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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1875 ~ David Honours Mephibosheth.

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

Have you ever been caught up in a blame game? This is a situation where a person blames someone else for something bad or unfortunate that has happened to them, even if the accused person doesn't know the injured individual. The hurt person casting blame isn't interested in making the best of things or seeking a solution to make things better. Instead, as the years go by, they are becoming bitter.

In today's *Bible Adventure*, Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul and son of Jonathan, was living with one of Saul's servants, Ziba, on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Mephibosheth was crippled in his feet since the age of five, from a nurse having a fall while carrying him to safety after hearing about the death of King Saul.

When King David had been established in Jerusalem for some time, he decided to find out if any of Saul's descendants might still be alive. David had promised Jonathan that he would show kindness to Jonathon's family as a sign of their enduring deep friendship. So David sent for Saul's servant, Ziba, in 2nd Samuel, Chapter 9. When David heard about Mephibosheth being a cripple, David had him brought to Jerusalem, where he could live under the king's protection.

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When Mephibosheth received orders to present himself to King David, can you imagine what must have gone through his mind? He only knew what he'd been told about David from carers who'd been loyal to Saul, and they'd painted David's character in a very poor light. In those days, a new king destroyed all the male relatives of the previous king to eliminate any threats to his throne. Mephibosheth may have well thought that under the pretence of showing kindness to him, the king was going to harm him or take his life in some way.

But David showed Mephibosheth unexpected and undeserved kindness. David invited Mephibosheth to remain in Jerusalem and be a guest at his meals, like one of his own sons. In addition, David turned over to him all the land that had belonged to his grandfather Saul. David told Ziba with Ziba's 15 sons and 20 servants to farm the land for Mephibosheth and give him the produce to support his family. This made Ziba a servant of Mephibosheth.

This arrangement may have worked well for quite some time. But when King David left Jerusalem at the time his first son Absalom's revolted, as recorded in 2nd Samuel, Chapter 16, Ziba took two donkey-loads of food to David and said the animals were for them to ride on. When David asked about Mephibosheth, Ziba said that he had stayed behind purposely in the hope that his grandfather's kingdom would be restored to him. So David said that Ziba could have everything that belonged to Mephibosheth. This was a mistake.

In Proverbs, Chapter 18, it says: "Any story sounds true until someone tells the other side and sets the record straight." David made a judgment without hearing Mephibosheth's side of the story. After Absalom's death, the people invited David to return from the other side of the Jordan River. Ziba, with his sons and servants, crossed the river and were ready to help David's party across.

Mephibosheth had not washed nor tidied himself since David had left Jerusalem. On David's return, he told David what Ziba had said about him wasn't true. He had wanted to go with David but Ziba hadn't got his donkey ready for him. So David said that he and Ziba should share Saul's property. But Mephibosheth, however, said that Ziba could have it all, because he himself had not deserved the kindness David had already shown to him.

There is one more piece of the Mephibosheth story: in 2nd Samuel, Chapter 21, there was a 3-year long famine during David's reign. David prayed to the Lord on behalf of the people and enquired of the Lord what was the cause of the famine and what he should do about it. The Lord indicated the famine was the result of Saul's killing some of the Gibeonites. This isn't mentioned anywhere else in the Scriptures. The Gibeonites were Canaanites who had been living in the Promised Land before the Israelites arrived there.

Gibeon is best known in the Bible for the deceit that the men of that place played on Israel's prior leader, Joshua, for claiming to be visitors from far away when they were actually living in the path of Joshua's oncoming army. Joshua made a treaty with them, only to find out three days later that they had not been telling the truth. Joshua couldn't go back on his word, so he made the Gibeonites be wood cutters and water carriers for the Tent of God. In this way, they might have found salvation in the God of Israel.

Joshua kept Israel's oath to Gibeon and spared them but Saul had tried to wipe them out. Because Saul had broken Israel's oath of protection and had shed innocent blood, God was now sending this famine so the offence would be dealt with. David asked the Gibeonites how he could make amends or atonement for Saul's actions, and how they could bless the people and land of Israel, to thereby remove God's curse from it.

