

“ReIntroduce” Series

Echo Church | Week 43 | October 26, 2025 | Rich Saunders Jr. |
“Part 4: The God That Restores” | Joel 1:4–5; Joel 2:23–27 (NKJV)

Joel 1:4–5

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.

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.

Joel 2:23–27

23 Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you—The former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

24 The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.

25 "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you.

26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame.

27 Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the Lord your God and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.

Reintroduce you to the God that Restores

Introduction

Have you ever looked around at your life and wondered, "How did I get here?" You had a plan. You had a rhythm. You had relationships that felt secure and resources that felt stable. Then, one day, something shifted. The rhythm broke, the relationship fractured, the resources dwindled, the opportunity vanished. It feels like loss. And in seasons of profound loss, our first instinct is often to find someone to blame. We look for a demonic fingerprint on the situation and declare, "The enemy has been busy!" We spend so much energy trying to rebuke a devil that may not even be the primary actor in the scene.

But what if the disruption wasn't just an attack from the enemy? What if it was an intervention from a sovereign God? The prophet Joel opens his message with a picture of total devastation. He says, "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" (Joel 1:4, NKJV). This wasn't a random pest problem; this was a divine wake-up call. God allowed the locusts—He allowed the loss—to get the attention of a people who had grown comfortable and complacent.

Sometimes, God will permit a breakdown to provoke a breakthrough. He will interrupt our regularly scheduled programming to invite us into a deeper reality of His power and presence.

The silence of loss can be the very environment where we learn to hear His voice again. We get so busy maintaining our lives that we forget the One who sustains them. So, He presses pause. He allows a stripping away not to punish us, but to position us. He's not just a God who allows devastation; He is, more importantly, a God who promises restoration. The same prophet who announced the locusts is the same one who announces God's promise to restore the years that they have eaten (Joel 2:23–27, NKJV).

Verse-by-Verse Breakdown and Historical Context

Joel 1:4–5 (NKJV)

“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. 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.”

In this opening image, Joel describes an agricultural catastrophe in layered detail: four different types of locusts, each devouring what their predecessors spared. Historically, the ancient world was no stranger to locust plagues—waves of insects that could strip the land clean, leaving crops, livelihoods, and futures in ruins. Joel's audience would have remembered such devastation not merely as an economic event, but as a crisis touching every part of communal and spiritual life.

Yet, the prophet shifts this physical catastrophe into a spiritual diagnosis. The “drunkards” are called to awaken—not just from literal wine but from spiritual numbness. They've invested their hope, their joy, their comfort in things that can vanish overnight. The removal of “new wine” is more than a food shortage—it's a sign: God is calling His people to awareness and repentance.

Joel 2:23 (NKJV)

“Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you—the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.”

This verse is an abrupt shift—a pivot from mourning to joy, from devastation to anticipation. The “former” and “latter” rains refer to the seasonal patterns critical to Israel's harvest: autumn rains soften the ground for planting, spring rains ensure the grain matures. In Israel's history, rain was a direct sign of God's blessing and presence (see Deuteronomy 11:13–14). Here, Joel promises not just a return to normalcy but an outpouring—God's extravagant faithfulness, restoring rhythms that once seemed shattered.

Joel 2:24–25 (NKJV)

“The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you.”

This is God's restoration at its most vivid—things not just replenished, but overflowing. Wheat, wine, and oil were the staples of ancient Israel, foundational to daily life and worship. Their return is a promise that God's restoration is total: He fills what was emptied, replenishes what was lost, overcomes what was consumed.

God does not merely stop the locusts. He rewinds what was stolen, He pays back the years.

Notice too that God calls the locusts "My great army"—a shocking phrase! God's sovereignty includes even the hard seasons. Sometimes, what felt like destruction was actually discipline—a redemptive interruption designed to bring His people back. Yet discipline, in God's hands, is never the end of the story.

Joel 2:26–27 (NKJV)

"You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame. Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the Lord your God and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame."

Now, restoration is not merely agricultural but relational and spiritual. The people will praise because God has acted "wondrously." Satisfaction replaces shame. In the ancient Near East, shame was a sense of public humiliation, of falling short before others and before God. But here, restoration brings a new identity: God's people know they are His, that He is with them, and that shame has no place in their story. The repeated assurance—"My people shall never be put to shame"—is God's final word, a covenant reversal of everything lost once claimed.

Before we move forward, let's pause to recognize the locusts described in Joel 1:4. The verse names four distinct types: the chewing locust, the swarming locust, the crawling locust, and the consuming locust. In their time, each represented a stage of devastation, eating away at what the previous left behind—an image of total loss.

But what do these locusts look like for us today? For the believer, these locusts symbolize the different ways life can be stripped down:

- Chewing locusts represent slow, gradual losses—relationships that erode, dreams that fade over time.
- Swarming locusts are sudden setbacks—unexpected job loss, a painful diagnosis, or a crisis that comes out of nowhere.
- Crawling locusts capture ongoing struggles that linger just beneath the surface—recurring temptation, lingering doubt, or chronic stress.
- Consuming locusts embody moments where it feels like everything is wiped out—the breaking point when hope, joy, or resources seem completely spent.

These locusts might look like disappointment, betrayal, setbacks, anxiety, or seasons when everything that can go wrong does go wrong. In our culture, they show up as the pressures and

losses that eat away at our peace, interrupt our progress, and test our faith. Recognizing them allows us to name our pain—and sets us up to see just how powerful God's restoration can be.

