God’s Merciful Love
Joel 2:12-13, 18-19, 28-32
SS Lesson for 03/26/2017

Devotional Scripture: Ps 136

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Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

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From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson helps us to recognize that God’s mercy is an important part of God’s Merciful Love. The study’s aim is to gain a greater appreciation for the long-suffering God shows to us when we sin. The study’s application is to forsake any known sin and come back to God in response to His mercy.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Joel 2:13

So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Before such an invincible army the nation’s only hope was to turn immediately (“even now,” v. 12) to the Lord in repentance. This section contains two formal appeals for repentance (vv. 12-14, 15-17). The first concludes with a motivational section (introduced by “for,” vv. 13b-14).

2:12-13a. The Lord Himself urged the people to repent with genuine sincerity (cf. with all your heart and rend your heart and not your garments) accompanied by fasting and weeping and mourning. Repentance is the desired outcome of the Lord’s judgments (cf. Deut. 4:30; 30:1-2; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 4:6-11).

2:13b. A recognition of the nation’s relationship to the Lord her God and of His gracious nature should have motivated His people to repent. The expression “the Lord your God” was well known to Israel (this phrase occurs 263 times in Deut.) and testified to the covenantal relationship between God and the nation. The words gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love (ḥesed, “loyal love”) recall Exodus 34:6 (cf. Neh. 9:17; Pss. 103:8; 143:8; Jonah 4:2), where the same affirmation preceded the renewal of the covenant after the sin of the golden calf. Because God’s character is merciful, He often relents from sending calamity. Again the golden calf episode is recalled. On that occasion Moses begged the Lord to “relent” and “not bring disaster” on His people (Ex. 32:12). The Lord responded favorably to his request (Ex. 32:14).

2:14. The words who knows testify to the Lord’s sovereignty in the matter (cf. 2 Sam. 12:22; Jonah 3:9). Even if sinful Israel repented, she could not presume on God’s mercy as if it were something under their control which He had to grant automatically. They could only hope that He would turn and have pity (cf. Mal. 3:7) by averting the disaster (cf. Joel 2:20) and restoring their crops (cf. v. 25). Agricultural blessing would mark a reversal of the curse that had come on them (in the form of the locusts; cf. Deut. 28:38-42) and would make it possible for grain... and drink offerings to be presented again (cf. Joel 1:9, 13). The second part of this call to repentance is an appeal to the nation to congregate for a formal ceremony of lamentation and prayer.

2:15. The opening words of verse 1, Blow the trumpet in Zion, are repeated. The fear elicited by the sound of the watchman’s trumpet (v. 1) was to prompt another sound of the ram’s horn, this time calling the people to a holy fast and sacred assembly (cf. 1:14). For the blowing of a ram’s horn was also used to call religious convocations (cf. Lev. 25:9; Ps. 81:3).
2:16. The entire worshipping community (assembly) was to gather, from the oldest (elders) to the youngest (those nursing at the breast). Not even newlyweds were exempted (cf. Deut. 24:5).

2:17. The priests were to lead the ceremony by weeping before the LORD in the court of the temple (i.e., between the temple porch and the bronze altar of burnt offering; cf. Ezek. 8:16) and by offering a prayer for deliverance. The prayer was to include a twofold petition: (a) spare (hîš, “pity or have compassion on”; cf. Jonah 4:11 for the same word, where the NIV renders it “be concerned about”) and (b) do not make, a question aimed at motivating God to action. The concern of the latter was God’s reputation. If Israel, God’s own inheritance (cf. Deut. 4:20; 9:26, 29; Pss. 28:9; 33:12; 78:62, 71; 79:1; 94:14; Micah 7:14, 18), were to become an object of scorn (cf. Joel 2:19), the nations might erroneously conclude that He lacked the power and/or love to save those who belonged to Him (cf. Ex. 32:12; Deut. 9:26-29; Ps. 79:4, 10). The rendering, a byword among the nations, though not the only way to translate the Hebrew here (cf. KJV, “that the heathen should rule over them”), is favored by the poetic structure (cf. the parallel phrase “object of scorn”; also see Jer. 24:9). The relationship between verses 18-19a and the preceding context is problematic. The NIV translation (cf. also NASB, KJV), which employs the future tense (“will be jealous,” etc.), interprets these verses as a promise conditional on the people’s positive response to the call to repentance in verses 12-17. However, that interpretation of the Hebrew verbal forms in this context is unlikely (cf. S.R. Driver, A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew. 3rd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892, p. 95; Keil, “Joel,” in Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, 10:200). The forms seem better translated with the past tense (cf. NIV marg., NASB marg., RSV) and the text understood as a description of the Lord’s turning to His people in Joel’s time. This would, of course, imply they had responded positively to the appeal of verses 12-17 (cf. Allen, The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah, p. 86).

