

# The God Who Gives Life to the Dead

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's pray together, and will you join me as we pray for our city and ourselves this morning? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, great and glorious God, what a privilege it is to worship you this morning, to align our hearts to truth, and to declare your wonder and your praises.

Father, you are the one true and everlasting God. You are the creator of all that exists in heaven and on earth. Everything that is visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, rulers or authorities, all things were created through you and for you.

And we've come to declare that truth this morning, to remind our hearts of it, to be washed in your goodness and your grace. Father God, thank you for the truth contained in your scriptures, that those of us in Christ, that our sins are like scarlet, you wash us white as new.

That our sin is red as crimson, you, God, wash us whiter than will. God, in that place, in that we place our hope and our confidence. It is on this truth that we stand, in that confidence we come before your throne to pray and to worship and to honor you this morning.

Father God, this morning we pray for the families in Hong Kong. We know, God, that so many families in our city are hurting, God. Marriages are taking strain. Parents are under pressure to give their kids the very best they can.

[ 1 : 24 ] Kids feel the pressure to perform from such a young age. God, we bring this area of our city's life before you and we ask for the redeeming power of the gospel to be at work.

Lord, we pray for our own marriages and our own parenting. That though, God, we are still sinners, will you let the gospel shape our hearts, God? That we will be better husbands and wives, better mothers and fathers.

Father, we pray too that as followers of Jesus, we will be salt and light in this area in Hong Kong. Help us to know how to come alongside and encourage and strengthen those whose lives are struggling.

Father, we pray especially for your amazing anointing to rest upon Kristen and Sylvie this week as they start the parenting course. God, may your truth ring out with power and transform our parenting.

May we see it for what it is. May we see what it is that you've called us to. May we know what it means and what it looks like to shape and guide our children's hearts, God, not just their behavior. Help us, we pray.

[ 2 : 25 ] Father, this morning we want to pray for the Bridge Church, for Eric and Justine. We pray for your special anointing and grace to rest upon them. We ask, Lord, that you anoint their ministry there.

Pray for Eric's preaching, for him to preach with power and authority. Pray for their leading of the bridge, God. We ask, God, that you blow the wind of the Spirit through the church and cause men and women to love you freshly, to see their need for the gospel, to confess sin and run to you.

We pray, God, for a wave of gospel renewal to take place as your word is opened and taught at the Bridge, Lord. And finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves as well. Oh, God, come and let the Spirit breathe upon us, God.

Cause new spiritual life to take place in our own hearts. Lord, we confess that often our hearts grow cold and hard towards you. Oh, God, come and revive our hearts, we pray.

Open our spiritual eyes to see you. Father, we pray that you will awaken our hearts to you again and cause spiritual life and power to change us and empower us for mission. May we be great ambassadors in our city.

[ 3 : 30 ] May we be salt and light. May we take the word of the gospel to our city because you, God, have taken a hold of us. Come and do this in our midst, we pray. In your wonderful name, amen.

Amen. Great. Jefferson's going to come and read God's word to us. And so let's listen to that. The scripture reading comes from Ezekiel chapter 37.

Please follow along in your bulletins or on the screen. The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley.

It was full of bones, and he led me around them. And behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley. And behold, they were very dry.

And he said to me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, you know. Then he said to me, prophesy over these bones and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

[ 4 : 42 ] Thus says the Lord God to these bones, behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.

So I prophesied, as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling. And the bones came together, bone to its bone.

And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, thus says the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.

So I prophesied as he commanded me, and a breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then he said to me, son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.

[ 6 : 01 ] Behold, they say, our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost. We are indeed cut off. Therefore prophesy and say to them, thus says the Lord God, behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people.

And I will bring you into the land of Israel, and you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from the graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land.

Then you shall know that I am the Lord. I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord. This is the word of God. All right. Thank you, Jefferson. Great. Well, if you're new here this morning, my name is Kevin, and wonderful to bring God's word to us.

If you are not new, you will know that as a church, we've been working our way through Matthew's gospel. And when we got to the Sermon on the Mount, we got to the part where Jesus talks about his followers being like salt and light, that he sends out into the world as his representatives.

