

“Health in the Spirit”

Joel 2:23-32

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.

24 The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil. 25 I will repay you for the years the locust have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—my great army that I sent among you.

26 You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. 27 Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.

28 And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. 30 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

32 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

Back in the days that the prophet Joel walked the earth there was a severe locust plague combined with drought that destroyed most of the crops on which the food supply of the Israelites depended. The very survival of God’s people in Jerusalem and Judah was in question. These virtual clouds of locusts, which are similar to grasshoppers, are truly devastating. They eat everything. They leave desolation in their wake. They are truly like a terrible, relentless, and ruthless army.

Into this situation comes the prophet Joel whom God sends to the Israelites to point out that the locust plague and drought were God’s instrument to turn them back to their faith and away from idols and indifference toward God. Joel exhorts the people (to exhort means to strongly encourage or urge to action) ...to come before the Lord sincerely, to return to the Lord with all their hearts, and to pray that the Lord would spare them. Joel points out to the people that they have been living with indifference in their lives toward God. They acted like they didn’t know God, like they didn’t care. He reminds the people that God has not forgotten them.

God loves us so much! Time after time He has proven that He is not willing to forget us and remove His love from us. In Christ, we are promised that we will never be forsaken. Christ will NEVER leave us! Joel is telling the people of Israel that and calling out to them, “WAKE UP AND REPENT!” God’s love never fails!

The book of Joel has timeless significance. The people of God continue to be faced with crises and tough times. The book of Joel speaks across the centuries to all of God's people going through difficult circumstances.

This passage in Joel chapter 2 begins with a call to be glad, to rejoice in the Lord. Now remember, the people are wondering if they are going to be able to survive. You see, in Israel there was no major river that they could tap into to irrigate their crops so the Spring and Fall rains were extremely important. Those rains don't come ... the crop does not come. On top of the rains not coming hardly at all the last two years, what little crops they had were completely devastated by locusts and caterpillars and grubs. Joel refers to the locusts as God's army. The people have been told to mourn and repent of their sin and return to the Lord.

So now Joel is telling them that if they obey, IF they repent and turn toward the Lord, that they can be glad and rejoice in the Lord. In fact now the people have turned back toward God and the rains have come. They will reap a harvest. In verse 25 the Lord says to the Israelites through the prophet Joel that their losses shall be repaired, that they shall be comforted.

I have been here at Doster Community Church 8 years as of last April. 7 years ago I preached a sermon titled, "Pressure Makes Diamonds." In that sermon I talked about keeping your eyes on the Lord, about seeing through your trials to the end of the tunnel where Jesus stands with His arms open wide saying, "My child, I love you and I have a wonderful plan for your life." A young man walked into a pastor's office and said, "Pastor, I would like to ask you to pray for me that I might have more patience." The pastor answered, "Ok, I will pray for you that you might have tribulations." "Oh no sir!", replied the young man, "it is patience that I want." "I understand," said the pastor and to the young man's surprise he again said, "I will pray for you that you might have trials in your life." Then the pastor showed the confused and somewhat exasperated young man Romans 5:3: "...we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience." The young man came to understand what the pastor was saying and why. We have to live life one breath at a time, in a patience mixed with joyfulness that sometimes can only be seen in the midst of suffering. God can and will turn all things, even suffering, into good for those who love Him. We know that from Romans 8:28. Carbon remains carbon unless it is subjected to extreme heat and pressure. Only then under specific extreme conditions does it become a diamond. There is a country song written by Don Williams that goes, "Pressure Makes Diamonds, much harder than stone. And they only get finer, as each day goes on, we've been through some hard times, but we've made it somehow, and if pressure makes diamonds our love's a diamond by now." (sing it)

It is important! That we live with an eternal perspective which means we remember that we know the end of the story. And if we are God's children, then in the end, we win. It can be extremely difficult to keep your eyes on the Lord in the midst of

struggles! It is hard to keep your eyes on the Lord and His love instead of getting angry, or despairing and continually asking the question, “Why me?”