2:18. In response to this genuine repentance, the LORD was jealous for His land and took pity on His people. The Lord’s jealousy is His passionate loyalty toward what is His, a loyalty that prompts Him to lash out against anything that would destroy it (cf. Isa. 26:11; Ezek. 36:5-6; 38:19; Zech. 1:14; 8:2). The military protection described in Joel 2:20 is in view here.

2:19-20a. The Lord’s promise began with a proclamation that the agricultural produce (grain, new wine, and oil) destroyed by the locusts (cf. 1:10) would be restored. He then announced that His people would never again be an object of scorn to the nations (cf. 2:17). Similarly (vv. 26-27) He promised they would “never again... be shamed.” The seemingly unconditional tone of these statements is problematic if verses 18-19a describe a historical event in Joel’s day. Whether one posits a preexilic or postexilic date for the writing of Joel, history shows that Israel, after Joel’s day, often did become an object of scorn. Perhaps the best solution to this difficulty is to understand that at least this aspect of the promise is eschatological in its ultimate fulfillment. Joel’s prophecy deals with Israel’s future apart from the chronological gaps which one sees so readily in retrospect. Consequently prophecies pertaining to his own generation are merged here with those that await future realization. This is common in Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Isa. 9:6-7; 61:1-2; Zech. 9:9-10). The Lord next announced that the threat described in Joel 2:1-11 would be averted (v. 20a). He would turn against the very army He had been bringing against His disobedient people (cf. v. 11), driving it into the desert (a parched and barren land) and the seas (the eastern sea and the western sea, probably the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea; cf. Zech. 14:8). The carcasses’ stench would permeate the air. As in Joel 2:1-11, the language, though alluding to a literal army (cf. Isa. 34:3; Amos 4:10), applies to locusts as well. Eyewitness accounts tell how dead locusts, having been driven into the sea and then washed ashore, gave out a foul odor (cf. Driver, The Books of Joel and Amos, pp. 62-3; Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets, 2:411). As noted in the Introduction, the designation northern army (lit., “northerner”) suggests that a literal army is ultimately in view. If “the northerner” is yet future (eschatological), the army is possibly the army in Joel 3:9, 12; Daniel 11:40; and Zechariah 14:2. But if the reference is strictly historical, any precise identification of the army is precluded by the uncertainty surrounding the date of authorship. So in this case it would not be clear to what extent, if any, Joel 2:20 was historically fulfilled in Joel’s day. If the invasion threatened in 2:1-11 had not actually begun, the language of verse 20 need not refer to a historical event. It would simply be a vivid and concrete way of saying that the destruction planned by the Lord had been averted at the last moment.

2:20b-21b. The NIV understands the last line of verse 20 as a statement about the Lord (cf. v. 21b; in this case k in v. 20b is taken as an emphatic assertion: Surely). Other translations (KJV, NASB, RSV) join the words to the preceding context, making the army the subject (cf. NASB, “For it has done great things”). The insolent pride of the invader would then be in view (cf. Isa. 10:5-19 for a similar view). However, the NIV reading has much to commend it, especially the structural correspondence it produces (cf. note on Joel
2:18-27. In the first two lines of verse 21 the personified **land**, which had been stripped of its produce (cf. 1:10), is encouraged to fear no longer but to **be glad and rejoice**.

