

# The Day of the Lord

## An Expositional “Journey” Through the Prophecy of Joel

### 4-Rend Your Heart- Not Your Garments; What Genuine Repentance Looks Like- Part 2

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September 13, 2020

#### **Joel 2:1-17**

**1 Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near,**

**2 A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been *anything* like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.**

**3 A fire consumes before them And behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them But a desolate wilderness behind them, And nothing at all escapes them.**

**4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run.**

**5 With a noise as of chariots They leap on the tops of the mountains, Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, Like a mighty people arranged for battle.**

**6 Before them the people are in anguish; All faces turn pale.**

**7 They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like soldiers; And they each march in line, Nor do they deviate from their paths.**

**8 They do not crowd each other, They march everyone in his path; When they burst through the defenses, They do not break ranks.**

**9 They rush on the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter through the windows like a thief.**

**10 Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.**

**11 The Lord utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the Lord is indeed great**

**and very awesome, And who can endure it?**

**12 "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart,  
And with fasting, weeping and mourning;**

**13 And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord  
your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in  
lovingkindness And relenting of evil.**

**14 Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent And leave a blessing  
behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your  
God?**

**15 Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,**

**16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather  
the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room  
And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.**

**17 Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, Weep between the porch and the  
altar, And let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not make Your  
inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among  
the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"**

To the Glory of God

Now, over the centuries, the Christian Church has gone through many variations of Evangelism. But we need to remember what Evangelism is and what the Bible teaches about this important Subject.

"*Evangelism*" is the effort put forth by believers toward lost people- to preach the Gospel to them- in the Hope that they will *hear* the Gospel; *believe* the Gospel; repent and trust in Jesus; and be saved. So, "*Evangelism*" is the heralding of the "*Evangel*" to the lost.

Now the word, "*Evangel*"- is an English *transliteration* of two Greek words, "*Euan-Gelion*"- which means: "*Good News*" and that is the word, from which, we get the word, "*Gospel*". So, just before leaving this earth, the Lord Jesus said this in **Mark 16:15b&16**:

**15 ... Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.**

**16 He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has  
disbelieved shall be condemned.**

So, among Protestants, those who engage in the ongoing and consistent *heralding* of the Evangel- the biblical Gospel- in humble

Obedience to the Command of Jesus- are called, "Evangelicals", while those who don't- are called, "Liturgical"<sup>1</sup>

So, "Evangelicalism" is supposed to be the section of Christianity that believes that the Church has the Duty; and the Obligation; and the Responsibility; and the Joy- to obey the final, parting Command of Jesus – and to herald the biblical Gospel to as many people as possible- every day- using every means available to us.

But sadly, over the years, as the modern, visible Church has lost its "First Love"; and has become more and more *entangled* with the "affairs of everyday life"- in direct rebellion to the Apostolic Command of the Apostle Paul, who was "moved" by God the Holy Spirit to infallibly say,

## **2Timothy 2:4**

**No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.**

... Evangelicals have *devolved* into really nothing more than a "voting block" that conservative Politicians can use for their own personal benefit and the benefit of their Platform. And so, Evangelism has become an effort to get as many warm and breathing bodies on the pews as possible- by *marginalizing* and *ignoring* what the Bible actually teaches about Salvation.

Today, phrases, like "*Accept Jesus into your heart*" and "*Make Jesus the Lord of your life*"- dominate the efforts by many in the modern Church as it pertains to both Evangelism and Salvation. And activities like "*Walking down an aisle*"; or "*Raising a hand*"; or "*Signing a card*"- reign supreme. And yet, these phrases and activities *cannot* be found anywhere in the Bible.

And one of the most glaring omissions by those engaged in modern "soul-winning" is the Issue of Repentance. Expecting lost people to be sovereignly drawn to a place of actually *hating* their Sin; and of literally and figuratively turning away from it- BEFORE THEY ARE SAVED- is almost completely forgotten in most of the efforts by the modern church in Evangelism. And yet, that is the biblical Model of Evangelism.

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<sup>1</sup> Those who believe that the Liturgy of the Church Service is paramount- even superseding the heralding of the Gospel to those lost- are "Liturgical."