And when we got there, we decided to pause there for a couple of weeks and to consider this theme of mission and evangelism. What does it mean to be Christ's ambassadors, Christ's representatives in the world?

[ 7 : 26 ] And so two weeks ago, Chris spoke from Matthew chapter 9 and 10, how Jesus says he's like the shepherd that sees the people that are like lost sheep, and his heart breaks them.

And so he sends his disciples out and says, go and call back these people that don't know me any longer. And then last week, we looked from 2 Corinthians 5 at how God sends us out as his ambassadors to speak his message on his behalf.

And it talks about how we implore those that don't know Christ, be reconciled to God. And so we are working our way through and considering this theme.

Now today, we get to our final passage of Scripture in this sub-theme on what does it mean to be salt and light into our city. And then next week, we're going to pick up again in the Sermon on the Mount, and Justin Ma is going to be preaching next Sunday.

And so we're looking forward to that. So today, we get to Ezekiel chapter 37. And the context of the passage is in Ezekiel is about how the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, have lost their way.

[ 8 : 29 ] They have walked away from God in their rebellion and their sin. And the consequence is that things are not going well for Israel. Just like Adam and Eve, they are cut off from God.

Life has become difficult, and the ramifications for their sin and their rebellion are playing out in the whole nation, in every area of life. And so that's what most of the book of Ezekiel is about.

But God has not abandoned them. He has not forgotten them. And so in his grace and his mercy, he reaches out to them and he calls them back to himself. And he promises to restore them.

But it's not a simplistic restoration. He's not just restoring their religious observation or their religious duties. It's nothing short of an entire makeover.

God has got to revolutionize their hearts. And it's a restoration that will include them coming back from slavery to the land, the promised land. It is a restoration that includes justice and righteousness in the nation.

[ 9 : 32 ] And in short, God promises to restore them in a way that will touch every area of national life. Politically, economically, socially, justice-wise, spiritually, relationally.

Every area of life is going to be touched as God moves in on them. And what is God's motivation for this? Well, he tells us throughout the book of Ezekiel, but in chapter 36, the one just before, God says, I will take your heart of stone and I will give you a new heart.

I will give you a heart of flesh. And then he says this. He says, I will do this not just for your sake, O Israel, that I'm about to act, but for the sake of my name, says God.

Because you have profaned it and I will vindicate it for my own glory, says God. And so God promises this complete revival and making new his people.

And he ends off with chapter 36 saying, and then all the earth will know that I am God. And that brings us to chapter 37, our passage today. Now, as we look at this passage through the lens of the gospel in our own hearts and mission evangelism, we're going to see four things.

[ 10 : 42 ] We're going to see what does this passage tell us about our own hearts? What does it tell us as we seek to be missionaries into our city? What hope does it give us for our own hearts? And what hope does it give us as we try to take this message out into the city?

So we're going to look at this passage through these two lenses, our own lives and this call of God to be his ambassadors into the city. And we're going to constantly interchange between these two applications. Does that make sense?

Okay. So let's dive in. The first thing we're going to look at is a hopeless situation. A hopeless situation. Look at this passage, how it starts off.

Ezekiel gets a vision from God. And in this vision, God takes him to a valley. And it's a plain valley. But it's not a beautiful scenic valley between, you know, snow-capped mountains.

It's a horrific sight. Because in front of Ezekiel, he sees this valley is filled, covered with human skeletons. And God takes Ezekiel down into this valley to walk amongst them.

[ 11 : 46 ] And two things grab Ezekiel's attention straight away. The first one is that there are not just a few bones scattered here and there. The valley is completely covered with them.

Look at verse 2. It says, He led me amongst them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley. Everywhere he looks. This isn't just, you know, an animal that died in the wilderness or some unfortunate man that ran out of water in the desert.

This is millions of people and their remains. The valley is completely covered with these skeletons. The second thing you notice is how exceedingly dry they are.

These are not the bones of someone that's recently died. They are bleached white by the sun. There is not a single remnant of life or sinew or meat that's left on them.

The vultures and the scavengers have licked these bones dry. And these bones have been here for a long time. They have been bleached dry by the sun, and there is no hint of any life left on them.

