

From Famine to Feasting

by Bob Phillips

The sermon addresses the spiritual famine in the church and calls for a return to God for true nourishment and fulfillment.

Duration: 1:10:50

Scripture: Isaiah 5:30, Isaiah 33:17, Isaiah 33:19, Joel 2:1-3

Topics: "Judgment And Repentance", "Spiritual Discernment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of discernment and preparation for the coming judgment. He references Isaiah 33:17, which speaks of seeing the king in his beauty and no longer encountering fierce people. The preacher urges the congregation to seek repentance and spend time with God if they have been convicted by the message. He compares the Word of God to a seed, highlighting its potential for growth and transformation. The preacher also warns against deceptive influences that may appear good but are actually destructive, using the analogy of locusts disguised as rain. He further supports his message by referencing Jeremiah 15:3 and Ezekiel 14, which speak of doom and severe judgments.

Transcript

I ask you to do it now in Jesus' name, amen. Jeremiah chapter 2, I've been doing, back in Lindale, Van, Texas, where David and I go to church, we've got a little group there, and I've been doing a series on the book of Jeremiah. I just want to cover a couple of scriptures there, and then we're going to go to Joel.

I want to say this to you, I believe there's a famine in the land. There's a lot of talk about feasting, but there's a famine in the land. My message this morning is from famine to feasting, because famine is where we are, feasting is where we want to go.

And everyone today wants to know how to feast. If you don't think that's true, go to your Christian bookstores. I'm not trying to criticize them, but they sell what people demand.

Try to find a good book on the cross. We have a whole generation, my generation, I shudder to think what will happen if the Lord tarries to the generation after me. We have a whole generation growing up that does not know, understand, or care about the cross.

There was a time when you could go in bookstores, you could find all kinds of books on the cross. I challenge you, try to find one. You're going to find a lot of self-help books.

You'll find a lot of books about how to overcome worry, depression, fear, loneliness. You'll find a lot of books about how to build churches. We don't recognize that our problem is that God has withdrawn His presence.

When God's people forget Him, God honors them with His absence. And that's what's happened to us today. We don't recognize it.

We keep trying to grab a hold of things, to try to fill the void that's there. You know what God says? David mentioned it last night. I want you to see it.

Verse five, Jeremiah two. Thus says the Lord. Now, can you see God's heart crying this out? Now think of this.

Here's the people he's talking to. Same thing applies to us. He said in Romans nine, Paul was talking about this people to them has been given the covenants.

They've been given the service of God. They've been given the law and the testimony of God. And they turn away from all of that and they turn to idols, worthless things which will hold no water.

And here's what God's heart says. Thus says the Lord. What injustice, what unrighteousness did your fathers find in me that they went far from me and walked after emptiness and became empty? That's God's heart.

He's saying to his people, look at me. That's what God's saying, look at me. What is there in me that you've looked at that you don't like? What is there about me, holy God, that you like your idols and your lusts and your pleasures more? What did I give you? I can't give you.

That's God's heart today. He's crying that out. What have I done? Oh, my people.

What have I done that you've so turned against me? Turn with me to verse 13. I won't go into this this morning, but I can show you through the Scriptures that when God judges the heathen, he judges them one time. But God's people, those who've walked with him, are judged double for all their sins.

Because the sin of a people who've walked with God and then turned away from him is a double sin. He says it right here in verse 13, for my people have committed how many evils? They've committed two evils. Here they are.

They've forsaken me. Now, when you forsake God, the natural result of it is that you've known God, you forsake him. The natural result is that your sin becomes double.

He says. They've forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and they hewn out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. And he's he's drawing a picture here.

And the picture is this of a of a they would hew out these vats or these large reservoirs out of stone. Some of them would be fed by pure, natural spring water. That's the fountain of living waters he's talking about.

That's a picture of the Lord. And then they had others that would just collect the water that fell down. I shared this Sunday, but my grandfather, I can remember that point.

My grandfather, they had he had no running water in the house. Had a well out back. And he also had drains coming down from the house.

The well waters had a spring feeding into it, and that's where we got our water to drink. But he had these huge barrels underneath every gutter spout. And he would collect that water, but you didn't drink it because it's contaminated.

It wasn't pure. We took a bath in that water. I enjoyed it.

I'd go to his house and and, you know, I'd go out and I'd draw the water. Probably the best water I can ever remember tasting. But that's what he's saying here.

He says, why have you forsaken me? I'm the fountain of living waters, pure, crystal clear, pure water, and it's available for you to drink. Why are you turning to the polluted water that falls from the skies? Why are you turning to the earthly things? It's his heart crying out. I hear that same cry when I get alone and shut up with God.

I hear the same cry today. Why have you committed two evils? Well, when you forget God, it not only brings this double sin, but it always brings a famine. I want to say it again.

We have a famine in the land today. You know what God says? And we see it happening. I've read it before.

I saw it about three or four years ago in Jeremiah two, and I never really believed what I thought the Lord was telling me. And today I'm seeing it clearly. Look what he says.

Jeremiah two, verse twenty nine. Why do you contend with me? You've all transgressed against me, declares the Lord. In vain I have struck your sons.

Has there been some striking today in America? Have we seen God's judgment? What about your own life? What about the lives of the people you pastor? Those that you see as acquaintances? Some judgment coming. There's two people that God chastens. He chastens his sons.

