

## Joel 2 – Deliverance, Mercy, and Praise – Sermon Outline

**Intro:** When God's people and/or all people in any nation live in heinous sin, God will give severe punishment. Through such judgments of the LORD, He destroys the wicked and sanctifies His people.

**Need:** God's kingdom calls for repentance, a life of repentance and grief over sin, a growing trust, comfort, and joy in Christ our Lord and Savior, and a swelling love and capacity to serve Him/His people.

**Theme:** The Lord severely judges His wicked people but powerfully delivers them when they repent.

1. Refusing to repent leads to the Day of the Lord's judgment upon His wicked people.
2. Repentance for sin and pleading for the Lord's delivering mercies is commanded.
3. Petitioning the Lord leads to His pity & deliverance, leading to His people's joyful praise.

### I. Refusing to repent leads to the Day of the Lord's judgment upon His wicked people.

#### A. Is this still speaking of the locusts, or a future, greater judgment upon God's people?

1. It seems this judgment points to future judgments and even remotely the full, final judgment upon God's people, the Jews in AD 70, and all the nations of the world when Christ returns.
2. The locusts devouring the land are a foreshadowing of greater judgment upon the wicked/wayward.
3. We see the same sort of call and warning, e.g., in Jeremiah 4:5-8, calling for repentance, lamentation, etc., because of the looming judgment on the southern kingdom of God's people, Judah/Jerusalem, just prior to being taken captive by the Babylonians:
4. *"Declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say: **Blow the trumpet** in the land; Cry, 'Gather together,' And say, 'Assemble yourselves, And let us go into the fortified cities.' Set up the standard toward Zion. Take refuge! Do not delay! For I will bring disaster from the north, And great destruction." The lion has come up from his thicket, And the destroyer of nations is on his way. He has gone forth from his place To make your land desolate. Your cities will be laid waste, Without inhabitant. For this, clothe yourself with sackcloth, Lament and wail. For the fierce anger of the Lord Has not turned back from us."*
5. The locusts have been described as a mighty nation coming up against God's land, innumerable, with lion-like teeth to lay waste the vine and fig tree, stripping the trees bare.
6. But 2:2 describes a "**people**" coming, unlike any other seen before, appearing like horses & jumping upon, not over, mountaintops. This is an exalted and powerful enemy, beyond mere locusts, but men.
7. This enemy is impenetrable b/c they are ordained by God to judge and destroy His wicked people.

#### B. 3-9, In the preceding chapter we also saw mention of the day of the Lord, judgment, fire, etc.,

1. As God's enemies feared Israel, King David, etc., or as the enemies feared Jehovah God when they heard of Israel coming, for whom the LORD split the Red Sea and drowned Pharaoh's armies, now the fortunes are reversed by God for His sinful, wayward people.
2. V. 6-8, Now Israel's faces are drained of color, their hearts struck with fear of the wicked, because for God's impenitent people, there shall be no deliverance from evil if they delay their repentance.
3. There is a point where God's longsuffering ceases for His people who are false.
4. V. 9, these enemies come in through the windows, locusts yes, but soldiers also, & more frightening.

#### C. 10-11, The day of the Lord comes upon His wicked people to crush them for their sin & idolatry, their heavy taxing of their own poor, their greed for gain, etc. We see this, for example, in **Amos 5:16-27**:

1. *"Therefore the Lord God of hosts, the Lord, says this: "There shall be wailing in all streets, And they shall say in all the highways, 'Alas! Alas!' They shall call the farmer to mourning, And skillful lamenters to wailing. In all vineyards there shall be wailing, For I will pass through you," Says the Lord. **Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!** For what good is the day of the Lord to you? It will be darkness, and not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion, And a bear met him! Or as though he went into the house, Leaned his hand on the wall, And a serpent bit him! Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it? "I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream. "Did you offer Me sacrifices and offerings In the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? **You also carried Sikkuth your king And Chiun, your idols, The star of your gods, Which you made for yourselves.** Therefore I will send you into captivity beyond Damascus," Says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts."*
- D. It is far more important to hear Joel's words as a sermon and prophetic warning, than trying to determine when he was writing & what precise historical judgment he is referring to, what degree, etc.
  1. The message is rooted in real history – there was a real plague and judgment of God on His people Israel, having locusts, famine, fire from heaven, and it is evident that this judgment portended future and fuller judgments of actual human armies/invading pagan nations if they remained unrepentant.
  2. This has always been God's dealing with His wayward people, because God acts from His unchanging, righteous, and holy nature. God's people then should live in light of His consistency!
  3. Prolonged sin over many generations leads to greater and more severe judgments from God.
  4. The Israelite/Jewish people were fully judged in the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.
  5. And yet, as we read in Romans 9-11 and elsewhere, the Apostle Paul, himself a Jew and former Pharisee, had a burden for his kinsmen according to the flesh, and points to a future inclusion of many Jews repenting and believing in Christ after the Gentile nations come to faith in Him.
  6. But there is a present blindness upon the Jews, a hardening of them because of their rejection and hatred of Christ, seen in their Christ rejecting religion of Judaism and its perversion of the O.T.
  7. Remember from Luke, etc., Christ proclaimed Himself from all the Old Testament, and Judaism rejects and hates the actual, historical N.T. Christ, and looks for another, a different Christ to this day.

## II. **Repentance for sin and pleading for the Lord's delivering mercies is commanded.**

- A. God's people must always be repentant and faithful, and will graciously receive His blessings, but if we deny the faith, refuse to repent, and turn to sin and idolatry, we will receive God's severity/curse.
  1. The goodness and severity of God, the blessings and cursings of the covenant of grace remain in the new covenant. Paul is very clear in **Rom. 11:22ff.**, Jews & Gentiles are grafted into same covenant:
  2. *"Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"*
- B. Joel 2:12-14 has application to us today, even as it was commanded to God's people in Joel's day:

1. To “**tear**” the heart, the sinful heart, is to kill the sin in the heart, its lusts and desires, and in the case of repentance, it is to lay bare the heart before God, not hiding but owning the sin.
  2. This requires a self-examination, and a confession/repentance of “*particular sins particularly*”, as the WCF 15.5 puts it. As we are to count our blessings one by one, we must repent of our sins one by one, especially when having long languished in many sins and rebellion against the Lord.
  3. We must “**tear**” our sinful heart to see our sin and confess them all before the Lord, as an act of repentance and contrition, not as an act of penitence in the sense of trying to earn God’s favor.
  4. As 1 John states, we confess our sins knowing God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
  5. And **WCF 15.1** uses this text here in Joel 2 as one of its proof texts for the sinner “*out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for and hates his sins as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.*”
  6. We do not rest in our repentance, nor even in our faith, but in Christ, the one to whom we look in faith, having turned away in sorrow from our sin, pleading his mercies.
  7. As **WCF 15.4** says, there’s no sin so small not deserving damnation, yet likewise no sin so great that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent. True repentance brings true mercy from God.
  8. V. 13, wholehearted repentance flows from the heart & leads to externals & action; tears at times, rending of garments, falling on our faces, making restitution as Zaccheus gave half his goods.
  9. As the punishment must fit the crime, so repentance must fit the sin, and the greater and more prolonged the sin, the greater the repentance must be to be sincere, though we never perfectly repent. But sincere repentance fitting the gravity of the sin prevails upon God’s covenant mercy!
- C. Remember the immediate historical situation – The locusts have eaten up the land, greater judgment from a powerful human army awaits, one that cannot be thwarted:
1. Why? Because 2:11, the LORD is the one who sends them, “*strong is the One who executes His word*” and no one can endure the day of God’s wrath and judgment, the day of the LORD.
  2. They are surrounded by a wasteland, but will be in a greater wasteland and face death, enslavement, plundering, etc., by invaders if they do not repent.
  3. They will be cut off if they do not repent, and as we saw Paul’s words in Romans 11, the Lord will still cut off His people if they take on His name, receive His sacraments, attend His worship, but all in vain, with sin in their hearts and lusts on their minds.
  4. As Christ said of His wayward people in **Matt. 15:7-9**, “*This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*”
  5. And where did Jesus quote this from? The prophet Isaiah. It is still true, because God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and the new covenant in Christ’s blood is not yet culminated in the glorified, eternal state. As such, some still fall away and are cut out of the covenant due to unbelief.
  6. In OT and NT, it has always been about the heart, a circumcised heart, not circumcised flesh. A heart baptized with the Spirit, washed inwardly, not water baptism and outward washing.
  7. The difference between the Old Testament and the New is not at root outward vs. inward, physical vs. spiritual, but incomplete to complete, seed to flower, foreshadowing to the substance of Christ.

