

SEEKING THE LORD'S FAVOR **CARL McMURRAY**

The latter part of Joel 2 describes the blessings that God had for His people in that day of fear and great crisis. Beginning in verse 8 the prophet speaks of God zeal for His people and the blessings that He was going to pour out on them. He speaks of their satisfaction and safety from oppressors. It is a beautiful picture that surely would have given them hope in spite of the calamity that God's people were facing.

Do we not seek the same outpouring of blessings today? Do we not wish, as God's people to be satisfied and safe in our affairs. Looking hopefully to the future? Perhaps we can learn from this passage and the understanding that the nature of God does not change from people to people or century to century.

We hear on every side the maxim that to receive God's blessing all we must do is cry out to Him. Just pray, we're told. Just believe and let Jesus come into your heart. I note that this is NOT the principle that God laid out for His people via the prophet Joel. Instead, if you begin at verse 18 and go backwards we must note that the Lord made His blessings conditional.

"Then" the Lord will be zealous verse 18 says. When?

When they "returned with all their heart," He says in verse 12. i.e. when they truly repented. When they "rend their hearts and not their garments," He says in verse 13. That is, when they quit going through the motions and commit from their hearts to Him. When they gathered together for holy purposes and worship instead of just for feasting and family gatherings, He points out in verses 15-16. Verse 16 points to the heartfelt commitment when it pictures even the bride and bridegroom coming out of their chambers. This usually did not happen even in cases of war.

The answer seems to be clear. Our Father loves His children and desires to bless them and protect them. The conditions for receiving His grace however can be summed up in the terms repent and return. God is waiting. When we will deliver our heart and not just hollow actions; when we will turn from following self and return to following Him; when we will set our hearts to gathering for God's purposes and not just for our own, then our Creator will be there for us. If you seek God's favor it must not be at the point of "faith alone." It must not be in tongue or just in desire. Seeking God's favor comes with a heart dedicated to Him and actions that follow suit.