

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

– Proverbs 28:13

Facing the Music

“Kent, what does ‘facing the music’ mean?” inquired Todd as his big brother entered the room.

“Facing the music’? Who did you hear say that?”

“Our teacher. Today someone broke the window in the woodshed at school. When Miss Ross asked about it, no one said anything. Then she said it was the same as telling a lie if you did it but didn’t speak up when she asked about it. I couldn’t see how it could be telling a lie if you didn’t say anything.”

“Well, it is,” said Kent. “That is the same as saying, ‘I didn’t do it’ because your silence makes people think you didn’t. You know the Bible says when someone in **authority** asks for information about something, you are guilty if you

don't tell what you know. But what did she say about 'facing the music'?"

"She said if you are guilty but refuse to face the **consequences**, you will just keep quiet or run away from those consequences. She said it takes a brave person to face the music. But she didn't say what kind of music she was talking about," said Todd.

"Oh, that is just a saying," said Kent. "I don't know where it got started. But I know what it means. In fact, I remember when I first heard that saying. It was in a story I read when I was about your size. Do you want me to tell it to you?"

"Sure," said Todd. "Then maybe I'll find out what 'facing the music' means."

Here is the story Kent told:

A **postmaster** in a big city was working in his office one afternoon. He heard a faint knock on the door.

"Come in," he said.

The door eased open, admitting three dirty, ragged, little street urchins. They looked scared out of their wits.

"What may I do for you?" asked the postmaster in a deep voice of authority.

"Oh, sir, we done it, and—and—we are here to face the music," **stammered** the smallest of the boys.

"What did you do?" asked the postmaster, much surprised.

"Well, him and him,"—here the little fellow jerked his thumb toward the two other boys—"and me, and Beanie



and Scotty were playing Follow the Leader. Beanie was the leader, and he jumped over one of them mailboxes you have on the street fer people to put letters in.

“Then I tried to jump over it, but I didn’t make it. The box tipped over. When it fell, the lock hit the curb and broke off. All the letters poured out in the street. We put ‘em all back. Every one. And set the box up. But we couldn’t fix the lock.”

“Where is this box?” asked the postmaster.

“Corner of First and Willow. We knew right off we had done something awful, but we didn’t mean to. So we was going to vamoose. Then we knew that wouldn’t be right. So then we decided to put our names on the box and let you find us if you could. But we knew you’d never catch all five of us. So that wouldn’t be fair either.”

Suddenly one of the other urchins spoke up. “Lil’ Buddy here said he was the one what knocked the mailbox over, so just put his name on it and leave the others off.”

The third boy finally found his voice. “But Beanie said he was the leader and jumped over the box first. We’ll stick together—all face the music or all vamoose.

“Then Scotty said that if we run off, someone would steal all them letters. So we knew we couldn’t do that. The only thing left was to come and face the music.”

“But we didn’t all come,” Lil’ Buddy took up the tale. He didn’t stammer now. “We left Beanie and Scotty at the box so that no one will snitch any letters. Them letters are safe with Beanie and Scotty. So him and him”—again the thumb

jerked toward the two other boys—“and me, come to tell you, and to take what’s coming to us.”

The postmaster looked at the three nervous little fellows. Then he smiled and said, “I wish I could tell you boys how great I think you are. Not many boys would be so honest as to take the blame for what they did when they could have gotten by without telling. Most boys wouldn’t care if the letters did fall out of the box and get stolen. Not many would be so brave as to come and face the consequences as you have done.”

By that time the scared looks had left the three little faces. The boys smiled in shy relief.

The postmaster came from behind his desk. His air of authority was gone. “I want to shake hands with such brave boys,” he said. “God bless you—and Scotty and Beanie too. Keep on being brave and honest, and you will go far toward being happy in this life. Facing the music is never easy, but that’s soon over and done with. A guilty conscience and the fear of being caught can keep you miserable for years. Now you go and tell Scotty and Beanie what I said, and I’ll send someone to take care of that box right away.”

As the boys left the office, the postmaster heard one of them say, “See, I told you they wouldn’t hang us.”



“Well, that’s the story that showed me what ‘face the music’ means,” said Kent. “Do you think you understand it now?”

“Yes, I do,” said Todd thoughtfully. “It means facing up

to the consequences of whatever you did that turned out wrong. Those little fellows were sure they would be punished for what they had done. But they didn't run away or even just wait to be caught. They went straight to the one in authority and confessed what they had done. And they didn't blame anyone else or act like what they had done wasn't so bad. I like that."

He was quiet for a long time. Then he said, "When I think how honest and brave those little fellows were, I guess I can face the music when I go to school tomorrow."

—Ruth K. Hobbs