The Gibeonites said that all they wanted was for David to hand over seven of Saul's male descendants to them and they would hang them before the Lord at Gibeah, where Saul had lived. Because David had promised to look after Jonathan's family, the life of Mephibosheth was spared. Instead David handed over two sons of Saul's secondary wife and five sons of Saul's daughter.

The idea of punishing children and grandchildren for the sins of a parent is difficult for us to understand; indeed, the law of Moses prohibited it. But God had also made it clear that the behaviour of parents can adversely affect their descendants, for up to four generations. It's therefore possible that those seven descendants of Saul had been part of Saul's army and that they themselves were guilty of the crimes against the Gibeonites.

Saul's wife built herself a shelter near the place where the men were killed, and kept the animals and birds away from their bodies day and night all throughout the summer. When David heard what she had done, he had Saul's and Jonathan's bones brought from Jabesh in Gilead on the other side of the Jordan River. Then, with the remains of those hanged seven men, they were all placed in the grave of Kish, Saul's father, in the territory of Benjamin. The Lord then answered Israel's prayers for rain. And that finishes the accounts of the family of Saul, the first king of Israel.

Everyone suffers in life. Some may suffer disability that's easily recognised in their physical bodies (like Mephibosheth) while others may suffer from unseen mental, emotional or social problems that they find hard to overcome. Christians suffer too. When a Christian is suffering yet can still glorify their God, this is a powerful testimony to a lost world. When non-Christians see us honouring the Lord in our suffering, it shows them how real our faith is. And yes, it teaches us and other Christians how genuine our faith is too.

Do you think your faith and resulting Christian maturity would get stronger if everything was easy in life? No, it's the opposite in fact. The Bible says that our faith gets stronger through hardship and trials, and that we should rejoice when we suffer in this way! Here's something that might surprise you: Christians develop even more hope by undergoing tribulation. In Romans, Chapter 5, it says, "But we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."

Hope grows in the garden of pain. It doesn't grow without challenges or difficulty. Instead, it grows in the hard times when we're praying constantly to the Lord for His help and guidance. You develop physical strength through working on your weaknesses. This is true of Christians in their spiritual lives as well.

A man named Arthur Mathais, who was living in Alaska in 1997, severely injured his right arm and shoulder in an accident. Over the next few months, his right arm became numb and had started wasting away. Medical tests showed that three of his neck bones had been shattered in the accident. Surgery fused them together yet the numbness became worse in the other parts of his body. More than that, he developed many allergies and the nerve damage in his body was now accelerating. Arthur realised that when his emotions were negative and his levels of anxiety were high, the pain was worse. The doctors gave him two years to live. At that time, his fear of dying and doubts about the future showed that his trust in God was very low.

Arthur had been a Christian for many years and he'd always had a heart for serving the Lord. While in so much pain, he became angry with God and he asked why God was doing this to him. Arthur's sister then phoned him to tell him how she'd been healed of tumours in her body after she'd made an effort to forgive from her heart someone who'd hurt her. At first, Arthur didn't think this made sense. But he went back through his memory to see if there was anyone who had caused him bitterness and resentment over his life. He remembered that his father had abandoned his family when Arthur was 12 years old.

Arthur had to learn how to forgive his father from his heart. He also repented of being angry with God for allowing these painful things to happen in his life. And in a little while, his immune system healed and his allergies disappeared. It's now been more than 15 years since the doctors gave their diagnosis of Arthur having only two years to live.

When other people heard about Arthur being completely healed from his allergies, pain and trauma, they asked him how he'd managed it. Many of them weren't aware that they themselves also had bitterness in their own hearts from some long past experience. After helping a number of people to find and confess their bitterness towards others and then trust God completely, Arthur went back to study and he became a trained counsellor. These days, he runs a service for helping people and sees a few thousand people each year being released from some crippling pain as they learn how to overcome resentment, negative emotions and genuinely forgive someone who has harmed them in some way.

There is interconnectedness between our attitudes and thoughts, our spiritual and physical lives, and our emotions and memories. One part of us cannot be suffering without the other areas of our lives being affected also.

The Lord Jesus taught in Matthew, Chapter 6, verses 14-15: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Choose to obey God on these matters and forgive from your heart.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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