

Joel 2:13

### Rend Your Heart

*So rend your heart, and not your garment; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.*

Like many who spend a lot of time outdoors, I make deliberate choices in the type of clothing I wear. For the most part, the weather and the terrain are the determining factors in making this choice. But it seems no matter how hard I try to prevent damage, I always get rips or tears or punctures. Thorns are the worst, like those long spikes on honey locusts. I've even had my four-wheeler tires impaled by those things! Thorns can also rip apart a nice flannel shirt when you're walking through a thicket. Denim jeans are durable enough, except when crossing a barbed-wire fence. There's nothing like ripping out the seat of your pants on a cold day in the field. So, I try to wear thorn-proof coveralls, I try to clear my tent site of sharp objects, and I try to protect my sleeping mat from lumpy or sharp projections (usually, this is done in the middle of the night when I wish I had thought of it earlier).

When my clothes get damaged, I mourn the loss, sometimes a great deal depending on the value of the item. In the Old Testament, it was just the reverse. To express grief or repentance, people would purposely tear their clothing as an outward sign of this inward conviction. For many, however, the practice became an insincere act, a traditional response that displayed no evidence of a changed heart. Through Joel, God extended an invitation to make a real change – a change of the heart, not the clothes.

New Year's Day is a traditional time to make a change in one's life. Many New Year's resolutions are made at that time and after while, many are routinely ignored. But when someone turns to Jesus to make a change, his entire life is impacted and not just for a few days. Bad habits can be turned over to the Savior. Sin can be laid at the Cross. Forgiveness and healing are offered by the Man of men, whose darkest day became the brightest hope for every person on earth when He bled to death on the cross (Matthew 26:28).

Don't wait until New Year's Day to do it. Rend your heart now and enjoy a refreshing of the Holy Spirit like you've never experienced before. For our Heavenly Father is gracious and merciful, loving and kind.

**TIP:** When crossing a fence, be careful not to damage the owner's property, even if it seems like it's not in use. If the fence is low and crossable, use your coat as a guard, with the outer cover placed against the wire (sturdy outerwear generally has tougher outer cloth). Many times, it's safer to just crawl under a fence. Or, use a gate, even if you have to walk a distance. Always find a safe way to cross. And always unload your firearm when crossing.

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## Joel 2:13 (Study Guide)

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#### HOOK

1. In your view, what is the toughest natural clothing material? Man-made material?  
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2. Describe a time when your clothing was worst damaged or lost in an outdoor sports activity.  
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3. Explain how to repair the following materials: tear in poly-tarp, hole in leather, rip in denim.  
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#### LINE

In the Old Testament, people expressed grief or repentance by tearing their clothing. For them, it was an outward sign of an inward conviction. Over time, the practice became an insincere act, a traditional response that displayed no evidence of a changed heart. Through Joel, God extended an invitation to make a real change – a change of the heart, not the clothes.

When someone turns to Jesus to make a change, his entire life is impacted and not just for a few days. Bad habits can be turned over to the Savior. Sin can be laid at the Cross. Forgiveness and healing are offered by the Man of men, whose darkest day became the brightest hope for every person on earth when He bled to death on the cross.

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When you feel convicted because of sin, how do you think you act? Now, when you feel convicted to do something good, how do you behave? Note the differences.

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You can you tell if someone has made a real decision to follow Jesus? Do you feel judgmental? If so, how will you change from being judgmental to being discerning?

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#### SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words:    clothing                      confession                      change

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