

**EZEKIEL: BLOSSOMING DURING LIFE'S MOST SEVERE CRISES**  
**Part XIX: God's Work To Preserve His Testimony Above His People's Failure**  
**(Ezekiel 36:1-38)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. One of the greatest challenges in making disciples is overcoming a "blown testimony!" Some Christians try to disciple the unsaved and block their own efforts to do so by performing embarrassing sins in front of the watching unbelievers. When this happens, not only do the unsaved have an excellent excuse for ignoring the Gospel, but those who try to witness are often chilled from continuing outreach efforts.
- B. This is not a new problem. Church History is fraught with broken pledges and ruined testimonies. Yet, the Church of Jesus Christ still survives, and people daily come to believe in Christ. Ezekiel 36:1-38 explains God's marvelous work to overcome this problem:

**II. God's Work To Preserve His Testimony Above His People's Failure, Ezekiel 36:1-38.**

- A. God worked to preserve the honor of the land of Israel, Ez. 36:1-15.
  - 1. When Israel was deposed from the land, the Gentiles gloated over the land and considered it their own possession, Ez. 36:1-2, 3-5.
  - 2. Accordingly, God predicted that the land would be returned to Israel and would eventually not suffer the humiliation of war and loss of its people again, Ez. 36:6-15.
- B. God also worked to preserve His own honor that was lost through the deportation of Israel, Ez. 36:16-38.
  - 1. Israel sinned in the land, causing God to have to remove the people in judgment, Ez. 36:16-19.
  - 2. In this process, the Gentiles looked upon the straggling captives of Israel, concluding that their God was not that great to allow His people such humiliation, Ez. 36:20.
  - 3. Accordingly, God decided to defend and honor His name in **spite** of Israel's condition, Ez. 36:21-38.
    - a. When the Gentiles profaned God's Name because of the sin of His people, God decided to do something about this tragic situation, Ez. 36:21.
    - b. Not for the sake of Israel that had sinned, but for His **own Name's sake**, God decided to reverse the entire process, Ez. 36:22-23: (a) First, God would gather the dispersed exiles from their Gentile host lands, returning them to Israel, Ez. 36:24; (b) Second, God would forgive the nation and create a new heart in them, Ez. 36:25-27. This is the prediction of the new birth that Jesus talked about with Nicodemus in John 3. The baptism "with water and the Spirit" does not refer to water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but to the **same baptism**--the "clean water" picturing the Holy Spirit's regeneration at salvation, Ez. 36:25-27 with John 3:5; (c) Third, God would put a new heart in the people of Israel, a heart run by His Holy Spirit, Ez. 36:26-27. This would produce the righteousness needed for the people to live a godly testimony, cf. Rom. 8:3-4. (d) Fourth, God would follow this inner sanctification up with external blessings of the land, Ez. 36:28-37. **In time, Israel would be seen as the holy flock of God, and her testimony and God's Name would be honored in her as a result**, Ez. 36:38.

***Lesson: God's testimony before the lost is dependent upon His own power, not upon the personal "goodness" of His human servants! God is not overcome by the sins of His own people!***

***Application: (1) If we have hurt our own testimony for Christ before the lost, we must confess this to the Lord and "rebound" into effective service. Such renewal is not only possible, but it is the effective way to respond to personal sinful failure, 1 Jn. 1:9. (2) If believers have hurt the testimony of God before the unsaved, it is God's business to reach that one with the truth. Accordingly, let us not become distraught, but keep fulfilling our own personal witnessing responsibilities. (3) After all, no one will stand before God and blame poor Christian testimonies for their ending in judgment, Rev. 20:13-15. All men know enough from God's display of Himself in nature to pursue that insight to be led to the Gospel, Rom. 1:18-20!***