



**GREATER BETHEL MISSIONARY
BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.
Dr. Brett Snowden, Pastor**

**Turn Back to God with All Your Heart
Joel 2:12-17**

February 17, 2026

Key Verse: “Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart,” (Joel 2:12, NIV)

Lesson Aim

To help believers understand that true repentance is inward, urgent, communal, and rooted in God’s mercy, not just outward religious activity.

Background of the Text

Joel is speaking to Judah during a time of national crisis, likely following a devastating locust plague. The destruction is both literal and symbolic—a wake-up call from God. Rather than offering political solutions or ritual fixes, Joel delivers God’s message: *This is not a time to cover up sin—it’s time to come home.*

I. God’s Invitation to Return (vv. 12–13a)

“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart...”

Key Teaching Points

- “Therefore also now” – God is saying *right now*, not later.
- Repentance is relational, not just behavioral.
- God doesn’t say, “Fix yourself first.” He says, “Turn to Me.”

“With All Your Heart”

- Not half-hearted
- Not emotional only
- Not Sunday-only faith

God wants total surrender, not partial obedience.

Emphasis

- Repentance is essential to restoration.
- Salvation and renewal begin in the heart (Romans 10:10).

II. True Repentance Is Inward, Not Performative (v. 13)

“Rend your heart, and not your garments...”

Explanation

In Joel's day, tearing clothes was a public sign of grief. God says:

Don't just tear your clothes—tear your heart.

Key Truth

- God is not impressed by religious theatics.
- He looks for brokenness, humility, and honesty (Psalm 51:17).

Application

- Church attendance ≠ repentance
- Saying “Lord, Lord” ≠ obedience
God wants changed hearts, not polished appearances.

III. Repentance Is Rooted in God’s Character (v. 13b)

“...for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness...”

We repent because of who God is:

- Gracious – He gives what we don’t deserve
- Merciful – He withholds what we do deserve
- Slow to anger – He is patient with sinners

Theology Tie-In

- God’s mercy motivates repentance, not fear alone
- Grace doesn’t excuse sin—it invites transformation

IV. Repentance Requires Urgent, United Action (vv. 15–16)

“Blow the trumpet in Zion... gather the people...”

Observations

- This is a solemn assembly—everyone is called
- No exemptions:
 - Elders
 - Children
 - Nursing babies
 - Newlyweds

Teaching Point

- Spiritual renewal is not just personal—it’s communal
- Revival begins when the whole body responds together

Church Application

- Families need repentance
- Churches need repentance
- Communities need repentance

V. Intercessory Prayer: Standing in the Gap (v. 17)

“Let the priests... weep between the porch and the altar...”

Role of Spiritual Leaders

- The priests are not performing rituals—they’re weeping
- They pray for God’s reputation and God’s people

Powerful Prayer Focus

- “Spare thy people.”
- Concern for God’s name among the nations

Today’s Application

- Pastors, teachers, deacons, and ministry leaders must lead in repentance
- Revival starts at the altar, not the platform

Life Application Questions

1. Am I turning to God with all my heart—or just enough to feel religious?
2. Have I mistaken outward activity for inward repentance?
3. What would it look like for my family or church to repent together?
4. Am I willing to weep and pray for others, not just myself?

Closing Thought

God’s call in Joel is not a threat—it’s an invitation.

He is saying: ***If you’ll turn back to Me, I’m already leaning toward you.***