

Cry Unto the Lord

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word.

Alright, take your Bibles and go with me to the book of Joel in the Old Testament. Joel is the second in the twelve minor prophets there. This is an unusual book for you to get to hear from, but God wrote it, and it's good. Amen?

Now here's what's happening. In this story, there has been a plague of locusts and insects that have come through the nation of Judah and literally destroyed everything.

And that was God's judgment on the country of Judah, which is two tribes out of the twelve tribes of Israel. And right behind that is an army coming of the Assyrians that's going to come through and destroy the country in chapter two.

And so the idea here is the prophet says, hey, it's time to get right with God. It's time to cry out to the Lord. It's time for us to recognize that God is exactly who he says he is.

[1 : 16] The whole book is basically a prophet who is making uncomfortable the comfortable. There are people in Judah. They're used to being the people of God.

They're used to doing everything, but they've become complacent and lazy. And so he's calling them back. This is a minor prophet. There are twelve of them. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nehemiah, Abakaz, Ebeniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

You're going to get to know those books real good over the next few months, and you're going to learn a little bit about them. These twelve made up one book in the Tanakh or the Jewish Old Testament.

Minor has nothing to do with their message being minor. It has to do with their length. They're shorter than the other books. You've got Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel, and they wrote long books.

This book, Joel, is written to the southern tribes, or what's called Judah. And he's calling on the people of God to repent and avoid the coming disasters.

[2 : 18] This book is a book of disasters, one after another. And God will use judgments to bring his people back to him.

They wouldn't listen to the prophets. They wouldn't listen to the preachers. And so God brings calamity and catastrophes over the land to give them a stronger message, to call on them to repent.

So Joel's ministry is to make uncomfortable the comfortable. The people are in deep moral decay. They were complacent. They were comfortable.

And they're spiritually apathetic. This could describe the United States of America or the people, even a vision Baptist church. And God often used calamity and hardship to teach us things that we refuse to learn any other way.

In Peru, they had a saying, a Spanish saying was, La letra entra con sangre. You can get a letter into them, but it might take a little blood. You've got to hit them hard enough to make them learn it.

[3 : 21] You've got to get their attention. That's the idea. So, you know, back in the old days when I went to school, if you couldn't learn it the easy way, after a few whippings, you could learn it. And so that's basically what the book of Joel is about.

Go with me, if you would, to verse 15. This book, the key to this book is a thing called the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord.

When you read the Old Testament, you're going to find that word a lot of times. After today, Lord willing, you'll have at least a slight understanding of what the word day of the Lord means. Number one thing it means is a day of destruction.

Look at Joel 1.15. Alas for the day, for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

Underline that word, destruction. You see, God was like, hey, that's it. I've been patient long enough. I've worked with you long enough. And so I'm bringing judgment on you. It looks like I'm going to have to knock you down before I can pick you up.

[4 : 23] It looks like I'm going to have to break you before I can raise you up. Look at Joel 2 and verse 1. It's coming, and it's terrifying. This day of the Lord is coming, and it's terrifying.

The Bible says, blow ye the trumpet and zine. Sound an alarm in my holy mountain. Let all the mountains of the land tremble, tremble. For the day of the Lord comes.

It is nigh at hand. It's a scary thing. It's a scary thing. Judgment is coming. Judgment is marching towards the people of Judah.

People will not be able to stand when the judgment comes. Look at Joel 2, verse 11. These are just the times he mentions the day of the Lord. In Joel 2, verse 11, it says, The Lord shall utter his voice before his army.

For his camp is very great. For he is strong that executeth his word. For the day of the Lord is great and awesome. Very awesome. Terrible. Very terrible. Who can abide it?

[5 : 20] God is moving. A day of judgment is coming. It's a final and great day. Joel 2, verse 31. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

That's going to happen at the end of the world. We heard about that in the book of Revelation. And we'll get around to that again in the future. And people needed to make a decision. When you know death is moving, hell is coming, When you know that judgment is coming, It's time to wake up and say, I need to cry unto God.

There is a real God and he really is powerful. And I can't just act like it's not true. Look at Joel 3, verse 14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision.

For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. So in the Bible, God's people need to be prepared for this day of the Lord.

The day of the Lord refers to different periods when God sends judgment. The main day of the Lord is still to come. There's one more big day of the Lord coming. And that will be when he sets up his kingdom here on earth.

