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If You Return

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Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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No truth in human experience is more applicable to our lives than the one we will be looking at in this lesson. It has to do with life's "You" turns. It has to do with realizing that you are on the wrong highway going to the wrong city, and unless you turn and go back where you came from, you'll be even more lost than you are now.

The Christian life is like that, too. We may go off on tangents. We may simply grow cold and indifferent. We may blatantly rebel and run as fast as we can from the God of glory and, like the prodigal son, thrust ourselves into a far country. But no matter how we got lost, what a joy it is to return home and to find the Father's arms always outstretched, waiting for us. That is what this lesson is all about. The title is "If You Return".

As we left Samuel and the children of Israel last week, God's people had just experienced two new major setbacks in their encounter with the enemy. The first defeat was arranged and allowed by God to arrest the attention of the Israelites and to bring them back to Himself. Instead of falling on their faces in humility, however, they took a spiritual weapon that had worked before and put their trust in *it* rather than in God. They then marched off in the energy of the flesh as though God was obligated to deliver them. You may remember from the last lesson that God could not bless their self-induced offensive for a variety of reasons, and they fell again.

The spiritual weapon they attempted to use in the flesh was the ark of the covenant. It was a vessel designed to glorify God when God's presence inhabited and controlled it. But God had not told them to use it. Their faith was in it instead of Him, so their second defeat was more devastating and humiliating than the first. God designed the first defeat to get their attention. It was a relatively mild setback, a kind of slap on the hand to wake them up. But they engineered the second one on their own. As always, they did a first-class job. Thirty-thousand soldiers died

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during the battle. The ark was stolen. Eli's two sons were killed. The rest of the army ran from the scene like wild animals. Color them scared.

To top this all off, when roly-poly, ancient Eli heard the news, he toppled backwards from his perch by the gate to a fate known as death. His daughter-in-law died in childbirth after naming her newborn son "Ichabod", meaning the absence of glory. She moaned in her dying breath, "The glory has departed from Israel." But as we learned in the last lesson, the glory had not departed from Israel. Israel had quenched the glory and interrupted the cycle of glory, but the glory itself had not departed. The Glory was simply waiting for them to return to Him. This they do in this lesson as the Living Legend of Samuel continues to unfold before us. We concluded the last lesson with the final verses of chapter 4 of I Samuel. There we resume for this lesson.

And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.

And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken. (I Samuel 4:21,22)

And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.

When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.

Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day. (I Samuel 5:1-5)

So the jubilant Philistines made their first big mistake upon capturing the ark. They assumed that because they had defeated God's children, they had defeated God. Satan, you see, has never understood Romans 8:28. Because he cannot grasp spiritual truth, he continues to make three basic tactical errors. They are as follows:

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1- He continues to play into God's hands by giving in to God's suggestion that he test God's children. God may suggest to Satan, "Have you considered my servant, Gary. There is none like him." Satan always gives in and says, "Yeah, I'll have at him." But God has a purpose in that test and He was goading Satan into action. The devil didn't learn with Job. He didn't learn with Joseph. He didn't learn with Samson. He didn't even learn with Jesus. He means evil, but God means it for good. So Satan's legions of demons are always holding premature victory celebrations. While they celebrate, God has designs that the setback become a comeback for His glory. Satan is gleeful over your sickness. Satan is rejoicing over that loss of a loved one. Satan is exuberant over that financial crisis. Satan is excited over that test you seemed to fail. But God is yet, out of that tragedy, engineering a victory and fashioning it out of the very substances of sickness, death, crisis, and failure. Because Satan cannot understand the mind of Christ, who rejected his offer of a physical kingdom to set one up in the hearts of a bunch of cowards, he makes the same mistake over and over again because he cannot grasp the purposes of God. He plays right into God's hands by giving Him the very tools He needs to make us spiritual.

