



"For the LORD your God is
gracious and merciful, and will not
turn His face from you, if you
return to Him"



HEALTHCARE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
INTERNATIONAL (SOUTH ASIA) MONOGRAPHS

Come, Let us Return to the Lord



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Return to the Lord

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Return to the Lord

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Introduction

Dear Friends,

“Come Let us Return to the LORD”

*This booklet is being written in preparation for our HCF South Asian Core Group Conference in Tansen, Nepal in April 2010. We are looking to the LORD to visit us, energize us and empower us to go into the Health Fields with His love, His compassion, His healing and His gospel. We are deeply conscious of a great need amongst us Christians in Healthcare and in HCF. It is either repentance or judgement. **There are no middle roads.** There are no other alternatives. It is either, “Revival or Judgement”!*

Please read carefully and we trust the Holy Spirit will ignite your heart to return to the LORD and then see renewal and restoration in the Healthfields. As many of us do the same, the LORD will surely send showers of blessing.

In 1987 we had a strategic South Asian Conference in Bangalore, India. As we were preparing for this, the LORD led us to 2 Chronicles Chapter 29 - 32, the chapters about King Hezekiah. I remember the excitement and thrill as our small planning team studied these 4 chapters at Fridsro, Bokkawela, Sri Lanka, months before the conference. Then as we began serious preparation for the April 2010 Conference in Tansen, Nepal, again this passage came strongly to us. We mentioned part of it in our “150 days to go” prayer letter.

Then, once again, as we began our HCF prayer week in Colombo, our Prayer Coordinator, began the prayer week with an exposition of 2 Chronicles 29. She called us to return to the LORD. The LORD spoke deeply to me that morning. I felt the pain of contrition and repented deeply for my sin and failures in HCF ministry. Yet, the week was a blessed week. I remembered the prayer of Lady Julian and wanted to pray it meaningfully.

*“LORD give me three wounds;
The wound of contrition;
The wound of compassion; and the,
The wound of a deep hunger for God”*

After the prayer week was over, I again went back to study the lives of Hezekiah and Josiah. And providentially I was led to read Michael Wilcock's commentary on Chronicles in the Bible speaks today series. It is so powerfully and precisely written. This was another deepening of the imprint of the Holy Spirit through Hezekiah's life. For this study we will mostly consider the 2 Chronicles passages about Hezekiah, though we will look at the 2 Kings passages too.

Time is limited and please pardon any shortcomings in this writing. Please allow the LORD to speak to you. Above all, a careful perusal of 2 Chronicles 29 - 32 will yield, under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, rich dividends in the spirit, far more than reading this booklet.

Oh! that we could capture the Passion of the Holy Spirit as I write. Our vision is to see a deep genuine spiritual awakening in the health-fields of South Asia that will touch the lives of many thousands.

For those of you who are going to be delegates at the conference, please study these chapters as you prepare for the conference.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Arul Anketell

Regional Promoter HCF South Asia

Chapter 1

Background and Crisis

Hezekiah came into the scene as King of Judah at a very critical time. His father Ahaz did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD. In fact he did very wickedly. Here are a few samples from God's word about Ahaz.

"He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree. Therefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria. They defeated him, and carried away a great multitude of them as captives, and brought them to Damascus. Then he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with a great slaughter" 2 Chronicles 28:3-5

"For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the LORD." 2 Chronicles 28:19

"For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel." 2 Chronicles 28:23

"And in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers" 2 Chronicles 28:25

"So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem; but they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of

Israel. Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.”2 Chronicles 28:27 .

He shut the doors of the House of God in Jerusalem and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. He lost battle after battle and many of the people of Judah were carried away captive because of sin. What a legacy for Hezekiah to inherit! Yet we sense that as Hezekiah saw all this, something deep in himself was moved and set ablaze.

Dear friends, as we see the decline of true spirituality and morals in the Healthfields, are we just going along with it or are we sighing and crying for HIS Kingdom to come? God puts a mark on those who sigh and cry over the iniquity, abomination and injustice in the Healthfields.

CRISIS

Not only did Hezekiah have to face the disastrous background of his father, he came face to face with an impending crisis. The Assyrians, those dreaded people, known for brutality and wickedness were at his doorstep.

They had destroyed Israel, the Northern Kingdom and taken many of them captive. A few Israelites remained in the Northern Kingdom of Israel under Assyrian Governors. And now the King of Assyria was ready to make his assault on Judah and Jerusalem. This then was the scenario as Hezekiah ascended the throne of Judah.

HEZEKIAH

The account in 2 Chronicles gives us a brief introduction to Hezekiah.

“Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done” 2 Chronicles 29:1-2

One notable feature is that his mother's name is mentioned. The Chronicler, possibly Ezra must have had a good reason to mention this. Though he had a wicked father, his mother, Abijah must have been a godly woman. She silently, secretly, steadily and sweetly led him and influenced him in the ways of God. How we can thank God for godly mothers.

II Kings 18: 1 - 8

What the Chronicler in the Book of Chronicles gives in 3 Chapters is summarized in these 8 verses in the Book of Kings. We are looking at Chronicles in this study of Hezekiah, but just for this concise summary of Hezekiah's life we turn to these eight verses. They are packed with some powerful principles. May God raise such leaders in the Healthfields of South Asia. Here then are ten vital foundational principles in Hezekiah's life. What a testimony in God!

1. “He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David did” (2 Kings 18:3)

The previous two good Kings, Uzziah and Jotham did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to what their fathers had done. But ez Hezekiah went back to the roots,

to David's life and walked in those ways. Jeremiah's words come to mind.

Thus says the LORD:

"Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'" Jeremiah 6:16

May many leaders in HCF go back to the word of God and the ancient paths of God's revealed truth.

2. "He removed the high places" (v.4)

Many good Kings before him walked in the ways of God but left the high places untouched. These were the altars to idols put up by Solomon to please his wives. They were a snare to Israel and an abomination in God's sight. At last a King, who loved God, appeared and removed the high places. Hallelujah! There are such traditions and high places even now which need to be boldly dismantled.

3. He broke the sacred pillars (v. 4b.),

4. Cut down the wooden image (v. 4c),

5. Broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made (v.4c)

We put all these three together as they are similar.