[6 : 29] And when he brings things to pass. In this book, We see the day of the Lord is the day of judgment of the locusts, The Assyrian army invading Judah, And the final judgment of the world.

The day of the Lord, That's God's anger or judgment on his people. The nation of Judah, And the nation of Israel. Now go with me if you would to Joel chapter 1 and verse 1.

Here's the thing that you need to understand. When Joel speaks, He's not saying what he thinks. He's not saying what they discussed in a club somewhere. He says, I'm about to give you the Lord's word.

Look at Joel 1, 1. And the word of the Lord that came to Joel. The word of the Lord that came to Joel. God's people. The priests were to teach people the law.

The prophets were to call God's people back to the Lord when they walked away from the law. God's people are to hear these men of God. And Joel's not saying what he thinks. He's not interpreting other stuff.

[7 : 29] He said, God gave me a message. This is the word of God. And it's what God told him to say. We need to learn. There's only one true voice of authority. It's not science.

It's not politics. It's the word of God. God's given us some authority. And when Joel spoke, He said, You guys need to listen to me. God told me this. And when any Bible teacher, Any Bible preacher, Any Sunday school teacher, Any disciple stands up, We're going to speak with authority.

But not because of who I am, But because of the book that we look at. It's the word of God. Amen? It is God's word. So there's this horrible judgment coming.

Joel is warning the nation of Judah, Get right. Get right because God's bringing judgment. Get right because God's tired of your complacency.

Get right because God is tired of you taking him lightly. God's tired of it. And there's horrible things happening. I want you to imagine, I mean, Just imagine the front page of the newspaper, Entire country destroyed by plague.

[8 : 32] Just imagine the dust bowls of our history. If you know any history, Just imagine poverty everywhere. That's what's happening in the land. Look at, And this is what he tells them.

He said, Guys, You need to tell your children what God's doing. You need to tell your children what God's doing. Look with me if you would at Joel chapter 1 and verse 2. Hear this, You old men, And give ear, All ye inhabitants of the land.

Hath this been in your days, Or even in the days of your fathers? Joel said, You realize we've just had all this plague come through and destroy our country? Do you realize all the crops are gone?

Do you realize it's even torn our barns down? These insects have come through and destroyed everything. Have you ever seen anything like that? Look what he says in verse 5, Or 3.

Tell ye your children of it, And let your children tell their children, And their children another generation. Great lessons to be learned in the passage. But here's the main thing.

[9 : 35] These lessons should be shared with our children and our grandchildren. We should be teaching our children. Now listen to this, Would you please? Here's the deal. Judgment is coming.

There will be a day when God sets up a judgment, And there will be a day when people die, And they either go to hell or they go to heaven. And we all know that. We know the truth. You've heard the gospel. You know the truth.

You know there really is a heaven. You know there really is a hell. You know there's a decision that's got to be made by your kids. So wake up and tell them. Here's what happens when you get comfortable. When nobody's dying and nobody's sick and nobody has cancer and there's not a lot of tragedy, Then you don't even realize all this stuff.

You need to wake up and say, It's coming. People need to know God. Tell your children. That's a Bible truth. Some of us have been there when bad stuff has happened.

Some of us have seen the need of God. Some of us have been to those funerals and watched those people thinking about pulling their loved ones out of the casket. We've seen this horrible stuff. They need the truth.

[10 : 39] They need comfort. Tell your children. The Bible says in 78.4, Psalm 78.4, We will not hide them from their children, Showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord and His strength and His wonderful works that He hath done.

I need to be real careful not to hide from my kids what I've seen God do. I have seen God hear and answer prayer. I have seen God do great things in my life. I have experienced times of trouble. I know what God can do.

I need to be careful, like Joel said, to tell my kids and my grandkids. In Genesis 18.19, Abraham will teach his children. The Bible says, I know him that he will command his children and his household after him.

And they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he's spoken. You see, what's going to happen is, oh, Abraham's going to talk to his family.

Can I just, can I remind you? I know, man, we live in prosperity. This is Alpharetta. This is almost like a little taste of heaven on earth because it's so beautiful and everything's so good.

[11 : 45] And everybody's got good jobs. Everybody's driving nice cars. And everything seems to be going so good. Like there's no need to worry about things that are eternal. Like there's no need to worry about people dying and going to hell.