This passage in the book of Joel tells me that there will be times when the locusts of life, lack of rain, and drought will threaten to destroy our lives. Around here the opposite may be true as well, where there is water everywhere and we are so sick of rain and being cooped up in our homes that we can’t stand it. Difficult times can be expected in everyone’s life. There is no question. It may feel like the locusts have eaten our crop and the rains have not come or the rains have continued to come without stop and we don’t know what we are going to eat. King David, you know, the one who defeated Goliath, the one who moved the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, the man after God’s own heart. HE prayed in sackcloth and ashes, he fasted and prayed, yet God did not spare his firstborn son. Then Absalom, his oldest son tried to kill him and take over his throne. David made it through. The apostle Paul was beaten with rods, whipped to within inches of death, abandoned at sea, thrown in prison for long periods of time, and even stoned (and it had nothing to do with marijuana)... he made it through. When the locusts of life seek to devour you it will hurt. But somehow, some way, we have to believe that the Bible is truth, God does not lie, He is always faithful. We have to hold on to the truth that God loves us unconditionally with an unlimited love. IF David, Paul, and the Israelites got through then we must believe God can get us through as well.

The first time I preached on this passage, I was going through divorce. My first wife, Jacqueline, had decided she didn’t love me any more and she didn’t want to be a Pastor’s wife. I was only able to see my son Coleton, every Thursday night and every other weekend. In that sermon written back in the Winter of 1995, I wrote, “One of the only things that keeps me going is this idea that if we keep our eyes on the Lord, if we seek the Lord in prayer, we will be able to thank God for the good that He will work out of that situation. If we repent of our sins, God will bless us in the end.”

In the book of Joel, God honored their repentance and blessed the Israelites with food, wine and oil. Our God knows our needs and our wants. God has regard for the real needs of His people. He created us and He knows what we need. God says to each of us this morning, “I will bless you and you will praise the Lord for His goodness.” We will acknowledge or know God’s active presence and His rightful place on the throne of our lives. When we are blessed beyond what we have suffered we should say, “Jesus is Lord and all is well.” Whenever struggles come, repeat that phrase in your mind, “Jesus is Lord and all is well.” When God restores us to plenty after we have known scarcity and want, it is doubly pleasant and will make us more thankful to God. Rejoice and sing His praises. Alleluia, Praise the Lord. I know I have experienced first hand over the last two years.

Then we come to Verse 28, “And afterward.” After God blesses us materially then He will pour out His Spirit and make us healthy spiritually as well as physically. The deliverance of Joel’s generation foreshadowed that of the end times. On the day of Pentecost Peter recalled the words from the last part of this passage from Joel chapter 2:

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. 30 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 32 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls.”

At Pentecost God poured forth His Spirit on all people without regard to sex, age, social position, or race. “ON ALL PEOPLE.” As soon as God’s people humble themselves, pray, and seek His face, He meets them and gifts them with the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit gives life!. The Hebrew word for Spirit is ruach, which is wind, breath, Spirit or life principle. The Spirit is the principle of life. We cannot live by human talent or skill. We need to live by the Holy Spirit. When God poured forth His Spirit on all people He called them, each one, to be a minister. Think about it. In what way are you a missionary, an evangelist, a prophet? If nothing is coming to mind, something isn’t right. We are called to surrender all; all our lives to God so that He can do wonderful things in and through us. We are called to follow Christ. Until each of us makes it a priority to learn more and more so that we can live more and more like Jesus we will not see fruit. We need to do what Jesus did. Jesus didn’t focus on the struggles, He focused on the task before Him and the glory of God.

Paul Stanley of Colorado Springs tells of an experience he had as a company commander in Viet Nam in 1967. “I saw Viet Cong soldiers surrender many times. As they were placed in custody, marched away, and briefly interrogated, their body language and facial expressions always caught my attention. Most hung their heads in shame, staring at the ground, unwilling to look their captors in the eye. But some stood erect, staring defiantly at those around them, resisting any attempt by our men to control them. They had surrendered physically but not mentally. On one occasion after the enemy had withdrawn, I came upon several soldiers surrounding a wounded Viet Cong. Shot through the lower leg, he was hostile and frightened, yet helpless. He threw mud and kicked with his one good leg when anyone came near him. When I joined the circle around the wounded enemy, one soldier asked me, “Sir, what do we do? He’s losing blood fast and needs medical attention.” I looked down at the struggling Viet Cong and saw the face of a 16 year old boy. I unbuckled my pistol belt and hand grenades so he could not grab them, then speaking gently, I slowly moved toward him. He stared fearfully at me as I knelt down, but he allowed me to slide my arms under him and pick him up. As I walked him toward a waiting helicopter, he began to cry and hold me tight. He kept looking at me and squeezing me tighter. We climbed into the helicopter and took off. During the ride, the young captive sat on the floor, clinging to my leg. Never having ridden in a helicopter, he looked out with panic as we gained altitude and flew over the trees. He fixed his eyes back on me and I smiled reassuringly and I put my

