

“JOEL’S TRUMPET”—PATRICK WALTON

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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. **Deuteronomy 6:3-4, 10-15; Joel 1:1-3; 2:1-2, 12-14**
- B. This morning it’s my intention to look briefly at the CRISIS that faced God’s people historically as well as our crisis today, and also SOLUTION presented through God’s Word to a people in the middle of crisis.
- C. My concern for us is that though this crisis may sweep over us, and leave in the near future, the lasting financial impact will be felt for generations to come. But even beyond this virus, and our financial instability, it’s my belief by the Spirit of God, there’s more trouble on the horizon for us.
- D. Beloved, we haven’t gone up a slow, gradual hill; we’ve turned a sharp corner, an unexpected corner, a corner that nobody warned me about, a corner that no newscaster on the television warned us about. It’s a blind corner, a corner with little assurance of what’s on the other side.

II. THE CRISIS

- A. In his book *The Benedict Option*, Rod Dreher rightly quotes Alasdair MacIntyre saying;
 - 1. *“Western civilization has lost its moorings. The idea is that the serious Christian conservatives could no longer live business-as-usual lives in America, that we have to develop creative, communal solutions to help us hold onto our faith and our values in a world growing ever more hostile to them. We would have to choose to make a decisive leap into a truly countercultural way of living Christianity, or we would doom our children, and our children’s children to assimilation...We Christians living in the west are facing our own 1500 flood (like the fall of Rome)...The light of Christianity is flickering out all over the West. There are people alive today who may live to see the effective death of Christianity within our civilization. By God’s mercy, the faith may continue to flourish in the Global South and China, but barring a dramatic reversal of current trends, it will all but disappear entirely from Europe and North America. This may not be the end of the world but seems to be the start of the end of a world, and only the willfully blind would deny it. For a longtime we have downplayed or ignored the signs. Now the floodwaters are upon us—and we are not ready.”*
- B. We’re a decade + out of a massive economic recession that leveled not only our nation, but the nations of the earth forever changing how life would operate moving forward. Cities for the first time in American history, powerful cities, economically strong cities declaring bankruptcy. In fact, since 2010 we’ve had 8 cities/counties file for bankruptcy.
- C. Recently wildfires have ripped through Australia burning over 25 million acres in every province of their continent and killing over a billion wildlife animals. Currently locust clouds numbered in the billions have darkened Africa and are now headed towards the Middle East with their arrival expected around Passover. It’s estimated that they will destroy 80% of the grown crops in Central and East Africa.

- D. And as I speak, 1/3 of the world's population (2.5/3 billion people) is under lockdown as a virus wreaks havoc, not only on people, but on our global economy, pushing our own nation's economy to a brink, it might not recover from. Last week a record 3.3 million people applied for unemployment, breaking the record from 1982 of 695,000. Some economists suggest that by April, unemployment could reach up to 40 million.
- E. This was to be a wakeup call to western culture that we were living outside our means, that our life of rare global affluence had lulled NOT mainly society, but the Church to sleep. What Keith Green referred to as being *asleep in the light*.
1. **Joel 1:1-3** *"The Word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel. Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation."*
- F. This book rightly opens with, *"The Word of the Lord that CAME TO JOEL..."* Like Joel, we are in need of God's Words, words that come to us, from God. We need something from heaven!
- G. Joel continues by addressing the folks responsible for the crisis in his day;
1. *"...Hear this, you elders, and give ear..."*— Rightly he opens up this book's address to the proper people responsible for the state of the nation. It's the Elders/Overseers/Pastors/Leaders. As goes the shepherds/Church so goes the city/region/nation.
- H. Joel's prophecy isn't for the non-believer, it's not for those on the OUTSIDE, but for those on the INSIDE of God's family, those that are called to be steering God's family into righteousness, into Christ.
1. This is why Jesus addresses seven Churches in **Revelation 2-3**—To the angel—*Overseer*— God knows that if you can reach the overseers, you can reach and change the congregation.
- I. He goes on to ask the rhetorical question;
1. *"...Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers...?"*
- J. The answer is no, nothing has ever happened like this before. This is what I call SHAKE WAKING. This is God's grace, speaking through His prophet, shaking God's family with sober words for the purpose of waking them up.
1. **Joel 2:1-2** *"Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound the alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains..."*
- K. Joel's trumpet is one of the hardest spiritual instruments to play. It's the sounding of an alarm, an alarm that has notes of GREAT IMPENDING TROUBLE, DARKNESS, AND GLOOM, coupled in the same breath with notes of LOVE, TENDERNESS, COMPASSION AND MERCY.

