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Joel 2:28-32 is the Old Testament Reading for Pentecost according to the Historical Series. In the ILCW Series it is limited to verses 28 and 29 in Series A. The significance of these verses is that Peter quotes them in his defense of the disciples' sobriety.

It is an interesting section (for those who think that Hebrew can be interesting) both regarding the insight which the Lord gave Joel about the New Testament Church, and in regard to exegetical difficulties which some have suggested.

We shall consider these verses from three aspects 1) translation and word study; 2) a verse by verse brief exegesis and notation of homiletical importance; 3) a suggestion regarding the outline.

I.

N.B Verses 28-32 in Chapter 2 constitute Chapter 3 in the Hebrew.

(28) And it will be that afterwards I will pour out my Spirit on all humanity, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams and your young men will see visions. (29) Even on the male servants and maid servants in those days will I pour out my Spirit. (30) And I will give miracles (signs) in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and columns of smoke. (31) The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon before the coming day of the Lord, the great and fearful day. (32) And it will be that everyone who calls on (lit. in) the name of the Lord will be saved, for in Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance as the Lord said and in the survivors whom the Lord calls.

N.B. Our Chapter 3 in the English is Chapter 4 in the Hebrew.

(28)

- אֲחֵרָיִם - this combination means afterwards
- אֶשְׁפֹּךְ - qal future, 1st person sing. from שָׁפַךְ, to pour (out)
- בָּשָׂר - Lit. flesh (including the animal kingdom), here, humanity
- אֶשְׁפֹּךְ - qal 3rd person plural, perfect, to pour forth, to prophesy
- אֲנֹשֵׁי - your old men
- אֶשְׁפֹּךְ - qal future, 3rd person plural with a paragetic nun, to dream
- אֲנֹשֵׁי - your young men (of mature age, but unmarried)
- וְרֵאוֹת - visions, revelations

(29)

- אֲפֹרָא - here even, since it will show the extent of the pouring out
- אֵלֶּיךָ - with the definite article, those (or these)

(30)

- אֶתְּתֶנָּה - qal 1st person sing., perfect, from נָתַן, to give
- מוֹפְתִים - miracles, signs
- עַמֻּדִים - column, pillar; from עָמַד

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(31)

וַיִּפְּחֶנּוּ - niph'al future, 3rd person sing. to be turned

אֲרִיִּם - niph'al part., masc. singular from אָרַם, dreadful, terrible

(32)

וַיִּדְבֹר - niph'al future, 3rd person sing., to be delivered

II.

28: And afterward: afterward in relation to the invasion of locusts, not necessarily being a chronological occurrence after verse 27. Cf. the teacher for righteousness (23). I will pour out my Spirit: here is God of free and faithful grace displaying his generosity in that he pours out his Spirit. This is picturesque language which in no way delegates the Spirit to the ranks of an inanimate force.

On all people: What a shocker for an Old Testament believer as Joel. What we have here is an insight into the universal priesthood of believers in the New Testament. This priesthood would not be limited to the line of Aaron, but would draw upon people who come from the various nationalities and social strata, extending even down to the slaves. On all people refers to the diversity of the believers, not the totality of the human race.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy...your young men will see visions: Luther says that these various activities all represent the knowledge of God through Christ, which the Holy Spirit kindles and makes to burn through the Word of the gospel. Although this outpouring with the above result occurred in a special way on Pentecost, namely, the speaking in various languages spontaneously, yet the work of the Holy Spirit still continues in a more general way today. This New Testament situation is the fulfillment of Moses' wish that all God's people would be prophets (Nu 11:29). It is evident that there were no dreams or visions on Pentecost, yet Peter quotes Joel that the special outpouring of the Spirit with extraordinary results resulted in the fulfillment of prophecy. Joel's inspired words convey poetical, prophetic representation.

29: Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit: For O.T. believers this was unheard of. But for us today it is proper. In fact, we often have greater success with those who are physically down and out as well as spiritually needy.. Verses 28 and 29 reveal a general New Testament principle, the universal priesthood, spearheaded by a momentous outpouring of the Spirit in a special way at Pentecost. We live as believers upon whom the Spirit has been poured in a general way (consider Luther's remark in verse 28.) How do we follow in the footsteps of that day of Pentecost? The Spirit has given us knowledge, clear information from the Word. He gives us the faith and the power to speak out to witness. We cannot beg off by saying we are too run-of-the-mill. We cannot say that the Lord considers us unworthy of communicating his message. Let us brand our excuses for what they are, namely, excuses which our lazy, sinful flesh cooks up and feels satisfied with.

30: Verses 30 and 31 show a common problem, namely having a good prophetic depth perception. Events that may span long periods of time are paired side by side in prophecy. The wonders are not strictly limited to the time just before the Judgment Day, but rather cover the New Testament era. Hence, some of the signs have been and will continue to be repeated. But all of the signs are warnings of impending judgment. Man might feel that he can someday eliminate wars and bloodshed. But the extraordinary catastrophes of life are surely beyond our control. The hope for world peace fails to consider the innate depravity of the soul.

32: And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved: again, a general statement of fact which does not depend on the nationality or social standing of the individual. What power simple faith has. This is the status of the believer, not those who call on a false God, or who cry out for mercy after their time of grace has passed.

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For on Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance: In times of distress, the Old Testament Children of Israel would seek safety within the walls of Jerusalem. Here the reference is poetic. Those who come to the Lord in faith for safety will receive deliverance. No, it may not be total deliverance from the troubles of this life. We cannot expect that. But we are delivered from sin, death and the power of the devil.

Among the survivors whom the Lord calls: those whom the Lord has called must look out for the disasters of this life which everyone must contend with, and also must beware of the persecution which the unbelieving world would hurl our way. The term, "survivor" sometimes has the connotation of personal fortitude or moxie. That is not the case here. When we carry on, we do it by God's grace. The thought of grace is likewise present in that the Lord CALLS the believers. He extends the invitation to be saved. Those who trust in his promise are not let down.

Throughout these verses we have the comfort of seeing the Lord look into the future and having the prophecy being fulfilled. What comfort there is to have a God who can see tomorrow as clearly as he can look back on yesterday. Yes, in our present time slot there still are the wonders of verses 30 and 31, but their terrors will not cause us to shrink back. We have the Lord who has called us on our side. The Holy Spirit has been poured out on us. Not as spectacularly as on Pentecost, to be sure, but still in a way that Old Testament believers would still call special, for we live in the period of the universal priesthood. We should perhaps consider whether our people need to be reinstructed as to what this all encompasses and the gratitude which arises from the distinct privilege which we have in this situation. We also have the firm faith that the Lord will deliver all who call on him with believing hearts.

III.

THE LORD POURS OUT HIS SPIRIT UPON US

- I. What an enviable condition to be in! (28-29)
 - A. Oh, how we might want to have traded places with the disciples on Pentecost.
 - B. But likewise, how much might the Old Testament believers have wanted to trade places with us.
- II. The Holy Spirit's gifts are our source of strength while living in a troubled world (30-31).
 - A. Various are the signs in the times which lead up to the Judgment.
 - B. The Spirit cares for all believers, great and small (29).
- III. Therefore we have confidence when considering death and the Judgment. (32).
 - A. Spirit-given faith saves -- "there will be deliverance."
 - B. Though death and judgment may strike fear in the hearts of others, we view them as the Lord's call to take us home.