

RENDING OUR HEARTS

Text: Joel 2:12-14

Key Word: Rend

Key Thought: God Wants us to Rend our Hearts NOT our Garments!

Ancient Egyptian Garment Making

From its start in prehistoric Egypt, women were predominately in charge of textile manufacturing and garment making. Garment making was a household chore, but women also worked for aristocrats in spinning and weaving shops. Every garment from the decorative dresses of queens and the elaborate, pleated kilts of the pharaohs to the simpler kilts and aprons of the common people were handmade by woman. The process of making garments is extensive even for the simplest of garments.

Most Egyptians wore garments made from linen. This type of fabric is light, airy, and allows freedom of movement, which are important characteristics because of the hot and sometimes humid climate of Egypt. The second choice of fabric is wool or cotton. Wool can be warm but it has natural oils that repel moisture. Ancient Egyptians also considered wool to be impure. Cotton is airy, but not as light as linen.

Linen is a fabric made from plant fibres. The plant fibre comes from flax plants that grow abundantly along the banks of the Nile. The flax plants are dried, combed, soaked, beaten, and dressed. The resulting fibres are then spun into thread. The thread is woven into linen fabric from which the garments are made.

When we consider the detail and knowledge required simply to fashion garments, it makes me even more convinced that we should spend a great deal more effort on determining what our hearts look like before God. That is why I'm focussing upon the word "Rend" which according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary means "*to split or tear apart or in pieces by violence; to tear (the hair or clothing) as a sign of anger, grief, or despair.*"

When God's people had sinned against Him they would often tear their garments as a sign of the seriousness of their repentance. **God had enough of the outward signs without the inward changes.** It was mostly show and God knew it. **It was a serious thing to attempt to disguise the true condition of one's heart.**

Knowing what we should do does not always lead us to change. There needs to be something that can draw us into a wonderful life of obedience and freedom in the Lord.

What Should Compel Us to Rend Our Hearts Before the Lord?

I. THE GRACE & COMPASSION OF THE LORD (Joel 2:13b)
II. THE SELF-CONTROL & LOVE OF THE LORD (Joel 2:13c)
III. THE KINDNESS OF THE LORD (Joel 2:14)

I. THE GRACE & COMPASSION OF THE LORD (Joel 2:13b)

Grace is described in the Bible as: **All-abundant** (Romans 5:15–20); **All-sufficient** (II Corinthians 12:9); **Glorious** (Ephesians 1:6); **Great** (Acts 4:33); **Manifold** (1 Peter 4:10); **Rich** (Ephesians 2:4, 5); **Undeserved** (1 Timothy 1:12–16).

Man's extremities are truly God's opportunities to bring about a lasting change for the better! He knew what it would take to bring the nation back to a place of fullness in their heart toward Him. **God's design is always to bring restoration and healing to His people.** Therefore, He graciously offered an invitation to repent (Joel 12–13a).

A customary way for the Jew to show their grief was to tear their outer garment. This was an external sign, which could be meaningless in and of itself. The prophet indicates that was not a time for external ceremonies. **The tearing of the outer garment would be useless unless their heart was broken in repentance and contrition.** These outward and inner expressions of repentance and grief are to be accompanied by positive actions of turning unto Jehovah God. Rending the heart is that which God looks for and requires.

*“The sacrifices of God are **a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart.** O God, you will not despise.”*

Psalm 51:17

“When we are greatly grieved in soul for sin, so that it even *cuts us to the heart* to think how we have dishonored God and disparaged (downgraded) ourselves by it, when we conceive an aversion (abhorrence) to sin, and earnestly desire and endeavor to get clear of the principles of it and never to return to the practice of it, then we **rend our hearts** for it, and then will God **rend the heavens** and come down to us with mercy.”

Matthew Henry
*“Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible”
(Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997*

I. THE GRACE & COMPASSION OF THE LORD (Joel 2:13b) (Contd.)

Joel 2:13b shows what kind of God had brought the plague and what kind of God waited for the proper response of repentance and contrition. It takes a God who is **gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness** to bring a sinner to repentance. **Man changes only because of God's faithfulness in causing him to face his sin. It is not natural to admit to and turn from sin.**

I am so thankful that God in His grace and compassion calls me to search my heart. God wants me and you to be happy (blessed). He knows that hidden sin will eat away at the abundant life that He desires for us to lavish ourselves in.

"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

4. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

5. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD – and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

Psalm 32:3 – 5

It was the grace and compassion of God that led King David to repent of his many sins against the Lord. It was the grace and compassion of God that led the Ninevites to put on sackcloth, declare a fast and call urgently upon the LORD in humble prayer.

"When God saw what they did and how they turned from the evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened."

