

Repentance, God's Bounty, And the Spirit

by Pastor Chris

Good morning, everybody. How are you all doing? Moms, Did you have a great Mother's Day? And then Alright, let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for the opportunity once again to come together to spend time in your word. Be with us as we share stories. And especially Lord what Joel two has in store for us in Jesus name. Amen.

Dr. John Goetsch tells of a time where he was a younger man. It was a cool and crispy Saturday night in the Midwest. The lights were on it was a Saturday night. The fans were filling the stands the band was playing and they were ready for some football. The opening kick takes place the game was intense. Back and forth. There was a Touchdown, touchdown there feel goal there, perhaps maybe an interception, maybe a fumble. And then it really really got serious. Nobody was giving up any momentum. From the clock ticking down. Toward halftime, the opposing team decided to go for it all. The quarterback he took a seven drop step back while his linemen formed a perfect pocket around him. Now John was an outside linebacker and he read with his eyes, he saw the play, he was anticipating everything developing, he dropped deep into a zone of coverage and anticipating that the tight end would try to get out and try to go for the pass. So he watches the play playing out but instead of throwing to the tight end, John looks and he sees one of the wide receivers. Running on the sideline as fast as possible. The defensive back is matching his every step running faster and faster. The quarterback throws to the wide receiver, both wide receiver and the defensive back jump up into the air. And fortunately for John the defensive back, his fingers just barely touch the football and taps it away from the receiver. And John thought yes. But as the wide receiver and the defensive back, fall to the floor, their legs get entangled. And when they landed the wide receiver, lets out one of the worst screams of his life realizing that he had injured his knee. It was so bad. I'll just save the gory details. Just it was really bad. John saw what had happened. The referee blew the whistle for all of the medical to come out. And they had to put the young man on a stretcher is obvious injury while though gruesome at best, eventually came back stronger than ever.

How many of you have perhaps broken a bone and when you break that bone? It's actually stronger than before you broke it? Anybody? Can anybody attest to that? Okay, we got a few people. We got two people. No, but it's scientifically proven that in some cases, when you break a bone, it's actually stronger than before you broke it. Now John lifts up this point too, though, where he says, I wonder isn't that exactly what God does with our lives as well? Perhaps that is why God says in Psalms 51:17 It says, The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart of God that will not despise God desires broken heart because he knows that when we come to Him in that condition, God can make all things new. Amen. And give us a new heart, a new spirit. And we can be better we can be stronger. So as you go about maybe in your life right now you're questioning things, saying things seem to be broken and yet God can take that broken heart and do wonderful and immeasurable things in our lives. So let's go to the book of Joel. Joel chapter two. Last week, we kind of basically had to blitz through Joel 2, that was not my intention, but I wanted to cover a lot of stuff. So kind of just as a, as a recap to remind us of what happened. Initially, in the book of Joel chapter one and half of chapter two.

The first part is there was the day of the Lord there was a plague of locusts that came into the land of Judah. And basically decimated and annihilated everything. Now, when we look in the Bible, was there ever a plague of locusts that came through a land? Can you anyone remember? Through the Egypt, right? And basically, the locusts ravaged Egypt, except the tables have turned instead of going against Judah's enemies. It's on Judah itself. And why did this happen? We don't know exactly know why. Other than Judah was not being faithful to God, and God had to get their attention and say, Hey, you guys have strayed, please come back. But there's also not just one day of the Lord, there's a second day of the Lord a coming time where if they don't get their act together, if they do not change from their ways, if they don't repent, they do not run their heart, there is an army of locusts, possibly potentially another army coming in and taking over. Yet, alas, we find that God does not forget God's people. In fact, God pleads with the people, starting with the spiritual leaders of that time, Hey, come on, let's get things back in order. Because remember, when the plague came through, and not only decimated them, economically, there was no grain, they could not do agriculture, they couldn't, they couldn't grow fruit and vegetables fast enough to save them.

