



Come Home

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By the Book™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from Jerry Vines Ministries
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Let's Begin

There have been some remarkable revivals in the history of America. In the

1700s there was what is known as The Great Awakening. George Whitfield came from England to America and preached out in the open air. Thousands of people received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior as a result of his preaching. There was also the great theologian, Jonathan Edwards, who was a pastor in North Hampton, Massachusetts. He preached the famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Through his preaching, even more came to know Christ as their Lord and Savior. Revival came to America. The well-known universities of Rutgers, Brown, and Princeton were even established to train men for the ministry of the Lord Jesus at this time. Then in the early 1800s our nation experienced revival again. It was known as the Great Western Revival or the Second Great Awakening. The meetings were called camp meetings and were characterized by great fervor, and on some occasions there was excessive emotion. In the latter 1800s God used a lay evangelist named Dwight L. Moody to literally shake two continents for Him. It was during that time that churches began to have revival meetings with visiting evangelists. They included preachers like Gypsy Smith and Billy Sunday. Later in the 1900s a group of Christian laymen in Charlotte, North Carolina, became

concerned about the spiritual and moral life of their city. They began to pray in 1932 for God to send revival, and in 1934 an evangelist named Mordecai Ham came to town for a tent revival. From that revival Billy Graham was saved. As we know, God has used Graham to preach the gospel of Jesus to more people than any man in the history of the world.

America has had amazing times of revival, but we have not had a revival in our country for years. The problem is not with the lost but with the saved. Periodically, we as believers need to have revival, a time to renew our fervor to God. We are not talking about evangelism. Evangelism is an expression of the church as we share the good news of Jesus with the lost, but revival is an experience in the lives of believers and the church. Revival is God's children recommitting themselves to the Lord Jesus once again. It is when we "come home" to God. There is no better time to do this than at the beginning of the New Year. As we use the outline below, we want to look at an Old Testament verse, 2 Chronicles 7:14. As we do, we will see that the Lord lays out the steps we need to take to have revival in our lives and to "come home" to Him.

I. The Plea (7:14)

II. The Process (7:14)

III. The Promise (7:14)

I. The Plea (7:14)

We understand that 2 Chronicles 7:14 was written to the children

of Israel. The Lord tells them, "If My people, which are called

by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek



My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” But we also know this verse is a verse that we as believers can apply to our lives today. The New Testament tells us God has made every believer in Jesus Christ part of His family (cp. John 1:12).

The first thing we see in this verse is God’s plea for His people or His children. He has a message from His heart to ours as He says, “If My people who are called by My name ...” God is speaking to us personally as His children. He will go on and use six personal pronouns in this one

verse of Scripture. This reminds us that it’s not someone else who needs revival, but God is pleading with each of us personally. This is also why we read in 1 Peter 4:17, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God ...”

Most believers are pretty good at confessing other people’s sins. The children of Israel blamed their parents for their hardships instead of confessing their own sins (cp. Ezek. 18:2). It is also why Jesus said, “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” (Lk. 6:41). It’s really easy for us to spot other people’s

sins. But God is getting close up and personal with us. Do you remember the old Spiritual, “Not my mother or my father, but it’s me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer”? We need to focus on ourselves and where we are spiritually. We also need to understand that God always starts with His people. He says, “If My people who are called by My name ...”

Reflection Connection

According to Matthew 7:5, what does Jesus call people who are good at confessing other people’s sins but not their own? Discuss why He does this.

II. The Process (7:14)

After His plea, the Lord gives us the process to lead us back to Him. It’s very simple and is nothing profound, but it is God’s roadmap. The first step is this: “... humble themselves ...” Humility is a rather elusive virtue. In fact, it can be so elusive that the moment we think we are humble, we probably aren’t. But in 1 Peter 5:6 we are told, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” We are also told in James 4:10, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.” God doesn’t say that we should pray for humility or that we should ask Him to humble us. He tells us to “humble” ourselves.

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Have you ever thought about what it means to “humble” ourselves? The word literally means “to bow down low.” It means to get down before the Lord where we really belong. If we are all honest with ourselves

and each other, we will have to admit that we all struggle with pride. Sadly, religious pride is the worst form of pride. If we are not careful, we can entertain thoughts like “I’m a pillar in my church” or “I’m one of the spiritual leaders in my church; just look at all I do.” When we do this, we are becoming prideful in our spirituality. We forget what Paul wrote in Romans 12:3, “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” If we want to “come home” to the Lord this



New Year, we have to humble ourselves. We have to be willing to bow before the Lord and tell Him that we are not where we need to be with Him; we are not as close as we have been or need to be.

The second step is we need to pray. Everybody agrees that praying is a good thing to do. We understand its importance and value. We also know that great revivals have begun in prayer. Just think about the spiritual awakening under the prophet Samuel. It came about because his godly mother, Hannah, prayed that God would give her a son and she then promised to give him back to the Lord (cp. 1 Sam. 1:11). There was also the great day of Pentecost in Acts 2 where 3,000 souls were brought into the kingdom of God on one day. It is easy to forget that the day of Pentecost was preceded by ten days of prayer in the upper room (cp. Acts 1:13-14). So, we all agree that praying is good to do, but are we praying? Do we have a regular prayer life?