- D. 14, notice the grain and drink offering is a blessing the Lord may leave behind if God's people repent.
1. It is, again, a blessed thing to give our tithes and offerings to the Lord, because it is an act of worship and obedience, but also, it is a sign of God's blessing upon us, that we have the things necessary for the body, with enough that we have a tithe and offering to give back to the LORD, who gives us all.
  2. **Haggai 2:17-19**, *"I struck you with blight and mildew and hail in all the labors of your hands; yet you did not turn to Me [repent]," says the Lord. 'Consider now from this day forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid— consider it: Is the seed still in the barn? As yet the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yielded fruit. But from this day I will bless you.'* "
- E. 15-17, The same call in Joel 1:14 is repeated, but with even greater clarity and urgency perhaps.
1. Priests, gather all the people, take no excuses. Even the children and nursing babes must be brought to the assembly, and perhaps even suffer hunger/fasting and cry out to the Lord as babes.
  2. Getting married? Doesn't matter, grooms and brides, cease your wedding ceremony and gather, for there will be no homes, no children, no love to enjoy if you do not repent, for surely, says the Lord, I will break you limb from limb if you continue in your sinful idolatry and gluttony and hatred of Me.
  3. Joel 1, they are to grieve like a virgin who mourns the loss of her husband, and so the joy of having your husband cannot be present, for indeed, God their heavenly husband is nigh unto divorcing them and destroying them in righteous judgment, and marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church.
- F. V. 17, Notice the forward-looking judgment, being subdued and taken into captivity by foreign nations, idolatrous pagans, when God created man to rule and subdue the earth for His glory in true worship.
1. The Church/God's people are to renew that duty and call in their service and worship to Him.
  2. V. 17, The **"altar"** here where the people could see them, or at least see the sacrificial smoke ascending, the altar of burnt offering or the great brazen altar as it is sometimes called, in the outer court and not the holy place where the altar of incense was, in which only the priests could go.
  3. Notice again the deep repentance and lamentation necessary. It is not enough to merely say sorry.
  4. It is not enough, indeed, to even simply turn from sin. There must be fruits of repentance, in this case, further and more fervent repentance. Pleading with the Lord in prayers and petitions, of contrition and grief and regret for sin, arguing with the Lord humbly, that He would not destroy His own ungodly heritage, so that the pagans say God has abandoned them.
  5. We must give reasons for God to act, and the root reasons are His covenant mercies to His people, and the glory of His holy name, that He has staked His name, His reputation, on fulfilling His covenant, on delivering His people from evil, beginning with the evil of their own hearts, and then the evil of those around them, and in v. 17 the priests are instructed to give such reasons to God in tears.

### III. Petitioning the Lord leads to His pity & deliverance, leading to His people's joyful praise.

- A. Upon sincere, heart rending repentance, the Lord promises to deliver His people, guaranteed.
1. But as Matthew Poole notes, He delivers His people who are his *"praying, repenting, and reforming people"*. Israel didn't persist in prayer, the disciples didn't, how often do you fail to pray/repent?
  2. God is zealous for His land and His people, and all the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness therein, so no matter where we are, if we are His covenant people and call out to Him, He shall deliver us/land.
  3. Ps. 103:11-14, *"For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

**As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him.** For He knows our frame;  
He remembers that we are dust.”

