So the Lord transports the prophet Ezekiel in the power of the Holy Spirit to a valley filled with dry bones. They are dead and dry and lifeless. As the Lord later tells him, “These bones are the whole house of Israel.” (Ezekiel 37: 11) The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is also a part of the whole house of Israel, so we are there also. The bones are dead and the church in America is becoming deader. The bones are lifeless and the church is day by day lacks the life-giving and supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit. While once there was much life, now there is no life. God breathed the life of breath and Holy Spirit into Creation at the beginning. But the breath of the Holy Spirit has departed and so the bones are dying and dead. Is your spiritual life more alive today than when you first believed or less? Is there a part of your spiritual life that is just going through the motions? Are you passionately in love with the Lord Jesus or is He a remote historical figure for you? Is your spirituality dry and dusty or filled with the Living Waters of the Holy Spirit? Do you desire God above all else? Are you compelled by every fiber of your being to come to church and enter His presence? However much time you spend in prayer is it never enough and you want to spend more time with God? Do you read the scriptures voraciously and desire to know Him through His Word? Where are you on that continuum? Between dead as dry bones (on the one hand) or filled with the powerful life-giving Spirit of God at work in you (on the other hand) where would you honestly say you are today?

The church in America is rapidly becoming the church of the valley of dried bones, a testament to what had once been and is but a memory now. Did you know that, according to the Pew Research poll, the number of atheists and agnostics has almost doubled to 9% of all Americans and we as mainline Protestants—Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, Congregationalists—at 11% are about to be overtaken by those who have a negative view of God. The largest religious group in America today is those who check “NONE” as their religious preference—larger than the Southern Baptists, larger than the Roman Catholic Church, larger than everyone who checks the box “evangelical” are those who check the box “NONE”. Combine the atheists, agnostics and NONE’s and we are getting close to one third of all Americans. A decade ago 52% of Americans were in church every Sunday; that has slid dramatically to 46%. People born between 1928 and 1945 check the box as generic believers in God at 82%; those millenials in the youngest group check the box at 42%. The Christian Church in America is sliding into the abyss, rapidly, faster and faster, and the decline is picking up speed. The speed of the decline is taking my breath away; the dissolution of the American Church that I thought might be 20 years in the future is within 10 years. We are beholding the valley of dry bones where was once the church.

I call it “the great falling away”. We don’t know what the Word of God says anymore. Nor care. We don’t understand why it is important to attend worship or to pray. More and more other things, the idols of this modern world, are taking precedence over our love for God. I Timothy states: “in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons...” (I Timothy 4: 1) To be sure there are parts of the church in America that seem (quote, unquote) “successful”. I suppose I could preach a prosperity gospel (pray to Jesus and get rich). I suppose I could preach a more “seeker-friendly” message, leaving out the name of Jesus and talking about God all the time, because the name “Jesus” is offensive to some. I suppose I could never preach on sin. I suppose I could never preach on the need to repent and turn to God. I suppose I could leave out the cross and Jesus’ vicarious sacrifice for us and our salvation to forgive us of our sins. I suppose I could tell you that everyone goes to heaven, including Adolph Hitler. I suppose I could cease to believe in miracles and say that Jesus’ resurrection from the dead was poetic and not literal. All of those things I will never do. I would rather be true to what I believe and in whom I believe than to be
“successful”. I would rather preach what the church has always believed about such matters rather than telling the world what it wants to hear. I will always preach about Jesus and His cross and resurrection. I will always proclaim the Gospel and humanity’s need for a Living Savior. If we’re going down I’m going down with my preaching guns blazing. I will not compromise. I will not ignore my Savior, Jesus. I will not be silent where the Gospel is concerned. I would rather be faithful than successful; I would rather hear “well done” from the lips of Jesus than possess all the baubles of success from a world sliding rapidly into hell.

So can these bones live?, asks the Lord. Ezekiel answers Him, “O Lord God, Thou knowest.” (Ezekiel 37: 3)

Father, only You and Your Son Jesus can do what we need to have done. Only You, can staunch the downward spiral into the dark abyss. You know, Lord. I do not know. You can do this, Lord. But I cannot do this, apart from Jesus...Ezekiel is told to prophesy to PREACH to the dry bones. Hear the Word of the Lord. The Lord God will breath His Spirit into you and where once were only dead and dry bones it will come alive again in the power of the Spirit and in the power of the resurrection. Can these bones live? I preach to dry bones and say receive the breath of life again from the Lord God Almighty. Breathe deeply of this Spirit and you shall live. Stop falling away and come back to HIM. This is the necessary GREAT SECOND REFORMATION. Can these bones live? It begins with you and me today.

When my parents declined and then died my heart felt like the valley of dried bones. It felt as if the Spirit had departed and the pain of loss had crushed my spirit. There was a large and gaping hole in my heart where once had been my life with my family. And so I prayed, not always because I wanted to pray but because I needed to pray. And I read my Bible, not because I was obliged to study it but because I discovered I needed to read the Word. And I began playing the piano again late at night, praise and hymns coming from the manse at odd hours because I was led to do so. And I can honestly say I have fallen in love with Jesus Christ all over again. He is so real and alive to me. I speak with Him in prayer and when I have prayed one hour I want to pray another. When I am studying the Bible, each verse suggests another and another and another, and I am filling my thoughts with His Word not my words. I don’t watch television anymore because I watch sermons and praise meetings on my smartphone. I’ve always been late for things but now I am chronically late because I lose track of time because I am so focused on Him. If you’ve noticed I’m a bit of a space cadet now, some details that I would always handle with ease I don’t, because I am so consumed with Jesus. Hours and hours spent with Him. It must be what heaven is like. What a glorious day that shall be.

So Reformation is falling in love with Jesus once again. He becomes the one great obsession of our heart and life. You only want to spend time with Him. Everything else becomes secondplace and falls away in the light of His glory and grace. Lord, you are more precious than silver. Lord, you are more costly than gold. Lord, you are more beautiful than diamonds. There’s nothing I desire compares with you...I watch each evening incessantly videos of a great African Evangelist by the name of Reinhard Bonke. He preached all across Nigeria with crowds estimated to be 1 million plus everywhere he went. The largest crowd was 1.9 million people. In the last decade, as the American Church has been sliding down into the valley of dried bones, there are over 5 million Africans in the past decade who have filled out commitment cards through his ministry. He was asked, How can you preach to crowds of this size? He said, “Very large speakers.” The church in America is in free fall decline; but the church in Africa is experiencing revival. The Great Falling Away is happening simultaneously to the Great Second Reformation.

Which part of the church do you want to be part of? Can these bones live? Then have you own personal Reformation today, have the dry and dusty parts of your faith come alive, fall in love with Jesus Christ all over again, in the powerful, matchless, name above every name, the name of Jesus Christ, I ask it.. Amen and Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!