



BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1738 ~ In Iconium.

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

The Apostle Paul and Barnabas were now well on their way on their 1st missionary journey in Asia, which currently is present-day southern Turkey. The men's difficulties only increased as they went further north and then east but God was with them, confirming His word of grace by giving them the power to perform miracles and wonders as they went along.

People hungered for spiritual things, especially those who had little or no education. Just as it still happens in poor countries these days, people spent time learning to read on their Bible. Paul and Barnabas needed to escape from unrest as the result of their preaching in Pisidia Antioch, so today's *Bible Adventure*, tells of them moving onto the city of Iconium.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

In Acts, Chapter 14, it tells of Paul and Barnabas reaching the city of Iconium some 80 miles west of Pisidian Antioch. There they went to the synagogue and preached Christ to the Iconium people. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas explained the Gospel with such effectiveness that many people, both Jews and Gentiles, believed in Christ. But again, Jews who refused to believe, began to stir up opposition against Paul and Barnabas as they had done in Pisidian Antioch.

Despite their opposition, Paul and Barnabas continued to preach boldly for the Lord. For a considerable time, they taught the people and the Lord performed miracles through them, which confirmed their message. In time, the city became divided into 2 groups: those who accepted Christ and those who refused to believe in Him. Finally, the opponents of Paul and Barnabas planned a plot to stone them. But the men learnt about the plot and were able to escape to the nearby city of Lystra without harm. However, when there, Paul and Barnabas didn't hide themselves away but kept on with their public preaching.

These cities that Paul and Barnabas were preaching in were a good distance from Jerusalem. It's possible that very few of each town's synagogue Jewish leaders had ever been on a trip to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover or Day of Atonement there. So the news about a long-awaited Messiah coming to His Jewish people may have not spread as far as Iconium.

Teaching about the Lord Jesus in those times was something new. Along with it, the Gospel message also had a surprise or unbelievable factor to it – that although Jesus was fully God, He also was fully human. Who had ever heard of a god dying for his sin-sick people? It was something no one was expecting to hear or had thought up by themselves. Yet many believed the Gospel message and had their sins washed away.

As with all converts to Christ within any generation, these new believers had to learn to hunger after spiritual things and feed themselves on spiritual food. There's a marked difference between food for our bodies and spiritual food for our souls. For people who aren't sick, our bodies tell us when it's time to eat. We feel hungry and go to get something satisfying to eat. But with spiritual food, we get hungry as we feed our souls by listening quietly for God's voice in a sermon or during a devotional time of prayer and thinking on God's Word by ourselves.

If there's no time spent with the Lord before we rush out the door to do our daily work, at first our conscience may warn us that we have missed out on time with our Lord. However, if we continue to develop a habit of skipping time for God, our spiritual hunger for new insights and intimacy with God won't develop or grow. It may well, in fact, become replaced by self-satisfying cares and attitudes that make us less interested in spiritual things. And this can only result in stunted spiritual growth.

Spiritual hunger sustains humility. People who are in need and remain aware of their need and how Jesus is the answer for fully satisfying that need will stay spiritually hungry and humble before the Lord. They have a constant awareness of the need for God and seek out His presence, peace and joy in whatever they do.

In some parts of the world over the past couple of centuries, some governments have gone to considerable effort to stop people from satisfying their spiritual hunger. Such governments claim there is no God and that instead, the government is their provider and carer from the cradle to the grave. These governments are called Communist. Here's the story of one man's journey from being a loyal communist soldier to becoming a Christian pastor.

In 1957, Berti was born into an army family in Albania not far from the border of Greece. His parents divorced when he was only 3 years old and he and his 6-year-old brother were split up; with Berti staying with his father and his brother living with an uncle. They never saw their mother again for the next 30 years.

When Berti was 6, his father married again. Berti wasn't keen on this and neither were the authorities. Even in Stalinist Albania, divorce was frowned upon. A few weeks after the wedding, the new family was posted to a military base on an island considered to be a place of punishment for those who didn't behave themselves.

When it was communist country, Albania operated on a rewards system. If a person or family wanted to get better treatment from the government, they couldn't do anything wrong socially or break the laws of the country. As everyone was competing for better housing and promotions there were spies everywhere waiting to report anyone's minor wrongdoing. The incentive to remain loyal to the government carried an extra weight of whole families being disadvantaged if one member of the family made one little mistake. This included grandparents, parents and children.

After 2 years, Berti's family were happy to leave the island, and over the following years, Berti moved house frequently. Berti got so used to moving schools that he found it easy to make new friends wherever he went. At each school, all students were required to show loyalty to the Albanian flag and the governing communist party. If a child forgot to ever wear their communist scarf to school, that child was open to persecution and ridicule.

During his high school years, Berti became interested in electronics and radios. He gained some qualifications and worked in a few different jobs. His father persuaded him to join the army and after 2 years, suggested that he apply to become an officer, which he did. Three years after this, Berti became the captain in charge of an army base.

Albania had been ruled by a Communist dictator Enver Hoxha since 1944. When WWII ended, Albania was on a very high alert for any possible invasion of its territory. This high alert warning system went on for years. Dictator Hoxha fell out of favour with all other countries that had helped him in prior years, and he ruled with tyranny and fear. Hoxha was determined to wipe out religion altogether and proudly declared in 1967 that "Albania was the first atheist country in the world."

Although Dictator Hoxha died on Berti's birthday in 1985, Berti didn't dare to celebrate in any way. And things continued on the same in Albania for the next few years.

Part of Berti's job in the 1980s was to subversively listen to radio messages and find anything unusual that could signal a possible attack on Albania. On one particular 24-hour shift, in 1989, Berti became bored and tired, so he idly twiddled the radio dials. He heard a voice saying, "If you want to find out more about God, we will meet again tomorrow." Like all Albanians, 32-year-old Berti had been told God didn't exist and anyone caught showing an interest in religion could expect a huge punishment to be imposed on him and his family.

Berti thought over his problem. He wanted to find out more. But could he tune in and not get caught? He might be shot if he was found out. At the very least his children wouldn't be allowed to go to university. Was it worth the risk? For 5 nights a week, the big international Christian radio service named Trans World Radio beamed a 15-minute program into Albania. Berti talked it over with his wife and she supported his decision to check into the broadcast further, because she knew he would be very careful.

At night when Berti was again alone at the base, with just a duty soldier guarding the gate, he put on his headphones as usual and he tuned into the Christian radio station. The program presenter speaking at the time offered listeners an overseas address to write to if they wanted to know more. Berti thought about it and after a while, he plucked up courage to write to the radio station. These broadcast programs into Albania had been on air since 1968 and not a single letter had ever been received in response. The station staff must have wondered if anyone was listening. It took 23 years for them to get their first written response from Berti in Albania.

Before the rise of communism, Albanians had been very proud of their history. They believed that the Apostle Paul, as it had recorded in Romans 15:19, had visited Albania and passed through it. In Romans, Paul said he had fully preached the Gospel in an Albanian area.

When communism took over the country, the Albanian people accepted the lie that God didn't exist for 47 years. But things are different there now, as communism fell in 1992 amid economic collapse and general unrest. Today, Berti records programs for the Albanian people and these are broadcast all over the country 5 days a week to help the people find and satisfy the spiritual hunger that they have after all these long-lost years.

Sadly, in countries where there is no persecution for going to church or opening a Bible any time someone wants to read it, the importance of feeding one's spiritual hunger is not rated as highly as it should be. Yet, despite this, Christians everywhere can find true satisfaction for their souls as they walk daily with their Lord. In Jeremiah, Chapter 29, Verse 13, the Lord says: "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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