2:21c-24. Each of the three elements in verses 20b-21b is repeated and/or expanded in these verses. The repeated affirmation that the **LORD has done great things** is followed by the expanded charges, **be not afraid** (v. 22) and **be glad and rejoice** (v. 23). The first charge was directed to the **wild animals**, which had been stripped of their produce (likely referring to a locust invasion). The second charge (2:23) was directed to the inhabitants of **Zion** (i.e., Jerusalem; cf. v. 1) who were earlier instructed to grieve over the destruction wrought by the locusts (cf. 1:5, 8, 11, 13). They could now “rejoice” because the **LORD** was prepared to restore fertility to their fields. As promised in Deuteronomy 11:14, the **autumn and spring rains** would come on schedule (in September-October and March-April), producing a bountiful harvest. The phrase translated **a teacher for righteousness** (Joel 2:23) is better rendered, “in righteousness the autumn rains” (cf. NIV marg., NASB, KJV; see Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, pp. 92-3, n. 26; and Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, p. 115). “Teacher” (môreh) is translated “autumn” later in the verse (cf. also Ps. 84:6). “For righteousness” would then probably mean, “according to justice” (i.e., in harmony with the covenantal principle that obedience is justly rewarded with agricultural blessing; see Kapelrud, *Joel Studies*, p. 116). The abundance of the harvest will be evidenced by the **threshing floors** and **wine** and **oil vats** being filled to capacity (Joel 2:24).

2:25-27. Verse 25 nicely summarizes the overriding theme of verses 19-24. The effects of the **locusts** would be completely reversed. Speaking as though compelled by legal obligation, the **LORD** promised to **repay** (šillēm; cf. its use in Ex. 22:1; 2 Kings 4:7) the nation for the crops which His **great army of locusts** (cf. Joel 1:4) had devoured. The agricultural abundance (2:26a) would prompt the people to **praise the name** (i.e., the revealed character) of their covenant **God**, who had **worked wonders** for them (v. 26b). This last expression placed the restoration of agricultural blessing in the mainstream of God’s miraculous historical deeds on behalf of His people (cf. Ex. 3:15; 15:11; 34:10; Josh. 3:5; Judges 6:13; Ps. 77:14). The nation would also acknowledge **know** (know) His active presence and His rightful place as their God (Joel 2:27). The words **I am in Israel** (lit., “I am in the midst of Israel”) recall the Pentateuchal references to God being “among” (or, “in the midst of”) His people (cf. Num. 11:20; 14:14; Deut. 7:21). The frequently used expression **you will know that... I am the LORD your God** also originated in the Pentateuch (cf. Ex. 6:7; 16:12). The association of that expression with the Lord’s exclusive claim to be Israel’s God (**there is no other**) reminds one of Deuteronomy 4:35, 39. Through these allusions to earlier traditions, the Lord affirmed that His relationship to His people was just as vital then as it had been in Moses’ day. This concluding section of the Book of Joel develops more fully the eschatological element of the Lord’s promise (cf. on 2:19-20a; “afterward” in 2:28; “in those days” in 3:1; “in that day” in 3:18). The deliverance experienced by Joel’s generation foreshadowed that of the end times. The day of the Lord, so narrowly averted by Joel’s repentant contemporaries, will come in full force against the enemies of God’s people (perhaps foreshadowed by the northern army of 2:20). The promises of 2:19-27 will find their ultimate and absolute fulfillment as the Lord intervenes on Israel’s behalf (2:28-32), decisively judges the nation’s enemies (3:1-16a, 19), and securely establishes His people in their land (3:1, 16b-18, 20-21).

2:28-29. The Lord announced that His “day” (v. 31) would be accompanied by an outpouring of His **Spirit on all people** (lit., “all flesh”). The following context indicates that “all people” refers more specifically to all inhabitants of Judah (cf. the threefold use of **your** in v. 28, as well as the parallel passages in Ezek. 39:29; Zech. 12:10). This will be true regardless of age, gender, or social class (Joel 2:29 is better trans. “and even on the male and female servants”; cf. NASB). At that time recipients of the divine **Spirit** will exercise prophetic gifts (**will prophesy**... **will dream dreams**, and **will see visions**) which in the past had been limited to a select few (cf. 1 Sam. 10:10-11; 19:20-24). This is probably an allusion to Numbers 11:29, where Moses, responding to Joshua’s misguided zeal after an outpouring of the divine Spirit on the 72 elders (cf. Num. 11:24-28), declared, “I wish that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit on them!” This extensive outpouring of the Spirit will signal the advent of divine blessing (contrast 1 Sam. 3:1, where the absence of prophetic visions characterized a period of sin and judgment).

