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Title: Death Row Inmates' Testimony 2 – Tae & Su and Yong (by Elder Park HyoJin)



Text: Isaiah 53 ¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. ¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.

1 Introduction

- I am continuing the story of Park HyoJin, the Korean elder who worked as a prison officer and witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the prison population, both on the prison officers and the prisoners during the Korean revival. The prison officers and guards were getting saved. The prisoners were getting saved. The prison cells turned into “cell groups” of prayer meetings and Bible studies.
- I'd like to tell another story of the inmates on death row and the power of God's salvation outpoured.

2 Tae & Su – Serial Killers' Salvation

2.1 Unthinkable Crimes

- When Park was transferred to a high-security prison in Seoul, he came across two young men on death row, Tae and Su. They were just 21 and 22 years old. He was briefed by the prison officers that these two young men murdered 5 People. It was a terrible crime that shocked the nation. But they had become Christians in prison under the care of Christian prison guards.
- Park saw Tae and Su in every worship service in the prison, in every prayer meeting. They looked like innocent children. In fact the two boys were extremely good-looking like movie stars. And they were radiant, beaming with joy. So he encouraged them and was so happy for their salvation.
- Park just could not imagine them committing crimes worthy of a death sentence. So he did something he rarely does. He looked up their court documents. Park had a general knowledge of the crimes of the prisoners under his charge, but he rarely looked up their court files. If he knew the details of their horrific crimes written out in detail, he could not maintain a neutral position towards them. It would bias him against them.
- But his curiosity got the better of him about Tae and Su. They were so childlike and joyful. What could these boys have done so terrible that they deserved to die? But when Park read their files, he shook in horror. They killed 4-5 men and women in some sleazy bar. The detail of their crime in their files – was so evil, so diabolical, so inhuman – it horrified him, outraged him. It was something no human being can do to another human being.
- From then on Park's heart just shut down towards the two young men. What he'd read about their crimes would just surface before his eyes whenever he saw them. He could not bear to look at them in the face. Each time he came across them, he felt fury rising in him, and his teeth would be set on edge. When he saw them happy in the worship service holding their Bibles, he felt like screaming at them. 'You sick psychopaths! How dare you smile! Execution is too kind for you after what you've done to your victims!'
- Park was in torment. His days in prison felt like hell. He had to see the young men every day, and his anger would boil over every time. His heart was torn in two. He had dealt with many prisoners, and

many criminals. He knew and preached the love of Christ that overcame all sin no matter how evil. He knew the blood of Jesus washed the worst sinners, and the most wicked crime is forgiven in Him. He preached it, and received that grace himself. But the evil of these two young men's crimes was so unthinkable, he just could not bear them.

2.2 The Vision of Jesus' Heart

- He lived one whole month in conflict and torment. Then one morning he returned home from early morning prayer, and he fell asleep just for a moment. Actually, he doesn't know if he was awake or asleep. At that moment a vision appeared before his eyes.
- Jesus was lying down. He was being tortured. His body was torn from the whipping. He was covered in blood that was spattering everywhere. There were big nails through His hands. When the agony reached its very peak, Jesus cried out with a loud cry something Park could not understand.
- At that moment, Jesus' heart broke open with blood bursting out everywhere. And Park looked into the open heart of Jesus that was flowing with blood, and he had a big shock. In the very heart of Jesus, he saw Tae and Su laying like embryonic babies in fetal positions, facing each other. And they were feeding from the blood that flowed from Jesus' heart.
- When Park saw this, all his torment and conflict disappeared. He woke up. Without even thinking, he fell to his knees. Tears were flowing down his face. 'Lord, You are wonderful. You are great beyond words. Thank you for letting me know that you truly forgive all our sins, and all our iniquities. My righteousness, my arguments, my questions, my hard-heartedness – they are blown away before the power of Your forgiveness and love.'
- From that day on, the two boys appeared so lovely and beautiful to him. Park began to love them like his own sons. He taught them the Bible, taught them God's absolute forgiveness and His perfect love.
- The blood of Jesus came between Park and the two boys, and bridged their hearts. And from that day on, Park could not remember the horror of their crime. He did not think of them at all. God's deepest mercy and compassion for their precious souls no matter how wicked their sins – flooded Park's heart.

2.3 Their Execution

- Then the day came for their execution. Park was standing before the hanging noose in the execution hall, waiting for the prison guards to bring Tae and Su. And he began to hear Hallelujahs and Amens from the corridor. And he saw Tae and his prison guards walking into the execution hall. They were praising God together.
- After the prison warden finished IDing Tae, he pronounced Tae's execution to be carried out on that day. Tae nodded and said 'Yes.' And the warden asked, 'Do you have any last word you want to say?'
- Tae said, 'I grew up from my childhood, not knowing what sin was. I grew up in crime. I had decided I was going to live like an animal, and die like an animal. But when I came to the prison and while I was going through the court receiving the death sentence, I met someone who became the most precious person in my life. That person is Jesus. I cried so much after I met Jesus. I cried so much for the innocent victims who were killed by my hands. I cried so much for their family who are suffering so much. I am so sorry. Today I am going to heaven.'
- I have one last request before I go. All my brothers and sisters I've met in prison – I pray you will meet Jesus like I have, and we will see each other again in heaven.

