

Wages of Sin

Joel 1

Intro

This morning we will begin a study of the ***Book of Joel***...

- Joel was one of the minor prophets and there is some debate as to when he lived...

With that said, many commentators believe that Joel was a prophet during the reign of King Joash (835-796BC)...

- What is clear is that Joel prophesied to the southern kingdom of Judah after a disaster had struck the kingdom...

The Lord has sent a plague of locusts to devour the land as a punishment for the continual disobedience of the people...

- And as bad as this plague was, it was only a shadow of God's future judgment as revealed in the book of Revelation...

This brings us to a primary theme in the book of Joel and in the Bible as a whole...

- This theme is the ***inevitability of God's judgment of sin***...

The inescapable reality is that ***God must judge sin***...

Even so, we are given a choice...

We can choose to live in continual rebellion and receive the judgment ourselves...

****Or****

We can repent of our sins and turn to the Lord Jesus for salvation and be shielded from the judgment to come because He took the punishment that we deserved at the cross...

With this great theme in mind, we will make our way through Joel 1 this morning...

And I have divided this chapter into two simple sections...

The Wasting (vs 1-12)

The Mourning (vs 13-20)

Let's move into our first section...

1) The Wasting (vs 1-12)

As we enter into this section, it is vital that we understand that ***sin*** is always a ***waste***...

waste — *use or expend carelessly, extravagantly, or to no purpose...*

*Furthermore, sin is also a **wasting**...*

wasting — *causing a person or a part of the body to become progressively weaker and more emaciated...*

*For a picture of this reality of sin as both a **waste** and a **wasting**, please turn to...*

Luke 15:11-24 (NKJV)

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons.

12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.

Here we see that the younger son wanted to ***take the Father's resources and use them however he pleased*** — ***this is a picture of sin...***

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

This is what sin is — it is a wasting of resources — it is a waste of the ***time, talent*** and ***treasure*** that God has given to us...

14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

This is a picture of the judgment that is built into sin — sin is a wasting that inevitably brings negative consequences...

- [ex. Adam and Eve ashamed and hiding after their sin...]

15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

- Here we see that sin is a **wasting** that brings **subjugation** (under the authority of the ungodly)...
- Sin is a **wasting** that brings **humiliation** (feeding swine — unclean animal)...
- And sin is a **wasting** that brings **deprivation** (lack of needed resources)...

17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."

The prodigal son shows us that the proper way to respond to our wasting is with **remorse** and **repentance**...

***Remorse* is *appropriate sorrow over our sin*...**

***Repentance* is a *change of mind and heart* that leads to a *change of direction*...**

20 "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

This shows us that God the Father ***grieves our wasting*** — He ***desires our restoration*** — ***He wants the best for you more than you want the best for you...***

21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry;

24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

The son confesses his *wasting* and simply asks to be a servant in His Father's household...

- But the Father has His own ideas and restores the son to a place of prominence...

So, as we turn back to Joel 1, we must realize that ***this is the heart of the Father*** — ***the Father seeks to restore His prodigals...***

- You see, when we choose to live in the ***wasting of sin***, we open the door for ***the locusts of natural consequences and of divine judgment...***

But as we are properly *remorseful* and *repentant*, *God is able to restore the years the locust has eaten...*

- He is able to bring beauty out of the ashes...

Even so, we must remind ourselves that the wasting of sin always brings consequences...

- The scars of sin will remain and some opportunities will be forever lost...

The prodigal son would not get back those opportunities that he wasted while living in sin but he was granted a fresh start in the Father's house...

Let's move into Joel 1:1...

1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

This is very important — Joel was not simply sharing what he thought of the situation — he was sharing **the word of the LORD...**

APPLICATION — As we study the word of God under the influence of the Holy Spirit then we will become people who can share the word of the LORD with others...[expand]

[ex. we can in a lesser sense be minor prophets in the lives of others — share the truth with others even though they might not remember our names...]

Now, it is interesting to note that the name **Joel** means “***Yahweh is God***”...

Next Joel addresses his audience...

**2 Hear this, you elders,
And give ear, all you inhabitants of the land!**

Joel’s message was for both *leaders* and *non-leaders* — it was a message *for all*...

***APPLICATION — It is important that you read and study the Word of God trusting that God has a message for you...
[expand]***

Joel continues...

**Has anything like this happened in your days,
Or even in the days of your fathers?**

**3 Tell your children about it,
Let your children tell their children,
And their children another generation.**

The judgment that had taken place was unique — it was a judgment that had not happened for generations and likely would not happen again for generations...

As we move into vs 4, Joel begins to recount the judgment...

