

## **TO PURIFY THE SONS OF LEVI**

**"Who shall abide the day of his coming? Who shall stand when he inspects? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, and they shall offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."**  
– **Mal. 3:2,3.**

BLESSINGS have come to us through an appreciation of the teaching of the Scripture respecting the great day of trouble coming upon the whole world of mankind – especially upon Christendom. Truly the Scriptures teach a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation, because of which even now, as our Lord prophesied, "Men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things coming upon the earth." We do well that we rejoice that this day of trouble coming upon the world as a thief and a snare has not so come upon us, but that we already by faith see many of its details and the glorious outcome, the establishment of the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens. We fear, however, that this great trouble upon the world, which in some sense we hope to be "accounted worthy to escape," has so filled the mental horizon of some of the Lord's people that it has hidden from their attention another kind of trial which is especially for the Church, and which must reach us and test us and prove us before the world's day of trouble is ushered in. It is this day of trial upon the Church, this special testing of the elect, that is referred to in our text.

## **PRIESTS AND LEVITES**

The house of Levi, the priestly tribe, typified the household of faith of this Gospel age. As the priests constituted the highest order or class amongst the Levites, so the Royal Priesthood, the

Lord's consecrated, the saints of this Gospel age, constitute the highest class amongst the spiritual Levites, the household of faith. When, therefore, the Lord through the Prophet declares the testing and purging of the house of Levi it includes all of the "Household of Faith," the "Little Flock" and the "Great Company." The end of this age is the time for the Lord's inspection of the entire household of faith, and properly enough the inspection begins at the top of the house, begins with the saints, but will extend to every consecrated one. The two classes subjected to the fiery trials of the Refiner are represented by the [R3865 : page 308] gold and silver. The gold represents those whose loyalty to the Lord will specially demonstrate itself in their love and zeal to lay down their lives for him, for the truth, for the brethren. These are the gold class, whose portion as the Bride class shall be joint-heirship with the great King of kings and Lord of lords in his universal empire for the blessing of all the families of the earth. The other class, represented in our text as the silver, will be the class less precious in his sight, the great company of Revelation 7, also spoken of in Psalm 45 as "the virgins, her companions, that follow" the Bride into the presence of the King of glory.

If the words, "Who shall stand when he inspects?" bring to our hearts an anxious throb, relief comes to us again with the thought that although the inspection will be most critical, most searching – although the trying in the fire will separate the dross completely and purify both the gold and the silver – nevertheless he who thus inspects, who thus tries, who thus purifies, who thus refines, is our Lord and Master, who bought us with his precious blood, who has assured us of his love and sympathy, and has promised with the Apostle that he will not suffer us to be tempted above that we [R3865 : page 309] are able, but will with the temptation also provide a way of escape; and he has assured us that all things are working together for our good, because we love God and have been called according to his purpose. – 1 Cor. 10:13; Rom. 8:28.

## **TRIALS FROM UNEXPECTED QUARTERS**

If we knew in advance just how each trial of faith and love and devotion to principle and loyalty to the Lord and to the brethren would come we might be prepared to meet it, and correspondingly it would be less severe, and our humility, patience and love be correspondingly less tested. But the Lord wishes to test us along these very lines, and hence our trials usually come from unexpected quarters. This makes the trial more severe and proves the better the real sentiments of our hearts. The Lord desires to purge out of us everything in the nature of dross – self-will, personal ambition, pride: he wishes to cultivate in us loyalty to himself and the principles of righteousness, represented in his character, and exhorts us through his Word.

Looking out at Christendom in general we hear the Prophet's declaration that "a thousand shall fall at thy side" – at the side of the body of Christ, the Church. And we see that falling in progress, falling from faith in Christ as the Redeemer, falling into Evolution, Higher Criticism, Christian Science, etc. But now we are looking closer at home to the members of the body, to see which of these will be able to stand the tests of our day – "Who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:17) inquires the Apostle. "Who shall stand when he inspects?" is the inquiry of the Prophet in our text. The intimation evidently is that the inspection will be so crucial as to test all of the saints.

