

DO YOU THINK YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR?

There is a story I want you to hear.



SPIRIT-LED WALK

There Is a Story I Want You to Hear

Long ago, there was a king whose reputation had spread far beyond the borders of his kingdom.

He was known for two things.

He loved his people deeply.

And he was absolutely just.

The poor could approach him. The forgotten were seen by him. His people knew him to be compassionate and generous.

But they also knew something else about their king: his word could be trusted.

He did not have one standard for the powerful and another for the weak. Justice did not change depending upon who stood before his throne.

Then one day, something happened that shook the kingdom.

Someone was stealing from the king's treasury.

At first, the king could hardly believe it. His own people were stealing from the kingdom that cared for them.

He ordered an investigation.

And he issued a proclamation: "Find the one responsible. When the thief is caught, the punishment will be ten lashes."

The search began. But no thief was found.

Then it happened again. More was missing from the treasury. The king was angry.

Twenty lashes.

The thefts continued.

Thirty lashes.

Still, no one came forward. Still, the thief could not be found.

Then the treasury was robbed again. This time the king stood before his people and declared: "Enough. Find the thief. When the guilty person is brought before me, the sentence will be forty lashes."

A hush fell over the people.

Forty.

Everyone understood the severity of what the king had just declared. A punishment this severe could take a person's life.

But the king had spoken. And his people knew his character. He was merciful. But he was also just.

His word would stand.

Then They Found the Thief

Word spread quickly through the palace. The guards had caught someone.

People gathered to see who had been foolish enough to continue stealing after hearing the king's warning.

The great doors opened. The guards entered. And between them walked the thief.

The king looked down from his throne. And his face changed.

It was his daughter.

His own daughter.

For perhaps the first time, the people saw their king unable to speak. The room was silent.

His daughter stood before him with her head lowered. There was no question of her guilt. She had been caught. The evidence was there.

And now everyone in the room understood the terrible dilemma before their king.

If he released her, what would that say about his justice? Had all his declarations meant nothing? Was the law only for other people's children? Was justice something the king demanded until keeping his word became personally painful?

But if he kept his word...

His daughter might die.

The king looked at her. The daughter he had held as a child. The daughter whose laughter had filled his halls. The daughter he loved.

And then he looked at his people. Justice demanded an answer.

Finally, the king spoke. "The sentence will be carried out."

The Sentence

There were gasps throughout the room. His daughter began to weep.

The guards led her into the courtyard. The people followed at a distance. At the center of the courtyard stood the whipping post.

The guards brought her forward. They bound her wrists. They secured her to the post. Then they opened the back of her garment so the punishment could be administered.

She stood trembling. The executioner stepped forward. The crowd became completely silent.

Some looked away. Others stared at the king.

Surely he would stop this. Surely at the last moment his love for his daughter would overcome his commitment to justice.

But the king said nothing. The executioner lifted the whip.
And then...

"STOP."

The king rose. He walked down from his place before the people. Slowly, he approached his daughter.

He removed his royal robe and let it fall to the ground. Then he stepped behind her. He leaned over his trembling daughter and wrapped his own body around hers. His body now covered hers.

The people stared in confusion. Then they heard the king's voice.

"Carry out the sentence."

No one moved. The executioner looked at him. "Your Majesty..."

The king did not move. "I said, carry out the sentence."

And the punishment fell. Not upon the daughter.

Upon the king.

He held her close. He did not withdraw. He could have stopped it at any moment. He didn't.

He remained over his daughter until the sentence was complete.

And when it was finished, the king had given everything.

The king died.

His daughter had broken the law. The king had not pretended otherwise. He had not declared evil to be good. He had not abandoned justice.

The sentence had been carried out. But the guilty one did not bear it.

The king did.

The daughter was untied. She fell beside the king who had given his life for hers.

She was guilty... but forgiven.

She had been condemned... but now she was free.

Her freedom cost her nothing. But it cost the king everything.