The Bronze serpent was symbolic of Jesus Christ our LORD being lifted on a cross to save mankind. At that time God said to Moses "Lift up the serpent in the wilderness. All

who look will live". So we are called to lift Jesus and all who look to Him, will live eternally! Yet as so often happens we take what God used as a symbol and make an idol of it. The children of Israel called it "Nehushtan" and burned incense to it. Are there ""Nehushtans" in our lives, in our fellowship, in HCF? They need to be broken in pieces and we need to lift Jesus alone in our ministry.

6. "He trusted in the LORD"

He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the Kings of Judah, nor those who were before him. v5. This seems to also include David and Solomon. **In the area of trusting God**, he stood above all the Kings of Judah. Later would come King Josiah, and **in the area of turning to God**, he stood above all the Kings of Judah.

"Now before him there was no king like him, **who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might**, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him." - 2 Kings 23:25

Leaders in HCF, we challenge you to trust God and lead a movement back to God.

7. "He held fast to the LORD, he did not depart from following HIM, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses" (v.6)

His was no "flash in the pan" spirituality or spiritual renewal. It was a carefully thought through, deliberate, decisive, decision. In this shallow age of triviality and super-

ficiality, we need this kind of commitment.

8. “The LORD was with him and he prospered wherever he went”(v.7a)

The greatest treasure in our lives is the presence of God. Moses coveted this. He told God, **“unless you come with us, don’t take us from here”**. It was better to die in the wilderness, than go into Canaan without God’s presence. Moses was not referring to the essential presence of God. He is everywhere. **He was referring to the “glory presence” of God, the manifest presence of God.**

How we need this manifest presence of God as we seek to advance God’s Kingdom in the Healthfields. Nothing else will suffice.

9. “He rebelled against the King of Assyria and did not serve him”: v.7b

Rebellion is generally not considered a good thing in the Bible. In fact in I Samuel 15 rebellion is equated with witchcraft. Yet, there are some rebellions which please God.

e.g

- Rebellion against Satan and his demonic hordes and his purposes
- Rebellion against the Status Quo

Someone has called prayer as, “rebellion against the status quo”! May God give us that zeal and hatred of wickedness and iniquity. It was said of Jesus, “He loved righteousness but hated wickedness” Not the people, but the principle. Hate the sin but love the sinner!

**10. “*He subdued the Philistines as far as Gaza and it’s territory as far from watchtower to fortified city*”
v.8**

God has called us to reign with Him, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. We have abdicated our role and evil forces have gone uncontested. The time has come to rise up and declare, in dependence on the blood; the finished work on the cross; and on the Holy Spirit; **“Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done!**

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” Matt 11:12

Oh! For a return to the violence of the Kingdom! The good kind of violence that turns things rightside up and not upside down!

Here then was the King, whom God used to bring about a great turning back to the LORD and a great reformation and restoration. We pray that the crisis hour in which we live, will see the emergence of God anointed men and women like Hezekiah to lead Christians in Health Care back to God. And then through this renewed commitment, may others be drawn back to God . Then Healthcare and the Healthfields will see degrees of transformation such as we have not seen before.

CHAPTER TWO

RETURN TO THE LORD

II Chronicles 29

PREPARATIONS

Hezekiah had a father, Ahaz who did great wickedness in Judah. He turned away from God and turned the people away from God. He even closed the doors of the House of God, the temple. Hezekiah would surely have observed all this. As we wrote in the introduction, his mother had most probably taught him, prayed for him and urged him to be true to the LORD. He saw the looming cloud of Assyrian invasion hovering over Judah. He saw the backsliding of his people in Judah. And one can imagine that even before he was made King, his young heart was stirred with grief and with zeal to do something. In silence and in secret he made his quiet covenant with God.

Beloved friends, as we see the **apathy, apostasy** and **anarchy** in the health fields, are our hearts being stirred? Oh! For young healthcare workers who will prepare themselves in secret, in the secret of their hearts. Remember our greatest victories are won in secret with only God and Satan in attendance. Think of the great triumph of Jesus in Gethsemane.

“The battle of Calvary was won, on the praying fields of

Gethsemane”

So when Hezekiah was crowned King, he began his restorative work on the very first month of the very first year of his reign. He had done his homework very well.

FIRST THINGS FIRST - EVEN IN A CRISIS

The crisis was urgent and serious. The Assyrians were at his doorstep. Lesser mortals would have discussed, debated and decided on an action relating to the crisis. For example in a financial crisis we go to financial advisors and take practical financial steps. If faced with a crisis of opposition and threat, we resort to legal advice and government help. These may be necessary at some time but Hezekiah **chose firstly**, to return to the LORD, and to seek the LORD.

Michael Wilcock in his commentary on Chronicles in the Bible speaks today series puts it very well.

“A clear view of how to cope with the crisis meant that he must look first, **not to the threat nor to the threatened**, but to the God who was over both”

What a good model for us!

In the health fields and in HCF, let us return to the LORD.

In Chapter 29: 4 - 11 he exhorts the Levites and Priests with powerful words. He had already opened the doors of the house of God and repaired them.

HIS CALL WAS A PROPHETIC CALL

“Our fathers were unfaithful; **they did evil in the eyes of the LORD our God and forsook him. They turned their faces away from the**

LORD's dwelling place and turned their backs on him. They also shut the doors of the portico and put out the lamps. They did not burn incense or present any burnt offerings at the sanctuary to the God of Israel. **Therefore, the anger of the LORD has fallen on Judah and Jerusalem;** he has made them an object of dread and horror and scorn, as you can see with your own eyes. **This is why our fathers have fallen by the sword and why our sons and daughters and our wives are in captivity"** 2 Chronicles 29:6-9 (emphasis mine)

He pointed out to them that what had happened to them was because of sin. And then he exhorted them to diligently repent and return to the LORD. We need to face this reality. In Micah, the prophet speaks of the need to expose sin.

"But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD, And of justice and might, To declare to Jacob his transgression And to Israel his sin. Now hear this, You heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice And pervert all equity, Who build up Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us." Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple Like the bare hills of the forest." Micah 3:8-12

What a relevant word to us in the health fields! We need to face our sin and the sin in HCF and the sin in the health fields. Can we again challenge you to pray Lady Julian's prayer.