Because the WATCH TOWER, by the Lord's gracious arrangement, has such an outlook over the harvest field, such contact with all the little flock of the Lord's people through the mail, through the pilgrims, through the colporteurs, we perhaps better than others can discern that the great Refiner's fires are already burning and that the gold and silver are being tried. And O, what sorrow it gives us at times to behold some not standing well the testing of this hour. We love all of the Lord's dear ones

who are now in the furnace of trial; we are sure that the Lord himself, the Refiner, loves them still more. If these have pain and sorrow, as we discern tendencies of weakness, disloyalty to the cause; ambition for name and fame or position, desire to be greatest, tendencies to lord it over God's heritage – if we are pained by these things, grieved, disappointed in some, shall we suppose that the great Refiner is indifferent? Nay, verily! It is written of him that having loved his own, he loved them to the end; and we see from the narrative that he was very patient and slow to cut off the self-seeking, ambitious, truth-selling and Lord-selling Judas. And the more we attain to the Master's character and likeness the more sympathy we will have with all who are out of the way, and who, unless recovered, will be surely cut off from membership in the body, as our Lord indicates – even though, as the Apostle declares, they may be saved so as by fire, as members of the "great company." – 1 Cor. 3:15.

### **"REBUKE WITH LONG-SUFFERING AND PATIENCE"**

It is impossible for us to write to all who seem to be in danger, for two reasons: **(1)** Time would not suffice; there are other duties of the hour; **(2)** If they will not hearken to the Word of the Lord, if they will not hear Jesus and the apostles and Moses and the prophets we need not expect that they would hearken to us. Hence the most proper course for us seems to be to occasionally give such words of warning as these foregoing, that although they may have a savor of death unto death to some yet we hope that they may have a savor of life unto life to others.

Strange as it may appear – yet in full accord with all the records of the past – these fiery trials, these siftings, seem to find in many cases the most dross amongst the leaders of the flock. Perhaps it is merely because they are more conspicuous, perhaps just as many who are not in so great prominence will really fall,

be consumed, "suffer loss," and be "saved so as by fire." The Lord alone is able to read the heart and to discern the thoughts and intents, and it is his will that now every member of the household of Levi, the household of faith, should be purged, purified, refined; and the fiery trials of our day are his own arrangements, his own fannings, that he may accomplish the work in harmony with the divine arrangement.

DAWN, Vol. VI. we believe, like the other volumes of the series, came out in its due season, and no doubt the Lord is using it to some extent as the earthly bellows wherewith to kindle the refining fires of this time. In that volume as in the others we endeavored to set forth not our own thoughts but the teachings of the Word, and this in some instances seemed to arouse a spirit of anger and resentment in the hearts of some of the leaders where there should be only love out of pure hearts and appreciation of the glorious liberties of the Church. We did nothing more than our duty in calling the attention of the brethren to the fact that the leaders are not the lords of the flock, and that any leader who assumes a lordly position endangers his own standing in Christ as well as hinders the progress of the flock in the liberty wherewith Christ made us free. And any of the Lord's flock who co-operate with such ambitious leaders are doing them injury as well as rendering an unauthorized subserviency injurious to themselves and the others associated with them in the study of the Word.

### **"TO ERR IS HUMAN, TO FORGIVE IS DIVINE"**

It is written, "To err is human," and we know that though begotten of the Spirit we all have the treasure of the new nature in earthen vessels, therefore are liable to err. Realizing this we should not deal harshly, unkindly, toward leaders who are inclined to usurp to themselves leadership in the Church of God without appointment by the Church; or inclined to override the right of others after they have been regularly chosen. Nevertheless, kindly,

gently, firmly, the congregation should hold control of all of its affairs, and see that the leaders recognize that the voice of the congregation is the voice of the consecrated. This will be to the advantage of all: it will assist the leader in keeping humble, in remembering that he is merely a member of the Church, which is the body of Christ, and that in the Lord's providence he serves the Church because they desire him to do so and consider such to be the will of the Lord. This will help to keep the leader from being puffed up, haughty, from speaking arrogantly of **[R3865 : page 310]** the congregation as "my people," "my Church," "my class," "my work." It will help him to recognize that it is the "Lord's people," the "Lord's Church," the "Lord's class," the "Lord's work," and that it is a favor, an honor, to be its servant and not at all within his province to be its ruler, its "boss."

