



Yet Even Now

“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments.”

Joel 2:12-13a

Repentance is not a favored topic among anyone who is carrying habitual sin. It is only in the softened heart that repentance blooms and cleanses. Over and over in the Word of God we find calls to repentance, pleading and begging the human race to bow their heart and head in response to an accurate summation of their sinful state. The enemy of our Creator whispers lies that we swallow hook, line, and sinker, without even a blink. We are easily swayed by the hissing questions, receiving and nurturing seeds of doubt. We accept as truth the lie that, even in this age of grace, God is angry and vengeful, that He will condemn and berate us, withhold good from us and pour out curses and punishment. We adopt the deception that His ways are unreasonable, unattainable, unjust, unfair. We paint God with our scorn, fueled by indignant and wounded pride that He would dare to tell us that we are wrong. And yet, He is still gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness. He still calls us to repentance. He still calls us to Himself. He still longs for relationship with us. He longs for us to be free from the slavery of sin, from the deadly consequences of willful transgression.

As simple as the solution is, it is immensely difficult for this prideful race. We must return to Him with all our hearts, with fasting and weeping and mourning. We attempt to falsify repentance, paying lip service but keeping our hearts far from Him. We put on the outward signs of godly sorrow, but do not feel it inwardly. I think that is why the phrase “rend your heart and not your garments” resonates with me. Outward repentance is worthless if it is not borne out of inward repentance.

It is difficult to reach that place of inward repentance. Often, in a heart that recognizes his or her own sinful state, we convince ourselves it is too late. We have gone too far to come back now. Again, these are lies we listen to eagerly, as it exempts us from humbling ourselves before a Holy God. But the truth of His Word is there for all to see: “Yet even now, return to Me with all your heart.”

It is not too late. Let us dispense with that lie for once and for all. Without that, we have nothing to stand on but our own distaste for admitting we are wrong. But this is what must be done. And even though it is a difficult place to get to, once there we find that all our preconceptions are misconceptions. God is not angry with the repentant heart. When we come to Him with all our heart, repentant inwardly as well as outwardly, He is quick to forgive, to cleanse, to make whole. And oh the joy that is found in right relationship with our Creator!

Father, we thank You for the truth of Your word. We thank You that You are loving and compassionate, slow to anger. We thank You for allowing us to acknowledge our sins and repent, and restoring us to right relationship with You.