

(Through the Bible) Hosea & Joel

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual purity, the principle of true prophetic ministry, and the role of leaders in guiding God's people.

Duration: 54:28

Topics: "Repentance", "Spiritual Adultery"

Description

This sermon delves into the prophetic books of Hosea and Joel, emphasizing the themes of spiritual adultery, God's unchanging love, repentance, and the day of the Lord. It highlights the need for leaders and individuals to repent, seek God through fasting and prayer, and turn away from idolatry. The message underscores the importance of genuine repentance, seeking God's forgiveness, and preparing for the day of the Lord when God will dwell among His people.

Transcript

Let's turn now to the book of Hosea. These are what are commonly known as the minor prophets. Hosea was a prophet to Israel primarily.

In Hosea's ministry, we learn something very interesting. The theme and the subject of this book, this prophecy is, we could say, spiritual adultery and God's unchanging love. It's a tremendous book that displays God's relationship with his people like a husband to a wife, and how that wife was thoroughly unfaithful to him, and how he continued to love.

Even in the Old Testament, Israel was called the Bride of Jehovah, and the relationship between God and man was pictured in the Old Testament as that of a husband and wife, like a marriage relationship. Just like today, our relationship with Christ is like a marriage relationship. And just like in a marriage, if the wife loves other men, and serves other men, and wants to please other men, she's unfaithful to her husband, she is called an adulteress.

It's the same in our relationship with the Lord. When we love money, we are spiritual adulteresses, that's another husband. When we love the honor of this world, that's another man trying to win our attention.

When we love pleasure, that's another man trying to win our interest. And when we love any of these other men, we have become adulteresses. That's why James says, you adulteresses, don't you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? And Hosea deals with that subject.

And he learned it in a very painful way. You know, what we see in Hosea, perhaps more than in any other prophet, is God trying to make his servant feel his heart. This is the principle of true prophetic ministry.

Even in the New Testament, we have to feel towards God's people the way God feels towards them. We have to look at God's people the way God looks at them. Otherwise, we will be just preachers who are preaching something which may be true, but without the feeling that God has towards his people.

So God has to take us through many painful trials in order to make us feel the way he feels towards his people. For example, in Hosea's time, Israel was like an unfaithful wife. When she worshipped idols, she was being unfaithful to the Lord.

And that was pictured as adultery. Adultery and idolatry were very closely linked in the Old Testament. And even in the New Testament, spiritual adultery is some form of idolatry.

Idolatry means worshipping something other than the true God. Something other than Christ takes number one place in my life. It may be your business.

It may be your property. It may be money. It may be your good looks.

It may be your ministry. Even that can be an idol. Anything that takes the place of Christ as number one in my life is an idol.

And as soon as something has taken the place of number one in my life, I have become an idolater, a spiritual adulteress. And all the words that are spoken to adulteresses and idolaters apply to me. And that's at that point.

So we see here, the way that God made Hosea feel how he felt towards an adulteress wife was by making Hosea marry an adulteress wife. Now that's a very painful way of learning the truth. How many men would like to marry a young girl who you know from the beginning she's going to be unfaithful to you, she's going to commit adultery, she's going to just fool around with other men.

I don't know how many people would be willing. You see, it was quite a price these prophets had to pay to be prophets. But when Hosea married this girl who was like a prostitute and was unfaithful to him, and he was told to keep on loving her.

And at one point, even she had gone and sold herself as a slave to somebody, he had to pay money and buy her back. And keep on loving her, spend money on her, and she's going to keep on committing adultery. And he found it was so difficult.

And as he found himself going through this struggle, God said to him, now you know how I feel towards my people, now go and preach to my people. So then, even though Hosea spoke sternly, there was a voice of compassion in his message of holiness. What is he emphasizing? Holiness and God's unchanging love.

Remember, these two things were the burdens of all the prophets. Holiness in God's people, and God's unchanging love for his people. Even when they are in spiritual adultery, they've gone astray, always his desire is to bring them back.

He punishes them, but he wants to bring them back after the punishment is over. Jeremiah said, after the punishment is over, God will bring you back. Hosea, the same thing.

