

Seoul Grace Community
What is Sin? The “Dry Bones” Sin
Ezekiel 37
October 23, 2016

1. Introduction

- a. The Bible gives us a very complex and nuanced understanding of the human condition—“sin” is more cancer than car wreck—it typically eats at us and destroys us slowly rather than obviously and suddenly
- b. Ezekiel is shown what spiritual “dryness” truly means for people who choose a way other than serving and being sustained by God
 - i. Can the bones live without God? Can we live? Do we have breath and life? Or are we dry bones?
 - ii. How do we find hope in the midst of hopelessness? (cf. v. 11)
- c. Context: Ezekiel was a prophet to God’s people in the land of Babylon
 - i. They were followers of God, living in a foreign culture and trying to apply their faith in the big city
 - ii. God had asked them to stay true to him yet they turned towards the norms and ideologies of the culture surrounding them
 - iii. In exile in Babylon, they had lost hope by trying to be their own masters—and here we get a vision of what the consequences of this choice is: the valley of dry bones

2. Dry Bones

- a. What’s the sin here? Death—(v. 11—“our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost, we are cut off completely)
 - i. Death: Here is a vision of dry bones—not just skeletons or dead bodies, but dry, disjointed bones spread across a valley (referencing Hell)
 - ii. You may not think about your imminent death but it does a great deal to determine how we live today
 - iii. The vision shows that they are dried out—they had lost their national identity as a people of God
 - iv. Hope was dying as well because their hope had been one as a nation to be blessed (refer to the covenant God establishes with Abraham to bless his descendants)
 - v. This was their purpose and their hope for life and yet now they are “cut off” (i.e. No more covenant, no more relationship with God, no more pulse—spiritual exile.)
- b. This is a picture of our personal exile when we choose anything other than God to govern us and give us hope—no more relationship with the source of life that we were always meant to have
 - i. See? The curse of sin isn't just punishment for wrongdoing—it's dry bones and having no substance.
 - ii. It's like being told you're a “nobody.”
 - iii. It's being found of no consequence in the end—you can't do it and you're just wasting away
 - iv. Someone can tell you that you did bad things and this may make you feel guilty but someone can tell you that you mean nothing--you're insignificant--and this will crush you
 - v. Sin is more cancer than car wreck—the illusion of control that leads us to ultimately see how insignificant we are

3. New Life

- a. The opposite of this particular “sin” is to have bodies—to matter, be made of consequence (see v. 6)
- b. And what is God’s answer? Resurrection (not mere rules or standards of accomplishment, but the very spirit of God in the form of his breath (v. 10)
 - i. And we see this again in John 20 when Jesus breathes on his apostles to give them life, hope, purpose
 - ii. Jesus gives us escape from the ultimate exile (i.e. death which ends in no meaning or consequence)
- c. This is why we should rage against the unnatural condition of death and decay
 - i. Dylan Thomas to his dying father—not acquiescing to death
 1. Do not go gentle into that good night,

2. Because there's something wrong with death—it wasn't meant to be natural and we weren't meant to just die to sin as a bunch of dry bones
- d. How do we get ultimate hope and a long term perspective on our current life (along with its sorrows, stress, struggles and challenges)?
- i. Look to the sanctuary God promises (v. 28)
 - ii. The sanctuary/tabernacle was where you could go and surely encounter God—to have peace and rest in your heart and here God promises it to be with his people “forevermore”
 - iii. But how? The exiles here are dry bones in Babylon—there is no temple/sanctuary/tabernacle for them to find comfort in.
 - iv. What, then is God referring to? The “one shepherd” of v. 24
 1. This is a good promise of having someone who will lead us, comfort us, be with us even in death—and we know of the fulfillment (John 1—it says that Jesus “dwelt” among us but that word is actually a verb meaning “to tabernacle” among us)
 2. Jesus is the place we go to find rest, security—to know that we matter and won't end up dry and worthless
 3. We get hope—fleshiness—we matter because he came to dwell with us!!
 4. Remember, it was Jesus who said I thirst on the cross because he was being poured out for us so that we have the confidence to know we won't end up as dry bones
- e. How?
- i. We have to hear the truth.
 1. God asks Ezekiel to preach to the bones—to preach to people who won't listen (Indeed, Ezekiel was probably martyred because people didn't want to hear the spiritual truth of their “dryness”).
 2. We need to hear the truth of our own dryness—and then the truth of the gospel gives hope.
 3. Not just a nice sentiment with symbols. But truth. Sentiment doesn't help someone in hard times or suffering or poverty. But the truth of Jesus does.
 - ii. How ultimately? He was cut off from the land of the living. And you get your gravestone removed.
 1. You may not spend much time thinking about your death. But if you do it is scary. You lose control. You lose power. You lose self.
 2. This was exactly what happened to Jesus. So that we get spared from it.