

## The Blessings of Restoration Joel 2:18-27

### **Slide 1**

The Sistine Chapel is one of the true jewels of art. After spending four years painting it, Michelangelo finished his masterpiece in 1512, at which time the chapel went into daily use.

In those days the only light source came from candles. After 400 years, as the candles burned year after year, the soot from those candles rose to the ceiling blocking out the beauty of the original art.

Because of this, a team of restorative artists were hired to restore the ceiling to its original beauty.

They worked on the Sistine Chapel from 1984-1999 until its monochrome look was replaced with Michelangelo's original colors.

Prior to the restoration process, many in the art community thought that Michelangelo was a genius at composition.

But it was also widely believed that Michelangelo's coloration was mediocre, being too dark, monochromatic, and blah.

Yet when they restored those frescoes to their original state, everyone could see the beautiful, fresh, spring-like colors—pale pink, apple green, vivid yellow, and sky blue against a background of warm, pearly grey.

When Michelangelo's true brilliance and goodness were revealed, people had to change their assumptions about him.

In a similar way, the soot, grime, and dust of daily life have obscured our vision of God's goodness. God's character seems blah or mediocre.

However, by calling us to repentance, God begins a work of restoration in us so we can see the true colors of His brilliant goodness.

This was the problem with the people in Joel's day. They had an obscured vision of God that left them spiritually lethargic.

Then, through the Prophet Joel, God calls to them to return to Him in repentance.

In our focal passage today from Joel 2:18-27, we'll learn that God restores all who return to Him in wholehearted repentance.

## **Slide 2**

When God's people, under the direction of their leaders, returned to the Lord in wholehearted repentance, He blessed them with full restoration.

Joel accomplished this, not by telling the people what to do, but by telling them what God had done.

In verses 18-27, Joel mentions four specific blessings of restoration. First, he tells the people that the Lord answered their prayers. Joel 2:19a, *"The Lord answered and said to his people."*

During the devastation of the locust invasion, the people had called out to God prompting Him to send Joel to tell the people that they needed to repent of their sin of spiritual complacency. When they did, the Lord answered their prayer.

Sometimes we experience some kind of disease, difficulty, or disaster. In such instances, we should always check whether we've sinned against God or simply become spiritually lethargic.

If we find this to be true, we must repent of our sin as the Lord will answer the one who returns to Him.

O. Palmer Robertson says, *“Believe His promise that He hears, no matter what your ‘feelings’ may tell you.”*

Second, the Lord will satisfy our desires. In verse 19, God told the people, *“I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy you fully.”*

The crops that were destroyed by the locusts were restored and God’s people were satisfied.

Do you remember the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand? Luke says that *“they all ate and were satisfied.”*

Jesus’ power to satisfy the physical needs of so many people is an illustration of His ability to satisfy the spiritual needs of every person who turns to Him in repentance.

Third, the Lord will remove your reproach. In the last part of 19c, God told the people, *“never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations.”*

When the locusts devastated the land, the surrounding nations sneeringly said of God’s people, *“Where is their God?”*

God’s people were a reproach among the nations, but with God’s restoration of His people, He removed their reproach among the nations.

An example of this principle is found in the experience of Chuck Colson. At one time, he was the second most powerful person in the world, after President Richard Nixon.

But, because of his actions, he was publicly disgraced and convicted in 1974 of obstruction of justice for his role in the Watergate scandal.

During prison, he repented of his sin and came to faith in Jesus Christ. He went on to found Prison Fellowship and earned the respect and love of a far greater number of people than he ever had while working in the White House.

O. Palmer Robertson writes, *“If you have been caught in sin and your reputation is tainted by rumors of truth and half-truth, commit the matter to the Lord. Concentrate on returning to God, and He will see to it that your reproach is removed. Time will tell the truth, and God’s great business is restoring the ruined reputation of straying sinners.”*

Lastly, Joel tells the people that the Lord would destroy their enemies. Joel 2:20, *“I will drive the northern horde far from you, pushing it into a parched and barren land; its eastern ranks will drown in the Dead Sea and its western ranks in the Mediterranean Sea. And its stench will go up; its smell will rise. Surely he has done great things!”*

The phrase *“northern horde”* could mean two things. On one hand, it could refer to the locusts, which God had driven into the seas.

On the other hand, it might refer to the Babylonians that would invade Judah centuries later.

God would eventually deliver His people from the Babylonians. But the enemies we face today are not primarily human enemies; our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil.

As we return to God in wholehearted repentance, He’ll destroy our enemies enabling us to continue walking in obedience to Him.

### **Slide 3**

Now, notice the recipients of restoration. First, the land.