Holiness is what God demands, and when he doesn't find it, he's going to punish you, but his love is so great that he wants to bring you back into fellowship with him. This is the essence of all prophetic ministry in the church also. A true prophet in the church today will always have the same burden that the prophets in the Old Testament had of holiness among God's people.

Not all are called to a prophetic ministry, but if a man is called to a prophetic ministry, his burden will be holiness among God's people, and God's unchanging, long-suffering, compassionate love that wants to bring his backslidden people back to true holiness. And I believe that there should be prophetic ministry in every church if the church is to be kept alive and functioning for God as it should. So that's the basic theme of Hosea.

So God allowed Hosea to suffer. It says in chapter 1 in verse 2, the Lord first began speaking to Israel through Hosea. He said to him, go and marry a prostitute.

Some of her children will be born to you from other men. It's quite a price to be a prophet. How many people want to be prophets? Certainly in the Old Testament.

Certainly in the Old Testament, the price is pretty heavy, but I want to say in the New Testament too, God may not require things like that today, but God's principle is the same, that he has to take us through deep suffering in order to get us to feel his heart. If you read the sufferings that the Apostle Paul went through in 2 Corinthians 11, so many dangers, so many beatings, imprisonments, and being beaten with rods and robbed and without enough clothes to keep himself warm and without food. The purpose of it all was to make this man feel the heart of God, to live close to God, to listen to God's heartbeat.

You know, when we go through trials, we are very close to God's heart. We can hear God's heart beating and we feel that when we speak to God's people. There's a lot of difference between such a preacher and a man who just acquired a lot of knowledge by reading books and by listening to tapes.

Do you want to serve God? Do you want to preach the way God wants you to preach? Then ask God to help you to see his heart and to feel his heart, and that will not come by sitting in classes, it will come by going through trials. It will not come by attending meetings or reading books. All that is good.

You know, we have a great lust for knowledge and we think, oh, only I could get more knowledge. I could serve the Lord. You look at some servant of God and you say, I want to serve the Lord like that.

Yeah, you can, but it won't come by studying. It won't come by listening to tapes. It will come by allowing God to crush you.

You're going through deep sufferings which nobody may know. Any true servant of God has gone through deep sufferings that other people know nothing about. Most of the time you won't even tell other people what he's gone through.

So remember this, Hosea teaches us that the only way to effectively minister is by going through deep suffering in one's personal life, and it's different for different people. It's not a standard syllabus for all of God's children. He taught Hosea one way.

He taught Jeremiah without a wife, putting him in deep pits. He taught Paul without a wife. So it's not all the standard procedure for everyone.

But the principle is the same, that you have to suffer in order to have a ministry from God. In 2 Corinthians 1, Paul says, verse 4, I've gone through trials and the strength that I receive in that suffering is what I can pass on to other people. Otherwise we just pass on knowledge.

So here we read he married this lady called Gomer, and he had children. And some of those children were born through others. The first son was Hosea's, the other two were perhaps not his.

And the names of those children indicated how God was punishing his people. In chapter 2, verse 7, he says, the way of Israel is when she runs after her lovers, she won't be able to catch up with them. She will search for them, but won't find them.

And then she will think, I might as well return to my husband, because I was better off with him than I am now. This is a picture of, you know, Hosea's wife ran away from him. And the same way Israel ran away from the Lord.

But in their trouble, you see, most people seek God only when they are in trouble. And they find all money doesn't help them, honor doesn't help them, people of the world let them down. Then they say, oh, I might as well turn back to God.

At least he'll help me. And God still cares for such a person who comes back. And that's why God told Hosea, take your wife, even when she comes back like that.

And it says here, this is a verse that can apply to all of us. She doesn't realize that it was I, the Lord says, who gave her everything she has. Do you realize that? The grain, the wine, the olive oil, the gold, silver.

Do you realize that your health is God's gift? You know how many people in the world are not healthy in sickbeds? Everything you have is God's gift. The money you have is God's gift. The intelligence you have is God's gift.

Now, those people, it says, when God gave them gold and silver, they used that gold and silver to make an idol to bail. It's like the prodigal son. He took money from his father, and he didn't use it for his father's business.