There's no need for any of that. But that's not what the Bible teaches. Abraham said, I'll tell my kids. Are you telling your kids? Daddy, are you taking the responsibility to make sure your children know the things of God?

Keep your children from a world of hurt. Keep your children from an eternity in hell. Make a decision. In Joshua 24.15, you know the verse.

Joshua said, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Joel starts off and says, guys, what I'm about to tell you, God told me. And I'm going to tell you what you should do with what God told me.

Tell your kids. And tell your grandkids. All you old people, tell everybody else. This is from God. Be sure and tell them. Go with me to Joel chapter 1 and verse 4.

[12 : 44] The calamity is teaching everyone their need to repent. The calamity is teaching everyone their need to repent. Joel 1.4.

The Bible says, that which the palmer worm hath left hath the locust eaten. And that which the locust hath left hath the canker worm eaten. And that which the canker worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.

It's time to wake up from sinful slumber. They wouldn't listen to the preachers. And now God's wrath is extended in a different way. Through calamity.

Please listen to this. He's God. He's big enough to control all these locusts that come through. He's big enough to control all these armies.

He's the creator of the universe. And he will be respected. And he will be honored. And he will get our attention. So Joel says, in Joel chapter 1 and verse 5, It's time for the pleasure seekers, the drunkards, the drinkers of wine to wake up and pay attention.

[13 : 50] See, everybody's having a good time. Everybody's just enjoying life like there's no tomorrow. Eat, drink today. Enjoy it. For tomorrow you may die.

Let's have a good time. Grab all the gusto. Live out the life you want. And Joel said, boys, you better wake up. God sent that through. And so you should awake. Look at Joel 1.5. Awake, you drunkards.

And weep. And howl, all you drinkers of wine. Because of the new wine, it's cut off from your mouth. All of a sudden, the partying is starting to cease.

You know why, don't you? The locusts came through. Now there's no more grapes to make wine. There's no more fun. There's no more parties. The money's run out. The country's in big trouble. And he said, y'all better wake up.

Y'all better wake up. Y'all better wake up. They've even stopped giving offerings. Look at Joel 1.9. No offerings are left because of the calamity.

[14 : 47] Joel 1.9 says, the meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord. The priest and the Lord's ministers mourn. All of a sudden, there's no more partying.

And there's no more preaching and praying. There's no more seeking God because it's all gone and they've quit coming to make offerings. All their income, all their produce is gone.

This is a Great Depression far worse than the Great Depression. In Joel 1.10, the Bible said, the field is wasted. The land mourns for the corn is wasted.

The new wine is dried up. The oil languishes. Wake up, partiers. Wake up, fun time lovers. Wake up, everybody's enjoying life to the fullest.

Wake up, there's a God in heaven and he's trying to get your attention. They're to wake up. They've not been paying attention. They've not been listening to the word of God. We should always be sensitive to God.

[15 : 44] Never indifferent to what he wants to do in our lives. Worship, which would have been secondary anyway, is now cut off. There's no more coming to God. Wake up, partiers. Wake up, fun lovers.

Wake up, adventure seekers. Wake up. There's a God in heaven. You need to pay attention to him. By the way, he's talking to Judah. These are the people of God.

They know better. It's kind of like talking to us and saying, wake up. There's a God in heaven. We get complacent. We get satisfied. We just kind of go about our lives and tag God on to it.

He said, wake up. Now go to Joel chapter 1 and verse 11. Joel chapter 1 and verse 11. He says to the farmers and the workers, it's time to be ashamed.

Look at verse 11. Be ashamed, O you husbandmen, all you people that take care of the vines and all you people that take care of the farms. Howl, O ye vine dressers, for the wheat and for the barley, because the harvest of the field is perished.

[16 : 47] No more harvest. The vine is dried up. Grape vines are gone. The fig trees languish. The pomegranate tree, the palm tree, and the apple tree. Even all the trees of the field are withered.

Joy is withered away from the sons of men. You know, this is a fertile country. I mean, this is like a drought hitting California and there's no more grapes and there's no more oranges and there's no more of any of the things that give us so much pleasure.

It's all gone. They've lost their joy. They're ashamed and they're embarrassed. Their hearts are filled with despair. There's no hope. God's judgment is seen everywhere.

They step out of their house and they can see the trees are dead. They can look out and see all their plants are dead. They can see all their income is gone. They've lost everything. No grapes.