In fact, in many areas- the notion that a lost person should alter his lifestyle- away from Sin and *toward* Holiness- BEFORE being labeled as "saved" is almost unthinkable. Some have even gone to the length of calling such ideas "barbaric"; "mean-spirited"; Legalistic"; "unworkable"; "unrealistic"; "unchristian" and a "hinderance to lost people being saved." And yet, look what John the Baptist told people, who were coming to him for Baptism in **Matthew 3:7-12:**

**7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?**

**8 "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;**

**9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.**

**10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**

**11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**

**12 His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."**

Now look closely at what John said in verses 7-10:

**7 ..."You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?**

**8 "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;**

**9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.**

**10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire**

Now, there is a lot here and certainly enough for several Sermons- but suffice it to say that John's preaching; John's method of Evangelizing- contained some powerful points:

- John says there is a "Wrath" from which people should "flee"

- John taught that there is a type of "Fruit" that is in "keeping with; or that is "appropriate for" genuine Repentance
- John taught that bloodline; ethnicity; nationality; and family connections were NOT able to save anyone
- John taught that unless the person brings forth "good fruit" he would burn

Now some would suggest, "*Yea, but the only reason John was so harsh was because he was dealing with those dirty Pharisees and religious hypocrites.*" Okay, but then explain why the Apostle Paul had Dr. Luke write this in **Luke 3:10-14:**

- 10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"**  
**11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."**  
**12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"**  
**13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to."**  
**14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."**

Now make no mistake about this- the Question being asked in verse 10 is:

### **What shall we do... TO BE SAVED.**

The crowds; and the tax collectors; and the soldiers had just heard and seen how John handled the religious frauds. And now they want to know what *they* needed to do to bear the "good fruit"; and to posses the type of fruit that was in "keeping with" true, genuine Repentance. And so, John begins to bring up things that almost nobody would have guessed had anything at all to do with what Repentance actually looks like.

And notice that *none* of these things are carried out in Church on Sunday. These are every- day Issues that these people were very familiar with. These are very simple, down-to earth Issues- that the average person was fully aware of.

Now I can almost guarantee you that this is NOT being taught in the Evangelism classes at most theological Seminaries. But God the Holy Spirit put this in the sacred Writings- so that we would believe and so that we would apply to our lives.

And this is the kind of Repentance that the Prophet Joel cries out for in the Passage before us this morning. And so, we hear the Prophet, this morning- thunder out the Inspired, Infallible, and Inerrant Word of the living God as he says,

**"Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God? Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not make Your inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"**

So, just what does real, genuine, biblical Repentance look like? And how should we, who live in our technologically advance culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century understand what the Lord would require of us- so that He might spare us?

Now remember what the setting is- here with Joel. A swarm of locusts have come to Israel (at some point about 800 years before Jesus was born) to devour every living green plant. And when these 3-4" long insects fly- there are so many of them- that they literally block out the sun. And as these locusts come down and begin to eat- nothing is spared. Every plant; every bush; every ear of corn; every vegetable; every blade of grass; every single barley and wheat stem is gone. But it doesn't stop there. And as the days go by- every cow and horse and donkey and goat- also dies because there is no food for them. But it doesn't stop there. Because as the animals die- people begin to die. But it doesn't stop there. Because now the air is filled with the stench of bloated dead bodies. And diseases, caused by the unsanitary conditions,

begin to run through the land. And then the buzzards and vultures come; and they fill their mouths with every inch of flesh of both man and beast.

But, modern 21<sup>st</sup> Century, educated and sophisticated Man uses his I-Pad to determine that locust plagues were common back then. So, this wasn't some Act of God- they say- this is simply the natural cycle of life back before we had satellites and the internet.

And so, in our smug, Self-assuredness- we determine that these kinds of plagues were simply part of life back when people were uneducated; unsophisticated; and highly superstitious. But they are rare today- because we have finished what Nimrod began 5,000 years ago. And we have built the Tower that can reach into Heaven itself. And now, nothing shall be impossible for us.

And so, we don't fear God; we don't worship God; we don't humble ourselves before God. And Repentance is the last thing on our minds. No, the advancement of Science; and Medicine; and Technology; and Government keep us from the plagues; and protect us from the diseases; and shield us from most of the harshness of life on this planet.

