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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1712 ~ The Apostles Persecuted.

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

Persecution doesn't always take the same form but its goal is still to stop the spread of teaching about the Saviour of the world.

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

When Peter and John healed the man born crippled, many people at that time began to follow this new Christian belief system. Every day, the apostles were healing many who were sick and as a result, more people than ever were following after the apostles.

That night when Peter and John were in prison, an angel of the Lord miraculously opened the prison doors and brought Peter and John outside. He told them to continue preaching to the people at the Temple about this new life available in the Lord Jesus. So early the next morning, Peter and John entered the Temple again and taught the people.

In the meantime, Caiaphas had called the ruling council together and then sent a guard to the prison to bring out Peter and John to face the rulers again. But the officers couldn't find them anywhere, even though the guards were standing outside and the doors were securely locked. The rulers were amazed that such a thing could happen.

Soon someone came to tell them that the men whom the rulers had put in jail were now standing in the Temple and teaching the people. The captain of the guard and his officers brought them before the council. They used no violence against Peter and John because they feared the people might stone them to death.

Caiaphas accused Peter and John of not only continuing to preach about Christ, but also of trying to blame the Jewish leaders for His death. Again Peter and the other apostles spoke boldly before the council. Peter preached Christ to the Jewish leaders themselves and he didn't use a soft approach. He called them 'murderers of Christ' right to their faces. He said that God had raised Christ up and exalted Him to His own right hand. Peter explained that the apostles were witnesses to these things and that the apostles must obey God rather than men.

When the apostles spoke, the Holy Spirit was also speaking, because everyone who obeys God has been given the Holy Spirit. If we don't accept Christ as our Lord, He cannot be our Saviour. Jesus is both our Lord and our Saviour. If we want Him to save us, we must be ready to obey Him. God exalted Christ that He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. Christ gives each person a new heart; He gives us the grace to repent. But we ourselves must do the repenting. Without repentance, there can be no forgiveness of sin.

Imagine how angry the ruling council members must have been to have Peter preach to them. Now they wanted to kill him and all the others. The leader of the Pharisees, Gamaliel, was a teacher of the law and highly respected by all Jews. Gamaliel spoke to the council members. He gave the examples of the two men who some time earlier, had led revolts against the Roman Empire. These two men were killed and their followers scattered. Gamaliel suggested that perhaps, with their leader Jesus now dead, His apostles too would soon scatter and the new religion disappear.

Gamaliel advised the ruling council to let the apostles go. If their preaching was not from God, it would come to nothing. But if it was from God, then to oppose the apostles' teaching would be to oppose God Himself. If this new religion was truly from God, it would also be impossible to stamp out anyway! The ruling council heeded Gamaliel's wise advice. They had the apostles flogged and then let them go. The leaders also ordered the apostles one last time not to speak in the name of Jesus. But even as they gave the order, the leaders knew that the apostles wouldn't obey it.

When we suffer for Jesus' sake, we are truly His disciples and friends. This was the apostles' experience and that is why they left the ruling council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name. When God appoints us to suffer disgrace in some way, we too should then rejoice. To receive dishonour from the world for Jesus' sake is to receive honour from God Himself.

Jesus had warned His disciples that they would be called to suffer for His sake. His words had now come true. Jesus had also said to them in John, Chapter 15: "No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also." However, Jesus promised that those who suffer for Him would be greatly rewarded in heaven. And suffering Christians have been holding on to that promise ever since.

Why is it then that we try to escape suffering as soon as possible? All forms of suffering entered human experience with the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God had commanded Adam not to eat of the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and warned him that if he ate of it, he would certainly die. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God anyway. Part of God's judgment on Eve and all women thereafter was to increase their suffering in childbirth. For Adam and all his descendants, the ground was cursed so that it took a lot of hard work to produce food. In the end, all suffering, even the suffering of the Lord Jesus, came from this original sin and its punishment.

Like Adam and Eve, many people bring suffering on themselves, either as the natural consequences of their actions or as God's judgment on them. Solomon in his wise words for living in the Bible book of Proverbs, warned his son against drunkenness and overeating. These two things bring poverty and an inability to work hard to provide food and clothing for a man's family.

Suffering is also a punishment from God for refusing to trust Him and for rebelling against Him. This was the case with the Children of Israel walking around the wilderness for 40 years and with their descendants during the times of the judges.

The Apostle Paul also said in 1 Thessalonians, Chapter 4, after warning the people against sexual immorality, that "The Lord will punish men for all such sins."

Throughout history, many people have drawn the conclusion that all suffering is punishment from God for sin. This was what Job's friends thought about his suffering. The disciples of Jesus also thought this about the man born blind, and whom Jesus cured. Job suffered at the hands of Satan to demonstrate that Job wasn't serving the Lord simply for the blessings that he received. And Jesus explained that the man had been born blind so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

Suffering has many other causes too. It can be God's attempt to get a person's attention and response. Suffering can be part of God's spiritual training program for young believers or as preparation for special spiritual service. Suffering can also be caused by an attack from Satan and his human or demonic agents as permitted by God. Persecution can lead true followers of Christ to a greater focus on Him and a stronger determination to do His will without fail. Suffering can be the means of bringing greater glory to God as the Christian endures it faithfully and successfully.

The supreme example of faithfully endured suffering to the glory of God is the Lord Jesus Christ. Along with the agony of His physical suffering on the cross, Jesus also experienced spiritual suffering as God made sinless Jesus to be sin for us. Jesus became our substitute payment for human sin, and as a result, God turned away from His beloved Son as Jesus bore the punishment for our sins on the cross.

Believers in the Lord Jesus are called to share in the sufferings of Christ. Paul said in Colossians, Chapter 1: “I am happy about my sufferings for you, for by means of my physical sufferings I am helping to complete all which still remains of Christ’s sufferings on behalf of his body, the church.” As all believers are members of Christ’s body, the church, when one part suffers, every part suffers with it. Such sufferings produce patient endurance and develop our character. We are then able to comfort others more effectively as they go through their seasons of suffering.

Peter in his first letter, in chapters 2 and 3, said that there was nothing particularly commendable about enduring punishment that is deserved; however, “If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps ... But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed ... It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”

Through prayer and self-examination, seek out God’s purpose in any suffering you’re experiencing. Sometimes the suffering that comes to you just happens to be for no reason that you can see or understand. It’s how you react to the suffering that matters. Peter and John’s suffering came after they had taken a stand for Jesus Christ. And then they praised the Lord as they suffered, for God’s goodness and sovereignty remained no matter what their circumstances were.

This is the same truth for us. We need to remember that suffering isn't forever. In fact, it's very brief when we consider how long eternity with Christ will actually be. Our suffering will end when we who believe in Jesus are called home to heaven.

In Hebrews, Chapter 2, Verse 18, it says: "Since (Jesus) himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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