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## **God Will Restore Your Wasted Years**

***By David Wilkerson***

March 26, 1990 &quot;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&quot; (Joel 2:25).

How many years did you waste before you repented and surrendered all to Jesus? How many years of your past life were eaten up by the cankerworm of sin and rebellion?

You know you are forgiven and your past forgotten because it is under the Blood of Jesus. But wouldn't you love to get back those years and live them for the glory of the Lord?

How often have you thought, &quot;I could have been so much further in Christ! I could have brought so much joy to His heart! I could have saved myself and my family so much pain and suffering. How blind and stupid I was: how enslaved by the devil! How close I came to losing my soul and my sanity. I can never make up for all those wasted years.&quot;

In his final days Paul looked back over his life and testified, &quot;I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith. Now a crown of righteousness is awaiting me.&quot;

For weeks recently Paul's testimony had absolutely pierced my soul. Something I couldn't shake nagged at my heart. In prayer I confessed, &quot;Lord, I don't think I can say that with Paul! Perhaps I could about the first 15 years of my ministry and the last 10 years.

But there is a gap in those middle years in which I sense the waste of months - even years.&quot; That period was not a time of some deep dark sin - but still it was one of drifting, and I was not at my best for Jesus.

In my marriage, too, I look back with some shame because I wasted so many precious hours. I have been happily married to the same woman for almost 38 years now, and we are more in love than when we first married. Yet in recent years I've asked Gwen to forgive me for the times in mid-life that I was arrogant and unkind - not at all the gentle, loving man of God I should have been.

I know that, like me, many of you can look back with regret at wasted years that have been eaten away by the worms of hell! I think of a businessman in our church who threw away years by drinking and drug-using. He was an adulterer who left his wife for weeks at a time, a wild man driven by lust and greed. Today he is on fire for God, growing in Christ and trying to make up the time to his wife. Yet he still feels the shame of those years the cankerworm destroyed!

The fact is, the closer you get to the heart of Jesus, the more those wasted years grieve you. The more you fall in love with Christ, the more you cry out to Him within, &quot;Dear Lord, how could I have hurt You so? How could I have been so deceived? I took years that belonged to You and threw them away!

&quot;Oh God, Your Word is so precious to me now, and I am so thrilled to be growing in the knowledge of You! How much growth in Christ I squandered! How much revelation I lost! How much blessing and anointing I forfeited!&quot;

I don't care if you have been saved 30 years or 30 days - God can and will restore all your wasted years! This one prophecy of Joel was directed to three groups: the nation of Israel, the church and

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individuals in Christ's body. I want to focus this prophecy on the third group, applying it to us as individual believers.

Joel Described Perfectly What Life Was Like Before You Repented.

You were once being devoured by an army of evil spirits who moved in on you to consume everything you had! Joel likened these spirits of destruction to locusts, palmerworms, caterpillars, and cankerworms. These insects are known destroyers, devouring everything good or decent.

Joel 2:11 speaks of a great army of God, "strong that executeth His Word." This entire chapter has been grossly misinterpreted as being a godly army of soldiers going forth to fight the Lord's battle. When we sing about the "army of the Lord," it is not this army in Joel 2. No, this is a devouring army of locusts that leaves nothing but desolation and destruction. It is the Lord's army - but only because He calls it forth as His rod to execute His wrath! Joel said of this demonic army, "Sound the alarm in Zion! Warn them! Warn God's people that this army is coming to bring darkness and destruction!" (Joel 2:1).

Here is a picture of an unrepentant people upon whom the enemy has come like a flood. They are without defense! Evil spirits rage like flames and burn everything in sight. Unrepentant sinners cringe, their faces full of sorrow. The evil locusts are the men of war, climbing over every human wall of resistance, entering through every window of the mind and heart. Nothing can destroy them. The sinner has no sword that is effective against them!

These destructive evil spirits are well governed and march on without breaking rank. And no matter how many times the sinner tries to resist, this army keeps coming!

Anyone who once was bound by a satanic habit knows this. Your home - once like a garden, full of peace and love - soon was devoured and left a desert! You tried to stop the attack but, like powerful horsemen, they leaped on you and were too strong for you to resist!

One satanic worm after another devoured your life: "That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten" (Joel 1:4). Every crack vial, coke bag, and heroin needle was a locust, a cankerworm.

Isn't that what happened? Satan had his teeth clamped on you, "whose teeth are the teeth of a lion" (Joel 1:6). He caused waste, ruin, mourning. "The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up." Everything in your life withered away! "The vine is dried up and the fig tree languisheth... even all the trees of the field are withered... joy is withered away" (Joel 1:10, 12).

Joel is describing the terrible scene after the devouring army had done its evil work. And it is a picture of nothing but desolation, waste, withering and loss of joy. When you look in the face of a dying AIDS victim, what do you see? You see this same terrible destruction.

Think back to your own time of deliverance. You were dying both physically and spiritually, totally helpless, as the hordes of hell completely overpowered you.