4 What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.

God had poured out His judgment on *unrepentant Judah* by sending four successive waves of locusts to consume their land...
[expand]

The Lord had warned of this judgment for disobedience in...

Deuteronomy 28:42 (NKJV)

Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land.

The judgment that God brought on Judah is similar to the 8th Plague that He brought against Egypt...

Exodus 10:14-15 (NKJV)

14 And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and rested on all the territory of Egypt. They were very severe; previously there had been no such locusts as they, nor shall there be such after them.

15 For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt.

Tragically, the judgment on Judah in the days of Joel reveals that God was dealing with them like He had dealt with the Egyptians...

WARNING — When we as believers begin to act like unbelievers we may receive the same punishment that unbelievers get...

- [ex. If a Christian is arrested for driving under the influence, they get the same punishment that an unbeliever gets...]

For a reminder of our need to separate from the ways of unbelievers, please turn to...

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (NKJV)

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will dwell in them

And walk among them.

I will be their God,

And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore

"Come out from among them

And be separate, says the Lord.

Do not touch what is unclean,

And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you,

And you shall be My sons and daughters,

Says the LORD Almighty."

Please turn back to Joel 1 as we move into vs...

**5 Awake, you drunkards, and weep;
And wail, all you drinkers of wine,
Because of the new wine,
For it has been cut off from your mouth.**

Drunkards are known for *laughing* but now they will be *weeping* because the wine and grapes are gone...

- This reminds us of what **Hebrews 11:25** refers to as “*the passing pleasures of sin*”...

Sin is pleasurable for a season or why else would people do it?...

- But the season ***always comes to an end*** and then ***there are consequences that follow***...[expand]

Now, as we move into vs 6-7 the Lord will speak directly through Joel — and the Lord will remind the people that everything belongs to Him...

**6 For a nation has come up against My land,
Strong, and without number;
His teeth are the teeth of a lion,
And he has the fangs of a fierce lion.**

**7 He has laid waste My vine,
And ruined My fig tree;
He has stripped it bare and thrown it away;
Its branches are made white.**

These verses remind us that everything belongs to the Lord...

- *And this gives us great insight into the nature of judgment...*

God has created all things for *His own purposes* and has *given instructions* on how to *treat people and things in a manner that pleases Him...*

- When people *continually fail to obey His instructions* then God brings *His judgment in His timing...*

And God has every right to bring judgment because everything belongs to Him and everything was created for His purposes...

All too often, when we experience the consequences for our sin we mistakenly think that God has *taken something away that belonged to us...*

- But in reality, He merely took back what belonged to Him because we were managing it improperly...[expand]

Now, with that said we must remember that not everything that befalls a person is the direct result of their sin...

Much of what we suffer is a result of *the sin of others* and is no punishment on us at all...

- But as believers there will be times when we will be disciplined by the Lord because of our disobedience and in those times we should humbly receive that discipline...

For more on this subject, would please turn to...

Hebrews 12:5-11 (NKJV)

5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

**"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;**

**6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives."**

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

We see here that the response to God's discipline is to receive it and not to run away away from it...

- Unfortunately, so many professing Christians simply run and hide just like Adam and Eve did...

But instead of hiding, we should realize that the Father disciplines us because He loves us...

- He disciplines us because He has your ultimate good in mind — because He wants to make you into something great — He wants you to become like Christ...[expand]

Please turn back to Joel 1 as we move into vs...

**8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth
For the husband of her youth.**

[expand — Reference to Jerusalem? — picture of a betrothed virgin whose fiancé is killed before they can be married...]

**9 The grain offering and the drink offering
Have been cut off from the house of the LORD;
The priests mourn, who minister to the LORD.**

**10 The field is wasted,
The land mourns;
For the grain is ruined,
The new wine is dried up,
The oil fails.**

Because of the invasion of locusts, the people no longer have the supplies to worship the Lord...[expand]

***APPLICATION — When we choose to live in unrepentant sin,
our ability to properly worship the Lord is damaged...[expand]***

Joel now addresses the farmers of Judah...

**11 Be ashamed, you farmers,
Wail, you vinedressers,
For the wheat and the barley;
Because the harvest of the field has perished.**

**12 The vine has dried up,
And the fig tree has withered;
The pomegranate tree,
The palm tree also,
And the apple tree—
All the trees of the field are withered;
Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men.**

*Sin is a **waster** of joy...*

- Sin brings **excitement** but it can never bring **joy**...

Instead of bringing joy, sin causes joy to wither away...

- [ex. Having a joyful day and someone who is walking in disobedience comes into the room and sucks the joy out of the room...]

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit and we must walk in fellowship with the Holy Spirit if we are to live lives of *true joy*...

