



***YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!***  
**Winter 2018-19 Midweek / Sermon Starter**

### **Unit 3: God's Power and Me**

**Sermon Series Title:** When the Spirit Moves

**Sermon 3:** God's Promise is Fulfilled

**Bible Passage:** Ezekiel 36:22-27

#### **Background/Context**

"I wish I could be a better person. I wish that I could control my mouth. I sometimes say things that are hurtful to others. I wish people would just work together. What's wrong with the people in the world?" These statements may mimic some you've made in the past or more recently. These often reveal a desire to personally do the right thing, but the inability to carry out that desire. But, the Bible has good news for anyone seeking to be their very best, and you don't have to send in a seed of faith (money) to receive the blessings God promised to give.

In Ezekiel 36, the writer presents the criterion which the Israelites must experience before they can enter into the promised blessings. After entering captivity for disobeying the God's law, the nation needed to be honest about its situation. They had disgraced and dishonored the name of the Lord God, yet now looked to God to renew and restore them. In order for this to happen the nation needed to remove their sin problem. They also needed God to give them a new heart. Lastly, the nation needed God's Spirit.

#### **A. The Stench Removed (Ezek. 36:23-25)**

Humanity has a sin problem. Sin occurs when people stray from God's work, ways, and will. Whether intentional or unintentional, sin sets off a chain reaction of consequences. When a person violates the will of God, their violation brings separation from God (Isa. 59:2), death (Rom 6:23), and abandonment (Rom 1:24). These are dire consequences and only God can rescue His people from them. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord made this promise, "I will honor the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations—the name you have profaned among them . . . I will take you from the nations . . . I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean . . . from all your impurities and all your idols" (vv. 23-25). The Bible describes men and women as being dirty or filthy because of sin. God promised to remove our sin and clean us up. King David expressed this process when he stated, "Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7). David understood that he was unable to cleanse himself. Only the Creator can remove the stench of sin from wicked people.

**Application Point:** Who do you know that needs to hear this promise of purification and restoration? How do you express God's promise in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ? The Lord promised to forgive us of our sin, and to clean us up. How will you respond to His promise?

## **B. The Soul Replaced (Ezek. 36:22, 26)**

It is not enough for the Lord to forgive or cleanse the sinner from transgressions. He also promised to do something else. Because the Israelites had "profaned God's name" by not keeping His statutes and ordinances, He desired them to live differently. "If only they had such a heart to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that they and their children would prosper forever" (Deut. 5:29). It is God's will for humanity to fear and reverence Him above all others, and to obey His commandments. He said, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit will within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (v. 26). This replacing of the heart and spirit (which I am referring to as the soul), of the sinner is imperative because it is in the heart where evil thoughts, desires, and mindset originate. Knowing that humanity is not capable of real heart change on our own, the Lord sent His Son to reconcile us to Him (2 Cor. 5:17).

**Application Point:** In bookstores around the country, shelves are filled with self-help books. These books offer instructions on how to be a better organizer, friend, husband, wife, parent, etc. Yet, the material in the books rarely gets to the core issue—the heart of men and women. Why do so many believers look for secular means to fix our lives when God already promised to give us hearts to know Him, fear Him, and obey Him? Only God can bring about real change in our lives.

## **C. His Spirit Returns (Ezek. 36:27)**

God promised that He would remove the stench and replace the soul. But that's not all. He is not finished with the repentant man or woman. God promised to put His Spirit in them. "I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances" (v. 27). God promised to take up residence in us and to guide us into all truth. The apostle Paul declared that a believer walks in a new and holy way. "I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). A Christian can't claim "I can't help it" when it comes to sin. The Lord took away the stench of sin, gave us a heart to know, love, and obey Him, and provided a personal trainer—the Holy Spirit.

**Application Point:** In what ways have you been cooperative with the Holy Spirit's guidance in your life? In what ways have you been uncooperative with His guidance? It's not too late to take steps to allow the Holy Spirit to guide you through every life situation.