

## **Restoration: From Desolation to Abundance**

**Key Verse:** 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. (Joel 2:25 KJV)

### **Introduction**

The book of Joel presents a powerful message of hope amidst devastation. Joel speaks to a people suffering from the loss of their land due to a locust plague—an event that was both physical and spiritual in nature. The imagery of locusts is not just a literal event; it evokes feelings of despair, loss, and hopelessness that can resonate deeply with us today.

In Joel 2:25, God makes a profound promise: He will restore the years that the locusts have eaten. This is not merely about agricultural recovery; it speaks to the restoration of lives, dreams, faith, and hope. In this sermon, we will explore the types of damage caused by the agents of devastation—the locusts, cankerworm, caterpillar, and palmerworm—and connect them to the struggles we face in our lives. We will also draw on biblical examples that illustrate God's faithfulness to restore His people, weaving a message of hope throughout.

### **The Agents of Devastation**

**1. Locusts: Total and rapid devastation** Locusts are known for their ability to swarm and consume everything in their path—vegetation, crops, and resources are stripped bare. They represent total devastation and loss, echoing seasons in our lives when we feel stripped of everything that gives us life and joy.

**Biblical Example: Job** Consider the story of Job. Job is a man described as "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1 KJV). He had wealth, a family, and health until the day came when everything was taken from him. His livestock were stolen, his servants killed, and—all too tragically—his children died in a calamity. Job's life collapsed around him: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21 KJV).

Job's response in the face of such overwhelming loss demonstrates profound faith. He mourned, he questioned, but he never abandoned his trust in God. His friends came to comfort

him, but instead they often added to his pain by blaming him for his suffering. After enduring immense suffering and maintaining his faith, God intervenes. Job's restoration is profound: "So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (Job 42:12 KJV). God not only restored Job's wealth but doubled it; he also blessed him with more children. This reflects God's character as a restorer, showing that even in the depths of despair, He has the power to restore and bless abundantly.

**2. Cankerworms: Missed Opportunities** Cankerworms consume the leaves of plants, preventing growth and hindering the production of fruit. They symbolize those moments in our lives when opportunities slip through our fingers, leaving us with feelings of regret and disappointment.

**Biblical Example: The Israelites in the Wilderness** The journey of the Israelites serves as a powerful illustration of missed opportunities. After their miraculous exodus from Egypt, they were promised a land flowing with milk and honey. However, due to their unbelief and constant complaints, they were condemned to wander in the wilderness for forty years. "And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years" (Numbers 14:33 KJV). The cankerworms of doubt and unfaithfulness caused them to miss their chance at entering the Promised Land.

Yet, amidst their wandering, God remained faithful. He provided for them day by day, sending manna from heaven and quail to eat, showing His constant provision. When the time was right, God renewed His covenant with them and brought them into the Promised Land, saying, "This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel" (Joshua 3:7 KJV). This moment represents a divine restoration of purpose and fulfillment, reminding us that God can still bring clarity and purpose to our lives, even after a season of missed opportunities.

**3. Caterpillars: Internal Struggles (Continued)** Caterpillars represent those internal battles we face—doubts, fears, and unresolved issues that gnaw at our sense of self-worth and faith. These struggles often leave us feeling inadequate or unfulfilled, affecting our relationship with God and others.

**Biblical Example: David** David's life is filled with moments of triumph and profound failure. One of the most significant failures came when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and orchestrated the death of her husband, Uriah. This sin brought tremendous internal turmoil to

David's heart, causing him to feel the heavy weight of guilt and despair. In his moment of repentance, he cried out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10 KJV). David understood that his actions had devastating effects not only on his life but on his relationship with God as well.

Despite the depth of his sin, God's response was one of grace. Even after the consequences of David's actions played out in his family and kingdom, God forgave him and restored him. David lamented, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit" (Psalm 51:12 KJV). God did not cast David aside; instead, He restored the joy and purpose in David's life, allowing him to continue serving as king and penning many of the Psalms we cherish today. David's restoration serves as a powerful reminder that no matter how deep our internal struggles are, God is eager to extend forgiveness and bring healing.

**4. Palmerworms: Prolonged Struggles** Palmerworms often operate in silence, representing prolonged challenges that may not be immediately visible but gradually erode our faith and confidence. These struggles can be trials, betrayals, or chronic difficulties that lead to exhaustion and disillusionment.

**Biblical Example: Joseph** Joseph's story serves as a fitting example of enduring prolonged suffering with faith and integrity. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, falsely accused of a crime, and subsequently imprisoned. For years, he endured injustice and hardship: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Genesis 50:20 KJV). Every setback appeared to be a defeat, yet Joseph maintained his integrity and faith. His unwavering trust in God did not go unnoticed. After interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, which revealed impending famine, Joseph was elevated to second-in-command over Egypt. The very betrayal that led to his enslavement became the platform for his eventual promotion and influence. In the end, Joseph not only reconciled with his brothers but also had the opportunity to save many lives during the famine. God transformed Joseph's prolonged struggles into a story of redemption, illustrating that even the darkest trials can lead to greater purposes in God's plan.

**5. The Collective Call of Restoration** From the narratives of Job, the Israelites, David, and Joseph, we see a common thread: each person faced significant trials symbolized by the locusts, cankerworms, caterpillars, and palmerworms. Yet, in each case, God's promise of restoration shines brightly.

Throughout Scripture, we find countless instances of God's restorative power, reminding us that He is not only aware of our suffering but also actively engaged in our healing and restoration.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the promise in Joel 2:25, "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten..." (Joel 2:25 KJV), reverberates through time, offering hope to all who have experienced loss and heartache. This promise stands as a testament to God's character as a restorer. He desires to bring healing not just to the surface but into the very depths of our souls. God's restoration can be transformative, leading to new beginnings and opportunities. It is a restoration that surpasses mere recovery; it is about rejuvenation and advancement into new spiritual and emotional territories.

Throughout our lives, we may encounter locusts that threaten our peace, cankerworms that snatch away our dreams, caterpillars that create internal strife, and palmerworms that drag on, threatening to sap our spiritual vitality. But, as we have seen, these challenges are not insurmountable when we place our faith in God. Encourage the congregation to reflect on their own lives. Where have the insects of life stripped them of joy, opportunity, or purpose? Invite them to bring those struggles before God, trusting in His promise to heal and restore. Let's step forward with faith, knowing that restoration is not only possible but promised. God can bring beauty from ashes, joy from mourning, and hope from despair. As we move forward together, may we lean into the truth of God's eternal promise: He is a God of restoration, and with Him, we can emerge from our trials stronger, renewed and filled with purpose.