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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1763 ~ Festus Appointed Governor.

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

Paul the Apostle had been held in prison for 2 years without any proven cause. Governor Felix was hoping that Paul wanted his freedom badly enough that he'd ask his Christian friends to gather together a large bribe to pay Felix for Paul's release. But Paul refused to do this. If God wanted Paul out of prison, God could easily arrange it at any time. He'd done so in the past for the Apostle Peter, so Paul had the confidence from a vision he had received much earlier that he would be going to Rome.

Early in his imprisonment, Paul was sent for by Felix and his Jewish wife, Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I. This couple had a reputation for living outside both Roman and Jewish law. Princess Drusilla wanted to ask Paul some questions about his faith in Christ. Once he had answered these, Paul moved on to speak about goodness, self-control and the coming Day of Judgment. Felix became afraid when he realised that all his sinful past would be revealed on that great and terrible day, and send Paul away. If a tough Roman governor could see his own sinfulness, why couldn't the Jewish chief priests and rulers as well? No matter how badly they behaved against other people, they thought that they would always have God's blessings regardless.

But Felix hadn't given up his motive of gaining a lot of money from Paul by leaving him in prison in the hope that Paul would try to secure his own freedom. Felix often called for Paul to be brought before him to talk with him. But the hoped for money never came and after 2 years, Felix was summoned to Rome to give an account of how he had run the province's affairs. He had kept Paul a prisoner as a favour to the Jews. While there, Felix was stripped of his governorship but escaped imprisonment through his brother's intervention, as Felix's brother had great influence over Emperor Nero who was ruling at that time.

Instead of Felix, the Roman Emperor Nero appointed a new governor for Judea, called Porcius Festus. Soon after Festus arrived in Jerusalem, another trial for Paul was set up with the Jews there. The Jews tried to persuade Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem for trial before the Sanhedrin, but Festus refused. The Jews had hoped to gain an advantage over the new and inexperienced governor. But the Bible, in the book of Acts in Chapter 25, reveals the Jews' hidden motives. They were secretly planning to kill Paul as soon as he was out of prison in Caesarea and on the road to Jerusalem. Two years earlier, a similar plot to do the same had been unsuccessful.

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When the court was convened in Caesarea in front of Festus, the Jews again repeated their various charges against Paul. But they couldn't prove any of them or produce any reliable witnesses. It may be easy to make charges against someone but it's not always so easy to prove them. If we have no proof and no witnesses, we shouldn't be making any accusations.

Whatever Paul's feelings were about yet another trial, he kept them to himself. If we want to avoid getting caught up in our emotions when our critics accuse us, we need to consider how to express our emotions in a way that pleases God. We mustn't get anxious but live each day as it comes. In Philippians, Chapter 4, it says: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

An emotion that is closely associated with having anxious thoughts is being worried. The Lord Jesus challenged his listeners in Matthew, Chapter 6, by asking: "Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it? And why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow ..." We are to trust our God for all our needs and wait patiently on Him. In 1 Peter, Chapter 5, Peter said it so well: "Cast ... all your care upon Him for He cares for you." This is the call for total commitment by all who desire to be of any value to the Lord Jesus in His kingdom, both here on earth and later one day in heaven.

In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 1, Paul reminded the Corinthian church what they were like before they became Christians: "Now remember what you were, my friends, when God called you. From the human point of view few of you were wise or powerful or of high social standing. God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to shame the wise, and he chose what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful. He chose what the world looks down on and despises and thinks is nothing, in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. This means that no one can boast in God's presence."

During this series of court hearings, Paul looked like an older man. To do the work of an evangelist, Paul had been favoured by God in a number of ways. Paul received many incredible revelations from the Lord. At one point, he was even taken up to a place he referred to as the "third heaven" where he heard something so divine that he was not permitted to repeat it.

The Bible warns us that knowledge can 'puff up' a person with pride and can cause them to become unteachable and no longer representative of God. Lest that happened to Paul because of the abundance of the revelation that he had received, he was given some kind of disability to keep his eyes on the Lord. The Scriptures don't say exactly what the disability was but the situation so troubled Paul that he begged the Lord three times to take it away. The Lord's response is recorded in 2 Corinthians, Chapter 12: "My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak."