Jonah 3:10

We must be convinced that it is the grace and compassion of God that leads us to repentance. If He didn't cause us to return (repent) we would most likely continue a downward spiral into a web of unrighteous living that would eventually engulf us.

I. THE GRACE & COMPASSION OF THE LORD (Joel 2:13b) (Contd.)

GRACE GREATER THAN OUR SIN

Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within!
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin!

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt!

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,
Threaten the soul with infinite loss.
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
Points to the refuge, the mighty Cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide.
What can avail to wash it away?
Look! There is flowing a crimson tide;
Whiter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe!
You that are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment His grace receive?

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II. THE SELF-CONTROL & LOVE OF THE LORD (Joel 2:13c)

The next important truth that Joel declares that should compel us to rend our hearts before the Lord is that of God's self-control (slow to anger) and His love. When it is rightly understood, instead of encouraging us to go on in sin, it will be a most powerful inducement to bring us into repentance. Moses discovered this kind of God after he destroyed the first stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments. The Lord told Moses to chisel out two replacement stone tablets. He was then to bring them up onto Mount Sinai without anyone accompanying him. The Bible then tells us . . .

“Then that LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD.

*6. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, **‘The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,***

7. Maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”

*Exodus 34:5 – 7
(cf. Numbers 14:11; Psalm 86:13)*

“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

5. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

6. but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Exodus 20:4-6

*“Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. **Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath.**”*

Psalm 78:38

II. THE SELF-CONTROL & LOVE OF THE LORD (Joel 2:13c) (Contd.)

Any of us who have not controlled our anger in a proper manner understand just how valuable a virtue this is. We are told that one out of every five Americans has anger management problems. We can **express anger**, **repress anger**, or **confess our anger**.

Anger is "*an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage,*" according to Charles Spielberger, PhD, a psychologist who specializes in the study of anger. **He teaches that expressing our angry feelings in an assertive—not aggressive—manner is the healthiest way to deal with it.** To do this, we have to learn how to make clear what our needs are, and how to get them met, without hurting others. **Being assertive doesn't mean being pushy or demanding; it means being respectful of ourselves and others.**

When we realize what God could do if He had not controlled His anger makes me very thankful. It also causes me to want to do things that please Him. I realize that I don't deserve His self-control or love. I am just ever so thankful that I daily benefit from it. **No wonder there is a desire growing across our nation to search our hearts before this kind of God.** No wonder King David wrote and sang . . .

*14. **The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.***

*15. **My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.***

*16. **Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.***

*17. **The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish.***

*18. **Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.***

*19. **See how my enemies have increased and how fiercely they hate me!***

*20. **Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.***

*21. **May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you.***

Psalm 25:14-21

III. THE KINDNESS OF THE LORD (Joel 2:14)

GIVE AND IT SHALL COME BACK TO YOU . . .

*** His name was Fleming, and he was a poor Scottish farmer. One day, while trying to eke out a living for his family, he heard a cry for help coming from a nearby bog. He dropped his tools and ran to the bog. There, mired to his waist in black muck, was a terrified boy, screaming and struggling to free himself. Farmer Fleming saved the lad from what could have been a slow and terrifying death.

The next day, a fancy carriage pulled up to the Scotman's sparse surroundings. An elegantly dressed nobleman stepped out and introduced himself as the father of the boy Farmer Fleming had saved. "I want to repay you," said the nobleman. "You saved my son's life."

"No, I can't accept payment for what I did," the Scottish farmer replied, waving off the offer. At that moment, the farmer's own son came to the door of the family hovel.

"Is that your son?" the nobleman asked.

"Yes," the farmer replied proudly.

"I'll make you a deal. Let me take him and give him a good education. If the lad is anything like his father, he'll grow to a man you can be proud of." And that he did.

In time, Farmer Fleming's son graduated from St. Mary's Hospital Medical School in London, and went on to become known throughout the world as the noted Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of Penicillin.

Years afterward, the nobleman's son was stricken with pneumonia. What saved him? Penicillin. The name of the nobleman? Lord Randolph Churchill. His son's name? Sir Winston Churchill.

It is God's kindness that continues to bring about numerous situations that promote life. I am so thankful to be a beneficiary of a great deal of the Lord's kindness. It is this kindness of God toward us that should compel us to rend our hearts before Him.

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Date: Feb 20/22

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Open the Eyes of my Heart - C; O Lord You're Beautiful - C

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Psalm 51:17; Psalm 32:3 – 5; Jonah 3:10

II. THE SELF-CONTROL & LOVE OF THE LORD (Joel 2:13c) - *Exodus 34:5 – 7 - (cf. Numbers 14:11; Psalm 86:13); Exodus 20:4-6; Psalm 78:38; Psalm 25:14-21*

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