Sobering: How Blind We Humans Can Be by Rick Liggin

Through the prophet Amos, God warned the northern kingdom of Israel that He was about to bring sure and certain judgment down on them! These were not good people. They were the kind of people who just couldn’t wait for the Sabbath to be over so they could get back to the business of cheating the helpless with dishonest scales and overpriced worthless wheat (Amos 8:4-6). To these ruthless and evil people, God said: “Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land…the Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob, ‘Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds. Because of this will not the land quake and everyone who dwells in it mourn?’” (8:7-8). Indeed, they would! God even went on to describe the “mourning” and “lamentation” that would certainly come soon on this unfaithful nation (8:8-14; 9:1-10).

Did you notice what God said He had “sworn by the pride of Jacob” (8:7)? He had sworn: “I will never forget their deeds” (8:7)! Whoa! How scary is that? God was, in effect, saying, “I swear I will never forget their sins!” Typically, we think of God as being One who “remembers our sins no more” (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12). But based on what we’re learning here in Amos, there can come a time when people are so far gone in wickedness that God will never forget their sins. Wow! That is a truly terrifying thought!

Now, you would think that people who are this evil and corrupt must surely know that they are a wicked and rotten lot. But this is where this message becomes especially sobering. At this time in their history, the people of Israel felt that they were all “okay” with God. Their national prosperity, both militarily and materially, confirmed for them that “the Lord God of hosts” was “with” them (5:14). After all, they were extremely religious people. They held religious festivals and assemblies; they multiplied sacrifices and offerings; and they worshiped in songs with harps (5:21-23). In fact, they were so confident of their right standing before God that they were convinced that “calamity will not overtake or confront us” (9:10). They believed that if any “day of the Lord” did come, it would turn out to be a day of deliverance for them from their oppressive enemies who would be judged (cf. 5:18-20).

But despite their arrogant confidence in their right standing before God, they were so wrong! They were totally blind to their faults. They were blind to the gross immorality among them (2:7). They were blind to their own materialistic greed, dishonest business dealings, and selfish abuse of the poor to their own advantage (8:4-6). And they were blind to the fact that all their religious activities were just meaningless rituals – they were only going through the motions of mindless “worship” (8:5). They just did not see the reality that they had become so corrupt that God’s judgment against them could no longer be avoided. And so, the Lord warned: “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel” (4:12), because He had “sworn by the pride of Jacob” that He would never forget their sins (8:7)! Wow! How terrifying is that?

It is a wonderful thing for God to promise that He will remember our sins no more; but it is altogether something else for Him to say to us…or to anyone: “I will never forget your sins.” That’s terrifying!

**A Sobering Application for Us!**

One of the real difficulties we have as humans is being objective as we evaluate ourselves before God. Real objectivity – seeing ourselves as God sees us – is hard. Think about Israel in Amos’s day; they were so corrupt that God promised never to forget their sins. They had to be really evil for God to make such a promise; and yet, they were totally blind to their sin. They actually evaluated themselves to be right with God. Can this happen to us? We would like to think that we could never be so blind. But listen, folks; if it happened with Israel, mark it down; it can happen with us! Don’t you dare doubt it!

Now, please know I’m not trying to indict anyone or suggest that we are like Old Testament Israel; but I do believe that their situation should move us to sober reflection, especially as we try to examine and evaluate ourselves spiritually before God! If Israel could be so blind as to see themselves as “okay” with God while He was promising never to forget their sins, then we must see that we, too, can be blind to faults or failings that need to be improved. Understand that the Lord *knows* our deeds…really! Do we? Let’s not be blind to our faults like Israel. That would be terrifying!