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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1598 ~ Zechariah in the Temple.

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

In today's Bible Adventure, we see two elderly people travelling from the hill country in Judea to Jerusalem, a year before the Lord Jesus was born. Their names were Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. As they jolted along in a cart probably drawn by a donkey, there was plenty of time to talk about the past.

Many people of advanced years love to recall the happy events of their young days. In fact, they'll tell you them until listeners get tired of hearing them. These are sometimes followed by a pondering of how life might have turned out differently if some other choices along the way back had been taken instead. Regrets also come out: "If only I'd done this or said that, things might have turned out better."

Another favourite saying is: "If I had my life over again I'd do things differently." The sad part is that we don't always get a second chance to make amends for something we've done wrongly. One wife spoke angrily to her husband for forgetting his paperwork when they arrived at the doctor's waiting room. She went home to get it. After she returned with it, she found her husband had taken a bad turn and never regained consciousness. She couldn't tell him that she was sorry for speaking rudely to him.

The really good news is that for all those people willing to come to the Lord Jesus and ask for forgiveness for their past sins and mistakes, He will wipe the bitter past away. There may also be other people who have been harmed by our sin and need an apology from us and prayer that God will turn their life out for His good. The thing about aging is that the older we grow, the more we become like the place we're going to go in the next life.

A preacher told the story of a 90-year-old man who decided to travel around the world. His friend came to see him in distress, saying, "You shouldn't try a trip like this. I might not see you again." "Maybe not," replied the man, suitcase in hand. "You may be dead when I get back." Not everyone is optimistic about death. Some people spend much of their lives fearing death and when it will come. One Christian writer said: "Death is the golden key that opens the palace of eternity."

Christianity enables us to look at the universe through hopeful and cheerful eyes. Christians may be poor material in themselves but they know they've got hold of ultimate reality in Jesus Christ. He was the most influential person ever to live on our planet but He died an apparent failure. Yet by rising from the grave, He turned into a most glorious success and gives all who trust Him a secure future.

God is able to take every failure in our lives and make it work in some way for good. Let's listen in on Zechariah and Elizabeth talking about an apparent failure in their life.

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

Zechariah and Elizabeth were both from the tribe of Levi, the third son of Jacob. In Luke's Gospel, Chapter 1, it states that both of them were right before God and blameless in keeping His commands. As a priest, Zechariah was rostered on to do service at the Temple regularly.

During that particular week of duty, Zechariah's name had been drawn by lots to perform the incense burning at the altar of incense while the people waited and prayed in the outer courts.

What a surprise Zechariah received when the angel Gabriel spoke to him while in that sacred place. God had not spoken to the Israelite people for over 400 years. Now the angel said that he and his wife were going to have a baby whom they were to call John. This baby would have the spirit and power of the Old Testament prophet Elijah and would turn many of the Israelite people back to their God.

Zechariah wasn't able to accept the news the angel brought. How could such a thing happen now both he and his wife were too old to have children? His doubt made the angel remove his ability to speak until the promised baby was born. When Zechariah went out to the waiting worshippers in the temple's outer courts, he was unable to pronounce the customary blessing.

Like Zechariah, we may doubt God's ability to deal with the seeming impossibilities of life. Many people in the Bible whom we consider to be 'pillars of the faith' had moments of doubt. Often their faith was being challenged in a new way. We must always allow our doubt to move us closer to God and not further away. When we move closer, we find the strength to trust Him and our faith will grow stronger.

God wants us to seek Him for answers if we are experiencing doubts. Doubt, however, can become sin if we allow it to make us scornful or hard-hearted. When struggling with doubt, take time to remember all the good things God has worked in your life. But be patient. Don't throw away your faith just because God doesn't resolve your doubt immediately.

Many young people studying to get a higher education find that the faith of their parents doesn't help them much when textbooks with worldly viewpoints severely attack the Christian faith. How can these ungodly studies be handled? Firstly, the Christian student should pray for God's guidance about which course and subjects to take. Some courses have more doubt raising ideas than others. In such times, it's needful to keep close friendships with other Christians and be asking senior people in the church how to counteract the false claims. Learn by heart relevant Scripture verses and promises. In Isaiah, Chapter 26, it says the Lord will keep the person whose mind is fixed on Him in perfect peace because he trusts in the Lord.

One of the most perplexing things for Christians is the problem of unanswered prayers. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth, some people devote decades of their lives praying for something and their request is not granted. For the Israelite people, not having children was like a social disgrace. There were a few Bible women recorded who suffered from this and who prayed earnestly and fervently for a child.

There was Abraham's wife Sarah, Jacob's wife Rachel, Elkanah's wife Hannah and now, Zechariah the priest's wife, Elizabeth. All of these people's prayers hadn't been answered for a long time. But in each case, the son they finally received by promise of God was special in God's sight and was a godly example down through all the generations for everyone around the world. Their parents' prayers were not in vain.

God listens carefully to the prayers of those who commit themselves to be the disciples of the Lord Jesus. As we maintain a close relationship with Him and consistently study His Word, our prayers will be more in line with God's plans for our lives. Sometimes, like the Apostle Paul, you will find God answers your prayers by giving you something better than what you asked for.

Praying in Jesus' name is not a magic wand. We pray our prayers with His will in mind rather than ours, with a willingness to obey whatever He says. Each long-term prayer should be finished with the indicator: "Not my will, Lord, but Yours be done." God's promise from Psalm 145 is that the Lord is close to all who call on Him in truth.

One of the greatest hymn writers of the Christian faith was a woman called Fanny Crosby. She became blind at six weeks of age, due to faulty medicine being applied to her eyes in the early 1800s. Fanny Crosby lived to almost 95 years of age and had 8,000 of her poems set to music. She told her mother: "If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind ... for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour."

An unpublished manuscript of one of her poems was discovered long after her death. It was called 'For What His Love Denies'.

'God does not give me all I ask, nor answer as I pray;
But, O, my cup is brimming o'er with blessings day by day!
How oft the joy I thought withheld delights my longing eyes,
And so I thank Him from my heart for what His love denies.

How tenderly He leadeth me when earthly hopes are dim;
And when I falter by the way, He bids me lean on Him.
He lifts my soul above the clouds where friendship never dies;
And so I thank Him from my heart for what His love denies.'

Sometimes when we pray we need to ask ourselves: Do I really want what I'm praying for? God doesn't want to give us things that would harm us or our relationship with Him in any way.

Have you ever said “Sorry” to the Lord Jesus and asked Him to be your very own Saviour from sin? Do you foster a personal relationship with Him by regularly reading His Word the Bible? Can you tell Him in your prayers all your hopes and dreams? Are you praying for your family and friends? Jesus will listen to your prayers and guide you in the things that He wants you to do.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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