

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

“COME FROM THE FOUR WINDS, O BREATH!”

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 6TH, 1892,

DELIVERED BY

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“Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”—Ezekiel xxxvii. 9.

ACCORDING to some commentators, this vision in the valley of dry bones may refer to three forms of resurrection. Holy Scripture is so marvellously full of meaning, that one interpretation seldom exhausts its message to us. The chapter before us is an excellent example of this fact; and supplies an illustration of several Scriptural truths.

Some think they see here a parable of the resurrection of the dead. Assuredly, Ezekiel's vision pictures what will happen in the day when “the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.” No matter how dry the bones may be, the bodies of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall rise again. That which was sown shall spring up from the grave; and, in the case of the children of God, it shall wear a new glory. At the word of Christ it shall come to pass: “For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Others see here the resurrection of the almost destroyed host of Israel, which had been divided into two companies, and carried away captive to Babylon. Plague and pestilence and the sword of the Chaldean had gone far to cut off the chosen nation; but God promised to restore his people, thus mingling mercy with judgment, and again setting in the cloud the bow of his everlasting covenant. A partial fulfilment of this promise was given when, for a while, the Lord set up again the tribes of Israel at Jerusalem, and they had a happy rest before the coming of Christ. But Israel's full restoration is yet to be accomplished. The people shall be gathered out of the graves in which, as a nation, they have so long lain buried, and shall be placed in their own land, and then will come to pass the word of Jehovah:

“Then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.”

There are others who, looking beyond the literal for the spiritual teaching, see, and, I think, rightly see, that here is a picture of the recovery of ungodly men from their spiritual death and corruption—a parable of the way in which sinners are brought up from their hopeless, spiritually dead condition, and made to live by the power of the Holy Ghost. I shall, at any rate, use the text in this sense, for I am not now aiming at the interpretation of prophecy, nor concerned greatly with what is to happen in the future. Neither do I wish to conduct you into the deep things of God; but I am just now thinking of practical uses to which I can put this incident, in order to stir up God’s people to deal with the Holy Spirit as he should be dealt with, and to urge the unconverted to seek the Lord, in the hope that some of them, as dead and dry as the bones in the valley of vision, may be made to live by his divine power.

Nothing gave me greater comfort, this week, than when I received a note from one saying that, last Thursday night, while I was preaching from the text “Let your soul delight itself in fatness,” she was enabled to lay hold on Christ. I had rather have such tidings than hear the gladdest news of a worldly kind that could be brought to me. Oh, that now also some poor heart may find rest in Christ while we are talking of that divine Spirit who becomes a Comforter to all those to whom he has been first a Quickener! May he come and cause men to live, and then afterwards make them full of gladness! It is his blessed office first to bestow life, and then to give light. Living unto God is the earliest experience of the redeemed, afterwards comes joy in God by the Holy Ghost.

I. Now, first, in using this text, as I have said, for practical purposes, I am going to make this remark upon it: **WE ARE NOTHING WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT.** I speak, my brethren, now, to you who love the souls of men. I know that there are some among you here who preach and teach with all earnestness, with broken-hearted love; and for the glory of Christ you try to bring men to believe in Jesus. In thus endeavouring to save the souls of lost and ruined men, you are engaged in a noble work. But I dare say that you have often felt, what I also fully realize, that you have not gone far in your holy service before you are brought face to face with the fact that, in itself, the work you propose to do is an utter impossibility. We begin our labour according to the Word of the Lord, and we prophesy. God helping us, we can do that; and, though the burden of the Lord be heavy, yet if we are told to prophesy again, we can, by his grace, do that also. We can prophesy to dry bones, or prophesy to the wind, according to God’s commandment. We are not afraid of seeming to be foolish, since we know that, when “the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” But when we preach the Word, and as the result of our preaching expect men to be saved, and so saved that we may know it, we come all of a sudden upon an iron-bound coast, and can get no further. We find that men are dead; what is wanted is that they shall be quickened; and *we* cannot quicken them. There are a great many

things we can do—and God forbid that we should leave one of them undone!—but when we come to the creation of life, we have reached a mysterious region into which we cannot penetrate; we have entered the realm of miracles, where Jehovah reigns supreme. The prerogative to give life or to take it away must remain with the Most High; the wit and wisdom of man are altogether powerless to bestow life upon even the tiniest insect. We know of a surety, doctrinally, and we know it with equal certainty by experience, that we can do nothing towards the quickening of men apart from the Spirit of God. If he does not come, and give life, we may preach till we have not another breath left, but we shall not raise from the tomb of sin even the soul of a little child, or bring a single sinner to the feet of Christ.

