

Favor

Ezekiel 36:26-28

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A. Transformed to Experience His Favor (v. 26; Ps. 51:7-11):

2. Give - He is going to put in each person, returning to the Jerusalem generously, the ability to submit their minds, their lives to serve the will of God. His restoration to Jerusalem is to rebirth what was broken.

a) God's restoration will not simply be an undoing of Israel's sin to bring her to a state of neutrality. Instead, , it will involve the positive implanting of a new nature in Israel's people that will make them righteous. Jeremiah called this work of God the "New Covenant" (cf. comments on Jer. 31:31-33).

3. New heart - He will generously refresh our inner spiritual and moral transformation so that we can be single-mindedly committed to the Lord's will (36:26; Eph. 3:16-17). His passion for us becomes our desire for Him.

a) In the ancient world, the heart was the center of volition and the intellectual catalyst for feeling and action. A "heart of stone" implied inflexibility and willfulness, while a "heart of flesh" meant submission and compliance. The "new spirit" suggests that God will empower Israel for obedience. This "new spirit" is God's spirit, the source of all life. The gift of God's spirit became a common way to speak about God's movement in Israel's life (see 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:4-21, 33; 10:44-47; 15:8;

19:2–7).

4. New spirit - He will also generously purposefully refresh all that we do so we become useful before the Lord God once again (10:17; Zech. 5:9).

a) This new internalized covenant would lead the people to turn to the new shepherd, the Messiah, and exchange their rebelliousness for a new heart, sensitive to the will of God. A “new spirit” within them would provide the enabling power to do this. God called this new spirit “my Spirit” (v. 27), meaning Yahweh’s Holy Spirit (11:19–20; 18:31; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28–29), who would empower them to obey the law of God. ^[1]

5. New spirit - The Lord so desires a relationship with us and understands the frailty of the flesh and the attacks of Satan. He constantly seeks to provide us His strength, from His Spirit to ours, so that our relationship with Him is new every morning.

a) God would not only restore the people physically to the land but would restore them spiritually by giving them a new heart and spirit to help them follow Him and do His will. (11:19–20; 18:31; 37:14; 39:29; Jer. 31:31–34; Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:17, 18; Rom. 7:7–8:11; 2 Cor. 3:3–18; Heb. 8:6–10:39.)^[2]

b) Thus, man's responsibility and God's sovereign grace are shown to be co-existent. Man cannot make himself a new heart unless God gives it (Phil. 2:12, 13).^[3]

6. Heart of stone - This is a hard heart that doesn’t receive God’s Word so that Christ can nurture spiritual growth – Ezek. 2:4; 3:7. Unimpressible in serious things, like the “stony ground” (Mt 13:5, 20), unfit for receiving the good seed so that it brings

forth good fruit. He must transform our hearts for the relationship to be divinely empowered.

a) Earlier, the prophet had all but said that Judah was incapable of obedience (Ezek. 2:3–4), just as Jeremiah implied (Jer. 13:23). Accordingly, the people must be remade so that disobedience becomes an impossibility for them. Jeremiah makes the same affirmation (Jer. 31:31–34). Here, both prophets become carried away by their rhetoric. Ezekiel wanted to affirm that without God's initiative, a genuine conversion on Israel's part is impossible. He wants to declare how difficult it is to overcome the bondage of past evil. He does not wish to turn Israel into a nation of moral robots whom God has programmed to obey. If disobedience is impossible, so is obedience.¹⁴¹

7. I will remove the heart of stone – Many people come to church and hear the word of God, but past experiences with relationships, church, and sometimes tired of feeling like God does not listen cause them to be hearers and not doers. Once we develop into this mood, our hearts can become stoney (Luke 8:11-15; Hebrews 5:11-14). We know we have a stony heart when the Lord instructs us to obey Him, and we immediately make excuses or become angry.

a) A "stony heart" is a hard heart, one that doesn't receive God's Word and nurture spiritual growth (Ezek 2:4; 3:7). (from The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament © 2001-2004 by Warren W. Wiersbe. All rights reserved.)