- In heaven, I will not be the Monster Tae. But I will serve you as Tae a child of God, who is forgiven and whose sins are washed away.'
- All the Christian prison officers in the execution hall sang with Tae at the top of their voices, 'Amazing grace how sweet the sound' as the floor opened up with a frightening thud, and Tae went into eternity.
- Su went the same way. He walked to the execution hall with a big smile. Su's last word was the same, 'I've lived like an insect, and I was treated like an insect all my life. But when I came to this prison, for the first time in my life I was treated like a human being. Thank you. Thank you. I received Jesus and I am going to heaven. I am so sorry for the victims and their families. I am so sorry.' Su kept repeating 'I am so sorry.' And as he too went into eternity, the scary sound of the floor opening up beneath him was swallowed up by the sound of the Christians singing, finishing the song for Su.

3 Yong – Faith of Friends

3.1 *Hardened Young Man*

- Park was transferred to a prison in a different city. There he met Yong. Yong was a hard young man on death row. He refused to hear the gospel. Many Christians in the prison tried to share with him. But his heart was shut, his wall was thick, and his ears were blocked. He would mock the Christians, 'Have you been to heaven? That story is for rich people with a full stomach and a warm bed to sleep in.'
- One day Yong opened his heart a tiny bit to Park when he shared the gospel again. 'I will think about it.' That was the closest he came to opening his heart. So Park made a note he will jump through that tiny opening with the gospel. But he was so busy he didn't do anything about it. One month passed, then two. Then suddenly out of the blue, the order came down to carry out Yong's execution.
- These orders come without warning to anyone including the prison officers to eliminate any potential trouble from the inmates. Once the order comes, in a matter of hours execution is carried out.
- Park and all the Christians were shocked. Park grieved, blaming himself for not pursuing Yong when he showed a small glimpse of willingness to listen. He assumed there will be enough time to follow up, not realising his execution order would be issued so quickly and so suddenly.
- So he sent Christian prison officers to prepare Yong for the execution. He asked them to use even the little time they had as they prepared Yong and even while walking him to the execution hall. 'Yong knows nothing of the gospel. He doesn't know the cross. He doesn't know the Lord's prayer. He doesn't know anything. Please share with him any gospel tract, 'Four Spiritual Laws' – anything!'

3.2 *On His Way to the Horror of Hell*

- But when Park saw Yong coming up to the execution hall – he knew the young man was already on his way to hell. His body was limp with pure fear, his mouth was twisted drooling saliva, and his eyes were rolled back. Yong was placed in his seat. But the prison warden could not go through the ID process. Yong could not understand anything being said to him. When he was asked 'What is your name?' etc, Yong was in such a state he could not respond. The prison warden stated formally that since the inmate isn't able to respond to the questions, the team was to proceed directly to the execution of the inmate.
- But Park jumped in and pleaded with his boss, 'Please give me a little time, and we will have a small worship service for Yong.' His boss said, 'Look at him. What use is religious service to him?' But Park pleaded with him and bought a little time. But the pastor in charge had stepped out for a while just at that moment, and they could not wait. So Park sat next to Yong and opened the Bible to John 1:12, and said, 'Yong, please read this in the Bible.' But Yong could not focus his eyes on the Bible, he tried and

tried, but he just could not read and gave up. So Park put his arms around the young man and recited John 1:12 in his ear, 'But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:' There was no response.

- So Park recited John 1:12 again in a louder voice. It was no use. His heart was aching for Yong. This time he screamed into Yong's ear as loud as he could till he thought Yong's eardrums might burst, 'But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:' Hoping against hope that his voice might somehow penetrate Yong's ears and get into his spirit and perhaps would give him just the tiniest mustard seed faith for salvation. But there was NO RESPONSE, ZERO.
- The prison warden finally shook his head, and gave the order, 'Please carry out the execution.'
- Yong could not walk, so he was half dragged to the noose. And his face was almost like watching a horror movie. His face was moving and stretching almost like melted rubber, and his eyes were completely flipped back. And Park knew he was being pulled right into hell and already looking at the horror of hell.
- And Park's heart broke with grief and anger at himself. Why didn't you take hold of Yong the moment he showed a small glimpse of openness? Why did you just go home saying it was late? What a hypocrite I am, preaching that one soul is more precious than the whole world, but I let Yong go. All of this came like a rebuke from the Lord. And without even thinking Park jumped up and ran to Yong, and pulled him into his arms. He waved away the two officers who were about to put the noose around Yong's neck.
- The prison warden was watching in shock. Park pleaded with his boss signing to him with his hands, 'Please, sir. Just a bit more time. I just need a little bit more time.' And his boss incredibly nodded to him 'yes'.
- Park brought Yong back to his seat. By now, whatever consciousness Yong had was completely gone. He was just a limp jelly. Suddenly four or five Christian prison officers ran over and surrounded Yong. Park pleaded with them, 'Let's pray for Yong. We cannot let him go like this. Let's pray to the Lord for Yong's soul to the end.' They embraced the young man and cried out to God. One officer who was a deacon in his church was crying, 'Yong, Yong!' Another held Yong's arm and cried, 'Yong, come back! Come back!' Another one was holding onto his leg, crying out to God, 'Lord, save Yong, please! Save Yong.' It wasn't really a prayer. They were all just screaming to God. Park held Yong's head against his heart, and said to himself, 'We once let him go. But we have him back. And if it takes all night, we are not letting him go this time.'
- It was 5 minutes but it felt like an eternity. And no one dared to stop them. Everyone just stood and watched.