How, then, should this fact affect us? Because of our powerlessness, shall we sit still, doing nothing, and caring nothing? Shall we say, “The Spirit of God must do the work, therefore I may fold my arms, and take things easily”? Beloved, we cannot do that. Our heart’s desire and prayer for our fellow-men is that they might be saved; and we have sometimes felt that, for their sakes, we could almost be willing to be accursed, if we might bring eternal life to them. We cannot sit still: we do not believe that it was God’s intent that any truth should ever lead us into sloth: at any rate, it has not so led us; it has carried us in quite the opposite direction. Let us try to be as practical in this matter as we are in material things. We cannot rule the winds, nor create them. A whole parliament of philosophers could not cause a capful of wind to blow. The sailor knows that he can neither stop the tempest nor raise it. What then? Does he sit still? By no means. He has all kinds of sails of different cuts and forms to enable him to use every ounce of wind that comes; and he knows how to reef or furl them in case the tempest becomes too strong for his barque. Though he cannot control the movement of the wind, he can use what it pleases God to send. The miller cannot divert that great stream of water out of its channel, but he knows how to utilize it; he makes it turn his mill-wheel. Though he cannot resist the law of gravitation, for there seems to be an almost omnipotent force in it, yet he uses that law, and yokes it to his chariot. Thus, though we cannot command that mighty influence which streams from the omnipotent Spirit of God; though we cannot turn it which way we will, for “the wind bloweth where it listeth,” yet we can make use of it; and in our inability to save men, we turn to God, and lay hold of his power.

What, then, are we to do? Face to face with spiritual death, conscious of the fact that we cannot remove it, and fully aware that only the Holy Spirit can quicken dead souls, what shall we do? There are certain ways and means by which we can act properly towards this divine Person; certain attitudes of heart which it would be well for us to take up; and certain results which will follow from a clear apprehension of the true state of the case.

First, by this fact, *we must feel deeply humbled, emptied, and cut adrift from self.* Look you, sir, you may study your sermon; you may examine the original of your text; you may critically follow it out in all its bearings; you may go and preach it with great correctness of

expression ; but you cannot quicken a soul by that sermon. You may go up into your pulpit ; you may illustrate, explain, and enforce the truth ; with mighty rhetoric you may charm your hearers ; you may hold them spellbound ; but no eloquence of yours can raise the dead. Demosthenes might stand for a century between the jaws of death ; but the monster would not be moved by anything he or all human orators might say. Another voice than ours must be heard ; other power than that of thought or suasion must be brought into the work, or it will not be done. You may organize your societies, you may have excellent methods, you may diligently pursue this course and that ; but when you have done all, nothing can come of it if the effort stands by itself. Only as the Spirit of God shall bless men by you, shall they receive a blessing through you. Whatever your ability or experience, it is the Spirit of God who must bless your labour. Therefore, never go to this service with a boast upon your lip of what you can do, or with the slightest trace of self-confidence ; else will you go in a spirit which will prevent the Holy Ghost from working with or through you.

O brethren, think nothing of us who preach to you ! If ever you do, our power will be gone. If you begin to suppose that such and such a minister, having been blessed of God to so many thousands, will necessarily be the means of the conversion of your friend, you are imputing to a son of man what belongs only to the Son of God ; and you will assuredly do that pastor or that minister a serious mischief by tolerating in your heart so idolatrous a thought. We are nothing : you are nothing. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," is a message that should make us lie in the dust, and utterly despair of doing anything in and of ourselves, seeing that all the power is of God alone. It will do us good to be very empty, to be very weak, to be very distrustful of self, and so to go about our Master's work.

