

LET GOD ARISE!

*Revival
Prayer Guide #9
Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis*



Return to the Lord: Revival under Hezekiah 2 Chronicles 30.1-9

Take Me Back *Andrae Crouch*

Take me back, take me back, dear Lord
To the place where I first received You
Take me back, take me back dear Lord
Where I first believed

I feel that I'm so far from You Lord
But still I hear You calling me
Those simple things that I once knew
Their memories are drawing me
I must confess Lord I've been blessed
But my soul is not satisfied
Renew my faith
Restore my joy
And dry my weeping eyes

I tried so hard to make it all alone
I need Your help just to make it home

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Hezekiah leads the people of Israel to turn back to the Lord

2 Chron. 30.1-9 - Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel. [2] For the king and his princes and all the assembly in Jerusalem had taken counsel to keep the Passover in the second month— [3] for they could not keep it at that time because the priests had not consecrated themselves in sufficient number, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem— [4] and the plan seemed right to the king and all the assembly. [5] So they decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem, for they had not kept it as often as prescribed. [6] So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his princes, as the king had commanded, saying, “O people of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. [7] Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were faithless to the Lord God of their fathers, so that he made them a desolation, as you see. [8] Do not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord and come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the Lord your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. [9] For if you return to the Lord, your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him.”

Seek the Lord while he may be found

Isa. 55.6-7 - Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; [7] let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.



Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV)

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Return to God and remove all that he detests from his presence

Jer. 4.1-4 - “If you return, O Israel, declares the Lord, to me you should return. If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver, [2] and if you swear, ‘As the Lord lives,’ in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.” [3] For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: “Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. [4] Circumcise yourselves to the Lord; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.”

The Lord can restore us to himself and renew our days as of old

Lam. 5.19-21 - But you, O Lord, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations. [20] Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days? [21] Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old.

Pay attention to the Lord’s pleas for your repentance and restoration

Zech. 1.3-4 - Therefore say to them, Thus declares the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. [4] Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.’ But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the Lord.

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desires his repentance

Ezek. 33.11 - Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?



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Return to the Lord and confess your iniquities before him

Hos. 14.1-2 - Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. [2] Take with you words and return to the Lord; say to him, “Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips.”

God bids his faithless children to return to him for healing and forgiveness

Jer. 3.12-14 - Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, “Return, faithless Israel, declares the Lord. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the Lord; I will not be angry forever. [13] Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the Lord your God and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed my voice, declares the Lord. [14] Return, O faithless children, declares the Lord; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.”

God will give us the grace to return if we are willing

Hos. 12.6 - So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.

Come, let us return to the Lord

Hos. 6.1-3 - Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. [2] After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. [3] Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.

Even in the midst of judgment our God will restore us if we return to him

Joel 2.12-14 - “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; [13] and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord, your God, for he is



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gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. [14] Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you

James 4.8-10 - Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

God bids us to search our ways and return to him with humility

Lam. 3.40-41 - Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord! [41] Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven.

For those of humble heart God will lift up, restore, and provide his grace

Ps. 30.1 - I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

Ps. 113.7 - He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap.

Ps. 147.6 - The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.

Matt. 23.12 - Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Luke 14.11 - For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.



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1 Pet. 5.6 - Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.

Let all who fear God draw near to him with a true heart and full assurance of faith

1 Chron. 28.9 - And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

2 Chron. 15.2 - and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.

Ps. 73.28 - But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.

Ps. 145.18 - The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

Mal. 3.7 - From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, "How shall we return?"

Heb. 10.22 - Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ■

ERNEST BAKER, in his pioneering study of Old Testament revivals, began his remarks on the revival under Hezekiah with this arresting assessment: 'The revival in the time of Hezekiah is amongst the most



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sudden of those recorded in Scripture. Hezekiah began a work of reformation during the first month of his reign, and within two months the whole land was swept with a wave of spiritual enthusiasm.’ It is not always possible for us to say why there is such a sudden response as the one under Hezekiah. Surely it is finally due only to the Spirit of God’s moving on the hearts of men and women.

~ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Quest for Renewal: Personal Revival in the Old Testament.*
Chicago: Moody Press, p. 99.

One of the hardest things for us to do when we are wrong is to admit it. We sometimes are willing to go through all kinds of shame, difficulty, and unnecessary misery rather than simply admit that we haven’t done what was right. We don’t like to admit that we’ve done wrong. We don’t like the way it makes us feel. We don’t like to be on display, especially when it comes to all the things we’ve done wrong or failed to do. No one likes the feeling of being exposed, of admitting that they have fallen short or neglected their duty.

Sad to say, it is completely abnormal for sinners (even saved ones!) to simply confess our wrong, and return and get forgiveness.

Why?

Maybe we hate the feeling of being “under the light” of others’ judgment and accusation. Perhaps we don’t want others to think poorly of us. Or it could be that we feel others have done things just as bad as we, and yet they haven’t been exposed to our humiliation of being set before the scrutiny and scorn of others. How easy it is to suffer about wrongdoing in silence and hiding than enter into the light of God’s truth and receive his healing and forgiveness.



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Wondrously, the covenant God has made with us through faith in the shed blood and broken body of our Lord Jesus, allows for mercy and healing to come to those who simply will turn back to God. The plea to return to the Lord is one of the most given commandments in all of the Bible; God seems to have no hesitation at all asking his wayward and rebellious children to return to him, to turn from their own selfish and wicked ways, and embrace his love and mercy. Alas, story after story in the Old Testament reveals the failure of God's people to act on his plea, and, unfortunately, become the recipients of his discipline and judgment.

