

1 **Genuine repentance – do you have it?**

Joel 2:12-17

2 **Joel 2:12-17**

"And even now," declares Yahweh, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, and weeping, and wailing." Rend your hearts and not your garments, and return to Yahweh your God, because he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in loyal love, and relenting from harm. Who knows whether he will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, an offering and a libation, for Yahweh your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call an assembly; gather the people, consecrate the assembly; assemble the elders, gather the children, even those who are breast-feeding; let the bridegroom come out from his private room, and the bride from her canopy. Between the colonnade and the altar, let the priests, the ministers of Yahweh, weep. And let them say, "Take pity, Yahweh, on your people. Do not make your inheritance a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the nations, 'Where is their God?' " (Joel 2:12–17, LEB)

3 **A review of catastrophe**4 **The locust plague**

◆The calamity to which the prophet has thus emphatically directed his hearers' attention: a visitation of locusts, repeated for more years than one (2:25), and of unexampled severity; what had escaped the ravages of one swarm, had been speedily devoured by a succeeding one, till the crops were completely ruined, and every chance both of harvest and vintage had been utterly destroyed.

◆*That which the shearer (gāzām) hath left, the swarmer (arbeh) hath eaten;*

◆*And that which the swarmer (arbeh) hath left, the lapper (yélek) hath eaten;*

◆*And that which the lapper (yélek) hath left, the finisher (hāsīl) hath eaten.*

5 **Complete destruction**6 **A continual judgment**

◆The different types of locusts and the different lifecycle stages of the locust mean that this was pretty much a year-round destruction.

◆All classes of people were affected by this judgment.

◆Deprived of luxuries (Joel 1:5-7)

◆Their worship interrupted (Joel 1:8-10)

◆Left them destitute of substance (Joel 1:11-12)

7 **A call to repent**

◆The nation was told to call a sacred assembly for all the people to fast and to cry out to the Lord.

◆Inner repentance

◆Accompanied by outward act (Joel 2:12-17)

8 **The significance of the locusts and drought**

◆A harbinger of the coming judgment of the Lord

◆*Sadday = Almighty; sod = destruction*

◆Egypt's locust plague preceded the final plagues of darkness

◆Deuteronomy said locust plagues were part of the curses that came upon those who ignored God's law

◆*You shall carry out much seed to the field, but you shall gather little produce, for the locust shall devour it. (Deuteronomy 28:38, LEB)*

- ◇ *All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.* (Deuteronomy 28:42, KJV 1900)
- ◇ Efforts of men were useless. Farmers dug into the ground to find ungerminated seeds (1:16-17)

9 Overwhelming destruction

- ◇ Modern travelers speak often of the literally incalculable numbers in which locusts come. Thus an observer in South Africa writes, "For the space of 10 miles on each side of the Sea-Cow river, and 80–90 miles in breadth, an area of 16–1800 square miles, the whole surface might literally be said to be covered with them: the water of the river was scarcely visible on account of the dead carcasses which floated on the surface, drowned in the attempt to come at the weeds which grew in it."
- ◇ Again, in Cyprus, "the locusts lay swarming above a foot deep in several parts of the high road, and thousands were destroyed by the wheels of the carriage driving over them."

10 Overwhelming destruction, part 2

- ◇ A writer in *Nature* (1889, p. 153) states "that a flight of locusts that passed over the Red Sea in Nov. 1889, was 2000 square miles in extent," and upon the assumption that it was 48 miles square, half a mile deep, and contained 144 locusts, each weighing 16 oz., to a cubic foot, he calculated that it contained 24,420 billions of insects, and weighed 42,850 millions of tons.
- ◇ A second similar, perhaps even larger flight, was seen passing in the same direction the next day. In Cyprus in 1881, up to the end of October, 1,600,000,000 egg-cases had that season been collected and destroyed, each case containing a considerable number of eggs. By the end of the season over 1300 tons of eggs had been collected; and yet not less than 5,076,000,000 egg-cases were, it is believed, deposited in the island two years afterwards" (Cambridge Nat. Hist. V. 292).

11 A transition

- ◇ The dominant theme of the first two chapters of Joel was a judgment upon God's people. The insect plagues described in chapter 1 was an expression of that judgment.
- ◇ However, this insect invasion pales in comparison to the coming "day of the Lord" which Joel describes in the first half of chapter 2.
- ◇ Now Joel turns his attention to the need for the genuine repentance of God's people. Obeying the commands of God represents a potential turning point in the lives of His people.

