



Rethinking Our Lives

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Rethink Church & Rethink Mission Conference**

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open with me to Ezekiel 36. This is not where I originally planned on going tonight.

I want to say how thankful I am to be serving with these two brothers this evening. I am grateful for God's grace toward me in both Andrew Scott and Francis Chan. Their friendship is an encouragement and their example is evidence of God's love in my life. I'm thankful for how they spur me on toward Christ in many ways.

The plan for tonight, Lord willing, is for Andrew to talk about rethinking mission and Francis will talk about rethinking church. My task from the beginning is to help us rethink our lives and Christianity as a whole. At least that's what was given to me. I thought, "Wow, okay, that's fairly general. Where can I find a text about that?" I had a whole sermon prepared in which I would walk through the New Testament, looking at every description I could find of a follower of Jesus, things like "dead to ourselves," "crucified with Christ," "alive in Christ" and other pictures of disciples.

But then today, as I was praying about where to go and looking over those other notes, I just sensed the Lord leading me to Old Testament texts, where God talks about what is new about our relationship with Him—the new covenant when it was promised in Ezekiel. Basically this was God's design for us in sending Jesus. What I want to do tonight, based on Ezekiel 36, is to ask you three questions that I hope will lead you to rethink your life and your Christianity—your salvation—according to God's Word.

Let me remind you of the context of Ezekiel 36. The historical setting was 597 B.C. The Babylonians exiled Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, along with several thousand others, including Ezekiel the prophet. So from the beginning of this book, Ezekiel was in exile. For the first 25 chapters of the book, Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed. Then in the middle of the book of Ezekiel, Jerusalem falls.

And the last 16 chapters of Ezekiel occur chronologically after the fall of Jerusalem. So chapters 33-48 are after the fall of Jerusalem, including the text we're looking at right now.

For the entire book Ezekiel is in exile, speaking to Israelites who were suffering in exile. In this chapter specifically, Ezekiel is telling God's people what God is going to do when He brings about a new covenant. Start with me in verse 22. This is the Word of God.

²² Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³ And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. ²⁴ I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. ²⁸ You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰ I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. ³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. ³² It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

O God, I pray that in the next few minutes, You will take these words and bring them to life in a fresh way in this gathering. God, I pray that these moments will be a demonstration, not of any wisdom in man, but of Your Spirit's power. We're asking You to help us rethink our lives. Lord, that doesn't come naturally to us. We're so prone to think like the world thinks. We need supernatural help to think according to Your Word. So we ask for that right now. Please, O God, help me to proclaim Your Word for what it says. Please help us supernaturally in these moments to hear from You. Transform our minds according to Your Word, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Here are the three questions that spring from God's Word to His people about a new covenant, our covenant, the covenant by which we know God.

1. How convinced are you that you have been saved solely by God's grace and supremely for God's glory among the nations?

The first question is how convinced are you, right where you're sitting, right now, that you've been saved solely by God's grace and supremely for God's glory among the nations? If we use the "Rethink" theme, the Word is causing us to rethink how and why we have been saved.

First, the how. How have we been saved? Are you convinced that you have been saved solely by the grace of God? Over and over again in Ezekiel 36, there is an emphasis on the sovereign initiative of God in saving His people. This text is driven entirely by the gracious activity of God. Just look at how many times the words "I will" are used in what we just read:

- Verse 22, *"Say to the house of Israel...it's not for your sake...that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name which you have profaned among the nations to which you came."*
- Verse 23, *"I will vindicate the holiness of my great name."*
- Verse 24, *"I will take you from the nations."*
- Verse 25, *"I will sprinkle clean water on you...and from your idols I will cleanse you."*
- Verse 26, *"I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."*
- Verse 27, *"And I will put my Spirit within you."*
- The end of verse 28, *"I will be your God."*
- Verse 29, *"I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you."*
- Verse 30, *"I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant."*
- Then verse 32 sums it up when God says, *"I will act."*

Thirteen times in 11 verses, God says, "I will do all of these things." Salvation is clearly grounded in the sovereign grace of God. The hearts of God's people will never be clean and the souls of God's people will never be saved, unless God acts in sovereign grace and mercy. Man is hopeless in his sin. Unless God comes to save, unless God comes as a Shepherd to bring permanent peace—to use other imagery from Ezekiel—then man will remain under His perpetual wrath. The sole ground of salvation is the sovereign grace of God.