2:30-31. The **great and dreadful day of the LORD** will be preceded by ominous signs (**wonders**) of impending judgment (cf. v. 10; see also Ezek. 32:6-8 for literary parallels). **Blood and fire and billows of smoke** suggest the effects of warfare. The turning of the **moon to blood** refers in a poetic way to its being darkened (cf. the parallel line, **The sun will be turned to darkness**, and Joel 2:10; 3:15). Though such

2:32. At this time of universal judgment, everyone who calls on (i.e., invokes) the name of the LORD will be saved (i.e., delivered from physical danger; cf. Rom. 11:26). “Everyone” does not refer to all people, but the Spirit-empowered people of God mentioned in Joel 2:28-29. In Romans 10:13 Paul related this passage to Gentile (as well as Jewish) salvation, but he was suggesting a mere analogy, not a strict fulfillment of Joel 2:32, which pertains to Israel. In the day of the Lord Jerusalem will be a place of refuge for the survivors whom the LORD calls. This remnant with whom the Lord initiates a special relationship (for the sense of “call” here, see Isa. 51:2) should probably be equated with the group described in Joel 2:28-29. 32a (cf. Wolff, Joel and Amos, pp. 68-9), though some (e.g., Driver, The Books of Joel and Amos, pp. 68-9) see this as referring to returning exiles. On the day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 in conjunction with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:17-21). His introductory words (cf. Acts 2:16, “this is what was spoken by the Prophet Joel”) may seem to indicate that he considered Joel’s prophecy as being completely fulfilled on that occasion. However, it is apparent that the events of that day, though extraordinary, did not fully correspond to those predicted by Joel. In attempting to solve this problem one must recognize that in the early chapters of Acts the kingdom was being offered to Israel once more. Peter admonished the people to repent so that they might receive the promised Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38-39 where he alludes to Joel 2:32). Shortly thereafter Peter anticipated “times of refreshing” and the return of Christ in response to national repentance (cf. Acts 10:19-21). Not until later did Peter come to understand more fully God’s program for the Gentiles in the present age (cf. Acts 10:44-48). When he observed the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost he rightly viewed it as the first stage in the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Apparently he believed that the kingdom was then being offered to Israel and that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit signaled the coming of the Millennium. However, the complete fulfillment of the prophecy (with respect to both the extent of the Spirit’s work and the other details) was delayed because of Jewish unbelief.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Deal with it. This seems to be the cry of many public figures whose lives fall far short of biblical standards. Caught committing adultery? Misusing public funds? Plagiarizing material? Just hire a public relations “spin doctor” to justify or explain away the behavior! Moral and ethical failures happen so often that we are no longer shocked or even surprised. If anything does surprise us, it’s a forthright admission of guilt that is accompanied by genuine repentance. Instead, we have come to expect excuses, finger pointing, etc. We live in a culture that is increasingly indifferent to accountability for misdeeds; it is a culture of defiant unrepentance. We are dismissed as “being judgmental” when we voice expectations for accountability and consequences. Culture wants us just to deal with it. We see such an outlook in ancient times as well. But when people thought they could live above accountability, the Old Testament prophets responded to brazen sin in a most judgmental way: repent or die! The judgment of wrongdoing and consequences was not that of the human prophet, however; it was the judgment of Almighty God. But how does God distinguish true repentance from false? The prophet Joel had God’s answer to that question.

The last 12 of the Old Testament’s 39 books are known collectively as the Minor Prophets. The book of Joel is one of these. The word minor refers to the lengths of these books, not to their contents. The importance of the latter is seen in the 30 quotations from them that appear in the New Testament. The book of Joel is one of these. The name Joel means “the Lord is God.” We don’t know much about this man or when the book was written. Traditionally, the book is dated as early as 837 BC, making Joel a contemporary of King Joash (2 Chronicles 24). Joel’s references to enemies are identified more readily with an earlier historical context (see Joel 3:4). Another viewpoint proposes a date several centuries later, partially because of reference to “Greeks” in Joel 3:6. The theory is that Joel would not have mentioned the Greek people until they had become internationally prominent. The backdrop for the book is a cataclysmic locust infestation that had descended on Jerusalem and the surrounding area (see Joel 1:2-4). Locusts are voracious, grasshopper-like insects that multiply rapidly and swarm. The descent of a swarm on a small area may result in utter destruction of crops, trees, and other vegetation (1:7, 10). Such devastation could lead to famine, with starvation taking a great toll on both humans and animals. God used locusts as instruments of divine judgment on occasion (examples: Exodus 10:3-15; Psalms 78:46; 105:34; compare Revelation 9:3, 4). For his part, the prophet Joel connected his horrific description of the locust plague by declaring the nearness of “the day of the Lord” (Joel...
1:15; 2:1) and this challenge: “The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?” (2:11). The question was a warning with an obvious answer: no one can withstand that day. It is futile to resist the judgmental wrath of God. But there was another option.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Need for God’s Merciful Love (Joel 2:12-13. 18-19)

12 "Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."
13 So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.
18 Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, and pity His people.
19 The Lord will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.

