

Not All That Glitters is Gold

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There is an old saying that says, “Not all that glitters is gold.” How true is this saying? Do we have some biblical examples of this kind of saying? Do people still remember this? Do people learn from this? As we all know, many Filipinos go abroad because of the “gold” in other countries. They want to become rich and enjoy life. Some of them enjoyed what they wanted at the start, but later on, ended up with nothing. How many times did we hear Filipinos returning home with sad experiences? How many Filipinos had difficulty even in coming back home? Some of them related their sad experiences abroad when interviewed by the media. But when asked whether or not they were still planning to go abroad again, some of them would answer positively. Why?

Although we hear or watch these sad experiences in the news, the people are still not learning from the vanity of this “gold” in other countries. Many of our countrymen suffered from the abuses of their employers abroad. Many of our countrymen were caught in between warring forces especially in the Middle East. Many of our countrymen suffered from the calamities abroad like earthquakes, tsunamis, radiation, etc. We have an example of a Cebuano who just arrived in New Zealand and suddenly died because of an earthquake. But are the people discouraged by these phenomena? No, they are not. Why? They still believe that “All that glitters is gold.”

Now let us check our Bible to see whether or not the saying “Not all that glitters is gold” is true. In the book of Genesis, we can read the story of an uncle and a nephew, that is, Abram and Lot, respectively. Let us read their story in Genesis 13:1-13. Here we can read that when Abram told Lot to choose the place he wished, Lot chose the plain of Jordan (verse 11). Why did he choose it? He saw that the place was very attractive to his eyes (verse 10).

But what happened afterwards? Let us read Genesis 14:1-17. A war occurred in that land that even Lot was taken captive, and his goods were also plundered (verse 12). Lot recovered the things that were taken from him because of Abram’s help (verse 16). Was it the end of the story? No, it was not. It was just a temporary setback. The major destruction was still coming. The Lord planned to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Let us read Genesis 18:16-33. Here Abraham, Abram’s new name (Genesis 17:5), interceded on behalf of his nephew Lot. Since God did not find 10 righteous people in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, He destroyed these cities by fire (Genesis 19:12-29). Of course for the sake of Abraham, God rescued Lot.

Brethren, can we see the parallelism between what is happening with our countrymen and Lot? The kind of calamities may not be the same as what Lot experienced, but we can see the same lesson, that is, “Not all that glitters is gold.” I hope people will realize that where there is much gold, there are many wicked people living in that land. Even if the motto of the people is “In God We Trust,” most of them distorted this motto into “In Gold We Trust.” If there are many wicked people in a certain place, there is an impending destruction or calamity that God will bring upon the people of that land. So let us be careful.

Brethren, as Christians, are we also attracted to some glittering objects? I mean, are we attracted by what is pleasing in our eyes only? What are the things that attract us the most in

our lives today? Is our Christianity affected by what attracts us? Is our Christianity affected by gold, by earthly pleasures, etc.? Is there anything that attracts us, which interferes with our relationship with God? Is there anything that attracts us, which hinders our plan to worship God on Sundays? Is there anything that attracts us, which hinders our plan to serve God as a token of our gratitude for Christ's death?

Brethren, let us learn from what we can see in our times and during the time of Abraham. If we do so, we will be spared from troubles, and we will have a better relationship with God.

Let me share with you the possibility of my family being in trouble right now. Even when we were still in Japan, Malou kept on persuading me not to return to the Philippines after my graduation. Of course, that was a very good pestering because it would make us rich. I could easily pay my scholarship with the salary that I would be getting in Japan. Proof to that is my house. I did not even work there because I was just a student, but I was able to save some money so that when we arrived in Cebu, we stayed for 11 days in a Pension house and moved to our own house after that. So there is a great difference between what I will get in Japan and what I will get in the Philippines.

There is another reason for staying in Japan. I baptized my Nihongo teacher, and I set up the church of our Lord Jesus Christ in that land. But still I came back. I wanted to help our country in my little own way. When we were already back here, Malou kept on asking me when would we be going back to Japan. My answer was always this, "It depends on the will of God or His leading." So we included that in our prayers for years, but eventually it died out.

So what is the lesson here? Had we succumbed to the attractiveness of the "gold" in Japan, we are now in trouble. When we were in Japan, we were living in Aizuwakamatsu City in Fukushima. We may not be reached by the tsunami, but we may be reached by radiation. I'm sure Malou is very scared right now.

Brethren, let us heed what Jesus said in Matthew 16:26, where He said, "***For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?***"¹ Let us not be like the third type of seed used by Christ in His parable that we can find in Matthew 13:22, which reads, "***Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.***" Let us rather be like the good seed as Jesus described it in Matthew 13:23, which reads, "***But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.***"

Thank you very much. May God bless us always and guide us in the right path of life that leads to real riches that will last forever!

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Occasion: Morning worship

¹ All quoted verses were taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible.