

## God's hope and vision of restoration and revival for withered bones

Ezekiel 37:1-14  
Key verse 37:10

"So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army."

Ezekiel was a priest who was taken away to Babylon with the second group in 597 BC. There God called him a prophet in his 30th year. For 21 years, Ezekiel proclaimed God's message among those exiled in Babylon. First, Ezekiel reminded them how unfaithful and ungodly they had been and how they had brought God's righteous judgment upon themselves. But then he gave them the message of God with the vision of complete restoration. Part of the message of restoration is the vision of the bones of the dead coming to life. God gave Ezekiel this vision shortly after he heard about the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple (586 BC). On the occasion of the 41st anniversary of the disciple-making ministry, let us see God's vision for restoration and revival through Ezekiel's vision.

### 1. Can these bones live? (1-3)

Let's read verses 1 and 2: "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 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." God led Ezekiel in the vision over a wide field full of dead bones. He led him through them everywhere. According to verse 11, these bones were the whole house of Israel. Perhaps they were the bones of King Zedekiah's sons and his great men and soldiers who had been killed in Riblah on the deportation route to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. They had once been great warriors and heroes. But because of their sin, they

were slaughtered. They fell into oblivion, and eventually only withered bones remained of them. For Ezekiel, this walking among the withered bones must have been very painful. They were the remains of his people or perhaps even of former friends and companions whom he had known. This was especially painful for him.

After we had to end the business mission in 2007 because of the financial crisis, my studies were also like a field full of dead bones. I had to go all over the field of the university hospital, sifting and arranging the withered parts of my studies everywhere, going to each of the different institutes and catching up on the courses and internships I had missed. After graduation, I had to apply for a job with my resume including a four-year delay and an aborted doctoral thesis. I can well understand Olaf, who is also applying at the moment. It was a very unpleasant and embarrassing situation for me. But it was the beginning of restoration.

Let us read verse 3: "He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know." Why had God led Ezekiel to this field full of withered bones and put him in such an uncomfortable situation? God asked a question that was very surprising to Ezekiel: "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel thought he had not heard correctly. He was surprised by God's question, so he could only bring out, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know." My German teacher always stressed that it is crucial in textual analysis to ask the right question. God's question to Ezekiel shows

that God was not concerned with the past, but that God was interested in bringing back to life the people of God who existed only in withered bones. In the midst of an impossible and hopeless situation, God had hope and vision for restoration and revival.

People tend to live in the past. Some people keep asking over and over again why some co-workers or even their own children left spiritual co-work. They even do this at the 41st anniversary service. In other congregations, doctoral theses have been written about this. They find all kinds of reasons: the servant of God, his co-workers, the environment, whatever. They use a lot of ifs and buts and derive interesting conclusions. At some point they become psychopaths. We must stop doing that. Instead, we may learn from God to ask the right question, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem lay broken and the people were in disgrace and misfortune, he asked, not humanly, "Why is this glorious city of Jerusalem broken? Why is this wall still not built after 120 years?" Instead, he heard God's question, "Son of man, can these bones live?" God mobilized the Israelites through Nehemiah, so that within just 52 days the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt. There are many people who mourn the past. But a person who struggles with God's vision and hope is needed for a wonderful story of restoration and spiritual revival.

Today we are celebrating the 41st anniversary of this disciple-making ministry. My parents started this Disciples' Making Ministry 41 years ago. They were students and foreigners. They could hardly speak German and had no title in theology. But they served the Disciples' Making Ministry through the Invitation Ministry, One-to-one Bible Study Ministry and the Life Community with Spiritual Authority. My father gave up his professional career and good earning potentials after his Ph.D. and served the Disciple Making Ministry full time. We saw an amazing and wonderful work of God in the past 40 years. Many local students be-