We see this in Ephesians 2. We know this text in the New Testament. For three verses, Paul talks about the sinfulness of man and that we are dead in our sin. Not kind of dead, partly dead, sort of dead—dead in our sin. The hinge verse though, where everything changes, is Ephesians 2:4. Remember it? *"But God, being rich in mercy..."* Then remember all the things God does. Because of His great love, He made us alive together with Christ. He raised us up with him. Verse six, *"He seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace."*

God is doing all the action there. God is the One Who's doing. It's interesting when you look at Ephesians 2, all the references to us are actually in the passive voice. Ephesians 2:5, *"You have been*

saved.” Not, “You saved yourself.” No, you were saved. This happened to you from the outside. We know Ephesians 2:8: “*For by grace you have been saved...*” This has been done to you, “*through faith.*” And just in case we’re not getting it, Paul makes it clear in verse nine: “*And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.*” God did this.

It’s the same language with which the Bible describes salvation throughout. Remember those glorious verses in Romans 3:21-26: “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*” We “are justified.” Salvation is something that happens to us. Sinners don’t justify themselves. Sinners are justified by God. God does this. The sole ground of salvation is the grace and mercy of God—and the supreme aim of salvation is the global glory of God. The “how” is that we are saved solely by His grace. The “why” is that we are saved supremely for His glory among the nations.

Think about this passage in Ezekiel. Why does God save His people, even when they sin against Him? Time and time again, throughout the Old Testament, God’s people turned away from Him to worthless idols. They followed foreign kings. They worshiped false gods. They indulged in idolatry and immorality over and over again, and they warranted the wrath of God.

As a result, God showed His judgment to them here in Ezekiel. He scattered them into exile, into a foreign land, but He did not destroy them. God did not do what He did with all kinds of other peoples in the Old Testament. When we read through the Old Testament, we see God striking down entire pagan idolatrous nations—and it is right and just and holy for God to do this. So why did He not do the same thing with the people of Israel?

Well, back up to Ezekiel 36:16 and you’ll see the answer. Listen for the motive of God in saving His people from all-out destruction. God is recounting His people’s rebellion, then we read:

¹⁶ *The word of the Lord came to me:* ¹⁷ *“Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity.”* ¹⁸ *So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it.*

Then God describes in verse 19 what He did to them in His judgment: “*I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them.*” But now, here’s the answer to our question: why were they judged and exiled, but not destroyed?

²⁰ *But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, “These are the people of the Lord, and yet they had to go out of his land.”* ²¹ *But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.*

Did you hear that? God just said, “When My people were exiled to the nations, they were profaning My name.” The nations were saying, “These are the people of the Lord, but look how miserable they are.” The conclusion among the nations was clear: the God of these people is not great. So out of concern for His holy name among the nations, God declares what He will do:

²² Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³ And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

God says, “I want the holiness of My great name to be known among all the nations. That is why I’m doing what I’m doing. That is why I will do what I will do. I will save and redeem and restore My sinful people, not for their sake but for the sake of My holy name.”

Are you hearing this? This is a very different way to think. The reason God saves His people from destruction is because God is zealous for the fame of His name among the nations. The resounding reality of Ezekiel is clear. Why does God save His people? Because God loves His glory and desires His glory among all the nations. When God saves His people, He doesn’t do it ultimately for their sake. He does it ultimately for His sake. God will bring His people back from exile. He will cleanse them of their sin. He will restore them in the land and in the process, He will show the nations that He is great. Follow this: God is for them because it brings great glory to Him. God is for His people because this brings great glory to Him among all peoples.