And there was also a spiritual cost because those animals that maybe still stayed alive would have nothing to eat, and there would be no ability to have sacrifices. So it was a physical issue. It was an economical issue was a mental, but also a spiritual issue. Now, sometimes I hear this narrative that God's grace can only be found in the New Testament. And yet, when we read through the Old Testament, there's plenty of examples that especially as we're going to read, that God is a God full of grace, amen. So let's just remind ourselves, okay, that God has got a grace. So we've talked a little bit about Joel 1. Joel has already talked about the seeds of grace and forgiveness, but Chapter 2 takes it a step further. And not just grace but actually restoration. Okay, our our theme series, theme, title is called restored better than new. So, what happens?

Let's go to Joel chapter 2, verse 18. Well, there, okay. So, then the Lord was jealous for his land and took people pity on his people. The Lord replied to them, I am sending you grain and new wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy you fully. Never again, will I make you an object of scorn to the nation. So God right here is already he is reminding them, hey, I'm going to come in and I'm going to restore you. I will drive the northern horde from you push it into the parched and barren land, its eastern ranks will drown in the Dead Sea and its Midwestern ranks in the Mediterranean Sea and its stench will go up, its smell will rise. Surely he has done great things. Okay. So the first thing that we can take from this passage is that God promises restoration for Joel please come back to me. I am full of grace and I will restore you. So restoration, God promises to restore the land. They will not be wasted away. Now, let's continue. Do not be afraid land of Judah. Be glad and what? Rejoice Surely the Lord has done what great things do not be afraid you wild animals for the wild for the pastures in the wilderness are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit, the fig tree and the vine yield their riches Be glad I remember there's whenever you read a passage look for commonality look for things that repeat it says Be glad several times be glad people have Zion. Rejoice and Lord your God for he has given you the autumn rains, because he is faithful. Remember scorched land. What do you need to do to enable to have it to grow, you need water, rain, he sends you abundant showers both Autumn and Spring rains as before the threshing floors will be filled with grain, the backs will overflow with new one oil. And here's a key verse 25. I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten the great locusts and the young ogres. The other locusts and the Locust Swarm my great army that I sent among you.

So God is basically staying right here, look what's done is done. But guess what it is going to, I'm going to redo and remake everything new. So much so that in verse 26, you're not just going to have food to eat, you're going to have plenty to eat until you are what you are full. Anybody ever go to a really great restaurant, maybe one of the favorite restaurants that you love, and you just you eat to your heart's content, your favorite meal, that you just basically are the point of like, okay, I need to be wheeled out in a barrel. Because if I walk, I'm gonna fall down. That's a good feeling right? God says, I am going to give you plenty to eat until you're full and you will praise the name of the Lord your God. Who has worked wonders for you never again, will my people be what? shamed? Because also remember that the surrounding nations, they're looking and eyeing Judah, they're thinking, how can I take this land, see this great opportunity? Then you will know that I am in Israel, for I am the Lord your God, and there will be no other? Never again, will my people be shamed.

So one of the things that we can take away here is rejoice and be glad. Now oftentimes when calamity or frustration strikes us, it's so much easier to whine than to thank God. Right? How many times in fact, we did a series on this. How many times have we read from the Scripture more particularly Philippians 4, Rejoice and be glad. And yet when the hard times come the calamity, the frustration of the missed opportunities. And we think why when we should probably be saying, rejoice, Lord, I'm going to rejoice you even though things are not going the way that I want them to. Can you all can you all have you all experienced that at some point maybe in your life?

There's a story told of an individual who was riding a bus and she saw a housekeeper with lovely golden hair and she was jealous. She wanted lovely golden hair. And she seemed so happy. And yet she felt just fair. And when she got him to leave, she noticed that the young woman the housekeeper, had a hobble to her step. And she had one foot in a prosthetic leg. But as she passed, she smiled at her. To which the lady said oh God, forgive me. When I whine I have two working feet. The world is mine. And when I stopped by to stop by some sweets, the lad who had served me had such charm, he seemed to radiate this awesome cheer. His manner was so kind and warm. And I said, it's nice to deal with you such courtesies such matters. I seldom find. He turned and said, Oh, thank you, sir. Ma'am. And then I saw that he was blind. Oh, God, forgive me. When I whine I have two eyes. The world is mine. And then when I was walking down the street, I saw a child with a set of blue eyes. He stood and watched the others play it seemed he knew not what to do. I stopped the moment and I said why don't you go join the others young one. Yet he looked ahead without a word. Because he couldn't hear me. Oh God forgive me. When I whine and I have two ears. The world is mine. With two feet to take me where I'd go with eyes to see the sunsets glow the ears to hear what I would know. I am blessed indeed. The world is mine. Oh God, forgive me when I whine. When I read that, that spoke to me, I felt like this This arrow just like shoots straight to my heart because it's so easy for us to want to whine. And maybe we do have reason to whine. But has whining ever helped us may get you your way for a little bit. But when you maybe whine to your superiors maybe when you whine to your parents, or your siblings, are you really getting ahead? Not really. It's so easy to take pity on ourselves. When we have so much we can be grateful for, for instance, you woke up Amen. You're above ground. That's a blessing. Some of you have the ability to drive here you have a car, you have a roof over your head. That's a blessing, amen. Has the land been scorched? Is the earth parched with dirt? There's dirt, but at least there's still some moisture, Amen. Let us count the blessings that we have. So may we rejoice and be glad.