came disciples of Jesus and co-workers. They themselves served the Invitation and Bible study ministry, they led the Life Community, they planted God-centered and mission-centered house churches, and they served the pioneering work in Bonn and in various cities in Germany and even in China. We also saw God's work in the 2nd generation missionaries. They grew into spiritual workers. They also established house churches. We also saw the birth of the 3rd generation co-workers. From 2009 to 2012, this disciple-making ministry was used by God as the headquarters of the European Mission, so that at the ESBC 2009 God's hope for Europe was revealed anew and the disciple-making ministry in Europe could start again with hope after the turmoil of the 2nd wave of persecution. Many spiritual leaders around the world who serve numerically larger churches also visited and were encouraged by this disciple-making ministry. The Mustard Seed Orchestra of Bonn UBF had always been the core of large spiritual orchestras, e.g. the UBF orchestra, also the TeenStreet and MissionNet orchestras. Most recently, this ministry gave a great spiritual impetus through GLEF. Many Next Generation co-workers gathered to study God's Word. They studied the Bible through Factual Study from the beginning. They came to God with tears of repentance and decided to cooperate with their parents for the pioneering work. But where there is the mighty work of God, the devil is also very jealous. There have always been co-workers and young people who have gone their own way, for whatever reason. Last year, this disciple-making ministry was discredited because of the personal problem of one Next Generation woman from America. Many people uninvolved in the matter interfered. An investigative committee was set up by the headquarters of the community organization in America. It prepared a report concluding that my father and his family should be removed from the place where he had served for 40 years to a physically different place, and that this house church ministry should be dissolved and a foreign leader installed. This triggered a split at headquarters and the departure of long-time

staff. It is a sad story and also, from a human point of view, an unjust and undignified treatment. It also hurt me a lot. I asked myself, "How can something like this happen? Who is to blame? Why does the world hate us so much? Do we need to change? Do we have to make ourselves more lovable by compromising our faith?" It was really not easy to celebrate the 40th Anniversary worship service. My father, humanly speaking, has also been hit hard. The organization made him outwardly (like Jesus) a gardener and builder. But he did not let the situation or the evil in the world intimidate or overwhelm him, nor did he sink into self-pity. Although he struggled for 40 years and was dropped by the organization in the end, he continued to fight as a stalwart, even at 70 years old, with joy, and full of hope and vision and great expectation, taking God's question, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

## **2. Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! (4-8)**

Let us read verses 4-6: "Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD ! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and 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 .' What plan did God have to bring the dead bones back to life? God gave Ezekiel a clear instruction, "Prophesy over these bones and speak to them." Ezekiel was to prophesy to the withered bones. He was to speak to them even though they had no ears. He was to speak about what God wanted to do and what he intended to do with them: God wanted to bring breath into them and make them alive again. He wanted to cover them with sinews, flesh and skin, and they were to know that God is the Lord.

Let us look at verses 7 and 8: "So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling

sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them." Ezekiel obeyed God's command and prophesied. As he obeyed, something unexpected happened. There began to be a rustling among the bones. The bones stirred and the bones moved together. From the bones, which had been lying in confusion for a long time and were probably already broken, neat skeletons were formed. But this was not the end. Ezekiel was even more amazed when he observed how flesh and sinew suddenly grew on the bones. Finally, they were also covered with skin. They were real bodies again.

Here we see the amazing creative power of the Word of God. God's Word makes even dead bones come alive. Samuel made funny ticking noises, which bothered others a lot. He was also a problematic student. However, God's servant gave him the task of writing an essay on the life of Jesus according to Hebrews 5:8,9: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." Samuel obeyed and wrote a 17-page essay. That's when the power of God began to rush into his life. His bones came alive, composed and became strong through spiritual obedience, Deep Work, exercise and low-carbohydrate diet. His tic problem stopped. He was also able to glorify God this year by finishing with grade A straight (1.0 point average).

Last year, through the continuous prophesying of God's word, God let us hear His mighty roar despite persecution and Corona. Through the baptismal Bible study and the writing of the testimonies, God worked in our baptized so that they made a decision with 1 Peter 4:13 to joyfully participate in the sufferings of Jesus with their parents in their youth, no matter what the cost. Dasom made a decision of faith to stay in Germany; she was able to pass the German exam and decided to begin training as a nurse for world missions. God was glorified through

Joshua and Samuel through the glorious victory of faith at the high school graduation. God worked through GLEF and established our Next Generation as servants of His Word and spiritual leaders with spiritual authority. God also continues to lead the Online Mission, KBG Mission and Mustard Seed Mission. Time would be too short for me to talk about God's work through prophesying the Word of God. Through prophesying the Word of God, we hear the sound of God and see the work of God manifesting itself more and more clearly. Now we can slowly see the body that God is up to something with. Praise God!