This is not the way the 21st century Christian in America thinks about God on both levels. We are saved solely by His grace, but we are so proud of what we can accomplish. We think so highly of what we bring to the table. Ezekiel 36 is a reminder to every one of us who is in the church, every one of us who calls himself a Christian in the church. Not one of us are in this gathering right now because of any merit in us. The only reason we are here is because of the mercy of God and He has shown us this mercy for the spread of His glory among the nations, for His glory in the world. This is the purpose of our salvation. The picture here is a God Who is zealous for His own glory.

If you look at this throughout Ezekiel, 70 different times God says, “I am doing what I am doing so that people—the nations—will know Who I am.” God is passionate about His name being known and His glory being exalted all over the world. He judges people and He saves people—why? Because He loves His glory.

Now, that may feel uncomfortable for us to say or think about, namely because that would be a negative characteristic in any one of us. To love our own glory, to delight in our own fame, to center on ourselves—that would be inappropriate for us. But brothers and sisters, that is more than appropriate for God. It is more than appropriate for God to be God-centered. Whom else would you rather He center Himself on? If it rubs you wrong that God lives to exalt Himself, whom else would you rather He exalt? You? At the moment when He would exalt someone or something else, He would no longer be the God Who is worthy of all exaltation—and He is. That’s what it means for Him to be God. God, by His very nature, is centered on God. There’s no one greater than Him.

You might think, “Well, doesn’t this take away from His grace for us, from His love for us—if He loves me for His own glory?” No, no, no. Think about it. If God is completely good and right and loving—all that is love is summed up in God—then what is the greatest gift He could give us? Enjoyment of Himself. Worship of Himself. Glory in Himself. This is the beauty. How does God show His glory? He shows His glory by sending His Son as a sacrifice for our sin, so that you and I, by His grace, might be forgiven of all our sin, restored to a relationship with Him where we worship Him with our all. And not just that—we worship Him among the nations.

This is just what the text says. It’s right there. We don’t think like this though. What child comes home from a Sunday school class in our churches and has drawn a picture that says at the top, “God loves Himself”? No, He loves me. It’s about me. Yes, He does love us. But He loves us supremely for His glory among the nations. That changes the way we live. It changes the way we think about God, the way we read through Scripture. It makes sense. Just think about this Book. It’s all that’s done here in Ezekiel 36.

I was preaching at a conference a couple weeks ago on the Psalms and it hit me in a fresh way. As I was meditating on various psalms, I was thinking, “God has written a book that instructs us how to give Him glory.” I pictured going to my wife Heather and saying, “Babe, I wrote some poems about how great I am. I want to give them as a gift to you, so that you can read them to me. You will love this. It will be so life-giving for you. In the morning and in the evening...” That’s very different.

But this is what God has given us, because He knows this is actually good for us. It’s most life-giving for us. Psalm 63: *“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.”*

His love is better than life. To be saved means that you love the glory of God more than you love your own life. You want the glory of God among the nations more than you want your own life. It will change your Christianity when you love the glory of God among the nations more than you love your

own life, your own plans, your own dreams, your own possessions. When you have all that on the table before Him and say, “My entire life is Yours for Your glory among the nations,” that changes the way you think about your life.

It changes the way you think about Christianity when you are convinced that you have been saved solely by the grace of God and supremely for the glory of God among the nations. I would just submit that if we were actually convinced of that, it would change the face of our Christianity. It would change the look of our lives, our families and our future. Can I remind you? God has written a whole Book, He’s designed all of this to end, with Him getting glory from all the nations for the grace He has shown.

That is where the train of history is headed. Based on the Word of God, I’m saying tonight to every one of us, “Let’s get on that train.”

2. How confident are you to make disciples and multiply churches without dependence on performances, programs and professionals?

These are not short questions and I realize this seems like three questions in one. Right where you’re sitting—not generally or vaguely, but specifically—How confident are you to make disciples and multiply churches without dependence on performances, programs and professionals?

Whereas the first question had to do with rethinking how and why we’ve been saved, in this second question we’re rethinking what happened when we were saved.