2- The second mistake that Satan makes that is exhibited in this story is really a continuation of the first one. He thinks that when God's children fall, he has defeated God. That is why the natural mind of the unbeliever draws the same conclusion as it watches the church. But guess what? God has never lost a battle. He is undefeated and undefeatable. He has given us a free will. Satan doesn't understand that. Satan tricks his servants and uses them. God frees His children and blesses them through their own choices.

3- Satan does not understand how defeat could bless the Christian, so Satan assumes that when we go down, God goes down. What he misses is that God may have allowed us to be defeated for a reason. On the other hand, we may have engineered the defeat by our own disobedience. In either case, God's power has not been abated one-ten trillionth of an ounce. Were He but to wink His eye, the entire legions of hell would quiver with fright. Soon God will decide to take Satan on once and for all in life's final battle. When He does, it will be no contest.

So in our story Satan begins to tease God as though God had forgotten to eat His Wheaties and that accounts for the collapse of

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the corps and the stolen symbol of God's greatness, the ark. The Philistines, thinking that they had the God of eternity tied to a tree or backed into a corner, parked the ark by their statue of Dagon in an act of defiance and humiliation. Dagon was that delightful slab of stone that had the head of a man, the body of a fish and all the power of a broken BB gun. Now God does have a sense of humor. When sunrise comes, our finned friend has collapsed at the foot of the ark. It must have been a strong wind, no doubt, the pagan priests persisted. They hire a crane and hoist the toppled trout man back on his priceless pedestal and go on their way.

The next morning, our amphibious idol had met an even funnier fate. This time he lost his head (literally), along with both hands. The frenzied Philistines awaken to find their dauntless deity decimated with his hands and head lying on the threshold of their pagan temple. They assumed that some mysterious miracle had taken place. They pass a rule that you can never step on the threshold of the temple again because their god lost his head there. The imagination of the enemies of God is ridiculous. What they didn't understand was that even when God is disciplining His own children, He won't put up with blasphemy from His enemies.

The atmosphere grew a little heavier in Ashdod before the Philistines began to feel uncomfortable in the shadow of the ark. Rather than read it for you verse by verse, I am going to give you a running commentary on the saga of the stolen ark.

The problems were just beginning in Ashdod. Suddenly, mice were running everywhere. They were accompanied by an epidemic of painful tumors which we won't bother to describe. They literally disabled the entire city. So the Ashdod city council had a meeting in an emergency session. They voted to donate the privilege of possessing this fine ark to their sister city, Gath. But God's wrath went to Gath along with the ark and they, too, fell victim to this painful, humiliating disease. So, never ones to hoard a blessing, the groaning Gathites vote unanimously to give the ark to their friends in Ekron. You know who Ekron is. This was an oil producing metropolis that pumped Ekron Extra to the neighboring community. Anyhow, they met the enthusiastic entourage at the city gates with placards of protest. By now the news had spread and this tiny little golden box was about as welcome as a nuclear reactor in Jane Fonda's backyard. But the tumors were no rumors and the people of Ekron were experiencing the same humiliating fate as the ark had made with its entrance into the city square.

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In fact, verse 12 says that the people met with one of two fates. What a choice. Those who didn't die got the disease. The latter was only a slight improvement over the former.

So while the Philistine physicians were working around the clock, the politicians were holding a meeting to see what could be done about assigning the ark a new home. Only politicians could have dreamed up a scenario like this. Verse 2 of chapter 6 says that they had called in the pagan priests and witches and asked, "Tell us what to do." They were hooked directly to the source, the wrong one. These brilliant scientific minds came up with this creative alternative. They said, "Send the golden box back from whence it came, but don't send it back empty. Send the Hebrew God a present to pacify His anger." Question, what do you give someone who has everything? Answer, 5 golden mice and 5 golden replicas of tumors. Don't you know that is just what God has always wanted? Then this weird team of advisors give their reason for the idiotic images. Their reasons tell a lot about how God's enemies look at God. In verse 5, we see the advisors say, "By making images of these mice and tumors, it will give glory to the God of Israel. Because of this, He will lighten His hand from you and from the gods and from the lands. He will ease up. Do not harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did when God did wonderful things among them. Did they not let the people go?"

