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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1720 ~ Saul is Converted.

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

After the Ethiopian treasurer received Jesus and was baptised by the Apostle Philip, back in Jerusalem, Saul of Tarsus continued with his self-appointed work of doing great harm to the new church community. As a result, believers fled to other parts of the country, and even as far away as Damascus and Antioch.

Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin. This could have influenced his fanatical pursuit of those he believed were wronging God by their new beliefs in Jesus. When an aged patriarch Jacob gave future predictions through God's revelation of how things would turn out for the tribes born to his 12 sons. In doing this, he never spared his favourite son Benjamin. In Genesis, Chapter 49, it says Jacob told each one their future, whether it was flattering or not.

Benjamin was Jacob's last born son and his mother died at his birth. Jacob prophesied that Benjamin was a "wolf that tears in pieces". The tribe of Benjamin would be characterised by a vicious and war-like attitude. When the 12 tribes left Egypt to travel to Canaan and eventually divide the land, the tribe of Benjamin settled between the major tribes of Judah and Ephraim. In that territory were a number of important cities: Jericho, Gibeon and even Jerusalem. Many people mistakenly think Jerusalem was in Judah.

The first evidence of Benjamin's aggressiveness is shown by the second judge of Israel. This judge single-handedly killed the fat king of the Moabites, who had oppressed Israel for 18 years. Although Benjamin means 'right-handed son', many of the tribe of Benjamin were in fact left-handed.

The next episode of Benjamin's vicious character was one of the truly dark times in Israel's history, as listed in Judges, Chapters 19. The other tribes tried to punish Benjamin for its wickedness and civil war was the result. Benjamin was close to being wiped out.

The next well-known member of the tribe of Benjamin was the first king of Israel called Saul, son of Kish. Along with Saul, there are a number of other Benjaminites in the Scriptures shown to be selfish and having misguided zeal, which brought their own punishments.

However, there were two outstanding examples in Old Testament Scripture of the Benjamin-like zeal which were channelled for God's glory. They were Queen Esther and her upright uncle Mordecai, who saved their people from Jew-haters at the time.

Just like his ancestors, Saul of Tarsus in the New Testament seemed to have inherited that same war-like temperament and he attacked his own people for following Jesus of Nazareth.

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Did Saul of Tarsus ever have doubts about the harm that he was doing to his fellow Jews? Although there seems to be no mention of doubt in his mind from Acts, Chapter 9, there may have been times when he did.

Here is an example of a true story of a young boy, whose parents were zealous teachers in their particular religion, and yet doubts in what they were teaching did come to the child as he grew. We'll call the boy Baz, as real names have been changed to protect him from further persecution. Baz's parents wanted him to be a teacher in their religion too. When he was only 4 years old, they enrolled him in a special religious school and Baz took extra lessons to learn their holy book. At night time, his parents questioned him about what he had learned and if he made a mistake, Baz was beaten.

As time went by, Baz had a series of dreams that he didn't understand. When he spoke to his father about one of these dreams, his father said it sounded evil and to pray to their god to find an answer. But no answer came. So Baz approached some Christians. They said that Jesus is the Messiah and God's Son. The boy wanted to know more but questions had to wait.

Baz graduated to senior school but his curiosity about Christianity continued. He managed to get a copy of the Bible and read it in secret. He had another dream in which he saw Abraham standing before him and telling him to go to the west. He saw what looked like a church. Disturbed by the dream, Baz asked his uncle for advice. His uncle told him to forget all about the dream and warned his father to keep a close watch on the boy or he might lose him.

Two years after his graduation, Baz had a vision of two hands before him. The left hand was dark but the right one was bright. A voice said, "Bring one soul, bring one soul." Baz was immediately embraced by a 'bright man'. Then the man said to him, "Be my disciple." Baz didn't understand the meaning of the dream but he sensed that he was at a crossroads in his life. He attended a service at an evangelical church and as he listened to the Word of God being preached, the Holy Spirit convicted him to repent from his sin and so he gave his life to Christ.