That is, until a Pandemic circles the globe. And, in less than 30 days, the mightiest Economy in the history of the world is stopped- cold. City streets are vacant; stores are boarded up; and highways are empty. And within two weeks- tens of millions of people are out of work. Suddenly, the Confidence in what the strength of our own arm can do for us- vanishes. And instead of trying to figure out which restaurant we want to visit that night- our thoughts turn to very simple and basic things like:

- Our next meal
- Shelter
- Clothing
- Drink
- Medicine

... and we find ourselves having much more in common with the people of Joel's day than we would normally think. Because the locust plague 2,800 years ago WAS an Act of God. And it was Judgment. It was orchestrated and spoken into existence by the Owner and Creator of the Universe. Listen again to what Joel says,

**Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been *anything* like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations. A fire consumes before them And behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them But a desolate wilderness behind them, And nothing at all escapes them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run. With a noise as of chariots They leap on the tops of the mountains, Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, Like a mighty people arranged for battle. Before them the people are in anguish; All faces turn pale. They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like soldiers; And they each march in line, Nor do they deviate from their paths. They do not crowd each other, They march everyone in his path; When they burst through the defenses, They do not break ranks. They rush on the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter through the windows like a thief. Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.**

... and then comes the sticker in the very next verse, where God calls this swarm of insects:

### **His army**

So, this is NOT a normal swarm of locusts. This is NOT just dumb insects reacting to each other. This is NOT a derivative of global warming. This is NOT simply what the ancient people endured. No, God did this. And He did it *purposefully*. This isn't arbitrary. This is NOT about "Luck" or "Chance" or even random "Fate". No, there is both Meaning and Purpose to this invasion of insects.

And God also did this- *specifically* for Judgment. This is NOT a Blessing- this is Judgment. People really suffered and died in this invasion. And Joel calls this Judgment, the "Day of the Lord". So, this is the "Day" or the "Time" of God's *visitation* to His people- in fierce Wrath and frightening Destruction.

And that also means that the normal methods of handling the locust invasion simply won't work with this one. It will not be removed

with the changing of the seasons; or with increased rainfall; or with the tides; or with any of the "normal" cycles or the ongoing operation of the created world.

We must remember that not only did God create all that is- in six-24 hour "evening and morning" division of Time called, "Days"- but He also created (out of nothing) the ongoing Operation of the created Universe. So, yes, God created dirt with His spoken word (out of nothing)- but He also created Gravity; and Centrifugal Force that work together to keep the earth in balance. And God also created the ongoing rotation of the moon- to regulate the tides; and waterfalls- to help diffuse the water; and black holes- to balance the stars; and supernovas- to keep the cycle of stars operating; and sub-atomic particles- to help with the balance of things that we see.

So, according to the normal operation of the created Universe, as the Seasons change; or as rainfall increases- locust swarms go back to Africa and lay dormant for up to twenty years.<sup>2</sup> But not this time. *This invasion is Divine Judgment-* and so, the normal operation of the Universe has been temporarily suspended. God is now "uttering His Voice" before His army- so they will accomplish His Will. God has "come" now to reckon with His people.

So, God has "Come"- NOT in the sense of the either the First or the Second "Coming" of Jesus- but a "Coming" in Judgment. And what you find out, as you read through the Bible, this is the most *common* way that Scripture uses the term, "Coming".

So, when we read about the Lord's "Coming" we normally link that word with the literal "Coming" of Jesus to the earth- in either His First or Second Advent. But that is a mistake. Most of the time, when the term, "Coming" is used- it is mostly speaking of God "Coming" to a people in Judgment.

Even with the familiar Passage that Jesus spoke in **Matthew 24**- we may assume that He was referring to Judgment when He said,

### **Matthew 24:29&30**

**29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**

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<sup>2</sup> Science doesn't know why this happens.