Then there's the rain that falls on the just and the unjust, both the good rain and the chastening rain. But the difference is that whenever those people who are not hungry for God get chastened, they don't turn back to God. And it says here in verse thirty, in vain I've struck your sons, but they accepted no chastening.

Your sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion. Tell me of a day when you've heard of more preachers falling to sin than you see today. Tell me a time when you've heard of more preachers being slain by the sword, devoured by the lion than you hear today.

Oh, generation, heed the word of the Lord. Have I been a wilderness to Israel or a land of thick darkness? There he is again. He's saying, what is it about me? What have I been to you? What more could I have done that I haven't done? Why do my people say we're free to roam? We'll come no more to thee.

Can a virgin forget her ornaments or a bride, her attire? Would a bride? Can you imagine? Can you imagine a bride leaving her house, going to the church? Walking down the aisle, just in her regular street clothes, standing in front of her husband and saying her husband to being saying, honey, I'm sorry, I forgot my wedding dress. No, there's not anything she's more meticulous about than how she looks in that wedding dress. She's a real bride.

She doesn't go off and leave it. It got this. He compares it like, how could you have left me? Now notice this, what he says.

Here's what I saw several years ago. Couldn't believe it. You've forgotten me days without number.

Verse 33, how well you prepare your way to seek love. Therefore, even the wicked women, you've taught your ways. The Lord told me three or four years ago when he spoke that to me, there would be a time when God's people would teach the world how to sin.

And that's exactly what he says right here. He said, you prepared your way to seek love. In other words, if you want lust to go in your heart, you'll find a way to do it.

I took to a man recently, most ingenious, most ingenious scheme using the Scriptures to justify his divorce and adultery that I've ever heard. Man called me. I confronted him about his sin.

Been married three times, trying to entice another young girl. She was just as guilty as he, but what I want to share with you is that when that man began to share with me, he said, well, no, I haven't really been married three times. I said, what do you mean? I know you've been married three times.

No, not really. I said, well, I've got to hear this one. I think something's coming.

I've got to hear it. He said, well, you know, it says in James that a man is enticed by his own lust. Then when he's enticed by his own lust, he said that gives birth to sin, then sin brings forth death.

So, well, you see, before I married those other women. I have a lust problem. I don't have it now, he says, but he said before I married those other women, I have a lust problem.

And and I had sexual relations with them before we married. So therefore, when I was enticed by that lust, it brought forth death. So when I said those wedding vows, I was a dead man standing there saying those vows.

Therefore, it doesn't count. Now, listen to me, as funny as that sounds, that man was perfectly serious. And you know what he told me? He said, there's four preachers in Dallas.

You may not agree with me. Maybe we don't interpret it that way, but God's given me some lights you don't have yet. I know you'll get it one of these days.

He said, there's four preachers I've been to in Dallas, four preachers that agree with me. I said, who are they? And he mentioned the four, one of them I knew. And I said, no, that preacher didn't agree with you.

I know that man. I preached in his church. You're lying.

He said, you call him and find out. I did. I could not believe what I heard.

That preacher said, yes, I see what he's talking about. I just went. Because this man, I know at one time was walking with God.

I tell you, a man does that when he's got a sin problem, his own life, God's people, those who claim to be God's people are going to show the world how to sin. That's what it says. We tell the world we're showing the world how to get rich, aren't we? In the church, we show them out.

I used to be a businessman before I went into the ministry on my own business. If you had presented me now, I didn't have I wouldn't say I didn't know Jesus. I went to church.

But if you had come to me then and you said, hey, I, you know, I found a way you can be more prosperous. I mean, you just name it and claim it. You can have anything you want.

I guarantee you got to bless your business. I'm no fool. I would have taken it.

But I never would have found Jesus with that. I would have been taught how to walk in the greed and lust that already had my heart and talk about Jesus. God's people will teach the world how to sin.

There's a famine in the land. Oh, I tell you, I you know, as I said, everyone wants to feast today, wants to find out how to feast on the word, how to feast on God, how to get this, get that. I'm convinced that there's few, few.

We'll say it again. Few. That means not very many who recognize there's a famine.

Now turn with me to Joel, Joel chapter one. I understand and believe that Joel two 28 was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. I also believe that we're going to see a mighty outpouring of the spirit of God in our land, but I don't believe it's going to come like a great sweeping revival.

I believe it's going to come to the hearts. I believe Malachi said it Malachi in the third chapter said that when those who feared the Lord called upon his name, he heard their voice and said they were like precious jewels in his sight and they begin to join together. And that's what God's doing today is joining together his people who have a fear of God in their hearts.

And he said, then you'll be able to determine or distinguish or discern the difference between those who walk with the Lord and those who don't walk with the Lord. But I also believe that the only ones that are going to have that discernment, because I read also in Jeremiah and Isaiah and Ezekiel, where he says one of the curses he's going to bring on the land who turns from him is I'm going to take the discernment of your discerning man away from you. You know, the only people going to recognize who's really walking with the Lord of those who seeking him with their own heart, they're going to be able to see the difference between light and darkness while the rest of the world calls darkness light.

And they've called the real light darkness. Joel one, he talks about something. Notice what he says.

Verse one, the word of the Lord that came to Joel, son of Bethuel. Here's this, oh elders, and listen, all inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days or in your father's days? He said, you're going to see something that's never you've never seen it like this before.

