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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2086 ~ The Disciples Fear Saul.

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

Following Saul's conversion from strict Judaism to Gospel-believing Christian, Saul immediately started preaching in the synagogues of Damascus that Jesus is the Son of God. The people who heard him were amazed and asked if this person was the same one who had come to Damascus to destroy the followers of Jesus. In Acts, Chapter 9, Saul proved to his listeners that he now also believed that Jesus is the Christ by quoting prophecies found in the Old Testament Scriptures.

In his letter to the Galatians, in Chapter 1, Saul tells of his quick departure to Arabia for a 3-year stay. Saul stayed there studying the Scriptures and received visions and revelations from the Lord Jesus. Then he returned to Damascus to preach in the synagogues there again. The Jews quickly became angry with Saul's message about Jesus and plotted to kill him. However, Saul heard about the plot.

Damascus was surrounded by a great wall which had gates leading in and out of the city. Saul's enemies set watch at each of these gates in the hope to prevent Saul from leaving anytime of the day or night.

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Saul stayed in Jerusalem with Peter and James for two weeks. He spoke boldly to the Jews of Greek descent but they rejected him and they also made a plan to kill him. Again, the Lord Jesus appeared to Saul in a vision and told him to leave Jerusalem at once. So the apostles took Saul to Caesarea on the Mediterranean Sea coast. From there, Saul went by boat to his home town of Tarsus, which is in modern-day Turkey. Saul remained there for some years and the church history written by Luke in his book of the Acts of the Apostles reverts to tell of Peter's work for the next one and a half chapters.

Following Saul's departure from Jerusalem, the Christians enjoyed a period of relative peace. Churches in Judea, Galilee and Samaria grew. Luke wrote that they grew in both strength and numbers and that both kinds of growth are necessary.

People often wonder what Saul did for three years in Arabia. It seems a long time for a man already well versed in the Old Testament Scriptures to spend away from his known mission in life. After Saul had testified to Jesus being the Son of God in the synagogues of Damascus, he needed to learn the lessons of being a new Christian.

As Saul would face many spiritual battles ahead and even be physically beaten and stoned, his trust in the Lord Jesus needed to become rock solid. And ours does too. How do we reach that the level of trust that Saul had?

Firstly, how do we view God? One unhappy woman in a counselling session explained that her view of God was that He was always angry with her, pushing her to do things for Him but not helping her out when she needed an urgent answer to prayer. How could this woman trust herself to God when she had no confidence in her view of Him?

Yet the Scriptures are very clear: God is faithful to His promises. He will not go back on His word. In the book of Numbers, Chapter 23, it says: “God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?” When we have a similar confident trust in God, there will always be a willingness to worship Him.

‘Worship’ means to simply give ‘worth’ to what we value the most. No one is more worthy of our reverence and praise than our only Creator God Himself. Sin, when it entered into the world through Adam and Eve, downgraded the worship of God to worshipping all sorts of other created things, including a worship of ‘self’.

When we worship or give worth to anything more than God, He calls this idolatry. Idolatry is not only the worship of false gods, but also the worship of the true God in heaven in false ways. We mustn’t entertain ideas about God that are unworthy of Him; nor should we deny what He says in the Scriptures or attribute to Him things that aren’t true. As an example, the footnotes in one version of the Bible claim that Jesus tolerates sin to get His greater purpose done. But the Bible is very clear in many places that Jesus, who is holy, hates sin as much as His heavenly Father does. And every person has a choice whether they will follow Jesus or not.

Secondly, Saul had to learn that although he had been well known and important in his past, he was now a nobody and that Jesus was everything. Saul had to learn to surrender himself to Jesus’ purposes for him. Later in his letter to Galatians, Chapter 2, he said: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God.”

Although Saul had direct revelations from the Lord, we have the inspired words of God in the Bible. The more time we spend reading these words, the more we’ll grow spiritually stronger and have a reason for living Christ-like every day.

In Romans, Chapter 1, Saul said: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” Worship involves our response to God, not only when we go to church on a Sunday, but also in what we do from Monday to Saturday.

God wants us to be like Jesus. His highest purpose isn’t to make us missionaries, preachers, ministers, doctors or teachers – but to make us like His Son. Everything else is secondary to this overall purpose. Are we willing to make a major goal of our lives to become like Jesus?

Saul also had to learn to love the way God does, even towards the unlovely. His previous life had been filled with hatred, legalism and fanatical behaviour. It would have been difficult for this type of Pharisee to show love. Saul was a very competitive person and originally was a rising star in recognition and importance within the Sanhedrin. He loved the approval of the others that they all gave him. But as soon as Saul became an apostle of Jesus by the grace of God, Saul had to learn to love Jesus with gratefulness in response to Jesus’ death on the cross of Calvary for his sins.

Jesus wants our loyalty, a deep respect and a willingness to obey His commands. But He also wants our life, all the energy it contains and all the possibilities it offers. Why does He want everything about us? Jesus is in the process of building a kingdom for His Father, and to do this, He has chosen men and women, young and old, who will surrender to Him fully, freely and unconditionally.

One of the early experiences of a new Christian is the stream of distractions that seem to take up more importance than Jesus and which fight against any deep commitment recently made to the Lord. These challenges are like tests to see if you’ll put Jesus first on your list of priorities. Don’t hesitate and look back to your old life of sinning. Make up your mind to follow through with Jesus in every possible way.

Jesus said that to be a follower of His, a person must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus. This means that we must be willing to die to our own selfishness and self-centredness. As an example, becoming known as a Christian may make you unpopular with your fellow workers. They may distance themselves and scoff at you and the Lord Jesus. This isn't easy to deal with at the time, but we must resist the temptation of never mentioning His name. We must surrender the craving for others' approval and willingly bear their little comments against us for the sake of the Lord.

Also, we need to remember that whenever we make up our mind to put Jesus first and our own desires second, a special supply of strength is directed to us by God. It will not be as hard as you think, for God's help or unlimited power and grace, is given to all those who step out and obey Him and live the way He requires. Our character is shaped by all the little things that we find we are called to do each day. Jesus taught that when we are faithful doing all the little things, He'll be able to trust us with bigger things.

There are many Christians who are never able to do big things for God because they have never been faithful in the way they handled the seemingly unimportant things. God is watching your life with great interest. He has great plans for you ahead but to achieve them, you will have need to do the little things well first.

God's small voice is often drowned out by the noise and activity of life, but if we make time to be quiet and rest by waiting on the Lord, He can speak directly to our hearts and guide us in all matters of godliness and truth.

Here are some Scriptures to remember when we start rushing around trying to do too much:

In Psalm 37, Verse 7 it says: “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.”

Psalm 62, Verse 5 says: “My soul, wait in silenced for God only, for my hope is from Him.”

Hosea, Chapter 12, Verse 6 says: “Wait for your God continually.”

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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