Need of repentance

The time of repentance (12)

Repent during the times that God can be found and He is near (Isa 55:6-7)
6 Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way. And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

Repent now because the Kingdom of Heaven is near (Matt 4:17)
17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Repent so that the times of refreshing can come (Acts 3:19)
19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Repent because the times of ignorance has passed (Acts 17:30)
30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

Repent during the times of earthly life because after that it will be impossible (Luke 16:27-31)
27 “Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'29 Abraham said to him,' They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'31 But he said to him,' If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

The way of repentance (13)

The way of repentance through inward brokenness (Ps 51:17)
17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart --These, O God, You will not despise.

The way of repentance through the turning of the heart (Heb 3:12-15)
12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."
The way of repentance through outward signs (Matt 3:8)
  8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

The way of repentance accompanied by humility (2 Chron 7:14)
  14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and
  turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their
  land.

Response to Repentance

Repentance that leads to God’s mercy (18)

God’s mercy keeps God from putting an end to the wicked (Neh 9:29-31)
  29 "You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands.
  They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they
  turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. 30 For many years you were
  patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no
  attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples. 31 But in your great mercy you did not
  put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

God’s mercy sometimes causes Him to relent (Ps 106:45)
  45 for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.

God’s mercy empowers perseverance (James 5:11)
  11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's
  perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and
  mercy.

God’s mercy makes Christians a people of God (1 Peter 2:10)
  10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy,
  but now you have received mercy.

Repentance that leads to God’s provisions (19)

Provisions through God using others (2 Cor 8:14)
  14 At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply
  what you need. Then there will be equality,

Provisions through God’s supplying directly (2 Cor 9:10)
  10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store
  of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

Provisions of faith (1 Thess 3:10)
  10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your
  faith.

Provisions that should evoke thanksgiving to God (2 Cor 9:12)
  12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also
  overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

Provisions through God’s glorious riches (Phil 4:19)
  19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

The Provision of God’s Merciful Love (Joel 2:28-32)

28 "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters
  shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.
29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.
30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.
31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.
32 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.

Provision of the indwelling Holy Spirit (28)

An indwelling that God not only promised, but also fulfilled (Acts 2:1-4)
When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Through the indwelling Spirit, a reconciled relationship is received (Col 1:21-22)
21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight

Through the indwelling Spirit, the constant presence of God is a result (1 Cor 3:16)
16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? Through the indwelling Spirit, I receive guidance

Result of repentance is the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)
38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Provision of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (29)

God's gifts are irrevocable (Rom 11:29)
29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

God gives gifts according to His grace (Rom 12:6)
6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

There are the gifts of ministering and teaching (Rom 12:7)
7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

There are the gifts of exhortation, giving, leading, and showing mercy (Rom 12:8)
8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

All of God's gifts are from the same Spirit for the profit of all (1 Cor 12:4-7)
4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

There are the gifts of the word of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor 12:8)
8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

There are the gifts of faith and healings (1 Cor 12:9)
9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,
There are the gifts of the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:10)

10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

There are the gifts given to the Church (1 Cor 12:28)

28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

Provision of God’s wonders (30-31)

Wonders that are to be remembered (Ps 111:4)

4 He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and compassionate.

Wonders that God declares (Ps 77:14)

14 You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples.

Wonders that are done in the deep (Ps 107:24)

24 They see the works of the Lord, And His wonders in the deep.

Wonders that are done by God alone (Ps 136:4)

4 To Him who alone does great wonders, For His mercy endures forever;

Provision of God’s deliverance (32)

Deliverance from Satan (Matt 6:13)

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’

Deliverance from deadly perils (2 Cor 1:10)

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Deliverance from troubles (Ps 34:19)

19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all;

Deliverance from trials (2 Peter 2:9)

9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.
Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable

Some interpreters regard the description of the locust plague in Joel 2:1-11 as simply another description of the same locust plague as the one described in chapter 1, or another locust plague in Israel’s past history. Others take this description as an allegory picturing Israel’s traditional enemies. Still others view it as picturing the eschatological day of the Lord in which the Lord Himself will come with His heavenly army in holy war against evil. Many amillennialists take this view. The view that seems best to me, and to many other commentators, is that it is a metaphor based on the past locust plague. Joel used the past locust invasion as a harbinger of an impending human invasion by an undesignated foreign foe.