He went and spent it on himself. This is the mark of God's backslidden people. They get so many gifts from God, and what do they do with it? They think, this is mine.

I earned this myself. I got an increase of salary in my office. My business prospered.

This is my money. This intelligence is my intelligence. I must use it in the maximum possible for my own profit.

That is to take the gold and silver God gives you and make an idol for bail through it. They did not realize that everything they have is what I gave them. How is it in our life? It's a good question to ask ourselves.

If we recognize it's God's, then we will give it back to him. Say, Lord, you gave me intelligence so that I can use it totally for your kingdom. But, in spite of their being so unfaithful, the Lord says, I will win her back.

Verse 14, I will win her back once again. I will lead her into the desert. I will make things dry and barren in her life.

And then when everything is dry and barren, she will turn to me. And then I will speak tenderly to her there. Now, normally, we wouldn't like to speak tenderly to someone who has been so thoroughly unfaithful.

But the Lord says, I will speak tenderly and I will continue to give her gifts. I will return her vineyards to her. And I will transform the valley of Acre into a gateway of hope.

Verse 15, Acre was the place where you read in Joshua chapter 7, that Achan, the man who committed sin in Jericho, was punished and put to death. That's the place called Acre, a place of judgment for sin. And the Lord says, that place of judgment for sin, I'm going to make it a door of hope for you.

That means, even though you failed, because you confessed your failure, and this judgment has come there, chastening has come there, from there, I can open a door of hope for you, that something wonderful can come in your life even in future. That's a wonderful message, particularly for those who are backslidden, gone astray, gone away from God, or wasted a lot of their life. They say, Lord, what can I do? So much of my life I wasted, so many wrong things I've done.

I wish I'd known all these truths when I was younger. You've been chastened, you've suffered. The Lord says, don't get discouraged.

I can make that valley of Acre a gateway of hope for you. And then the Lord says in chapter 2, verse 16, sorry, chapter 2, In that day, in that coming day, the Lord says, you will call me my husband, and not my master. See, in the old covenant, they could not experience this type of relationship that we can have with the Lord today, of husband and wife.

And it's in a sense a prophecy of what is going to happen when the Holy Spirit comes in. You see, the Holy Spirit brought Rebecca to Isaac, Eleazar, a picture of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, the Holy Spirit brings us to Jesus to be married to him.

In the Old Testament, they knew him as master, oh God, my master. He says, in this day, you will not call me my master, you will call me my husband. What type of relationship do you have with the Lord? Do you know that he does not want to be just your master, he wants to be your husband.

A lot of people, their service for the Lord becomes boring and heavy, because it's like a servant serving his master. It's like government working in a government office, so many hours a day, I have to do it, and I get my salary, and I go and do it again every day, like that. But a wife does not serve her husband for a salary.

But that doesn't mean the husband doesn't take care of his wife. The husband shares a lot of money with his wife, but she doesn't work for that. She works out of love.

So he says, in that day, you will not call me master, you will call me husband, my husband. And verse 20, the Lord says, even if you are unfaithful, I will be faithful to you and make you mine. See the tremendous love of God, pursuing after someone who has gone astray.

Chapter 3, verse 2, she had sold herself, Hosea's wife, as a slave, and so he says, I bought her back for 15 pieces of silver and 5 bushels of barley and a measure of wine. See, she'd gone away, she'd gotten into problems, and she had sold herself as a slave, maybe working as a housemaid in somebody's house. And Hosea heard about it, and he goes after her and says, I'll pay whatever that master paid, and I'll buy you back, come back and be my wife.

And said to her, verse 3, you must live in my house for many days and stop your prostitution. And this is a picture of God's love. In this particular case, the Lord said to them, because they were going to go into captivity and be punished, the Lord says, Hosea had to tell his wife, in this time, you will not have any sex with anybody else, and not even with me.

Which illustrates that God, though he hasn't forsaken Israel, will allow Israel to be apart from him for a period of time when he's going to punish them, when Israel will be without temple priests or any such thing. But God's desire always is to bring his people back to him. From this experience of suffering that Hosea had in the first three chapters, he begins to preach in chapter 4 onwards.

And he says some strong words, but remember, the background to all these strong words is this experience that he had been through. So it doesn't mean that because we have this experience, we become soft. We become firm, but with compassion for God's people.