[ 12 : 48 ] They are bone dry, as it were. Excuse the pun. Now, this may seem like a strange vision to us, but as you read the book of Ezekiel, you'll actually know exactly what's going on.

And Ezekiel knows exactly what's going on. This is the nation of Israel, and it's a picture of Israel's condition. This is how God sees them. Now, this is not how they see themselves.

They think of themselves as doing quite all right. I mean, they're not perfect. They know they've sinned a bit. I guess they could have been a little more committed. They're in exile.

But they think of themselves as we're not all that bad, especially compared to the nations around us. I mean, those guys are really bad. We're not perfect, but not as bad as them. And they go to the temple every now and then.

They offer some sacrifices. They maybe lead a CG. They serve in the kids' ministry. They bring their offering to God, except it's a false security. Because when God looks at their condition, this is how He sees them.

[ 13 : 48 ] When God looks at their heart, they're not just a little bit off color. They haven't just lost their way or a little bit under the weather. When God looks at the state of their heart, He sees that they are spiritually dead.

He's dead. And friends, the Bible tells us that this isn't only the condition of Israel 600 BC. This is in fact the condition of humanity.

This is all of our condition. The natural state of human beings is that we are spiritually dead to God. And that includes yourself and includes myself. That's all of us.

It's the very best human being you can think of. The very worst human being you can think of. In our natural state, apart from God working in us, our natural spiritual condition is that we are dead to the God who made us for relationship with Him.

Now, what does this mean to be dead to God? Well, it means a couple of things. The first thing is what theologians describe our state as being totally depraved. And what that means is that as humans, we are not as bad as we could be.

[ 14 : 53 ] But what it means is that every area of our lives has been affected by the pollution and the infection of sin. There is not an area of our lives or our consciousness or our humanity that is not affected or tainted by the brokenness of sin.

You think of the way we approach relationships, our sexuality, our work, our careers, our leisure, our friendships, even the way we approach religion.

All of these are affected and tainted and damaged by sin. All of life is affected by our sinfulness. Secondly, it means that there is no spiritual good inside of us.

And that is, there is no good in relation to God in our natural state. There is nothing inside of us that we can point to or rely on that will help us draw closer to God. Now, that doesn't mean that human beings can't do anything good.

Of course, we can. Even people that don't believe in God can do good. You can raise money for the poor and serve in shelters. You can do good things. But what it means is there is nothing fundamentally inside of us that makes us turn away from the love of self towards the love of God.

[ 15 : 58 ] And then the third thing that it means is that it means we are utterly unable to save and rescue ourselves. Think of somebody that is dead. Can they take themselves to the hospital?

Can they administer CPR on themselves or phone 911? I need an ambulance quickly. I'm already dead. No, someone that's dead is completely at the mercy of some great physician.

If you're dead, you cannot save or rescue yourself. You cannot take yourself to the emergency room. And that's true of all of us spiritually. There's nothing inside of us that we can do to rescue ourselves.

We cannot go on some pilgrimage or raise some money or give a donation to the poor. Sometimes people come to me and they say, I really want to get closer to God, but let me just work on myself spiritually.

And then when I'm feeling closer to God, then I'll come back to church. Or sometimes people say to me, Kevin, I want to do this Christianity thing. Let me just work on me. Let me just get a bit better, remove some sin, improve my life, and then I'll come and receive God's grace.

[ 17 : 03 ] No, you can't do that. There's nothing we can do, nothing inside ourselves that draws us closer to God. We need to be revived before we can draw near.

Think of how Paul writes about this in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians, he says, No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.

They are foolishness to him. He cannot understand them. They are spiritually discerned. Or Romans chapter 8, Paul says, The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's laws.

Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. And the reason why this is the case is actually given to us in the passage.

Because think about, before we get there, think about in Hong Kong, what do we love to do? Or what do we do for our family members that have passed away? What do we do at their burial sites?

[ 18 : 00 ] We go and sweep them. We go and clean them up. Every now and then we take flowers. We make sure they're well arranged. And we look after the burial sites of our ancestors. Don't we? Well, in the ancient Near East culture, the burial of the dead was even more important to them than it is to us in modern day Hong Kong.

And the reason is not just for the grieving family members behind, but for the person that had passed away, a decent burial was very important. Because it symbolized that they would get peace in the afterlife.