No figs. No apples. No trees in the field. Here's the big lesson. God's big enough to control the elements and bring this drought. God's big enough to use the locusts to destroy everything.

[17 : 48] Farmers, you think I'll go plant a field, I'll get a harvest, we get rich, we enjoy life. He said, no, no, no, you need to understand something. There's a God in heaven and you need to pay attention to him.

He ought not be on the back page of your novel. He ought not be just a thing you've added to your life. He ought not just be a postscript to your letter. He ought to be principle in your life.

Wake up, farmers. Be embarrassed. Then he says, hey, man of God, won't you wake up? Look at Joel chapter 1 and verse 13. The priests need to humble themselves. The ministers need to humble themselves.

Joel 1, 13. Gird yourselves and lament. You priests, howl, you ministers of the altar. Come, lie all night in sackcloth, you ministers of my God.

For the meat offering and the drink offering is withholding from the house of God. God, hey, guys, hey, partiers are having a hard time. Farmers are having a hard time. Preachers are having a hard time.

[18 : 47] It's bad everywhere. That's what Joel says. They needed to cry out to preachers with broken hearts. They needed to have all night prayer meetings. They needed to see how desperate the situation was.

They needed to cry out to God with all their hearts. This is a time of intense spiritual labor. They needed to honor God by getting God's people to come to worship.

Look at what Joel says in 1, 14. Joel 1, 14. Sanctify ye a fast. That means set aside a time. Dedicate some time. Call everything off and let's have a fast.

Call a solemn assembly. Get them all together. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God and cry unto the Lord. Things are bad, boys.

Let's get to the house of God. In Judah, let's get to the house of God. What had started in the hearts of the men of God now needed to extend to the people. Everyone needed to be calling on God.

[19 : 46] They needed to realize that it was God who was in charge over all the calamity in the entire universe. Wake up. Wake up. You've been living life like God's not there.

You've been living life like God's not that important. God's what you do when you need some help. God's what you do when you die. And he said, wake up, party goers. Wake up, farmers and then workers.

Wake up, preachers. Time to go seek God. Let's make a fast. A fast is a time of stopping to think about yourselves and to think on the Lord and what he wanted.

Can I get you to open your Bible to Isaiah 58? I really wish you'd look this passage up with me. Isaiah chapter 58 and verse 6 so you can mark it. Because when you hear fasting, you would probably have no idea what fasting really is.

It's not just not eating or not drinking. But in Isaiah chapter 58 and verse 6, the Bible tells us what God wanted in a fast. Look at what it says in Isaiah 58 6.

[20 : 42] Is not this the fast that I have chosen? Look at it. To lose the band of wickedness. Set aside some time and let's clean up our lives. Get sin out of your life.

Quit letting sin control you. Undo heavy burdens. Quit taking advantage of people. Let the oppressed go free and that you break every yoke. Hey, here's what a fast is about.

Taking care of poor people in verse 7. Give your bread to the hungry. Bring the poor that are cast out to the house. When thou seest a naked, cover him. Don't hide yourself. In other words, stop thinking about you.

You. If you want to get things right with God, you quit being the center of your life. Partygoers, who's the center? You. Hey, farmers, who's the center of your life? You. Hey, preachers, who's been the center of your life?

You. Time to change that. Come to God. Let's get some things right. Let's quit thinking about me and think about him. Let's get some things right and think about him.

[21 : 39] Look at verse 9 if you would. Isaiah chapter 58 verse 9. Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer. Thou shalt cry and he shall say, here I am.

If thou take away from the midst of thee the putting forth of the finger. Quit pointing at everybody else. You know what's happening. We come to church and all of us are like, yeah, it's him. He's talking to him.

Yeah, he needs that message. Joel says, or Isaiah says, stop that. And quit speaking vanity. Worthless junk you're talking about. Get focused on God. Verse 8 to verse 10.

If you draw out your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then God will bless. Verse 13. If you do, you stop doing your pleasure on the Lord.

See, Israel had a day set aside to worship God, but they didn't really think God's worship was that big a deal. So if they were going to have a vacation day, it would be a vacation from doing God's will, not their farm. It would be a vacation day from doing what God wanted them to do, not from what they wanted to do.

[22 : 38] He said, why don't you make the Sabbath your delight in verse 13? Why don't you quit doing your own ways in verse 13 and finding your own pleasure and finding your own words. And in verse 14, why don't you get happy in Jesus?

