

be blessed once again and they will rejoice in their new condition.

D. v. 27 **There Is The Promise Of Realization** – When their restoration comes, God’s people will know that God is in their midst and that He alone is the source of their strength, their power and their blessing. They will set their hearts to follow Him and they will never draw back into sin.

I could be wrong, but I believe the church will experience one more revival before the Lord comes. I believe that God still has a remnant of people who love Him more than they love their sins. I believe that God is going to purify His church and bring us to a place of repentance and revival one more time.

When He does, there will be no doubt as to who is in control. There will be no doubt about who is to be worshiped and glorified. Even the enemies of the church will have to acknowledge that God walks among His people.

The world looks at us and they laugh today. They call us weak. They say that we are out of touch with our modern world. They tell us that we need to turn loose of our outdated, superstitious beliefs. They say we need to forget about the Bible. They say that we need to forget about preaching Jesus as the only hope of salvation for sinners. They say we are weak, foolish idiots who need religion because we are unable to deal with life. They say we are mental and intellectual cripples who need a crutch just to make it day to day.

They are right about one thing. Jesus is a crutch! I am too crippled to walk even one step on my own. I need Him! But, they are wrong about the rest of it! When this thing winds up, the church will leave this world in power, glory and victory. I believe we can finish our days here in that same fashion.

When God visits His people, there will be no doubt about who is doing the work. I personally believe that the Church needs to ask the Lord to come back and manifest Himself among His people once again. When He is in the house, He will make His presence known, **Mark 2:1**. Too much of what goes on in the modern church can be explained, but when He moves, in the supernatural will be the ordinary. It won’t be church as usual; church will become a place for the unusual! I long for that day!

It’s not too late for revival in the church. 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. We need a divine invasion of our lives and of our church.

If we are going to see the revival we need, we are going to have to change our ways. We are going to have get back to God. We are going to have to wake up, clean up and get back to God.

Paul’s advice to the Romans will still work today:

11 *“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”*

12 *“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”*

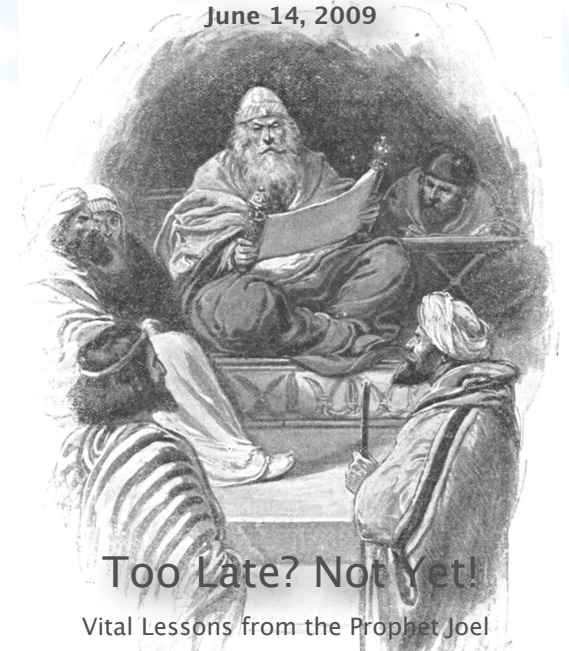
13 *“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.”*

14 *“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”*

Romans 13:11-14

AGAPE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP PULPIT SERIES

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Going Around the World for Jesus

The nation of Israel is in trouble! They are under constant by their enemies, **3:2ff**. They have experienced a terrible drought and a massive invasion of locusts, **1:7-20**. These tragedies have left the land ruined and the people 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, **2:13**.

God used nature and Israel's enemies as His means of divine judgment. He 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.

The book of Joel was written to the people of Israel. It deals with their past and it deals with their future. It looks back to the judgment of God on them for their sins. It also looks forward to a glorious day when they will enjoy the great blessings of the Lord.

While this book was written to the Jew, 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! These verses remind us, that with our God, It's Never Too Late. I want to share some *thoughts* from the book of Joel today. As I do, I want to encourage our hearts – with this thought – “It's not too late!” I want you to see that there is hope for our churches, our nation and our future.

I. 1:1-2:11 **THE PROBLEM**

- A. **They Faced Devastation – 1:4** – 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** – They also faced invasion from surrounding nations. The armies that came in destroyed their vineyards and orchards. Their enemies were strong, numerous and seemed to be too powerful to stop. It seemed as though they would be starved out and utterly destroyed by their foes.
- C. **They Faced Desolation – 1:8-13; 16-20** – A severe drought afflicted their land. There was no rain and all the crops failed, **v. 10-12, 17**. The herds and wild animals suffered and perished because there was no water or pasture for them, **v. 18-20**. Fires broke out that destroyed the forests, **v. 19-20**.
- D. **They Faced Discipline – 1:14-15** – None of these things were accidental, they were all the judgment of God upon

the land, **2:25**. The people had turned against the Lord and they were paying for their rebellion. Joel called their troubles “*The day of the Lord*,” **1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14**. Everything tragedy that gripped them was the work of God. He was judging His people for their sins.

As I 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, **Rom. 1:18-32**.

Natural disasters rip through our nation with far greater frequency than I can remember. While the south is gripped by drought, the mid-west, the bread basket of our nation, is devastated by severe flooding. In many places, the spring planting of corn was ruined. Higher food prices and food shortages will be the result. Consider the tornadoes, hurricanes and fires that inflict damage totaling in the tens of billions of dollars. America is under judgment! Or, am I the only one who sees this?

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*” (**Isa. 5:20**). 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.

There is no doubt that America is under the awesome judgment of God today. You can see it in our homes. You can see it in our population. You can see it in our streets. You can see it in our entertainment. And, most devastating of all, you can see it in our churches!

Preaching has been replaced by Psychology. Holiness has given way to happiness. Commitment has been replaced by complacency. **Our pews are full, but our altars are empty**. 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.

We are under the judgment of God! That is why our nation is in the shape it is in today. That is why our churches are in the shape they are in today. That is why we are experiencing a spiritual drought. That is why our young people have little desire for the Lord. That is why we have become cold, lifeless and impotent. God has weighed us and found us wanting!

II. 2:12-17 **THE PLEA**

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. v. 12-14 **There Is A Plea For Repentance** – 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, (i.e. “*with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning*”) This is the kind of people God will bless, restore and use.

B. v. 15-17 **There Is A Plea For Restoration** – 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**. (III. The word “*sanc-tify*” means “*to separate, to be holy, to consecrate, to dedicate*”). God is calling His people back to Him.

III. 2:18-27 **THE PROMISE**

(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. v. 18-22 **There Is The Promise Of Restoration** – God promises to deliver them from their enemies. He promises to feed them, bless them and satisfy them one more time. If their will come to Him, He will restore them to a place of blessing.

B. v. 23-25 **There Is The Promise Of Revival** – 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!

We need a revival of His manifest presence among His people. We need a revival of His power in our services. We need a revival of the conviction of God on the hearts of the lost. We need a revival of holiness in the church. We need a revival. Oh that God's people would seek His face and ask Him for the move of God we so desperately need in these days. Oh that we would see how far we have fallen and that we would desire to get back to where He would have us to be.

We need a revival! It's our only hope! It's the only hope for our families, our communities, our churches and our nation.)

C. v. 26 **There Is The Promise Of Rejoicing** – God's people will experience His blessings and they will be satisfied. They will praise Him. They will worship Him and exalt Him. They will hold their heads high before their enemies and no longer will they be the object of shame. They will