This Is Our Story

This story isn't from the Bible. But it gives us a picture of something that is.

Because every one of us stands where that daughter stood.

Guilty. And loved.

The Bible doesn't hide the reality of our condition:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

Not some of us. All of us.

We have all chosen our own way at times. We have all done things that fall short of God's goodness.

And sin has consequences.

"For the wages of sin is death..." Romans 6:23

This is where many people misunderstand Christianity. They imagine God looking down from heaven trying to decide whether He is going to punish us or love us.

But the cross tells a completely different story.

God is perfectly just. And God loves us beyond anything we can comprehend.

So He did something extraordinary.

He came for us.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

Notice when He loved us. Not after we fixed ourselves. Not after we became religious. Not after we cleaned up our lives.

While we were still sinners.

Jesus came knowing exactly who we were and exactly what we had done. And He came anyway.

He Took Our Place

Hundreds of years before Jesus was crucified, the prophet Isaiah described what He would do:

"But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings; the punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

"All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the wrongdoing of us all to fall on Him." Isaiah 53:6

Read that last line again.

The wrongdoing of us all fell on Him.

Jesus didn't die because He was guilty. He died because we were.

Peter later described it this way: "He Himself brought our sins in His body up on the cross..." 1 Peter 2:24

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus stood where we deserved to stand. He took what we deserved so that we could receive what we could never earn.

Forgiveness. Freedom. Life.

He Knew What It Would Cost

Jesus wasn't surprised by the cross.

He knew about the betrayal. He knew about the beating. He knew about the mocking. He knew about the nails. He knew about the cross. And still He went.

"No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own." John 10:18

He wasn't trapped. He wasn't powerless.

He chose the cross.

Why?

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

Because He loved us.

Justice and Mercy Met

The fictional king covered his daughter with his own body. Jesus did something infinitely greater.

He gave His life.

The guilty were not declared innocent because sin suddenly stopped mattering. Jesus took our place.

Justice wasn't forgotten. Mercy didn't pretend there was no sin.

At the cross, justice and mercy met.

Scripture describes God as "...just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Romans 3:26

He is still just. And He can justify us.

Because the King Himself paid the price.

So Let Me Ask You Something

What is the thing you believe God could never forgive?

You don't have to tell anyone. Just answer it honestly in your own heart.

Maybe it was something you did years ago. Maybe it happened yesterday. Maybe you've never told another person. Maybe you've spent years trying to outrun it.

Maybe you believe God could forgive other people... just not you.

Look at the cross. God already knows. He knew before Jesus went to Calvary.

And Jesus went anyway.

You are not discovering the limits of God's grace by telling Him what you've done. He already knew the worst thing about you when He chose the cross.

You Cannot Pay Him Back

And He isn't asking you to.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works..." Ephesians 2:8-9

Forgiveness is not something you achieve. It's something you receive.

The second half of Romans 6:23 says: "...but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Death was what we earned. Life is what He offers.

The King Has Already Stepped Down

Jesus has already gone to the cross.

The price has already been paid. And He rose from the dead. Now the invitation is yours.

"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

Everyone. Not everyone except you. Everyone.

You Can Talk to Him Right Now

You don't need special words.

You don't need to be inside a church. You don't need to have everything figured out. Just be honest with God.

Jesus, I need You.

I know I have sinned, and I know I cannot save myself.

I believe You died for me and rose again.

I believe You took the punishment I deserved.

I ask You to forgive me.

I surrender my life to You.

Teach me to know You, follow You, and live the life You created me to live.

I receive Your forgiveness and Your grace.

Amen.

One Last Thing

If you've spent years believing that what you've done is greater than God's willingness to forgive you, remember the cross.

Your sin has a cost. But Jesus willingly paid it.

You are not being invited to pretend the past didn't happen. You are being invited to let Jesus give you a new future.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." 2 Corinthians 5:17

**The price has been paid.
The invitation has been given.
Will you receive it?**