You'll even be able to tell your sons about it in verse three, and they'll tell their sons, sons in the next generation that has a historical fulfillment. But I'm saying to you that we're also going to see it and are seeing it now. It's a famine.

Now, look what he says. Verse four. What the gnawing locust is left, the swarming locust is eaten, what the swarming locust is left, the creeping locust is eaten, what the creeping locust is left, the stripping locust is eaten.

It may be reading a little bit different in the King James, but basically what I'm wanting to say to you, I don't think he's trying to describe four different stages. What he's doing is the same thing the prophets did throughout the land. When God was preparing his people and telling them there's going to be an entire ruin or complete destruction, he talked about four times of four kinds of judgment.

That's what he does here, uses four types of locusts. And what he's saying is there's going to be such a judgment coming that it's going to be the entire ruling of what you see. Well, I can show you that he also said it in Jeremiah 15, three, I don't want you to turn there, but he said, I shall appoint over my people, four kinds of doom, the sword to slay the dogs, to drag off the beast of the field and the birds of the sky to devour four kinds of doom.

Jeremiah said, then Ezekiel came by and he said, in the 14th chapter, he said, you know, even if Noah, David, and Joel were in your midst and we pray for you, the only people they'd be able to deliver was their own righteous souls. Then his next statement in the 21st verse was, I am going to send my four severe judgments, the sword, the famine, wild beasts and the plague to cut men off. See what I'm saying to you is this.

This is just the way the prophets used under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to declare that a great, mighty judgment was coming. And that's what he said. First, 16.

Let's see what the problem is. Has not food been cut off before our eyes? Gladness and joy from the house of our God. Well, I think Brother Dave can testify to this.

His wife, when mentioned it last night, we were talking about some things. She said, I'm appalled at the number of letters that come into the ministry saying, please pray for my preacher. We don't get the word of God here.

There's a famine of the word of God. The people are not being fed. We get a lot of sermons.

We've got some of the best orators. I was the one particular man that has a radio ministry. If I ever turn the radio on and hear it, that was one of those captivating voices I've ever heard.

Beautiful, sweet, flowing voice never says anything, never seems to stumble over anything. I mean, says everything just meticulously perfect. But every time I listen to him, I keep trying to hear it.

I keep waiting to see what's he fed me with that will feed my soul. And I end up with nothing. Yet he remains one of the most popular preachers in America.

Food's been cut off from before our eyes. It's a famine. Gladness and joy from the house of God.

We've got to teach people how to praise them. We have to teach them how to dance in the spirit. Well, it's true, isn't it? Gladness and joy have been cut off.

Now, I'm not saying we don't have a lot of outward activity, but the gladness and joy produced by the presence of the Holy Spirit is missing from our churches. I'm not much of a dancer, but I can dance when the Holy Spirit comes. When I ask you a question, he says in verse 17, the seeds shrivel under the clods.

The ground's not broken up. Listen, I'm not saying there's not some truth going forth. I've heard I've heard many sermons where there's truth going forth, but truth that's planted in a heart where the clods haven't been broken up, where the land's not been plowed.

You can speak truth in your pulpits. You can speak truth about Jesus. You can speak truth using the Bible.

But if you don't deal with the hearts of the people to break up the hardness, it will shrivel. The seed of the word will shrivel under the clods. There's no repentance preached.

That's what it's saying. The ground's not broken up before the planting takes place. See, that's where people get deceived.

I heard not too long ago, heard a man talking about this man who had preached a beautiful, beautiful message on prayer. And he asked me, he said, what do you think about the message that's going forth there on prayer? I said, I'd rather not comment. He kept pressing me and finally I said, well, OK, you want to know, I have to tell you, I don't believe it's truth.

And what he's saying is truth. I have no problem with that, but it's not going to produce what he's talking about. He said, why it's truth, but it's not being put in hearts that have been prepared to receive it.

You don't try to teach an ungodly, degenerated vine. That's what I said. That's what Jeremiah called us.

You don't teach a degenerated vine how to pray until there's repentance in their life. So the clods are broken up. There's not going to be any growth of the seed.

Mark 4 is one of my favorite passages of Scripture. Mark 4, Mark 13, Mark 8 is a picture of the seed that's sown forth. The Word of God's one of the most beautiful things.

The Word of God is called a seed. It's a seed. Now, I'm not a farmer, but I know that if I take a grain of corn, I could go right out here, take a grain of corn, plant it in the ground.

And if I watered it enough, it got some sunshine, the proper nutrients, that thing, a stalk would come up. I don't know anything about corn. That's because of the Word.

See, the Word of God is like a seed. Now, inside every grain of seed is like a computer. God placed it there.

That grain of seed has something inside it that's designed to produce and will produce what it's designed to do. I plant wheat grains, I want to get wheat. I plant corn grains, I want to get corn.

The Word of God, when it's planted in a pure heart, listen, there's not enough power in hell to stop it from growing and producing what it's designed to produce. And what it's designed to produce is the image and character of Jesus in my life and your life. But then Luke 8 talks about that seed.

He talks about a trampled seed. He says, but the seed's been trampled. I take that same grain of corn, take a hammer and smash it, break it into four pieces, go plant it in the ground, do the same thing to it.