Think about Ezekiel 36 here. Right after God states His clear concern for His consummate glory among the nations, He tells His people specifically what He’s going to do. Remember what He says, beginning in verse 25?

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Put this together. How is God going to glorify Himself among the nations? He’s going to form a people who are forgiven of their sins. It’s a great phrase: “...clean from all your uncleannesses...” They’re cleaned from impurity and immorality and idolatry—“...from all your idols I will cleanse you.” God will glorify His name by forgiving His people of their sins. We are tempted to stop at verse 25 in our understanding of the new covenant. Trust in Jesus and you’ll be forgiven of your sins. You can know you have eternal life in heaven, cleansed of all your sins. This is absolutely true—yet utterly incomplete. It’s not just forgiveness of sins that’s being promised here.

If we stop there, what will happen? If we stop here, we will create in our minds a version of Christianity that says, “Come to Jesus, be forgiven of your sins,” but then we have all kinds of people living just like the rest of the world, saying, “I know I asked Jesus to forgive my sins, so I’m forgiven.” Then they live just like the rest of the world, just coasting until they get to heaven. That is not biblical Christianity.

Forgiveness of sins and “*I will give you a new spirit.*” What a promise! In verse 27, God says, “*I will put my Spirit within you...*” God will dwell in His people. Think about that. Rethink that moment when you trusted in Christ, repented of your sin and put your faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord—at that moment you were forgiven of your sins and received His Spirit. Christian, think about it where you’re sitting: the Spirit of God is dwelling inside of you right now. It will knock you out of your seat if you really think about it. He’s in you. The Spirit of God is in you.

Why? So that we might obey His will. In giving His Spirit, God says, “I will transform their wants. I’ll give them entirely new wants.” Verse 26: “*I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*” People who had hearts of stone that were hard toward God, unresponsive to God, unyielding to God will now be soft and responsive and submissive to God. We will want God. We’ll desire God. We’ll delight in God. This is the Christian life. We have radically new wants and an entirely new will. We want to follow Him. Our hearts will be changed from the inside out.

Verse 27: “*I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*” God will dwell in His people so they might obey His will. And what is His will? Put it together with what we just saw. His will is to make His glory known in the world. That’s the will of God for our lives. We don’t even have to ask, “What’s Your will for my life?” He’s told us. “Make My glory known in the world. That’s My will.”

Now, obviously there are all kinds of ways that takes place in our lives as we walk in God’s statutes and obey His rules. But think about this specifically in light of when the new covenant happens. In Luke 24:45-49, Jesus—after dying on the cross and rising from the dead, right before He ascends into heaven—says this:

⁴⁵ *Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,* ⁴⁶ *and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,* ⁴⁷ *and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.* ⁴⁸ *You are witnesses of these things.”*

Did you hear that? Repentance and forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, starting here in Jerusalem. “*You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you*” —My Spirit— “*but stay in the city until you are clothed with power*

from on high.” Jesus is promising the filling of God’s Spirit; what Ezekiel 36 is talking about. For what purpose? So they will be His witnesses in the world.

When Luke picks up the story in Acts 1, what does Jesus say there? Verse eight: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* Don’t miss what the Bible is teaching here. The promise of the new covenant—the reality of the new covenant—is this: when people are saved by the grace of God, for the glory of God among the nations, God forgives them of their sin and fills them with His Spirit so that they might obey His Word as His witnesses in the world.

Let me say that one more time. When people are saved by the grace of God, for the glory of God among the nations, God forgives them of their sin and fills them with His Spirit so that they might obey His Word as His witnesses in the world.

In other words, by God’s grace in the new covenant, believers in Christ are not just forgiven of sin, they are filled with the Spirit of God in such a way that they have what it takes to obey God’s will as witnesses in the world.

So now I come back to the question: how confident are you to make disciples and multiply churches without dependence on performances, programs and professionals? Every single follower of Christ, as we’ve just seen in God’s Word, has the Spirit of God in them and the Word of God in them. In this, every single follower of Christ has what it takes to obey the mission of God, the will of God, and to make His glory known as a witness in the world.