"Oh LORD! wound me with three wounds.

The wound of contrition (sorrow for sin and repentance)

The wound of compassion (love with pain)

The wound of a deep hunger for God”

HIS CALL WAS A PERSUASIVE CALL.

"Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, do not be negligent now, for the LORD has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him and burn incense." 2 Chronicles 29:10-11

He told them it was in his heart to make a covenant with the LORD, so that the fierce wrath of God could be averted. As we said earlier, he had probably already made a personal covenant. But now he intended the whole community to do this. He then encouraged them by calling them “My Sons” He urged them not to be negligent and reminded them of their calling and chosenness.

This seems to have worked for we read in v.12

“Then these LEVITES arose”

We are reminded of Nehemiah who said to the people in Jerusalem,

“Come let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach” And they said, “Let us arise and build” Then they set their hands to the work.

This is the clarion call at the Conference. Brothers and Sisters in the health fields of South Asia, “Come let us return to the LORD! Come let us arise and build! Come, let us go and seek the LORD’s face!”

HIS CALL WAS A PRACTICAL CALL

He called for four things.

- Personal cleansing
- The cleansing the temple.
- Restoration of burnt offerings and sacrifices
- Restoration of praise and worship

In restoring Praise and worship he was going back to David's time. In restoring the sacrifices and offering, he was going even further to the time of Moses.

Amazingly the Levites rose up, and worked hard and diligently. They cleansed themselves and cleansed the temple. They finished the work in a record 16 days! This is the kind of deep repentance that we so desperately need at this time.

RESTORATION OF TEMPLE - WORSHIP -

AN ASSEMBLY OF JOY

Hezekiah called on the Priests, Levites and the people to restore the whole sacrificial system and worship in the temple. The people brought a great number of burnt offerings. And both the fragrant and the sin offerings were made.

There is a beautiful phrase in verse 27.

"Then Hezekiah commanded them to offer the burnt offering on the altar. **And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD also began**, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel" 2 Chronicles 29:27

"As the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began" Hallelujah! May our Conference be soaked in song.

With repentance, returning to the LORD and restoration of the worship sacrifices, the song of the LORD begun. Praise erupted. And the temple rang out with the praises of the LORD. At the end of the chapter we read:
"Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced that God had prepared the people, since the events took place so suddenly" 2 Chronicles 29:36

There was much rejoicing at the suddenness of the whole process. Oh! For a Season of 'Suddenlies' in HCF. Can we begin this with all diligence before and during the conference in April 2010?

RETURN TO THE LORD

This is a theme in many parts of the Bible.

Hosea called Israel to return to the LORD

"Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. **Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD.** His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth" - Hosea 6:1-3

Jeremiah called Judah to return to the LORD:

Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say:
"Return, backsliding Israel," says the LORD; 'I will not cause My

anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,' says the LORD; 'I will not remain angry forever.'" Jeremiah 3:12

"Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion" - Jeremiah 3:14

"Return, you backsliding children, And I will heal your backslidings." "Indeed we do come to You, For You are the LORD our God." Jeremiah 3:22

Josiah himself strongly returned to the LORD

"Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book" 2 Chronicles 34:31

So can we cry out to each other and to the Healthfield Christian,

"COME LET US RETURN TO THE LORD!"

CHAPTER THREE

COME TO THE FEAST

CELEBRATING THE PASSOVER

After the people had returned to the LORD, the next great event was celebrating the Passover. As we read this, we pray that our gathering in Tansen, Nepal will be like this celebration. We believe God is calling us to a “feast” in Tansen, Nepal.

One issue that we see in the initial verses is that the Passover was not held as prescribed by Moses in the first month but in the second month. But this delay was not like how Jeroboam changed the date for his convenience and his own good.

“Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month **which he had devised in his own heart**. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense” 1 Kings 12:32-33

He devised all this in his own heart. This sin of installing an altar of golden calves plagued Israel until the Kingdom was destroyed. It is referred to over and over again as; “The sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin”

No, Hezekiah, delayed the Passover for two reasons.

The Priests had not yet ceremonially cleansed themselves. Also the Northern Tribes were far away and it would take time for them to come to Jerusalem. Moreover the LORD had given permission for these very two reasons in Numbers 9 v 10 – 11; defilement and distance.

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If anyone of you or your posterity is **unclean because** of a **corpse**, or is **far away on a journey**, he may still keep the LORD's Passover. **On the fourteenth day** of the **second month, at twilight, they may keep it**. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.”

In this we see a deep quality in Hezekiah's character. He was seeing to both the inward heart condition as well as the outward ritual necessity for cleansing. He was concerned with both the healthy organism and organization.

THE CALL TO RETURN

Hezekiah wrote letters inviting people to come to Jerusalem for the Passover. A number of pertinent truths become evident as we read this portion of scripture. II Chronicles 30 v.1 - 12

The Proclamation

“So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done it for a long time in the prescribed manner” v. 5

Hezekiah was only King of Judah. Yet the call was to all. He called people even from Samaria and the Northern Kingdom. The throne in the North, in Israel, was destroyed and the people were under Assyrian Governors.

This was the time to reunite God's people. Their true centre was the God appointed King and the God appointed priesthood under God. What a large vision Hezekiah had. Josiah later did the same. His reform extended beyond Judah into Israel. Elijah, when he rebuilt the altar at Mount Carmel did it prophetically with 12 stones, to include all 12 tribes of Israel.

So, as we come to this gathering in Nepal, we are also inviting leaders of other Christian Fellowships. We want to see Jesus lifted high in the Health Fields of South Asia. Our true centre is not HCF, it is JESUS and Him crucified, risen, ascended. The cross is the global meeting place with God.

The content of the call

"Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the command of the king: "Children of Israel, **return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel**; then **He will return to the remnant of you** who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria" 2 Chronicles 30:6

"For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you **if you return to Him.**" 2 Chronicles 30:9

The theme of returning to the LORD was now taken from Judah and Jerusalem to all Israel. In the letter sent by Hezekiah, four times the word "return" is used. Moreover, it was a call to repentance. It was a call to a commit-

ment. He did not invite them with false promises. Nor did he say “come and have a nice time”. There was a mixed response to this call. Some humbled themselves, gave heed to the call and came. Some laughed and mocked at the couriers who brought the message.