12 Repentance requires turning from sin to the Lord (2:12)

- ◇ *"And even now," declares Yahweh, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, and weeping, and wailing."* (Joel 2:12, LEB)
- ◇ There is a cause-and-effect relationship. Because the day of the Lord is coming – the cause – the people must now turn to God – the effect – says the Lord.
 - ◇ The word return is a change in direction. *And when Pharaoh released the people, God did not lead them the way of the land of the Philistines, though it was nearer, because God said, "Lest the people change their mind when they see war and return to Egypt."* (Exodus 13:17, LEB)
- ◇

13 Repentance isn't real without a directional change

- ◇ Repentance is more than just confessing your sins and asking for forgiveness
- ◇ Repentance expresses sorrow for our sins and then turns away from those sins to walk in obedience with God
- ◇ Obedience replaces disobedience and the change in one's life becomes obvious
- ◇ John the Baptist told people to bring fruits worthy of repentance (Luke 3:8). The people that he addresses in Luke 3 had not yet demonstrated true repentance and so he explains it to them in

greater detail.

14 **What are the fruits of repentance?**

- ◇ Acts of compassion -- *And he answered and said to them, "The one who has two tunics must share with the one who does not have one, and the one who has food must do likewise."* (Luke 3:11, LEB)
- ◇ Honesty in business -- *And tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you are ordered to."* (Luke 3:12–13, LEB)
- ◇ Justice and contentment -- *And those who served in the army were also asking him, saying, "What should we also do?" And he said to them, "Extort from no one, and do not blackmail anyone, and be content with your pay."* (Luke 3:14, LEB)
- ◇

15 **Rend your heart before the Lord**

- ◇ *"And even now," declares Yahweh, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, and weeping, and wailing." Rend your hearts and not your garments, and return to Yahweh your God, because he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in loyal love, and relenting from harm.* (Joel 2:12–13, LEB)
- ◇ In Joel's day, the rending of garments represented a visible demonstration of grief and regret among the Hebrew people. True and heartfelt sorrow for sin against God was far more important to God than external acts such as these.
- ◇ Genuine repentance is deeper than simply tearing a garment – it involves a rending of the heart before the Lord.

16 **The Lord our God**

- ◇ This phrase is used 263 times just in the book of Deuteronomy.
- ◇ It refers to the covenantal relationship between God and the nation.
- ◇

17 **The motivation for genuine repentance**

- ◇ *Rend your hearts and not your garments, and return to Yahweh your God, because he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in loyal love, and relenting from harm. Who knows whether he will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, an offering and a libation, for Yahweh your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call an assembly; gather the people, consecrate the assembly; assemble the elders, gather the children, even those who are breast-feeding; let the bridegroom come out from his private room, and the bride from her canopy. Between the colonnade and the altar, let the priests, the ministers of Yahweh, weep. And let them say, "Take pity, Yahweh, on your people. Do not make your inheritance a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the nations, "Where is their God?" "* (Joel 2:13–17, LEB)
- ◇

18 **Does the Lord repent and relent?**

- ◇ Passages such as this one often refer to the Lord repenting or relenting of a decision to judge his people
- ◇ But if God does not change and He has no sin, there is no need for him to repent or relent. So what does this mean?
- ◇ It means that God almost always allows for the possibility that when man repents, he might avoid calamitous judgment.
 - ◇ God delights in being merciful to His people is consistency in doing so testifies to his faithful and gracious character and is a motivation for us to turn to him in repentance. (See also Genesis

6:5-7; Exodus 32:12-14, Psalm 106:45, Jeremiah 4:27-28).

◇It is possible, however, for a man or a nation to go so far astray from God that He no longer makes mercy available (cf. Jeremiah 7:16, 11:14, 14:11).

19 **An important question to ask**

◇WHO KNOWS whether the Lord will relent of his pending judgment?

◇Even if sinful Israel repented, she could not presume on God's mercy as if it were something under their control which God had to automatically grant.

◇*He said, "When the child was still alive, I fasted and I wept because I thought, 'Who knows? Yahweh may have mercy on me that the child will live.' (2 Samuel 12:22, LEB)*

◇*Who knows? God may relent and change his mind and turn from his blazing anger so that we will not perish." (Jonah 3:9, LEB)*

◇They can only hope that He would turn and have pity by averting the disaster and restoring their crops. In so doing, they would then again have a supply and they would be able to offer the grain and drink offerings to the Lord.

