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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2133 ~ Paul Defends Himself.

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

In courts of law when an accused person is brought to trial, their accusers or prosecutors have to prove their case against the person on trial beyond all reasonable doubt. This makes the position of the accused as 'presumed innocent until proved guilty'. This rule was established to favour an accused person based on a legal inference that most people are not criminals. It also recognises that an accused person cannot produce any proof for their innocence when denying a fact that they are accused of.

These rules for courts of law hadn't been established when Paul was beaten by an angry crowd of Jewish men outside the temple on the Feast of Pentecost. Roman soldiers from a nearby fort had rescued Paul before he was dragged away and beaten to death. Paul was then permitted to address the crowd as he stood on the stairs leading into the fort. He spoke to them in their native language so that they would understand better the message he was saying.

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

Paul's explanation of his conversion to Christianity to a very angry Jewish crowd is given in Acts, Chapter 22. When Paul told them that the Lord had said to him that He would send Paul away to the Gentiles, the crowd went wild. The Jews showed that they were unfit to evaluate the merits of Christianity. They had so much ethnic pride that they believed they were better than any other people. They held fast to the idea that God wouldn't ever bother with the Gentiles, who were in their eyes were 2nd-class people. This bad attitude was precisely why God couldn't use them as His missionaries to the Gentiles.

The commander brought Paul immediately into the fort. Since he didn't understand the Hebrew language, he didn't understand anything Paul had said. So to find out what crime Paul had committed and what he had done to get the people so angry again, the commander decided to flog Paul first. After that, he'd ask him questions to sort out the truth of the whole situation.

Although Paul had been beaten 5 times by the Jews and 3 times by the Roman rods, this flogging would be much greater in its severity and had potential for permanent physical damage or even immediate death. As the soldiers were preparing Paul for the whipping, Paul asked a question that transformed him from a victim to a master of the situation: "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"

Paul's statement that he was born a citizen made Paul at least the commander's social equal. Even if a Roman citizen was found guilty of a crime, he usually didn't receive a flogging with a metal-tipped whip, which was one of the most dreaded forms of torture in those days.

We can see from Paul's example that when trouble comes to us, it is right for us to use any reasonable or legal means to escape from that trouble. If we are innocent of some alleged wrongdoing, we need to say so to defend ourselves. We should use all legal means to avoid punishment for crimes we didn't commit. Christians in this world have the same legal rights as anyone else and it's correct to claim these rights in a humble and respectful way.

However, Christians must also remember that they should never put their faith in any legal system but only in God alone. Even if we don't obtain justice from the courts of the land, we'll always obtain justice from God at the appointed time.

Now the commander faced a problem. To preserve the life of this Roman citizen, he would probably have to keep him in his custody. But to do this, he needed to at least have some charges against him.

In the commander's eyes, the anger of the crowd against Paul involved only a Jewish religious matter. Since the Jewish Sanhedrin had authority to judge all cases involving the Jewish religion, the commander decided to call the Sanhedrin together and get their help in finding out what the charges were against Paul.

The following day, Paul stood before the Sanhedrin in the fort and addressed the council. Paul sincerely believed that he had done everything, including persecuting the church, for God with a clear conscience. He only spoke that one sentence of his speech before the ruling high priest of the day, Ananias, called out for Paul to be struck on the mouth.

The history books record that Ananias was a corrupt and evil man who ruled as high priest from AD 47 to AD 58. To strike a man being questioned was against the rules of the Sanhedrin. It was very illegal to strike or punish a man who had not yet been determined to be guilty.

Not knowing it was the high priest who had given the order to strike Paul, Paul turned to him and he predicted God would strike him, calling him a "white-washed wall". Such a wall looks new and strong on the outside but inside it is weak and full of decay. Jesus had also called the Jewish leaders "white-washed tombs". Those Jewish leaders appeared good outwardly but inwardly they were evil and corrupt.