And first of all, he says in chapter 4, this is the controversy that the Lord has against his people. And again, like all the prophets, he starts with the leaders. I remember many years ago, I think it was 20 years ago, I was invited to a large denominational convention.

There were many thousands of people there, and they invited me as a special speaker. And when I got on the platform, I said, the burden the Lord has given me is not to speak to all the thousands of people sitting here, but to the leaders who are sitting on the platform behind me. And for two days, I spoke primarily.

I didn't turn around because there was no mic that side, the mic was here, so I had to face this way. And I said, I'd like to speak to the pastors and leaders. And I spoke about righteousness and money matters.

And after two days, they told me, we don't want to hear you anymore. They didn't allow me to speak the third day. So I had to pack my bags and go home.

Well, it hasn't gone very well with that denomination, by the way, since then. Okay, the point is this, that the prophets always spoke to the leaders first. Because it's because the leaders are going astray, that the people are going astray.

So, if children go astray, it's the parents' fault. The parents have not brought up those children properly. If your children misbehave in school, you can't blame the children.

I said, the parents have not taught their children to behave properly at home. That's why they misbehave at school. No one is talking to the children, talk to the parents.

I remember once a mother brought a young boy to me and said, Brother Zak, please pray for this son, he's like this, like this, like this, like this. I felt like praying for the mother, because I felt the problem was with her. And so I didn't pray for the son.

I don't just do what people tell me to do. And I said, you're not going to help this boy if you treat him like this. Humiliate him publicly by saying he's like this.

So, in the same way with God's people, very often God's people even today suffer, because their leaders are not godly. Their leaders don't know God. And therefore the people suffer.

So, these prophets said, look you priests, verse 4. Don't point your finger at somebody else and try to pass the blame on somebody else. Say, what to do brother, the people in the church are like this. No.

You priests, chapter 4, verse 4. My complaint is with you, says the Lord. And as a punishment, you will stumble in broad daylight. And so also with all the false prophets.

So, my people, verse 6, are being destroyed because they don't know me. Why are God's people destroyed? It's not because they don't know the Bible, they don't know God. And that is, the fault is yours, verse 6, you priests, because you yourself don't know me.

See how the prophet spoke directly to the leaders. And so, I refuse to recognize all of you, verse 6, the last part, as priests anymore. I remove the anointing from your life.

You have forgotten the laws of your God, and I will forget to bless your children. And verse 7, the more preachers that are here, the more they sin against me. What a condition.

They have exchanged the glory of God for the disgrace of money. Idols. You see how relevant this word is for today.

Many preachers have exchanged the anointing of God for money. They've lost the anointing because they got more money. Once upon a time, they had the anointing and less money.

They went after money, lost the anointing. They've exchanged the glory of God for the disgrace of these idols. And the priests are only interested in feeding themselves at the expense of people, verse 8. And in those days, you know, the priest would get an offering.

If a man brought a sin offering, a portion of that became the priests. You read that in Leviticus. So, some priests, it says here, you people, you're glad when people sin.

Why? Because they bring more offerings and you get more meat in your curry. And he says, like priests, like people, verse 9. Since the priests are wicked, the people are wicked. So now I'm going to punish both priests and people.

And so on. It's wonderful. I want to encourage you to read some of these prophets in the Living Bible translations.

It's really excellent. I don't have time to read all of it. Verse 14, why should I punish these people? For the young men, for you men, are doing the same thing.

Careless in your attitude to women and sinning. Okay, let's move on. Chapter 5, again.

Listen to this, you priests and all of Israel's leaders. And listen to this, all you men from the royal family, the kings. Again, the word is to the leaders.

These words of judgment are for you. You are doomed. And so on.

And it says here about returning to the Lord in chapter 6. They say, okay, when they hear a message like this. This is what happens sometimes when you hear a message. Oh Lord, we're very sorry.

And they say, okay, come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us in pieces. We usually turn to the Lord after we get torn up.

And now he will heal us. He has injured us. They say he'll bandage our wounds.

And he will restore us. And we want to know the Lord. Let's press on to know him.

