



BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1746 ~ Paul in Berea.

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

While the Apostle Paul was speaking in the Jewish synagogues of Thessalonica, some people opposed him strongly, without thinking about the implications of what Paul was saying. They didn't just agree to disagree with him, but violently opposed his teaching, even though he could back it up with Scripture. This was a sign that Satan was ruling in such people's hearts.

This outright rejection of God's message, or lack of reasonableness, proves that not everyone is going to be saved or one day be in heaven with Jesus. Some people claim their academic learning is superior to what's written in the Scriptures. But in Romans, Chapter 1, Paul said: "God's anger is revealed from heaven against all the sin and evil of the people whose evil ways prevent the truth from being known. God punishes them, because what can be known about God is plain to them, for God himself made it plain."

In today's *Bible Adventure*, Paul has moved onto the city of Berea, where the people there gave him a fairer hearing.

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After problems at Thessalonica, the new believers immediately sent Paul and Silas away at night to the city of Berea, about 60 miles to the west. When the Lord Jesus sent out His disciples to preach in the towns of Israel (in Matthew Chapter 10), He told them, “When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.” Christians don’t flee to hide from trouble; they flee to preach and witness in a new place. By persecuting Christians, the devil thinks he’s stopping the Gospel but in fact, he’s causing it to spread!

In Berea, Paul followed his usual pattern of going to the synagogue first. The Jews of Berea were open-minded and listened intently to what Paul had to say. Then they compared what Paul was saying with their Old Testament Scriptures. In doing this, the Berean people were a very good example for us to follow today. Whenever we hear any new teaching, we should first make sure that it agrees with what is written in the Bible. If it doesn’t, we must reject it as false.

The Jews from Thessalonica heard about Paul and Silas teaching in Berea and followed them there to cause trouble too. It’s no wonder that Paul criticised the Jewish persecutors of the new believers so severely in 1st Thessalonians, Chapter 2. He explained to the new believers that they were experiencing the same persecutions that the hostile Jews had brought on in the churches in Judea. How displeased God was with the Jews efforts to stop Paul and Silas preaching a message to the Gentiles that would bring them salvation!

Once more Paul escaped from the crowds in uproar and some new believers took Paul by sea to Athens. Silas and Timothy had stayed in Berea but once Paul had arrived in Athens, he called them to come to him and so they left Berea immediately.

Paul didn’t dwell on the bad things that happened to him. Once, in 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 11, Paul made a summary of those difficult times that he’d experienced while bringing the Gospel to as many people as possible. Paul was pleased that some people in each city he preached were brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Like Joseph, the son of Jacob who had been sold into slavery by his brothers, Paul could say the same about the opposing Jews as Joseph had to say about his brothers in Genesis, Chapter 50, “You plotted evil against me but God turned it into good.” This is the way we must live too: praying that God will bring good out of evil for His honour and glory.

Satan tries to defeat us in our minds first. If the old devil could get Paul to think constantly about how some had rejected the Gospel and how his physical punishments for preaching hurt, Satan could position himself better towards defeating Paul. And it’s the same for us too. If Satan can get us to doubt what the Bible says, we’ll be unsure and ineffective in our daily walk with the Lord. But if we stay grounded in the Word of God and believe it as certain truth, then Satan can’t confuse us by starting a debate over human reason and logical thinking. We need to live by God’s principle of faith and in faith, receive His great, enabling resurrection power for victory over all things that we face in life.

Some people say they can’t forget some terrible thing someone’s done to them in the past. Despite the circumstances, God calls us to forgive those who have wronged us and to love our enemies – things we can’t do in our own strength or ability alone. When we want to remember something, we keep bringing it up in our minds. A child learns to spell words by saying them over and over again or writing them out so that they’ll transfer from the brain’s short-term memory to its long-term memory.

To forgive ourselves and forget the wrong things that we’ve done in the past, we need to accept God’s forgiveness and reverse the learning process that we were entrenched in. If we refuse to let go of the past because we won’t believe how short our standards fall, then we are filled with pride. When a terrible thing we did in the past comes back into our minds, we need to shake it off by fixing our eyes on Jesus, praying to God, repeating verses of Scripture or singing a comforting hymn. We need to dislodge the temptation to remember our sin and its consequences from our mind; and then in time, the memory will fade.

Do you want to live more consistently as a godly believer in Christ? The same principle applies. If you fill your mind with worldly things, God will seem quite distant. We take more into our memory through our eyes than through our ears. This means that a lot of TV movie watching puts so much of the world into our minds. Then it's easy for Satan to divert any thinking about God into some sideline that's unrelated to Christian things.