These guys get an A+ in Hebrew history. They knew all about the power of the Hebrew God, intellectually. Now they were learning all about the Hebrew God's power, experientially. Yet instead of bowing before Him and personally inviting Him to be their God, they made useless images to appease Him. They then sent the reminders of His presence as far away as they could. Man hasn't changed, has he? He still does the same thing.

In verses 7-9 of chapter 6, the Philistine planning pow-wow comes up with another grade C experiment. This is their idea. They said, "Make a new cart for the ark. Take two new milk cows who have never pulled a cart before. Steal their calves from them and bring them back home so that momma cows won't want to leave town. Lay the ark on the cart. Put the golden goodies for God in a box alongside it. Tell the cow to go. Now if this high-priced milk wagon goes up the coast to Bethshemesh, back to the Jews, we will know that it was their God who was angry with us. But if the cows do anything else, it was all just a coincidence." The people execute this precise plan of scientific significance. The

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cows say, “Moo,” they miss their little babies, but still they take the cart straight up the coast to Bethshemesh as though they were on a controlled access freeway. The Philistine Police Force is following behind, watching Bossie and Bessie as they reach the border. They see the men of Bethshemesh take the ark, tear up the wagon carrying it and use the wood for kindling. They watch as the Israelites barbecue Bessie and Bossie and make an offering to God. The ark has been transferred.

End of problem, right? Wrong. Now the ark was back in Jewish hands where it belonged. But God had to punish them, too, because the anxious Hebrews looked into the ark of the covenant, which they were forbidden to do. Fifty thousand, three score and ten perished as a result of that sin. The people began to mourn again. In verse 20 of chapter 6, the men of Bethshemesh said, “Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? And to whom shall it go up from us?” They sent messengers to the men of Kirjathjearim. These men came for the ark. They put it in the house of Abinadab who set his son Eleazar to be the guardian of the ark.

Chapter 7:2 tells us that for 20 long years the ark remained there. For 20 long years, the children of Israel mourned because it seemed to them that God had forsaken them. They had bought the lie. They had written Ichabod across Israel, just as Phinehas’ wife had done. They surmised that the glory had departed and God had abandoned His people.

Before we open the next chapter in the Living Legend of Samuel, it is important that we come to see the underlying spiritual truths in what has taken place so far. As we said in the last lesson, the glory had not departed. God’s people were simply out of God’s will. So God sent discipline into their lives to draw them back to Him. Instead, His chosen children misread the discipline and took on the enemy in their own strength. The results were disastrous. God’s people were left humiliated and defeated. Meanwhile, the enemy, in their desire to capitalize on a family matter, soon found that even while God is punishing His own, He will give the enemy no occasion to rejoice. While God’s interim purpose was inter-family discipline, His ultimate purpose was still to defeat the enemy. Only God can do both at the same time. So when the lights of your fellowship with God seem to have gone out and you are lamenting your disobedience, don’t believe for a minute that God is on the ropes or is down for the count of 9. The scripture says:

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Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.
(Psalm 115:3)

Remember that though the presence of God means rebuke to the believer who is out of fellowship, that is nothing compared to the awesome terror that the presence of God means to those who do not know Him. One day you and I will stand before the presence of God and we will be faultless, for He will see us in Christ and His presence will be awesome glory. To those outside of Christ, His presence will mean eternal judgment, eternal separation and eternal punishment. The difference is not in His presence, the difference is in whether or not we have been clothed in Jesus Christ to stand in His presence. Jesus will make all the difference.

