

“REND YOUR HEART, NOT YOUR GARMENTS”

A. The message of God’s Word to this world is a call for our repentance (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18).

1. That message will not change until the Lord Jesus returns in judgment.
2. Your baptism didn’t change that message, for there IS a constant need for your repentance.
3. No matter how “rewarding” life is, we will not see God apart from our repentance.
4. King David gave us an excellent description of repentance.

Psa 51:17 – The sacrifices of God are **a broken** [to burst, tear] **spirit**, **a broken** & **a contrite** [to collapse] **heart** — These, O God, You will not despise.

5. How might we illustrate this sense of contrition? (Read 2 Sam 18:32 – 19:5)

a. David was deeply moved; he wept & mourned on a day of victory.

b. Joab attempted to shame him for reacting in this manner.

[**The point of this illustration:** we ought to view sin as we do a physical death, & be affected by sin in a similar way.

The people around us may be as happy as they can be, but if we have sinned we **MUST** stay focused on the seriousness of that matter, until we have truly repented.

Joel was another prophet whom God used to describe the nature of true repentance. **Allow** me to set the stage.]

I. JOEL’S MESSAGE OF REPENTANCE

Chapter One:

- Israel had grown indifferent toward God & His law.
- So Joel was sent by the LORD to warn the nation of His coming judgments against her for sins.

- From the elders & priests down to the common farmer, they were all were told to be ashamed & to repent.
- Or a devastating plague of locusts would come, followed by drought & famine—a forewarning of an advancing army.
- Their throats would be parched, & their stomachs empty.
- God foresaw that their animals would have enough sense to cry unto Him in their misery, BUT the people would remain unchanged & unrepentant.
- They would not feel any misery, unhappiness or grief in their hearts over their sins.

Chapter Two:

- Joel took a trumpet & blew an alarm sounding the coming day of the LORD, a day of judgment & darkness upon the unrepentant.
- That day would be *figured* or symbolized by a swarm of locusts sent to invade the land; they could not be resisted & they would cause terrible destruction.
- A plague of grasshoppers climbing over walls & through windows, & destroying everything in its path would show Israel that God’s judgments against sin can never be shut out, they cannot be escaped.—***But there was hope...***

Joel 2:12-13 – “Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “***Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, & with mourning.***” 13 So ***rend your heart, & not your garments; return to the LORD your God,*** for He is gracious & merciful, slow to anger, & of great kindness; & He relents from doing harm.

[**Joel’s** call to *repentance* is like the call of the gospel of Jesus Christ. **The** gospel calls each one of us to daily, sincere, complete *repentance*.

We must not say that *repentance* is not intended for us (“I’m not that bad.” “I’m a Christian.”). **Joel’s** call was addressed specifically to God’s people.

Those of us who have been delivered out of the power of darkness & conveyed into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col 1:13) – are the very ones called to “rend” our hearts & turn to God in daily *repentance* when we sin.]

II. WHAT IS & IS NOT TRUE REPENTANCE?

{In Joel’s prophecy we learn...}

- A. **True repentance** is a *rending of the heart*, not merely of the garments.

1. It begins as a work of the heart; it is not merely an external action.
2. Repentance is when we rend or tear the heart in grief & sorrow for sins committed.
3. Repentance takes place when God exposes our sins to our eyes (through His word), & our hearts become broken in sorrow for our guilt.

Repentance is often mistaken for many things:

- **Repentance is NOT just an outward change or improvement** (actions, words, attitudes).

1. The fruit of repentance is not all that repentance entails (Luke 3:7-14; Acts 26:20).
2. Joel commanded Israel to fast, weep & mourn (all outward actions) but her repentance was in the turning..., rending... & returning...

Joel 2:12-13 – “Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “**Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, & with mourning.**” 13 So **rend your heart, & not your garments; return to the LORD your God,** for He is gracious & merciful, slow to anger, & of great kindness; & He relents from doing harm.