He will surely come. But what is the Lord's response to this outwardly, apparently repentant attitude? I mean, if you didn't have discernment, you'd read verse 1 and 3 and say, praise the Lord. There's a revival.

You'd be sending a report straight away the next day. We had a revival here yesterday. And send the number of people who raised their hands, etc., etc.

But God sees through that. And he says, I'm not fooled by all these words. Verse 4, your love vanishes like the morning dew.

He says, all this repentance is like in the morning, you know, the dew is on the grass. You come back an hour later and all the dew is gone. He says, your love is like that.

Your repentance is like that. It's meaningless. It's not deep.

It disappears like the dew in the sunlight. I sent my prophets to cut you to pieces. It's not a very exciting ministry to be a prophet, to cut people to pieces.

But remember, this man himself has been cut to pieces in his private life. With his wife, he's been cut to pieces in God's dealings with him. And it is from that background that he speaks.

I sent my prophets to cut you to pieces, verse 5, chapter 6, verse 5. I've slaughtered you with my words, threatened you with death, and my judgment will surely strike you as surely as day follows night. If Hosea had not had all that experience of suffering in his private life, he would have spoken those words in a very harsh way. Don't try to imitate those words if God has not taken you through the deep valley of suffering.

It's very exciting to be a prophet in the pulpit. But you can get honor. But when you try to imitate a prophet, without God leading you through that type of experience, you will be a false prophet.

First of all, ask God to take you through deep experiences where you get to know Him. Trials, sufferings, pain. And then, God will make you His mouthpiece to many people.

Walk with God in secret and humble yourself under whatever God sends into your life. And he speaks so strongly here about judgment. And he says, I don't want your sacrifices.

I want you to be merciful. This is the verse that Jesus quoted. I want mercy and not sacrifice.

Chapter 7, I wanted to heal Israel, verse 1, but its sins were far too great. And Samaria, the capital of Israel, is filled with liars, thieves, and bandits. That means the leaders of Israel were telling lies.

The leaders of Israel were thieves. What is a thief? A thief is a person who takes money that doesn't belong to him. When somebody sends money to a pastor here for God's work, and that pastor uses that money to buy property for himself and in his name and his children's name, what is he? A thief.

What else? That's exactly what God is saying. Money sent for God's work is being used for buying his private property. Do you know the type of things that are going on like that in this land? Yeah, that's what happens.

And then he says in verse 8, my people mingle with godless foreigners. Chapter 7, verse 8. They pick up these godless ways from these godless foreigners. That's also what we see in Christendom.

Mingling with worldly people, adopting worldly methods, adopting worldly standards, adopting worldly business procedures in Christian work, and adopting the method of psychologists when preaching. There's a lot of preaching today from Christian pulpits which is pure psychology. It's not God's word.

And the Lord says, they've all become like a half-baked cake. Cooked on one side, not cooked on the other side. And then he goes on like that about their despising God's laws in chapter 8, verse 12.

In chapter 9, verse 1. He says, O Israel, don't rejoice like other people do. Now the Bible is full of exhortations to rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord, rejoice in the Lord, rejoice in the Lord.

But here is one verse which says, don't rejoice like other people do because you've been unfaithful to your God. You're an adulteress. You offer sacrifice to other gods.

See, a person who loves money, loves honor, loves pleasure, loves a comfortable life, those are his gods whom he worships. When he comes on Sunday morning to the meeting and he shouts and praises God, do you know what God says from heaven? Don't rejoice. I don't listen to all this.

I know what you live for in your personal life. I know what your ambitions are. I know that you worship your job and your business and your money and your property and you fight for those things and here you come and say hallelujah and praise the Lord on Sunday mornings.

Don't rejoice. So sometimes God says things which startle us and that's why a prophet is the most misunderstood person in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. He says, break up your fallow ground.

In chapter 10 and verse 12, plant the good seeds of righteousness. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts. For it is time to seek the Lord.

Till he comes and showers righteousness on you. And then he goes on to speak about God's love. When Israel was a child, chapter 11 verse 1, I loved him.

And he goes on in chapter 12, verse 7 and 8. These people are like crafty merchants selling from dishonest scales. They love to cheat. And they cheat others and then they boast.

