

Small Group Notes

Sermon: 23 April 2023



J O E L

**Rend your hearts and
not your garments**

Joel 2:1-17

SCRIPTURE

Joel 2:1-17

OVERVIEW

In chapter 1 we saw destruction caused by the plague of locusts, and God's call for his people to repent. In Chapter 2 we see that in light of their continued stubborn rebellion, Joel warns that unless they repent, further disaster will come.

On Sunday we focused on verse 13 and the invitation that the Lord brings through Joel to his people.

"Rend your hearts and not your garments."

We need to be aware of the difference between remorse and repentance. Remorse is often connected to regret and external actions to demonstrate how sorry we are. The Lord isn't looking for an impressive show of sorrow, he is looking for genuine heart change.

Joel calls the people of God to return to the Lord and highlights some key characteristics of who the Lord is.

1. **"God"** - The Lord is the eternal, almighty and all powerful one. Nothing is impossible for him, and so just as he is able to send an army to bring judgement upon Israel (verse 11) so he is able to make it possible to return to Him despite the sin and rebellion of the people.
2. **"Gracious"** - The Lord gives to us what we don't deserve. The people of Israel don't deserve intimacy or acceptance from God

at that moment in time and yet the Lord calls them to return to him. So the same for us, no matter who we are, what we've done or what we are doing, in Christ God gives us what we don't deserve.

3. **"Merciful"** - The Lord also doesn't give us what we do deserve. Israel deserved to face judgement for their rebellion and yet the Lord in his mercy calls them to return. Again for us, in Jesus we don't get what we deserve, he drank the cup of God's wrath and took the punishment for our sins so we can instead receive mercy.
4. **"Slow to anger"** - The Lord is patient, he doesn't lose his cool nor does he blow his fuse. Israel's history is full of sin, rebellion and idolatry, yet God consistently pursues them and calls them back to himself. So it is for us, God is patient with us, he doesn't lose his temper or give up on us.
5. **"Abounding in steadfast love"** - The Lord is overflowing in love that never changes. His affection or desire for the people of God doesn't change. It's impossible to reach the end of his love. We can be confident that every day of our lives the Lord is abounding in unchanging steadfast love.
6. **"He relents over disaster"** - Scripture tell us mercy triumphs over judgement (James 2:13). Sin is serious and God is unable to ignore it, yet in his love, mercy and grace the Lord has made it possible for us to know forgiveness. We don't live under a cloud of judgement or anger but in Christ

can be confident that His goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives.

QUESTIONS

1. How can we tell the difference between repentance and remorse and why does it matter?
2. What characteristic of God highlighted do you struggle to know and why?
3. Which of the characteristics do you long to grow in showing in your own life?