- Ez 36:37-ff. In my NLT Bible, the title heading for chapter 36 is *Restoration for Israel*. And in our text, 36:37 is the first time in Ezk that God says, "I have heard Israel's prayers. Up to that point He has slammed the door on them.(Ez 14:3; 20:3)
- I find it interesting that it has been hard to start any of the message on restoration without first focusing on God the Restorer. He holds the key...He alone is the restorer. I also have to make mention: Life has dealt all of us wounds and scars from multiplied places. Some of those scars came because of choices we made. Some of those scars came from choices forced upon us. Some of those scars just happened. So the fact remains...we all need restoration.

I. God Is A Restorer

- A. Context: It is important to understand the context because context adds depth and color to the scriptures. It provides an 'on ramp' for us to understanding while we read.
1. Ezekiel is a prophet to the people of Judah who have been taken as slaves to the nation of Babylon. He too was a slave in Babylon. About 5 years into their captivity God begins to speak to the prophet Ezekiel. He sees some wild stuff! For seven years he prophesies 'No Hope'. Then around chapter 33 he begins to give hope and for the next 15 years Hope is what he prophesies.
 2. Ps 137 also gives insight to this time as Israel sings "*Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept as we thought of Jerusalem. We put away our harps, hanging them on the branches of poplar trees. For our captors demanded a song from us. Our tormentors insisted on a joyful hymn: "Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem!" But how can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a pagan land?"* (Psalm 137 1:4 NLT)
 - a) It reveals the sadness of the Israelites as they are mockingly asked to sing a Jewish song but have no joy to sing them with. Read 37:11
 - b) They hung up their harps in that land. A picture of their inability to find joy (find God) in the midst of sorrow. How can you sing when you have been made a slave?
 3. This scene was the result of their stubborn refusal to turn away from their sin. This was the result of turning a deaf ear to the words and warnings of the prophets. Their determined and stiff-necked disobedience led them to Babylon. And now, they were like the prodigal in the far country. They were homesick and nostalgic. Their memories

were mingled with tears. They longed for the sights of their own country. They were painfully aware of how sin had impoverished them. Often our sin leads us into painful consequences. But He is Lord over all. Consequences of disobedience (Dt 28:15-68)

- B. The state of the bones. vs 11. They are discouraged, depressed, humiliated, heart broken, homesick and filled with hate. *"Smash their babies on the rocks!"* vs. 8 Three lies:
1. God exists to serve me. The exile created a crisis of faith. They had come to see God as the dispenser of gifts whose primary role was to cater to them. He was there to serve them whenever they wanted.
 2. I am the center of the universe. The exiled recipients of God's grace are deluded into thinking that they are the center of the world and that their desires determine God's activity. The reality God is the center of the universe and He constantly works to reveal himself to us. He wants us all to see His glory.
 3. I can handle this myself. The only help the bones have is the fundamental cleansing, heart transplant with an infusion of God life. A social gospel is no gospel without the Gospel of the cross and resurrection. Ez 36:26-27
 4. These bones were dry because they had believed the lies. The result: consequences talked the people out of God's love, their future, and hope. Thankfully that God does not leave us there.

II. God Takes the Initiative

- A. God has taken the ultimate initiative in sending His Son. That is our starting point as believers! And He does it so that, vs. 38 *"Everyone knows that I am the Lord!"*
- B. *"This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am ready to hear Israel's prayers and to increase their numbers like a flock."* (Ezekiel 36:37, NLT)
1. He will not stay angry forever. He is ready. Why does He speak first to the land. Because the land had time to rest according to the number of years that the Israelites had forsaken it rest. He was also preparing the land for the return of the Israelites.
 2. God announces a total shift in the experience of the nation of Israel. He is ready to both hear and to increase the nation population to in preparation for return.
 3. His announcement is key: Only I can do this for you not you yourselves!
- C. Any time God does something in the earth He does it through a man. In our passage that man is Ezekiel. In your life it may very well be you!
1. I was carried away by the Spirit! The ruah - Heb for spirit/breath. We need the Holy Spirit's involvement if we are going to be restored. He was set down in the valley of dry bones. Whose bones? Israel's! The bones of their people and warriors. Ezekiel was brought back to the place of death (spiritual and natural) To restore God has to take us back to the place of loss. Remember: Ezk is not an outsider looking in. He is exile like all the rest. He knows why he is exile. When you have lost something and God seems distant you want to be carried by the Spirit if you have to face that loss.
 2. I was led by the Spirit around and among the dry bones. Israel has testimonies of people being raised from the dead but never any testimonies of dry bones being