How can it be that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness? When the prophet Isaiah was about to start his ministry in Isaiah, Chapter 6, he said: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." As recorded in 2 Chronicles, Chapter 26, King Uzziah's life had a sad ending. Following the example of his father, Uzziah, started out as a good king and God blessed him and Israel. He served the Lord faithfully as long as his religious advisor and God's prophet, Zechariah, was alive.

King Uzziah had a large well-equipped army and his fame spread because of all the help he'd received from God. But when Uzziah became strong, he grew arrogant and proud, and this led to his downfall. Uzziah entered the temple of God and he offered incense on the altar, although he was strictly forbidden to do so. Uzziah mistakenly thought that as king, he could do as he pleased and be like God, without suffering any consequences.

But the Lord punished him by giving him a disease on his forehead. For the rest of his life, Uzziah was ritually unclean and unable to enter the temple again. He lived in his own house but his son ruled the country.

"The year that King Uzziah dies" represents the year that pride dies in us. It is when we finally realise we don't have any strength in ourselves to earn God's favour on us; when our natural tendency to do our own thing, even in the name of God, dies; and we understand that we don't have the right to chart our own course in life, this is when we 'see' a newly revealed and holy Lord! At the time Isaiah had his vision of God's throne in heaven it was likely that he was already a prophet. However, God was about to commission Isaiah as a major prophet, so He destroyed any sense of pride in Isaiah's life.

Paul didn't complain about the disability he received, but he understood that by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God was able to do more through his life of devotion and dedication now that he had it. We all started out in life as God's enemies. In Romans, Chapter 5, it says: "But God has shown us how much he loves us – it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!"

Judgment is coming and God wants to show sinful people His mercy. When we believers in Christ are asked for the hope that we have, our message is that we stand by the mercy of God, not by how many Bible verses we know or how often we go to church. Unsaved people need to know that without the mercy of God, they're doomed.

Once you grasp this truth, suddenly you will become an evangelist. You'll be able to open your mouth and testify to God's amazing and powerful grace, because you now understand that God has not chosen the strong but those who know they need God's mercy. It is the mercy of God that's given us hope, broken our sin and made us brand-new creations in Christ Jesus when we repent and believe that He has totally taken away our sin in love for us. God is the One who does this work in and through our hearts – it is up to us not to resist this.

We all have sinned and been born as sinners from sinful parents; as a result, we come short of the magnificence of God. The Bible says there is no one righteous. That's why the Christian life is a life that follows Christ, is indwelt by Christ and is lived in God's mercy. Paul said that God allowed the weakness in his life to protect him from becoming proud. God uses our every weakness to bring glory to His own name. He's looking for those who are willing to say, "Here am I, send me." God calls those who believe that, despite their own weaknesses, the Holy Spirit will guide, empower and speak through them the amazing but necessary steps our living God uses to save a dying world.

To keep our valuable relationship with the Lord, we need to spend time with Him often and every day until our thought patterns become like His and our ways are like His ways. This transformation will not automatically happen if we never spend time with Him personally. The process of being changed into Jesus Christ's likeness requires humbleness under God's mighty hand, resistance of the Devil's temptations, and self-discipline to spend personal quiet time with our Lord. We need to pray and read His Word and practice a thankful and loving spirit. Going to church and attending Bible studies just aren't enough.

We need to humble ourselves before God and take time to hear His still small voice in the quietness of our prayers. You don't have to pray fancy prayers or read a certain amount of the Bible to be heard by God. The most important thing is to draw close and become intimate with God by being honest about who we really are. Only then will reading a passage of Scripture start to reveal the truth. The Lord Jesus said in John, Chapter 14, Verse 12: "I am telling you the truth: those who believe in me will do what I do – yes, they will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father."

It cannot be stressed enough how much you need to study the Word of God on your own. Your past teachers and preachers can't stand behind you before the Lord on Judgement Day. It will be you, and you alone. You won't be able to quote some idea from a Bible teacher in your defence. It will be about your relationship with the Lord. With the great increase in world events today that can be related to Biblical prophecy about the end times, we all need to heed the words that Paul wrote in Philippians, Chapter 2, Verse 12: "... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Let's remember to watch and pray for our Lord's return. In Christ, we have nothing to fear, on earth or on Judgement Day.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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