

# Rend Your Hearts

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*Joel 2:12-14*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Illustration about Gov. Neff of Texas granting a man a pardon, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #10414.
  - 1. This man exhibited true repentance, and he therefore received a pardon
  - 2. If we are to receive a pardon from God, we must exhibit true repentance.
- B. What is true repentance?
  - 1. Many individuals say that true repentance is being sorry for one's sins.
  - 2. One must be sorry for his sins.
    - a. "Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation" (2 Cor. 7:10).
    - b. Godly sorrow is sorrow that God's will has been violated, not that one was caught.
  - 3. True repentance begins with godly sorrow and ends with a change in behavior.
    - a. When the Pharisees and Sadducees were coming to John for baptism, he told them, "Bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Mt. 3:8).
    - b. The fruit of repentance is a changed life, a life which no longer lives in sin.
- C. This morning, we want to examine Joel's call for repentance.

## TURN TO GOD, v. 12-13a

- A. Joel depicts a horrible plague of locusts which has come upon the Israelites.
  - 1. These locusts devour Palestine.
    - a. "What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten, What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten" (1:4).
    - b. "He has laid waste my vine, And mined my fig tree: He has stripped it bare and thrown it away, Its branches are made white" (1:7).
  - 2. This plague is referred to as the "day of the LORD (2:11). The question is asked, "Who can endure" the day of the LORD?
  - 3. The call to repentance we find here comes as a result of this great catastrophe--Unfortunately, it often takes a catastrophe to convince people to wake up.
- B. The Lord encourages the Israelites to turn to him "now."
  - 1. The Lord stresses the immediate need Israel had to turn to him.
    - a. Israel could not wait to repent.
    - b. God's punishment rested upon them and they had to repent quickly.
  - 2. We, too, cannot wait to repent.
    - a. Joshua told Israel, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Josh. 24:15).
    - b. "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (Heb. 3:7-8).
  - 3. Repent today.
    - a. The longer you wait to repent the greater the danger.
    - b. Illustration about boy who waited too late to repent, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #10423.
- C. The Lord wants the Israelites to turn to him with all their heart, v. 12.
  - 1. God will not accept a half-hearted repentance; he wants repentance with the whole heart.
  - 2. To repent with the whole heart means to surrender totally one's life to God.
    - a. God wants our entire lives to be under his control.
    - b. Is your life totally under God's control?
- D. The Israelites were to turn to God with fasting, weeping, and mourning.
  - 1. The change which was to take place in the Israelites hearts was to be shown outwardly with fasting, weeping, and mourning.
    - a. Fasting, weeping, and mourning were the common ways to show contrition in the days of Joel.
    - b. The repentance which takes place in our hearts is to be shown outwardly.
  - 2. The people were to fast.
    - a. In times of crisis, the Israelites fasted.
      - 1) When Saul and Jonathan were killed, Israel fasted (2 Sam. 1:12).
      - 2) When the son born to David and Bathsheba became ill, David fasted and prayed for the child (2 Sam. 12:16).
    - b. This was a time of crisis, and the Israelites are told to fast. Everyone was to participate in this fast-the elders, the children and nursing babes, and newlyweds were to participate (2:16).

3. The people were to weep.
  - a. Sin often brought about weeping.
    - 1) Because Moab had sinned against God, God was going to judge them--Everyone wailed and melted in tears (Is. 15:3).
    - 2) Because Israel had forgotten God, weeping and pleading could be heard in the heights (Jer. 3:21).
  - b. Do you weep over the sins you have committed?
4. The people were to mourn.
  - a. The term used here for “mourn” means to wail.
  - b. This was a term that commonly described the activity at a funeral.
  - c. Here the term designates the sorrow one should feel over his sins.
- E. The people were to rend their hearts, not their garments, v. 13.
  1. One feature of the lamentation service was the rending of garments.
  2. Here, the Israelites are told to rend their hearts, not their clothing.
    - a. The rending of the heart symbolizes true contrition and remorse.
    - b. God does not despise a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17).
- F. The Israelites are told to return to the Lord their God, v. 13.
  1. The fact that they are told to return to God shows that they previously had a relationship with God.
    - a. Indeed, these Israelites were God’s covenant people.
    - b. Although they enjoyed a relationship with God, they left God
  2. We, too, can leave God; we can fall from grace.
    - a. “You have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4).
    - b. “Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him” (Heb. 10:38).
    - c. The Ephesian church had left their first love (Rev. 2:4).
- G. This is God’s call to repentance. God calls all people to repentance.
  1. “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).
  2. “These times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).
  3. Have you repented of your sins?

## **TURN TO A FORGIVING GOD, v. 13b**

- A. Because of God’s love and concern for the sinner, those who turned back to God knew they would receive forgiveness.
- B. God is gracious and merciful.
  1. God is referred to as gracious because of the great grace he shows those who are his.
    - a. “The LORD will give grace and glory” (Ps. 84:11).
    - b. “Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Rom. 5:20).
    - c. “The grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant” toward Paul (1 Tim. 1:14).
      - 1) Even though Paul had murdered and persecuted Christians, God forgave him out of his great grace.
      - 2) God can forgive our sins out of his great grace.
  2. God is referred to as merciful because he shows great mercy to his children.
    - a. The Hebrew root behind “merciful” is related to the word for womb.
      - 1) The idea seems to be “motherly love.”
      - 2) Just as a mother shows great mercy to her children, God shows great mercy toward his children.
    - b. God shows great mercy.
      - 1) “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You” (Ps. 86:5).
      - 2) “Your mercy is great above the heavens” (Ps. 108:4).
- C. God is slow to anger.
  1. God does become angry, but he does not do so quickly.
  2. Many of us become angry rather quickly, but not God--he is longsuffering.
- D. God shows great kindness.
  1. In the Hebrew, “great kindness” refers to God’s love.
  2. Our God is a God of love.
    - a. “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:16).
    - b. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 Jn. 3:1).
- E. The Lord relents from doing harm.
  1. When the Lord declares judgment upon man for sin, God will withdraw the punishment if man repents.
    - a. When the Israelites made the golden calf, God’s anger was fierce against them.
      - 1) God planned to destroy them.

- 2) Yet, after Moses interceded for the people, the Lord relented of the harm he said he would bring against them (Ex. 32:7-14).
- b. When Nineveh repented, God relented from the disaster he said he would bring upon them (Jonah 3:10).
2. God will not do you harm if you turn to him.

## **CONCLUSION, v. 14**

- A. Perhaps God will relent of his punishment and leave a blessing behind him.
  1. Although God relents from doing harm, sin does need to be punished.
  2. God's sovereignty remains intact here.
    - a. Just because the people repents does not automatically mean that God will relent from his intended punishment.
    - b. Man cannot arbitrarily control God--God remains in control.
- B. A grain offering and a drink offering might be left behind for God.
  1. The locusts had so destroyed the fields in Palestine that there wasn't anything left to offer God (1:9).
  2. The leaving behind of the grain and drink offerings would mean that the locust plague was over. This would mean that God had forgiven his people.
- C. Just as God would bless the Israelites if they turned to him, God will bless us if we turn to him.
  1. Have you turned to God?
  2. Why not turn to him now?