Next, because of our absolute need of the Holy Spirit, *we must give ourselves to prayer before our work, in our work, and after our work.* A man who believes that, do what he may, no soul will be quickened apart from the work of the Spirit of God, and who has a longing desire that he may save souls, will not venture to his pulpit without prayer. He will not deliver his message without a thousand groans and cries to God for help in every sentence that he utters ; and when the sermon is done, his work will not be done ; it will have scarcely begun. His sermons will be but a text for long-continued prayer. He will be crying to God continually, to anoint him with the heavenly oil. His prayer will be "Let the Spirit of God be upon me, that I may preach deliverance to the captives ; else men will still remain in the prison-house in spite of all my toil." And you, beloved, as you believe that doctrine, will not allow the preacher to go to his work without your prayers. You will bear him up in your supplications, feeling that your attendances at the house of God will be all vanity, and the coming together of the people will be as nothing, unless God the Holy Ghost is pleased to bless the Word. This thought will drive you to besiege the throne of grace with strong crying and tears that God would quicken the dead sons of men. If any of you are working without

prayer, I will not advise you to cease your work; but I will urge you to begin to pray, not merely as a matter of form, but as the very life of your labours. Let the habit of prayer be constant with you, so that you neither begin any service for God, nor carry it on, nor conclude it, without crying to the Lord for his Holy Spirit to make the work effectual by his almighty power.

We have already gathered much instruction from this truth, if we have learnt to lie low before the Lord, and before the mercy seat.

But we must go a little further. Since everything depends upon the Spirit of God, *we must be very careful to be such men as the Spirit of God can use.* We may not judge others; but have you not met with men whom you could not think the Spirit of God would be likely to bless? If a man is self-sufficient, can the Spirit of God to any large degree bless him? If a man is inconsistent in his daily life, if there is no earnestness about him, if you cannot tell where he is in character or creed, if he contradicts one day what he said the day before, if he is vain-glorious and boastful, is it likely that the Spirit of God will bless him? If any of us should become lazy, indolent, or self-indulgent, we cannot expect the Spirit, whose one end is to glorify Christ, to work with us. If we should become proud, domineering, hectoring, how could the gentle Dove abide with us? If we should become despondent, having little or no faith in what we preach, and not expecting the power of the Holy Spirit to be with us, is it likely that God will bless us? Believe me, dear friends, that a vessel fit for the Master's use must be very clean. It need not be of silver or of gold; it may be but a common earthen vessel; but it must be very clean, for our God is a jealous God. He can spy a finger-mark where our eyes could not see it, even with a microscope; and he will not drink out of a vessel which a moment before was at the lips of Satan. He will not use us if we have been used by self, or if we have allowed ourselves to be used by the world. Oh, how clean should we be who expect the Holy Spirit to make use of us! How careful should we be in our private life as well as in our ordinary walk and conversation! This is no small thing. See to it, my brethren and sisters, for much of the promised blessing may depend upon your carefulness.

Next, since we depend wholly upon the Spirit, *we must be most anxious to use the Word, and to keep close to the truth,* in all our work for Christ among men. The Word of God is the Holy Spirit's sword; he will not wield our wooden weapon. He will only use this true Jerusalem blade of God's own fashioning. Let us, then, set high value on the inspired Word; we shall defeat our adversaries by that sword-thrust, "It is written." So spake the Christ; and so he conquered Satan. So also the Holy Spirit speaketh. Be wise, therefore, and let your reliance be, not on your own wisdom, but on the word to which you can add, "Thus saith the Lord." If our preaching is of that kind, the Holy Ghost will always set his seal to it. But if you have thought it out, and it is your own production, go, good sir, to Her Majesty's offices, and get letters patent for your invention; but the Holy Ghost will have nothing to do with it. He cares nothing about your "original mind." Our Lord Jesus laid aside all originality, and spake only the words of his Father, the words which the Holy Ghost brought to him.