◇

20 **Does God do evil?**

◇Joel 2:13 mentions that God would relent of his evil or from harm. *Rend your hearts and not your garments, and return to Yahweh your God, because he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in loyal love, and relenting from harm.* (Joel 2:13, LEB)

◇The Lexham English Bible translates this correctly as harm while other translations might see evil.

◇When the Bible references God doing evil it means a physical disaster. It is never a moral evil. Sin brings calamity or disaster at the Lord's hand whether it is manifested in an insect plagues or a conquering army – both of which we find in the book of Joel.

◇The only way to avert such a disaster is to turn to the Lord in heartfelt repentance and it is possible that he will have compassion and mercy upon His people.

21 **Exodus 34:6-7**

◇*And Yahweh passed over before him, and he proclaimed, "Yahweh, Yahweh, God, who is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding with loyal love and faithfulness, keeping loyal love to the thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and he does not leave utterly unpunished, punishing the guilt of fathers on sons and on sons of sons on third and fourth generations." (Exodus 34:6-7, LEB)*

◇This passage is where God declares His own name and describes Himself. The most accurate description you will ever get of God is the one that He Himself gives!

◇God's goodness and kindness is our motivation to turn toward him

◇

22 **Another motivation for repentance – God's reputation**

◇*Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call an assembly; gather the people, consecrate the assembly; assemble the elders, gather the children, even those who are breast-feeding; let the bridegroom come out from his private room, and the bride from her canopy. Between the colonnade and the altar, let the priests, the ministers of Yahweh, weep. And let them say, "Take pity, Yahweh, on your people. Do not make your inheritance a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the nations, 'Where is their God?'" (Joel 2:15-17, LEB)*

◇

23 **Everyone is called to collectively repent**

- ◇ From elders to infants
- ◇ Priests and ministers of the Lord
- ◇ Everyone is gathered to pray to God
 - ◇ There are many urgent commands in 2:15-17: blow the trumpet, sanctify a fast, call a sacred assembly, gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders are aged, gather children and nursing babies, let the newlywed bride and groom pause their honeymoon
 - ◇ The need for repentance is urgent.

24 **Weeping is commanded**

- ◇ The priests and ministers are commanded to weep and pray as an expression of grief and humiliation
 - ◇ They are to do so between the porch and the altar of the Temple so that they can gather in a place large enough to hold a group of such size and as an expression of their public repentance

25 **Specific wording is required**

1. The ministers are to ask the Lord to spare His people. They are asking for God to have pity or compassion upon them.
2. The leaders must ask God to not give his heritage to be reproached by heathens or other nations.
 - ◇ The word *heritage* here refers to property and land.
 - ◇ The word *reproached* means to taunt or scorn.
3. The leaders must ask God to do these things so that he the nations will not rule over God's people.

26 **Sarcastic attack is to be expected**

- ◇ In verse 17, the Lord anticipates the sarcasm of the heathen who would question God's presence if they were to come to rule over His people Israel.
- ◇ The heathen nations surrounding ancient Israel typically had their own gods who supposedly fought for them in battle. So if another nation conquered Israel, they would have an occasion to say that their God was greater than the only true God.
- ◇ The reputation of God should be a key aim of our prayer life.
 - ◇ Rather than praying for what makes us most comfortable, we should pray for what brings God the greatest glory!

27 **What are we to do?**

- ◇ We need to rend our hearts in true repentance and sorrow for our sins.
- ◇ We need to turn toward the Lord to walk in obedience so that we can experience God's full blessings.
- ◇ We must cease to put off obedience to the Lord.
- ◇ We should praise the Lord for his graciousness, mercy, slowness to anger, and great kindness.
- ◇ We should obey God's commands to sanctify, fast, and assemble with God's people.
- ◇ We should seek God individually and collectively to forgive us of our sins and heal our nation so that other nations will not mock the God that has so greatly blessed us.

28 **Next time...**

- ◇ We will be getting soon to the passage that includes Joel 2:28 – a source of confusion to many people. Please stay tuned!
- ◇
- ◇ *And it will happen afterward thus: I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and your elders will dream dreams; your young men shall see visions.* (Joel

2:28, LEB)