So here's what a fast was. Turn from you. Turn to him. Quit thinking about you. Start thinking about him. Quit living for you. Start living for him.

That's what the fast was. That's what they were being called to do. That's what they were being called to do. They needed to understand that all of this was happening was God's judgment.

Look at Joel 115. Alas for the day, for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction underlined, from the Almighty shall it come.

We'd like to blame it on the Democrats, the Republicans, the politicians, Wall Street, the businessmen. We'd like to pin it on the weather patterns and weather currents.

[23 : 45] And here's what Joel said. Uh-uh. It's God. It's God. Now, Judah, you can imagine what Judah's thinking, can't you? Judah's like, wait, wait, wait, wait. You have bad years, you have good years.

But this one's not just a bad year. This isn't just a bad harvest. Everything's been destroyed. God's trying to get their attention.

I don't know if you can see this. And this is to Judah. It's not to us, but it certainly applies to us. How many times has Austin Gardner gotten so hung up on his own lifestyle, his own things, what he wants, his own pleasures, his own desires, that God's kind of taken second seat?

Hey, when things are really bad, a buddy of mine, his kid was born, this is 40 years ago, but his son was born. And we looked through the window, because you couldn't go to the babies back then.

And we looked through the window at the little kid sleeping, and his chest was caving all the way down to his spine. And it was the most horrible, horrific thing we'd ever seen scared us to death. Before the doctor ever said a word, we knew something was wrong.

[24 : 50] And my buddy said, we've got to pray. And we ran upstairs to the little chapel, and we cried, and we prayed, and we begged God to save his little kid named Andrew. And we begged God to save his life. And we begged, and we'd come back down and look, and then we'd run back upstairs, and we'd pray, because we knew there was nothing we could do but trust God.

It's amazing how in those hard times, we know. What's Joel saying? You guys wouldn't listen to the preaching. You guys kind of take the Bible like, we hear it every week.

He said, so somehow God's got to get his message through. So he sent the locusts. So he sent destruction. So he sent calamity. So he sent judgment, because here's what he's saying. Wake up and listen to me.

That's what he's saying. Do they not realize that the joy of serving God has gone? Look at Joel chapter 1 and verse 16. Is not the meat cut off from before our eyes?

Yeah. Joy and gladness from the house of our God. Isn't that cut off? Used to, you came to church, and it was like, wow. You came to the temple, and you worshiped, and you praised, and you brought your offerings, and you thought how great your God is.

[26 : 00] He said, but now it's not that way. Everywhere we turn, tragedy. Everywhere we turn, calamity. The party goers aren't happy. The farmers aren't happy.

The preachers aren't happy. The country is destroyed. And what Joel's going to say is, if only that was all of it, an army is coming this way too.

This is only the first step. God wants our attention. They have seen total destruction. Look at Joel chapter 1 and verse 17, if you would.

Joel chapter 1 and verse 17. The seed is rotten under the clods. What in the world is God doing? You understand?

The bugs came through and destroyed everything, and now the seeds are under the clods, and God's seen to it they're rotting. There's going to be no growth. The garners are laid desolate. The barns are broken down.

[26 : 59] The corn is withered. Hey, you don't even have a place to store anything anymore. Destruction has come to our whole country. Verse 18, even our animals are feeling the pressure.

The beasts are groaning. The cattle are perplexed. They have no pasture. The flocks of sheep are made desolate. Everything is horrible.

Because God wants his people to call on him. Joel's not taking pleasure in the message. Joel's trying to say to them, guys, let's get right before more judgment has to come our way.

And I know we teach and preach and believe in the grace of God. But you know God's not going to just put up with us born-again believers acting like he's not important. You know he's going to call our attention to come to him and serve him and honor him and live for him.

You know this isn't a game. This isn't just a Sunday morning religious exercise. There is a God in heaven. And this is real. But what happened in Judah is what happens all over the world.

[28 : 09] Do you realize when everything is just so good, did you know that prosperity brings its own sin with it? Did you know that prosperity causes you to relax? Do you know that prosperity is a way to choke you off?

I was in China in 1999. And I got to meet a man that spent like 20 years in a communist prison. And I was so blessed.

Everything I'm saying to him, I'm having to get it through an interpreter. We're talking. And I told him, I said, I am so honored to meet you. I'm so honored to share with you and hear all the things that God's done. He told me about hours he would be made to stay on his knees until his knees hurt.