8. A heart of stone from your flesh – The flesh with nothing good in it (Galatians 5:19-21). It must be transformed to have any possible desire to seek the Lord. The passions of the flesh drive us away from the Lord. For us to have a genuine relationship with the Lord, He must implant His Spirit in us (Titus 3:4-8) so that His Spirit influences our spirit (Romans 8:9-17), transforms our hearts by cutting out our stoney hearts so that the flesh, its passions, no longer rules our lives.

a) “Flesh” in the OT is often a symbol of weakness and frailty (Isa. 31:3); in the NT, it is often a symbol of the sinful nature as a God-opposing force (as in Rom. 8:5-8). Here, it stands (in opposition to stone) for a pliable, teachable heart.

9. A heart of flesh – God will put in us (all who allow Him to transform their lives) a heart that generously impacts our minds and all emotions (heart) so that we genuinely seek Him and worship Him like David, who said his soul pants for God like a deer pants for water (Psalm 42:1). It is only when this takes place His chosen people can form a kingdom that all the nations of the world would believe is the holy hand of God at work among us.

a) The two statements of v 26a are unpacked in v 26b and v 27. Yahweh would creatively endow Israel with new wills that were sensitive rather than stony and challenging in their reactions to Yahweh’s will. Thanks to Him, their lives would be governed by a new impulse that would be an expression of Yahweh’s spirit. He would re-make their human natures so they marched to the music of the covenant terms that expressed Yahweh’s nature and will. Only thus could the covenant relationship become a living actuality rather than a doctrinal truth. Only thus could the old ideal of Yahweh’s people in Yahweh’s land (cf. v 20) become a reality.^[5]

B. Remain Engaged (v. 27):

1. I will put – God makes a decisive decision on His initiative to continuously, generously implant His Spirit in our lives. God’s passion and desire for us drives our entire experience of Him.
2. My Spirit – God does all the work by breathing into our bodies (Acts 2:1-4) His Spirit so that our spirit has ‘all spiritual blessings’ (Ephesians 1:3-4), and therefore has the potential of being controlled by His Spirit so that we can be enabled to live a holy life guided by His wisdom (Ephesians 5:15-18).

- a) The witness of the Spirit in the heart proves that the person has been born of God (Rom 8:9,14-17; Eph 1:13-14). Because you have God's Spirit within, you share in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:1-4) and therefore want to obey the divine will. It is nature that determines conduct. Dogs act like dogs because they have a dog's nature, and God's people act like they belong to God because they have God's nature within (1 John 3:9). Ezekiel will deal again with this gift of the Spirit in Ezek 37:14 and 39:29. (from The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament © 2001-2004 by Warren W. Wiersbe. All rights reserved.)
3. To cause - God is completely committed (Philippians 1:6) to create within us, by His divine energy (convict us of sin; John 16:7-11, remind us of His word; John 14:26; illuminate His Word so we can understand it; 1 Corinthians 2:10-15), the ability and desire to obey Him daily (Ephesians 3:14-21).
 4. Walked together – Because of God's Spirit becoming a powerful influence, believers' lives are expected to surrender to Him. The Spirit-driven life would then become a lifestyle that is pleasing to God.
 5. To cause us to walk in His statutes – To cause us to obey His written Word, which contains all of His precepts, also means that we would live responsibly before God.
 - a) Fourth, the Spirit of God will “move” them to follow (“walk-in”) His laws (v. 27).⁵⁵ Inability to keep the law was a primary concern presented by the apostle Paul. He lamented his struggle and failure to keep the law in his own strength (Rom 7:13–25) and followed that lament with the solution in Rom 8:1–39. The solution to his dilemma was living in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:16–26).¹⁶¹
 6. Careful to keep; Guard – Despite all that the Lord will do for us, we are still responsible not to allow our anxieties, insecurities, and passions (the heart of stone in the flesh) to interfere with our obedience to the Lord's written Word or His moral laws. David said he purposefully and decisively sustained God's Word in his mind so that in His emotional ups and downs, he would not sin against God (Psalm 119:11).