On the other hand, the people of Judah were given singleness of heart to obey the King and the leader. They were a model for the rest to follow. What a comfort they must have been to God and to Hezekiah.

“Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD.” 2 Chron 30:12

Dear friends, dear delegates, this was the initial and continuing call that we in HCF South Asia want to communicate.

We are not saying to you,

“Come and have a nice time”

“Come and enjoy fellowship”

“The mountains of Nepal are beautiful”

All those are true and we would like all to happen. But we are saying,

“See the distress we are in. See the low state of even Christians in the Health field. See, how we have grieved the LORD. See the vast suffering multitudes. **Come let us return to the LORD**”

To strengthen this attitude, we are having one of the

meals on each day as a very simple meal, a kind of partial fast. We are having the Saturday afternoon before the Communion Service, as a free afternoon. Not for shopping or an excursion, but for each delegate to rest, sleep, seek the LORD and really come prepared. After the conference, on Sunday evening there will be time to relax and go out.

Also the programme is rather full. Yet daily after lunch till 4 pm. is free to rest.

So please come with this mindset. We are not calling you to a picnic or a holiday.

This is a preparation for WAR! We are asking you to come prepared to seek God earnestly and unitedly.

THE PASSOVER

II Chronicles 30v. 13 – 27

What a glorious Passover they celebrated! It began with further cleansing and removing of all idol altars in Jerusalem.

“They arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and they took away all the incense altars and cast them into the Brook Kidron.” 2 Chronicles 30:14

Hezekiah, was concerned with outward ritual and delayed the Passover, so that the priests could be clean. But now he faced another problem. The people from the Northern tribes had not cleansed themselves and yet contrary to

the law, they ate the Passover. Judgement could have fallen on them and perhaps did. Yet Hezekiah intercedes and he prays that God will look at their heart attitude. The LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people.

“For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, **had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover** contrary to what was written. **But Hezekiah prayed for them**, saying, "May the good LORD provide atonement for **everyone who prepares his heart to seek God**, the LORD God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary **And the LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people.**" 2 Chronicles 30:18-20

So beloved brothers and sisters, as we come to this gathering let us guard our hearts with all diligence.

“For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war." 2 Chronicles 16:9

“But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

God looks at the heart!

Great joy and great singing and great worship and great confession

This was a glorious festival.

The joy was so great and the people so blessed that they decided to extend the feast for another seven days. **We hope that all who come will be so encouraged and**

blessed that each country will hold this year, 2010, a special HCF Core group conference, nationally.

Great Prayer

"Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven." 2 Chronicles 30:27

All prayer is supposed to come to God. But this is specially mentioned here. The LORD was so pleased that their prayer went straight into God's presence and God's heart. We pray that in Nepal as we meet, the Holy Spirit will release, focused prayer that will bring forth a powerful response from the LORD.

"Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of God's omnipotence"

Nothing like this since Solomon

"So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem" 2 Chronicles 30:26

The Chronicler records that since Solomon's time there had not been a Passover or any celebration like this in Israel. He could have been referring to the whole heartedness and the extravagance of the feast. Or he could have been referring to the fact that all twelve tribes came together again after Solomon's time.

For after Solomon's reign, the Kingdom divided into two. God's heart *however was to unite them again. Now at last the Northern tribes joined Judah in this Passover.* We

long to see such a wholehearted, united “feast” before the LORD, at Tansen, Nepal.

JOSIAH - TURNED TO THE LORD

“Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses” - II Kings 23:25

From a very young age Josiah began to seek the LORD. He led a radical and ruthless programme of restoration in Judah and Israel. He too extended the cleansing of the land beyond the boundaries of Judah. He wanted to rid all Israel of idol worship. **Hezekiah was outstanding in trusting the LORD. Josiah was outstanding in turning to the LORD** and bringing restoration.

Later Josiah too celebrated a grand Passover in Jerusalem. Almost the whole of chapter 35 of 2 Chronicles is devoted to this Passover. **The King himself gave lavishly of his own substance for the offerings.** He also went back to David’s time and followed all the procedures as outlined in God’s word. So he also went back to God’s instruction to Moses. We trust leaders of HCF will lead the way in sacrificial generosity.

“Prepare yourselves according to your fathers' houses, according to your divisions, **following the written instruction of David king of Israel and the written instruction of Solomon his son** So slaughter the Passover offerings, consecrate yourselves, and prepare them for your brethren, that they may do **according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses**” II Chronicles 35: 4 & 6

And the final statement about this Passover even surpasses what was said of Hezekiah’s Passover.

“There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” - II Chronicles 35:18

Hezekiah's Passover was unique upto the time of Solomon. But here we read that, even further back in history, since the time of Samuel there had not been a Passover like this. The only sad thing is that it seems that the people responded only outwardly. They did it because of the devotion of the King. Their hearts were far from the LORD. Michael Wilcock in his commentary says that in this Josiah, the King shepherd was like Jesus, the King shepherd, “who came unto His own but His own received Him not”

Michael Wilcock also clearly explains that a careful reading of the narrative shows the loneliness of the King in these reforms. Unlike in Jehoshaphet and Hezekiah's reforms, when the people seemed to join wholeheartedly, here it seems as if they just went along but not wholeheartedly.

From Chapter 34 v 3 onwards we read about the loneliness of the King in a subtle way.

- He hewed down...
- He prayed.....
- He convened.....
- He read

- He made all present.....

“Under his direction the altars of the Baals were torn down; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them, and smashed the Asherah poles, the idols and the images. These he broke to pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them” 2 Chronicles 34:4

“Josiah removed all the detestable idols from all the territory belonging to the Israelites, and he had all who were present in Israel serve the LORD their God. **As long as he lived, they did not fail to follow the LORD, the God of their fathers**” 2 Chron 34:33

As long as he was there they responded, “Let us pray that it will not be just a few in HCF South Asia who long for renewal, but we will all join with one heart and one mind”. This could be one reason that Jeremiah the prophet, though he had a great regard for Josiah hardly made a comment about the great reforms of Josiah. He knew that this reformation would not last.