3.3 Holy Spirit Comes to the Execution Hall

- Then suddenly Yong began to move his body, and he raised up his hands. And the first word out of his mouth was a shout, 'Lord! Lord!' The Christian officers thought Yong finally lost his mind. They thought he was just mimicking them without any conscious thinking. But suddenly Yong stretched out his arms to heaven even higher and began shouting with tears rolling down his face, 'Lord, thank you for receiving this sinner. Thank you, Lord, for forgiving this sinner.' He shouted over and over again.
- Then Yong wiped the tears off his face, and began to shake each officer's hand who prayed for him, 'Thank you, thank you!' His face was so transformed. Just a few minutes ago, his face was twisted like a horror movie, with eyes rolled back and he was drooling saliva in fear. That face had vanished. Now his face was beautiful, soft and shining.

- The person who was most shocked by all this was the head of the prison, the warden who was in charge of the execution. He was almost shaking. And Yong looked at the prison warden, and their eyes met. And Yong went towards him and politely bowed to him with great respect. The warden didn't know what to do - he half got up from his seat, and bowed to Yong as well.
- Yong said to him, 'Thank you, sir. Please stay healthy and get promoted to a high position, and keep caring for many broken people like me in need of compassion. I hope to see you in heaven.' The unbelieving prison warden was speechless. He took out his handkerchief and buried his face into it and was weeping.
- When the time for Yong's execution finally came, Park and Yong stood before the noose and held hands. Park said to him, 'Wow, Yong. This is so cool. You are so cool. God is so cool. Please, go ahead of us to heaven. We will all meet again soon in just a little while. Farewell for now.' Yong said, 'Yes, sir. Yes, sir.'
- In the middle of their final exchange on earth, suddenly enormous power surge like electricity began to flow from Yong's hands into Park's hands. It was not a subjective feeling. It was real and physical. Park looked at Yong. The Holy Spirit was baptising Yong, filling him up to the full and overflowing. It was visible all over Yong's face and all over his body. Yong raised his hands to heaven again and said, 'Lord, Lord. Thank you for forgiving this sinner. Thank you for receiving this sinner.' He kept saying this over and over again, overcome by the Holy Spirit falling on him. He shouted, 'Lord, Lord, Lord!'
- Then he began to sing, 'Pass me not, O gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry; While on sinners Thou art calling, Do not pass me by.' Then he began to dance, this inmate in the execution hall before the hanging noose! With a bright shining face, full of the Holy Spirit, Yong was singing and praising God, 'Savior, Savior, Hear my humble cry, While on sinners Thou art calling, Do not pass me by', and he was dancing.
- No one gave any cue, but the dozen Christians present in the hall rushed over to where Yong was, and they joined Yong in the holy dance, in that dimly lit execution hall, in front of the noose, singing and praising God with the inmate about to be executed. They were thanking and worshipping God.
- No one dared to stop them. The two prosecutors present in the hall were weeping. They said to Park later, 'We leave this place, carrying something in our hearts that we can never forget as long as we live.' The pastor was weeping. The catholic priest was weeping. The Buddhist priest was weeping. The prison warden was weeping. The floor was wet with tears.
- Finally, the time came for Yong to leave this world. The rope was placed around his neck, and the white hood was placed over his face. But Yong didn't stop singing, 'While on sinners Thou art calling, Do not pass me by.' And while he was praising God and singing, the floor beneath him was opened, and he went into eternity.
- After everyone left, Park went down to care for Yong's body. He took the rope off his neck, and embraced him. A thousand thoughts were passing through his mind. How did this happen? There was no altar call. No confession. Yong knew no gospel, ZERO. Yong did not know any hymns or worship songs whatsoever. Yet Yong sang the hymn perfectly, every note was perfect, every verse accurate.
- Park wants to ask Yong when they meet in heaven, 'Did the Holy Spirit put the song in your mouth supernaturally?'

3.4 Reflection

After hearing these testimonies, I confessed to the Lord, ***'I too was a criminal on the death row with the noose hanging over me. Jesus took my place and paid for my crimes. Thank You, Lord. Thank You!'***