Tremble And Pray

By Rich Carmicheal

During the worship service at a church I recently visited, the congregation sang the song that includes the words, "And sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble." I wondered then, and continue to wonder, where the people are who truly tremble before the Lord?

That particular weekend I had been reading in the Book of Judges that the people forsook the Lord, did evil in His sight, followed other gods, and *"thus they provoked the Lord to anger"* (Judg. 2:11-12). That last phrase is so significant. While the Lord is *"slow to anger"* (Ex. 34:6), He can be *"provoked to anger"* – and it is a most serious issue when He is! The passage in Judges goes on to state that *"the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them…. Wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had spoken and as the Lord had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed"* (2:14-15).

Here in the United States, and in other countries as well, there are many who are forsaking the Lord (if they ever knew Him) and who are doing evil in His sight. In fact, the last verse of Judges is a fitting commentary for our culture: *"In those days…everyone did what was right in his own eyes"* (21:25). Even the clearest and strongest of God's standards on issues such as marriage, sexual morality, social justice and the protection of the unborn, as well as His words against greed, violence, sensuality, deceit, and so forth, are being rejected – and not just by the world, but by many in the church!

The Lord does not change (Mal. 3:6), and He continues to be provoked to anger by sin. And when He becomes angry, there is reason for individuals and nations to tremble. *"The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. …Mountains quake because of Him and the hills dissolve; indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence, the world and all the inhabitants in it. Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken up by Him"* (Nah. 1:3-6). *"...Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; surely it is near"* (Joel 2:1).

The wrath of God is actually already revealed from heaven against ungodliness and unrighteousness, and part of His wrath is to give people and nations over to their sin, allowing sin to run its natural course of destruction (see Romans 1:18-32). We should be trembling as we see God's wrath already being poured out, and as we realize what wrath is yet to come if we do not return to Him. *"My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments"* (Psa. 119:120).

The good news is that God does not want to pour out further judgment, but He wants us to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). It is His kindness that leads us to repentance, and only our own stubbornness and our unrepentant hearts that store up His wrath against us (Rom. 2:4-5).

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He longs to awaken individuals and nations, and He seeks those who are humble and who tremble at His Word (Isa. 66:2), those who tremble at His judgment against unfaithfulness (Ezra 9:4), and those who will work out their salvation *"with fear and trembling"* (Phil. 2:12). He asks, *"Do you not fear Me? …Do you not tremble in My presence?"* (Jer. 5:22).

In the midst of judgment on his nation, the prophet Habakkuk trembled and prayed: *"Lord, I have heard the report about Thee and I fear. O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy"* (Hab. 3:2, 16). May we likewise tremble before the Lord and seek mercy and revival.

"Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine indignation toward us to cease. Wilt Thou be angry with us forever? Wilt Thou prolong Thine anger to all generations? Wilt Thou not Thyself revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? Show us Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, and grant us Thy salvation" (Psa. 85:4-7).

About This Issue…

Along with a call to seek the Lord for the revival that is so desperately needed in the church and in our nations, there are also messages in this issue to encourage those who are going through trials and suffering. If this latter focus describes you, we hope the Lord ministers much comfort and encouragement to you.

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