What will it produce? Absolutely nothing. The image has been destroyed. That's what's happening with a lot of the truth that's going forth.

There's truth going forth in some places, but the image of the seed of holiness is being destroyed and it's not producing the character of Jesus. That's what he's talking about. I want to ask you this, in all honesty, pastors, Christian workers, whatever capacity, is there a famine? Are you suffering from a famine in your own soul? Are the rivers of living water really flowing? Be honest.

You can agree with everything I've said up to this point and everything I say after this, but that's not what I want you to do. What I want you to do is examine your own heart. Are they really flowing? There's going to be a feasting.

I'm going to get to that in a moment, but listen, there's got to be the breaking up of the clods before the seed of the Word can do its work. If you can honestly say, I'm blind, I don't see, God says, you'll see and your sin's removed. But it was to the Pharisees to say, well, we see, we're not blind.

He says, then your sin stays. If you see there's a need in your life and the waters have, for whatever reason, they've dried up, the fresh springs that used to flow in your life are not flowing anymore. God's got a remedy for that.

What he doesn't have a remedy for the man who pretends. Psalm 81 has a scripture in the New American Standard. It doesn't say it exactly that way in the King James, but Psalm 81, verse 15, the New American Standard said, those who hate the Lord pretend obedience to him.

Well, it's drawn. Look what he says. Verse 8. He says, I want you to wail like a virgin.

I want you to lament and gird with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth. Like a virgin, you're to wail and lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth. Now, here's what that's a picture of.

Whenever, whenever a virgin, the betrothal in Jewish times in this time of this was written, that a betrothal period. And it's a picture of a virgin who's taken and been betrothed to a husband. She's not living with him yet, but she's waiting for the consummation of that marriage to take place.

And all of a sudden, all of a sudden, her husband is robbed from her. He's taken away from her. She was looking forward to coming together and being married to him.

But he's missing, he's been taken away. My friends, listen, that's exactly our picture of where we're at today. The bridegroom's presence is not where it used to be.

And I'm not just trying to go back in the back, go back to back times. There ought to be in every minister here that really is falling after God. I don't care if your church is the most alive church of anyone here, then you'll be weeping that much more for what you see around you.

There will be a lamenting and a weeping because of what you see. How can you look around you and not be heartbroken? I can't even go to a mall without being heartbroken. Recently, I was in a place where I was around several teenagers.

I'm not going to describe things graphically that I saw. I saw a big badge on one girl. You know, just a button.

Very strong sexual overtones. Pretty, pretty young girl. Probably 14, 15 years old.

Saw one boy. One boy had a t-shirt on, had a badge like a detective's badge on the front. Picture of a voluptuous looking woman in a bikini.

And said, I'm a bikini inspector. He's probably 14, 15 years old. Saw one girl.

I described it to my wife. She didn't even believe me. One girl had, all she had on was these, I don't know what you'd call them, pantyhose, I guess, but with designs in them.

They were thick. Just skin tight. Saw she had on.

You know what I thought to myself? How did they get out of the house like that? I wept for the young people. I felt an anger. The anger of God.

How did they get out of the house looking like that? I said, my God, what's happening in the house? Things like that. Verse 9, the grain offering, the libation are cut off from the house of the Lord. The priests mourn the ministers of the Lord.

Fields ruined. The land mourns. The grain's ruined.

The new wine dries up. Fresh oil fails. He says in verse 9 again, the grain offering's cut off.

The grain offering was offered after the burnt offering. It's a picture in Leviticus of Jesus, but it's also a picture of us because we're to walk in his footsteps. Now, the grain offering was not allowed to have any or meat offering, it says in King James, not allowed to have any leaven in it because it's the leaven that produces the air holes in bread.

And basically what God's trying to tell us through that is I'll not offer. I'll not accept an inflated offering. That's what we've got today.

We've got a bunch of inflated offerings. They look like something. They look real.

When you taste them, it's nothing but air holes. And then God says, see, it had no leaven in it. And then then it would.

You took fine flour that talked about the purity. And when he's saying that the grain offerings missing from the house of the Lord, he's saying there's no purity there. Where's the purity in the holiness? Then they took that and they mixed it with frankincense.

You know what frankincense? Then they took oil and they put the oil and they mixed it all together. The oil, the picture, of course, of the presence and anointing of the Holy Spirit. The frankincense being the sweet aroma, the prayers, the sweet aroma that goes up to God.

He says it's missing from my house. That's what God's saying. I say there's a famine in the land.

Where is it? Where are the churches today? Where are they? Maybe you have one. Understand, I'm not judging you. I'm just asking you, is there famine in your life? It can change.

But is there purity in the people? Is there a sweet aroma of frankincense rising up, rising up to the nostrils of God? Is the holy anointing oil present or does it show up every once in a while? Ministers, listen to me. Some of you may get offended when I say this, but I have to say it. Whenever I go to a meeting, I always look and see how many people are carrying Bibles.

Brother David mentioned that I happen to feel this way. I'd rather I feel like I'm naked if I go to a meeting without my Bible. I feel just as conspicuous.

If I come to a meeting and I can't remember when it's ever happened, except one time many years ago and came to a meeting and I felt so uncomfortable, so fidgety, I didn't have my Bible. Now, if I come to a meeting, and I won't say it, there was probably a third, less than half of the people last night came with a Bible. I don't say that to chastise you or anything, but listen to me.