- B. 19, For a land to be a reproach to its people, it doesn't yield up food, even when labored over diligently.
1. And as the pagans worshiped gods of fertility and fruitfulness, for Israel's land to be withered, it implicated their God, Jehovah, as a weak or hateful God in their minds.
  2. God will remove this curse, this blight, from them, and further, God will remove the invading swarms of nations far from them, giving them peace and vindicating His name, LORD, covenant faithful one.
  3. Notice that these prayers require God's people on the whole to be making them to the Lord.
- C. **APPL: If you want reformation/revival in your own life, fall on your face before the Lord and plead for it.**
1. Fathers, plead for it for your family, with your wife and children whenever possible, and on your own.
  2. Then as a church, we must pray and plead for the Lord's blessing, asking Him to forgive us our sins, to wash us and convict us and renew our joy afresh, and if we persist in sincere prayers Sunday after Sunday together, on our own in between for the sake of our church, the Lord will answer.
  3. In sanctification of His people, and growth of His body at HRPC, to our children, He will show mercy.
  4. The economic and natural disasters and burdens, the Lord in time will lift, or give you greater provision than your wayward neighbors, or at least give you wisdom and strength to endure.
  5. Your networks of godly friends and families and churches will be Christ ministering to you through His body to sustain you through drought and storm, of physical and spiritual sorts.
  6. And if the faithful churches in our nation would be sincerely humbling themselves, confess their sins, cry out for God's mercy, and beg Him to purge us, He would do so.
  7. He would remove the dross, strengthen what remains, and the church would shine brighter and hotter for His glory, and more would be brought in, live godly lives, full of knowledge of Him, teaching their children and neighbors, and the nations would be further leavened and won for Christ.
  8. The true faith of Christ must not be a reproach among the nations, with false teachers and televangelists and nonsense, or weak and cowardly pencil neck intellectuals in ivory towers.
  9. May the LORD lift such a reproach from us, and make us full of His knowledge, love, and service with all confidence and courage.
- D. V. 20, As God in Ex. 10:19 caused a strong west-wind to blow away the locusts from Egypt in the plague, the plagues of human invaders will be blown back by Almighty God when He rises up to judge in His power in favor of His people, who have returned to Him, rending their hearts.
1. The Lord providentially raises up oppressors of His people for their sin, whether it be a Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar or whoever, but God using such persons to punish His wicked people, does not make the wicked deeds of a Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar righteous.
  2. No, God will in turn, when His people repent, destroy the wicked rulers and nations that He ordained to judge/ravage His own people. These pagan nations/rulers still acted according to their own sinful wills and desires, and God used them for that purpose to punish His people.
  3. God in judging His people was righteous, but the wicked rulers and nations in plundering His people were wicked, and so God in time delivers His repentant people from those wicked, evil, Satanic rulers, for all the "monstrous things" [barbaric] they have done as the NKJV in v. 20 says.
  4. So do not say, "We deserve this for our sins, therefore, let us not ask the Lord to deliver us."

5. No, perish such a wicked thought. Own your sins and deserving, then beg the Lord to deliver you from further wrath and judgment, and return to His mercy and kindness, as He promises to do, for the LORD may yet turn and relent when His people repent in sincerity of heart.
  6. For the LORD is after our hearts, not our destruction. He is after our holiness, not His burning hatred upon His own forever. The LORD is zealous for His land, He will pity His repentant people, He will send times of refreshing once again, if not upon us, then upon our children or grandchildren.
- E. 21-24, We saw last week the sin of God's people leads to the curse upon everything, land, beast, man.
1. When God's people repent and cry out unto the LORD, He returns with His mercy to all -- the land, the animal kingdom, and the children of Zion. The command to all is to "fear not, but rejoice!"
  2. Ps. 37:1-6, "*Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.*"
  3. 23-24, the former September rain, the latter March rain, the rain for planting, and the rain for growing and harvesting is given. Thus the threshing floors are full of wheat and vats overflow with oil/wine.
  4. God will send to His people what they need and what He withheld, because they were withholding their nuptial vows, their covenant duties in marriage to their LORD -- worship, obedience, devotion, purity, honor, praise -- as a wife is to be toward her husband, so we must be to the LORD.
  5. Remember Joel 1:8-9, the lament of the grain and drink offering being cut off, now the command is to rejoice at their return through the Lord's mercies, not just in heart and with words and songs, but deeds, by actually now giving the tithe/offering of the daily grain and drink offerings to the LORD.
  6. Prov. 3:9-10: "*Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.*"
  7. This is no slight salvation, but superabundant provision, and indeed, the greater provision of the overflowing, outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant after Christ has ascended will be prophesied by Joel in 2:28-32, which we will cover in detail next Lord's Day.
- F. The immediate sorrow/curse/burden is not forgotten, and the LORD promises restoration of what the locusts, that great army, have eaten away, upon Israel's repentance, which should lead to their praise:
1. Recall the telescoping nature of God's judgments and blessings. Joel has pointed to future judgments for unbelief and continued rebellion, but also soon coming restoration, a reversal of Joseph/Israel in Egypt's 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of famine.
  2. Here, after the famine, the plenty would come, if they would but repent with all their hearts and serve the Lord, and call out to Him. We know in Israel's history they did not repent, & human armies came!
  3. Yet God will see to it that His elect, His remnant, those truly His within the covenant, will never be put to "shame", but will return to the Lord in repentance, be delivered, then praise Him and live holy lives.
  4. Heb. 12:11 says, the Lord chastens whom He loves, and those trained by His chastening, which is not pleasant in the moment, yields a spiritual, superabundant harvest, for those trained by the Lord's discipline, being planted by the Lord in Christ with the watering of the Word and manure of the Holy Spirit, yielding the "peaceable fruit of righteousness".