In this major revival in 2 Chronicles 30, we read of the leadership of Hezekiah to cause the people of Israel to turn back to the Lord in true worship and full obedience to his will. Ahaz, Hezekiah's father, did not follow the Lord, and the previous sixteen years to this revival were filled with idolatry and abominations.

2 Chron. 28.1-4 - Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done, [2] but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the Baals, [3] and he made offerings in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. [4] And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

This reign of idolatry, abomination, and wanton disregard for the worship of the God of Abraham merited God's intervention and justice, and we see that the Lord gave him over to the king of Syria who defeated Ahaz, even capturing a great number of Israelites and taking them to Damascus (2 Chron. 28.5). Furthermore, God gave him over to be defeated by the king of Israel, "who struck him with great force," (28.5), killing 120,000 men in



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one day. God describes Ahaz as casting off all restraint in Judah, being most unfaithful to the Lord (19.2). When we lose touch with the heart of God, we are liable to do all kinds of the worst and most reprehensible deeds. No one can ignore God without consequence.

Hezekiah did not follow in the footsteps of his father but refused his ways for the way of the Lord. At twenty-five, during the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them, brought in the priests and Levites, and consecrated them again to the Lord (29.3-5). He returned to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He recognized that the people under his father's sorry leadership had forsaken him, turning their faces from him, and turning their backs to him. He acknowledged their wrong, and turned back to the Lord.

Dr. Kaiser explains the power of Hezekiah's turning and what it means for those of us who seek the Lord's presence and power in revival today, and who want to experience the power of God's prophetic work in our midst:

*But a revival does not only depend on the open doors of the house of worship or on the existence of divine services. More is needed than these outward acts of piety. There must be a turning around. That turning is twofold: it is a turning **from** sin, the first ninety degree turn, and a turning **towards** God, the second ninety degree turn, to make a complete about face. . . . The Hebrew word "to turn or repent" is pronounced **shw**. And in every one of the 118 instances where the word occurs with a religious significance, God was trying to give His people a **shove** in the right direction. . . . All the prophets, both in word and deed, referred to it and to the activity of repentance as the quintessence of their ministry. Therefore it is probably the one expression that summarizes the whole prophetic ministry (Kaiser, p. 103).*



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The heart of Hezekiah's reign and ministry on behalf of the people of Israel, therefore, is marked by this appeal to return to God, to turn back to him whom they have forsaken and provoked. Notice Hezekiah's plea for the people to be restored to God in unqualified repentance to him:

2 Chron. 30.6-9 - So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his princes, as the king had commanded, saying, "O people of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. [7] Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were faithless to the Lord God of their fathers, so that he made them a desolation, as you see. [8] Do not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord and come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the Lord your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. [9] For if you return to the Lord, your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him."

Kaiser here recognizes four alternatives offered to the people of God, each being a call to turn from wickedness and sin (cf. 2 Chron 7.14).

1. Turn to him with an unqualified trust, or he will not turn to us (v. 6).
2. Turn to him with a wholehearted obedience, or he will make us despicable to all (v.7).
3. Turn to him with glad service, or he will not turn his anger from us (v. 8).
4. Turn to him with unceasing prayer, or he will withdraw his presence and favor from us (v.9).



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While we fully understand today that we are under grace and not the law, we cannot ignore the fact that our failure to respond to God can affect our relationship with him. While we freely admit that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Rom. 8), that we have been chosen in him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love (Eph. 1.3), and that we have been washed and regenerated by the Holy Spirit through Christ who justified us by grace and not works (Titus 3.4-7), we are still called to walk in the light as he is in the light (1 John 1.7). James exhorts us to draw near to God in order for him to draw near to us (James 4.8); we are called to faithfulness, wholehearted obedience, and glad service, not selfish faithlessness. The love of God ought not to make us lazy but draw us nearer to God with an even deeper longing and desire to honor him with all we are and all we have. Nothing short of full dedication to God is a fitting response to the love of God on Calvary.

How can those of us who long for a new and fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit not return to the Lord and receive his cleansing and forgiveness? Are there any among us who do not need his grace and mercy, his strength and courage, his life and hope? Only those of us willing to humble ourselves as Hezekiah and the people of Israel did can taste these rich nectars of God's will. Surely, a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit awaits us if we only repent and return humbly to God, who alone through Christ is our source, our joy, and our hope.

This kind of turning back and brokenness will allow God to pour out his Spirit upon us again, resulting in true holiness, godly unity, and faithful ingathering of the lost to the Kingdom.

Are you really strong enough to admit just how much you need him? Return to him, and watch him work among us again. ■



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Example of Returning to the Lord: Hezekiah

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Biblical Principle of the Month

Revival demands a repentance and return to the Lord, an acknowledgment of our having forsaken the will and way of the Lord, and a return to glad service to him through Christ in the power of the Spirit. God's constant prophetic plea to his people should encourage us never to hide or protest our own innocence; only when we draw near to God in humility in faith can he draw near to us in cleansing and power.

James 4.8 - Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Hos. 6.1-3 - Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. [2] After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. [3] Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.



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