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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2001 ~ Jesus Teaches.

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

When a person borrows or owes money they need to repay, this money is called a debt. You may have heard that in ancient times, people who couldn't pay their debts by an agreed due date could sell themselves or their children into slavery so the unpaid labour paid off the debt to the people the money was owed to. This practice was called debt slavery or bondage and was banned in Greece in about 600 BC and in Rome in 326 BC.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, a number of debtors' prisons were established. Some people who couldn't pay their debts were put into large rooms with criminals like murderers and thieves. This situation was most unsatisfactory as no debtor could earn anything while in jail to help pay off their debts. Other private prisons had work programs so the debtors were required to do to repay their debt. This gave rise to the practice of a person being jailed for a certain period of time 'with hard labour'.

These days when people can't pay their debts, some flee their country and live elsewhere for years. In Australia, when a person owes money for unpaid fines, they can choose to be sent to prison for a period of time, pay the debt off slowly or do community service for a period of time. Community service is unpaid work that improves the local area, such as mowing the grass along the roadways and in parks.

Another way many people deal with their increasing amount of debt that they can't repay is to declare themselves 'bankrupt'. Bankruptcy is a legal situation declared by a judge in court. The creditors or people and businesses wanting to be paid back by the bankrupt person wait until all the person's assets of value have been sold and the monies distributed among them. Although the creditors don't get all that is owed to them, most usually they get something. A bankrupt person is not allowed by law to start up a new business until three years later. In East Asia a long time ago, if a person became bankrupt three times, they were given the death penalty.

In today's Bible Adventure, the Lord Jesus gave the parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

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The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant is recorded in Matthew, Chapter 18.

In Luke, Chapter 17, Jesus said, "If your brother sins, rebuke him and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in one day, and each time he comes to you saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." One of Jesus' disciples Peter may have heard Jesus say this. Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" But the Lord said, "Seventy times seven." Then Jesus told Peter the parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

The unforgiving servant was let off paying a very large amount of money, probably several million dollars. The king didn't ask him to pay a little back over a time or give him extra time to pay. The king cancelled the debt completely. This was a great act of mercy which the unforgiving servant didn't seem to appreciate for very long. After receiving so much mercy, that he didn't deserve, this servant should have willingly shown similar mercy towards his own debtor, who owed him only a few dollars.

When the Lord Jesus said one should forgive another seventy times seven, He indicated that no one should keep the score of people's wrongs against them. We should copy Christ's example towards us and forgive other people every time that we are wronged.

When the king in the parable heard about his servant's unmerciful attitude to another, he withdrew his forgiveness. The unforgiving servant was then punished and owed his huge debt again. In Mark, Chapter 11, the Lord Jesus taught: "When you stand and pray, forgive anything you may have against anyone, so that your Father in heaven will forgive the wrongs you have done."

God keeps records in heaven of each person's sins or debts toward God. God knows everything, including all our secret thoughts and feelings. The debt we owe God because we are sinners is like the very large debt owed by the first servant. We can't pay God back for the wrong that we have done. Nor can we ever pay it back by doing many good works or sacrifices. But God in His mercy is like the king in the parable and forgives us completely when we come humbly to Him asking for forgiveness. How can we then not show mercy toward others? Jesus finished with this statement: "That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Does this mean that people can lose their salvation if they don't forgive others? Is this possible or not? This question has caused disagreement for the past 2,000 years. Some verses of Scripture clearly give eternal security to all true believers in Christ Jesus. However, unforgiveness is not a sign of a believer who's walking humbly with their Lord, but may become a wedge that helps cause a person to walk away from their faith. What a terrible tragedy for those who leave the path to God and never return!

A believer holding onto grudges needs to take time to deal with an unforgiving spirit in their life. Satan works powerfully to offend and create deep hurts that a person wants to justify and hold onto, rather than surrendering their upset thoughts and feelings to Jesus in exchange for spiritual renewal, forgiveness and love. In John, Chapter 6, the Lord Jesus said: “It is the will of him who sent me that I should not lose any of those he has given me, but that I should raise them all to life on the last day.”

In Ephesians, Chapter 1, the Apostle Paul said: “You also became God’s people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he had promised.” God is able to keep what we have given to Him. He also will rescue us during temptation and keep us from falling. From these verses, we can see the believer’s security in eternal salvation.

On the other side of the argument, there are a number of verses which speak of people falling away from the faith in the Lord Jesus. In 1 Timothy, Chapter 4, it says: “The Spirit says clearly that some people will abandon the faith in later times; they will obey lying spirits and follow the teachings of demons.”

In Hebrews, Chapter 6, it also says: “How can those who abandon their faith be brought back to repent again? ... It is impossible to bring them back to repent again, because they are again crucifying the Son of God and exposing him to public shame.”

And further in Hebrews, Chapter 10, it says: “There is no longer any sacrifice that will take away sins if we purposely go on sinning after the truth has been made known to us.”

God is sovereign and all knowing. He knows how many hairs we have on our heads and all our thoughts and motives. Christians who treat their salvation lightly are not earnest and serious about the things of God, and may be tempted back to the world's ways. When Jesus likened Himself to the true vine and the believers in Him as the branches, He also taught that His Father would prune off any branches that gave no fruit.

In these verses of the New Testament Scripture, we can see that some verses say a believer cannot lose his salvation while others say he can. Both these truths must be held in balance. For believers who are anxious about keeping their salvation, we should major on the verses that show the truth that our salvation is secure. But for those believers who are over-confident that they cannot fall, they should heed the verses that they can indeed fall away. If they don't abide in God's goodness, they will be cut off.

The final word on the two sides of this comes from the small epistle of Jude which says: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." It says further, "To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy ..."

All Christians believe that we are saved only by the grace and mercy of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and that we can continue in that faith only by the help of the Holy Spirit. Some Christians have different views of whether or not a true Christian can lose his salvation. Only God knows each person's heart. But however we stand on the matter, we must not let such a thing put us out of fellowship with other believers or with the Lord Himself.

One of the biggest problems we have over forgiving others, especially for dark and deep wrongs, is our memory of the wrong and the difficulty to accept that everything in the past is gone with Christ. In Hebrews, Chapter 8, God said that when He forgives, He forgets. When we pray and ask God to take away some bad memories, He does.

In recent years, scientists have studied the health benefits of forgiveness. Their studies have shown the serious mental, emotional and physical consequences of an unforgiving heart. Professional counsellors have found forgiveness to be a useful tool in reconciling couples and families. In some of the many studies done in the last 10 years, forgiveness has been linked to a lessening of chronic pain and depression, less stress on the body and a more positive outlook on life.

If unbelieving scientists can see what a large difference forgiveness can make in people's lives, how much more should fellow Christians be willing to see the importance of forgiving one another. In Proverbs, Chapter 14 it says: "Peace of mind makes the body healthy."

In Colossians Chapter 3, Verse 13, it says: "Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you." Who do you need to forgive today? May you find God's grace and power to do so!

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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