Now what about the children of Israel? God has judged their enemy and filled them with fear. We understand that and we applaud that. But over here in the corner are our Jewish friends, God's own children. They are huddled in agony and frustration. They are mourning over the absence of God. Both are powerless in His presence. The difference between the Jews and the Philistines lies in the fact that the Jews are His. All they have to do is return from the far country of rebellion and fall into the Father's open arms. The glory is waiting. Sooner or later, they must come to the end of themselves.

And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.
(I Samuel 7:2-4)

Verse 3 is a fantastic verse to underline. Do you see what happened when they finally got tired of living without the power? God's man gave them God's word and guess what? The glory had not departed. The Glory was waiting for His children to come home. Samuel gives God's people his version of four steps to peace with God. He says, "Israel, God never left you, you left Him. All of these years of agony were not His doing, but yours. Do these four things and the power will return to you."

1- Return unto the Lord with all of your heart.

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- 2- Put away the strange gods and idols from among you.
- 3- Prepare your hearts unto the Lord.
- 4- Serve Him only.

“Do this,” Samuel said, “and He will deliver you from the hands of the Philistines. Return, put away, prepare and serve.” That is all God is after. After all of that wasted time and unnecessary heartache and useless desperation, there wasn’t another second to waste.

Now what was God saying to Israel? What is God saying to you and to me? First, He is saying that if you want the glory to shine again in your life, you have to return. God is stationary in our relationship. It is we who have been doing the running. Return. How many of you know what it means to return? You have been gone and you want to return. What does it mean? Here is a definition:

Return: to make an unalterable decision that results in a total change of direction which takes us back where we once were.

It is a decision that can’t be changed that turns our direction around and takes us back where we used to be. It means that you have been there before and you either drifted aimlessly away or you chose deliberately to leave. Now you want to go back where you belong. You want to go home. You can’t wander accidentally back. You must make a decision, “I want to return. I want to return with all of my heart.” The whole of my soul cries out in unison, “Return.” You have tried being God’s child without God’s power and it is horrible. “Turn” He says, “with all of your heart.”

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
(Isaiah 55:7)

Jeremiah 24:7 adds,

And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

Like the prodigal, we often take off looking for our inheritance in the here and now. In the process, sometimes we wander into a far country, seemingly out of reach and out of touch. We end up wallowing in pig sties while a banquet table awaits us if we will but return.

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Secondly, Samuel says that after you begin to return, put away. Put away means to willingly discard any hindrance to success. What we are to put away is all the gods of this world. While we were out there wandering, we accumulated unnecessary baggage we call souvenirs. They remind us of the glitter and the glamour of that former country. That glitter and glamour turned to ashes because it was all a mirage. But if you try to make the return trip without getting rid of those habits and those pleasures you picked up while you were gone, you will never make it back. When you return, you are going against the winds of the world and all of that excess baggage creates wind resistance. You will never make it home. To make the return trip, you must make a U-turn in your heart and pull off at the roadside park just outside of commitment county and unload all of that garbage that you picked up along the way. Satan's lie is that you can have the best of both worlds. God says, "No, to return you must put away the false gods you have clung to."

Thirdly, Samuel told them to *prepare their hearts*. They had turned around and cleaned house. Now they must fill their house and their heart with all of God and nothing else. It's true for us, as well. Get alone with Him for an hour, for a day, for a week or for whatever it takes to prepare your heart. The word "prepare" means to arrange, establish, or make ready ahead of time. Now that you have turned around and put away, God has some rearranging to do in your life. He wants you to rearrange priorities, attitudes, purposes and allegiances. He wants to make your heart ready beforehand so that He can reign from its throne unhindered. Hezekiah prayed,

...But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD
pardon every one

That prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of
his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the
purification of the sanctuary. (II Chronicles 30:18b,19)

Psalm 10:17 says,

LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt
prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

Jesus said in John 14,

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so,
I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again,
and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may
be also. (John 14:2,3)

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God wants to prepare your heart for His lordship. Otherwise, it won't be long until you have drifted back to that far country. But if He prepares it, He will occupy it and will rule over it. That is why He is preparing it.