So, how do we move from the pain of what was lost to the promise of what can be restored? We have to understand the nature of God's restorative work.

Point One: You Can't Reverse What God Restored

When God steps in to restore something, it's not a temporary fix or a fragile patch-job. Human repair is often cosmetic; we glue the pieces back together, but you can still see the cracks. Divine restoration, however, is a recreation. God doesn't just give you back what you lost; He gives you back a renewed version of it, sealed with His purpose. He redeems the time, redeems the pain, and redefines your reality based on His promise, not your past. What He restores is made resilient by His own power. The enemy cannot snatch back what God has sovereignly given back. As Isaiah 43:13 declares, "Indeed, before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?"

The promise in Joel 2:25–27 (NKJV) is that God will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten. He says you will have "plenty and be satisfied." This isn't just about getting your stuff back. It's about a complete reversal of the situation, so thorough that its former brokenness has no claim on its future. God's gifts and calling are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). When He opens a door, no one can shut it (Revelation 3:7). When He restored Job, He gave him double for his trouble, signifying that the season of loss was officially and irreversibly over (Job 42:10).

So, how do we cooperate with this irreversible restoration? We must repent for the mindsets that led to the loss, replant our hope in His promises, rejoice for the restoration before it's even fully visible, and remain in Him, the source of all renewal. We have to stop living in fear of losing it all again and start walking in the authority of His restorative power.

Your past pain is not a prophecy of your future. God's restoration is not a temporary truce with your history; it's a permanent treaty for your destiny.

Point Two: Shame is a result of you not being satisfied.

One of the most powerful promises in this text is found in Joel 2:26–27 (NKJV): "you shall eat in plenty and be satisfied... My people shall never be put to shame." Shame is a corrosive emotion. It's the spiritual echo that tells you you're not enough, you've failed too badly, and your story is permanently stained.

But notice the connection here: God links satisfaction with the removal of shame. Shame thrives in a soul that is unsatisfied. When you aren't satisfied with God's presence and His provision, you will always feel like something is missing, which makes you vulnerable to the lie that you are what's missing.

Shame is a result of you not being satisfied with who God is for you and who you are in Him. We look for satisfaction in our performance, our possessions, or other people's approval. When

those things fail us—and they always will—shame rushes in to fill the void. Jeremiah 2:13 describes this as forsaking the fountain of living waters to hew out broken cisterns that can hold no water. We were designed to be satisfied in God alone. David understood this when he said, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1) and "Those who look to Him are radiant, and their faces are never covered with shame" (Psalm 34:5).

To live a shame-free life, we must find our satisfaction in the only source that never runs dry. Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger" (John 6:35). The Apostle Paul learned this secret, stating, "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Philippians 4:11). We break the cycle of shame by reordering our appetites to crave God more than anything else, renewing our identity based on His grace, reframing outcomes through the lens of His sovereignty, and resting in His grace instead of striving in our own strength.

Shame is the shadow cast by an empty soul looking for light in all the wrong places. True satisfaction in God is the only light bright enough to make that shadow disappear.

Point Three: Restoration. Pour. Prophecy.

God's plan doesn't end with simply giving you back your stuff and making you feel good about yourself. The restoration of your resources is the platform for the outpouring of His Spirit. There is a divine sequence: He restores the land, then He pours out His Spirit on the people. Joel 2:28–29 (NKJV) says, "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." The restoration of the grain, wine, and oil was just the beginning. The main event is the outpouring.

This is the promise Peter stood up to declare on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16–21). Restoration leads to an outpouring, and the outpouring leads to a prophetic community. When God restores you, it's not just for you. He fills you up so He can pour you out. The Holy Spirit comes to give you a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26–27), to make rivers of living water flow from your innermost being (John 7:37–39). This outpouring empowers you with vision for the future, dreams that defy your circumstances, and a testimony—a prophecy—on your lips. You become a living, breathing witness to the restorative power of God.

Your restoration has a purpose beyond your comfort. It is fuel for the mission. We have a responsibility to steward this sequence. We must posture ourselves to receive the outpouring through prayer and expectation. We must practice the release of that Spirit through praise, prayer, and proclamation, speaking life into dead situations as the Spirit leads (1 Corinthians 14:1–3). And we must partner for renewal in the world around us, letting the overflow of God's restoration in our lives manifest as justice, generosity, and mission to others.

God doesn't just restore your house so you can live in it. He restores your house so it can become a well for the whole neighborhood to draw from.

God is not restoring so you can show off. God is restoring so you can show up.

Conclusion

Today, we need to be reintroduced to the God that restores. Not just a God who blesses, not just a God who saves, but a God who specializes in taking the broken, eaten, and devastated years of your life and redeeming them with purpose and power. He is a God who doesn't just forgive your past but reverses its effects.

He is the God whose satisfaction eradicates shame. He is a God who restores not just to make you whole, but to make you a conduit of His Holy Spirit.

The invitation tonight is to respond to this God. For some, that means repentance—turning away from the broken cisterns you've been digging and turning back to the Fountain of Living Water. For others, it's time for rejoicing—to begin thanking Him for a restoration you can't even see yet. And for all of us, it is a call to readiness—to prepare our hearts for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit, to become the sons and daughters who will prophesy, the old and young who will see visions and dream dreams for His glory.

He is here to restore the years.