

## "Heart of Flesh" Ezekiel 36:23-38 Exaudi Domine 2024

Greetings, beloved, in the matchless name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Dear brethren, we live in a world that often feels like a desert, parched and barren. The challenges of life can leave us feeling as if we are wandering aimlessly, thirsting for something more, something meaningful, something that can truly quench our spiritual thirst. But let me remind you, dear friends, that we serve a God who specializes in transforming deserts into gardens, and hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.

In the book of Ezekiel, God speaks of a transformation that is nothing short of miraculous. He speaks of taking a heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh. This is not a minor adjustment or a slight shift. It is a complete and total change. It is the work of a Master Craftsman, carefully removing the old, hardened heart and skillfully replacing it with a new, tender one.

This transformation is not something we can do on our own. We can't soften our own hearts. We can't make them more receptive to God's Word. Only God can do that. He is the one who takes our hearts of stone and turns them into hearts of flesh. He is the one who makes us alive to Him and His Word.

As we continue to immerse ourselves in the richness of Ezekiel 36, we find ourselves confronted with a powerful image of restoration. This restoration is not merely a return to a previous state, but a radical transformation that is both personal and communal, physical and spiritual. It is a restoration that is rooted in the very character of God, in His goodness and His love for His people.

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The first image that comes to mind is that of a land restored. In verse 34, the Lord declares, "The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it." This is not just about agriculture. It's about life, abundance, and prosperity. It's about a land that was once barren and lifeless, now teeming with life and productivity. It's about the goodness of God, who takes what is broken and makes it whole, who takes what is dead and brings it to life.

In the midst of our trials and tribulations, we often find ourselves in a spiritual exile, feeling lost and disconnected from God. But even in these moments of desolation, there is a promise of restoration and renewal. This is the hope we find in the book of Ezekiel, a hope that transcends our circumstances and anchors us in the steadfast love of God.

In the throes of exile, we are confronted with our own brokenness. We are stripped of our illusions of self-sufficiency and brought face-to-face with our need for God. This is a painful process, but it is also a necessary one. It is in the crucible of exile that our hearts of stone are broken and made ready for the transformation that God desires to bring about in us.

Our God is a God of transformation. He's not just in the business of changing circumstances, He's in the business of changing hearts. He takes our hearts of stone, hardened by the trials and tribulations of this world, and turns them into hearts of flesh, capable of experiencing His love, His grace, and His mercy in ways we never thought possible.

Our God is a God of restoration. He takes our brokenness, our pain, our suffering, and He turns it into something beautiful. He restores us, not just to our former state, but to a state that is better

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than anything we could have ever imagined. He makes us whole again, not just in body, but in spirit.

And finally, our God is a God of hope. Even amid our darkest trials, even when we feel like we're wandering aimlessly in a desert, He is there. He is our guiding light, our beacon of hope. He leads us out of the desert and into the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land of abundance and blessing. We are saved by the grace of God, who has given us the spirit as well as the Son. He is Risen! Amen.