

Restore the Locust Years

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[0 : 00] I'm going to sing Psalm 51 Psalm 51 from the beginning of the psalm After thy loving kindness Lord have mercy upon me for thy compassions great, blot out all mine iniquity me cleanse from sin and throughly wash from mine iniquity, for my transgressions I confess, my sin I ever see against thee, thee only have I sinned in thy sight done this ill and when thou speakst thou mayst be just and clear in judging still behold, I in iniquity was formed, the womb within my mother also me conceived in guiltiness and sin, behold thou in inward parts with thy delighted art and wisdom thou shalt make me know within the hidden part do thou with hyssop sprinkle me

I shall be cleansed so ye wash thou me and then I shall be whiter than the snow let us sing these verses Psalm 51 from the beginning after thy loving kindness Lord have mercy upon me after thy loving kindness Lord have mercy upon me for thy compassion give not yet all my iniquity me cleanse from sin and unruly from my iniquity for my transgressions

As thy conversations O thy love and boulders for my heart and thy■■■■ I don't understand, not when there's blistering just unclear in judgment, CHOIR SINGS and guiltied in exalination.

Behold thou with me in my heart, with new delighted heart, and wisdom shall give me hope within the hidden heart.

To thy will is no strength of me, I shall be ■■■■ro.

[4 : 42] Ye wardsansace, andrender shop, be wide and ideas.

as you know. We can turn to the passage of Scripture that we read together, the book of the prophet Joel, chapter 2, and we can read at verse 25.

And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerwarrin and the caterpillar and the pamerwarrin, my great army which I sent among you.

And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied. And praise the name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never be ashamed.

And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel and that I am the Lord your God. And none else. And my people shall never be ashamed.

[5 : 59] It's not necessary for us to know who Joel was or when he lived.

but it does help. No question. Normally when we're looking at one of the prophets of the Old Testament, it's helpful for us to know something about who they are and at what point in the history of the church they laboured.

But there's not much information given to us. And if you do study the book of Joel and read what is written by the various commentators, they have to cast a forensic eye, I suppose, over the writing itself in order to glean from it some of the detail that might help them understand the point at which Joel laboured.

So usually he is associated with the time of Amos, perhaps before Amos.

Amos. And really that information is taken from the mention that is made within the book of the various nations that are identified as being involved in the history of the people of this time.

- [7 : 51] But the opening verse just tells us that he was a prophet, the word of the Lord that came to join the son of Petru. He is called to proclaim God's word and it is not a message that he has created or composed but rather a word that God has given him to declare.
- And it is declared in the context of three things. God's call to the people to repent.
- And that is undergirded by God's revelation of his judgment. And the third thing is the great and terrible day of the Lord that is as a backleth to all that is being said.
- If you read through this prophecy, even the chapter that we read together, you'll recognize some of the words there as they are quoted in the New Testament scriptures.
- scriptures and the fact that the words of the prophet traverse the centuries to the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- [9 : 31] But as I said, at the heart of the message of the prophet is a call to repentance. Now the opening verses of the first chapter are first of all addressed to the spiritual leaders of that generation.
- There is a call for them to heed and act upon what they hear. And then the word goes out beyond them to the wider community and beyond them to the world at large.
- And I think that is probably what is true at all times. God speaks first and foremost to his people. Then he speaks to the community that have his people part of that community and then it goes to the world at large.
- And when you think about our own environment at the present when the word of God is coming to us God is speaking to his own people the church first and foremost.
- And then the word goes out beyond that whether people choose to hear it or not. He speaks preeminently to his people and his word even when it is a word of judgment that comes to his people.
- [11 : 13] O. Palmer Robertson in his comments on the opening verses of this prophecy he says that God speaks first of all to the elders and he maintains that the attitude of the spiritual leaders is all important in determining the receptivity of the congregation to the word of God.
- God speaks to the spiritual leadership and if they're not receptive to the truth it is no surprise that the word doesn't go beyond that.
- It is no surprise if when we look at it in the days of the Lord himself the word came to the scribes and the elders and they chose or did otherwise to deal with God's word.
- They despised the truth as it spoke of Christ and that impacted upon the people in a negative way.
- I think Robertson says if you look at the way Christ was at one point there was interest in him there was a desire on the part of even the spiritual leadership to see if there was truth on his side but it was very quickly something that they discarded and when they did that that filtered its way through to an unbelieving group within the covenant people of God if the leaders are not hearing and having their lives changed by the power of God's word the people will not hear what God has to say so he speaks God's word to the people and he speaks
- [13 : 30] God's word to the people telling them of God's purposes for them but we have to remember that God's word goes out to all people it will never be an excuse on any part on the part of any person on the day of judgment that God did not speak to them that is not what I'm saying God's word goes into this world through the channels that he has ordained by which that word is proclaimed whether they choose to hear it or not and they will be judged accordingly we must understand however that judgment begins with God's house that's almost a given we find it throughout the scripture that when the word of judgment comes to a people it has to begin with his people and that is something that the prophet has to emphasize to them and no one will be excluded from that and