Verse 12-13

Speaking for the Lord, Joel urged his hearers even now, even though judgment was threatened, to repent. However, he clarified that their repentance needed to be wholehearted, not just external. Fasting, weeping, and mourning would give evidence of the people’s sincerity, but they had to rend their hearts, not just their garments, as was customary in mourning. They needed to return to Yahweh their God (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:14).

Such an awesome prospect of invasion led Joel to appeal to the people of Jerusalem to repent. This would hopefully turn away God’s judgment. He voiced two appeals, but, unusually, he did not say what the sins of the people were. Evidently they were known well enough at the time.

Verse 13-14

If they did, they could count on Him being gracious, compassionate, patient, loyal to them, and willing to withhold punishment (cf. Exodus 34:6; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 103:8; Psalm 143:8; Jonah 4:2). Their genuine repentance might-Yahweh is still sovereign-move Him to turn from His previously intended course of action and bless, rather than curse, them (cf. Malachi 3:7). Agricultural blessings would signal a reversal of His judgment in the recent locust invasion, and they would then be able to offer grain and wine to the Lord again (cf. Joel 1:9; Joel 1:13).

"Some dismiss biblical references to God "relenting" from judgment as anthropomorphic, arguing that an unchangeable God would never change his mind once he has announced his intentions. While it is true that God will not deviate from an announced course of action once he has issued a formal, unconditional decree (see Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Psalm 110:4), he is often depicted as "changing his mind" in contexts where he has given only a warning or made a conditional statement about what he will do. Since Joel 2:13 lists God’s capacity to "change his mind" as one of his fundamental attributes (see also Jonah 4:2), one cannot dismiss this characteristic as anthropomorphic."

Verse 15-16

The prophet urged the blowing of the shophar in Zion again, but this time to call a public assembly and a fast rather than to announce the coming invader (Joel 2:1; cf. Joel 1:14). Fasting involved sacrificially going without food to devote oneself to a higher spiritual purpose. God’s people needed to gather together and Revelation - consecrate themselves to Him as a people. Everyone without exception should participate, from the oldest to the youngest. Even newlyweds, who sometimes received a special exemption for being newly wed (Deuteronomy 24:5), needed to attend this meeting.

It is interesting that the Jews will assemble in the Promised Land, having received encouragement from the Antichrist, during the first half of the Tribulation. Then the invader will descend on their land and the terrible prospect envisioned in Joel 2:1-11 will take place, in the second half of the Tribulation. Antichrist will persecute them. They will not assemble then in repentance, however.

Verses 15-17

Joel went beyond calling for personal heart-felt repentance to urging the people to assemble for a corporate expression of their sincere contrition.

Verse 17

The priests should take the lead in this public expression of repentance. They should weep and pray for God to have mercy on His people, because they were His special inheritance, for the glory of His name. The pagans might conclude that He was unable or unwilling to defend His chosen people from their enemy if He allowed the invader to succeed.
Verse 18
If the Israelites repented sincerely, Yahweh would be zealous to protect His chosen land from foreign invaders and have pity on His chosen people. This was His essential response.

"Beginning in Joel 2:18, Israel ceases to be the object of God"s judgment and becomes instead the object of His blessing. In a similar reversal the hordes (locust and human) cease to be the instruments of God"s judgment on Israel and become instead the objects of God"s judgment. This reversal was originally foretold by God through Moses in Deuteronomy 30:1-9."

"Between Joel 2:17-18, we should presume that the invitation and commands of Joel 2:12-17 have been accepted and obeyed."

Joel next revealed the Lord"s response and comforting words in view of the people"s private and public repentance. It is unclear whether he meant that the Lord had responded or would respond. The problem is the Hebrew perfect verbs, which can be rendered in English with either past or future verbs. Several English translations (NASB, NIV, AV) interpreted the Lord"s response as being conditioned on the people"s repentance and translated the verbs in the future tense. It is equally possible that Joel meant that God had already responded positively because the people had repented, which the prophet did not record. I view this section as what God promised to do if the people responded to Joel"s call to repentance. Sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem in586 B.C. God told the Israelites that they had passed the point of no return and that captivity was inevitable (Jeremiah 7:16; Jeremiah 11:14; Jeremiah 14:11-12). Since repentance was still possible for the Israelites when Joel wrote, this prophecy evidently does not deal with that time.