If somebody was left unburied or just left to the elements and to the animals, it was the sign of an ultimate insult, the ultimate curse. It was a sign that everlasting suffering into the afterlife.

What's happening here? As Ezekiel walks amongst these bones, God's sending a message. He's telling us that these bones are the remains of somebody, not just that died in battle or not just that died in famine.

The reason these bones are here is because of some curse, is because of divine judgment. And friends, that's what the Bible tells us is our problem. The result of our sin and our rebellion against God is not just that life is difficult, is that we are under a divine judgment.

[ 19 : 14 ] And the result is that we are left spiritually dead. Dead to God, dead to ourselves, dead to the life that God created us for, and we have no hope of saving or rescuing ourselves.

Ephesians chapter 2 puts it like this. He says, As for you, as for me, we were dead in our trespasses and our sins, in which we once walked, following the curse of this world, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body, and being by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

Our situation is hopeless. Second point is an impossible assignment. Now let's think about this. Jesus comes to us and he says, outside of Christ, people are spiritually dead, unable to save themselves, unable to rescue themselves, and now I want you, Watermark, to go as my ambassadors and to speak to them and to tell them the wonderful message of Jesus.

Go into all the world and baptizing them, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Jesus sends us out as his ambassadors, his representatives, and he says, go and take my message and tell people to respond.

Now here's the question. How well do dead people respond to messages or instructions? I don't know about you, but I don't think they respond very well.

[ 20 : 45 ] If I were to die here on stage right now, what would happen? Well, I hope somebody would call an ambulance. I hope somebody would try CPR, would take me up to Queen Mary.

Claire might run up and say, please don't die on me now, or something like that. But I'll tell you what you probably wouldn't do. You probably wouldn't come and say, Kevin, now this is not a very convenient time to die on us.

You're in the middle of your sermon. I want you to go to the bathroom, wash your face, sort yourself out, and then come back here. We're all waiting for you. Why wouldn't you say that? Because dead people don't listen to instructions, right?

Well, why not? Because when we're dead, that's how it works. Well, friends, in many ways, what this means is that the tasks of mission and evangelism is an impossible one.

Jesus sends us out and says, go and take my message to people who are spiritually dead and unable to hear the word of the gospel. In many ways, Jesus is sending us out and he's asking us to preach to a graveyard.

[ 21 : 50 ] Imagine you go to a graveyard and standing in front of you are tombstones and you say, right, this morning's message comes from Matthew chapter 4. And Jesus says, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

Now, who would like to respond? Just raise your hand, anybody here, and I'll love to pray for you. It's not going to happen. It's not going to happen. And Ezekiel knows this. Look at what he says in verse 3.

God asks him a question and he says, Ezekiel, can these bones live? And Ezekiel answers very cleverly. He says, oh God, you alone know.

Which is kind of his way of saying, God, it's impossible, but because you are God, I'm not going to say it's impossible, so I'm just going to sit on the fence. And so he says, God, I don't know.

You alone know these things. And then God gives him an impossible assignment because he asks him to speak to the dead bones and to tell them to live. An impossible assignment.

[ 22 : 45 ] Point number three. Our only hope. Now, let's look at what happens here. God tells Ezekiel to do this ridiculous thing. He tells him to speak to the dead bones.

But he tells him not just to say anything. He says, speak my word. Look what he says here. He says, prophesy over these bones. Now, to prophesy isn't to tell the future.

To prophesy is to speak God's word or to speak on behalf of God, God's message using your own words. And so God says, Ezekiel prophesy, speak my message on behalf of me to these dead bones.

And so look at what Ezekiel does. Verse four. He says, oh, dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Just by the way, that's one of the reasons why as a church, we preach through books of the Bible.

We preach expositionally. Because our job is to bring God's word, not my word. You don't want to hear my word. That doesn't do anything. Who cares what Kevin or Chris' opinion is?

[ 23 : 45 ] We want to bring God's word because God's word breathes life. And so Ezekiel says, hear the word of the Lord. This is what the Lord says. Behold, I will cause my breath to enter into you and you shall live.