**30 And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.**

At that "Coming" God utterly destroyed the unrepentant Jews, who had refused to trust in Jesus. But God did much more than that. God *forever* ended the very *fabric* of their entire "system of Worship"- that God Himself had prescribed for them under the Old Covenant- and that the Jew had engaged in- for thousands of years- including:

- The Temple in Jerusalem
- The Sanhedrin Court
- The Levitical priests
- Animal sacrifices
- Their genealogical records

But God didn't end all of this through Persuasion. He didn't finally use the superior Argument of the New Covenant itself to cause them to stop their now obsolete form of Worship. So, how did God forever end the entire system of Worship of the Jews? By using the pagan Roman army to tear it all down. And that is why, in the very first Christian Sermon by Peter- Dr. Luke wrote,

### **The Acts 2:40**

**And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"**

Now Peter wasn't referring here to normal specific Sins like Adultery or Fornication or Blasphemy or Stealing or Lying- he was referring to an entire generation of Jews who had become "perverse"- Not sexually perverse- but spiritually. The Jews- were holding on to the inferior Old Covenant that had been made completely *obsolete* and *unworkable* by the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. And Peter is exhorting believing Jews- to be "saved"; or be "delivered"; or to "flee" from those pagan Jews and their insistence of keeping what God Himself had ended- by and through the Lord Christ.

But why did Peter want believing Jews to be "saved from"; or to be "delivered from"; or to "flee"? Because Judgment was "coming" on them.

Cataclysmic; Divine Judgment was coming to the Jews and to Israel. Why? Because they had murdered the Prince of Life and equated all that he did- with the working of satan.

We must understand that, from the very moment John the Baptist, pointed his finger at Jesus and said,

### **“Behold, the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36)**

... anyone sacrificing an animal was an Abomination to God. And this is why neither Jesus, nor His disciples- ever offered a single sacrifice- during the entire time of His Ministry. They also didn't fast; they didn't worship in the Temple; they didn't keep the man-made regulations of the Sabbath; and they paid no attention to the Levitical priests. Why? Were they simply being rebellious? No, they were blessed by God to be able to understand that Jesus was the *fulfillment* of the entire Old Covenant!

And those who were gifted to be able to understand that- *immediately* walked away from their entire Old Covenant mentality and they fully embraced Jesus and the infinitely superior New Covenant.<sup>3</sup>

And yet, nearly 40 years AFTER the Resurrection- many believing Jews were *still* sacrificing animals; they were *still* worshipping in the Temple in Jerusalem; they were still submissive to the Order or Levitical priests; and they were still striving to keep the Sabbath- as defined by the Pharisees (not God). Why? Because they simply could not make the break from the Old Covenant into the New.

So, in His Mercy, in 70AD, God put it into the heart of the pagan Roman general, Titus Vespasian, to ride down (from the North) and utterly destroy everything in his path- *including* the Temple in Jerusalem; and all of the genealogical records that the Jews had been meticulously keeping for centuries. And by destroying the Temple, by extension- the Levitical priesthood; the Sanhedrin Court; and animal sacrifices vanished from the earth. And so, every facet of Old Covenant Jewish Worship was *unmistakably* judged by God to be *inferior* and to this day- has NOT been revived!

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<sup>3</sup> People like Zacharias and Elizabeth; and Simeon and Anna- who had spent their entire lives living under the Old Covenant- immediately understood that Jesus was the fulfillment of that Covenant. And they responded by immediately abandoning the Old to fully embrace Jesus. And they did this- without hearing and single Sermon by Jesus; and without seeing the Crucifixion or the Resurrection.

So, this "Coming" Jesus was referring to in **Matthew 24**- was NOT His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming- but rather the "Coming" of God in Divine Judgment against unbelieving Israel. And that is why Jesus said,

**Matthew 24:34**

**Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.**

... and in less than 40 years from the time Jesus spoke these words- all that He prophesied here- came to pass.

And this is *exactly* how Joel describes the "Coming" of the Lord. NOT in Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming to the earth- but a "Coming" in Divine Judgment- this time by locusts.

Now in Joel's case- we aren't given a specific reason for the Divine Judgment. Back, when we went through Malachi's Burden- we knew *specifically* why God was angry. But here, we are not told the exact reason. And that means that we then may apply this Judgment to *any* Sin.