5. And so God's people will never be put to shame, not only because they are not left naked and starving by the Lord physically, but likewise spiritually, they will be clothed in Christ's righteousness, and personally fruitful themselves in holiness, in good deeds done in Christ, keeping His law in love.
  6. **APPL:** It's hard to serve God in prosperity and in poverty, though for different reasons. But in poverty and calamity the Lord pokes us and awakens us to call out to Him for mercy. That should train us to praise Him when we are prosperous, or even simply have our daily bread and day's wages.
  7. Israel of old, and we Christians today, still struggle with sin and forsaking the Lord/growing lax when things are going well. We can turn to the pleasures money and prosperity provide, pursuing things sinful in themselves, or overindulging in things lawful but used to the point of abuse and idolatry.
- G. **APPLICATION:** So probe yourself, do you do this? Do you take it easy after you get the promotion, or the blessing you've long sought, and forget the Lord, or turn to things sinful in themselves?
1. Do you forget to train your children when life is hard, or when life is overly blessed, or are you raising them continually in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, not just being the fun dad or sweet mom, but also the disciplined dad and correcting mother?
  2. Do you only bark at your children, never showing the fatherly tenderness of the Lord, risking provoking your children to wrath and anger and apostasy?
  3. The Lord uses the carrot and the stick upon us, in perfect wisdom, and calls us to wisely use the carrot as well as the stick upon our children, and ministers to use both upon the congregations.
  4. May God help us to use the right tool at the right time, and may it be received properly and not rebelled against. May we likewise serve one another in the body of Christ, helping one another.
  5. For those who call upon the name of the LORD, they shall be saved, and further, shall never ultimately be put to shame. If God smiles upon us, let the world frown or sneer or hate.
  6. God is all that matters, God is sovereign, and blesses the faithful, and lifts up the lowly, and tears down the proud. God's heavy hand of judgment upon His wayward children, and His tender hand of comfort and provision upon repentance and crying out to Him, all reveal our God in the midst of His Israel today, the Church of Jesus Christ. There is none other like our God! How perfect He is!
  7. So do not grumble or complain, but confess sin, follow Him, praise Him, worship and adore Him.
  8. Reflect Him in your life, in all that you do, to whomever you have duties to, and He will bless.
  9. You will learn, through God's blessings and burdens, that there is none like our God, and all of it brings Him glory, and trains you and works for your good. Every bit of it.
  10. And in that is sure comfort, hope, and ultimate peace. Who is like our God? Who knows the Lord but those born of His Spirit, bought with His blood, brought into His family as His body and Temple?
  11. God's prosperity is a call to praise Him for His mercy and grace, His chastisements a call to repent and cry for His renewed grace and mercy, which He will surely give in due time. Let us pray.