How can we prophesy the Word of God and experience God's life-giving work? It is not witchcraft. In the past 41 years, we have seen that God has used and is using the one-to-one Bible study ministry and faithful spiritual life fellowship on a daily basis-not through a system or organization, but through the house church ministry-to restore and spiritually awaken the sheep and Next Generation from sin sickness. We may prophesy God's Word and experience the work of God in the next 40 years through the formation of 10,000 Bible study teams, through the spiritual life community starting from early morning prayer, and through the spiritual mobilization through leadership seminars and master classes, which will restore the young people and the Next Generation.

### 3. A vast army of God (9-10)

Let us read verse 9: "Then he said to me, Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" Ezekiel was to prophesy again, but this time not to the dry bones, but to the breath. The "breath" is mentioned nine times in this passage (including "spirit" in verse 1). With "breath" the spirit of God is meant. Ezekiel was to prophesy to the breath: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live." What happened? Let us

read verse 10: "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet--a vast army." When Ezekiel prophesied to the breath, the breath of God came into the restored, but still lifeless bodies, and made them alive. They no longer lay around passively. They actively stood on their feet and formed a vast army. To prophesy to the breath is to pray to God. We learn that the young people are restored and spiritually mobilized through a Bible teacher who prophesies God's word and who prays so that they stand up as an army of God. What does this mean?

Charles Studd most famous quote is, "Some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell, I want to run a rescue store within a yard of hell." Charles Studd encouraged Christians of his days not to be chocolate soldiers, but fighters and heroes who would lay down everything, even their lives, for the mission of God, no matter the cost. He encouraged the Christians in his time to have the DCD attitude ("Don't care a damn"). This attitude made British soldiers invincible: DCD about hardships, deprivations and danger to life. DCD about persecution from religious organization. DCD about sickness and death. DCD does not mean to be reckless or ignorant, but it means to be a soldier of Christ full of strength, love with prudence and discipline and with the absolute attitude towards the Great Commission of Jesus. For this, Charles Studd was slandered throughout his life as an extremist and fanatic who used indecent language. However, he himself was not impressed by this, but served the mission among the people in the heart of Africa with the DCD attitude of an elite soldier until his death. God used him as a vast spiritual army that stopped the relentless progress of Islam advancing from the north in Central Africa.

The missionaries and co-workers of UBF were and are also soldiers of Jesus Christ. Mother Sarah Barry refused to live in the safe and prosperous buildings of the American mission settlement. Instead, like the

Korean students, she lived and slept on the hard floor, ate Korean kimchi, spoke Korean, and also used the Korean toilet, serving them by living together. Many missionaries of UBF, humanly speaking, went as lay and migrant missionaries to Russia, China, Muslim countries, more than 90 countries of the world. They experienced incredible difficulties, language, residence permit, financial issues, personal sickness, problems of cooperation, and especially the pride and sin problem of young people while making disciples in another culture. But through the Word of God and with the DCD attitude, they became invincible fighters who overcame all difficulties and obstacles and continue to create fruit for God among the students and give glory to God by entering the Kingdom of God through many hardships. S. Peter Ryu was very much tempted to be a hypocrite together with the majority and save himself. But with the DCD attitude of a worthy warrior of Christ, he was able to overcome the temptation and remain faithful to God and be used as an army of God for the mobilization of the Next Generation. I also pray for Olaf that with DCD attitude of a soldier of Christ he will be able to overcome the challenge of finding work and housing and cooperates with Shepherd Jochen's house church for the pioneering work of Rhein-Sieg University.

I was also a chocolate soldier. I was full of fear for my future with the mentality as a small man with black hair and paid much attention to the opinion of the majority. But when my parents prophesied God's word to me and prayed to the breath, I became a fighter of faith who could write God's history of faith in computer examinations, business mission, center construction and through cooperation in the house church ministry. Now, I may be used by God to continue to write faith history as an army of God for the pioneering of medical school, online mission and M-mission.

