

HEARTS OF STONE FOR HEARTS OF FLESH

I. Ezekiel 36:22-28

A. So we're back in Ezekiel today, the prophet who declared God's word inside of Babylon where God's people had been hauled off into captivity. Ezekiel delivered prophecies of *lamentation, mourning, and woe!* Why? Because the people had profaned God's name through idolatry along with all the immorality and child sacrifice that came with it. Idolatry is committing adultery against God Almighty. God's people did that. The northern tribes, overtaken by Assyria, never were allowed to return in mass to their land. Thusly they're referred to as the Ten Lost Tribes. Better news was promised to Judah. But the Best News belongs to you!

B. Many of God's people actually liked hearing Ezekiel preach but they were mere hearers and not heeders. Preachers dare not judge a sermon by what folks say walking out the door. We sometimes need to wait a long time, even years, to see if our words had any life-changing impact. James 1:22 (ESV) exhorts us accordingly: *22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

C. Here's a little theology lesson: There's a difference between one's orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Orthodoxy is your theology; your doctrinal foundation; your core Biblical beliefs. Your orthopraxy is the actual fleshing-out of what you purport to believe. U2 sang, "You must be an acrobat to talk like this and act like that!" Pharisees were great examples of people who proudly boasted of their correct theology but then sorely corrupted it with their ungodly actions and add-on traditions. They poisoned people with their hypocrisy. Jesus called them, the blind leading the blind, whitewashed tombs, a brood of vipers. (*Aren't you glad we don't have them around anymore?!*)

D. So let's conduct an orthodoxy vs orthopraxy exercise in one small area, the church. Listen to 1 Timothy 3:14-15 (ESV) when Paul gives the *why* of his instructions on the qualifications of church leaders: *14 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. So does your orthodoxy agree with this Scripture that the church is the household of God, a pillar and buttress of the truth? What if we were to assess your orthopraxy on the matter: Would your orthopraxy reveal that you really do view the church as the household (family) of God as well as pillar and ground of truth? Would your orthopraxy reveal that you view the church as THE Bride of Christ? Would your orthopraxy reveal that you view your brothers & sisters in Christ as living stones and members of a Royal Priesthood or something more akin to members of the Odd Fellows or Pythian Sisters or your card club? (You can continue the exercise at home on any of the key doctrines of the faith, comparing your orthodoxy with your orthopraxy and see what you find.)*

E. Ezekiel 36:22-28 (ESV) is our text today: *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. (And yes this came to pass...)*

F. But despite the prophetic promises that came to pass for Judah being allowed to return to their homeland, rebuild Jerusalem and likewise the temple, the ultimate fulfillment of all these things occurs in Christ. Just as the exiles of Judah were restored, the exiles of the Garden, the descendants of Adam, all born with hearts of stone, all unclean in the filthiness of sin, have been given the greater promise: Eternal Life in Christ Jesus. It is Jesus who calls the dead to life, who exchanges hearts of stone for hearts of flesh, who puts His Spirit in those He's chosen for adoption that they may cry out, *Abba Father!* Tell me He's done that for you! Or tell me you want that for yourself! Tell me you want that for all those you love!

G. Think about this:

1) With a heart of stone, Jesus' brother James thought his Elder Brother was crazy; but with a heart made flesh he came to know his Elder Brother as the Messiah and Son of God, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

2) With hearts of stone, James & John were tagged the *sons of thunder* and wanted fire to scorch a Samaritan village; but with hearts made flesh, one became the first apostle martyred and the other became the apostle of love.

3) With a heart of stone, Saul of Tarsus was willing to kill Christians for what he believed; but with a heart made flesh, and the new name Paul, he was willing to die for fellow Christians and for his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so he did!

H. Jeremiah was another prophet who declared God's word to the exiles of Judah. **Jeremiah 17:9-10** (ESV) says: **9** *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?* **10** *I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds. Raise you hand if you want a new heart? Or if you want one for someone you love? Here's what you should do: Go home and make a list of those you know and love, those you want to know Christ. Then start praying for them that God will replace their hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. Ask God to apprehend them and fill them with His Holy Spirit. And ask Him to do this no matter what it takes.*

I. Maybe you'll hit your knees for your children or grandchildren. Maybe you'll cry out for your aging parents or grandparents. Maybe it will be for someone who's dying, whose time is short, whose eternity is at stake. Maybe it'll be for an atheist who jabbars online. (Think atheists frighten God?! LOL) Maybe it'll be for a young couple with children, struggling to make ends meet. Ask God to use you as His instrument, to be a vessel and voice of His mercy, compassion, and love, His truth, and wisdom, and understanding. But don't get in the way of God! Trust Him!

