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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1665 ~ The Prodigal Son.

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

A pastor once told the story of a popular movie about a boy who was accidentally left at home alone while all his family travelled overseas. The boy was delighted at first that he was in charge of everything he did. So he did some silly things that he considered to be total freedom. After a problem with burglars trying to break into his home, he discovered he was actually lonely. He decided that a life without his parents wasn't quite what he thought it would be.

This story is similar to how people relate to God. They resent God's authority and want the freedom to do exactly what they like. When they think they have achieved total freedom, they have fun for a while but soon, this turns into a life of fear and loneliness. It's only at this point that people realise that God's rules are designed to protect them.

In many of the recent parables Jesus taught, there's a theme of forgiveness. In today's parable of 'The Prodigal Son', the father needed large reserves of forgiveness for both his two sons. The younger son wished that his father was dead so he could get his hands on his share of his father's inheritance. The older son, out of envy, was not prepared to forgive his brother or his father for holding a celebration feast for the younger son returning home as a prodigal after squandering his inheritance away.

This parable is sometimes called the Parable of the Lost Son and follows the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin in Luke, Chapter 15.

Personal freedom has received much attention from writers over the centuries. Many say there's no freedom in wrongdoing. It chains and binds its victims as surely as selfishness flows onto troubles. Righteous people love freedom heartily; unrighteous people don't really love freedom but rather, want no limitations on their self-indulgence.

Certainly, the younger son of today's Bible Adventure was so wrapped up in his own life and interests that he gave his father great hurt by asking for his inheritance while his father was still alive, as to imply his father should have died by this point. Such disrespect for his father could have brought about this young man's own death, as under the Old Testament law, the father could have had his son stoned to death for such rudeness. But the father didn't punish him but gave him his share of everything that the father owned.

Once the young man received his inheritance, he left home for a far country to enjoy what he thought was 'the good life'. He thought real freedom was no work and not needing to obey his father but rather, to simply do as he pleased.

In this parable, we see that the father represents God the Father while the younger son represents the person who wants to live in the sins of disobedience and rebellion against God.

The prodigal son wasted all his money in a far-off country. He thought he was gaining his freedom but instead, he became a slave to sin. He lost everything and found himself tending a herd of pigs, a despised animal that the Jews considered unclean. Life at home with his father was free and happy, especially when compared to living with pigs! Any Jewish young man tending pigs for a living certainly had dropped to the bottom of the Jewish social scale. Before long, the prodigal son came to his senses. He realised how foolish he'd been and what a bad state he was in. This was the first step in his repentance. After he confessed his sin, he determined to turn away from his sin and return home. True repentance must have all three steps: admitting your sin, confessing it and then turning from it.

While the prodigal son was still a long way from his father's house, the old man saw his son coming along the road. He must have been watching out and waiting for him regularly. The Pharisees didn't understand God or why He is willingly so patient and longsuffering as He waits for the return of His children. In Numbers, Chapter 14, it says: "I, the Lord, am not easily angered and I show great love and faithfulness and forgive sin and rebellion." This was said before the Children of Israel had entered the Promised Land of Canaan. The Lord was loving and forgiving even back then, but the Pharisees had misrepresented God's character in their teaching.

Once the prodigal son was humbled, he prepared a speech to say to his father. He considered himself no longer worthy to be called his father's son so would work instead as a servant. He planned to earn his keep in his father's house and try to repay all the money he had wasted. He couldn't think of any way to make up for the error of his ways. But his father didn't wait to even listen to his son's repentance plan; instead, he called for a robe, ring and shoes for him to wear.

Similarly for people who want to become believers in Jesus, we can't do deals with God either. We can't promise to do certain things to earn our salvation or repay for the sins we've committed. God doesn't want to hear our plan, which can never repay the debt we have made against Him. God just wants us to admit that we can't do it on our own. In faith, we believe that Jesus, God's perfect Son, has fittingly rescued us from a sin debt impossible to pay back. Jesus bore all our sin Himself and cancelled the debt by His sacrifice on the cross. His love, mercy and unmerited favour is given to anyone who believes Jesus has done this for them.

In today's parable, before the son had finished his confession of sin, his father had forgiven him and reinstated him to full sonship. The father didn't treat his son by what his bad behaviour deserved but instead, by love and grace. This is how God treats all of us who truly repent. Just as the Good Shepherd or God in the previous parable rejoices over finding a lost person who is prepared to repent and believe in Jesus, so the father in this parable rejoiced when he found his lost son.

The prodigal son's older brother in the parable represents the nation of Israel, who considered themselves God's chosen people and God's only chosen people. The older son was jealous because his father forgave his younger brother, who was so undeserving of such. Do you ever feel jealous because someone else with so many obvious sins is offered the same forgiveness as you? You could have been in church for years obeying all the right rules in your life, when along comes some shameful person with no Bible knowledge at all who makes a conversion to Christ; everyone makes a big fuss over him and how great this is?

Prior to Jesus telling this parable, the Pharisees had complained that Jesus received tax collectors and sinners into His company. They were jealous of the attention Jesus gave people who were socially unworthy of Jesus' teaching and help. Envy and jealousy are great sins deep within the heart. In Romans, Chapter 13, it says: "Let us conduct ourselves properly, as people who live in the light of day – no orgies or drunkenness, no immorality or indecency, no fighting or jealousy."

The person who envies his brother or friend is unhappy with the brother's good fortune, and so doesn't love his brother and sins against him. In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13, it says: "Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud."

The father in this parable greatly loved his older son and explained to him that the son had lost nothing from his brother's return. The father's love was great enough for both his sons and similarly, God's grace is great enough for everyone who believes and repents. We have no need to be envious or have a competitive spirit when we look at others.

From this parable, we see the difference between Christianity and all other religions.

Christianity is a religion of grace, mercy and love. We don't earn our forgiveness with God, for God forgives people freely and completely when they come to Him. All we must do is repent and receive the forgiveness of Christ through believing in Him.

All other religions are represented by the older brother at the end of the parable. The old brother stubbornly was saying: "Sinners like my younger brother should not be freely forgiven. They must first earn their forgiveness. They must deserve the forgiveness that they can receive." But these opinions are false teachings. No one deserves to receive anything at all from God. None of us can say that we've obeyed God in everything we've done. All of us have sinned and we all need to cast ourselves onto God's mercy. Each one of us is a 'lost son' needing forgiveness – even the older brother who remained at home and worked faithfully for the time when he would receive his inheritance.

The sad thing for many parents is that their prodigal son or daughter may not return 'home' to Jesus in their lifetime. These parents need to be comforted by God through their prayers for their strayed child or children. Some mothers have prayed for 35 years or more for a prodigal child and passed into the presence of the Lord before their children have become believers in Jesus.

In Psalms, Chapter 103, Verse 12, it says: “As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins from us.” Let us repent like the prodigal son and not become embittered and unforgiving towards those around us who are forgiven by God and the church in great mercy and celebration.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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