And what did Joel say was the Remedy for this Judgment? Increase subsidies to study global warming? No. Increase research for vaccines? No. What did God move upon Joel to write was the Remedy for this Divine Judgment? Real, genuine, biblical, Repentance.

**12 "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning;**

**13 And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil.**

**14 Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God?**

**15 Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,**

**16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.**

**17 Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not make Your**

**inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"**

So, the Remedy to the Divine Judgment is real Repentance. So, let's go through this - verse- by verse:

**"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart**

So, the Problem with Israel and with all lost people- is that they are now separated from God. They are distant from God. There is a separation between them and God. Well, what *causes* that Separation? How is it- that the only people that God has chosen to be *exclusively* His- are now separated from Him?

### **Isaiah 59:1&2**

**1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear.**

**2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.**

So, Sin caused the Separation. And we know that there are two kinds of Sins. Not "Mortal and Venial"- but "Original and Personal". We are all conceived in our mother's womb with both the rebellious "Sin Nature" of Adam. But we are also personally guilty of the Sin of Adam- as well. And it is this "Original Sin" that caused Death in the beginning. And this is one of the best defenses against the silly, unscientific myth of Darwinian Evolution. Because until Adam listened to his Wife and ate the forbidden fruit- nobody died (**Genesis 3:17**). Death did not exist until Adam sinned. The Apostle Paul said,

### **1Corinthians 15:22**

**For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.**

But there are also Sins that we partake of- *personally*. And the Bible teaches that these "Personal Sins" also bring the Wrath of God down on the heads of the disobedient.

### **Ephesians 5:3-6**

**But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.**

So, in His Mercy, God, through Joel calls to the people to "Return". Now the basis of "returning" implies that we are going somewhere we have been before. You never tell somebody to "return" to a place he has never yet been. But when someone has been to a particular place- and leaves- he is told to "return".

And this "Returning" is also part of what Repentance means. We must understand that Repentance is much more than simply saying, "*I'm sorry*". And that is true because we have to ask, "*Why are you sorry?*" Are you sorry because you got caught? Or because you got arrested? Or because your wife found out; or you got your name in the paper; or because you got sick; or because you suffered a financial loss because of your Sin?

So, what would happen if you had NOT been caught? Would you still be sorry? Would you still have wanted to repent? If you seemed to "get away with it"- would you still sense the need to repent and Return? Let's look at what the Apostle Paul taught about genuine Repentance from **2Corinthians 7:8-10:**

**For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.**

So, the Bible teaches that there are 2 different kinds of "Sorrow":

- Sorrow of the World
- Sorrow that is according to the Will of God

Now you can replace the word, "Sorrow" with "Guilt" and even "Conviction". So, there is a Sorrow or a feeling of Guilt; that is "of" the lost, pagan World. And this is a deep sense of Guilt- where you may be moved to say, "*I'm sorry*"- and actually mean it. Yet, *this* Sorrow; *this* type of Guilt NEVER brings forth Repentance- or Forgiveness. It ONLY condemns. It ONLY finds Fault. And this kind of Sorrow- will beat you; and beat you; and beat you- until you are wanting to just give up. Because there is no Hope to the "Sorrow of the World"- there is ONLY Condemnation. And this is what the Pharisees operated under. And the Bible says it produces ONLY Death. It doesn't have the capacity to produce either Repentance or Forgiveness.

But there is another Sorrow- that is "according to the Will of God". And this Sorrow- Convicts- but does NOT Condemn. The Purpose of Conviction is to bring about Repentance and Forgiveness. The Purpose of Condemnation is to destroy. And it is very easy for humans to engage in Condemnation. It is part of our fallen flesh. But we must remember- if all we do is Condemn others- we are nothing but Pharisees. And the only thing that will come forth- is Death.

The Sorrow that is according to the Will of God- *convicts*. And that means it is a sovereign Work of God the Holy Spirit. So, I can't convict you. And you can't convict me. Even if we are correct; or right- we CANNOT convict another human being. Only God can convict the human heart. So, if I try to convict you- if I put pressure on you- to force you to agree with me and to modify your behavior based on what I think you should do- I'm NOT convicting you at all. I'm simply manipulating you. And "spiritual manipulation" is a terrible Sin.