He said to his disciples, in that memorable discourse, before he went out to Gethsemane, "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Let us try to imitate him, being willing not to think our own thoughts, or to speak our own words, but those which God shall give to us. I would rather speak five words out of this Book than fifty thousand words of the philosophers. I had rather be a fool with God than be a wise man with the sagest scientist, for "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." You cannot work for Christ except by the Spirit of Christ, and you cannot teach for Christ except you teach Christ; your word will have no blessing upon it, unless it be God's Word spoken through your lips to the sons of men. If we want revivals, we must revive our reverence for the Word of God. If we want conversions, we must put more of God's Word into our sermons; even if we paraphrase it into our own words, it must still be his Word upon which we place our reliance, for the only power which will bless men lies in that. It is God's Word that saves souls, not our comment upon it, however correct that comment may be. Let us, then, be scrupulously careful to honour the Holy Spirit by taking the weapon which he has prepared for us, believing in the full inspiration of the sacred Scriptures, and expecting that God will prove their inspiration by their effect upon the minds and hearts of men.

Again, since we are nothing without the Holy Spirit, *we must avoid in our work anything which is not of him.* We want these dead people raised, and we cannot raise them; only the Spirit of God can do that. Now, in our part of the work, for which God condescendingly uses us, let us take care that there is nothing which would grieve the Spirit, or cause him to go away from us. I believe that, in places where the work of conversion goes on largely, God is much more jealous than he is anywhere else. He watches this church; and if he sees, in the officers of the church, or in the workers, something unholy; if he beholds practices tolerated that are not according to his pure mind; and if, when they are noticed, these evils are winked at, and still further indulged, he will withdraw his blessing until we cease to have a controversy with him. Possibly he might give his blessing to a church which was worse than this in many respects, while he might withdraw it from this church, which has already been so highly favoured, if it countenanced anything contrary to his Word. An ordinary subject of her Majesty might say certain things about her for which he would never be brought to book; but a favourite at court must mind how he behaves. So must we be very sensitive in this divine employment in which we come nearest to Christ; we must be careful to co-operate with him in our work of seeking to pluck brands from the burning. We must mind how we do it, for we may, perhaps, be led to adopt ways and methods which may grieve him; and if we persevere in those ways and methods, after we have learned that they are not according to his will, the Spirit of God will leave us, lest he should seem to be setting his seal upon that of which he does not approve. A headlong zeal even for Christ may leap into a ditch. What we think to be very wise may be very unwise; and where we deem that at least a little "policy" may come in, that little policy may taint the whole, and make

a nauseous stench which God will not endure. You must have the Spirit of God; you can do nothing without him; therefore do nothing that would cause him to depart from you.

Moreover, *we must be ever ready to obey the Holy Spirit's gentlest monitions*; by which I mean, the monitions which are in God's Word, and also—but putting this in the second place—such inward whispers as he accords to those who dwell near to him. I believe that the Holy Spirit does still speak to his chosen in a very remarkable way. Men of the world might ridicule this truth, and therefore we speak little of it; but the child of God knows that there are at times distinct movements of the Holy Spirit upon his mind leading in such and such ways. Be very tender of these touches of God. Some people do not feel these movements; but perhaps if they, with a more perfect heart, feared the Lord, his secret might be revealed to them. That great ship at sea will not be moved by a ripple; even an ordinary wave will not stir it; it is big and heavy. But that cork, out yonder, goes up and down with every ripple of the water. Should a great wave come, it will be raised to the crest of it, and carried wherever the current compels. Let your spirit be little before God, and easily moved, so that you may recognize every impulse of the Spirit, and obey it at once, whatever it may be. When the Holy Ghost moves thee to give up such and such a thing, yield it instantly, lest you lose his presence; when he impels thee to fulfil such and such a duty, be not disobedient to the heavenly vision; and when on thy knees he seems to direct thee in prayer, go in that direction; or if he suggests to thee to praise God for such and such a favour, give thyself to thanksgiving. Yield thyself wholly to his guidance. You who are workers, do ask for the wisdom of the Spirit carefully and believingly. I do not understand a man going into the pulpit, and praying the Spirit of God to guide him in what he shall say, and then pulling it all out of his pocket in manuscript. It looks to me as if he shut the Spirit of God out of any special operation; at least, all the help he can expect to have from the Spirit at that particular time must be in the manner of his reading, though of course he may have been guided in what he has written. Still, there is but scant room for the Spirit to manifest his power. In the same way, if you make up your mind how you will deal with people, and what you will say, it may often happen that, in the process, if you forgot all you meant to say, it would be the best thing that could happen to you; and if you said exactly what you did not think it would be prudent to say, it would turn out to be the very best thing that you could say; the unaccustomed method might be the thing that the Spirit of God would bless. Keep yourself, therefore, before that valley of dry bones free to do just what the Spirit of God would have you do, that he, through you, may raise the dead.