Some Christians believe that they have to live with one foot in the world to reach out to their non-Christian relatives and friends. Doing this, however, places even mature Christians into a danger of drifting back into the world and its values and ways. We have to eliminate those things that take us away from the Lord Jesus. He never forces Himself on people; they must want to have Jesus as Lord and Saviour in their lives. No one can hassle or force someone else into believing in Christ or becoming a Christian. So we need to pray persistently for loved ones who currently seem uninterested in our Saviour.

At just about every synagogue Paul visited during his missionary travels, the Jews thought that they were superior to everyone else because they were confident that they only worshipped the one true God. As a result, they looked down on other people and even referred to them as 'unclean pagans'. In contrast, the Berean Jews were fair-minded and they listened without prejudice to Paul and checked out what he said to see if he was telling the truth.

Prejudice can take on a number of forms: one people group against another, different levels of poverty within a group, the colour of another person's skin or even better – male or female? The Lord Jesus broke down all these barriers of prejudice and superiority, and reached out to demonstrate equality and respect for all people. God has made us all different but in a way that when we all work together, our efforts are more complete and effective for everyone.

A person's appearance may be another area where prejudice raises its ugly head. A person considered good looking may be favoured for a job over a less attractive person who might have more qualifications for the job. In 1st Samuel, Chapter 16, when the prophet Samuel was looking for a successor to King Saul of Israel, Samuel admired the first son of Jesse. But God said to Samuel, "Don't judge him by his appearance or height ... The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." The real person is what we are inside as our outside beauty fades over time; let's not forget that our external body is only a temporary dwelling until we pass on from this life.

Even a prediction about the Lord Jesus in Isaiah, Chapter 53 said: "There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to Him." Although some preachers may have a charming, enthusiastic way about them, the Lord Jesus didn't use a charisma or power to attract or influence people.

We can also show prejudice towards others about their economic status, or amount of wealth. When a wealthy or prominent person comes to a church meeting, is that person given a better hearing than a poor person? In James, Chapter 2, the rich person was given special attention and a good seat, while the poor person was told to stand over to the side or sit on the floor.

And then there's prejudice of age. Old people think they're the people of experience and should be listened to while young people think that old people are out-of-date. In 1st Timothy, Chapter 4, Paul told Timothy, "Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young." Then in the next chapter, Paul said: "Never speak harshly to an older man but appeal to him respectfully as you would to your own father."

It isn't hard for anyone to see that some occupations command more respect than others. God doesn't write off honest occupations or families. Jesus came to the family of a carpenter rather than to a family of a king. God loves each person, regardless of their occupation. Even the location or region where a person is born can be a source of disrespect:

In John Chapter 1, a future apostle named Nathaniel, or Bartholomew as he was sometimes known, replied to Philip's invitation to meet the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" he said.

Of course, if we decide not to like a person, we can criticise and hold prejudice against them for years. But this isn't what the Spirit has given to believers when they first surrendered their lives over to Jesus Christ. We need to pray for any person we don't like and ask God to reveal to us why we don't. Then our prayers will become more effective. We may need to confess any sins, including envy or jealousy of others; for God has a plan for our lives that He Himself has selected for us. We need not compare ourselves to anyone else or regret that we aren't doing something differently from what we are. We may need to refocus our attention on Jesus.

Do you sense you might be losing your first love of the Lord Jesus? In the book of Revelation, Chapter 2, Jesus found a fatal flaw in the church at Ephesus. They were losing their joy in serving Him and He gave them His prescription for renewal and revival. These were the three R's: remember, repent and repeat.

We are to keep remembering what our condition was like when Jesus first found us. We were separated from Him by our sin and on our way to certain judgment. But Jesus graciously and lovingly reached out to us and forgave our sins as we confessed to Him our wretched condition. We trusted Jesus to make us whole and at peace with God, which He did, and not only to us, but for all believers in Christ too.

When we were first saved, how we loved Him from the bottom of our grateful hearts! But that might be years ago and you might be finding other interests replacing that first zealous love you once had. Can you say: "I believe that I am as close to the Lord as I have ever been?" If you can't, remember back to when you were closest to the Lord, mark this time off in your mind and aim to return there again.

The Lord Jesus desires all people to turn to Him for healing of their universal disease of sin. In Romans, Chapter 10, Verse 9, it says: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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