Our co-workers and Next Generation are outwardly ordinary employees, mothers, housewives, and students, respectively. But through DCD Spirit through early morning

prayer, common life, GLEF, master courses, they live as invincible fighters of God and future global spiritual leaders for spiritual revival and world mission. Paul Ezra is also growing as a soldier of Christ, "Yes!" As God's army we write history of faith for the K (=KBG/Korean) / M (=Muslim) / O (=Online) / S (=Senfkorn/Mustard Seed) mission in the time of temptation and Corona. At present, the religious organizations are propagating the "loving spiritual community". From this it is not far to Church of Unity. What would Charles Studd have to say about this? At the same time, the staff of this disciple-making ministry has been described by the religious organizations as "North Korean style" and the servant of God as a "North Korean dictator." It is a very extreme and deliberately misleading comparison. It shows more about those who say such things than those who are being spoken about. The point is: if Christians call us soldiers, then we may be proud to receive such recognition.

Victory in the spiritual war for spiritual revival and world mission does not happen through a numerically large organization with many members, board of directors and ethics committees. It is never the number that matters. One person who is willing to lay down his life for the mission of God, no matter what the cost, is used by God as His mighty army. That is why God commanded Gideon to send home 29,700 decent soldiers and "swallow" 120,000 Midianites with 300 determined soldiers who were willing to live for God and die like dogs. In history, the Greeks, led by 300 defiant Spartans, taught the vastly superior Persians the fear of God at the Battle of Thermopylae. Spiritually speaking, we are soldiers and generals who serve the spiritual work of conquest through early prayer, through the disciple-making ministry, through life together, through the mobilization of the Next Generation, through online mission, through M-mission. God may bless you to be used as His vast spiritual army for the pioneering of the faculties of Bonn University, Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences and Koblenz University, further through the K/O/M/S-Mission in the

coming 40 years as far as Istanbul, Cairo and Dubai, as far as Cambodia, Cartagena and North Korea!

#### **4. God's hope and vision for Israel respectively for Germany and Europe (11-14)**

Let us look at verses 11-14. After the vision, God revealed to Ezekiel what He intended to do with His people. God's people had no hope. They said, "Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off." (11a) But God will bring them up from their graves and bring them back to their land (12). Then they will know that God is the Lord (13.14).

When we look at ourselves or at the spiritual situation in Germany and Europe through the lens of the secular and mainstream Christian media, we have much reason to say, "Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off." We want to settle for the status quo. In Georg Müller's time, people said, "Francke's time was a whole different time." Today, many Christians also say, "Today is a very different time." But history is not written by situation nor by fashion. History is written by God and God's people. In verses 11-14, the word "will" is repeated six times. God's will and God's plan are clearly spiritual restoration and revival, completely independent of situation and time. Instead of swallowing in self-pity or in the past or making excuses for the situation, we, like Ezekiel, may work with God here and now for spiritual restoration and revival. We may have confidence because God is Lord, yesterday, today and forever.

God wants to bring up from the graves the spiritual dry bones of the young people at all 1,700 universities in Europe. God again wants to give his breath to the young people, so that they are used as spiritual leaders, heroes and conquerors as his vast army. He wants to use Germany as a shepherd nation and Europe as a missionary sending continent for the world mission and M-mission. This alone is all important. God has spoken it and is doing it. We have experienced in the past 41 years that God is

the Lord. We are also to experience that God is the Lord in the next 40 years. Amen.

Today God has shown us His hope and vision for a field full of dry bones. Through this, we see God's hope for the next 40 years:

1. Instead of mourning the past, work with the right question and direction: "Can these bones live?"
2. Prophecy God's word by forming one-to-one Bible study teams and spiritual life together and by teaching spiritual heritage.
3. Don't be a chocolate Christian. Live as an invincible soldier of Christ as an army of God with DCD spirit for making disciples of Jesus among the young people and the next generation, and further for the world mission through K/M/O/S mission.
4. Work together with God for the spiritual revival of Germany and Europe and experience that God is the Lord, even today.