

The Book of Joel - Part Two

“Sweet Communion During Times of Famine”



“It may be that He will turn and have pity, and bless you with abundant crops. Then you will be blessed with enough grain and wine for offering sacrifices to Him”

(Joel 2:14).

Joel looked over a field and nation full of issues and needs, and saw only the heart of God. He did not become overwhelmed with anxiety because of the condition of the people; neither did he take upon himself the burden to make everything better. Joel did the one thing that was needful, he went to the One he loved and spent some time with Him. At some point Joel must have turned his eyes away from the crisis and looked deep into God’s heart, for Joel comprehended what the real problem was; a lack of communion. The scriptures in Joel chapter one emphasize the lack of drink and meal offerings. These offerings consisted of bread and wine, the very elements that represent communion. Outwardly it appeared as if the true famine was in the wasted fields, for locusts and draught had destroyed the increase of the harvest for years. Yet the very heart of the famine could only truly be understood by looking upon the empty altars. Starvation had reached the House of God and the table of the Lord. Without a fruitful harvest, there was no wine for the drink offerings and no bread for the grain offerings. In New Testament language that would be described as a lack of Christ in us to bring the Father the fellowship that He hungers and thirsts for, His Son through us.

With the decrease of fruitfulness comes the increase of sorrow and hunger. Sorrow and hunger can press people to do many things to alleviate the pain. It would have been a temptation for these people to forget about God and start working harder to try to get that harvest out of the ground and put some food on the table. *“All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul” (Lam. 1:11).* Yet God chose Joel to write down how to approach the true spiritual need. Joel’s response to the famine in his generation can speak into our lives and hearts today. I believe Joel understood the famine emanated from a spiritual poverty which can only be understood in New Testament terms as a lack of Christ formed within. The Seed of Christ may be planted in us through new birth, but there are seasons where Christ the Seed has yet matured unto fruitfulness and we find ourselves in need of Christ’s Life coming forth.

“But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me”.

(Gal. 1:15-16a).

Once we are confronted with our need for more of Christ formed in us, we will also be confronted with how to respond to that need. The options are endless, but only One thing is needful. That One thing is God. He alone can reveal His Son in us, and He does it by grace (Gal. 1:15-16a). Crying over our failures earns us nothing. Seeking the One with love with all our hearts points us in the right direction! *“Therefore even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your hearts”* (Joel 2:12). Hungering and thirsting for more of Jesus before our Father opens the flood-gates of His heart to reveal His Son in us! *“But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me”* (Gal. 1:15-16).

“Therefore even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your hearts”

(Joel 2:12).

To me, the goal of my studying in Joel has been to stay in the realm of relationship with Jesus and not sink down into the realm of my lack and need. In Him alone is my fullness, my life, and my everything. David said it beautifully in Psalm 27:4, *“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.”* In verse 8 of that same Psalm David sang words that ring true for us today, *“When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek”*. LOVE PREVAILS! How wonderful it is that time with the Lord accomplishes more than all our labor “under the Son”. The Shulamite in the Song of Songs knew this was true, and was not ashamed to spend time with the King in His chambers even when she was yet black and unformed (Song of Songs 1:4-5). The relationship described in the Song of Songs can seem like foolishness and a waste of time in the face of so much need and lack of harvest, but apart from Christ there is no fruit or harvest. In the Gospel of Luke chapter 10 we find Martha becoming frustrated with Mary for spending time at the feet of Jesus in the midst of so many things to do, yet Jesus declared that Mary had chosen wisely.

The bible talks about sowing in times of famine. What a joy to sow time with Jesus during our times of spiritual famine. To lift up our eyes from the earth to Him Who is our Life and enter into the glory of Christ. In John 15:4 Jesus told those who wanted to know Him more that if they would simply abide in Him, then He would abide in them and make them fruitful through His indwelling Life. Oh, sweet fellowship in Christ. May our famines be broken as we abide and partake in the hidden chambers of the heart of Jesus. *“Seek the Lord when he can still be found; call him while he is yet near”* (Is. 55:6-7).

Joel beautifully describes the fruitfulness that results from such times of seeking the Lord in chapter 2 verses 24-26; *“And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed”*.