Samuel's fourth order was to serve Him with all your heart. Lordship is not a passive position. If you have a lord then you are a servant. If you are a servant, then you serve. Service, then, is the activity of a servant who is in total submission to another's will based on total allegiance to another's control. So whatever He wants, you do. Whatever He desires, you desire. You actively obey, continually. That is serving with all of your heart. A servant simply does what he is told. You cannot separate worship from service. Your primary act of service is worship. All other service springs from this. Do you remember Jesus as He rebuked Satan in Matthew 4:10? When Satan offered it all to Him if He would just fall down and worship him, Jesus said, "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." In Deuteronomy 8:19 God says, "If you forget Me and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, you will perish." You cannot separate worship from service. Lordship requires worship to maintain its position and service to fulfill it. Samuel adds, "Serve Him only." That is the essence of lordship. No man can serve two masters. The key to abiding is single-minded allegiance. A heart that flits from God's best to the world's best like changing channels, will be tossed aside like the waves of the sea, James says. Sooner or later we will have to decide that ours is a jealous God.

So Samuel gave God's people four steps back to peace, to joy, to victory. He said, "Return with all your heart. Put away the strange gods. Prepare your heart. Serve Him and Him alone." Now they understood what he was talking about. But they were afraid. They were afraid because they had been away from Him for so long. They asked Samuel to pray for them. That is a good thing to do. In I Samuel 7 we read,

And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

(I Samuel 7:5,6)

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So they fasted and they prayed and said to the Lord, “We have sinned.” That is all God was waiting for. That is what the enemy was waiting for, too. Remember: just outside the chapel of surrender, the enemy always waits. You return to the Lord and the enemy will open fire on you with all he’s got.

And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

(I Samuel 7:7-9)

Do you see the difference? Now Israel didn’t have to fight the battle. They had to engage in the battle, but the battle was God’s. Lordship does not nullify warfare, it intensifies it; only now the battle is not yours, it is God’s. You just praise Him and He does the fighting. That is victory. In verse 10 we continue,

And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar.

Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

(I Samuel 7:10-14)

Do you see the timing? Just as Samuel was offering the burnt offering, the enemy attacked. But now God’s people were in

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fellowship. They had returned. The God of eternity thundered. Do you remember what thunder means? The thunder of God equals the voice of God expressing the power of God. The thunder of God is the voice of God.

God thunders with His voice, great things He does.

(Job 37:5 paraphrase)

The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven:

(Psalm 77:18a)

But the reason God's voice or God's thunder is expressed is always for a singular purpose in scripture. It is to demonstrate His power.

Lo, these are parts of his ways:... but the thunder of power,
who can comprehend it? (Job 26:14 paraphrase)

If you want an interesting study, do a study of the word "thunder". See what it means when God thunders. You will find that it is always a demonstration of His power. To the unbeliever, it brings about fright. To the believer, it is confirmation of the presence of God. So whenever you hear it thunder outside, you are listening to the voice of God. He is only whispering, but He is saying, "All power is Mine in heaven and in earth." If you are not a Christian, every time you hear the thunder, you ought to think of judgment. It ought to drive you to your knees. But, my friend, if you belong to Him, whenever it thunders, stop and praise Him. He is about to defeat the enemy again. The voice of His thunder is the exercise of the expression of His power. God thundered and the Philistines fled. God's people were victorious. The enemy was subdued. Peace was restored and God restored all that they had lost as they had wandered from His presence. It was the same enemy. It was the same battles. It was the same odds. What happened? God's people had returned. They had put away the strange gods. They had prepared their hearts. They had served Him only. Now the same enemy was a piece of cake. The same odds were in God's favor. God's people had returned.

