

Daily Devotion For July 31, 2022

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a **refiner's fire** or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver." Malachi 3:2-3

As I have talked about the Oak Fire in recent devotions, it reminds me of how God is like a forest fire in how He manages His church. To us, a forest fire is intensely destructive because it consumes acres of forest. It destroys property and damages the economy, and that's particularly why it is so catastrophic. We primarily consider the loss to ourselves. But a forest fire does not just destroy forests — it also revives them! It cleans the forest floor of debris, opening it up to sunlight and new growth. It removes thick shrubs which take up the water, so the water supply is restored. A forest fire kills disease and insects which harm trees. The burnt vegetation replenishes the soil with nutrients. Some species require the heat to open their cones and release their seeds. Fire is so vital that forest managers use prescribed or controlled burning to reduce hazards and renew the forest.

Change is important to a healthy forest. Without fire, the trees and plants would eventually succumb to old age with no new generations to carry on their legacy." That's also true for the church, the Body of Christ. Its legacy is preserved through God's refining fire. Sometimes it is as church members pass away as we have seen so often at El Estero. Sometimes members move to other places. Sometimes it is the pastor who leaves.

God's **refining fire** may seem intensely destructive, but it does not destroy the church. It revives it, like a forest fire revives a forest. Out of the ashes, there arises new, healthy growth, and the church thrives again with vibrant faith, purified as silver and gold.

Thought For Today: Remember, Jesus promised to build His church which would never succumb to the forces of death. Its existence has been preserved through the enduring love of God, Who remains forever faithful. The fires that He permits are never wildfires, but prescribed fires always under His control.

Today's Prayer Focus: Continued prayers for those affected by our nationwide forest fires, the first responders and comfort for those who have lost their properties. Deo Volente.