

Real Life Stories
A Gift in Prison

Some years ago, while conducting a series of meetings in Michigan City, I was asked to preach to the inmates in the State prison. I sat on the platform with the warden of the prison and watched the prisoners march in—700 men, young and old. They marched in lock step, every man's hand on the shoulder of the man before him. At the word of command they sat down. Among that number there were seventy-six "lifers," men who had been committed to prison for life.

After the singing I arose to preach, but could hardly speak for weeping. Disregarding all the rules of the prison, in my earnestness to help the poor, fallen men, I left the platform and walked down the aisle among them, taking one, and then another by the hand and praying for him. At the end of the row of men who were committed for murder sat a man, who more than his fellows, seemed marked by sin's blighting curse. His face was seamed and ridged with scars and marks of vice and sin. I placed my hand upon his shoulder and wept and prayed with and for him.

When the service was over, the warden said to me, "Well, Kain, do you know you have broken the rules of the prison by leaving the platform?" "Yes, warden, but I never can keep any rule while preaching. And I did want to get up close to the poor, despairing fellows, and pray for them and tell them of the love of Jesus the Saviour. He came 'to seek and to save that which was lost. [Jesus] receiveth sinners, and eateth with them' " ([Luke 19:10:15:2](#)).

"Do you remember," said the warden, "the man at the end of the line in the lifers' row whom you prayed with? Would you like to hear his history?" "Yes," I answered, "gladly."

"Well, Tom Galson was sent here about eight years ago for the crime of murder. He was, without doubt, one of the most desperate and vicious characters we had ever received and, as was expected, gave us a great deal of trouble. "One Christmas Eve, about six years ago, duty compelled me to spend the night at the prison instead of at home. Early in the morning, while it was yet dark, I left the prison for my home, my pockets full of presents for my little girl. It was a bitter cold morning, and I buttoned my overcoat up to protect myself from the cutting wind that swept in from the lake. As I hurried along, I thought I saw someone hiding in the shadow of the prison wall. I stopped and looked a little more closely, and then saw a little girl, wretchedly clothed in a thin dress; her bare feet thrust into a pair of shoes much the worse for wear. In her hand she held tightly clasped, a small paper parcel. Wondering who she was, and why she was out so early in the morning, and yet too weary to be interested, I hurried on. But I soon heard that I was being followed. I stopped and turned around, and there before me stood the same wretched looking child.

" 'What do you want?' I asked sharply.

" 'Are you the warden of the prison, sir?'

" 'Yes, who are you, and why are you not at home?'

" 'Please, sir, I have no home; mamma died in the poorhouse two weeks ago, an' she told me just before she died that papa, that is Tom Galson, was in prison; an' she thought that maybe he would like to see his little girl now that mamma is dead. Please can't you let me see my papa? Today is Christmas and I want to give him a present.'

" 'No,' I replied gruffly, 'you will have to wait until visitors' day,' and started on. I had not gone many steps when I felt a pull at my coat and a pleading voice said, 'Please don't go.' I stopped once more, and looked into the pinched, beseeching face before me. Great tears were in her eyes, while her little chin quivered with emotion.

" 'Mister,' she said, 'if your little girl was me, and your girl's mamma had died in the poorhouse, an' her papa was in the prison, an' she had no place to go an' no one to love her, don't you think she would like to see her papa? If it was Christmas, and your little girl came to me, if I was warden of the prison, an' asked me to please let her see her papa to give him a Christmas present, don't you think I would say yes?'

"By this time a great lump was in my throat and my eyes were swimming in tears. I answered, 'Yes, little girl, I think you would, and you shall see your papa'; and, taking her hand, I hurried back to the prison. Arriving in my office, I asked her to come near the warm stove, while I sent a guard to bring Galson from his cell. As soon as he came into the office he saw the little girl. His face clouded with an angry frown, and in a gruff, savage tone he snapped out: 'Nellie, what are you doing here: what do you want? Go back to your mother.'

Real Life Stories
A Gift in Prison

" 'Please papa,' sobbed the little girl, 'mamma's dead. She died two weeks ago in the poorhouse, an' before she died she told me to take care of little Jimmie, 'cause you loved him so; an' she told me to tell you she loved you, too—but papa'—and here her voice broke in sobs and tears—'Jimmie died too, last week, an' now I am alone papa, an' today's Christmas, papa, an'—and I thought, maybe 'cause you loved Jimmie, you would like a little Christmas present from him.'

"Here she unrolled the little bundle she held in her hand, until she came to a little package of tissue paper from which she took out a little fair curl, and put it in her father's hand, saying, as she did so: 'I cut it from dear little Jimmie's head, papa, just afore they buried him.'

"By this time the inmate was sobbing like a child and so was I. Stooping down, he picked up the little girl, pressed her convulsively to his breast, while his great frame shook with suppressed emotion. "The scene was too sacred for me to look upon, so I softly opened the door and left them alone. In about an hour I returned. Tom Galson sat near the stove with his little daughter on his knee. He looked at me sheepishly for a moment, and then said, 'Warden, I haven't any money'; then suddenly stripping off his prison jacket, he said, 'Don't let my little girl go out this bitter cold day with that thin dress. Let me give her this coat. I'll work early and late; I'll do anything. I'll be a man. Please, warden, let me cover her with this coat.' Tears were streaming down the face of the hardened man.

" 'No, Galson,' I said, 'keep your coat; your little girl shall not suffer. I'll take her to my home and see what my wife can do for her.' 'God bless you,' sobbed Galson. I took the girl to my home. She remained with us a number of years and became a true Christian by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Book, the Bible, shows man's need and God's remedy for that need (Romans 3:9-24; John 3:1-16). "Tom Galson also became a Christian and then he gave us no more trouble (Luke 8:35)."

A year ago, when I visited the prison again, the warden said to me, "Kain, would you like to see Tom Galson, whose story I told you a few years ago?" "Yes, I would," I answered.

The warden took me down a quiet street, and stopping at a neat home, knocked at the door. The door was opened by a cheerful woman who greeted the warden with the utmost cordiality. We went in, and then the warden introduced me to Nellie and her father, who, because of his reformation, had been released early, and was now living an upright Christian life with his daughter, whose little Christmas gift had broken his hard heart.

... T.A.P. Kain

"Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 4:5; 5:6).

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

He died for YOU.

... Gleaned from Moments With The Book