

## Restoring the Years

In Joel 2:25, God says, “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.” This is a Bible verse that tells us that God can reverse the most serious setbacks. It is a promise to restore the broken, revive the fallen and bring hope to the hopeless. More than half of the book of Joel is dedicated to explaining the devastation caused by the locust plague. The Word of God is telling us of the effect of Israel’s wandering from God, His word and His ways. I am reminded of Numbers 32:23: “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.” In Numbers God was telling Israel to pass over the Jordan into the promise land ready and willing to battle for the land God promised them, and if they did not, their sin would find them out. Oftentimes when the judgment of God begins to fall, human nature has a tendency to blame God for sending the discomfort, forgetting it was merely the effects of one’s sin catching up with them.

To better understand Joel 2:25, we need to understand Joel 1:4 which says, “That 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.” This was the fulfillment of the warning God gave Israel if they disobeyed in Deuteronomy 28:15-17, 38 and 42. One commentator said this about Joel 1:4: “The language may express the four stages in the development of a single type of insect. The palmerworm (Hebrew, gazam: “to gnaw”) is the stage at which the locust is first hatched and is characterized by its gnawing activity. The locust (Hebrew, arben: “to be many”) is the most common name for the locust, and is the second stage, in which the locust gets its wings and flies. The cankerworm (Hebrew, yeleg: “to lick off”) is the stage it does its destructive work. The caterpillar (Hebrew, chasil: “To devour or to consume”) is the final stage, in which the locust reaches its full growth and devours everything in its path.” Returning to Joel 2:25 and the promise of restoration we see the picture is of a loving Lord who gives three patient warnings before the fourth and most devastating judgment comes. Yet it was after the final phase of our Lord’s punitive action that He now says in essence, even though you are quite totally wasted, you may still come back to me and I will restore all that has been taken from you. When David seemingly had lost all, the Bible says in I Samuel 30:18a, “And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away....”

The Devil is described in Revelation 9:11: “And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.” In Hebrew (Abaddon)

and Greek (Apollyon), this prince of darkness has a name that means “destroyer.” Revelation 12:10 reads, “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” No matter what Satan does to God’s people, no matter how much he accuses us of, God says, “I can undo the destruction I have allowed him to bring about. And concerning his accusations, don’t listen to him; he is a liar.”

How do we find this restoration?

## I. SUBMIT

Joel 2:13, 14.

### A. Submit Our Hearts

“...Rend your heart, and not your garment...” (Joel 3:13a). In the days Christ walked upon the earth the Pharisees were big on outward appearance as observed in Matthew 23:5: “But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.” God wants a humble and broken heart toward Him. He is rebuking the fake form of repentance that is all show and no substance. Psalm 34:18 says it well: “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”

### B. Submit Our Wills

Joel 2:14a says, “Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him...” The phrase “Who knoweth...” is an attitude of submission. We see this reflected in the words of the three Hebrew children in Daniel 3:17, 18a: “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not...” In other words, if we are delivered, God is praised and if not, He is still worthy of our praise and worship!

## II. SANCTIFY

Joel 2:15, 16

### A. Personally

“...Sanctify a fast....” Sanctify literally means, “to set apart” for special use or purpose, that is, to make holy or sacred. Therefore, sanctification refers to the state or process of being set apart, i.e. made holy. Through the days, months and years following salvation, God’s goal is to sanctify us unto Himself. Jesus said in John 17:17, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” God means for our sanctification be thorough as voiced in I Thessalonians 5:23: “And the very God of

peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Peter pointed out that we are not to be complacent in this matter, for he said in I Peter 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts....” John Murray said, “Indeed, the more sanctified the person is, the more conformed he is to the image of his Savior, the more he must recoil against every lack of conformity to the holiness of God. The deeper his apprehension of the majesty of God, the greater the intensity of his love to God, the more persistent his yearning for the attainment of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the more conscious will he be of the gravity of the sin that remains and the more poignant will be his detestation of it...Was this not the effect in all the people of God as they came into closer proximity to the revelation of God’s holiness?” A fast calls specifically for an all out sanctification of oneself.

#### B. Corporately

In Joel 2:14 and 15 we see the words, “Blow the trumpet...call a solemn assembly...Gather the people.” There is no way we can truly be set apart for our Lord and His service if we ignore our corporate responsibilities such as church attendance and participation. Hebrews 10:25 says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

### III. SEEK

#### Joel 2:17-29

In this passage of Scripture the Lord is talking about the former and the latter rain (Joel 2:23). In the agricultural world of the Bible, this was referring to the early or former rains in the fall that soften the ground just before the planting, thus preparing the ground for growth. Then the latter rains come in the spring, which ripen the crops for harvest. The rains always have the harvest in mind (Joel 2:24).

#### A. Seek by Supplication

Zechariah 10:1; 12:10; Joel 2:17

The late David Wilkerson says, “The Hebrew word for "supplication" signifies "an olive branch wrapped with wool, or some kind of cloth, waved by a supplicant seeking peace or surrender." These were called "branches of supplication." Simply put, they were flags of surrender. They signified a cry of total, unconditional surrender.”

#### B. Seek With a Thirsting

Isaiah 44:3; John 7:37-39; James 5:7, 8; Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:16-18

### C. Seek With a Confidence

Joel 2:25

Through God's omnipotent power He promises total restoration. He not only gives us all that we ask for, He is able to give us more. Hebrews 11:40 promises, "God having provided some better thing for us...." Ephesians 3:20 gives us the confidence of restoration beyond our fondest imagination: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Our Lord wants more for us than we want for ourselves.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.