The application, I trust, is obvious. What about you? What about me? Are you fighting battles you used to win? Only now are you tasting frustration and defeat? Does it seem as though the glory has departed? Does the power seem faint? Does the peace seem unstable? Does the joy seem but a faint glimmer of the glow that once was? Is the enemy winning battles he was never intended to win in your life? Maybe God has a word for you from

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the Living Legend of Samuel. That word is this: Return. Return with all your heart right now to Him. He wants to help you put away every hindrance to a Spirit-controlled life. He wants you to be alone with Him so that He can prepare your heart for Lordship. He then wants you to serve Him alone. Not Him plus. Only Him alone.

Now let's be honest. Isn't the temptation great to assume that a lesser degree of joy, a lesser degree of peace and a lesser burden for souls is natural? We can even call it a sign of spiritual maturity. The reality is that we are being self-deceived. Should not the best time we have ever had in our relationship with God be the norm? Should not our burning desire be to return to that place of fellowship and proceed from there from one degree of glory to another? I don't mean to re-create old experiences or rekindle old emotions. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about fellowship. If we have walked in closer harmony with the Lord in days past and have lost something, don't we need to return?

Maybe you have never trusted Him. Maybe you are unnecessarily separated from Him by sin, your sin. You can return right now. You can return to that relationship with God that Adam had before he decided to do things his way. You can come to Jesus Christ right now and return to life as life was intended to be.

If you are a Christian and the flame no longer burns as once it did, may I remind you that the pilot light has not gone out. The glory has not departed. It is all there waiting, waiting for you to return.

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IF YOU RETURN...

“If you return,” said Samuel,
“God will deliver you.”
And endless ages later, still,
The promise yet holds true.

Oh, weary warrior, worn and tired,
That’s not how life should be;
You need to hear God whisper,
“Return, I’ll set you free.”

You were not meant the fray to lose
Day after day after day,
You’ve lost the power, beloved,
Somewhere along the way.

Return to Him with all your heart;
Put off the things that mar.
Prepare your heart to serve Him;
Prepare to win the war.

Oh, Christian friend, return to Him;
He’ll purge your life of sin.
And you will hear the Master say,
“My child is home again.”

He’ll take you in His arms, and then
The power for which you’ve yearned,
He’ll pour once more into your life,
Because you have returned!

For Focus and Application

1- Reread I Samuel 4:21-5:5. It almost seems comical, but it is serious business. Satan is toying with the glory of God. He has captured the ark in which the glory dwells, and thinks He has God on the run. How is that likened to his attitude when he thinks he has you on the run?

2- When a believer loses a spiritual battle, Satan makes three mistakes in judgment since he does not have the mind of Christ. See if you can name those three mistakes. Liken them to real world situations in your own life.

3- What is the difference between our losing a battle and God’s losing a battle? Why can God not lose a battle?

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4- Why can't Satan understand God's reason for letting him test us? What is lacking? Can you fathom a people worshipping a piece of stone with the head of a man and the body of a fish when they can know the Living God? What kinds of things does man worship today that are just as foolish?

5- What do you think of Satan's plan to appease God by giving Him gifts to calm His anger? What do you think of the gifts he chose? Why do men still try to appease God by gifts and good works today? How is Satan behind that scheme?

6- Satan's lateral or hand-off plan was another scheme that didn't work. He tried to pass off the ark to somebody else, as though God wouldn't be able to track it down. All he did was spread the misery. How does man do that today?

7- Why is idolatry such an affront to God? What kinds of idols exist in our world that must break His heart?

8- God gave the children of Israel four steps to restoration. Memorize I Samuel 7:3, and review those four steps.

9- Why is the act of returning to God such a decisive step? Why is it impossible to "sort of" repent? Why is "putting away" evil such an important part of repenting? How do you prepare your heart to "put away" sin?

10- Israel went back into battle and won decisively. What was the difference? Are you losing spiritual battles you ought to be winning because you need to return? Why wait a moment longer? God is waiting for you, just as He did for the Israelites. He is waiting for you to return to that level of power you once had. Do it now.

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