

## DECEMBER 18

Rend your heart and not your garments.

Joel 2:13

### From the pen of Charles Spurgeon:

Rending of garments and other outward signs of religious fervor are easily displayed but are frequently hypocritical. Demonstrating true repentance is far more difficult and thus is far less common. People will follow a host of detailed ceremonial rituals, for such things are pleasing to the flesh; but true faith is all too humbling, heart-searching, and thorough for the likes of carnal people. These sinful people prefer, instead, something more ostentatious, flimsy, and worldly. Outward rituals bring temporary comfort, for they are pleasing to eyes and ears, the ego is fed, and self-righteousness is inflated; but they are ultimately misleading, for when it comes to the time of death and the day of judgment, the soul needs something more substantial than ceremonies and rituals upon which to lean. Apart from essential godliness, all religion is utterly useless. Every form of worship lacking sincerity of the heart is nothing but a solemn sham and an impudent mockery of the Majesty in heaven.

Rending of the heart, on the other hand, is a divine work of God and is felt deeply. It is a secret hidden grief that is personally experienced, not merely in form and ritual but as a soul-moving work of the Holy Spirit on the inmost heart of a true believer. It is not something simply to be discussed or something we simply acknowledge mentally, but something that is strongly and deeply felt in every loving child of God. It is powerfully humbling and completely sin-purging, yet it sweetly prepares the soul for gifts of God's grace that proud unyielding spirits are completely unable to receive. It is also distinctly discriminating, for it belongs solely to the elect of God — and to them alone.

Today's verse commands us to rend our hearts,

but the human heart is by nature as hard as stone. Since this is true, how can this be done? We must take our hearts to Calvary where our dying Savior's voice once broke the rocks in two — knowing His voice is just as powerful today.

*O blessed Spirit, may we truly hear the death cry of Jesus, and may our hearts be torn as people once tore their garments during times of mourning.*

### From the pen of Jim Reimann:

Job's story is a perfect example of true heart-rending repentance. At the end of his difficult ordeal he finally said, "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.... My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:3, 5–6). Notice how his experience caused him to see the Lord as He is, further leading him to humble himself in repentance. Finally, only after his repentance do we read: "And the LORD accepted Job's prayer" (v. 9).

David as well understood the difference between outward signs of repentance and the rending of the heart. After being confronted with his sin by the prophet Nathan, he prayed, "You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps. 51:16–17).

*I praise You, Lord, for You have said, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26).*

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