

## These Bones Live!

✠ **Given life through God's Spirit (vv.11-16)**

✠ **Adopted as co-heirs of Christ's glory (vv.17-19)**

In the Name of Jesus, dear living “bones,” the army of God in Christ:

This is one of the strangest service / sermon theme combos I can remember at New Life. Our First Lesson (Ezekiel 37:1-14) supplied the service theme: CAN THESE BONES LIVE? Hollywood has nothing on the pictures the Holy Spirit paints through prophets like Ezekiel. You can see the LORD's hand picking him up and carrying him to a huge valley of dry bones. The LORD God asks the question, “*Can these dry bones come back to life?*”<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel humbly answers, “*LORD God, you know.*” God tells him to preach. Imagine the rattling all over the valley as “the head bone's connected to the neck bone and the neck bone's connected to the shoulder bone and...” Tendons connect and skin covers, but no life yet....

Preach again, Ezekiel! “*Prophesy to the wind. Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind.... From the four winds, come, O breath, and blow into these slain that they may come back to life.*” So I prophesied as he commanded me. *Breath entered them, and they came back to life. They stood on their feet, a very, very large army.*” That's “*the whole house of Israel,*” the LORD says. They think they're dead and cut off from God, but our God brings the dead back to life, spiritually and physically.

Since God always does what He promises, His Apostle Paul is preaching: **These Bones Live!**

✠ **Given life through God's Spirit (vv.11-16)**

Not one of us started off as members of God's family. Hard to see because by nature we are sin-dead corpses, blind, deaf, unable to help ourselves. All of us who have struggled through medical problems of our own or with our children know there are some questions you can't answer without an x-ray or a CAT scan. Miracles of medical technology let us look inside Mommy's tummy and see that Baby can even smile. Why is it so hard to believe that inside every Christian there is one smiling face and one scowling, angry face? That nasty, natural self we inherit from our parents and pass on to our children. Everyone knows how to be bad. Centuries of wars and Hollywood scandals prove the plight of humanity among the most powerful and those who think they are the best and brightest.

So Paul back in Romans 6 tells how Baptism kills the Old Adam and gives life to the New Man. Now he adds, “*And if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit, who is dwelling in you.*” God's Word is connected to water, proclaimed by prophets, echoed by preachers. Our natural sin-born wretchedness versus our new natural faith-born righteousness. By the Spirit **These Bones Live!**

So why do we act like orphan children? You kids in school and us older kids at work seem to think we owe something to people who have no use for God. Why do we care what they think? Boys and girls, you have the same legal status in God's family as sons. “*So then, brothers, we do not owe it to the sinful flesh to live in harmony with it.*<sup>13</sup> *For if you live in harmony with the sinful flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live.*” In other words, if you follow your heart and do what feels good for your body, death wins. Physically you can see it in the violent end of rock stars and worldly culture club. What we cannot see is the death of soul and body for everyone who follows the carnal, sinful flesh instead of God. Those bones die eternally in torment.

<sup>1</sup> *Evangelical Heritage Version, EHV*® © 2017 The Wartburg Project. [www.wartburgproject.org](http://www.wartburgproject.org). Quotes unless noted.

That makes me feel bad for them and scared for me. My sinful self is always trying to control me. In Romans 7, Paul complains about the same thing. Like a valley full of dry bones we cannot help ourselves until the Lord's prophets and apostles preach Christ to us by God's kind command. Such sweet consolation: "**Indeed, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.** <sup>15</sup>**For you did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you are afraid again, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we call out, "Abba, Father!"** <sup>16</sup>**The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God's children.**"

Luther writes, "In the middle of these terrors of the law, the thundering of sin, the shaking of death, and the roar of the devil, the Holy Spirit in our hearts begins to call out, 'Abba! Father!' And his cry is much stronger and drowns out the powerful and horrible shouts of the law, sin, death, and the devil. It penetrates through the clouds and heaven and reaches up to the ears of God."<sup>2</sup> Now that's the life the Holy Spirit gives! You wake up with songs of the liturgy on your heart like "The Lamb of God" (Dale Witte) sung by our younger Christians today. Years later, eyes failing, your heart is still singing the hymns you taught your challenged child for Sunday School. He went off to Boot Camp and carried God's comfort and the power of God's army on his heart. Don't be fooled by appearances. **These Bones Live!**

### **Adopted as co-heirs of Christ's glory (vv.17-19)**

**"Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him."** Bank your body and soul on this for all eternity. *Christ has died...Christ is risen...Christ will come again.* Paul spent the first five chapters of Romans and nailed this truth like no one else. The whole world is justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (3:24) Believe and it's yours. Reject it in unbelief and you stay spiritually dead like dry bones with unimaginable terror ahead. God does not want that for you or anyone else. You can be sure because Christ died for all. And when God put His family name on you in Baptism, you were adopted into the eternal inheritance to belong to Jesus forever.

This high honor as those who will inherit heaven also has a sacred duty. You want to be Christ's brother, then expect to suffer here with Him and for His dear name – maybe even death. Some of the worst persecutions may come from fellow Christians as was in England – Protestant vs. Catholics vs. Protestants. Jesus suffered mockery and spitting, a crown of thorns and death before His inheritance. So it will be for all His followers today. Death first, then the inheritance will be ours. Reality check.

So why are we ready to overturn mountains and uproot trees in our resentment when folks don't appreciate us? "Impatient are we," said Yoda, you see. But the Force of man's mind has no power here. "I've been wronged. I'm hurt! I'm angry!" And the powerful wind of the Spirit whispers through Paul: **"I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.** <sup>19</sup>**In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed."**

On tiptoe like a child waiting for a parade! "Heaven and earth, sun, moon and stars, leaf and blade, every living thing, waits with sighing and groaning for the revelation of our glory." So will Christ have to ask you? "Where are your crown of thorns, your cross, the nails and scourge? My followers and I have been suffering since the beginning of time. The world hates us. What about you?" Triumphant faith sees suffering as a small inconvenience, not worth comparing with the glories of heaven ahead.<sup>3</sup> We are truly unworthy of God's free grace in Christ, but that makes Him all the more determined to preach to these dry bones. From babyhood to grandparents in the hood we live as the inheritance of Christ Himself and His own personal delight. Faith says, "Minimize my suffering...Maximize God's glory!" No merit of mine is needed or acceptable here. Nothing the church has to kick in as if Christ and His merits were not enough. Christ is all we ever need as **Adopted co-heirs of God's glory.** Hear the Gospel in the wind of the Spirit: **These Bones Live!** There's no end to this sermon. Let your life be the great, Amen!

<sup>2</sup> *By Faith Alone* © 1998, World Publ. [www.Laridian.com](http://www.Laridian.com) .

<sup>3</sup> *Postil*. Lenker, ed. 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, Romans 8:18-22. Baker, re-printed 1988, Vol. VIII, p. 97, 99-103.

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