And he would go to sleep and they would beat him with sticks to make him stay awake. And I told him, I'm so glad none of that's happening. And I pray God will prosper you and bless you like he does in our churches in America. And he said, please don't. Please don't.

Persecution is so much better for us. He said, we know there's a God. We seek him. But you Americans are so prosperous, you have forgotten God.

[29 : 08] I would remember looking at him like I was thinking, I have never heard anybody talk to me like that. I mean, since when don't you want to prosper? And he said, persecution reminds us of God. That's what Joel's about. Go with me to Joel chapter 1 and verse 19.

This calamity is calling on them to repent. Verse 19. O Lord, to thee will I cry. For the fire devours the pastures of the wilderness.

The flame has burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field cry also unto thee. For the rivers of waters are dried up and the fire devours the pastures of the wilderness.

Look at that underlined in verse 19. This is where we want to get to today. O Lord, to thee will I cry. This week, a friend of mine had cancer knock on his door.

He's an out-of-keep-a-prew. His name is Walter Messa. He's a great guy. I've known him for 25 years. Walter was a fallen-down drunk and came to know Christ as his Savior.

[30 : 18] I was preaching one time in Hunter, the church where he was a member of. And I was preaching there and I said, if you're here today and you've been living a dirty life and you think God could never save you, if you've got the sins of the world holding you down, if drunkenness has your life, there are people in this room that have been exactly where you are and God has saved them and changed them and given them a new life and he can do that for you.

And Walter hollered out from about six or eight rows back, Yeah, that was me! Yeah, that was me. Always been so sweet to me.

Always hugged me. Always said kind things to me. But this week, pancreatic cancer knocked at his door. I can only imagine it. Alone and quiet in the dark.

He's crying out to God like never before. I have a friend whose name is Ephraim. Tell you. And Ephraim was arrested, falsely accused and put in prison.

He was a pastor. He was arrested for something he didn't do and he would later prove he didn't do it. He'd get out but he would spend six months in prison before that. In the hard prison. In the one where they beat you up and everything else.

[31 : 27] And I said, well, what was it like, Ephraim? He said, I can only tell you this. That first night, stripped naked in a dark, cold room with no clothes on. In no light, after having been yelled at and screamed at and kicked and beaten, God was sweeter to me than ever before.

Because I had nowhere else to turn. I was alone. I was alone. Before the story's over, Ephraim actually started a church in the prison. He had men.

When everybody wanted to beat him up for being a preacher, he had these cutthroats that had gotten saved. And they'd walk around with him. And if anybody tried to get close, they'd say, we don't have to take care of you. You know who we were. So God did a work.

But here's what he's saying in the story. Joel says, guys, can you not tell things are bad? Wake up. Cry out to the Lord. You should underline that in the verse. Oh, Lord, to thee will I cry.

The people have understood that God is God over them. He's almighty. He's all-powerful. He's at work in the universe. He's at work in my life.

[32 : 32] He controls the elements. He can bring the locusts through. He can stop the armies that are coming. He can give prosperity. But it's God. It's not me. They see their foolishness.

And they cry out to God. But today, God calls us to wake up also. Will we? Do we need God to discomfort the comfortable?

Is it possible that the book of Joel, as we study it today, is like God saying, wake up. You have not been paying attention. Wake up. You have not taken my word seriously. Wake up. I don't need to bring something to bring you awake.

So listen to me. Will you need to be afflicted before you will diligently seek God with your life? Do we really need God to shake us that way when by grace we could simply say, God, you are everything.

And I focus on you. And I live for you. Now, some of you came this morning. You're not saved. The truth of the matter is you have not given God any place in your life. You're not born again. You're not going to heaven.

[33 : 35] And judgment is coming. There's a hell out there. There's judgment. And you'll die and go there forever. And for those of us that are born again, hey, we're saved by the grace of God. We don't have to worry about it.

We're going to go to heaven. But God wants our lives dedicated and living for him and honoring him. It's not a game for him. Don't get too comfortable in Judah.

This is a city where Jerusalem is the capital. Hebron is the capital, which we'll be in in 2 Samuel, 1 Samuel tonight. But the people of God are just like, oh, hum.

It's all okay. I'll take God when I want to. I'll leave him when I want to. It's just not that big a deal. And Joel says, time to wake up and cry out to the Lord.

This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com, where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.