

# The Sword Is Lowered Right Now ■ Return To The Lord

by Tim Conway

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*This sermon emphasizes God's call for repentance and return to Him, highlighting His grace, forgiveness, and long-suffering towards sinners. It underscores the importance of truly turning to God with one's heart and affection, not just engaging in religious activities. The message stresses the need to pay attention to God's word, tremble at His commands, and genuinely seek His mercy and blessings by submitting to Him. It presents a powerful image of God's readiness to forgive and bless those who return to Him, contrasting it with the consequences of persisting in sin and rebellion.*

**Duration:** 10:30

**Scripture:** Zechariah 1:3, 1 Peter 2:25, Isaiah 1:4, Psalm 103:8, Romans 2:4, Ephesians 2:4, Proverbs 28:13, Revelation 3:19, Matthew 11:28

**Topics:** "Repentance", "God's Grace and Forgiveness"

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## Description

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## Transcript

God's basically saying, your fathers and my prophets, they're all dead. But my words are not dead. They never die.

But see, oh folks, here's where the gospel according to Zechariah just should be sweet. Look at verse three. 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. And then is really good news. I mean, how gracious is that? And you have to see this for what it is.

What is it? He's talking to people who obviously are living just like their fathers. That's why he's warning them. So he's telling them these things.

That's why he's saying return, because they're not with him. They're in a place they need to return from. There's a place they need to return to, just like their fathers who were told to return from their evil ways, but did not return from those evil ways.

You see, the fact is here, folks, that you want to see this for what it is. God isn't saying how glad he is that these people are not like their fathers, how glad that he is that they gave themselves to building the temple. You see, he's called precisely because they're just like their fathers and they're in danger of facing the exact same judgment that their fathers did unless they return.

Yes, they've returned to rebuilding the temple, but you know what? Being religious, just mechanically doing the outward thing is not the same as returning to God. That's obvious. They're involved in the religious activity, but God wants them.

He wants their heart. He wants their affection. He wants their love.

Why doesn't God just say, hey, I've seen your kind before. You're just like your fathers. I'm done with you.

You guys have just exhausted my patience. Isn't it amazing? The fathers of the fathers were like this. All you have to do, keep going back.

Go back to Egypt. They were like that. Go back to the wilderness.

They were like that. Go back to when they came into the land. They were like that.

I mean, it's just, but God doesn't do that. He doesn't just destroy them. He doesn't just destroy us.

There's one answer to all of it. And what is it? He's a God of grace. You gotta see who he's calling.

He's calling sinners. Remember that. Where is he calling them to? Not to some, you know, abandoned planet somewhere.

He's saying, come to me. Return to me. Hey, but you're the God that's so angry with us.

That's right. It's the same God. It's the God who will destroy you in the end.

But you see, he's also a God of love. He's also a God of forgiveness. He's also a God of great long suffering.

God's anger. You just remember these mills of God, they grind slowly. God's not quick in his wrath.

What patience to come to these folks. And you know, it just goes on. I mean, in the end, they're going to kill Zechariah.

They're going to kill Christ. And still, he saves people like Paul. He's just come unto me to me, return to me, return.

It means there's somewhere you ought not to be. You're not in a good place. You're in the place where God's anger is on you.

Where God's wrath hangs over your head. Come back. Come to me.

It's nothing else than that. He's loving and gracious, forgiving long suffering. This is folks.

This is really, really, really good news that we have a God like this that says return. That has a New Testament ring to it. Peter says you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

I just ask this. Is there anyone straying here? Look, I'm not asking you whether you're a Christian or not. That's not it.

There's no light matter. If you are where God's anger is going to meet you in your sins, just as it did the fathers of these people, you want to return. You want to return.

You want to return to him. I'm not asking you if you claim to be a Christian. That can be cheap.

Well, I'm a Christian. So what? Everything's okay. No, no, no.

You remember this. What it says here is these people were not paying attention. You see Zechariah one, four, you look at the last line there.

They did not hear or pay attention to me declares the Lord. You see the very heights and depths of what it means to return to God is escaping, returning away from that place where you don't pay attention to him. You don't pay attention to his word.

You see, that's the question. It's not whether you claim to be a Christian or not. That's not the most fundamental thing here.

The most fundamental thing is this. Do you hear him? Do you pay attention to him? That's the issue. When he speaks, do you tremble at his word? That's the question on the table.

Do you hear and pay attention to him? And the glorious good news in all of this is if you say, quite honestly, I have not been. And this is phenomenal news. If you say, well, I've been doing my own thing.

I've been going my own way. I've been despising him. I've been ignoring God.

You know what? It's like this God who expresses how angry he is. And you know, scripture talks about the fact that he wets his sword. He puts that sword on the stone, sharpening stone.

It's like he's got this thing sharp and he's ready to execute justice against you for your sin. But he comes over and with the sword held low, he puts his arm around you and he says, I am not minded to execute judgment. Return to me.

But what the fathers do, they killed the prophets, Isaiah, and they saw him in half. So tradition tells us, maybe Hebrews 11 tells us, they just said, bring out the intoxicated. Let's see.

Don't be like that. Don't be like that. God has that sword lowered right now.

And he says, return to me and I will return to you. What's that? That's like every blessing you can imagine. I'll bless you.

I'll forgive you. And just repudiate your old ways. Submit yourself to me.

I mean, do you even grasp what a very, very incredibly generous and kind offer this is? Listen, if past history should teach us anything, it teaches us the mills of God's wrath grind on and they eventually catch

everyone. You want to be in that place where you return to him, then those grinders, those mills of God's anger and wrath, they will catch you. God's anger will be, there'll be no wrath towards you.

Why? Because God did something. He sent his son to go into the jaws of those grinding mills and take it on behalf of all those who will lay down the weapons of their warfare. Because you see, when God comes over to us and he lowers his sword, we've got a sword in our hand too.

It's the sword of our rebellion. Sword we've been fighting him with. He says, lay it down, submit to my mercy, and I will come to you.

It'll be like nothing you can imagine. I will bless you through your life here, and I'll take you to be with me forever in a paradise that you can't even imagine.

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