

"BY AND BY HE IS OFFENDED."

Jesus tells us of a class who when they hear the truth receive it with joy until they find that it costs something to possess it; then they are disappointed and would rather surrender the truth than pay its inevitable price – persecution and self sacrifice.

People under different circumstances have different trials to encounter and different valuable things to part with if they would "Buy the truth and sell it not." As a rule the price of it is demanded in those things which the purchaser values most highly. Usually social standing, reputation, a good name are the most prized of all things, and usually this is the price which we must pay for truth. No doubt it is to-day much as it was when Jesus was present in the form of a servant. The severest cross then was to confess and follow the lowly one, among whose followers were none of the Scribes and Pharisees – the theologians of that day – whose only answer to Jesus' teachings, &c., were, "Give God the glory, we know that this man hath a devil."

The church rulers of that day were the most strict in outward forms of any period of Judaism, and no doubt they thought they did God service in warning the people against Jesus. They felt keenly the importance of their position as Teachers, and were proud of it, and hence were in no way prepared to receive the meek "Lamb of God." Jesus said they were "Blind leaders of the blind," and only the blind ones followed their leading. Those who had ears to hear and eyes to see followed the Lord.

It must have been quite a trial – scorching – for the Jewish convert to realize that in believing this Jesus, they were opposing the great system of theology that had been in force for centuries. It must have tried their courage and faith intensely to realize that they, illiterate men, were opposing their ideas against the views of all the

learned theologians, who pronounced the new Teacher a fanatic. Again, it would cut them off from the pecuniary advantages accruing from the friendship of the wealthiest and most influential class of society. All of these things were sore trials, but were put as trial in this way to develop and separate the "peculiar people," for Jesus declared that if any man was ashamed of him and his words – teachings – the same was not worthy to be his disciple. All of this finds its perfect parallel in this time of harvest, and now as then. He that is ashamed of the Lord's teachings – ashamed to confess his faith in His presence is unworthy to be His disciple and is not wanted.

The theologians of that day threatened and scourged those who followed and believed in Jesus as the Christ. (They all believed that Christ was coming, but denied His presence and "knew not the time of their visitation.") Just so the theologians of to-day are the bitter opposers of the presence of Christ. Because they know not the time of their visitation; they are "stumbling" as did the Jewish church. They threaten and scourge in the synagogues (churches) now, too, except it is in a different way; it is now a scourging with the tongue – far sharper often and more powerful than a literal scourge.

One of the severest trials at that day was to be put out of the synagogue; "They feared the Jews," for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." (John 9:22.) This was the only "respectable church" in those days, and to the poor Jew it seemed disgraceful to be cut off from the church. No doubt they considered that their relationship to God was dependent upon their belonging to the nominal church. The new Teacher spoke against the Pharisees and Rulers of the synagogues, and said that in many things they were hypocritical; that for a pretence they made long prayers and drew nigh with their lips. Some felt the truth of this and would have followed **[R213 : page 7]** Jesus and have been willing to join His church, if He had one – but

the church He represented was bound together by the truths he taught, and He said to them: "Rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20.)

So now, "in the days of the Son of Man," those who receive present truth are cut off from fellowship with the nominal churches. Having tasted the heavenly manna they are no longer satisfied with the husks. Yet they have so long been identified with the churches, have been so actively engaged in their socials, fairs, etc., which in their simplicity they have come to regard as "working for Jesus," that the thought of sundering those ties is like cutting off a right hand. But dear friends, remember that as then, so now, the nominal church stumbles and falls, (Isa. 28:13 and Rev. 18:2,21,) and those in it, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are the only ones now recognized as His church.

As when then present Jesus used clay mixed with the product of His mouth to anoint literally the man born blind, and thus gave him sight, so now in this "harvest" the words of His mouth, mixed with and used through the clay of humanity, may have been his agency in the opening of your spiritual perceptions to understand his truth and see its beauties. It was on the Sabbath – the seventh day – that his eyes were opened: It is now the seventh day [– on a grander scale – the 6000 years of time having been complete in 1873.] It was by the power of the present Jesus that the clay and washing gave sight; so here also.

Marvel not if in other respects the blind man's case was typical of yours. When he confessed his faith in Jesus they said: "Dost thou teach us? – and they cast him out of the synagogue." He might have kept quiet and believed in his heart and retained his standing in the church, but that would have been cowardly and had he done so – been ashamed of him he would have missed his subsequent communion with Jesus. So here, your eyes being opened to the recognition of the

Lord's presence and blessings of light and truth, which in consequence have come to you – it remains with you as it did with him to keep silence and remain in the church, or confess his presence and be cast out; to hold "the fear of man which bringeth a snare" and be ashamed of Him and His words, or confess Him and be confessed before the Father and the [R214 : page 7] holy angels. If we love the opinions and respect of men and of a worldly "Babylon," church, and seek honor one of another, how shall we expect that honor which cometh of God only – To be of the bride of Christ.

"Your brethren that hated you – that cast you out, said – 'The Lord be glorified:' But He shall appear to your joy and they shall be ashamed." (Isa. 66:5.)

And "Jesus heard that they had cast him out...and He found him," (vs. 35,) and became his teacher personally, and the man "worshiped Him." So with you, the Lord will hear of your witness for Him, and when you are separated from the nominal church – "Babylon" – your experience will be that Jesus himself will teach you and show you marvelous things of His truth and plan. And then you can indeed worship HIM – in spirit and in truth, and no longer worship the creeds of men. Jesus' explanation of our trial in receiving him will be explained to us as to him: "For judgment (a trial) am I come into this world that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." (vs. 39.)

We know of some who are now experiencing this kind of scorching. They have heard the word and received it with joy – their eyes have been opened to see wonderful things in God's word. They have realized that the Lord is present and has opened their eyes – they have confessed Him and denied not – they have been baptized typically in water, in a likeness of His death and raised in the figure. Now they are seeking daily to be baptized into death – the death of the old natures – the likeness of Christ's. The sun of persecution and

reproach has risen and the scorching has commenced. If they be stony ground hearts their profession and all will wither away and die out, but if good hearts, the seed will continue to grow and yield fruit which the sun will only ripen and perfect – not wither.

To these we would say, remember how our master said that if any man would be His disciple (pupil – to learn of Him) he must take up His cross and follow Him. Remember how you promised to follow Him through evil and good report; remember, too, that He is an ever present help in time of trouble, and thus remembering, may you be enabled to "endure hardness as good soldiers" – "Endure as seeing Him that is invisible."

"Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: On their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. Nothing glorifies God's name and character more than does the grand plan which He is showing to us, and which we preach. Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad, also, with exceeding joy." (1 Pet. 4:12-14.)