Jeremiah made this statement to Josiah’s wicked son.

"Shall you reign because you enclose yourself in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink,
And do justice and righteousness?
Then it was well with him.
He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
Then it was well.
Was not this knowing Me?" says the LORD. Jeremiah 22:15-16

But as I said earlier apart from this respect he had for Josiah, he does not speak much of his reform.

Beloved friends and delegates at the HCF South Asia Core Group gathering we plead with you all, “Come let us re-

turn to the LORD with our hearts” What a waste of time, toil and money to have such a gathering if our hearts are not fully turning to the LORD. We plead with us all, to get real with God before, during and after this gathering.

JOSIAH MAKES A COVENANT WITH THE LORD

“Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes **with all his heart and all his soul**, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book”
II Chronicles 34:31

He was moved by God’s word and then led the people to renew their covenant with the LORD. At the gathering in Nepal, we too intend to make a fresh covenant with the LORD. He has done His part. Now it is our turn to renew our part. John Wesley instituted a beautiful covenant service for his people. The final words of the covenant read like this:

The covenant

Here, the People standing, the Minister shall say,

And now, beloved, let us bind ourselves with willing bonds to our covenant God, and take the yoke of Christ upon us.

“This taking of His yoke upon us means that we are heartily content that He appoint us our place and work, and that He alone be our reward”.

Christ has many services to be done; some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and temporal interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please our-

selves, in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is assuredly given us in Christ, who strengtheneth us.

Therefore let us make the Covenant of God our own. Let us engage our heart to the Lord, and resolve in His strength never to go back.

Being thus prepared, let us now, in sincere dependence on His grace and trusting in His promises, yield ourselves anew to Him, meekly kneeling upon our knees.

THE COVENANT

I am no longer my own, but Thine. Put me to what Thou wilt, rank me with whom Thou wilt; put me to doing; put me to suffering; let me be employed for Thee or laid aside for Thee, exalted for Thee or brought low for Thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to Thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Thou art mine, and I am Thine. So be it. And the Covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven, Amen.

We intend reading this with our hearts during the conference/gathering. Please read it carefully.

HCF SOUTH ASIA CORE GROUP GATHERING.

April 21 - 25, Tansen, Nepal. 2010

So dear friends we invite you to this feast with the LORD.

“And in this mountain
The LORD of hosts will make for all people
A feast of choice pieces,
A feast of wines on the lees,
Of fat things full of marrow,
Of well-refined wines on the lees.
And He will destroy on this mountain

The surface of the covering cast over all people,
And the veil that is spread over all nations." Isaiah 25:6-7

Let us come as the Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians

"Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. **Therefore let us keep the feast**, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Cor 5:7-8

"Many nations shall come and say,
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths."
For out of Zion the law shall go forth,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." Mic 4:2

COME, LET US KEEP THE FEAST!

CHAPTER FOUR

HEZEKIAH'S REFORMS

As we move into Chapter 31 of Second Chronicles we see the whole process of restoration continuing fervently and faithfully. Michael Wilcock in his commentary on Chronicles puts it very well. (Bible speak today series) He says that first in Chapter 29, Hezekiah **looked to God**. Then in Chapter 30 he **looked around at the people** and invited them to the Passover. Now he **looks into the heart**. For behind the outward organization, there was a remarkable inward devotion in both Hezekiah and his people.

As the chapter opens, we find the reforms continuing.

“Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the sacred pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the altars — from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh — until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession.” 2 Chronicles 31:1

What fervent zeal they had to rid the land of idolatry. Would that as we leave the gathering in Tansen, Nepal, we would have the same mindset.

GREAT GENEROSITY

Hezekiah then made the first of many new appointments.

“Hezekiah assigned the priests and Levites to divisions — each of them according to their duties as priests or Levites — to offer burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, to minister, to give thanks and to sing praises at the gates of the LORD's dwelling” - 2 Chronicles 31:2.

Also he commanded the people to give generously to the House of God, for the priests, Levites and the work of God.

A remarkable response is seen. First from nearby Jerusalem and then from throughout Judah and Israel the people brought in an abundance. They started after the Feast of weeks, Pentecost, in the third month and finished with the Feast of Tabernacles in the Seventh month. Within four months there was a remarkable response. The tithes and offerings were laid in heaps. And we read in Chapter 31 v.8 these beautiful words.

"When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw the heaps, they praised the LORD and blessed his people Israel" 2 Chronicles 31:8

As a result of this the Chief Priest told Hezekiah,

"and Azariah the chief priest, from the family of Zadok, answered, "Since the people began to bring their contributions to the temple of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the LORD has blessed his people, and this great amount is left over." 2 Chronicles 31:10

There was an abundance and an overflow. One is reminded of how generously the people gave during the building of the tabernacle in Moses' time.

Listen to these words very carefully.

"And they received from Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of making the sanctuary. So they continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning. Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work he was doing, and they spoke to Moses, saying, " **The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the LORD commanded us to do.**" So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to

be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, "**Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.**" And the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done — indeed too much." Exodus 36:3-7

Remember these were the people who had sinned so grievously in making the golden calf. And yet now their hearts were moved. We are praying for this kind of hilarious generosity among all of us both before, at, and after the conference. Why should the work of GOD suffer lack?

King Hezekiah leads the way in generosity

King Hezekiah led the way in his generosity. Both in the Passover and now again he made his own personal generous contribution. We appeal to all of you HCF leaders to lead the way in generous giving.

"The king also **appointed a portion of his possessions for the burnt offerings**: for the morning and evening burnt offerings, the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths and the New Moons and the set feasts, as it is written in the Law of the LORD." 2 Chronicles 31:3

Michael Wilcock makes this penetrating comment in his commentary.

"How may one know that a real spiritual work is going on in the hearts of God's people? The practical answer is the thoroughly earthy one of the pocket, the purse and the cheque book!