The Lord next says, “If My people ... will seek My face ...” To seek God’s face means that we seek the approval or the smile of God. Listen to what the Lord says in Hosea 5:15, “I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early.” God wanted His people to come home to Him; He wanted them to see His approval; but He also knew that it often takes affliction, difficulties, and trouble. What a difference it would make if all

believers heeded Psalm 27:8. The psalmist wrote, “When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.”

We need to also ask ourselves if we have sought the face of the Lord lately. Do we long for His approval? Is God pleased with our lives? The old hymn “Nothing between My Soul and My Savior” reminds us that we should want nothing between us and our Savior.” Is this our desire today? We may have to *lose* our face before we can *seek* His face.

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We cannot seek the Lord’s face if there is somebody else’s face “between” the Lord and us. What do we mean? Consider what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:23-24, “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” God is saying that we cannot seek His face if there is someone we are not right with. At the same time, we need to realize that there is nothing

on this earth that is any more marvelous or glorious than to be in the conscious presence of the God of this universe. When Paul saw the glory of the Lord on the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, he was overwhelmed by it. He then said, “... Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). Isaiah also saw the face of the Lord and was overwhelmed by it. He first said, “... Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Is. 6:5). He saw his sinfulness. But after the Lord cleansed him, he was also ready to be used by the Lord. When God asked whom He should send, Isaiah replied “... Here am I; send me” (Is. 6:8). When is the last time we have been in the conscious presence of God and have felt the smile of the face of God?

The Lord continues to say, “If My people, who are called by My name, will ... turn from their wicked ways.” This is the part that gets tough. If we want to enjoy God’s conscious presence, then we have to turn from our wicked ways. “Turn” is the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament word “repent.” It means “to turn away from” or “to turn your back from.” Some people want to hold onto the world with one hand and then the Lord with the other hand. But God says we can’t do it that way. We have to repent and turn from our wicked ways; we have to repent if we want to be right with Him.



To turn from our wicked ways means we have to turn from our sins of omission. This means the things we should do that we don't do. When is the last time we personally talked to a lost person about Jesus? When is the last time we had our daily quiet time and read our Bible and prayed? What is our church attendance like? In Proverbs 3:27 we are told, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." Are we heeding this verse? What about sins of commission? Are we watching things on our electronic devices we shouldn't watch? Are we in relationships that we don't want anyone to know about? Are we living in a way that would bring shame and reproach on the name of Jesus Christ? Tragically, the lifestyle of the average believer in America today is enough to make the

angels weep. So many believers have prostituted their testimony before a lost world that the lost do not have any desire to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This is because the lost cannot get over the hypocrisy they see in believers' lives and in many churches.

What about sins of disposition? We read in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We also read in 2 Corinthians 12:20. "For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates (quarrels), envyings (jealousies), wraths (flaring tempers), strife (taking sides), backbiting (angry words),

whisperings (vicious rumors), swellings (pride), tumults (general bedlam)." Have we said something unkind to someone lately? Have we disrespected leadership? Have we behaved in a manner which was un-Christlike in our dealing with people? Do we gossip? So often we "Christianize" gossip under the guise of a prayer burden. What about our attitudes or our thought life? People may think we are a model believer, but do we harbor resentment, jealousy, or bitterness that they cannot see?

Reflection Connection

Read 1 Chronicles 28:9 and discuss what this verse says about God knowing our hearts and our thoughts. What does this say about hiding our sins?

III. The Promise (7:14)

If we will do our part, then God promises to do His part. Verse 14 ends with God saying "... then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." First, He will hear from heaven. We have an advantage the children of Israel never had. We have been given Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Because Jesus is our great High Priest, when we turn from

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our wicked ways, we know we can then approach God's throne of grace. We also have been given the promise of 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from

all unrighteousness." We know when we confess our sins, He will forgive our sins.

The Lord also promises to heal our land. Too many times we blame others for what is wrong with America today. We like to say the problem is with certain groups of people or a certain political party or leader. No, the problem in our country is with those who name the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are the problem. In the Old Testament



it was Jonah who was down in the belly of the ship who caused the violent storm. It was only after the sailors dealt with Jonah that God was able to do what He wanted to do. It is only when we as God's children come home to Him that our land has a chance of being healed.

Reflection Connection

Read Psalm 147:3 and 11 and discuss why these verses also assure us that God will forgive and heal us when we are willing to turn from our sins.

Wrap Up

An old invitation hymn that was written in the late 1800s and used often in the 1900s was entitled "Coming Home." Its opening lines read, "I've wandered far away from God, now I'm coming home; The paths of sin too long I've trod, Lord, I'm coming home." We would all agree that America needs to come home to God; but let's remember that before that can happen, we have to come home to Him. As we begin this new year, let's be challenged to pray the prayer the psalmist prayed in Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." As we do and we let the Lord show us our sins that we have been blinded to, let's then follow the pattern given us in 2 Chronicles 7:14. If we will, we will be coming home to the Lord, we will be able to claim His promises, and we will also be leading the way for our country to come home to Him.