"Laments in the OT are sometimes followed by a divine oracle in which Yahweh, through a prophet, assures his people that their prayers will be answered (or sometimes rejected)."

Verse 19
Joel had interpreted the Lord"s response (Joel 2:18), and now he relayed His instructions (Joel 2:19-27). Yahweh would restore all that the locusts had eaten: grain, wine, and oil (cf. Joel 1:10). The people would enjoy plenty of these products in the future (cf. Deuteronomy 6:10-11; Deuteronomy 8:7-10; Deuteronomy 11:13-15). Yahweh would also never again allow the nations to disparage His people, assuming that they would not apostatize again (cf. Joel 2:26-27). Another view, less acceptable from my viewpoint, is that this promise is unconditional and refers to Israel"s eschatological future. The problem with this view is that the Jews will experience some antagonism at the very end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-10).

Having given His essential response to the people"s repentance, the Lord now explained what He would do in more detail. This section is chiastic with the focus of emphasis on Joel 2:21-24. Joel 2:19; Joel 2:26-27 promise a restoration of crops and a cessation of shame. Joel 2:20; Joel 2:25 promise the elimination of enemies, and Joel 2:21-24 urge courage and encourage rejoicing.

Verse 20
The prophet now revealed that this invader would come from the North. Both Assyria and Babylon, as well as all other eastern invaders, entered Israel from the north because of the impassability of the Arabian Desert to Israel"s east.

"If "the northerner" is yet future (eschatological), the army is possibly the army in Joel 3:9; Joel 3:12; Daniel 11:40; and Zechariah 14:2."

Instead of leading this army against Jerusalem (Joel 2:11), the Lord would drive it from Judah. He would drive its soldiers into a parched and desolate land (Arabia?) and into the eastern (Dead) sea and the western (Mediterranean) sea (cf. Daniel 11:45). In other words, He would turn against them rather than leading them and scatter them rather than uniting them against Jerusalem. The smell of the dead carcasses of the many soldiers would fill the air because they had done many great things. In short, they had tried to overthrow God"s people (cf. the Egyptians drowning in the Red Sea). Masses of dead locusts also smell terrible, especially after dying in the sea and then being washed ashore.

Verses 21-24
Joel called on the land, personified to represent its people, to rejoice because the Lord had done great things (in contrast to the enemy army, Joel 2:20). The NIV interpreted the last line of Joel 2:20 as referring to the Lord, but it probably refers to the invading army, as the NASB, AV, and RSV translated it. Specifically, he had delivered His people from a much larger and more powerful enemy invasion, assuming the Judahites" repentance. The animals too could stop fearing because God"s blessing had returned to the land. Green pastures had replaced brown, and trees and vines had again become abundantly fruitful rather than dry and lifeless (cf.
God’s Merciful Love

Verse 25

The Lord further promised that He would make up to His people what they had suffered because of the locust invasion (cf. Joel 1:4; Exodus 22:1; 2 Kings 4:7). The "years that the locusts had eaten" refers to the yield or produce of those years. Sin had resulted in covenant curses, but repentance would result in covenant blessings (cf. Deuteronomy 28-29).

Verse 26-27

The people would have plenty to eat and would feel satisfied physically. They would also be full spiritually and praise Yahweh their God for working wonders for them (cf. Exodus 3:15; Exodus 15:11; Exodus 34:10; Joshua 3:5; Judges 6:13; Psalm 77:14). They would never be put to shame, again assuming that they continued in their attitude of humble trust and obedience (cf. Joel 2:19). God’s blessings would evidence His presence among them and the intimacy of their fellowship with Him (cf. Numbers 11:20; Numbers 14:14; Deuteronomy 7:21). They would realize in their experience that He is the only true God (cf. Exodus 6:7; Exodus 16:12; Deuteronomy 4:35; Deuteronomy 4:39), and they would abide in that shameless condition (as long as they remained faithful to Him).

"... just as God"s warnings of judgment are often conditional and can be averted by repentance, so his promises of prosperity are often contingent on their recipients remaining loyal to God (see Jeremiah 18:7-10)."

Verse 28

The preceding promises foreshadowed even greater deliverance and blessing for the Israelites in their far distant future. The clues to a leap to the distant future in the prophet's perspective are the words "after this" (Joel 2:28), "in those days" (Joel 2:29), "the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31; cf. Joel 2:11), "in those days and at that time" (Joel 3:1), and "in that day" (Joel 3:18).