David and the building of the temple

1 Chronicles 29 is a very moving chapter.

"Furthermore King David said to all the assembly: "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced; **and the work is great**, because the temple is not for man but for

the LORD God. 2 Now for the house of my God **I have prepared with all my might:** gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance.”1 Chronicles 29:1-2

David prepared **with all his might**. He gave lavishly and generously. He gave even his own special treasure of gold and silver. This would have been worth billions of rupees.

The leaders responded willingly and joyfully.

“Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, **offered willingly**. They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. **Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly**, because with a loyal heart **they had offered willingly** to the LORD; and King **David also rejoiced** greatly” 1 Chronicles 29:6-9

Then David prayed a wonderful prayer of praise to God from verses 10 - 19. Please do read it. Here a few excerpts.

**“But who am I, and who are my people,
That we should be able to offer so willingly as this?
For all things come from You,
And of Your own we have given You”** 1 Chronicles 29:14

“O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intent of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their heart toward You” 1 Chronicles 29:18

Verse five shows both the outward act and the inward consecration

“who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself to the LORD today”? 1 Chronicles 29:5

Beloved friends, delegates, leaders of HCF, may we respond with great generosity.

May we be able to say with David,

“I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart **I have willingly offered** all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, **who are present here to offer willingly to You**” 1 Chronicles 29:17

MANAGEMENT - ORDER

After this from verse 11 of 2 Chronicles 31, Hezekiah makes many administrative and clear management decisions. Everything was put into order.

The word “faithful”, “faithfully” or faithfulness appears 4 times.

“Then they **faithfully** brought in the offerings, the tithes, and the dedicated things; Cononiah the Levite had charge of them, and Shimei his brother was the next” 2 Chronicles 31:12

“And under him were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, his **faithful assistants** in the cities of the priests, to distribute allotments to their brethren by divisions, to the great as well as the small” 2 Chronicles 31:15

“and to all who were written in the genealogy — their little ones and their wives, their sons and daughters, the whole company of them — **for in their faithfulness** they sanctified themselves in holi-

ness.” 2 Chronicles 31:18

“After these **deeds of faithfulness**, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and entered Judah; he encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself” 2 Chronicles 32:1

How important this quality of faithfulness is. May God raise many faithful people for the tasks ahead in the next few years.

Again I wish to refer back to Michael Wilcock’s commentary and quote a passage from his book.

It is so pure and powerful.

“Are we to imagine that the detailed organizing which followed – storage arrangements, a hierarchy of officials, registration lists, all the paraphernalia beloved of bureaucrats (31:11- 19) – is out of keeping with the heart-devotion expressed in the first part of the chapter? Not at all. The response of the heart may sometimes ignore rules and regulations, but there is a difference between structures which hinder the flow and those which channel it. What we see operating here is a principle to be found throughout Scripture, that of the proper relation between organism and organization, spontaneity and preparedness, content and form, spirit and word. In each case, not only is the latter as important as the former, it is actually an appropriate expression of it. Three times in this part of the chapter we find the word ‘faithfully’, which speaks of the diligence and perseverance of people who know how easily the first impulse can be lost. But the fact remains that the structures of 31: 11-19 would

have been a lifeless skeleton if Hezekiah had not seen when he looked into the hearts of his people in 31: 4 – 10, a true love for God, which God himself had put there.”

In HCF, in the next seven months after the gathering in Nepal, we urge each HCF National group to follow this pattern. Good management would be like the endoskeleton helping us move and function and fulfill a purpose. We need to beware of substituting management for true life and the leading of the Holy Spirit. But it need not be “an either or”; we can have both and see God’s work go forward and flourish even in dark times of trial and turbulence.

HCF International is adopting a certain strategic planning model which we hope we all can follow under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Closing Remarks

“Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. 21 And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.” 2 Chronicles 31:20-21

The Chronicler concludes this section with a wonderful summary of Hezekiah’s life and ministry.

He did throughout all Judah

He did what was good and right and true before the LORD, his GOD.

In every work that he began, to seek his GOD, he did it

with all his heart.

He prospered in all he did

We pray that this will be true of many leaders in HCF and
in the Health fields of South Asia.

CHAPTER FIVE

WARFARE

After fourteen years of returning to the LORD, renewal and reformation, now Hezekiah faces a head on collision with the Assyrian army. Somehow it seemed that as Hezekiah turned to the LORD, the presence of God among HIS people, had kept the Assyrian army at bay. But now danger was at the door. Hezekiah was spiritually prepared for this battle.

The whole battle is described in more detail in 2 Kings 18 & 19 and Isaiah 36 & 37. However it is also described in 2 Chronicles Chapter 32.

Sennacherib, the King of Assyria had conquered the cities of Judah. Only Jerusalem was left. It was a desperate situation. Moreover, his Commander defied and poured contempt on Hezekiah and his God. They spoke in Hebrew and not in Aramaic as they wanted the people to hear and lose confidence. The enemy had done his homework well, even studying the Hebrew language. To what extent people and Satan will go to subjugate and conquer others!

2 Chronicles 32 v. 9 – 19, gives us an account of how they reviled the LORD and tried to discourage them. We read a similar account in 2 Kings. 18 v. 17 - 35. In the Chronicles passage we can count seven times, that they reviled the LORD. Yet the people held their peace and answered not a word. Hezekiah had encouraged them with these

words,

“He appointed military officers over the people and assembled them before him in the square at the city gate and encouraged them with these words: **"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles."** And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said” 2 Chronicles 32:6-8

Then the Assyrian leader sent a severe threatening letter to Hezekiah. It was a sort of final ultimatum. The Assyrians were about to invade and they were ruthless people. Hezekiah then did something that will always be an example to God’s people.

His response was five fold.

“And Hezekiah **received** the letter from the hand of the messengers, and **read** it; and Hezekiah **went up to the house of the LORD**, and **spread it before the LORD**. Then Hezekiah **prayed before the LORD**, and said: "O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth." 2 Kings 19:14-15

- He received the letter
- He read the letter
- He went upto the House of the LORD
- He spread the letter before the LORD
- He prayed before the LORD

What a Godly response! Should we not do the same?

Then he prayed a magnificent prayer.

"Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: "O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands — wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them. Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand, **that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone.**" 2 Kings 19:15-19

The prayer had seven elements to it

Worship and Acknowledgement of God v.15

You are God! You alone, of all the Kingdoms of the earth.
You are Creator!