Once more: since, apart from the Spirit, we are powerless, *we must value greatly every movement of his power*. Notice, in this account of the vision in the valley, how the prophet draws attention to the fact of the shaking and the noise, and the coming of the sinews and the flesh, even before there was any sign of life. I think that, if we want the Spirit of God to bless us, we must be on the watch to notice everything he does. Look out for the first desire, the first fear! Be glad of anything

happening to your people that looks as if it were the work of the Holy Spirit; and, if you value him in his earlier works, he is likely to go on to do more and more, till at last he will give the breath, and the slain host shall arise, and become an army for God. Only you cannot expect the Spirit of God to come and work by you if you are half asleep. You cannot expect the Spirit of God to put forth his power if you are in such a condition that, if he saved half your congregation, you would not know it, and if he saved nobody, you would not fret about it. God will not bless you when you are not all awake. The Spirit of God does not work by sleepy men. He loves to have us alive ourselves, and then he will make others alive by us. See to this, dear friends. If we had more time at our disposal, I would speak longer on this part of the subject; but I have said enough now, if God the Holy Spirit blesses it, upon this first great truth that we are nothing without the Holy Spirit.

II. Now, secondly, we may learn, from the action of Ezekiel on this occasion, that **WE MAY SO ACT AS TO HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT**. When he first saw the dry bones, there was no wind nor breath; yet, obeying the voice of the Lord in the vision, the breath came, and life followed. How, then, shall we act? I will only give you in brief a few of the conditions to be observed by us.

If we want the Holy Spirit to be surely with us, to give us a blessing, *we must, in the power of the Spirit, realize the scene in which we are to labour*. In this case, the Holy Spirit took the prophet, and carried him out, and set him down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. This is just a type of what will happen to every man whom the Spirit means to use. Do you want to save the people in the slums? Then, you must go into the slums. Do you want to have sinners broken down under a sense of sin? You must be broken down yourself; at least, you must get near to them in their brokenness of heart; and be able to sympathize with them. I believe that no man will command power over a people whom he does not understand. If you have never been to a certain place, you do not know the road; but if you have been there yourself, and you come upon a person who has lost his way, you are the man to direct him. When you have been through the same perplexities that trouble others, you can say to them, "I have been there myself: I know all about it. By God's blessing I can conduct you out of this maze." Dear friends, we must have greater sympathy with sinners. You cannot pluck the brand out of the burning if you are afraid of being singed yourself; you must be willing to smut your fingers on the bars of the grate if you would do it. If there is a diamond dropped into a ditch, you must thrust your arm up to your elbow in the mud, or else you cannot expect to pick the jewel out of the mire. The Holy Spirit, when he blesses a man, sets him down in the midst of the valley full of bones, and causes him to pass by them round about until he fully comprehends the greatness and the difficulty of the work to be accomplished, even as the peopphet said, "Behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry."

Next, if the Holy Spirit is to be with us, *we must speak in the power of faith*. If Ezekiel had not had faith, he certainly would not have

preached to dry bones; they made a wretched congregation; and he certainly would not have preached to the wind, for it must have been but a fickle listener. Who but a fool would behave in this manner unless faith entered into the action? If preaching is not a supernatural exercise, it is a useless procedure. God the Holy Ghost must be with us, or else we might as well go and stand on the tops of the hills of Scotland, and shout to the east wind. There is nothing in all our eloquence unless we believe in the Holy Spirit making use of the truth which we preach for the quickening of the souls of men. Our prophesying must be an act of faith. We must preach by faith as much as Noah built the ark by faith; and just as the walls of Jericho were brought down by faith, men's hearts are to be broken by faithful preaching, that is, preaching full of faith.