C. Blessed (v. 28):

1. To live in the land – Once our relationship with the Lord is responsive to all the Lord willingly does for us, He will permanently and bestow entirely His blessings on our lives.
 - a) The results of Israel's regeneration will be her permanent occupation of the land (v. 28a); a covenant relationship with God (v. 28b); protection against relapse into idolatry (v. 29a); the abundant supply of every want (vv. 29b, 30); and self-humiliation and repentance on account of past sin (vv. 31, 32; cf. Plumptre, *Pulpit Commentary, in loco*). These benefits are of pure grace (v. 22).

2. That I gave - God, based on His covenant with Abraham generously, permanently established and confirmed the land He would allow His people to inherit. When their relationship with God is honored by their willingness to obey Him, nothing can take His blessings away from them.
 - a) Ezekiel promises that the land will enjoy unparalleled fertility so Israel will never again experience famine. Famine was always a danger to the region in antiquity. The land had no excellent river system to provide irrigation, as did Egypt and Mesopotamia. Israelite farmers had to depend entirely upon adequate rainfall to support their crops. Any year the rain did not come in sufficient quantity, the people suffered from famine. The people of the ancient Near East knew this to be a characteristic of Palestine (Ezek. 36:30). Ezekiel asserts that once the restoration takes place, famine will be a phenomenon of the past.^[2]

 - b) While this promise will be fulfilled for the entire nation of Israel during the Millennium, its fulfillment is foreshadowed by the Spirit's indwelling of all believers in Christ.^[8]

3. You shall be My people – Christ bought us with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23), our bodies are His temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19), He has transformed into a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) so that we become His possession, His holy nation, and His royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9-10).

a) As the people had failed so miserably to respond to God and fulfill their purpose in the world, there would have to be radical surgery: the old stony hearts would be replaced with new living hearts, and the old stubborn spirits replaced with God's life-giving spirit. Only then would the land be restored and become like the Garden of Eden (verse 35). Only then would the chosen people form such a kingdom that all the world's nations would perceive the holy hand of God at work in their midst. ^[1]

4. I will be your God – When our hearts are fully surrendered to His inner power, and our minds are surrendered to do His will, and then He blesses us, He will forever be supreme sovereignly reigning over our lives.
5. I will be your God – God, who created all things out of nothing and reigns forever will supremely be our King, or Lord and our redeemer so that no one or our flesh can conquer us (Romans 8:31, 37-39; Galatians 5:22-25; 1 John 4:4).
6. I will be your God – His blessings are forever internal and external and are so established nothing can ever destroy what He does for us.

^[1]Cooper, Lamar Eugene: *Ezekiel*. electronic ed. Nashville : Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1994 (Logos Library System; The New American Commentary 17), S. 316

^[2] Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (p. 994). T. Nelson Publishers.

^[3] Fausset, A. R. (n.d.). *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Jeremiah–Malachi: Vol. IV* (p. 342). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

^[4]Vawter, Bruce ; Hoppe, Leslie J.: *A New Heart : A Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*. Grand Rapids; Edinburgh : Eerdmans; Handsel Press, 1991 (International Theological Commentary), S. 163

^[5]Allen, Leslie C.: *Word Biblical Commentary : Ezekiel 20-48*. Dallas : Word, Incorporated, 2002 (Word Biblical Commentary 29), S. 179

⁵⁵“Move” translates an unusual use of עָשָׂה, “to do, make.” BDB (795) gives the sense here (also Eccl 3:14) as “bring about.” Allen (*Ezekiel 20–48*, 175) translates “ensure.”

^[6]Cooper, Lamar Eugene: *Ezekiel*. electronic ed. Nashville : Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1994 (Logos Library System; The New American Commentary 17), S. 317

^[7]Vawter, Bruce ; Hoppe, Leslie J.: *A New Heart : A Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*. Grand Rapids; Edinburgh : Eerdmans; Handsel Press, 1991 (International Theological Commentary), S. 163

^[8]Willmington, H. L.: *Willmington's Bible Handbook*. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 1997, S. 420

^[9]Craigie, Peter C.: *Ezekiel*. Louisville : Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, c1983 (The Daily Study Bible Series), S. 257