Verse 28-29

After this, namely, after the deliverance from the northern invader just described, God promised to pour out His Spirit on all the Israelites without gender, age, class, or position distinctions. Other similar promises identify the Israelites as the recipients of the Spirit (e.g., Ezekiel 36:27; Ezekiel 39:29; Zechariah 12:10), and here "your sons and daughters" (i.e., Israelites) are the object of this blessing. God never gave His Spirit to unbelievers, so believing Israelites are in view. Amillennialists believe that all flesh means all believers, namely, believing Jews and Gentiles in the church. They change the meaning of what Joel said. In Old Testament times God gave His Spirit only to select individuals (cf. Numbers 11:24-29; 1 Samuel 10:10-11; 1 Samuel 19:20-24), but in the future everyone (i.e., all believers) would prophesy and receive revelations from the Lord. Prophecy often describes praising God in the Bible (cf. 1 Chronicles 25:1-3), so that may be in view here. Visions and dreams were God’s customary ways of giving special revelations to people in Old Testament times (cf. Numbers 12:6). Normally the absence of prophetic revelation indicated sin and divine judgment, but the presence of such revelation reflected divine blessing (cf. 1 Samuel 3:1; Amos 8:11). So a universal bestowal of the Spirit indicates a time of unprecedented divine blessing. This would be the fulfillment of Moses’ desire (Numbers 11:29; cf. Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 44:3-4; Ezekiel 36:27-28; Ezekiel 37:14; Ezekiel 39:29; Zechariah 12:10).

Verse 30-31

The Lord also promised awesome displays of celestial phenomena before this great and terrible day of the Lord arrived. Awe-inspiring miracles would occur in the sky as well as on the earth. The appearance of blood, fire, and columns of smoke suggests warfare, with God’s hand at work behind the scenes (cf. Exodus 19:9; Exodus 19:16-18; Revelation 6:12-17). The sun would become dark and the moon would turn red. These are probably descriptions of how these heavenly bodies will look (language of appearance), not what will become of them, in view of other similar descriptions (e.g., Joel 2:2; Joel 2:10; Joel 3:15; Jeremiah 4:23-24; Ezekiel 32:6-8; Amos 5:18-20; Amos 8:9; Zephaniah 1:15; Revelation 6:12-13). These signs will precede the great and awesome day of the Lord still future (cf. Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28).

Verse 32

The promise continued that whoever would call on the name of Yahweh would be delivered. The day of the Lord described earlier in this chapter involved God judging the enemies of His people, and this eschatological day of the Lord also involves divine judgment. Therefore the deliverance in view must be from divine judgment
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Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

I am writing this on a cold day. Winters are cold in Nebraska, but this is what one website described as “ridiculous cold.” The high for the day will not be above 0°, and the wind chill factor will hit -30°. All the schools are closed—in Nebraska! Although my wife and I moved here from California, we can put up with cold weather. But sometimes it just seems too much! The old saw “When it rains it pours” seems to be true for all of us on a regular basis. Winter doesn’t result in just one lingering episode of illness, but two; some months inflict not just one unexpected expense, but four; some summers witness not just one dear friend moving away, but
three. These are the minor locust swarms of life, when one bad thing is piled upon another before we can recover from the previous. What do we do? Although these may not be times when we have sinned to a greater extent than at others, we may take Joel as suggesting that such times are opportunities for spiritual examination. It would be presumptuous to think that all our misfortunes are God’s judgments on us, but there is no wiser thing to do in times of distress than to turn to the Lord. There is no better thing to do than repent of being so busy that we have neglected prayer. There is no more comforting thing to do than to call on the Lord’s name for his mercy. When the locusts of life seem to swarm, remember that God’s love is both restoring and sustaining. When those locusts devour your joy and peace, turn to God. He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and has a heart of great kindness.

**Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

1. Now is the time to turn to God and obey Him; none of us knows what the future holds (Joel 2:12)
2. We please God through repentance and hearts turned toward Him. God is not impressed with outward displays and public rituals (vs. 13)
3. God’s love and mercy protect and restore His people from the consequences of their own disobedience (vss. 18-19)
4. The Holy Spirit living within us is evidence of God’s generous love (vss. 28-29)
5. God warns us about His judgment of sin because He is merciful and wants all men to repent and be saved (vss. 30-32)