Baz felt compelled to be baptised. His brother found out and tried to stop him, saying that he would become unclean if he did. Fearful of the consequences, but determined that it was the right thing to do, Baz was baptised the following Sunday. When he returned home, his family was furious. They threw water over him to show that he was considered defiled. They beat him and threw him and his belongings out on the street. Baz was heartbroken by his family's rejection but he sensed the Lord encouraging him.

He turned to the church but no one was able to give him a place to stay. Discouraged Baz started to have doubts. He prayed to Jesus to show him the way. Again he sensed the Lord telling him to trust in Him and be strong. Some Christians helped him find shelter in an abandoned house and each week, he had training sessions with a man from the church. Baz soon found that the Lord had blessed him with a gift of evangelism and he started to help others understand about Jesus Christ and His salvation from their sins.

It took many years for that Baz to grow up and change from the religion he was born into, and convert to Christianity. Converting to Christianity can often be a slow process, where a person has to change their values in life, their loyalties and admit some of their thinking has been wrong. Christianity is different from all other religious systems and cannot be compared with them. As the Bible says, Christianity is a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ONLY Saviour of the world.

When persecution comes to Christians, how would we react? A teenage girl was excited to go to her first church service but she worried too about the consequences if her father found out. And of course he did. He beat her mother and the girl felt quite guilty about this. Her mother, however, was pleased that the girl was willing to go and said not to worry about it. In time, her father started looking for another wife and eventually threw his entire family out of the family home. It was a pastor who found a safe house for them to go to.

The girl couldn't understand her father's behaviour and thought that Christianity was more appealing as there was no marrying of multiple wives. She taught her sisters and brothers to always forgive. After some ups and downs, this teenage girl found it easy to share her testimony. She said: "Do not be afraid! God knows everything and He can see your heart. God is always there. Don't worry about the problems because every problem makes you closer to God. Persecution will also make you stronger and closer to God, so don't worry."

The Christians who fled from Jerusalem to avoid Saul of Tarsus were mostly converted Jews and so they still went to the synagogues to worship God. The Jewish high priest had authority over the synagogues there in Damascus. Saul obtained letters from the high priest authorising him to seize any Christian he found and bring them back to Jerusalem. At that time, believers in Christ were known by the name of 'The Way', which was a good name, as Christianity is the way to salvation and eternal life. Jesus Himself is our true way.

Just on the outskirts of Damascus, when Saul's party called a halt to rest, there was a flash of light brighter than the sun around. Saul heard a voice speak to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Saul fell to the ground, asking "Who are you Lord?" No one else in Saul's party saw anything but only heard a voice they didn't understand. Saul's conversion to Christianity was different from most other conversions and quite dramatic. Saul knew all the Old Testament Scriptures and had heard the testimony of Stephen before overseeing his death.

Saul had been travelling to Damascus with giant-sized pride and steely determination, but he was on a collision course with his eternal destiny. He suddenly came face-to-face with the Light of the World. Only then did he realise that he had been heading in the wrong direction. Years later in his life, Paul spoke about the time before he was converted, in Acts, Chapter 26 and Colossians, Chapter 1. Paul didn't try to put on an attitude of "I wasn't that bad" after all. He fully understood how far God's mercy had reached down to lift him up out of the pit of error and misguided passion.

The writer of Hebrews says in Chapter 10, verses 32-35: ‘Remember how it was with you in the past. In those days, after God’s light had shone on you, you suffered many things, yet were not defeated by the struggle. You were at times publicly insulted and mistreated, and at other times you were ready to join those who were being treated in this way.’

‘You shared the sufferings of prisoners and when all your belongings were seized, you endured your loss gladly, because you knew that you still possessed something much better, which would last forever. Do not lose your courage, then, because it brings with it a great reward. You need to be patient, in order to do the will of God and receive what He promises.’

May we too remember these words in our times of difficulty! The Lord is faithful and will remain with us. His purpose is to make us fit for heaven and one day, a holy presentation to His Father in heaven.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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