raised from the dead. "Can these bones become living people again?" It is now a question of faith and God is seeking to reveal himself to Ezekiel. Ez is smart, he is not going to say "No that is impossible." You just don't say that to God! God wants us to see the impossibility of the situation in order that we recognize that only God can change it. What is God after? "Everyone will know that I am the Lord."

3. Speak a prophetic message to the bones. When you believe that God is a restorer then you will be able to speak prophetically to the bones/impossibilities of your life. It is prophetic because it is a word from God. If it is not from God Ezk is just talking. What has God said, that I can say?
 - a) Mk 11:22-24 Speak to the mountain, "Have faith in God, I tell you the truth you can speak to this mountain..."
 - b) When God breaths on what you are saying there is power in your words. Jn 6:63 "My Words are Spirit and they are Life!"
 - c) vs 7 As I was speaking there was movement! A rattling noise all across the valley! le. Deer antlers.
 - d) vs 9 Speak again! Don't stop speaking when you see a little movement of restoration! This time prophesy to the wind! Gather and breath on these slain (they are the bodies without life) that they might live! Heb *haya*, "The verb *ḥāyâ* "to live" involves the ability to have life somewhere on the scale between the fullest enjoyment of all the powers of one's being, with health and prosperity." *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed., pp. 279-280). Chicago.
4. They stood as an army! Not as party! They were unified with purpose.
5. Regarding restoration: 1.) The Holy Spirit will carry you where you need to be. 2.) When you get there He will lead among the impossibility. 3.) And with His presence empower you to speak dry bones, your marriage, your broken heart, your bank account.

III. Back to Reality

- A. Vs 11. God says to Ezk, "Snap out of it. These bones represent the people of Israel." This is their confession.
 1. Our bones are very dry. Is a metaphorical statement.
 - a) "*My heart is sick, withered like grass...*" (Psalm 102:4, NLT)
 - b) "*Because of my groaning, I am reduced to skin and bones.*" (Psalm 102:5, NLT)
 2. We have no hope. It the interpretation of the metaphor.
 - a) Remember what I have said through through this series? If you are at a place where you have no hope, know that you are believing a lie.
 3. We are finished. Represents the depths of their pessimism.
- B. Ezekiel had prophesied to the bones. He had prophesied to the breath. Now he hard to begin the hard work of prophesying to a despairing people. He had to start the process: See notes and podcast from 1/17/2016 www.houseoffreedom.org

1. Lead the people to acknowledge that they were the problem. Or as I said last week, realize and admit you need restored.
 2. He has all the plans and specifications, so submit to the process.
 3. Repent and commit to the work. You are repenting no just from something but to something.
 4. Accountability
 5. Abiding, resting in Him, and walking in the Spirit.
- C. When this happens, vs 13 *"Know that I am the Lord! I will put my Spirit in you and you will live again!"*

Conclusion:

- Life has dealt all of us wounds and scars from multiplied places. Some of those scars came because of choices we made. Some of those scars came from choices forced upon us. Some of those scars just happened. So the fact remains...we all need restoration.
- What would your life look like is suddenly you received twice what was stolen from you?
 - Didn't have a dad? What if right now you had twice the experience of a good father in you?
 - Marriage that failed? What if right now you had the life of a person with twice good marriage?
- All restoration must start with Jesus.