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HAVE WE MADE A COMMITMENT TO GOD?

0ver 35 years ago in High School we had to make a thorough study of William Shakespeare's play "The Merchant of Venice". We studied this play, amongst other works, in detail over a period of two years, and whenever I think of the commitment we must make to God I think of this play.

One of the lesser plots in this play involves a young eligible heiress named Portia and the suitors who want to marry her. To ensure that his daughter would get the right kind of husband, Portia's father had before his death devised something of a riddle which any potential suitors would have to solve.

Portia's father had made three small caskets, one out of gold, one out of silver, and the third one out of lead. Each of these caskets bore an inscription which provided some clue as to what to expect for its content. One of these three caskets contained a picture of Portia, and the first suitor to select that particular one from amongst the three caskets would be eligible to marry Portia.

The thing to ponder over are the inscriptions of these three caskets.

The gold casket read:

> "WHO CHOSES ME SHALL GAIN WHAT MANY MEN DESIRE"

The silver casket read:

> "WHO CHOSES ME SHALL GET AS MUCH AS HE DESERVES"

The lead casket read:

> "WHO CHOSES ME MUST GIVE AND HAZARD ALL HE HAS"

Inside these three caskets were the following things.

Inside the gold casket:

"A carrion Death, within whose empty eye there is a written scroll. I'll read the writing.

> All that glisters is not gold;
>
> Often have you heard that told.
>
> Many a man his life has sold
>
> But my outside to behold.
>
> Gilded tombs do worms infold.

Had you been as wise as bold,

Young in limbs, in judgement old,

Your answer had not been inscrolled.

Fare you well, your suit is cold."

Inside the silver casket:

"What's here? The portrait of a blinking idiot

Presenting me a schedule! I will read it. ...

The fire seven times tried this;

Seven times tried that judgement is

That did never choose amiss.

Some there be that shadows kiss;

Such have but a shadow's bliss.

There be fools alive iwis [old English for 'certainly']

Silvered o'er, and so was this.

Take what wife you will to bed,

I will ever be your head.

So be gone; you are sped."

Inside the lead casket there was a portrait of Portia and a scroll which read as follows:

"You that choose not by the view

Chance as fair, and choose as true,

Since this fortune falls to you,

Be content and seek no new.

If you be well pleased with this

And hold your fortune for your bliss,

Turn you where your lady is,

And claim her with a loving kiss."

The lesson involved here is that it is a mistake to judge by appearances. Those who are impressed by the appearance of gold and of silver are frequently motivated by a "GET" attitude. They "get" what they deserve and what many (most?) people desire. But they don't "get" what is really important in life.

To obtain the things that really do count in life we have to change our attitude away from "get" and focus our minds on "give". Mr. Armstrong frequently referred to the two opposite ways of life as "the GET way" and "the GIVE way". We must indeed be prepared to give and to hazard all we possess if we want to draw close to God.

We have to make an unconditional commitment to God before we are ready for baptism. We must indeed be willing to hazard and to give all we have. As Jesus Christ said:

> He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:37 AV)
>
> And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:38 AV)

And the Apostle Peter made clear that they, the apostles, had indeed been willing to leave everything behind, to make a total commitment.

> Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. (Mark 10:28 AV)

God looks to those who have made a total and unconditional commitment to him.

[Comment: This analogy came to mind after I spent some more time thinking about the article I had written about "baptism".]

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