

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

JOEL 2:12-13

12Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

13And 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.

ESV

Introduction

The first of September marks the beginning of a new year for us at KVBC. For me, a question hangs in the air. Will we continue to do business as usual or will we make a difference for the Lord in the following year. The altars have been dry, the baptismal waters are not stirred and our attendance is down.

I believe KVBC congregation loves the Lord. You show it in your giving to missions. However, perhaps we have just grown indifferent.

This is where we find the nation Israel. They were not worshiping idols. They had simply grown indifferent.

God used a prophet Joel to deliver a message to His people.

Joel ("Jehovah is God".) - The second chapter of Joel describes what God wanted from the Children of Israel.

Background and Setting

Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia had made frequent military incursions into Israel (3:2ff.). An extended drought and massive invasion of locusts had stripped every green thing from the Land and brought severe economic devastation (1:7–20), leaving the southern kingdom weak. This physical disaster gives Joel the illustration for God's judgment. As the locusts were a judgment on sin, God's future judgments during the Day of the Lord will far exceed them. In that day, God will judge His enemies and bless the faithful. No mention is made of specific sins, nor is Judah rebuked for idolatry. Yet, possibly due to a calloused indifference, the prophet calls them to a bona fide repentance, admonishing them to "rend your heart, and not your garments" (2:13).

Turn Ye To Me With:

All your heart

12 Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart -

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

With Fasting

16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

What is fasting? Well the definition of fasting means to “afflict the soul or self through self denial.”

Why should a person fast? Generally there are three good reasons to fast:

We give up physical food in order to FEAST on the spiritual food of God.

Fasting places the person humbly before the Lord.

People fast to express their sorrow over sin in their lives. Christians today have lost the importance of the “position” of sorrow unto God...it is believed that a simple “sorry Lord” suffices.

Secondly, fasting is God’s desired way for His people to plead for God’s mercy. We can read where individuals, families and nations have fasted in the Bible in order to seek God’s grace and mercy.

Lastly, we should fast in order to become more effective in our lives and ministries.

With Weeping

Weeping is defined as a time of a continual dripping.

Psalms 30:5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

With Mourning

Mourning is defined as “great lamentations, wailing.”

Rend Your Heart

Rending means to literally or figuratively “cut out or tear.”

A person who comes before the Lord with a truly penitent heart is referred to as having a "broken and a contrite heart." In order for the person to get to this point in their spiritual walk with the Lord, it will require “breaking up the fallow ground”. The Prophet Jeremiah wrote:

Jeremiah 4:3-4 For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

4Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. (

A repentant believer will search their hearts and rend those areas in their hearts and actions that are contrary to the will of God. The sin in their lives that is festering just beneath the surface and will rip it out and confess it to God.

Turn Unto the Lord Your God

The simple steps of “turning to God with all you heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning will result only when you rend your heart.” It is at this point in your spiritual walk that you will be able to turn unto the Lord your God.

How does God respond to the repentant heart?

The Character of God to the Repentant Heart

God is gracious

God is merciful

God is slow to anger

God shows great kindness

God repents of the judgment for the evil works

The judgment to the unrepentant is clearly laid out in the Scriptures. It is not God's will that judgment is inflicted on man. However, God is righteous and Just and there is a sentence to be carried out on the person who refuses to repent. God is unwilling that any should perish:

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

A Biblical truth found throughout the Scriptures is that the brethren should, from time to time, reflect on their lives. Searching for answers to

“What you need to do better?”

“What actions am I taking that I should stop doing?”

“Where am I investing my time? On things above or on things on the earth?”

I believe that everyone in this auditorium, upon close examine would realize that changes in our hearts and actions need to be made. Each of us are in need of repentance. Joel says the way to achieve this is by:

“...turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: *And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God:*”

Conclusion

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Jesus said; “Whosoever will, may come.” In our verse-by-verse study of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, we found that even in the midst of judgment, opportunity to repent was given. This is a great Truth of the Bible. Throughout the Old and New Testaments we see that God is patient, loving and filled with grace. Love and grace will be showered on those that would demonstrate genuine repentance.

This message is for the Christian today. Will you follow the example by the prophet Joel today and reject the ways of the world by turning to God? Will the year 2015-2016 be the most fruitful time of harvest for the Lord?

Only you can answer that question.

Bob Crowder