In addition to this, if we desire to have the Spirit of God with us, *we must prophesy according to God's command*. By prophesying, I do not mean foretelling future events; but simply uttering the message which we have received from the Lord, proclaiming it aloud so that all may hear. You will notice how it is twice said, in almost the same words, “So I prophesied as he commanded me.” God will bless the prophesying that he commands, and not any other; so we must keep clear of that which is contrary to his Word, and speak the truth that he gives to us to declare. As Jonah, the second time he was told to go to Nineveh, was bidden by the Lord to “preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee,” so must we do if we would have our word believed even as his was. Our message is received when it is the Word of God through us. When the Lord describes the blessing that comes upon the earth by the rain and snow from heaven, he saith, “So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth.” Let us see to it that, before the word goes forth out of our mouth, we have received it from the mouth of God. Then we may hope and expect that the people will receive it also from us. The Spirit of God, that is, the breath of God, goes with the Word of God, and with that alone.

Notice, next, that if we would have the Spirit of God with us, *we must break out in vehemency of desire*. The prophet is to prophesy to the bones; but he does not begin in a formal manner by saying, “Only the winds coming can bring breath to these slain persons.” No, he breaks out with an interjection, and with his whole soul heaving with a ground-swell of great desire, he cries, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!” He has the people before him in his eye, and in his heart; and he appeals, with mighty desire, to the Spirit of God that he would come and make them live. You will generally find, in our service to-day, that the men who yearn over the souls of their fellow-men are those whom the Spirit of God uses. A man of no desire gets what he longs for; and that is nothing at all.

Then, if we would have more of the power of the Spirit of God with us, *we must see only the divine purpose, the divine power, and the divine working*. God will have his Spirit to go forth with those who see his hand. “When I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then

shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord." It is not my plan that God is going to work out; it is his own. It is not my purpose that the Holy Spirit is going to carry out; it is the purpose of the eternal Jehovah. It is not my power, or my experience, or my mode of thought, which will bring men from death to life; it is the Holy Spirit who will do it, and he only. We must apprehend this fact, and get to work in this spirit, and then God the Holy Spirit will be with us.

III. Bear with me, if I fill up all my time, or if I should even stray beyond it. I want now to address unconverted persons, or those who are afraid they are still unsaved; and with the text before us, WE WOULD SPEAK HOPEFULLY TO OUR HEARERS.

You who are not yet quickened by the divine life, or are afraid you are not, *we would exhort you to hear the Word of the Lord.* Though you feel that you are as dead as these dry bones, yet if you want to be saved, be frequent in hearing the Word. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." If you wish to find the divine life, thank God that you have that wish, and frequent those houses where Christ is much spoken of, and where the way of eternal life is very plainly set forth. When you mingle with the worshippers, listen with both your ears; try to remember what you hear; and pray all the while that God will bless it to you. "O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord!"

Next, *we would remind you of your absolute need of life from the Spirit of God.* Put it in what shape you like, you cannot be saved except you are born again; and the new birth is not a matter within your own power. "Ye must be born again,"—"from above," as the margin reads, in the third chapter of John's Gospel. All the religion of which you are capable will not save you, do what you will; strive as you may with outward ceremonies, or religious observances, there is no hope for you but in the Holy Ghost. There is something to be done for you which you cannot do for yourself. We will not water down that truth, but give it to you just as it stands in the Scriptures; we want you to feel its power.

But *we would have you note what the Holy Spirit has done for others.* There are some of your friends who have been born again. They were as helpless and hopeless as you are; but they are now saved. You know they are, for you have seen their lives. Take note of them, for what the Holy Spirit can work in one he can work in another. Let the grace of God in others comfort you concerning yourself, especially when you hear of great drunkards, or great swearers, or very vicious persons, who have been transformed into saints. Say to yourself, "If the Holy Spirit could make a saint out of such a sinner as that, surely he can make a saint out of me." As you see the flesh and sinews on others who were once as dry as bare bones, be encouraged to hope that it may be even so with you ere long.

May I go a little further, and say that, *we would have you observe carefully what is done in yourself?* I think I am speaking to some here who have already undergone a remarkable change. You cannot say that you have spiritual life; you are afraid that you have not. Still, you are not what you used to be. You have put away many things from

you that were once a pleasure to you, and now you take a delight in many things which you once despised. There is some hope in that, though it may be nothing more than the sinews coming on the bones, and the flesh upon the sinews. Yet I notice that, where the Holy Ghost begins, he does not leave off till he has finished his work. God takes such a delight in his work, that, having begun it, he completes it. Well did Job say, “Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.” Now, what he has done for you already, encourages me, and should encourage you, to hope that he will yet do much more, continuing his gracious work until life eternal is bestowed upon you.

