

Title: CAN YOU SEE THE FINISH LINE? JOHN 15:26-27; 16:4-15
(Chatham, NJ; 05/31/15, AM) [Pc – Topical; Twin-Point Outline]

Theme: We must never allow the unrighteous to believe that we have given up our battle against sin and unrighteous behavior for the Spirit helps us and fights for us.

Purpose: To exhort us to keep on fighting with courage and conviction.

Introduction:

1. Ezekiel 37:1-14, explain the Valley of Dry Bones.
2. God had punished them and sent them to Babylon.
3. Israel felt dried up and hopeless, 11.
4. The valley provides her a vision of new life that can only be provided by God.
5. Israel will have a future by the Spirit of God.

I. Can Today's Bones Live? Do You Have a Vision?

A. The Long, Lonely Version

1. Cardinal George of Chicago, before he died on April 17, said, "It is likely that I will die in my bed. My successor will die in prison. His successor will die executed in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the church has done so often in history."
2. Several weeks ago I mentioned Whittaker Chambers, a communist spy turned Christian, who believed at the time that Christianity was on the losing side.
3. He never lived to see Communism collapse, though the man he accused of being a spy, Alger Hiss, did live to witness it.
4. His pessimism was unwarranted.
5. Perhaps he could never overcome the notion, drummed into him by communism's idealists, that their cause was inevitable history. It wasn't.

B. Seeds of Hope

1. Although the NYT breathlessly declared that Christianity is on the decline in the US, they admitted in raw numbers that Evangelical Christianity increased.
2. We must ask, "Is it Christianity that has declined or the fluffy, worldly nonsense that some churches serve up as the real thing?" I suggest the latter.
3. Though you may read of some denominations voting to allow gay weddings and gay clergy, not a single major conservative denomination is reconsidering its stance. The stronger, larger, and more orthodox groups dwarf the liberal, mainline churches when it comes to churchgoing adherents.
4. Once the gay rights movement bleeds these liberal churches to death, they will have to confront the stronger, Bible-believing churches and will likely stagnate as they run into bigger walls to tear down.
5. Many people are beginning to push back on the religious liberty front:
 - See page 6, *Imprimis*, April 2015, for examples
6. Despite repeated attempts by liberals to browbeat Christians and bend the law to their will, the pro-life movement is still standing tall with some local jurisdictions passing ever-stronger pro-life laws.
7. Finally, there is Ukraine: see *Good News* article.
8. Will we stand with them when we have opportunities?
9. Our voice is important.

II. We Have Help, John 15:26-27; 16:4-15

A. God's Breath and the Holy Spirit

1. God's breath in Ezekiel 37:11 gave life to the bones

2. Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the “helper” and “spirit of truth” who comes from the Father, 15:26-27
 3. Paraclete – from parakaleo, “to stand beside” (frequently used in NT to mean “to exhort or to encourage”)
 4. Jesus had told them, “I will not leave you as orphans.”
 5. He and the Father are present with us in the Holy Spirit, the same “breath” of God that gave life to a Valley of Dry Bones.
 6. He is the “Spirit of Truth.”
- B. He convicts the world, 16:8-11
1. Sin – because the world does not believe
 2. Unbelief is the classic sin: a refusal to surrender heart and will to the divine will and authority, and it reaches its highest expression by refusing to accept the Son
 3. Righteousness – because Jesus goes to the Father and won’t be seen
 4. Jesus’ departure and seating at God’s right hand probably connects righteousness with believers now having access to God whereas before our sins prevented our entry into his presence
 5. Judgment – the ruler of this world is judged (condemned)
 6. The spiritual powers that influence the world are now condemned by the power of the Holy Spirit; no wonder the demons were afraid of Jesus.
 7. In Revelation 19, the rider on the white horse (Jesus) strikes the nations with the sword of his mouth
- C. He Speaks, 16:13-15
1. Guided the disciples into all truth, 13
 2. Spoke on the authority of Christ, 13
 3. Declared all that belongs to Christ: the message is divine, 14

Conclusions:

1. Do you have a vision for what this church can become?
2. Do you believe the Holy Spirit can breathe new life into us?
3. Sometimes God waits to act definitively until we have demonstrated our faith.
4. Pray for the bones to live.
5. Be confident in the power and work of the Holy Spirit to make it happen.