This was one of the Hallmarks of the Protestant Reformation. It was called, the "Formal Cause" of the Reformation. The Issue was about who or what has the Power to "bind the conscience" of the believer. So, the Question was, "*Who has the ability to bring Conviction to other people- the Pope or the Word of God?*" And Protestants answered: "*The Word- rightly divided- ALONE.*" Catholics answered: "*The Pope- as the Vicar of Christ*".

And there is no middle ground; no room for compromise; or agreement. You either believe that the Pope (or some other person) has this Power; or you believe the Scriptures do. But you can't believe both.

So, God the Holy Spirit takes the spoken (preached) Word; and He "binds the conscience" of the individual to the Scriptures. In other

words, God the Spirit takes the preached Word and "attaches it" or "knits it" to the "conscience" (soul) of the individual. So, if the individual is in accord with the Divine Truth of Scripture- he will be *commended* and *encouraged*. But if he is at odds with the Scriptures- he will be *convicted*-and in need of Repentance.

So, look what Paul taught that the Sorrow or the Guilt or the Conviction that the individual has- that is in accord with the Will of God does:

**For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation**

... but look at what the Sorrow or the Guilt or the manipulated "conviction" that is of the world produces:

**... but the sorrow of the world produces death.**

And this tells me that God is NOT talking to ONLY lost people here. He is also talking to saved people- who have somehow become separated from the Lord. So, these are people, who have "grown weary of well-doing"; people, who have "taken their hand off the plow"; and people, who have longingly "looked back" (like Lott's wife) to the life and the worldly pleasures they once had as lost people- desiring to live that way again.

And God tells these people to "Return"- come back to where they have been before. They once were on fire for God; they once were close to God; they once enjoyed reading the Bible; they once delighted in Prayer; they once thrived in godly Fellowship- but the gravity of the world dragged them back into the very activities and thoughts and actions that God originally delivered them out of.

And so, even though the locusts are just outside the door- eating their garden- God says,

**"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart**

But what does it look like to "Return" to God with all our hearts? Joel says,

**... with fasting, weeping and mourning And rend your heart and not your garments...**

Now anyone can just go through the motions. So, this has got to be genuine. But here, Joel describes real, sincere, honest, and biblical Repentance as including things like:

- Fasting
- Weeping
- Mourning

... which the modern Church categorically denies. In fact, I hear very little about either one of these three aspects from anyone these days. And one of the biggest complaints is, "*I'm just not emotional*". Well, Joel wasn't teaching us how to be emotional. He was teaching us what genuine Repentance looks like.

Another huge roadblock to this kind of biblical Repentance and a Returning to God- is the unbiblical notion that, since I am saved- I have no need to repent. Billy Graham taught this. That once I ask God to forgive me- I must NEVER ask God to forgive me again. This is a complete misunderstanding of what Repentance is. Repentance is NOT about simply being sorry that you sinned. It is fine to be sorry that you sinned. Hopefully, that Sorrow is the Sorrow according to the Will of God. But Biblical Repentance goes much further and teaches that after you sorrow according to the Will of God- you also "turn away from that Sin" and turn (return) toward God.

So, Repentance is a change of mind. And the mind was changed because the conscience or the soul was bound to the Word of God by the Spirit of God. And because this is a Work of the Spirit- the change of mind- produces a change of behavior.

So, if we actually hope to Repent- *biblically*- we should, first, understand what we did wrong. And so, we should be able to talk about the Sin itself- and discuss it. We should discuss what led up to us engaging in the Sin. And then we should make very sincere and specific Plans about how we can start living according to the Will of God. And again, we should be able to talk about that Sin; and discuss it with our brothers and sisters; and to engage in godly Fellowship to find out how they handled it; and maybe even have a Bible Study- about what to do –

to overcome that Sin.

And there are only two reasons why people won't do this:

1. Pride
2. Gossip

... and both of those are Sins themselves.

And here, the Word of God tells us that we should weep over our Sins- rather than just get mad about them. And Joel says we should also genuinely mourn over our Sins- rather than treat Sin as nothing to be concerned about. And finally, Joel also teaches us to fast- about our Sins.