Furthermore, *we would remind you that faith in Jesus is a sign of life.* If in your heart you can trust yourself to Christ, and believe in him that he can save you, you have eternal life already. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” If thou canst now, though it be for the first time, trust thyself alone on Christ, faith is the surest evidence of the work of the Holy Ghost. Thou “hast passed from death unto life” already. Thou canst not see the Spirit any more than thou canst see the wind; but, if thou hast faith, that is a blessed vane that turns in the way the Spirit of God blows. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” If thou believest, this is true of thee, and if thou dost cast thyself wholly upon Christ, remember that it is written, “He that believeth on him is not condemned;” wherefore be of good cheer.

We beg you not to be led aside to the discussion of difficulties. There are a great many difficulties. To tell dry bones to live, is a very unreasonable sort of thing when tried by rules of logic; and for me to tell you, a dead sinner, to believe in Christ, may seem perfectly unjustifiable by the same rule. But I do not need to justify it. If I find it in God’s Word, that is quite enough for me; and if the preacher does not feel any difficulty in the matter, why should you? There is a difficulty, but you have nothing to do with it. There are difficulties everywhere. There is a difficulty in explaining how it is that bread sustains your body; and how that bread, sustaining your body, can be the means of prolonging your life. We cannot understand how the material can impinge upon the spiritual; and there are difficulties in almost everything connected with life. If a man will not do anything till he has solved every difficulty, we had better dig his grave. And you will be in hell if you will not go to heaven without having every difficulty solved for you. Leave the difficulties; there will be time enough to settle them when we get to heaven; meanwhile, if life comes through Jesus Christ, let us have it, and have done with nursing our doubts.

Further, *we would have you long for the visitation of God, the Holy Spirit.* Join with us in the prayer, “Come, Holy Spirit, come with all thy power; come from the four winds, O breath!” One wind will not do, it must come from all quarters. Your heart, filled with all sorts of evil, wants breaking; it wants throwing down like the house of Job’s son when Job’s children were in it, and “there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell.” Oh, for a wind from the four quarters of heaven, to smite

the four corners of the house of your sin, and lay it low! "Come from the four winds, O breath!" As the poet sings—

"Lifeless in the valley,
Come, O breath, and breathe!
New-create and rally!
Come, O breath, and breathe!
Blowing where thou listest,
Thou the word assistest,
Thou death's power resistest,
Come, O breath, and breathe!"

Be willing to have the Holy Spirit as he wills to come. Let him come as a north wind, cold and cutting, or as a south wind, sweet and melting. Say, "Come, from any of the four winds, O breath! only come." He can come unexpectedly upon you in the pew during these five minutes that remain. You are perhaps thinking about whether you can catch an early train, and get home. May the Holy Spirit lay hold of you before you leave the building, and get you home in real earnest to your God and to your Father! He can come very mightily. There is a great deal about you that would shut him out. But it is hard to keep wind out when it blows in the fulness of its strength. You may fill up the crevices of the door as you please, but still the wind gets in. Thus, too, is it with the Spirit of God: he comes in might; and he can also come very sweetly. Be not afraid of the Holy Spirit. He can charm you to Christ, as well as drive you to Christ. May he enter your heart even now!

We yearn to see all of you thus made to live. I am praying in my very soul that he would come to every one of you. I do not read that Ezekiel saw part of the valley of dry bones live, and the rest remain dry bones; but that they all lived, and stood upon their feet an exceeding great army. I long to see you all blessed at this service. Why should it not be so? Oh, that the Spirit of God would come and touch everyone of us! Many of you are alive already, blessed be his name! Well, you can have more life, for Christ has come not only that you might have life, but that you "might have it more abundantly." Let the blessed Spirit enter in greater fulness, I beseech you. But pray mightily, that every soul here that is dead may now feel the sacred breath, and begin to live. Then I shall not only hear of one, as last Thursday, but news shall be brought of many upon whom the divine Spirit has sweetly come, and led them to Jesus, to be saved now, and to be saved for ever. God grant it! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel xxxvii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—464, 461, 451.