My concern though, if we’re not careful in our thinking, is that we become unnecessarily—and in some ways unhelpfully—dependent on performances, programs and professionals to do that which God has already equipped us to do. Here’s what I mean by that. How have we implicitly, if not explicitly, communicated disciple-making in our church culture? We gather together for a service—what I’m calling here a performance just because most of our churches, like the one we’re in right now, are set up theater-style, with a stage and an audience. Much is made to center on what happens on the stage, mainly the activities of musicians and a preacher.

Then we go from performance to programs designed for every age and stage of life—preschool programs, children’s programs, student programs, college programs, young adult programs, men’s programs, women’s programs, married programs, singles programs, senior adult programs—and even programs for people who just don’t fit. These programs are often facilitated or organized by professionals who make them happen.

Now, I want to be really clear here. I’m not saying that all of those things are bad in themselves. In fact, I would argue there’s much good and much biblical that is happening in some of those areas. But here’s the problem. What might happen if you were suddenly planted in a remote or unreached part of the

world, where you didn't have a performance, you didn't have programs and you didn't have any professional ministers around you? Could you make disciples, then gather those disciples together into a church that was focused on making disciples and multiplying that church? How confident are you to make disciples and multiply churches if all you have is the Word of God and the Spirit of God?

I think that sounds pretty intimidating to us, but that's what I want us to realize. This is almost exactly the circumstance we read about in Acts 8, when the members of the church in Jerusalem were suddenly scattered across Judea and Samaria. What does the Bible say they did? Acts 11:19 says they proclaimed the gospel and planted the church at Antioch—the church that then became one of the most strategic multiplying churches in the history of Christianity.

As a pastor, I want to prepare people to do just that. In this gathering today, I want to exhort us to be ready to be so confident in the Spirit of God in us and the Word of God in front of us to make disciples and multiply churches wherever God leads us in the world, without dependence on performances, programs and professionals. When that is the case, I think mission according to God's design just takes off.

I was out in the lobby a couple weeks ago and a guy came up to me and said, "All right, Pastor, I get it. I saw a job opening in the Middle East, so I took it. I moved my family to the Middle East. What do I do now?" That's a good question. He said, "Well, you showed it to me in the Word—but now what do I do?" I want that brother, that sister, that family to be ready for that. I want them to be making disciples here, right where they live, where they work, where they play. I want them to be ready so that when God says, "Do this somewhere else where the gospel has not yet gone," they're ready to do that.

How confident are you in the Spirit of God and the Word of God? Are the Spirit of God and the Word of God sufficient for you to make disciples and multiply churches? I want to encourage you: He is sufficient, so you can be confident.

That leads to the last question.

3. How desperate are you to see dead people come to life?

We need to rethink how and why we were saved. We need to rethink what happened when we were saved, that we were filled with the Spirit of God and forgiven of our sin. Now let's rethink what we do now that we have been saved. We live to see dead people come to life.

Let's read what Ezekiel wrote in Ezekiel 37—an illustration of God bringing the dead to life:

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. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³ And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones,

and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ 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.”

⁷ 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. ⁸ 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. ⁹ Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, 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.” ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹ Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.’” ¹² Therefore prophecy, 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. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ 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.”

The context here is clearly God speaking to His people in exile. He’s saying, “I’m going to restore you. I’m going to bring you back to life. That’s how this new covenant is going to play out.” But I want you to see how it happens. How does the dead come to life? It’s connected to what we just talked about. Are the Word of God and the Spirit of God sufficient? How did dry, dead bones come to life? There are two factors at play here: the Word of God and the Spirit of God. “Speak and the Spirit will move.”

In this passage, I want you to see a picture of how the gospel will spread, how dead people will come to life. When servants of God speak His Word in the power of His Spirit, the dead will come to life. So how desperate are you to see the dead come to life?