If Paul had recognised the high priest, he wouldn't have spoken against him in such a way. When he was told, he immediately apologised to Ananias and the Sanhedrin. In Exodus, Chapter 22, it says: "Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people." We too, need to remember that we are not to speak evil of our leaders, either spiritual or secular. They've been appointed by God to their position despite the nature of their heart and when we speak evil of them we are, in a sense speaking evil of God. Instead, we need to keep our rulers continually in our prayers.

In the tenseness of the moment, Paul had declared God's judgment on Israel's chief leader, as Israel had no king. And Paul's prediction did come true: Ananias was killed by robbers in AD 66.

But back at the trial, Paul had perceived that members of the Sanhedrin present were made up of 2 major parties, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees always tried to keep on good terms with the Roman authorities. They always opposed any preacher like Paul who stirred up the people, because they were afraid that any disturbance might displease the Romans. The chief priests belonged to the Sadducee party and if the priests allowed any riot to arise, the Romans would blame them and they would lose their positions. So they were always looking to keep the peace.

The main difference between the two parties was that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the body while the Sadducees didn't. Even before the time of the Lord Jesus, the Pharisees believed in a bodily resurrection. They hoped for an eternal life and those who became Christians believed their hope had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the world's Saviour who rose from the dead.

When Paul claimed to be a Pharisee who believed in the resurrection of the dead, the Pharisees of the Sanhedrin began to take his side and declare him innocent. Paul indicated new realities that linked to Jesus' resurrection: if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, He could not have appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, nor in the temple to commission him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

This evidence led to a major dispute and the Sanhedrin couldn't come to any decision at all about Paul. Once more, the commander was left without any charges and again, had the beginnings of a riot on his hands. He had Paul rescued again and returned to his cell in the prison. Paul must have been deeply despairing at the reactions he was receiving from the Jewish people and temple leaders. Just telling his witness about past events in his life caused such an uproar that his own people wanted to kill him.

Back in his cell, Paul must have seriously been concerned about coming to Jerusalem at such a time as this when a compulsory feast was being attended by Jews from other regions. Of course, all the Jews would know him and couldn't be depended on not to make a fuss. He must have wondered what would happen to him next. The following night, the Lord Jesus appeared to Paul in a vision to encourage him and tell him that he would be going to witness for the Lord in Rome.

Paul remained a prisoner in Israel for 2 more years after that but never worried or feared for his life. He knew that at the right time, he would be going to Rome.

The Jewish rulers and devout Jews had completely rejected Jesus of Nazareth as their long-awaited Messiah, even though they knew that He had risen from the dead. Even if they were not moved by Him healing sick people, casting out demons or His authoritative preaching, they should have accepted the indisputable fact that Jesus had risen back to life. There were 100 Roman soldiers as witnesses to this and even though the leaders bribed them to tell the people otherwise, the news still spread, particularly after Pentecost and the giving of the Holy Spirit to Christ's followers.

There are people these days too who completely reject Jesus as the Saviour of the world and for similar reasons. Many spend their lives trying to improve their social standing and material possessions. But these things fall very short of knowing real happiness in life, even for a short while. The Lord Jesus calls each believer to a life of service in His kingdom after, and only after, they've given up their own plans for their life and made Him king over them. Why is this? Living life for either God or ourselves on this planet is a test for each one of us.

If we love, obey, trust and rely on the Lord Jesus while on earth, He will give us a resurrection life at the end of history in eternity with Him forever. No one can even imagine what God has in store for those who love Him and reign with Him in heaven. Is the cost of laying down our own life to do His will too great a price for a future life in paradise? In heaven, there'll be no sickness, sorrow or death but a place of true joy that is completely devoid of sin.

Just like the Jewish Sadducee rulers wanting to keep their jobs, sadly many want to hold onto what they can see and have now, rather than to give them up and trust the unseen Lord to keep His promises. Let us not be like this. Daily give up your selfish ambitions and desires and follow Him, for in Jesus, we have all spiritual blessings needed for living a godly life that God will one day reward in heaven.

In 2nd Timothy, Chapter 4, Verse 8, Paul says: "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing (that is, His return)."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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