I suppose when you think of God working in judgment within a community within a nation within a society there will be those who ignore it as God's work of judgment there will be those who would use the fact that God is judging that society to point the finger of blame in the direction of God which always seems to me to be the default position of many many who are atheistic in outlook who would deny God and yet when God judges it is easy for them to point the finger of blame and say what kind of God do you have what kind of

God would bring judgment to bear upon a people or a community even though they themselves prior to that are unbelieving and in denial of such a God and yet God doesn't depend on them to believe in him or not when he exercises the judgment that he has promised because of the people's wickedness then he's not going to be frustrated by the people's hard hearted response to it their denial of him or their accusation of him for being what he is a holy God who must deal with sin as he sees fit and when we look at this passage we have to remember that what we are introduced to is a judgment of God upon a nation and it is an extensive judgment it leaves no one untouched and nobody is excluded from the effect of it which seems to some to be iniquitous in itself if the righteous are to be affected as the same as the unrighteous then surely there is iniquity at the heart of that judgment but the judgment of

God is designed where it is exercised towards his own people would have you to bring his people back to himself and that is what it will always do where his people experience the wrath of God exercise towards them in justice pleasure the ultimate end of what he is doing is to turn them to himself that they may experience repentance and that they may turn from their sin to himself for those who are the focus of his wrath who are in denial of who he is like for example if you think of Pharaoh in Egypt God hardened Pharaoh's heart the same judgment that came to bear upon the nation I think we find it so often that the heart of man is either like clay which hardens in the sun or like wax which melts the two things are quite the same the same element is brought to bear upon the two and yet one reacts differently one hardens and the other melts and this was the way it was with regard to the generation who experienced the wrath of

God the judgment of God and here we believe that the instrument of God's judgment appears to have been locusts there are some commentators who suggest that the figure of locusts is used but only to describe the activity of marauding armed horses from surrounding nations and there are times in the scripture where you do find something like that but in this instance what seems to be clear is that there is a plague brought to bear upon them and we have little experience of such plagues as they take place the devastating damage that is done when locusts for example as they are described here they leave nothing in their wake if you read in verse 25

[20 : 21] I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten the canker worm, the caterpillar, the palmer worm three or four different either stages in development of the locust or perhaps a different species but all engaged in the activity they are mine he says my great army which I sent among you and what they are doing is quite literally laying the land bare of vegetation and what they are to learn from all this is that this is the Lord's doing they are my army this is my judgement and while we acknowledge that not many of us will have experienced anything like that