If you think about where you live right now, you are not in that neighborhood or that apartment complex by accident. God is sovereign over everything, including the details of your life. He has the whole thing rigged and He’s put you in that neighborhood or that apartment complex for a reason. There are people who are spiritually dead all around you. Why are you in that workplace? There are people who are spiritually dead all around you. Why are you in that city? There are people who are spiritually dead all around you.

So how will they come to life? They’ll come to life when servants of God—children of God who are filled with His Spirit and His Word—are bold enough, desperate enough, to step out and speak this

Word to one of those people, trusting His Word, not because of our ingenuity or creativity in presenting it but because of the power inherent in it. He will bring the dead to life. Do you believe this?

If we're not careful, we can get so caught up in talking about how hard our culture is, how hard it is to share the gospel with various people or across cultures. But we will miss the point if we spend all our time talking about how hard the ground is instead of how great our God is. His Word has power to bring the dead to life. Are you desperate to see that, not just where you live, but all around the world?

I was praying two night ago with my kids for the Brahmin in India. There are nearly 60 million of them. They're upper echelon—upper class Indians—and very few are known to be believers. I was praying, “God, please bring the Brahmin to life. Send laborers to India. Raise up laborers in India to spread the gospel among the Brahmin. You've saved us for Your glory among the nations. Show Your glory among this people group, the Brahmin.”

Are we desperate to see the dead come to life? When it all comes down to it, if we are desperate for the dead to come to life, then there will be an urgency in us when we realize there are people who are dead but who will come to life if we'll proclaim this Word to them. So let's proclaim this Word to them. Do we feel that urgency?

Right before I came out tonight, I was reminded of a quote from Jonathan Edwards that I want to put before us. It's a hard quote to hear, but I think it drives home the necessity to rethink these things, because by God's grace our eternity is secure in Christ. We need God to take our minds off ourselves and rethink how we're living for the spread of this good news to those whose eternity is not secure, who are on the road that leads to an everlasting hell. Jonathan Edwards said:

To help your conception of what hell is, imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven, or into the midst of a great furnace, where your pain would be as much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire, as the heat is greater. Imagine also, that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an hour, full of fire, as full as a bright coal of fire, all the while full of quick sense.

What horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace! And how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you. If it were to be measured by a glass, how long would the glass seem to be running. After you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to you to think that you had yet to endure the other 14.

But what would be the effect on your soul if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full for 24 hours. And how much greater would be the effect if you knew you must endure it for a whole year. And how vastly greater still if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years. O then, how would your heart sink, if you thought, if you knew that you must bear it forever and ever, that there would be no end, that after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end than it ever was and that you would never, never be delivered.

Brothers and sisters, I plead with you: do not be ignorant nor indifferent. This is not a game. There's real, eternal, everlasting judgment awaiting those who don't hear and believe this good news,

who are dead and don't come to life. So I plead with you to live with desperation to see the dead come to life wherever you live and wherever God may lead you, praying, Open up my life wherever You might lead me, God. You have saved me by Your grace.

Praise God, you don't have to fear eternal death. Praise God, you have been saved from your sin and all of its effects in eternity. Realize that you've been saved by grace for His supreme glory among the nations. That is why you have breath right now. You've been forgiven of your sin and filled with His Spirit to make disciples and multiply churches with your life. Do it. Work. While you still have time, work to see the dead come to life. And as you do, you will experience the joy of proclaiming His grace, exalting His glory and fulfilling the purpose for which you live.

Before we move on, I want to invite you to let this soak in and pray, right where you're sitting. For the next few minutes, I invite you to go to the Lord with what you just heard from His Word. If you have something to write on, maybe you could write out a prayer. I know that's helpful for me sometimes to keep my mind from wandering. Maybe you could write out what God is speaking to your heart right now. I want to give you a few moments to let the Spirit cause His Word to soak in, then we'll move on to what is next.

God, we pray that Your Spirit will transform and renew our minds, even right now; that You would lead and guide our thoughts, our desires and our prayers in this gathering. Amen.

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