hand on his shoulder. After landing, I picked him up and walked toward the first aid tent. As we crossed the field, I felt the tenseness leave his body and his tight grasp loosen. His eyes softened and his head leaned against my chest. The fear and resistance were gone—he had finally surrendered.

The God to whom you and I surrender is NOT our enemy. He heals and cares for everyone He takes captive. And God tells us in verse 32 that “Everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved.” EVERYONE!!! Now to call on the name of Yahweh does not mean merely to appeal to Yahweh for help in times of need, as if God were a fireman that you only call when you are in need. The words used in the original language reveals that to call on the name of the Lord is to Worship Him and to acknowledge one’s allegiance and commitment to Yahweh even to the ends of the earth. This calling on God pre-supposed knowledge of Him, we have to spend time in the Word. This calling on God pre-supposes faith in Him, desire to live His way, a dependence on Him, and an obedience to His will. The praying remnant will be saved! Do you trust in the Lord? I pray that we will simply focus on what God calls us to do. Let’s sincerely trust and obey. Let’s seek to live Jesus’ way as a priority and leave the results in God’s hands.

We are called to turn away from our sin and turn toward God, from self to Christ and from things below to things above. Call on the Lord, spend time in prayer, seek His face, spend time in the Word, cultivate your desire for and dependence on the Lord. He is God. Jesus is Lord and all will be good. The very name of the author of this book, Joel, means “Yahweh is God!” Depend on Him, that anchor holds! Remember that He loved us first. While we were still sinners, enemies to God, God sent His Son to die for us. His blood paid the debt that we owed for all our sin, past ... present ... and future. Depend on God and let Him bring you, let Him bring us, back to health. The future may look uncertain but we have to move forward trusting in God’s faithfulness as we live in obedience to all God calls us to do. Please, please, please pray continually, share with us how God is working during the Fish Story time, and ask God every day to show you some way that you can show love in action. God will make a way, where there seems to be no way. He will not leave us in the valley, He will get us through any and every valley he calls us to go through, no matter what. And God will work all things together for good.

Let’s pray ...Dear Lord, God, heavenly Father, there are some of us who are feeling lonely today. There are some that don’t feel well and are struggling physically. There are some of us who are hurting emotionally, some are depressed, angry, and sick of life not going the way they want. Some of us are feeling that you are far away. Waiting on You and Your perfect timing is difficult Lord. Restore us. We pray for healing, we pray for assurance. Send us people, send us financial resources, and give us strength to keep on keeping on. Restore unto us the joy of Your salvation and renew a right Spirit within us. We ask in the precious name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. AMEN

Sermon Notes for “Back to Health in the Spirit”
based on Joel 2:23-32 given at Doster Community Church June 14, 2026

- I. No matter how dark the cloud of locusts or the drought or flood or valley of the shadow, Christ will never leave us. He gets us THROUGH.
- II. No matter how bad it gets rejoice in the Lord. He will make diamonds out of pressure/stress.
- III. Repent and turn to the Lord, depend on Him, trust in Him and He will bless you.
- IV. If you are God’s child, adopted through the blood of the Lamb, then you can have an eternal perspective ... we win in the end.
- V. We are called to surrender all our lives to God so that He can do wonderful things in and through us. We are called to follow Jesus. Until each of us makes it a priority to live more and more like Jesus we will not see fruit. We need to do what Jesus did. Read the Gospels to remember what Jesus did!
- VI. What is God saying to you specifically this morning?
- VII. What are you going to do about it? What change will you make this week?