I'm rich. I've gotten it all by myself. And listen to this.

No one knows that I got it by cheating. Do you know that there's a lot of black money in the church? Which you don't know about. You know there are business people in the church who give bribes.

Nobody knows about it. Some of them are elders in good churches, even separated assemblies. Outwardly they appear so right and get honor in the church but one day God is going to expose them.

And a true prophet can see through such people. And that's why most of these rich business people who are crooked are afraid to confront a true prophet. I want to encourage you my brothers and sisters.

Be a voice for God in this generation. There are people who say no one knows that I got it by cheating because my outward testimony is spotless. They are like clever merchants who deceive people but they can't deceive God or His true servants.

In chapter 13, there's a beautiful verse here about the resurrection. In verse 14, about ransoming us from the grave. In chapter 14, the Lord calls them back.

Return, O Israel. Don't just say like you said in chapter 6, I'm coming back. Return.

Give up your sins. It's your sins that have brought you down. Say to Him, say to the Lord, forgive us our sins.

Verse 2, graciously receive us so that we may offer to you the sacrifice of praise. A New Testament expression which we find in Hebrews 13. The sacrifice of praise.

That is the place to which God wants to finally bring us. Where we become worshippers. Where our relationship with Him and a life of praise becomes more important than everything else.

And the Lord says, verse 4, I will heal you of your idolatry and faithlessness. Do you know that the love of money is so deeply entrenched in all of us that only the Lord can deliver us from it. Recognize how much you love yourself.

How much you love money. I remember once when I told a brother, Brother, I think your problem is the love of money. He said, oh no, Brother Zach, I've been free from that long ago.

I said, well, you're better than me in that case because I'm still battling it. Are you battling the love of money? Do you think you're free from it? God have mercy on you if you think you're free from it. The love of money is like a big onion.

You peel off the first layer of the onion. Is anything left? Sure. You peel off a second layer of the onion.

It's still there. Sin is like that. You think you're free from it.

That shows how blind you are. When God gives you light, you see, okay, I may have peeled out 25 layers of the love of money but there's still something there, in it. I want that onion to come down to zero.

How many of you are in the pursuit of that? Every sin is like that. Lusting with the eyes. Adultery.

It's like an onion. There are many, many layers. Then you come down to the center.

Let's press on to perfection. Verse 9. Those who are wise will understand these things. Those who are discerning will listen carefully.

The paths of the Lord are true and right and righteous people will live by walking in them. That's how Hosea ends. Now we want to look at Joel.

It's just a short prophecy of three chapters. And the subject of Joel is the day of the Lord. In the first chapter, he's talking about a plague of locusts that had come upon... Joel, by the way, was a prophet to Judah, the southern kingdom.

And the Lord sent him at a time when there was a terrific plague of locusts that had swept the land and many of the crops had been eaten up. And sometimes in these natural calamities, we have to see the hand of God. And we need a prophet at such a time to tell us why this has happened.

We read in 2 Samuel 21, verse 1, that there was a famine in the time of David for three years. That was abnormal. So he began to seek the Lord and say, Lord, why is there a famine? And the Lord told him what the cause of the famine was.

There was some sin that had to be set right. And when that sin was set right, the famine problem was solved. The Bible says that sometimes sickness is due to sin.

1 Corinthians 11 seems to teach that some people even die because they're playing the fool with sin, not taking the breaking of bread seriously. James chapter 5 says, Pray for one another that you may be healed. Confess your sins to one another that you may be healed.

So, when there is some calamity, it's good to ask ourselves, what is the Lord trying to say to us? Even when you have an accident, always try to listen. What is God trying to say to me? There was a plague of locusts. Instead of explaining it by natural terms, why not stop and say, Lord, is there something you're trying to say to me through it? And God may have something to say to you through it.

It's always good to hear what God has to say. And that can protect you from more serious calamities in the future. I remember times when I've ridden my scooter and I've had a little toss.

By the grace of God, I've never hurt anybody in all these 40 years that I've ridden a scooter or broken any bone of my own. But I've had little tosses and had a scrape. And I've come home and I said, Lord, what are you trying to tell me? And the Lord says, You must drive a little slowly.

