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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1503 ~ Intrigue around the Throne.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

At the end of World War II, in 1945, there were many Japanese soldiers still hiding in the jungle throughout the Pacific Islands of South East Asia. These men did not know that the war had ended. In some places, planes dropped leaflets telling the soldiers there was now no more fighting. One group who found some dismissed them as being false propaganda and ignored them. But gradually over time, soldiers trying to live off the land came out of their hiding. The last few men to be finally found had lived in the jungle for nearly thirty years, yet they still came out quite unwillingly. Their loyalty to duty for their country could not be faulted.

In today's *Bible Adventure*, Princess Michal who had been David's wife and loyal to him, had to face a crisis. King Saul married her off to another man soon after David had escaped his soldiers.

Also, we hear more about Abner, King Saul's commander who had shown total loyalty to Saul when he was still alive. As the most influential person in Israel, Abner had put Saul's son Ishbosheth on the throne of Israel. The eleven tribes of Israel recognized Ishbosheth as the rightful successor to his father on the throne, except for Judah, who honoured David's anointing instead. Abner then started a civil war with Joab, the commander of David's army. Abner tried hard to take Judah from David and give it to Ishbosheth. At the first battle, however, David's men won victory. Yet the fighting continued and it became a long war. David's position became stronger and stronger while Abner's grew weaker and weaker.

Abner was not pleased to be publicly shamed over his behaviour by Ishbosheth, the very king he had put on the throne of Israel. So upset was Abner that he changed his mind about supporting Ishbosheth any longer and decided to make an agreement with David instead. He and David had fought together many times earlier when David was King Saul's soldier.

When King David asked for Princess Michal to be returned to him, she and her brother Ishbosheth reluctantly agreed. They realised that the king's orders were law and needed to be obeyed. Princess Michal's second husband did not want her to leave him and followed her and the king's messenger until they were met by Abner. Abner insisted that distraught man return to his home without her. What a lot of unhappiness there is in today's story! Sin always causes trouble and grief and people can greatly suffer because of other people's sins.

When Joab heard that King David had received and sent Abner away in peace while he was at battle, Joab was very unhappy. Joab did not trust Abner and with good reason. As Abner was losing the civil war, he could have been likely trying to do something underhand to help his cause. Joab also wanted to pay back Abner for killing his brother. He had not forgiven him and was not about to try and establish a future relationship in peace with him.

In Luke, Chapter 11, the Lord Jesus Christ taught in what we know as The Lord's Prayer that we must forgive those who have wronged us. If we don't, God will not forgive us our wrongs. This is very important. Don't carry around in your mind any thoughts of hate, anger, malice or revenge. These distorted reactions badly affect your relationships with others. Not only that, they can bring sickness to your body. A doctor in charge of a mental hospital once said that if he could only teach all of his patients to forgive, three quarters of them would immediately leave and go home straight away.

Joab sent a messenger after Abner asking him to come back, saying that David wanted to see him again. Joab's motive for doing this was completely dishonest. What is dishonesty? It is being deceitful, false, cheating and untrustworthy. People often cheat on their tax returns if they think they can get away with it. Does their conscience trouble them? If it doesn't, it should. One writer said: "There is no twilight zone of honesty. A thing is right or wrong – it's black or white."

One of the most amazing stories of cheating on tax returns came to light in 1987. A new tax rule in the United States came in whereby parents had to list the social security number for each child to claim a tax exemption for them. Seven million American children suddenly disappeared! People had been falsely claiming for children that they did not have. But the new rule stopped all that.

When Abner returned as requested, Joab arranged for them to be alone and then killed him without warning. King David was horrified at the way Abner was killed and completely disassociated himself from such a deed. Joab killed Abner in a city of refuge where Abner had full protection by law. This event highlighted just how far law and order had slipped from the times before Saul was made king. Joab should have taken his complaint against Abner for his brother's death to the city elders for them to decide the case; not take revenge by his own hand.

Joab may not have wanted to see an agreement made between David and Abner for reasons that could have included Abner being an older, more experienced army commander. David might have started overlooking Joab and listened to Abner's advice instead. Joab may have been jealous or fearful about his own position. If only he had committed the situation to God and asked Him to work things out.

We too can take matters into our own hands and take revenge to suit ourselves. Usually other people are hurt or offended in the process though. And we demonstrate to all our unforgiving heart. How then can we cope when circumstances have wronged us? Constant prayer to God will give us peace and the right words to say at the right time. All our negative thoughts must be frankly confessed to God and then forsaken.

So many Israelites had been previously hurt or killed because Abner had sinned against the will of God when he appointed Ishbosheth as ruler instead of David. As a result, Abner caused Israel a great deal of suffering and heartache. In our own lives, how can we escape such suffering? The Bible tells us we can ask God for protection and deliverance. But suffering is something God intends to bring good from and we find it to be part of life for everyone.

In 1 Thessalonians, Chapter 1, the Apostle Paul says to the people in the city of Thessalonica: “You imitated us and the Lord; and even though you suffered much, you received the message with the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit. So you became an example to all believers....”

God Himself suffered the loss of His precious Son, the Lord Jesus. Jesus suffered even though He was perfect. The loss of His own life on the cross paid for the sin of human beings. Does it surprise you then that God expects us to suffer too for His sake? In the New Testament book of Acts, Chapter 8, suffering and trials greatly furthered the spread of the Gospel.

Have you let other things take first place in your life and now the Lord Jesus is not so important to you as He once was? Turn back to Him. Confess and forsake the wrong you have been doing. He loves you and will forgive your errors and restore your relationship with Him. Come to Him then with a sincere heart.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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