Preachers, there ought to be such a strong Word, people trained that sit under your ministry coming from the Word. They know they can't follow you in a message unless they've got their Bibles. And I'll tell you something, people that are trained like that, when they leave the house, they just automatically pick it up and take it with them.

So I know there's a famine here. I say I know there's a famine here. Well, where there's famine, there's always shame.

Verse 11, not only where there's famine are the wine and the word, the grain's ruined, the word's ruined, the new wine's dried up, the joy and the presence of God's gone, the fresh oil fails, that's the Holy Spirit. And God says, you ought to be ashamed of this. There ought to be a shame over this.

Please understand, I'm speaking to myself as well. I'm not standing here as one who's got it all worked out. I feel ashamed.

You know the shame he's talking about? I tell you, it's a shame. I want to deal with every sin, everything God shows me is sin in my life. And he showed me, he started, as Brother David said, with the outside and he worked his way inside.

Showed me things and still shows me things. I thank God, how did that get there? How could I go on and detect motives and attitudes that are just unacceptable in His holiness? But you know, the shame that I feel is not the shame over my own sin. It's the shame when I look and I see that our God has become a reproach.

The lost world looks at what we've got and they don't want to touch it. That's the shame he's talking about. Be ashamed! There ought to be in every minister who's walking with the Lord and hunger for it.

There ought to be a shame that causes you to shut yourself up with God. Well, where there's a famine, not only are those, the word missing, not only is there shame, but there's something else that always appears. You always find Satan in all of his blinding and binding power.

Verse 6, chapter 1, For a nation has invaded my land mighty and without number. Its teeth are the teeth of a lion, has the fangs of a lioness. It's made my vine a waste, and my fig tree splinters.

It's stripped them bare and cast them away. The branches have become white. It's exactly what Satan's doing in the church with the people of God today.

But I want to tell you something. Verse 1, chapter 2. Chapter 2 describes this army. Well, I tell you, there's a song that's real popular.

I can't sing it. I have difficulty because I know what this chapter is saying. Blow the trumpet in Zion.

About the great army that's coming. How many of you have heard the song? I tell you why I have trouble singing it, because I see people rejoicing about this great army of God. When it's talking about the demonic forces of hell.

And God's blowing an alarm. Everything we do teaches people. You sing a song, you teach people.

And when your people, we sing those songs, your people turn and they see these scriptures here, they're going to think this is God's army. I'll tell you, I'll show you, it's not God's army. But before I show you that, let me share this with you.

Satan is not our problem. The saddest thing about Joel 2 is that people look at it and see it's the powers of darkness, those who do. But they don't see that God's the one that sent it.

It's a judgment of God. There's never been a time when you can get more tapes on how to cast out demons. And find more books.

Never been more deliverance ministries than there are today. Never been more written about how to take authority over Satan. How to rebuke him.

Whole ministries built around that concept. But God is going to wake us up to realize that when you stand and rebuke the powers of darkness and Satan, you're dealing with God. Because God sent the judgment.

Now, I'm not saying there's not a time to rebuke Satan. I'm not saying there's not a time to deal with the powers of darkness. I'm not saying we don't have authority.

But my friends, when sin's there, God's the one that brings the judgment. The devil has no authority. It's God that's sovereign.

Are you following what I'm saying? I want to show you. He's talking about this great army. And he calls them clearly.

We saw it already. He said they're locusts. Now, you show me anywhere in the word of God where locusts ever describe God's army.

They don't. Matter of fact, if you read Joel carefully, you'll find that when the people repent, he says, I'm going to remove this army away from you. It can't be.

Anything but the powers of darkness. Look with me at verse 25. Chapter 2. That I'll make up for you the years.

This is after repentance comes. I'll make up to you for the years that the swarming locusts has eaten the creeping locusts, the stripping locusts, the gnawing locusts. My great army, which who's sending? I sent among you.

You say, well, how could God do that? It's simply this. This is what I'm saying, because I don't want you to misunderstand me. It's not God's desire.

Lamentations chapter three makes it very clear. It's not God's desire. It breeds him to have to judge his people.

But he's judged sin. And where you find sin and famine, you will find Satan. And what he's saying here is, listen, I'm saying this to you because I've watched people.

I've watched disaster after disaster. Plague after plague. I've watched wave after wave of judgment come upon people.

And I've watched them rebuke Satan. In the name of Jesus, I command you to please Satan. And I've watched their lives continually be devoured so they learn more about it.

They never deal with the sin in their lives. They never stop to think that it's God that they must do business with, not Satan. When you do business with God, he fights those battles for you.

Now look with me. Verse one, chapter two. Blow a trumpet.

Where are we going to blow it? To the lost people? No. Chapter two, verse one. Where are we going to blow the trumpet? In Zion.

Why? Sound an alarm. Where? On the holy mountain. Let the inhabitants of the land tremble for the day of the Lord's coming.

Surely it's near. What are we blowing an alarm for? Because the locusts are coming. I won't have you turn there, but in Isaiah chapter five.

Don't turn there. You can read it. First five verses.

This is a picture of a vineyard. And it says that God says in verse five of Isaiah five, he said, here's my vineyard. He looks at it.

He says, what more could I have done from a vineyard that I've already done? Verses two to four describe what he did. Says that he planted a vineyard. Says he planted it with the choices vine.