You're driving too fast. So, I'm thankful for a word like that. Okay, I take that seriously.

And I try. And that can save me from a more serious accident at some other time. In everything big and small, when something happens which is not normal, which is not good, sickness, accident, ask the Lord, Lord, what are you trying to say to me? Maybe the Lord is just telling you to trust Him more.

So, here was a plague of locusts and there was a prophet who came and said to them, Listen to this. Again, leaders. Verse 2. Always the prophet spoke to the leaders.

Listen to this, you leaders of the people. Everyone listen. Verse 2. In all your history, in all your history, has anything like this happened before? No.

This is God trying to speak to you. Have you had any experience like that? Where the Lord has to say in all your life such a thing has never happened to you, right? What am I trying to tell you through this? Stop and listen. And when you listen and you hear that God is chastening you and punishing you for your sins, and you repent of those sins and you set it right, then, verse 3, you can tell your children about this in the years to come.

In future generations, you can tell your children, you know, Daddy, I was going astray and your Dad was going astray and then God spoke to me and judged me and gave me this type of punishment and I could come back in his ways. Now children, you tell your children about that. Pass it on from generation to generation so that they can know how to fear God.

So that was what the Lord was saying. But it says all of you people are so drunk with your own, you know, assured confidence in yourself, saying no, no, no, we haven't done anything wrong. Then you're not able to hear what God is saying.

Joel says, wake up you drunkards and weep. There's no fruit in your ministry. All the grapes are ruined, your new wine is gone.

What is the reason? Is it God's will that we should be unfruitful? No. Jesus said very clearly in John chapter 15, is it verse 16? I don't remember. I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain for eternity.

By this you will prove that you are my disciples. So it is God's will that we should be fruitful, fruitful in our character that we overcome our natural the nature we inherited from Adam and produce the fruit of the spirit and fruitful in our ministry whatever our particular calling is. But he says, look at this.

The locusts have destroyed it and you don't seem to be bothered by it at all. And verse 12 joy has withered away. Joy has dried up.

When you lose your joy you can be absolutely sure that you're a backslider. A true disciple of Jesus is full of joy. He may have many trials.

He may have sorrows. But when joy has withered up when joy has dried up you know you're a backslider. Please take that as a sign of backsliding when you start murmuring.

When did the children of Israel murmur? When they were in the wilderness and God destroyed them for murmuring. And one Corinthians 10 says, this is written for our instruction that we should not murmur like them. When you murmur and complain against people at home because the food is not cooked right, you are in the wilderness yourself.

Please remember that. When joy has dried up, you're a backslider. What should you do then? You leaders, first of all, verse 13 dress up in sackcloth.

Go and weep before God's altar. Spend the night in sackcloth. You leaders, you ministers, you preachers, announce a time of fasting.

Call the people together. Tell them all to fast and seek God because there's no fruit in the church, no fruit of character, no fruit in the ministry. We need to seek God with fasting and repentance and prayer.

And blow the trumpet, verse chapter 2 verse 1 in Jerusalem, in the church. Sound an alarm. This is a serious matter.

Let everyone tremble in fear because the day of the Lord is soon going to come. The day of the Lord comes in chapter 3 but in chapter 2 he's telling us how to be ready for it. It's a day of darkness and judgment and a time when fear will grip people.

So what while there is time, verse 12 the Lord says, before that day comes, while there is time, turn to me now. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, mourning.

Don't tear your clothes. I'm not interested in that. Tear your hearts.

Verse 13. Return to the Lord your God for he is gracious and merciful. He is filled with kindness and he is not eager to punish you.

Who knows? He will send you a blessing instead of a curse. So blow the trumpet, verse 15, 2-15 in Jerusalem. Announce a time of fasting.

Call the people together. This is the one place where we are told to publicly have a fast. Fasting and prayer as a church.

Call the elders, call the children, even the babies. Call the bridegroom from his room and the bride from her private room. The priests who stand in the Lord's presence must stand between the people in the altar weeping.

Verse 17. And they must pray saying Lord spare your people. Don't let us become an object of mockery among the heathen.