This course benefits the congregation also, teaching them their responsibility to the Lord and to his cause to be in proportion as they uphold and give approval to the one who as leader or servant of the congregation is their representative. Whatever the leader does that is wrong is the fault of the majority of that congregation, and the realization of their responsibility means the strengthening of their characters, the broadening of their minds and in general their preparation for the Lord's service here and hereafter. It should even grate upon our ears to hear an elder in a discourse address the congregation in the second person saying, for instance, "You ought not to do this." It should be considered by all elders, all recognized teachers in the Church, the leaders in any sense, that they do not speak of the congregation as of a different class from themselves, as in the nominal Church there is the usual style of recognizing the clergy as one class, the laity as another. On the contrary the better form, the humbler form, would be for the leader to address the congregation as including himself in the exhortation, as for instance to say, "We should not do" thus and so.

## "LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW"

If the spirit of love were largely developed in all of our hearts it would require no discussion of this subject from either standpoint, but we are only partially developed in the fruits of the Spirit: hence our difficulty, and hence also the great importance of helping one another, so that our relationship together as fellow-members of the one body may be as helpful as possible to all. And when any feeling of criticism is aroused in our hearts in respect to the course of a leader, it would be the proper, loving course to say to ourselves – Well, perhaps if I were just in the leader's place I might do no better than he does in the matter [R3866 : page 310] of keeping my body under – in the matter of walking humbly with the Lord and with the brethren – in the matter of exemplifying the perfection of love, which seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, is not puffed up, thinketh no evil. – 1 Cor. 13:5.

When we realize that ambition was the cause of Satan's fall, that it was the cause of mother Eve's disobedience, that it has been the cause of the stumbling of many of the noblest ones of God's people in the past, the lesson should not be lost upon us, whatever our station. It should give us sympathy for the leaders and the greater trials and temptations to which they are exposed, and to the leaders it should give greater alertness, care, watchfulness, lest they should be in any measure overcome by this fault, which has harmed so many in the past and which evidently is so grievous a one in the sight of the Lord, for the Lord resisteth the proud but grants his favors to the humble. – Jas. 4:6.

Another point, we must never forget that as the will of the leader should not be taken as the mind of the congregation unless it has so expressed itself, so likewise we should not for a moment suppose that the will or judgment of any other member should be taken as the judgment of the entire congregation. If then any

brother conscientiously esteems that the leader of a meeting is not following the wisest or best Scriptural course, he may indeed go to the leader privately, kindly, lovingly, and give him his opinion, but it does not follow that the leader must follow this opinion. He might say, "This is the opinion of one, and my own is the opinion of another no less worthy of credit," and he might properly enough hold to his own opinion or modify it slightly. It is the voice of the congregation as a whole that should be sought on any subject, and which should decide every subject in the Church according to the understanding of the consecrated ones respecting the divine will as heard from the Word of God.

### **A DANGER FROM THE OTHER SIDE**

Neither should any one too hastily conclude that his view of matters is sounder or better than that of the leader. On the contrary, the fact that the leader has been chosen by the congregation as the one best fitted of its number to look after its interests should have weight, and the brother or sister who thinks he or she has reason for difference of judgment respecting certain matters should hesitate a little, reconsider the matter, weigh it carefully, try to see it from the standpoint of the leader, if he or she can so find it in the Scriptures. If after all he or she feels certain, it is not his or her duty nor his or her privilege to harass the whole company by trying to impress his or her views suddenly, hastily, vehemently. His or her moderation should be manifested, as the Apostle says, "Let your moderation be known to all men." (Phil. 4:5.) He or she should approve what could be approved of the leader, and in objecting to certain features of his course it should be done in all kindness, moderation and brotherly love, and surely with meekness.

The public acts of a public servant are subject to the examination and criticism of the public, and likewise the open teachings and open conduct of the leaders of the Church are open



to criticism by their brethren, but the spirit of love and sympathy should always prevail, and nothing should be done through strife or vain glory, and any one criticizing an elder with the evident view of supplanting him should be viewed the more critically himself, and all should recognize that the selfish, self-seeking spirit is a dangerous one, inimical both to the interests of the individual and the interests of the congregation. The brother who is in the right condition of heart to be a leader amongst the Lord's humble followers should manifest humility in word and manner – in everything. Others need not be frowned upon nor openly rebuked, but they should not be encouraged – they should not be put into places of influence in the Church lest it injure them and others who would come under their influence.