Who is that vine? Jesus. He plants it with the choices vine. It says he put a hedge around it to protect it.

Says he took all the big stones and removed them. Now I'll ask you a question. When you come to Jesus, does he put a hedge around you? Does he take the stones out of your life? Is he the vine? We're the branches.

Then it says, now listen to me carefully. Says that he built a wine press and made a wine vat. That's the beautiful thing about God.

See what he's talking about there is not only did I produce the vineyard. Not only do I make the fruit available. But I put my Holy Spirit within you to produce the fruit.

But then he says he built a tower right in the middle of it. Built a tower. Now the most fierce enemy of the vineyards in the land was the locusts.

And the tower was a place where a watchman sat. The watchman sat on the tower. And it was his job to alert and discern the coming locusts.

And to alert the people and blow a trumpet. Now, it wasn't easy to discern sometimes. Because the locusts, you can read about this, you'll find.

The locusts, let me describe to you why it was so. Here he is, the watchman, sitting on the tower. He's watching out over everything.

And all of a sudden he hears a sound. Now, you know what? They say that sometimes it's been reported even in modern times. I've read even in Africa.

I've read reports of locusts coming and being so vast and so thick it covers a six mile area. And here comes this swarm of locusts, but it's way off in the distance. And the first thing that happens is you hear it.

You can hear the sound. But you know what? The wings, the horde of locusts coming, the wings beating. Guess what it sounds like? It sounds like the sound of rain.

Oh, God's trying to teach you something with this. It sounds like rain. The one thing the vineyard needs is rain.

And it sounds like that's what's coming. And so here's this watchman standing there and he hears the sound and he's listening. It sounds like rain.

And then when you look off in the distance, then the sun would beat down upon those wings of the locusts. They're brownish red in color. Be a beautiful sight.

That watchman had to quickly discern that even though it sounded like rain, it wasn't rain. And even though it looked beautiful, it wasn't beautiful. It was destruction coming.

And then he had to blow that trumpet. When he blew that trumpet, those that worked and cared for the vineyard, they only had one weapon against it. They had to quickly build a fire all the way around that vineyard.

And cause the fire and fan it until smoke filled it up. And the smoke was the only weapon in the fire that they had against those locusts. And the things today that are coming, that are coming to your ministry, that are coming to your church, they have the sound of rain.

And many of them look beautiful. But you've got to discern the difference and the only thing that's going to turn them away. But look what happens.

See, it may be a garden of Eden before them, but when they come through, it doesn't do anything but leave the church like a deadened, burnt, blackened, cast out people. A desolate wilderness. And I dare say there's probably not a man in here that doesn't know a church that's had those locusts hit.

I say, I dare say, there's not a man in here that doesn't know a place those locusts have hit. They may be hitting your church. You might be one of them.

Here's the problem. Verse 8, they don't crowd each other, they march everyone this path. They're so fierce, they're so powerful.

They march everyone this path. They burst through the defenses. They don't even break ranks.

They rush on the city, they run on the wall, they climb the houses, they enter through windows like a thief. You know what he's saying? He's saying this army, now listen to me carefully. This army is of demonic powers, is so fierce, it's so powerful.

Success motivation is not going to chase them away. The power of positive thinking is not going to chase them away. Empty rebuke is not going to chase them away.

I was in a church not too long ago. It's all I could do to get up and preach. And the Holy Spirit came on me and I had to expose it.

The pastor, I knew something was wrong. The minute I saw him, I knew something wasn't right. A sickening feeling down deep inside.

And he gets up before all the people and he says, How many people here have got a Bible? This brother's going to preach out of the Bible. And everybody raised their Bibles. He said, now wave them in the air.

And everybody just started going like this. He said, wave them, wave them. I bet for ten minutes he went like that.

Building excitement in the people. Wave your Bibles. He said, I see it in the Spirit.

The devil's running from this place. He's afraid of this place. The only place the devil was running was like a runaway train.

Right through that pastor's life. Later on, his wife came to me. He cried out.

He said, the devil's not going to come near this place. His wife came to me later. He was abusing her physically and sexually.

I tell you, the waving of the Bibles doesn't affect the devil. But the fire and the smoke turns him away. Well, I tell you, when there's fasting, I mean, when there's famine, there needs to be some fasting.

Verse 14, chapter 1. This is what God's calling His people to. Verse 14. With the famine, it ought to lead us to fasting.

Verse 14, chapter 1. Consecrate a fast. Proclaim a solemn assembly. Gather the elders.

All the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God. And what does he say, do? Say it one more time. Cry out to the Lord.

Now, the sad thing is that if you don't recognize the famine, you won't cry out to God. I'm not talking about abstaining from food here. I believe what he's talking about is a fasting.

A fasting is a solemn assembly, a fast, where we come before God in absolute desperation, with a soberness and a fear of God in our hearts. We cry out to Him, God, I'd rather have you than my daily bread. I know your presence is not here like it ought to be.

I know it's missing God. We become so desperate that there's nothing more important in our lives than getting right with God. That's the kind of fast he's talking about.

But people are not desperate for that today. Listen, religion can very easily adapt to the absent presence of God. We've learned how to adapt well.

That's the fast he's talking about. Now, with the fasting, if we ever come to the place of fasting like that, crying out to God in absolute desperation, God's always faithful. He'll bring the instruction that's needed.