I will lay sinews upon you and cause flesh to come upon you and I will cover you with skin and I'll put breath into you and you shall live. And you will know that I am the Lord. Now, just on a side note, in Hebrew, as far as I understand, the word for breath and the word for spirit as in God's Holy Spirit is the same word.

It's the word ruah. And so in a sense, there's a play on words here. God says, I will put my breath in you but at the same time, he's saying, I'll put my Holy Spirit in you. I'll put my spirit which causes life.

And so Ezekiel, look what he does. Verse seven. He says, so I prophesied as God commanded me. And what happens? As I spoke God's word to these lifeless bones, there was a sound and behold, there was a rattling and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

And as I looked, there were sinews on them and flesh had come upon them and skin covered them. As these bones come together and a body starts to form and sinew and muscle and flesh and skin and suddenly they start to look like a great army but there's still something missing.

[ 25 : 01 ] Verse eight. There was still no breath, no spirit inside of them. There's no life in them. They may look like human beings, they may look like an army but they're just corpses. There's nothing there. Then God said to me, prophesy to the breath, to the spirit and so I prophesied as he commanded and the breath came into them and they lived and they stood on their feet an exceedingly great army.

And friends, this actually is a picture of the essence of salvation. This is what it means to be a Christian. This is, to be a Christian is to have new spiritual life breathed into our hearts and our souls, into our spiritual being such that where we were once dead we are now given new life.

To be a Christian is not somebody who intellectually agrees with the world view or even intellectually agrees with everything that's in the Bible, though it is true. Serving God and being involved in ministry or leading a CG or serving in the kids ministry, that doesn't make you a Christian.

Friends, a Christian is someone who's been saved, who's been converted, who's had spiritual life implanted into their souls so that their dead spirit is now made alive and they are now a new creation as we heard last week.

Someone who was once unable to reach out to God and love and serve Him is now, his heart has been made new because God breathes His Spirit upon them. There's a wonderful story of a man by the name of William Haslam in England in the 1850s.

[ 26 : 25 ] And William Haslam, I think we've got a picture of him, Uncle Will, was a preacher. He was a pastor and he lived in the town of Cornwall in England in the 1850s.

But even though he was a pastor, he actually wasn't a Christian. He thought he was a Christian but later on in life he realized that he wasn't. And his heart was cold, his heart was hard towards God and towards others and he was very judgmental and everybody in the town knew it.

The whole town knew Haslam was a hard, judgmental man. But what happened was one day his gardener went to go and visit another church and he became a Christian.

And his life changed. His whole life changed. And then some people in William Haslam's church went to go hear this preacher and they got converted. And their lives got full of life and joy and William Haslam saw something change in his gardener.

And he was very perplexed by it and challenged by it. And he realized that his gardener now had something that he didn't. And so he went to go see another pastor on the outskirts of Cornwall town.

[ 27 : 33 ] And this pastor said to him, if I was dying on my deathbed, I wouldn't call for you for you are not converted. And William Haslam was greatly troubled. And so the next Sunday morning at church, he didn't feel like preaching and so he thought, I will just read a few passages of scripture from the New Testament.

I will say a few kind words and then I'll go home. And so he stands up and he reads from the gospel and he reads a passage about how Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees.

And he says a few kind words but he's not in the mood. And while he's speaking, while he's preaching, he hears this voice in his own head. And the voice says to him, Haslam, you don't believe that Jesus can save you just like the Pharisees.

And in that moment, while he's preaching, he says this. Let me, find it for me, sorry. He says, I do not remember at all what I said but I felt a wonderful light and joy coming into my soul.

And I was beginning to see for the first time what the Pharisees could not. And so he gets saved by his own message. While he's preaching, he gets converted, he gets born again. But what happened was the congregation saw it.

[ 28 : 42 ] They saw something changing inside of him. And there was a visiting preacher in the congregation that day. And so the preacher stands up and says, the preacher's just got converted. He's just got converted.

Hallelujah. And the whole church breaks into outro and singing and the meeting, there's an outro and things are not the same. And what actually happened after that is Haslam goes on and there's a revival that comes through Cornwall.

His whole life changed and he started preaching the gospel for the first time and people were getting saved everywhere. But the point is this. The point is, friends, you can be a preacher.