Now, to go towards the end of this last passage here. And Joel chapter 2. There's a very significant passage verses 28 through 32. That is very important for us to be mindful of. And it's a common it's

probably the dominant theme. Actually, in the book of Joel at least four I think, if not five times, there is this phrase called The Day of the Lord. So in verse 28, says, and afterward I will pour out my spirit on how many people, all people, not just not just Elijah, or Elisha, or Joel or Isaiah, but all people, your sons and your daughters will what? Your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see what visions and even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit. In those days, I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke, the sun will be turned to darkness in the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. For on Mount Zion. And in Jerusalem, there will be what deliverance as the Lord has said, even among the survivors who the Lord calls, so the day of the Lord, the day, the Lord can mean a couple of things. The day alert could be a good thing where God intervenes and steps in and helps the people could also be a day of the Lord where hey, you guys, you have greatly strayed, you need to come back to me. But there's this major theme and it's not just here in the book of Joel, the day of the Lord can be found in the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos and Obadiah. We're gonna get to that in two weeks, by the way, Zephaniah and Malachi, and not just in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament, we find in First Corinthians five, five or Thessalonians, five to Second Peter three. And it actually says that terminology the day of the Lord, whereas in Matthew 11, or First Corinthians they change that up a little bit where instead of as day the Lord It's the day of judgment or the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, or the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so for the Old Testament prophets, the day of the Lord is the time when God clearly comes near to visit the world and intervene in human history. Obviously, that can help happen more than once. Amen. By the way, that's a quote from John Tyndall. So God has intervene in a mighty way by protecting God's people, helping them but also reminding them Hey, Judah is real. You have strayed, please come back to me. Now, out of this out of this passage, verses 28 through 32. There are several promises, okay. God promises the spirit. There's also nine references to this passage alone in the New Testament, God promises the Holy Spirit. But not only that, God not only promises the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is poured out. It's not like where you get a Malachi and you fill up a cup of water. I wish I had that opportunity, but I didn't want to make a mess. It's not like God takes a picture and pours out water on a cup, but it's like the Niagara Falls being poured over. Right? The promise of the Holy Spirit is not something small but it's for all people who desire to hear and be with God. Ever everyone, everyone can receive the Spirit. In fact it says even on my servants ok. Joel is making a significant important, it's not just the prophets are the leaders, but even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. And finally, everyone can have communion or interaction with God. We don't have to go to somebody to vouch for us to go to God, because we can deal with God directly they met.

Now God is revealing who God is. But if we just look at this passage alone, we be doing ourselves a great disservice. Because guess what, somebody quotes this passage of fact, if we go to the book of Acts, chapter 2, a very significant event happens in Acts chapter 2, verses 17 through 21. One of the disciples stands up Acts 2 verses 17 through 21. I'm sorry, I didn't get a chance to put this on. I came to this afterwards. But in Acts 2, verses 17 through 21, it says Peter literally quotes the book of Joel and says, in these last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people, your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams sound familiar? Even on my sermons, both men and women, I will pour out the Spirit in those days and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above signs on the earth below blood and fire and billows of smoke, the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. But in verse 21, he changes just a little bit and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will