I don't think any one of us can say that we haven't seen it recorded in books that we are able to read or through the media I remember seeing a nature program on Africa and it showed there a devastation that was wrought by white ants the white ants tiny wee creatures but they descended on the land and it had the same kind of devastating influence as the locusts as the locust had in this region nothing was left that had life in it perhaps there would be a tree and it would have the image of a tree it would stand as it stood beforehand but if you touched it it would disintegrate into dust and this is a kind of devastation that was wrought trees bushes all greenery and this was what is important for us to understand this was the doing of the Lord this was his judgement and there was no response for it but to repent because the prophet brought this to their attention this is God's doing this is what he is going to bring this is why he is going to bring it and the response that was expected was repentance genuine deeply felt sorrow for sin that exposed them to the judgement of God and understood that it was rightly the experience that they deserved the thing to remember is this that the one who will stay the hand of the executioner is the one who brought the executioner to exercise judgement in the first place this is the only remedy the only way that the judgement could be brought to an end is if God determined that it had suffice that it had achieved his purposes and this seems to have been the case that there is a change in the message that comes from the prophet therefore also now saith the

Lord turn ye even to me with all your heart with fasting with weeping and with mourning and rend your heart and not your garments turn unto the Lord your God for he is gracious and merciful slow to anger and of great kindness and repenteth him of the evil and so on this knowledge was made known to them and they embraced that truth as a truth they believed now when we look at this how can we believe how can we understand what the prophet is saying here I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten we often speak of these words we use these words we link them into our own experience and we think

I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten one thing that we do know is that we cannot go back we cannot recover last days what is done cannot be undone in one sense as is frequently stated lost time cannot be recalled and it is what is lost can never be found as far as time is concerned so the message of the prophet is I'm going to allow you to retrace your steps so that the judgment has never taken place that's not what he is saying that's not the message that he has for this people but that having executed judgment and devastated the land using his army that he is able to restore the fruit that was lost by reason of that devastation this is what can be reversed and whereas other things cannot be reversed and I think when we examine our own lives and when we think of the reasons we have in our lives for repentance when we examine where we have gone wrong and the wrongs that we have done we know that these wrongs are there and they cannot be rubbed out they cannot be blotted out by our hands anyway the only place that we can go with them is to God and to confess them and to seek mercy from him and forgiveness for them but it doesn't take away the sense that we have of the harm these wrongs have done to ourselves and perhaps to others we cannot escape from that

I was thinking of two examples from the scripture and I suppose it's just things that were done that could not or should not have happened for example we see just in a very short compass of time we see the Lord going into the garden of Gethsemane with three disciples and he gives these three disciples a role he says to them watch with me for one hour and yet they fall asleep now if you were to ask these three disciples if you were going to speak to them following on from this we're not told what they would accomplish by their continuing to do what Christ had asked them for but I'm sure that their heart and mind was full of recrimination for the fact that they had failed him in this one point and they couldn't really go back they couldn't go back and say well if we understood that the cross was that close then we may have made a special effort if we had understood that it was so important then maybe we would have been more diligent do we not understand how often we see retrospectively how things could and should have been different similarly when you think of

[29 : 30] Thomas we know the disciples were together for fear of the Jews and the Lord came into their presence for the first time and he breathed on them the Holy Spirit but Thomas wasn't there and we know that Thomas was blessed by the Lord we know that he received the favour of Christ subsequent to that but he would never have this privilege that the other disciples had he missed out in a big way and it would be something that would be worth for all time now the same is true for our own lives things that we could have done that we didn't do and things that we ought not have done that we did do and then we have time to reflect on these things and the effect that they had upon our lives and we think well these are years that the locust has eaten in this respect that we that we've allowed circumstances to rob us of these potential blessings but the awesome wonder of what the prophet is saying here is that that is not the end of it that is the judgment is not the end it is the means to an end and where