- So, if you are a believer and you are not living *a joyful life* then it is likely that you are *not walking in the fellowship with the Holy Spirit*...

But it doesn't have to be that way — the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...

- [expand — exhort people to live in submission to the Person of the Holy Spirit — cultivate relationship with Him...]

*Let's move now from **The Wasting** to our second section...*

2) The Mourning (vs 13-20)

**13 Gird yourselves and lament, you priests;
Wail, you who minister before the altar;
Come, lie all night in sackcloth,
You who minister to my God;
For the grain offering and the drink offering
Are withheld from the house of your God.**

Here Joel calls on the **priests** to mourn before the Lord...

- The priests are to lament and wail for what they have lost — for the consequences of sin and how it has affected their ability to worship the Lord...

Interestingly, this mourning over sin is often overlooked by believers...

- Too often we are so concerned with helping people feel better that we make things worse by not encouraging people to properly lament over their sin...[expand]

Dallas Willard

“There is little hope for genuine change in one who is without remorse, without the anguish of regret.”

This *remorse* — this *regret* — this **mourning** over the **wasting** effects of our sin *breaks up the hard soil of our hearts and prepares us for true fruitfulness...*

Psalm 51:17 (NKJV)

**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart—
These, O God, You will not despise.**

Moving on in Joel 1, the prophet continues to address the priests...

**14 Consecrate a fast,
Call a sacred assembly;
Gather the elders
And all the inhabitants of the land
Into the house of the LORD your God,
And cry out to the LORD.**

This is a call for national repentance...

- And please notice that true mourning over sin **brings a person back to God so that they might be forgiven...**

True **remorse** over sin leads to **repentance** and then to **restoration...**

REMORSE — REPENTANCE — RESTORATION

We cannot simply jump straight from *sin* to *restoration*...

- When we sin and the Holy Spirit brings conviction then we will have proper *remorse* over our sin...

We then *repent* of our sin and experience *restoration*...

Moving on to vs...

15 Alas for the day!

For the day of the LORD is at hand;

It shall come as destruction from the Almighty.

The phrase **the day of the LORD** is used in different ways throughout the Bible...

- According to Thomas Constable, when it is *“used generally it refers to any period of time in which God is dealing with people in dramatic, direct ways”*...

The day of the LORD can also refer specifically to God’s final judgments as prophesied in the book of Revelation...

- In this case, it seems that Joel is predicting another judgment that will come upon the people of Judah — perhaps their fall to the Babylonians?...

Now, as we continue on we see how Joel is mourning over the condition of the land...

**16 Is not the food cut off before our eyes,
Joy and gladness from the house of our God?**

**17 The seed shrivels under the clods,
Storehouses are in shambles;
Barns are broken down,
For the grain has withered.**

**18 How the animals groan!
The herds of cattle are restless,
Because they have no pasture;
Even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment.**

This scene is a sad reminder that ***sin effects more than just those who have committed the sin...***

- Innocent people, animals and the environment all pay the price when people continue on in unrepentant sin...

Dallas Willard

“In today’s world, famine, war, and epidemic are almost totally the outcome of human choices, which are expressions of the human spirit.”

With these truths in mind, the best thing that we can do for our families, our friends and for everyone we come into contact with is to simply walk in obedience to the Lord...

Living as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ — in the power and gifting of the Holy Spirit — is the best thing that we can do for each and every person that we come into contact with...

Continuing on to our last two verses...

19 O LORD, to You I cry out;

**For fire has devoured the open pastures,
And a flame has burned all the trees of the field.**

**20 The beasts of the field also cry out to You,
For the water brooks are dried up,
And fire has devoured the open pastures.**

In the midst of the devastation, Joel does the right thing and ***cries out to the LORD...***

- And this is where our *mourning should lead* — our mourning should lead us to the Lord...

Our mourning should rise above our feelings and our circumstances and should find the Lord...

Psalm 42:9-11 (NKJV)

**9 I will say to God my Rock,
"Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the
enemy?"**

**10 As with a breaking of my bones,
My enemies reproach me,
While they say to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"**

**11 Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God;
For I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.**

Conclusion

So, as we close Joel 1 it is clear that ***sin is a wasting that leads to mourning...***

- ***Sin is a wasting of the time, talent and treasure that God has given us...***

And as *the consequences of this wasting — the wages of sin —* negatively affect our lives mourning will surely follow...

But don't waste your mourning...

Allow that mourning to bring you back to God after you have strayed...

- Allow godly ***remorse*** to bring you to ***repentance*** and that repentance will bring you back to the Father for ***restoration***...

As you return to the Father you will find that He's been waiting for you all along...

Let's pray...