You can be an elder in your previous church. You can be an elder in this church. You can be a CG leader. You can serve in kids ministry. You can be very involved in doing Christian things and still not be born again because the Spirit of God has not come upon you.

R.C. Sproul said it like this. God doesn't just throw a life preserver to a drowning man. He goes to the bottom of the sea and he pulls a dead corpse from the bottom of the ocean.

[ 29 : 45 ] He lifts him up onto the bank and then he breathes into him the breath of life and he makes him a new person. And so Ephesians chapter 2, we read it earlier, goes on like this.

He says, As for us, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Any hope for us? No hope whatsoever but for God. We were dead in our sins. No chance of living. But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us?

Friends, just think about that. Why does God save us? Well, Ezekiel 36 tells us for the praise of his name, for his own glory. But secondly, because of the great love with which he loved us.

Because of God's incessant, overarching love for us. When we were dead in our sins, God made us alive together with Christ. And he raised us up with him and he seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

It is by grace that you have been saved. Not through works. This is not your own doing. It is a gift of God so that no one may boast. And so remember in Matthew chapter 19, Jesus is talking to his disciples about the impossibility of somebody getting saved on their own works.

[ 30 : 55 ] And the disciples say, Well, then who can get saved? And Jesus says, With man, this is impossible. But with God, all things are impossible. Ezekiel, can these dry bones live?

Friend, can you get saved? With man, this is impossible. But with God, all things are possible. Friends, the only hope that you and I have of ever getting saved, getting born again, getting made new, of having our sins forgiven, of having new life inside of us, is if God comes and performs divine CPR on us, if God comes and breathes the breath of his spirit into us, and causes us to be made new again.

And that leads us to our fourth point, which is our only confidence in missions. You see, the last three weeks we've been speaking about how Jesus sends us out as salt and light.

Jesus sends us out as his ambassadors. Jesus sends us out to go and call the people that don't know him to come and know him and give them the hope of the gospel. And at first impression, we might ask, Well, why speak?

If this is an impossible task, why witness? Why evangelize? We cannot give spiritual life to the dead. What's the use in preaching to a graveyard? Except if God does give life to the dead.

[ 32 : 14 ] Except, friends, if our only confidence is that the God who sends us out as ambassadors is the same God who works miracles to give life to the dead. And the way that he's chosen to do that is through the simplicity of preaching the gospel and witnessing to the wonder of who Jesus is.

I remember hearing a story a few years ago of a man, I think he was an American man, that felt like God was calling him to be a missionary into Pakistan. Now, if you know Pakistan, it's one of the most hostile countries in the world for Christians to live in.

Christians are constantly being killed and hung and slaughtered. And even more so if they try and witness, if they try and share the gospel with others, you are writing your own death sentence.

And so as this man spoke to his family and his friends, they're all saying, why would you do that? Surely there are other places that are less hostile, less threatening, more accepting.

Why not go somewhere else where they'll be more receptive to the gospel? And his answer was this, because it is God who gives life to the dead. And if God has chosen to give life to the dead, there is no one and nothing that can stop his plans.

[ 33 : 24 ] Friends, you and I may look at our circumstances and our friends and you may think, God, they'll never become Christians. They'll never admit that their sin is in need of God. And to be honest, I often think like that in my humanness.

Sometimes I think, oh God, that person's never going to believe it. But friends, at the heart of the gospel is the truth that God saves sinners. Billy Graham doesn't save anyone. Tim Keller doesn't save anyone.

You and I don't save anyone. God saves people and therefore we can be full of faith that in the most difficult circumstances, in the most trying circumstances, in the hardest places of our city and our nation and our world, in the most unlikely territories on the planet, God is calling people to himself.

He's breathing fresh life and spirit into their bones. And what this means is two things. Two very simple applications. One, don't get discouraged. Don't get discouraged.

Sometimes you may feel like, God, I've tried to share the gospel with my spouse or my sister or some family member for 20 years and they're not hearing it. Don't give up on them because it's not you that saves them.

[ 34 : 27 ] It's not how well you articulate it. It's not your perfect reasoning. It's God who takes your simple words and breathes life into their spirit. And one day, out of the blue, they may just come to you and say, I believe.