### **"LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK"**

Do not be too hasty in acting in connection with the Church's interests. Be sure first that your own motives are good, pure, loving toward the one you criticize; be sure that you have no sympathy with evil speaking; be sure that you are seeking merely the liberties of the Church which the Lord proposed – that you are seeking merely the welfare of the Church in respect [R3866 : page 311] to the times, places and character of meetings and leaders; and be sure that you are as anxious that others should have liberty to express their sentiments as you are solicitous that your own liberties of expression be not overridden or ignored.

It is rarely advantageous to have one leader or elder only in a congregation for a number of years in succession, unless it be very small or otherwise unavoidable. Some who begin humbly enough with a desire to be servants of the Church and with feelings and expressions of their own unworthiness of the privilege and incompetency for the service, if continued in the position year after year come thereby into sore trial and testing, and are in danger by and by of coming to feel that they own the position, and

that the selection of any one else for the service would be an insult. This of course is entirely wrong, yet we have an illustration in Scriptures along this line. We read, "Now Moses was the meekest man in all the earth." Doubtless this had to do with the Lord's choice of Moses as a leader for his people. For forty years the nation of Israel looked to him in every emergency, and it should not surprise us at all that at the close of that forty years the meekest man in all the earth was too arrogant to be allowed to go into the land of Canaan. Moses was deprived of the privilege of entering Canaan because he was not sufficiently meek – because, having lost so considerably of his original meekness, he smote the rock in the wilderness, saying, "Ye rebels, must I bring you water out of this rock?"

### **A LESSON FOR ALL LEADERS**

If the meekest man in all the earth and one of the greatest men in the world's history was thus overcome by the circumstances of his position amongst the people, it should not surprise us if we find that in Spiritual Israel some who start out meek and humble become more or less arrogant, too, and talk about what they do and must do, and assume that the others are dependent upon them for the water of life. Whenever we look at this picture of Moses it should say to us all, especially to all leaders, "My soul, be on thy guard!" Only a frequent looking to the Lord and a realization of this danger and a continual strife against it can keep us safe at our Redeemer's side – at the side of him who was meek and lowly of heart – the great Teacher who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself (Heb. 12:3), and with such meekness – laying down his life in immersion, in loving service – seeking not his own welfare and honor, but humbling himself even unto death, even the death of the cross. The Apostle showing this exclaims, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." Exaltation, influence, place, power, authority in the Church, now bring extra trials and extra

sacrifices as well as extra dangers. The higher one is up the more careful he must be lest he miss his footing and fall.

Sometimes a congregation may have its patience sorely tried by an elder who, possessing good traits, good qualities, persists in "running" the Church according to his own conceptions and ignores the desires of the Church. If the objection to the elder, leader, be along the lines of immorality or along the lines of false doctrine as respects fundamentals laid down in the divine Word – for instance, the ransom – then steps should be promptly taken, as a congregation is responsible before God and men on these points. Laxity on these lines cannot be brooked; the matter should be firmly dealt with by the congregation. But if doctrinally, or at least on the fundamentals, the leader be found loyal to the Lord and his Word and to the harvest message, and if he be above reproach in the eyes of those of the congregation who know him most intimately, and if the difference merely be along the lines of his unwillingness to conduct services of a character or at a time or at places which the majority have requested, it might in the interest of peace be the wisest course to continue such an elder until the expiration of the term for which he was elected.

Then at that election, without becoming too personal or saying an unkind word to him, the congregation owe it to themselves, to the Lord and to the Truth not to elect him again to any such place of absolute control. This would not mean that the brother should be dropped from leadership entirely, but that the particular meetings he desired to lead and the character of the meetings should be understood, and his election should be along those lines, so that there could be no misunderstanding in the future, and others possessing some qualifications for service in the company should be sought with the expectation that the Lord, who has the entire situation in his eye, probably has others in preparation to fill the breach.