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Joel Prophecies the Full Restoration of Those Who Repent.

I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten" (Joel 2:25). The New American Standard says, "I will make up to you for the years... eaten."

This promise is incredible! All along I had wanted to make up those years to God, to make amends and repay Him! But He says, "Wrong! I will make it all up to you - all those years of being wasted, stripped, harassed by the devil. You can't repay Me for a single wasted hour. Walk before Me in righteousness, and turn from your sins - and I will make up all the losses, whether they were yours, your family's, or Mine!"

To repentant sinners the Lord declares, "Fear not... be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things" (Joel 2:21). You need not be ashamed of your wasted years. God is going to remove from you the evil army, and you will eat and be satisfied. You will never again be ashamed! (Joel 2:19-20, 26-27).

You were born for His eternal purposes. He planned for you a life of satisfaction, joy and usefulness in His kingdom. But then sin entered, and God's plan for your life was interrupted. The devourer moved in, and suddenly years were wasted, lost.

But now, in Christ, all is new - even the calendar! The Lord goes back to the day the locust came, and He removes all those wasted years and starts counting again from the moment you repented! All those blessings you missed were stored up! All the joy, the peace, the revelations, the usefulness that you thought were dead and gone forever were actually kept by the Lord!

In hell, the damned may be haunted with a vision of what their lives could have been. Some may see what they lost. But this is not so for the repentant. All will be restored! They need never again say, "Oh, what I missed! what I could have been? Oh, how much God had for me, but I blew it!" No! God can restore all the wasted blessings!

God commanded a sabbath year - every seventh - in Israel (Leviticus 25:3-4). The people were to allow the land to rest in that seventh year. But they wondered what they would eat: "And if ye shall say, what shall we eat the seventh year? Behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase... then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years" (Leviticus 25:20-21).

The Lord of the harvest had only to speak, and the need was abundantly met. Beloved the same is true for every believer today. God need only speak the word, and the lost years can be restored to you!

This is how God restores our wasted years. He brings forth in us supernatural joy, revelation, peace and victory - far beyond our human abilities! He can accomplish more in us, for us and through us now than we ever thought possible.

We can stand upright today, as if we had never sinned, as if we had lost no time, as if we were right where we would have been had the devourer never come! God puts us right back on His divine schedule. His eternal purpose and plan are right where He planned them to be. Nothing is lost!

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The Lord God desires to pour out on us all the blessings and joys in Him that we missed earlier! Yet He doesn't make it all up with outpourings alone! These outpourings become overflowings! "And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil" (Joel 2:24).

There is such power in repentance. It brings back to us all that the cankerworm destroyed. God resurrects it all!

It's Time To Press On.

Paul says, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). In other words, "Forget your past and press on in Jesus!"

Satan's favorite harassment is to bring up your past by pulling old skeletons out of the closet to scare you! He will try to persuade you that an old addiction or lust is going to rise up again and bring back the devourer! You could go back to the old temptations. Or you could succumb to pride, thinking you cannot fall - but then you would be targeted by the enemy for certain. However, if you do what is right. "Who is he that can harm you?"

You might feel the pangs of remorse for your waste as long as you live. And yes. the memories will keep you humble. But in God's eyes, your past is a dead issue. As far as condemnation and guilt are concerned, God says, "Forget the past. Press on to what I promised you!"

Is America Too Far Gone? Cannot God Restore America Also?

Is the situation hopeless? Can the Lord not cure our nations wounds? He did so for Israel!

To America and all nations, God still says. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). To wicked Israel the Lord said, "Will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jeremiah 30:11).

Israel suffered an incurable wound of sin! But there remained a people in Israel who engaged their heart to approach the Lord. To these people He said, "I will cause them to draw near" (Jeremiah 30:21).

God healed Israel's incurable wound and saved a nation already under judgment! He restored it and built the city on its own heap! He multiplied and blessed them, and "their children also shall be as aforesaid" (Jeremiah 30:20).

I have been saying over and over about America what the Word says about Israel: The wound is incurable.

But God could restore America the same way He did Israel! He could heal the wasted years if He had a people engaged in seeking Him! He could wipe out all the years of wickedness and restore and

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rebuild! Scripture says God "ransomed him [Israel] from the hand of him that was stronger than he" (Jeremiah 31:11). And He can do the same thing for America! Yes, there is still hope. But time is running out. Pray that God will draw us to Himself and spare the nation until a multitude can be saved.

Are you being devoured even now, the worms of the devil eating away at your life? You can start all over again, and your time-wasting can end now! His law of restoration can begin making everything new in this very hour. Your past can be wiped clean - and this can be the first day of a new life!

We see a picture of such restoration in the New Testament, when Jesus healed a man with a withered hand, "Saith He to the man, stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth: and it was restored whole, like as the other" (Matthew 12:13). You see when Jesus restores you, the old wounds can't even be found!

Beloved, take those old wounds - the worries and heart-nagging about your wasted years - and let God restore to you the very years that were taken away. Then press on toward the prize of your high calling in Him!

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