I believe. Don't get discouraged. Don't give up. Keep on sharing the wonder of Jesus. Second application is this. As a church together and as individuals, we need to be those who pray and who pray and who pray and who pray.

J.R. Packer says it like this. Every time we pray, we confess our impotence. That means our inability and God's sovereignty. And prayer is both the highest privilege and the highest duty of the Christians.

It's a privilege because it allows us to partner with the sovereign God. the miracles that God wants to do. He invites us into His miracle and it's a privilege to partner with Him with His dealings and His workings.

But it's also the highest duty because it aligns us with the truth. It reminds us that we are completely and utterly unable to effect a change in people's lives. And yet, God does give life to the dead.

[ 35 : 36 ] And it's the highest privilege because it reminds us of that truth that we are not able but God is able. Chris reminded me this week, remember, in the book of Acts, the disciples are going around telling everyone around Jesus.

They're getting in trouble for it. They're getting thrown into jail. They're getting persecuted. Some of them have been killed. What do they do? Do they back off? No. They pray. And what do they pray?

They pray, God give us boldness. God give us courage not to step. Stop. But the second thing they pray is God let your power be upon us. Do miracles, we pray.

God do what only you can do. Let your power come upon us that will change people's lives. Friends, if we're going to be a church that's obedient to Jesus and fill Hong Kong with the message of Jesus, if we're going to be faithful to this task, how we need to become a church that prays?

See, friends, the same theological conviction that drives us to believe that confidence before men, that God by His sovereign spirit changes people, is the same conviction that ought to make us humble and persistent before God because it's God that changes lives.

[ 36 : 43 ] And therefore, we need to become men and women that pray. Pray in your CGs. Pray every day on the way to work. Pray while you're making dinner for your family.

Pray while you're in the shower. Pray for people that don't know God. Pray for your own heart. Pray, pray, pray. O Ezekiel, can these bones live? Watermark, can this city be saved?

O Hong Kong, can you come to know the wonder of Jesus? Can God breathe in you and power in His spirit and save marriages and families and deliver addicts? Soften hearts, hear the word of the Lord.

Behold, I will cause my spirit to enter you and you shall live and then you will know that I am the Lord your God. Let's pray together. Can I maybe ask you to stand with me and I want to encourage us to close our eyes and let's pray together.

O Lord God, we we come before you God because you alone change lives, God.

[ 37 : 59 ] God, we know where the power lies. It lies in you. It lies in the power of your spirit. God, as we heard this morning in Adrian's life and so many of us can testify, God, when you saved us, you caused us to be born again.

You put new life in us, God. We were dead in our sins but you, Christ, have raised us up again. And for that, we praise you and we rejoice, God. God, I pray that we will be a church that rejoices.

I pray put deep joy in our heart, God. May we celebrate the gospel. friends, I want to pray for some of us maybe that are not Christians.

Maybe you're not saved. You may have thought you were a Christian. You may have served in many areas, in many ways. But maybe it's just been religious duty. It's been dead works. Maybe your life has never been made new.

Your heart has never come to know the wonder of Jesus. Like Haslam, you've never experienced the life and joy of serving him. Friends, this morning, why don't you come to him? Why don't you confess your sin?

[ 39 : 03 ] Confess that you have no hope apart from Jesus forgiving you. Confess that there's nothing you can do to save yourself. And then surrender. Come to him and say, Jesus, please come and breathe life into me.

Come and forgive me of my sins and make me new. Father God, come and do that. Come and save us, Lord, we pray.

I pray, God, this morning that some people will be born again for the very first time. God, come and put a life and a joy in our hearts as the Spirit of God takes hold of us, we pray, God.

And then, friends, I want to pray for us, maybe some of us who just feel like we've been dry for a long time. Maybe we are Christians, but that joy, that spark, that life of the Holy Spirit, it's been a long time since we felt that.

We feel like we are embers that are dying out in a fire and we want the wind of God to come and blow and freshly cause our hearts to be a flame for God. Friends, if that's you, why don't you cry to God and ask him to come and do that?

[ 40 : 16 ] Ask him to come and blow the wind of the Spirit and to freshly cause spiritual life to take hold of your heart. Oh God, come and do this. Oh God, come and do this.