## "BE YE KINDLY AFFECTIONED"

If this kindly and gentle reproof of the brother's course leave him still self-willed and arrogant and indisposed to serve the congregation according to their ideas, it would be wise to drop him entirely from leadership for a time. But let nothing be done through strife or vain glory – let not an unkind word be expressed. Rather remember the services of the past; he should be esteemed for those services. Do not be afraid that matters will all go to wreck without some one human being having control. While esteeming every brother and servant in the Lord very highly and in proportion to their works as well as their characters, [R3867 : page 311] we should ever remember that the Lord himself is our Shepherd, our Bishop, our Pastor, our Leader, and that we are his sheep. If the congregation feels such a dependence upon any one person for its spiritual comfort and refreshment and edification there is something wrong, and the sooner matters in such a case come to a crisis the better it would probably be for all. Those who have gotten started in the Truth can build one another up in the most holy faith, edifying one another and assisting one another in various kinds of Berean Scripture studies, and they would probably make much more progress in so doing than if they continued to allow leaders to lord it over God's heritage and to manage the Church contrary to the wishes of the *majority*.

We emphasize the word majority because so frequently minorities attempt to rule. Our thought is that the loving consideration of the different members of the body for each other should so exercise their sympathies and loving co-operation that the majority would be quite willing to agree to some recognition of the desires and preferences of the minorities – with [R3867 : page 312] individuals even. In other words, majorities are not to be selfish, and to determine that because a majority gives the authority therefore it would be proper to exercise that power to the ignoring of their brethren of somewhat different views. Union of

heart means that each and all will ignore some of his or their own natural tastes and preferences wherever principles of the Word of God are not involved.

We need not tell you, Beloved, that every word of this article is written with a heart full of brotherly love and a desire for the edification of the Lord's dear people, and without any personal animosity or other evil impetus or desire. We seek your good. We are in touch with the entire field, and know the sifting and testing that is going on, and desire to lend a helping hand to the injury of none and the blessing of many. Consider these things and note our further suggestions along the same lines in the sixth volume of the DAWN STUDIES.

Recurring to our text we remark that the very thought that we are in the presence of the great Refiner, the very thought that he is supervising the fiery trials through which all of the house of Levi must now pass, should quicken us, energize us, put us on guard. We are under his inspection. The intimation is that this is the final testing, and that those who are refined by present experiences, purged of pride, ambition, selfishness, meekness of heart, will surely be received into the Kingdom. There the humble will be exalted to glory, honor and immortality. Can we wait for this? Can we not afford to humble ourselves? Do we not desire so to do? Will we not all unite our hearts and minds and prayers and efforts to the intent that this work of humbling may progress in our own hearts, and that thus the spirit of humility may be shed abroad in the whole Church, from the humblest to the most prominent of its servants?

### **"AN OFFERING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS"**

The expression of our text, "an offering in righteousness" may be viewed from two different standpoints, both true. (1) We may understand it to signify a right offering, a proper offering, an acceptable offering; or (2) we may also understand it to signify an

offering in the interest of righteousness or justice, in the sense that the sin offerings of Israel, the Day of Atonement, were offerings in righteousness or to effect righteousness – to effect cancellation of sin.

Both thoughts are true: we have presented our bodies living sacrifices and God has accepted them in Christ, but with the understanding that we would be conformed to the image of his dear Son, that we would attain to the character likeness of Christ under his instruction and guidance and blessing and assistance. If now we fail to attain this, if pride or ambition or any other thing hinders our development in the likeness of the Lord, our offering will not be acceptable and we will not have a place in the highest glory to which we have been called. Likewise we have seen that the Church is filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ; that as the body of Christ whom the Head is guiding in sacrifice we were represented in the Atonement Day offerings by the Lord's goat of sin offering. The offering made by our Lord, of which we are granted a share, by which he justifies the world, shall ultimately bring in everlasting righteousness to all those who will come into accord with him. We are still in the time when we are expected to share in this sacrificing – "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him," otherwise we shall not. We are very desirous, therefore, that we should be enabled to offer the acceptable sacrifice represented in the type, that we thus might have membership in the body of Christ in glory and in the great work of blessing all the families of the earth. Shall we not all conclude more earnestly than ever before that the matter at stake is of the greatest value? and shall we not all with fresh zeal allow the Lord in his providences and by his Word to purge our hearts from all dross and to fill us instead with his meek and quiet Spirit?

-----