be what? saved, Amen. Now in verse 32, Joel, Joel has talked to the people that Judah is back then, and Peter in Acts 2, he's pointing out that these things have been fulfilled. And guess what they are not just for today, but it continuing the day of the Lord is not just one day can be several days. Why does Peter proclaim this message, what's taking place here in the context of this passage, what's happened is some great event has happened. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, one word, describe it as called Pentecost. Okay, they've been prophesied. And all of a sudden, right before this, as they're speaking, there's other people of many different nations. And the disciples are talking, they're saying great things, everybody can understand everything, even though they're all speaking in different languages, I can't remember the name of the nations off the top of my head right now. But if you were a Greek, if you were a Jew, if you came from other places, you understood your language. And you could only come to the conclusion that God was doing a great and mighty work in these disciples. And it doesn't just stop there. Because if you look through the, the whole book of Acts, that people are prophesying, they're praying, and the Holy Spirit is doing a great and mighty work. And everybody has the opportunity to not only talk to God, but can be led by the Spirit because that's what God wants to do in our lives. Amen.

So what does this all mean for us? Every week I get together with Bill and he always asks is really difficult question. So what? How does Joel to help us in our lives? Number one, are we perfect people? No. We all have the opportunity to grow, amen. So there's always places in our lives that we could change and we can grow and adapt, much like the people of Judah. God is pleading with them, please come back. And guess what? As you come to me, and I'm going to work in your lives, guess what, I'm going to restore the land. But to do so admits that, oh, I was wrong at some point. How many of us love to admit that we're wrong, especially when we have to publicly acknowledge it? Oh, that's a hard thing to do. Right. Especially admitting, like, I'm not perfect, I'm flawed. But the beauty of Joel is it's a reminder of God's faithfulness, that God can indeed, re store us. And just like the young man who broke his leg, his leg was healed. And it was stronger and better than ever. God can do an amazing, wonderful work in our lives.

To close with. Okay, there was a story told of two guys named Jim and Alex that were at a dealership where Alex worked at an auto dealership, and Alex says, Jim, I feel like I'm a hypocrite every time I go to church because I failed to live for Christ so often. Alex, he tells Alex Well, what do you call this part of the dealership and Jim says it's the showroom with all of the cars. And it says behind that you have the parts department and you have the service and And then Jim says, What if I told you I didn't bring my car to the service department? Even though the shocks are shot, the engine is running really rough. Alex says, well, you'd be a knucklehead to not take it back to you need to fix it. Right? Well, Jim points out. Yeah, you're absolutely right.

Now let's get back to here, the church, ok, in your initial desire to follow Jesus, you give your life but to Christ, but instead of thinking of the church as a showroom, where we try to lie to each other, everything is great, our lives are fine, everything's perfect. Nothing to see here. You're a mess. And that's why we are here. God does not call the perfect people to be here at church, God calls the broken and willing to be humbled and restored to this place. Sorry, if you're here, because you want to lie to ourselves, you're not going to get very far, amen. Let's be honest with ourselves, we all have areas in our life where we can grow, and we need to be restored. So may you allow the Holy Spirit to a great work in your life. Just as the people in Joel were called to seek forgiveness, to read your heart, to be honest with yourselves to acknowledge that God is God, and that we need to turn our lives to the way that God desires to live our lives and not just because Oh, God has been this, this dictator but no, because God

wants us to have not just a good life, but a great life. Because the ways of God are a great life. May you seek the Lord, read your heart? May you follow God? May you find restoration. Now, where in your life have you experienced deep loss and regret? Because I'm sure that people in general felt a lot of loss. And they probably experienced a lot of regret. Amen. So, let us take that last passage, verses 28 through 32. And it says, seek the Holy Spirit. May you pray for restoration for healing, and that you may rejoice and be glad.

Father in heaven, thank you, Lord, for your great love. And God sometimes we have to be woken up sometimes we have to have a wake up call. But it meaning that we sometimes are not perfect people that we make mistakes is hard. But Lord, You are full of grace and love and your desire to seek... to have us seek you. Restore us, heal us, help us in all that we do, Lord, may we be the faithful people you've called us to be not only here in this building in Downey, but throughout the city and wherever we are, wherever we live wherever we work, wherever we go. In Jesus name, amen.

Grace and peace everybody.