



REFLECTIONS

September 6, 2009

For he will be like a refiner's fire

Malachi 3:2

Refiner's Fire

Why does God allow pain into our lives—burning pain from accidents, illness, or loss of loved ones before their time? Maybe the answer can be found in a story written by an author unknown to me. Perhaps the author will not mind if I share it here.

REFINER'S FIRE¹

There was a group of women in a Bible study on the book of Malachi. As they were studying chapter three, they came across verse three, which says: "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." This verse puzzled the women and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out about the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study.

That week this woman called up a silver smith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest in silver beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver. As she watched the silver smith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest, so as to burn away all the impurities. The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot—then she thought again about the verse, that he sits as a refiner and purifier of silver.

She asked the silver smith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver were left even a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed. The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silver smith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy—when I see my image in it."

If today you are feeling the heat of the fire, remember that you are in God's hand. He has His eye on you, and He will keep holding you and watching you until He sees His image in you.

"You are the light of the world."

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¹ Author unknown

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