God is speaking to his people it is with a view to bring them back to himself and the God who ordains the judgment is the one who is able to end it and bring a blessing perhaps I would suggest anyway from the wording of this passage that the blessing that he confers upon them is a greater blessing than they would have enjoyed if things had gone on as they were as far as the harvest of these the fruit of the land was concerned there is a greater blessing there is a greater abundance of provision on the part of God that that doesn't justify their neglect or their sin that brought about God's judgment we can never argue it like that we can never be like the world who will say whatever will be will be we can never justify our own inactivity and say well because of that something better came about or something greater came to be in my experience that's not the whole point of what God is doing just because he is gracious just because he is willing to bless in a way that we do not deserve doesn't expunge the guilt or remove the cause of the of the the displeasure that God showed but it's important for them to see

I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten you shall eat in plenty and be satisfied and praise the name of your Lord the Lord your God that has dealt wondrously with you this is the outcome this is the experience that they will enter into and it is the eye of the believer open to God's mercy and grace in a way that they would not otherwise have the privilege of enjoying William Cowper in one of his most famous poems writes his purposes will ripen fast unfolding every hour the bud may have a bitter taste but sweet will be the flower blind unbelief is sure to air and scan his work in vain God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain and is that not the case with regard to the providence that God ordains wherein he works his judgment even in order to bring his people back to himself the world who are blind will come to their own conclusions and say well there's nothing good going to come of this but the

Lord's people will enjoy the interpretation that God is able to give to them in his own time the acute devastation which on the face of it seems irreversible will be reversed but only by reason of a response to God's grace and I think that's important in the book of chronicles the second book of chronicles my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sins and will heal their land and if we believe healing came if we believe recovery came if we believe that the processes that were introduced into their experience by way of the

Lord's army are stopped then we must believe that the only way that could have happened is by reason of the genuine return to God in repentance Christians if we look back on our own lives as Christians one thing we have to understand and we have to guard against it that our life may be full of regrets we are often overwhelmed by regrets as Christians Christians who at perhaps had abided in our lives we expected great things from ourselves rightly or wrongly we expected to be better Christians than we are we expected to be more fruitful as Christians we expected to give God greater glory than we do and who of us has not given such undertakings to God and then found ourselves to be to be the most unprofitable of servants but we were grateful we're thankful to God that that in his word we're reminded that we are implanted into his vineyard and that he has undertaken that these vines that he has planted there are destined to bear fruit not just to bear fruit but to bear greater fruit more fruit but it's always under his hand we may think that it is it is always by our power and motivation and desire and zeal and all of these things are the means by which we are going to secure that end but that doesn't work that's not the way it is and here

[37 : 49] God has promised this is what he will do you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel and that I am the Lord of God and none else and my people shall never be ashamed is that not the way it always must be you will know you will learn you will be reminded that what what is to be done what is done is my doing and it's for my glory and my glory I will give to no other God and there are many mysteries in the providence of God that we cannot unravel and we cannot begin to understand and yet if we understand this that God is always at work in his own church for the glory of his name for the good of his people for the extension of his kingdom and even though we cannot see how that can possibly be it will be and we will possibly if that is his will be given insights into it whether in this world in the next well may bless to us these few thoughts let us pray ever blessed

God help us to to appreciate that you are a God who who works in this world in mighty ways and awesome ways and the ways in which you work are often surprising but you have determined to bring to fruition your purposes through whatever medium you choose to use for the glory of your name and for the good of your kingdom bless us as we form part of that as we see around us the the purposes of God being revealed to us grant to us that understanding and discernment so that we may see your hand even where others don't forgive our sins and partners in Jesus name Amen we're going to sing in conclusion from Psalm 113 in

Galic Psalm 113 the first two verses Amen O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus, ie estu mehub gu furrochar, srimorni kantochus, macho eich ur leh daigi ago yeh, ko heses rufd, achagat se tayoch, gacham, gung strigat ago hud.

O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus. O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus.

O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus.

[41 : 52] O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus. O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus. O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus.

O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus. O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus. O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus.

O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus. O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus. O neine oji hafaie, dar lumeir uftsususus.

O neine oji hama ghastie.

No one is with no harm Thank you.

[43 : 44] Thank you.

Thank you.