Joel 2:21, *“Do not be afraid, land of Judah; be glad and rejoice. Surely the Lord has done great things!”*

The land was the first to suffer when the locusts devastated it. Now, the land is the first to be restored.

Second, the beasts of the field. Joel 2:22, *“Do not be afraid, you wild animals, for the pastures in the wilderness are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches.”*

The animals were severely affected by the locust plague. Now, there’s plenty for them to eat as God restores the beasts of the field.

Finally, the children of Zion, that is, the people of God, are restored by God Himself and are to rejoice in the Lord their God.

Joel 2:23, *“Be glad, people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given you the autumn rains because he is faithful. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before.”*

Robertson asks, *“How should we respond when the Lord starts blessing us in these immeasurable ways?”* He answers, *“We should gratefully receive the Lord’s blessings, stop being afraid, and live in happiness.”*

In other words, because of what the Lord does in response to our repentance, rejoice!

Don’t sink into depression over your past sins and losses. Don’t dread the consequences of earlier failures.

Don’t assume a complete restoration is too good to be true. Rejoice wholeheartedly over the Lord’s capacity to restore by grace.

#### **Slide 4**

Now let’s look at the climax of restoration; what God did was amazing. The barren land started producing crops.

The beasts of the field had plenty to eat, and God's people were restored and rejoiced. Could it get any better? Amazingly, it did!

Notice the material blessings of the people by the restoration of lost resources. In verse 24 God says that *"the threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil."*

But even better than that, God says in verse 25, *"I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—my great army that I sent among you."*

When God says, *"I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten,"* this is one of the most priceless promises of God in His Word.

God loves to restore what's been lost. He delights in restoring wasted years. He rejoices over sinners who repent and return to Him.

Do you mourn over the lost years of your life? Do you think back with bitterness as you remember the wasted years of youth when you didn't serve the Lord?

Was it twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or sixty years before you humbled yourself in repentance before your Maker? The Lord restores the years the locust has eaten—all of them.

Have you spent a number of years living in carnality and lukewarmness, doing only what pleased you? Have you made a number of serious mistakes in your life?

Did you make some hasty decisions that you now regret? Do you often muse about those decisions and the effect they've had on your life?

Listen! God will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten! He gives back everything that you've lost, and more.

A great example of this is Job in the Old Testament. Job was under fierce attack from Satan. Besides his health, Job lost ten children and a massive amount of wealth.

Nevertheless, he remained faithful to God, and in the end, God gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Living with regrets is sin for a Christian. Regret is the sorrow of the world that works death. Living with regret has nothing to do with the godly repentance that leads to life and restoration.

Living with regret means that you refuse to believe the glorious truth that God restores the years that the locust has eaten.

Do you mull over your past failures, like an ugly hyena gnawing on a putrid bone? Do you let your thoughts feed morbidly on your sins of the past? Don't insult the glorious redemption that Christ has accomplished.

Believe Him. Start rejoicing in faith. Look your failures straight in the eye and listen to Satan's accusations no more. Trust fully in God's ability to restore the years the locust has eaten.

Joel 2:26a, *"You will have plenty to eat, until you are full."* You'll come to cherish the blessings of God in the supply of your daily bread. You'll realize that even your daily bread is a gift from a gracious God.

Then God continues, *"and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has worked wonders for you."*

When you talk with a person who has had his locust-years restored, you'll constantly hear how great the Lord is, and how much he loves the Lord in return.

If you've experienced the grace of God in your life, you should, as the Bible says, *"Praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you."*

Another result of this climax of restoration is that when you understand God's restoration in your life, you'll know Him personally.

Verse 27a, *"Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other."*

You'll know that He's the Lord your God and there's none else. No one will be able to budge you from your rock-solid conviction about your personal relationship with God.

And fourth, you'll never again be put to shame. Twice in these last two verses, God says, *"never again will my people be shamed."*

Once you've returned to the Lord in wholehearted repentance, you'll never again be ashamed. Your sin, no matter how great, has been washed by the blood of the Jesus.

Horatio Spafford wrote this stanza in his beloved hymn, *"It Is Well with My Soul:"*

My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought—  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more:  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

## **Slide 5**

### Conclusion

Joel teaches us to remember that repentance is God's way of restoration.

The book of Joel is not only written specifically to God's people, but it's written to God's people who've strayed from their walk with Him.

It's written for those believers who've become spiritually lethargic. They don't believe in grace. They don't read God's Word. They seldom pray. They attend worship services, but if something else comes up, they skip church.

If we have strayed from God, we must return to Him in wholehearted repentance because repentance is God's way of revival.

Returning to the Lord in humility is the only way to receive all His blessings. Then, in response to your repentance, He'll restore the years that the locust has eaten.