And that instruction is found in chapter 2, verse 12. And here's what he says. Yet even now declares the Lord, what does he say? Return to me with what? Have heartedness.

A portion of your heart. All your heart. All your heart.

With fasting. With weeping. And mourning.

Are you doing it, Pastor? Rinse your heart and not your garments. I want to tell you something. I have watched a denomination literally crumble.

I started preaching nine years ago. What I'm going to say to you right now, I do not say anything differently when I stand before my Southern Baptist brethren. Nine years ago, I didn't see everything I see now, but nine years ago, I started saying, I've got sermons and tapes to prove it.

I started saying nine years ago, that if the Southern Baptist continue to close out the Holy Spirit, there's going to be a split. There's going to be a split in the church. And neither side is going to walk in holiness.

And my friends, I want to sit here and declare to you, I've watched it happen in the Southern Baptist denomination. I don't care if it's called the liberal moderate side or the fundamental side. The absence of the presence of God is evident on both sides.

But that's not the only denomination I see happening. God is saying, and I've watched the Southern Baptist do it. I've watched them follow after what this man's got to say, and what this man's got to say, and that man's got to say, and this man's got to say.

I've watched them tenaciously cling to the traditions of men and the denomination, and what the denomination has to say, and let that pacify the hunger for God. And I'm watching it crumble, and you can see it crumble too. I tell you, there's got to be a fasting that says, God, I don't care.

I don't care what you've got to say. But you speak to me. I've got to hear your voice.

And if all my security goes out the window, I'm desperate for you, God. I'm desperate for you. And you're going to have to rend your heart, not your garments.

There have been pastors that have come to these repentance conferences, and some of them have had that heart broken. And I want to tell you something, brethren, listen to me. Your heart has got to break.

If it's not broken, get along with God and pray to Him until He breaks it. He'll break it if you want it broken. But we've got to have broken hearts, and we don't have them.

I've watched preachers come. Some of them will go back to their pulpits and they'll weep a little bit and they'll cry a little bit. And the first time a church boss or a deacon that lives in ungodliness stares at them, they back down from the Word and it's all gone.

Sometimes it's their wives. And that's not an indictment against wives. It's an indictment against the preachers because they couldn't back down if the Word of God was burning in their bones.

Then there are others that go back broken. They don't care. God, I've got to have you.

Nothing else matters. Just you. I'm rending my heart, not my garments.

And the brokenness comes. We've gotten letter after letter after letter. Preachers said, we had an instant revival.

First Sunday I was back, half the church was at the altar. It doesn't always happen like that. We've also had letters from pastors that said, I preached holiness.

The church has dismissed me. They've kicked me out. But they don't care.

I said they don't care. Verse 15, blow a trumpet in Zion. He says it again.

Consecrate a fast. This is chapter 2. Verse 15, proclaim a solemn assembly. Gather the people.

And what does he say to do with the congregation? Sanctify the congregation. Assemble the elders. We've got second and third generation deacons and elders in churches that have been drinking for years, smoking, living ungodly lives, and the pastor is not doing anything about it.

Sunday school teachers that you know are not walking with God, they still teach. I want to warn you of something before you try to change the church. Look what they cry.

Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room. They're calling for the bridegroom to come out of his room.

Come. Let the priest and the ministers, the Lord's ministers, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, spare thy people, O Lord. That's the cry.

You see, their hearts are broken before God, and they're not interested in being proven right. They're not interested in hammering down sinning deacons. They're not interested in dealing with sinning Sunday school teachers.

They're crying out, God, spare your people! They have a love when they preach holiness. They don't want to see them perish, they cling tenaciously to try to get them to repent, but they don't back down from what God's told them when they've been shut up with Him. But if you don't have the love, that's why I'm saying to you, if you don't have the brokenness, don't go preach holiness.

Don't go preach against sin if there's sin in your life. And don't go preach against sin until God breaks your heart that you can love the people. And look what he cries out.

Do not make thine inheritance a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they among the people say, where is their God? You know what, they've reached the place where they're so... Listen, I'm not saying they're not dealing with their own sins, they're dealing with those... But the one thing they say is, my God, we've been a reproach to You! We've been a reproach to our God! Now I can preach that, I can say it two dozen times, until the Holy Spirit gets a hold of your heart, you won't even feel it. But if you've got a time where you're being shut up with God, you're feeling it right now and you're looking over the land and you're saying, my God, we're a reproach to You! We're a reproach to Your holiness! Then it's beating in your breast and you're crying it out, and you're saying, spare your people, oh God! Then comes the promise of God.

God says, if I have a people that will walk like that, verse 18, God says, I'm going to intervene with those people. Then, then, that's a big word. Thens and ifs are real big words in the Bible.

Then the Lord will be zealous for His land and He'll have pity on His people. The Lord will answer and say to His people, behold, I'm going to send you grain. That is the Word of God that's come back.

Listen to me. You'll start preaching the Word of God like you've never preached it before. You'll feel the people's ears with the Word of God, not just Scriptures.

It'll be God's Word. It won't be your three-point sermons. I'm not saying you won't have three points, but you won't stay up all Saturday night trying to come up with three points.

It'll be the Word of God that you want to get in their hearts. And it won't come, it'll come after having been shut up in the closet with God. And the new wine, He says, I'll send it back.

