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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1711 ~ The Sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

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

Following the healing of a crippled man by God's Holy Spirit through Peter and John, these two apostles were put in prison for the night and brought before the ruling council the following morning. Peter had preached Jesus Christ to them. The healed man was standing there beside Peter and John, so the leaders couldn't claim no miracle had been done. Nevertheless the council didn't want the apostles to continue speaking about Jesus in public. So they threatened them. But Peter told them that it was more important to obey God than them.

As soon as Peter and John had been threatened a second time by the high priest, they were released for return to their companions in the new Christian community. The men reported all that had happened. Everyone started praying to God, acknowledging that He was the creator of heaven and earth. They quoted the words of King David in Psalm 2, where David had prophesied that the nations, people, kings and rulers would gather together and rage against Him and the Lord Jesus.

The raging nations referred to were the Romans while the people who plotted in vain were the people of Israel. Herod was one of the local kings and Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Jerusalem, was one of the rulers. The enemies of Christ thought that they had killed Him by their own decision and power. But they had merely fulfilled God's own plan and purpose. God had decided long before this time that His Son, Christ, must suffer and die.

Jesus was appointed to be man's Saviour. For Him to save people from their sins, it was necessary for Him to bear the punishment of those sins, and this meant death. God continually uses man's evil actions to bring about great good for His kingdom.

The apostles and people kept praying, asking God to look on the threats of the Jewish leaders and grant great boldness to His servants so they would continue preaching God's word, healing and performing wonders and miracles through the name of Jesus.

God responded to their prayer with an earthquake, which shook the place where they were gathered before they all were filled with the Holy Spirit. From this account, we can understand that believers are not just filled with the Spirit once at the beginning of their Christian lives. They can be filled with the Spirit time and time again.

Following this encounter, the believers shared everything that they had with those who were in need. For example, Barnabas, who later became a travelling companion of Paul's, sold his land and handed the money over to the church to distribute to other believers in need. In today's *Bible Adventure*, a husband and wife decided to tell a lie to everyone about the money that they had received for selling some land that they owned.

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As Peter explained in Acts, Chapter 5, there was no obligation on Ananias and Sapphira to sell their land or give any of the money from the sale to the believers. What they did wrong was to tell a lie about how much they received for the sale of the land. They had decided in advance what they would say so that they could keep back part of the money for themselves. Why did they do this?

Ananias wanted to show Peter and the others that he was more generous and devoted than he really was. He wanted to appear like a very good Christian who was willing to sacrifice everything for Christ. The Holy Spirit revealed to Peter that Satan had entered the hearts of Ananias and his wife. It wasn't only people that they tried to deceive but also God's Holy Spirit.

Before we get too judgmental about this couple, we need to examine our own hearts. Have we ever tried to appear better or more worthy than we really are? Have we ever tried to take the praise for some good work that we didn't do? Or have we ever tried to avoid the blame for some bad work that we did do? If the answer is yes, then we too have behaved like Ananias. We have tried to deceive the Holy Spirit.

Ananias' guilt when his evil plan was exposed caused him to fear and God's judgment came upon him. The Holy Spirit punished him; not Peter. When Sapphira came in, Peter gave her an opportunity to tell the truth but she continued with the lie as well. Like Adam and Eve, both had knowingly sinned, thinking that God wouldn't see or respond. How very wrong they were!

Were Ananias and Sapphira true believers? Only God knows the answer to this. But we do know to deliberately sin against God is an extremely dangerous thing to do. Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives for preplanning to tell a lie. The result of their deaths caused great fear to come on the whole church and to all who heard about it. The believers continued to meet together in Solomon's Porch but only true believers dared to join them. However, the Bible says more and more people believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

The Holy Spirit continued performing signs and wonders through the apostles. Some people were healed simply by having Peter's shadow fall upon them. The apostles were doing the same things and even greater things than what Jesus did while He was here on earth.

The opposite of telling lies is telling the truth. God is truth and He wants us to tell the truth at all times. ‘Truth’ is what the facts are, exact and accurate, genuine and trustworthy. There is a saying: “Love God, love His Word, love your enemies, love your neighbour, love truth”. And those who love truth, learn to live it and speak it.

We have to be careful with the words we use because words have power. They have the power to build up or tear down, hurt or heal, bring comfort or create upset. Many an adult still stings in their memory of some savage words spoken by a parent who put them down when they were a child! Each day with Jesus’ empowering grace and help, we can speak cheerful and encouraging words that’ll bless someone else, lighten their load and bring the light of Christ into their souls.

Helping further those who have suffered from critical words is being a good listener. When such people put their feelings into words, it seems as if the internal emotions flow out through the words. Some find it helpful to write down the angry scenes they remember vividly in their minds and then to throw it all away, while others ask God to help them to forgive the guilty person and heal their spirit so that the past is the past, and now remains the past.

We can’t change what we said yesterday, but today and tomorrow give us new opportunities to be a friend to someone who needs one.

When we speak, we have to be careful about what tone of voice we use, for the tone in our voice can show our mood and our thoughts. It’s easy to say, ‘I love you,’ in a tone that says the opposite. It’s also possible to say things in the right tone of voice but without any real feelings of kindness at all. That’s why the Bible urges us to do more than just seek a change in behaviour and words when we first come to Christ as a repentant believer. Change has to come from the inner core of our being, which includes the way we think and react to things, and then work its way into everything that we say and do.

There's an old poem which says: "If your lips would keep from slips, five things observe with care: of whom you speak, to whom you speak, and how and when and where." A wise person is someone who has a disciplined tongue. But where do those wayward words come from as we speak? From an undisciplined mind that is not yet fully renewed in Christ! We need to allow the Holy Spirit's conviction and change in our innermost areas if we are to improve our communication with others around us.

When we express good and positive things, loving and scriptural things, these become part of our own inner self. The opposite is also true – when a lie is told, the punishment for telling it is that the person has to live with the knowledge of personal untrustworthiness. Our words become part of our future destiny. The Lord Jesus warned the Pharisees in Matthew, Chapter 12: "By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

Not only is God truth, His Word is truth and the Lord Jesus is truth. Even the Pharisees admitted that Jesus was truth. In Matthew, Chapter 22, the Pharisees sent a delegation to ask Him questions that might trip Him up. They said: 'Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully; and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.' Were they trying to flatter Him or mock Him? God only knows. Yet nevertheless, what they said was true.

The Lord Jesus remained true to His Father's plan. When He died on the cross, not only was this the final sacrifice for His people's sins, but He opened heaven to those who would believe in Him and made our resurrection to heaven as a believer possible. Do you have a hope of going to heaven? Is it a true hope based on what Jesus has done for you? Ask Him today to help you to be true to Him until your last breath here on earth.

In 1 John, Chapter 3, Verses 18 and 19a, it says: “Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions. It is by our actions that we know we are living in the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before the Lord.”

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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