3. I’m not minimizing the importance of outward signs of change in repentance:
 - a. Tearing clothes – Wearing sackcloth – Ashes on head – Pull hair – Strike thigh – Beat chest

[**God** has created a close relationship between your body, soul & spirit, so that what you are feeling on the inside can be seen on the outside: *tears, shoulders dropped, face in hands, turn down the corners of the mouth.*]

4. But Joel means that repentance is NOT just something visible on the outside.
 - a. God is NOT fooled by drama or playacting; repentance must NOT be hypocritical or staged.

- c. Repentance is a work of the heart.
“Rend your heart, not your garments”.
- d. Esau cried a river of tears, but he did not get back his blessing (Heb 12:17).
- e. Judas felt badly about his betrayal, but he went on sinning rather than repent (Jn 17:12).
- f. Neither of these two men had the attitude that could lead to repentance.

2 Cor 7:10 – For **godly sorrow** [Psa 51:17; broken spirit, contrite heart] **produces repentance leading to salvation**, not to be regretted; but the **sorrow of the world produces death**

- f. There are counterfeit repentances, namely, those done for the benefit of the onlooker.

- **Repentance is NOT** just the confession of sin, or admitting to sin.
 - Judas (Matt 27:3-5); Pharaoh (Exo 10:16-17); King Saul (1 Sam 26:21)
- **Repentance is NOT** just discovering that sin is painful & enslaving (2 Cor 7:10b).
 - People will stop committing some sins because of their harmful results. Rep. is not just seeing the error of your ways.
- **Repentance is NOT** just quitting big sins & holding on to the smaller ones that no one will notice (Acts 5).
 - The LORD said, “Turn to Me with all your heart.”
- **Repentance is NOT** just self-determination or resolve (Lk 18:10-14).
 - Change that is rooted in the pride of life is done in order to save face & to maintain acceptance with others.

- **Repentance IS** a rending or tearing of the heart because of sin & the pure actions that follow ([Matt 21:28-31](#); Ninevites (Read): [Matt 12:41](#); [Jonah 3:5-10](#)).

- The best example we have of the spirit of repentance is found in King David (Read [Psa 51](#)).
- David didn't make excuses or idle promises; he blamed only himself, & he trusted only the LORD to lift him out of guilt & despair.
- David knew that his own sins brought him down, & that God had exposed David's true spiritual condition ([Psa 51:8](#)).

CLOSING

- A. **Repentance begins** with a rending of the heart.
 1. Once torn, there is a "balm in Gilead", a "physician there" who can heal the wound.
 2. When we confess our sins, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin ([1 Jn 1:7](#)).
 3. Then God will renew us in the assurance of forgiveness, & give us back to His service.

"Rend your heart, and not your garments."- Joel 2:13 (Spurgeon)

GARMENT RENDING and other outward signs of religious emotion, are easily manifested and are frequently hypocritical; but to feel true repentance is far more difficult, and consequently far less common. Men will attend to the most multiplied and minute ceremonial regulations; for such things are pleasing to the flesh; but true religion is too humbling, too heart-searching, too thorough for the tastes of the carnal men; they prefer something more ostentatious, flimsy, and worldly. Outward observances are temporarily comfortable; eye and ear are pleased; self-conceit is fed, and self-righteousness is puffed up: but they are ultimately delusive, for in the time of death, and at the day of judgment, the soul needs something more substantial than ceremonies and rituals to lean upon. Apart from vital godliness all religion is utterly vain; offered without a sincere heart, every form of worship is a solemn sham and an impudent mockery of the majesty of heaven.

HEART-RENDING is divinely wrought and solemnly felt. It is a secret grief which is personally experienced, not in mere form, but as a deep, soul moving work of the Holy Spirit upon the inmost heart of each believer. It is not a matter to be merely talked of and believed in, but keenly and sensitively felt in every living child of the living God. It is powerfully humiliating, and completely sin purging; but then it is sweetly preparative for those gracious consolations which proud unhumbled spirits are unable to receive; and it is distinctly discriminating, for it belongs to the elect of God, and to them alone.

The text commands us to rend our hearts, but they are naturally hard as marble: how, then, can this be done? We must take them to Calvary: a dying Savior's voice rent the rocks once, and it is as powerful now. O blessed Spirit, let us hear the death cries of Jesus, and our hearts shall be rent even as men rend their vestures in the day of lamentation.