Desperately asking God to see, and hear both his crying and the situation. He truly turned to the LORD. v.16

He asked God to see how Sennacherib was casting a reproach on HIM, the Living God. He was concerned for God's honor and name. v.16 b.

He faced the facts.

He asked God to intervene

His motive was that all the Kingdoms of the earth should know the LORD.

Yes, the gods of other nations and the nations had been destroyed. This is a formidable enemy. Yet he adds with deep trust in God and derision of the enemy that these gods of the nations, were not real gods, but just the work of men's hands. Derision and mocking are part of the repertoire of God's people, especially against the forces of darkness.

Consider Psalm 2 v.1 - 6

"Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
"Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us."
He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The LORD shall hold them in derision.
Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
"Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion." Psalm 2:1-6

When the coalition of forces came against God and against His people,

"the LORD enthroned in heaven laughs"

"the LORD will hold them in derision"

Consider Elijah, who mockingly said to the prophets of

Baal, "Shout louder, perhaps your God has gone to the toilet" We are shocked by these words, but sometimes they are needed to bring us out of bondage and fear and manipulation by false Gods

The conclusion of his prayer is a classic one

"Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone." 2 Kings 19:19

THAT ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH MAY KNOW
THAT YOU

ARE THE LORD

GOD, YOU ALONE! Hallelujah!

What a powerful, noble, God honoring motivation for this prayer! Hezekiah was

concerned for God's honor and he wanted not just Israel, but the whole world to

know that the "LORD, He is God." This prayer or this phrase or something similar

to it is found in many places in the Bible. Please read and bask in this great truth.

God

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land." Exodus 6:1

Moses

"So he said, "Tomorrow." And he said, "Let it be according to your word, **that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God.**" Exodus 8:10

God

"or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, **so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth.**" Exodus 9:14

"that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, **and that you may know that I am the LORD.**" Exodus 10:2

Joshua:

"for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over **that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD,** that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever." Joshua 4: 23 & 24

David:

"This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, **and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel**" 1 Samuel 17:46

Solomon:

"And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need, **so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other**"- 1

Kings 8:59-60

Psalms

“God be merciful to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us,
Selah

**That Your way may be known on earth,
Your salvation among all nations”** Psalms 67:1-2

Hallelujah!

God wants all nations to know that He is the LORD, and to be saved. This should be our motivation too.

God heard Hezekiah’s prayer and answered in a dramatic fashion. In one night the LORD sent an angel to destroy 186,000 Assyrian soldiers. The Assyrian King returned in shame and was later assassinated by his own sons.

May God help us to pray such prayers for Divine intervention in the coming years. Not that we want people to die! No we want people to be saved and evil forces to be defeated.

Let us remember,

“The Battle belongs to the LORD”

Martin Luther’s great hymn is such a strength to us.

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood,
of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe,
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,

And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

And tho' this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed,
His truth to triumph through us;
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

CHAPTER SIX

HEZEKIAH'S LAST DAYS

Hezekiah's last days are a mixture of good and bad. God teaches us some deep lessons from this. When things go well there is always the danger of pride. Also at any moment, if we take our eyes off the LORD, we become vulnerable and can fall from grace very quickly.

In 2 Chronicles Chapter 32, we read of a number of incidents towards the end of his life.

Hezekiah's sickness

Hezekiah was sick and Isaiah the prophet told him to prepare for his death.

"In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live" 2 Kings 20:1

Hezekiah turned to the wall, turned to God, wept bitterly and asked for an extension of life. God responded through the prophet Isaiah,

"Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father:"**I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you.** On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David." 2 Kings 20:5-6

He was given 15 years more of life. God confirmed this to him by a remarkable sign. Yet in that last 15 years of his life, Manasseh, his son, one of the most wicked kings of Judah was born. These are mysteries which are difficult to fathom. The passage in 2 Chronicles gives us some insight into this mystery.

“But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, **for his heart was lifted up**; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. **Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart**, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah” 2 Chronicles 32:25-26

Pride crept into this man near the end of his life. What a warning to all of us. We read of a number of great men in the Bible to whom this happened. When God had blessed and used them, their hearts were lifted up in pride and this caused their downfall. Asa, Uzziah, Josiah and others are examples. One startling example is Moses. He meekly and patiently bore the grumblings and backslidings of Israel for 39 years. Then in the final 40th year before they entered the promised land, he got angry with them, smote the rock twice, dishonoured God and lost his chance to enter the promised land. God was gracious and gave him this opportunity later when Jesus was on the Mount of transfiguration. But we see how right at the end of the 40 years, after being so patient and meek, he faltered and failed in patience.

So let us take heed and be warned!

He collected for himself

From 2 Chronicles 32 v.27 and 29 we see how he collected and made **himself** many treasures and cities.

“Hezekiah had very great riches and honor. **And he made himself** treasures for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of desirable items;” 2 Chronicle 32:27

“Moreover **he provided cities for himself**, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much property” 2 Chronicle 32:29

He seems to have violated God’s standards for a king mentioned in Deuteronomy 17: 16 & 17;

“**But he shall not multiply horses for himself**, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' **Neither shall he multiply wives for himself**, lest his heart turn away; **nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself**” Deuteronomy 17:16-17

He tried to form an anti Assyrian alliance with Babylon

“However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, **God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart**” 2 Chronicles 32:31

God withdrew from him and tested him, to see what was in his heart. He showed the Babylonians all that was in his house and in his dominion. He was more attentive to them than to God (2 Kings 20 v. 12 - 19).

God was displeased with this action. How sad for a man who had led his people back to God.

He built a special underground tunnel to the pool of Siloam

“This same Hezekiah also stopped the water outlet of Upper Gihon, and brought the water by tunnel to the west side of the City of David. Hezekiah prospered in all his works” 2 Chronicles 32:30

He took the waters from the upper Gihon and did not allow it to flow along the natural path to the pool of Siloam, but diverted it through an underground tunnel. The Pool of Siloam, was a source of water to the city, a quiet, unspectacular source of life. This was a great engineering feat and is still present in Jerusalem. There is some controversy as to whether Hezekiah was right to do this or not. Was it an act of faith or unbelief? Isaiah 22 v .11 seems to point out that this was an act of unbelief.