You know that Christians are an object of mockery among the heathen. I heard of a meeting recently in one part of India some time ago where some people claimed to heal the sick. You know these advertisements the eyes of the blind are being opened and etc, etc.

So they had a meeting with this man who claimed to have a gift of healing, preaching and some radical fundamentalist anti-Christian people came to that meeting with some sick people and a doctor and brought them up to the front and said please heal them. And of course he could not heal any of them. It was just a hoax.

And then these people broke the sound system and everything on the platform and said don't deceive the people here saying you can heal the sick when nobody is getting healed. I thought if I were in that meeting I would have agreed 100% with what those people said. Don't deceive people by telling lies.

And Christians have said things like that which have made them an object of mockery. Lord have mercy upon us. These unbelieving people come.

Let us be honest and say let's not claim things which we don't have. Let's not claim to have gifts which we don't have. If you have the gift of healing, go ahead and exercise it.

But don't go around claiming that you have a gift when you don't have it. If Jesus didn't go around advertising I'm the great healer. I've come to town.

He didn't have to advertise. He actually healed the sick and everybody knew about it in no time. That's just an example of how the Christians have become an object of mockery among the unbelievers because of their own fault.

And the Lord will pity his people when we repent like this, when we confess our sin and he'll be indignant for the honor of his name and he will reply. And what is he going to do? He will pour out his spirit. Verse 28.

I will pour out my spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams.

This is the verse that was quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost saying this is what Joel prophesied. We've been praying in the upper room for 10 days, fasting, praying, seeking God, repenting, saying Lord don't let your people be the object of mockery here and the spirit was poured out. I want to encourage you my brothers and sisters call a fast, blow a trumpet, get people to seek God.

People who are concerned that the name of Jesus is being dishonored in our land. Oh what a word of prophecy Joel has for us today. Seek God and then very soon the day of the Lord will come.

Verse 30 onwards he says there will be wonders in the heaven and the earth blood and fire and pillars of smoke and in between this time before that happens, verse 32 anyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved. Chapter 3 describes the future judgment the millennial reign of Christ and before that comes it says here in verse 14 a verse that we need to think about thousands and thousands chapter 3 14 are waiting in the valley of decision that's where many many not thousands today it is millions in Joel's time it was thousands millions and millions of people are waiting in the valley of decision not knowing which way to turn and the day of the Lord will soon arrive in the valley of decision we are in this time a time will come when the sun and the moon will grow dark the stars will no longer shine the Lord's voice will roar from Zion but to his people verse 16 the Lord will be a refuge and a strong fortress in this time and then you will know verse 17 is speaking about the millennial reign of Christ when he comes to earth I will live in Zion my holy mountain Jerusalem will be holy forever there will be no more backsliding then no more foreign armies will conquer her again and Egypt verse 19 will become a wasteland Egypt refers to the world and Pharaoh is a picture of Satan the ruler of the world Edom is a picture of the flesh you know we have three enemies the world the flesh and the devil and all three are pictured here Egypt the world its ruler Pharaoh the devil and Edom Edom is the descendants of Esau and in the new testament we are told conflict between Esau and Jacob is like the conflict between Ishmael and Isaac he's a picture of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit Ishmael is a picture of the flesh and Isaac is a picture of the spirit man born of the spirit and man born of the flesh, there is conflict between religious people and spiritual people.

Esau and Jacob have the same type of conflict and there is a picture of the flesh and here its saying that finally God will completely deal with the world the flesh and the devil because for so many years they attacked God's people and killed her innocent people but Judah will remain forever Jerusalem will endure through all future generations and I will pardon my people's crimes that's a picture of the church and I the Lord see the conclusion will make my home in Jerusalem with my people that is the ultimate goal of prophecy is that God can dwell in the midst of his people and today you and I are called to proclaim the word in purity to God's call God's people to repentance the fasting to give up all their idols notice how in all these prophets that we've been considering so far their burden was always give up your idols give up your idols give up your idolatry give up your idol worship put God first put God first in your life holiness holiness holiness and holiness was having no idols in our life holiness is not just being righteous in financial matters holiness is that nobody but God has first place in my life he is number one anything less than that is not holiness and that's our calling to proclaim today so that one day the church can be a place where God can dwell and be happy let's pray

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