- L. It's a sound that takes time to learn, so that ONE NOTE, either POSITIVE / NEGITIVE isn't exalted above the other. The greater dilemma for Joel, and all the other prophets then, and today, is that God's family often doesn't want to hear it.
1. Joel again rightly states that this trumpet is to be played, "...in Zion (Jerusalem)...in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble..."
- M. This isn't a message for a wayward society, for an immoral/liberal culture, it's a message for an aphetic priesthood, for overseers of God's family that had strayed. For followers of Jesus that have been lulled to sleep by the spirit of this age.
1. But Joel is clear it's, "...a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains..."
- N. John the Beloved had a similar experience, and command from Jesus regarding the sound of this trumpet;
1. **Revelation 10:8-11** "Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth. So, I went to the angel and said to him, Give me the little book. And he said to me, Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth. Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, You must prophesy again, about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."
- O. John the beloved is being instructed by Jesus to fully digest the contents of this *scroll/book/message* for the purpose of both FEELING IT and PROCLAIMING BOTH THE POSITIVES AND THE NEGITIVES within it.
1. *"Preaching is, therefore, always a matter of life and death. The people in our churches depend for their very lives on the ministry of the Word; therefore, our preaching had better be nothing less—and nothing other—than the exposition of the Bible. Nothing else will do. The question that faces us as preachers is not are we are going to grow our Churches or inspire our people. Its not even how we can lead them to live more faithfully than they did before. The question that faces us is this; are these people going to live, or are they going to die?"* -Albert Mohler Jr.
- P. Well it's clear, there's a crisis at hand, it's serious, it demands our full attention, but is there a solution?

III. THE SOULTION

- A. Joel, with great wisdom and experience, rightly sounds the trumpet, a trumpet of TRUTH and SOBERITY, but also a trumpet of LOVE, TENDERNESS and SOLUTION;

1. **Joel 2:12-14** “Now, therefore, says the Lord, Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. 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. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him...”
- B. God's calling His people, the nation of Israel, the Church to return to Him. He's resounding a call all the way back from **Deuteronomy 6**, when Israel's on the verge on the Jordan, about to inherit the promised land;
 1. **Deuteronomy 6:3-4, 10-15** “Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength....So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities, which you did not build, houses full of all good things which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you have eaten and are full—then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, from the house of bondage....”
- C. Our hope isn't in our ability to think our way forward. It's not in our ingenuity, our political standing, our financial portfolio, it's not in the size of our ministry. Our hope is an appeal to a God who's, “...gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness...who relents from doing harm...”
 1. This appeal, this solution, this hope, is found solely/squarely in the God of Moses' encounter in **Exodus 34**. This is God of Jonah's/Israel's sworn enemies, the Ninevites.
- D. It wasn't money that God wanted, it wasn't a bigger ministry machine, it wasn't more laborers for the task, it's the heart of His people. It's something even greater than time, it's attention, it's your affections! God desires attention.
 1. **Joel 2:18** “Then the Lord will be zealous for His land and pity His people. 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...”
- E. This is what Paul prayed in **2nd Thessalonians 3:5**, “Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and the patience of Christ.” Direct—to make level, remove debris, clear a path
- F. Joel's call then, is God's call today; shut down business as usual Christianity, return to the LORD with all your heart.
- G. Joel says NOW, right NOW, not tomorrow, not in a week, not next month, NOW return to the Lord. Beloved there's always a better day to return to the Lord, there's always tomorrow in our minds, but this global change should bring home the reality that we don't know what tomorrow holds, we don't even know what later today holds. We thought we did two weeks ago, but this two-week period declares that we DON'T KNOW, WE NEVER KNEW.

H. Today is a day to take inventory of your heart. It's a day to EXAMINE YOURSELF to see if you're in the faith! It's a day to acknowledge your lethargy, your prayerlessness, your lack of engagement with God, His Word, His people, His mission or plan for your life.

1. **2nd Corinthians 13:5** *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves comma the Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you are disqualified.”* For he who lacks these things is shortsighted
2. **2nd Peter 1:9-10** *“For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.”*