“You built a reservoir between the two walls
for the water of the Old Pool,
but you did not look to the One who made it,
or have regard for the One who planned it long ago” Isaiah 22:11

Mark Wilcock in his commentary on Chronicles feels that this was an act of faith and Hezekiah relied on God and Isaiah in this. Perhaps Isaiah’s indictment was for those who followed. Or did Hezekiah make a mistake? We are not sure.

So we conclude this short study on Hezekiah’s life. Beloved delegates to the South Asia HCF Core Group Conference/Solemn Assembly in Tansen, Nepal and all colleagues in HCF and Brothers and Sisters in Healthcare, can we urge each other constantly, “Come Let us return to the LORD”. May the LORD pour His SPIRIT upon us at the

Conference. So let us keep our eyes fixed on JESUS the author and finisher of our faith. We need not only the “Alpha anointing”, we need the “omega anointing” to finish well.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”1 Corinthians 15:58

CHAPTER SEVEN

COME LET US RETURN TO THE LORD.

We close this booklet by looking again at our theme
“Come let us return to the Lord.”

One issue which we feel needs to be emphasized is that this returning needs to be deep and lasting and that which bears fruit. Let us not be like the Israelites about whom the Lord had to say, *“This people honors me with their lips but their hearts are far from me.”*

In the Book of Hosea we see the Lord, as a broken hearted Bridegroom calling Israel to return to the Lord. In Chapter 4 and 5, God brings an indictment on Israel. He bemoans the lack of a knowledge of God in the land. In Hosea 4:1, we read these words,

“Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, for the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: “There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land.” Hosea 4:1

The last of God’s corrective disciplines to them in chapter five was that he would withdraw His presence from them.

“I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense.
Then they will seek My face;
In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.” Hosea 5:15

Though he withdraws, he waits eagerly for their return. So we read, *“Until they acknowledge their guilt.”* God withdrew and waited, longing for Israel to return. Guilt is not a problem to God. He has made atonement for sin. But God cannot help us as long as we have unacknowledged guilt.

Then in chapter 6, comes a fervent call to return to the Lord.

“Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth.” Hosea 6:1-3

Can we say this to each other during this conference?

Yes, the same hands which caused the wounds will bandage and heal the wounds. God longs to be gracious. If we repent and return He will surely come. He will come as **surely** as the sun rises every morning. He will come as **refreshingly** as the seasonal rains. But we must pursue, press on and persevere in our seeking after God. Then we will know Him. He will restore and revive us. Hallelujah!

Yet verse four is a sad verse. There seemed to be some turning to God. But God is not impressed. His problem is even with their turning because it was so superficial. So God says,

"O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away." Hosea 6:4

Their turning was like the morning cloud. It was fleeting and shallow and not weighty. He then tells them that He is not impressed with their offerings and sacrifices. Often we try to substitute religious observances for reality and repentance. This kind of religion will not stand the scrutiny of the blazing eyes of God. In the last chapter of Hosea, this call to true deep repentance is again issued to Israel.

"O Israel, return to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity; Take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips." Hosea 14:1-2

Take words with you, and return. In other words, let your repentance be genuine and written down or spoken; A covenant with the Lord!

The Prophet Jeremiah also spoke for God in calling Judah and Israel to repentance. He pointed out a number of Israel's sins. Here is a short list of some of them:

- i. Following the dictates of their own heart
- ii. Turning away from the Lord
- iii. Refusing to listen to the Lord
- iv. Refusing to repent
- v. Idolatry
- vi. Injustice

vii. Sloth and apathy etc., etc.

He called them to genuinely amend their ways and return to the Lord.

"The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 'Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the LORD!'" Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:" **Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.** Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these.' " **For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor,** if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever." Jeremiah 7:1-7

These are powerful words. Please read them through again, very carefully.

John the Baptist was another prophet who called Israel to repentance and asked them to bring forth the fruit of repentance.

"Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones." Luke 3:7-8

Beloved delegates, to the HCF conference and friends, we are not looking, only for some emotional turning to the Lord. We are praying that as we genuinely repent and return there will be long lasting changes in our lives.

Changed priorities

Changed attitudes

Changed purposes

Changed life style

Changed ambitions

Changed values

Changed relationships

Changed heart etc., etc.

We believe that God is longing to be gracious to us.

“Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you;
And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you.
For the LORD is a God of justice;
Blessed are all those who wait for Him.” Isaiah 30:18

He is waiting to pour showers on the dry ground, showers of blessings. So brothers and sisters in healthcare in South Asia, “Come Let us return to the Lord.”

We close with the words of a hymn which we sang at an International HCF conference. The words are deeply moving.

The sunset tints are stealing
Across the world we know
And solemn bells are pealing
Their message sad and low
That time for work is ending
O Father can it be?
That we are slow in sending
Our forces out for thee

We bear a sacred calling
To go and make Thee known
We know that million's falling
Before ungodly thrones
For other lords besides Thee
Hold sway in human lives
And other isms call them
To worthless sacrifice

We face a task unfinished
That drives us to our knees
Earth's needs that undiminished
Reproves our slothful ease
For broken lives lie bleeding
Beneath sin's cruel clutch
They know not of His pleading
Nor have they felt His touch

O Father God sustain us
O Holy Ghost inspire
O LORD Thy love constrain us
So that we never tire
From fearfulness defend us
From apathy awake
Forth in Thy service send us
To labor for thy sake

God bless you all.

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"This booklet is a call to Healthcare Christians of South Asia to repent and return to the Lord. We in Healthcare Christian Fellowship International, South Asia have been deeply moved by the repentance, restoration, reformation and renewal brought about by the Lord, through King Hezekiah. We consider this as a model for a similar restoration in the health fields of South Asia. This booklet is a clarion call to all Christians in healthcare. "Come let us return to the Lord."

In whom (Christ) are hidden all the treasures
of wisdom & knowledge -Colossians 2:3 (NKJV)

Then the Lord replied:

Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so
that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an
appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove
false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come
and will not delay. -Habakkuk 2:2,3 (NIV)