

Joel 2:13, "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

The Book of Joel, as well as the other Old Testament Books of the Prophets, is full of reproof and correction for the disobedient children of God. The Prophet Joel, in the three chapters of the book, reminds the children of Israel of the troubles they had faced in their disobedience. The Prophet brings to their remembrance how;

(1) They had suffered on an agricultural level. In Joel 1:4 we read, "That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten." The people of Israel, because of their evil ways, had lost crops and fields. The Lord, who in His great providence was able to keep their crops from the damage of the pests of this world, had removed His hedge, turning them over to the damaging powers of this world.

(2) Had suffered on a religious level. By comparing Joel 1:9 and Joel 1:13, it is clear the daily offerings and sacrifices had decreased because of the loss of crops. We can also see that the people began to "withhold" from the Lord what belonged to Him. When the people failed to give, the servants of God's House suffered and most of all, God was displeased.

(3) They would suffer from military attacks. The Assyrians were coming (Joel 2:20). The armies of Assyria would come with "the noise of chariots" (Joel 2:5); They would come against Israel with "mighty men" (Joel 2:7); and the "earth would shake before them" (Joel 2:11). According to Joel, the land behind this great army would be nothing but "fire" and a "desolate wilderness" (Joel 2:3). And even though the Lord was not obligated to bless this people any longer, He, in His great mercy, sends this Prophet to them to, not only remind them of their disobedience, but to also comfort them and give them hope that He would forgive their sins and bless them once again. Joel tells this people to;

(1) Seek the Lord and call on His name. In Joel 1:14, it was the Prophet that exhorted the people to "cry unto the Lord". Joel is calling on this people to turn their faces unto God and call on Him for help. In a like manner, it was Isaiah that said "Seek the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near;..." This lesson is one of great importance. When our disobedience has brought us out of the favor of our Heavenly Father, we should seek Him and call unto Him for help in those times of need.

(2) Repent of your evil ways. In Joel 2:13, it was Joel that told the people to "rend your heart, and not your garments,..." The people needed to repent of their sins and turn to the Lord, not just the leaders, but the entire population. Joel 2:16 reads, "Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts:..." Repentance is not really repentance if it's only in part. Repentance by definition is a ceasing to do what is wrong, turning, and beginning to do what is right.

(3) Never lose hope in the Lord your God. In Joel 2:24-25, the prophet informs this group of people that God is able to restore and repair the damages their disobedience had caused. God is able to restore that which was eaten up and destroyed by the pests. God is able to bless them in such a way that "my people shall never be ashamed" (meaning they would never feel that they had made a wrong decision in repenting and turning unto the Lord).

(4) Remember that a better day is coming. From Joel 2:28-32 we have a wonderful prophecy that is fulfilled in Acts chapter 2 (see Acts 2:16). But even today, the theme of this lesson has application. The children of Israel, by these words, had a better day to look forward to and it finally came. We

too, in the year 2015, have a better day to look forward to. When things are rough and dark (even made dark by our foolish decisions of life), the entire elect family has a day that SHALL come, the glorious day of our God when He shall take us home to heaven. And by that hope, I can face the troubles of today a little easier. Amen!

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