The presence of the Holy Spirit and the joy will be there. And the oil, there'll be a holy anointing oil from heaven to send down upon you and your people and your church. Because God says, I'm going to be zealous for you.

And He says, you'll be satisfied in full with them. And never again make you reproach among the nations. There's so much more I could share here, but I want to get to something.

I want to share this with you. Verse 32, And it'll come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered. For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there'll be those who do what? What does it say? Escape.

Does your Bible say escape? Or deliverance? There'll be deliverance. They'll be delivered. And mine says, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be delivered.

And on Mount Zion and Jerusalem there'll be those who escape. As the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls. Now, in verse 28, you all know the Scripture.

He says, I'm going to pour my Spirit out on mankind. Sons and daughters will prophesy. Old men will dream dreams.

Young men will see visions. You know who God's going to pour His Spirit out on? When the church cries out and weeps. Spare thy people.

Verse 3, chapter 3. They have also cast lots for my people. They traded a boy for a harlot. Sold a girl for wine that they may drink.

I'll tell you who God's going to pour His Spirit out on. He's going to pour it out on some old men and some young men. He's going to pour it out on some sons and daughters.

He's going to pour it out on those young teenagers. Those young boys and girls that I saw in the mall. He's going to pour His Spirit out on those that we've cast off and rejected.

There are parents today, so their son or daughter can be popular, we'll lead them right into hell. So they can be the most popular person in school. God says, when my church comes alive, I'm going to pour my Spirit out upon those people.

That's where it's going to come. We just get to get in on it. And I believe they get to experience the power.

We don't experience the power, but I think that's what we're going to see happen. Praise God, He'll let us get in on it. And as David said, there's multitudes and multitudes in the valley of the decision.

I want to have you turn with me to one other scripture. Isaiah 33. Then we're going to close.

Isaiah 33. There's a fire coming. It's already here.

It's already burning. It's not going to be by rebuking the devil that we're going to find God's presence. You know, even though in Joel 2, he says, here's this mighty army I've sent against you.

These locusts, powers of darkness creeping in. All kinds of doctrines of demons. But in the midst of all that, he says, it's not rebuking the devil that you're going to get your victory in.

It's whenever you return to me with all your heart. With fasting and mourning and you're in your heart and not your garments. You know what God says? God says, then I'll take care of every enemy that assails you.

No weapon formed against you shall prosper. Because I've got your heart. And a fire is coming and he says, Isaiah 33, verse 14.

Sinners in Zion. Now where are those sinners? Zion is called God's holy mountain. That's the place of his presence.

Sinners in Zion are terrified. Trembling has seized the godless. Who among us can live with the consuming fire? Who among us can live with continual burning? Who can? Well, God gives the answer.

He says in verse 13, you who are far away, hear what I've done. And you who are near, acknowledge my might. Verse 15.

He who walks righteously speaks with sincerity and rejects unjust gain or bribes. And shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe. You can't be bribed away from this.

I'll speak more about that this afternoon. He who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed, shuts his eyes from looking upon evil. Here's what God promises.

He will dwell on the heights. His refuge will be the impregnable rock. Who is that? That's Jesus.

His bread will be given him and we'll no longer be drinking from broken cisterns. But his water will be sure. And I love verse 17.

Your eyes will see the King in his beauty and they'll behold a far distant land. Your heart will meditate on terror. Verse 19, you'll no longer see a fierce people.

People of unintelligible speech which no one comprehends. Verse 21. But there, the majestic One, the Lord, shall be for us a place of rivers and wide canals.

That's what I believe God's calling His people to. Let's bow our heads. As we head to bow, I just want to say to you, God wants to do a work.

If the Lord's spoken to your heart about something this morning, He's dealt with you. Spend some time. Spend some time getting alone with God.

There'll be plenty of times for invitations. But I don't believe that's what God wants right now. I believe that God wants us just to examine our hearts.

I say one thing. Workers, pastors, wives, if your heart is not broken, get with God and ask Him, and ask Him, and ask Him until He breaks it. And you can look at sin and weep over it.

Not only your sins, but the sins of the people. And you have beating in your breast a cry to God that says, spare your people, oh God. Let us no longer be a reproach to You.

Pray this with me. Father, Lord, let it be in this place. God, if you could just touch a handful of ministers, a handful of us, Lord.

And Lord, I haven't arrived. God, break my heart. Make me weep.

Let me see sin the way You see it. Let every preacher here, Lord, that has a heart willing and open, let us see it like You see it, God. Just because things look successful, Lord, let us not be fooled.

Lord, raise up watchmen that can see the beautiful picture of the locust coming and recognize it for what it is. Lord, bring together ministers that have the fire and the smoke burning in their breasts. And when they speak forth Your Word, Lord, it creates a hedge around the whole vineyard.

Lord, give pastors discernment as they get along with You, God. Give them discernment, Father, to recognize the difference between real rain and the sound of rain. Father, do it in this, in Jesus' name.

Lord, bring repentance throughout this conference. Lord, break our hearts. Lord, make us cry out to You.

Lord, with a fasting that does nothing more important than You, we're shut up with You, God, and You're all we want. Lord, remove every stone. Remove the dross, Lord.

Remove everything that's taken away the anointing or made it dull. Father, we ask You to do that work in us. Let Your Word perform its work in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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