Now I have a very in-depth Study on Fasting that I assume is on the Church website- that you may wish to get and read. There is a lot to say about Fasting- but suffice it to say that Fasting is when you are so concerned about a need; or when you sense that you are distant from God- that you stop eating. And you spend the time that you would normally eat- in Prayer and the Study of God's Word.

So, Fasting is a "Means of Grace"- another "Tool" that God has graciously given the Church to help us walk this world in white. And even though Fasting is almost non-existent in the modern Church- it is as biblical as Prayer; and as common as reading and knowing Scripture.

Now "Consecrating a Fast" and "Calling a Solemn Assembly" is when the Church fasts *together*- or when the Church fasts and prays together. Normally fasting is done *individually*. But there are times when the need is so great- that the Leaders of the Church are led by God the Holy Spirit to "consecrate" or "set aside" or "call" a Fast for the entire Congregation- to cry out to God in humble Repentance and beg God for Mercy.

Now we need to keep in mind that the Goal of Fasting and the Goal of a Solemn Assembly is NOT to twist God's Arm until He answers. NO, it is to humble ourselves; and to get away from the every-day cares of life- to the point where we can hear God clearly; and understand what God would have us do.

But what did Joel mean when he said,

**"rend your heart and not your garments"**

Back under the Old Covenant, when people heard blasphemy- they ripped their garments. And this was an outward sign that they were so hurt; so disgusted; so offended; and the Sin was so grievous- that it troubled them enough to rip their garments. Jews also ripped their garments out of strong emotion- caused by despair; grief; humiliation; indignation; or mourning.

For example, Reuben “**tore his garments**” when he found that his plan to deliver his brother Joseph was foiled because Joseph had been sold into slavery (**Genesis 37:29**). Their father, Jacob, “**tore his garments**” when he assumed that Joseph had been devoured by a wild animal. (**Genesis 37:34**) Job “**tore his robe**” when he was told that all his children were killed. (**Job 1:20**) A messenger “with his cloths torn” appeared before High Priest Eli to inform him that the Israelites had been defeated in battle, Eli’s two sons had been killed, and the ark of the covenant had been captured. (**1Samuel 4:12-17**) When Josiah heard the Words of the Law being read to him and recognized the errors of his people, “he tore his cloths.” (**2Kings 22:8-13**).

At Jesus’ trial, High Priest Caiaphas “tore his robes” when he heard what he wrongly judged as blasphemy. (**Matthew 26:59-66**) And there was a rabbinic tradition dictated- that any who heard the Divine Name being blasphemed- were obliged to tear their garments. Another rabbinic opinion postdating the destruction of Jerusalem’s Temple (70AD), however, stated that

“... he who hears the Divine Name blasphemed nowadays need not rend his garments, for otherwise one’s garments would be reduced to tatters.”

So, what God was speaking, through Joel, was that simply tearing the garments did NOT mean that the heart was truly burdened. So, it is *infinitely* better that the heart be truly burdened over Sin and the clothes remain “untorn”; than for the heart to remain unbent; unbowed; and unbroken- and the clothes be torn.

Finally, in verse 17, Joel said,

**Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar,  
And let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not make Your  
inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among  
the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"**

Now the first thing we notice here is that this is a precursor to Jesus and His Ministry of Intercession for us. But this also illustrates what godly Ministry is all about. The Leaders of the Church should weep over the people, who have sinned- not merely get angry with them. And this shows the ‘shepherd’s heart” that godly men will have toward the people they serve.

And we should pray for the people. I pray twice every single day for the people of this Church. I cry out for you- that God will strengthen you; and equip you; and empower you to see Jesus in His Beauty; to love what you see; and to be changed into what you see. This is the heart of genuine Ministry.

We have been chosen and called out by God Himself- so that we may live our lives to His Glory. And so, when we sin- God’s Glory among the pagan world is hindered. And when God’s Own people live *continually* in unrepented Sin- we become a reproach to God. Because if God’s Own chosen people don’t think enough of Him- to obey and love and follow Him- why should the lost pagan world? And so, even the pagans will ask, “*Where is your God?*” So, may God be good to us- to tear our hearts over our Sin- so that we may repent and be in Right Fellowship with God.

Amen. Let’s pray.