J. **2 Corinthians 5:17-19** (AMP) reminds of our present no-condemnation position in Christ as won for us on the cross. It will encourage our hearts and take us to prayer: **17** *Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life].* **18** *But all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ [making us acceptable to Him] and gave us the ministry of reconciliation [so that by our example we might bring others to Him],* **19** *that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting people's sins against them [but canceling them]. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation [that is, restoration to favor with God].*

* Meanwhile as our hearts and actions limp towards our blood-bought positions obtained for us by Jesus, we pray along with King David: "Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right and steadfast spirit within us. Do not cast us away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from us. Restore to us the joy of Your salvation and sustain us with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:10-12)

* Augustine prayed thusly and so do we: "O Holy Spirit, descend plentifully into (our hearts). Enlighten the dark corners of (these) neglected dwellings and scatter there Thy cheerful beams." (The Lord Bless You All as You go!)

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Ezekiel 36:22-28 (ESV)

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.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 (ESV)

14 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, **15** if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Jeremiah 17:9-10 (ESV)

9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? **10** I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (AMP)

17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life]. **18** But all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ [making us acceptable to Him] and gave us the ministry of reconciliation [so that by our example we might bring others to Him], **19** that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting people's sins against them [but canceling them]. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation [that is, restoration to favor with God].

Psalms 51:10-12 (AMP)

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right and steadfast spirit within me. **11** Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. **12** Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.

Quote by Augustine

"O Holy Spirit, descend plentifully into my heart. Enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling and scatter there Thy cheerful beams."

Video, Audio, Sermon & Article Links

Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy - Westminster Catechism Question 5 - Dr. Ken Talbot

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8U_yhT9eAdk

John MacArthur's Perfect Gospel Presentation To Ben Shapiro

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tY1KcLgA01I>

Bonus Stuff

Ezekiel 11:16-21 (ESV)

16 Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone.' **17** Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.' **18** And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. **19** And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, **20** that they may walk in My statutes and keep My rules and obey them. And they shall be My people, and I will be their God. **21** But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares the Lord God."

Jeremiah 24:1-7 (ESV)

1 After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, together with the officials of Judah, the craftsmen, and the metal workers, and had brought them to Babylon, the LORD showed me this vision: behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the LORD. **2** One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. **3** And the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I said, "Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten." **4** Then the word of the LORD came to me: **5** "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. **6** I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up. **7** I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be My people and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.

Psalms 51:1-12 (ESV)

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. **2** Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! **3** For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. **4** Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment. **5** Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. **6** Behold, You delight in truth in the inward being, and You teach me wisdom in the secret heart. **7** Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. **8** Let me hear joy and

gladness; let the bones that You have broken rejoice. **9** Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. **10** Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. **11** Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. **12** Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Psalm 73:23-28 (NASB)

23 Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. **24** With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. **25** Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. **26** My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. **27** For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. **28** But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works.

Proverbs 3:5-7 (NASB)

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. **6** In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. **7** Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

Romans 12:2 (AMPC)

2 Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].

Ephesians 2:8-10 (AMP)

8 For it is by grace [God's remarkable compassion and favor drawing you to Christ] that you have been saved [actually delivered from judgment and given eternal life] through faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [not through your own effort], but it is the [undeserved, gracious] gift of God; **9** not as a result of [your] works [nor your attempts to keep the Law], so that no one will [be able to] boast or take credit in any way [for his salvation]. **10** For we are His workmanship [His own master work, a work of art], created in Christ Jesus [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, ready to be used] for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us].

Quote by Augustine

"I never have any difficulty believing in miracles, since I experienced the miracle of a change in my own heart."

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"Christ will be master of the heart, and sin must be mortified. If your life is unholy, then your heart is unchanged, and you are an unsaved person. The Savior will sanctify His people, renew them, give them a hatred of sin, and a love of holiness."

Quote by Harry Ironside

"Christianity is not just repeating John 3:16 or Acts 16:31; it is yielding the heart and the life to Christ."

Quote by D.L. Moody

"I believe firmly that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfishness and ambition and everything that is contrary to God's law, the Holy Spirit will fill every corner of our hearts. But if we are full of pride and conceit and ambition and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God. We must be emptied before we can be filled."

Quote by J.I. Packer

"We must learn to measure ourselves, not by our knowledge about God, not by our gifts and responsibilities in the church, but by how we pray and what goes on in our hearts. Many of us, I suspect, have no idea how impoverished we are at this level. Let us ask the Lord to show us."

Quote by George Herbert

"God sees hearts as we see faces."

Quote by Samuel Rutherford

"Since He looked upon me, my heart is not my own. He hath run away to heaven with it."

The Walk We Talk

By Steven A. Bush

So let us walk the walk the walk we talk,
Proclaim the Rock and grow the flock,
Sure some will squawk and mock and balk,
But some will seek and ask and knock.

There is no time to sit and gawk,
For time is ticking off the clock,
And soon their ships will leave the dock
With blinded souls hell bound for shock.

We have keys for hearts still locked,
With truth and love we come well stocked.
The road is narrow but is not blocked,
Our Message is no poppycock.

Let us paint with paint and not with chalk,
Risk stones and jeers as laughingstocks.
Let us walk the walk the walk we talk,
Proclaim the Rock and grow the flock.

- PSB <>, Friday, March 7, 2014