

REND YOUR HEART

JOEL 1-2

Text: Joel 2:13

Joel 2:13

¹³ And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

Introduction:

The nation of Israel is in trouble! They're under constant attacks by their enemies.

They have experienced a terrible drought and a massive invasion of locusts.

These tragedies have left the land ruined and the people discouraged, and demoralized.

The prophet Joel uses these events as an illustration of God's judgment upon Israel. Their specific sin is not named in this book, but a careful reading of the book indicated that the people had slipped into a state of complacency and apathy about the things of God.

God used the trials they faced as a nation to awaken the hearts of His people and to call them back to Him.

The book of Joel is a book of judgment. But, it is also a book of hope. In this book, God's people are made to understand that even in the midst of divine judgment there is always hope if they will seek the Lord.

While this book was written to the nation of Israel, there is something here for us as well. Like Israel, we live in a land that is under divine judgment. We look at our nation and at our world and we wonder if there is any hope for the future. We wonder if there is any hope for revival. We wonder if there is any promise for us in these dark days.

These verses teach us that there is hope; hope for our church, our community, our nation and our future.

Note:

1. THE PROBLEM (1:1-2:11)

A. They Faced Devastation (1:4)

Joel 1:4

⁴That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.

- One insect invasion after another destroyed and ruined their crops. There was no food left for the people.

B. They Faced Destruction (1:5-7, 2:1-11)

Joel 1:5-7

⁵ Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. ⁶ For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. ⁷ He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.

Joel 2:1-11

¹ Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; ² A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. ³ A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. ⁴ The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as

horsemen, so shall they run. ⁵ Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. ⁶ Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. ⁷ They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: ⁸ Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. ⁹ They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. ¹⁰ The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: ¹¹ And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

- They also faced invasion from surrounding nations. The armies that came in destroyed their vineyards and orchards. Their enemies were strong, and powerful.

C. They Faced Desolation (1:8-13, 16-20)

Joel 1:8-13

⁸ *Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.* ⁹ *The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn.*

¹⁰ *The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.* ¹¹ *Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.*

¹² *The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.* ¹³ *Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God.*

Joel 1:16-20

¹⁶ *Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God?* ¹⁷ *The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.* ¹⁸ *How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.* ¹⁹ *O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and*

*the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. ²⁰
The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the
rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath
devoured the pastures of the wilderness.*

- A severe drought afflicted their land. There was no rain and all the crops failed.
- The herds and wild animals suffered and perished because there was no water or pasture for them.

- Fires broke out that destroyed the forests.

D. The Faced Discipline (1:14-15)

Joel 1:14-15

¹⁴ Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD, ¹⁵ Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

- None of these things were accidental or coincidental; they were all the judgment of God upon the land.

- The people had turned against the Lord and they were paying for their rebellion.

- As we read about the judgment that fell on ancient Israel, I am reminded of where our nation and our churches are today; there can be little doubt that we are facing the judgment of God in America.
- Natural disasters rip through our nation with far greater frequency than I can remember.
- Consider the tornadoes, hurricanes and fires that inflict damage totaling in the tens of billions of dollars. America is under judgment!
- Now, consider the sin and evil that runs rampant in our world. We are living in a generation that calls “evil good and good evil”. We are living in a society that protects the wicked and punishes the righteous. We are living in a world where fear has replaced faith; sin has replaced sanity; greed has replaced God; and hatred has replaced holiness.
- Preaching has been replaced by praise songs. Holiness has given way to happiness. Commitment has been replaced by complacency.
- We get more excited about a shopping trip than we do about a revival meeting. We wink at sin and wince at the holy demands of God. We have lost our fire, our power and our desire for the things of God.

- We would rather play than pray. We would rather have our ears tickled than our hearts searched by the Word. We would rather be entertained than challenged. We would rather stay like we are than become more like Him.

2. THE PLEA (2:12-17)

Even though they are experiencing the judgment of God, there is still hope! God reaches out to them one more time to address their condition and to call them back to Him.

A. There's A Plea for Repentance (12-14)

Joel 2:12-14

¹² Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: ¹³ And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. ¹⁴ Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

- Genuine repentance is the only hope they have for survival. God calls on them to “turn” to Him “with all your heart”.

- He calls on them “rend” their “hearts” and not their “garments”. God isn’t looking for mere external displays of religion; He is looking for heart change.

He is looking for a people who are broken over their sinful and who are willing to change.

He is looking for a people who will be sorrowful over their sins.

The only hope our nation has of being saved from the judgment of God is for God’s people to seek the Lord.

B. There’s A Plea for Restoration (15-17)

Joel 2:15-17

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: ¹⁶ Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. ¹⁷ Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

- God calls on all the people, from the oldest to the youngest, to come back to Him, v. 16b.

He calls for those occupied by the consuming matters of life to put Him first, v. 16c.

He calls on the spiritual leaders of the people to come back to Him, v. 17.

God wants His people to seek His face once more. He wants them to get hungry for Him one more time. God calls His people back to a place of closeness and holiness, v. 16a.

This is the pressing need of our day. We live in a generation that puts everything ahead of God. We live in a generation that yields itself to everything but God. We live in a generation that has essentially abandoned God. We need to seek the Lord!

We need to come to a place where nothing matters but His will for our lives.

3. THE PROMISE (2:18-27)

After discussing the Problem and declaring His Plea, the Lord now delivers a Promise to His people. If they will come back to Him, they will experience His blessings one more time.

A. The Promise of Restoration (18-22)

Joel 2:18-22

¹⁸ Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. ¹⁹ Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: ²⁰ But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. ²¹ Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things. ²² Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

- God promises to deliver them from their enemies. He promises to feed them, bless them and satisfy them one more time.

B. The Promise of Revival (23-25)

Joel 2:23-25

²³ Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. ²⁴ And the floors shall

be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. ²⁵ And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

- God promises to send both the “former” and “latter” rains.
- The “former” rains fell in October and November. They helped replenish the soil in preparation for the next planting season.
- The “latter” rains fell in March and April. They came just in time to ensure that the harvest would be bountiful.
- God also promised to replace everything that had been lost during the days of drought and devastation.
- He is promising a revival of His blessings on the land!

C. The Promise of Rejoicing (26)

Joel 2:26

²⁶ And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

God's people will experience His blessings and they will be satisfied. They will praise Him. They will worship Him and exalt Him.

D. The Promise of Realization (27)

Joel 2:27

²⁷ And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

When their restoration comes, they will know that God is in their midst and that He alone is the source of their strength, their power and their blessing.

When God visits His people, there will be no doubt about Who is doing the work.

Close:

It's not too late! There is still time to seek the Lord. There is still time to save the next generation. There is still time to turn this nation back to God. We can't do it on our own. We need divine intervention. We need God to move one more time among His people. We need a revival.