

Copper Nails

By H. A. Ironside

There is nothing that so takes the joy out of life like unconfessed sin on the conscience.

I once heard the late Dr. F. E. Marsh tell that on one occasion he was preaching on this question and urging upon his hearers the importance of confession of sin and wherever possible, of restitution for wrong done to others.

At the close a young man, a member of the church, came up to him with a troubled countenance. "Pastor," he explained, "you have put me in a sad fix. I have wronged another and I am ashamed to confess it or to try to put it right. You see, I am a boatbuilder and the man I work for is an infidel. I have talked with him often about his need for Christ and have urged him to come and hear you preach, but he scoffs and ridicules it all. Now I have been guilty of something that, if I should acknowledge it to him, will ruin my testimony forever."

He then went on to say that some time ago he started to build a boat for himself in his own yard. In this work copper nails are used because they do not rust in the water. These nails are quite expensive and the young man had been carrying home quantities of them to use on the job. He knew it was stealing, but he tried to salve his conscience by telling himself that his master had so many he would never miss them and besides, he was not being paid all that he thought he deserved. But this sermon had brought him to face the fact that he was just a common thief, for whose dishonest actions there was no excuse.

"But," said he, "I cannot go to my boss and tell him what I have done or offer to pay for these I have used and return the rest. If I do he will think I am just a hypocrite. And yet those copper nails are digging into my conscience and I know I shall never have peace until I put this matter right."

For weeks the struggle went on. Then one night he came to Dr. Marsh and exclaimed,

gaged and involved at throbbing heart-core?

Yet I am more than thankful for some lessons learned through those luminous lines. I have come to see that it IS meant to become "uncomfortably close." We must first be made uncomfortable ere we can begin to fathom the comfort of God, impelled of His Spirit. Here once and again, is the up-surgings of thi vital, personal business of coming to "close quarters" and to "tight grips" with the Holy One!

I well know that many of the saints would rather have the Lord do anything with their hearts than—SEARCH—them. There is a sad shrinking from such searching, and the loss all too soon becomes evident. Yet everything is based upon this, for HE begins at the very beginning with these hearts of ours. First the searching; then all blessings will follow. Preciousness and power and provision cometh after the probing. And that has been proven over and over again in the case and in the lives of many of the saints. They rejoice now in what had been wrought then, whatever the personal cost. For how blessed to be able to turn the heart upward with the full assurance and adoration, "O but Thou art REAL to me dear Lord Jesus!" Beloved, how is it with thine heart? and how is thine heart with the Lord of that heart?—Wesleyan Methodist.

The King's Highway

"Pastor, I've settled for the copper nails and my conscience is relieved at last."

"What happened when you confessed to your employer what you had done?" asked the pastor.

"Oh," he answered, "he looked queerly at me, then exclaimed, 'George, I always did think you were just a hypocrite, but now I begin to feel there's something to this Christianity after all. Any religion that would make a dishonest workman come back and confess that he had been stealing copper nails and offer to settle for them, must be worth having.'"

Dr. Marsh asked if he might use the story, and was granted permission.

Sometime afterwards, he told it in another city. The next day a lady came up and said, "Doctor, I have had 'copper nails' on my conscience too." "Why, surely you are not a boatbuilder!" No, but I am a book-lover and I have stolen a number of books from a friend of mine who gets far more than I could ever afford. I decided last night I must get rid of the 'copper nails,' so I took them all back to her today and confessed my sin. I can't tell you how relieved I am. She forgave me, and God has forgiven me. I am so thankful the 'copper nails' are not digging into my conscience any more."

I have told this story many times and almost invariably people have come to me afterwards telling of "copper nails" in one form or another that they had to get rid of. On one occasion I told it at a High School chapel service. The next day the Principal saw me and said, "As a result of that 'copper nails' story, ever so many stolen fountain pens and other things have been returned to their rightful owners."

Reformation and restitution do not save. But where one is truly repentant and has come to God in sincere confession, he will want to the best of his ability to put things right with others.

ONLY ONE WAY OUT

According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, about eighty men of the 156th Field Artillery Regiment from Fort Dix, who had been called out to fight fires, were being trapped without knowing it. An unknown airplane pilot, seeing their plight, risked his own life by flying low enough to drop weighted paper notes to these men. Three times he did this, and the notes told the men that they were trapped, that the pilot could see the way out, and that he would guide them to safety. The men believed his words and obeyed him instantly, dropping their tools and following their guide.

On the double, the soldiers went through a narrow flame-lined channel, and all reached the highway safely. It is interesting to note that the men did not stop to argue on the notes that came from above to see whether they were genuine, and they took no chances by trying to find some other way out. They believed the only one who could view the whole scene, and ran for their lives, and were saved.

God, who alone can view the whole scene of this troubled world, sent His Son to save men, and He calls on them to believe in His Word. How futile to try to find other ways out! The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6—Forward.

A Parable

By A Busy Pastor

A certain woman once lived by herself in a solitary house at the edge of a dense, gloomy forest. She was not too well, and it is not surprising that she was inclined to be nervous and fearful. Her small room was lighted by a single coal-oil lamp, which she was careful to clean and replenish with oil every day, for she lived in constant dread of the dark and kept her lamp burning brightly all of every night.

However, in the bustle of one busy day, she forgot to refill her lamp. That night she lighted it as usual as the sun sank behind the tree tops. Again the shadow of the forest swallowed her little house; and, as the twilight faded from the sky, the light poured bravely from the windows, holding the darkness at bay. But as the woman was folding away her evening's work, the lamp began to flicker and go out. In dismay she hurried to turn the wick to conserve the little oil remaining; but as she did so, the shadows crept out of the corners and crowded up to the table, seeming to threaten her with un-named terrors. In panic the poor woman did a very surprising thing—she turned and blew out the light—and spent the long night trembling in a corner, not even daring to close her eyes to sleep.

The next day the tired lady walked the toilsome miles to the lampmaker's house to get her lamp repaired. The lampmaker assured her that the lamp was all right—it only needed oil—and she returned home comforted—to live with new confidence in her little lamp.

But—before many weeks had passed, she again neglected to clean the lamp and replenish the oil; and, as the light grew dim, again there came the strange impulse to blow out the flickering flame—and again she spent the night in terror—and again made the weary trip to the lampmaker's. This time the woman begged the lampmaker to increase the capacity of the lamp's oil reservoir; but that, he said, could not be done.

With the passing months the experience was repeating again and again, and the poor soul's fright wore more and more upon her nerves. Her daily routine was disrupted, and more and more frequently she forgot the oil. The resulting nights of anxiety and dread weakened her until those who knew her became seriously alarmed. Unfortunately, since she lived so much alone and was ashamed to discuss her fears, no one understood what the root of her trouble really was.

The woman's story might have had a tragic ending, had it not been that a certain evening a friend stopped to visit her just as her lamp was going out. The friend found her huddled by her table with the lamp turned low, staring in wide-eyed terror at the advancing shadows, just at the point of blowing out the light again. The friend was almost amused at first—then understanding and sympathetic. Stopping her hostess from extinguishing the light, she encouraged her instead, to pour in more oil; and, as the light grew stronger, she carried the lamp into the corners to show her that there was really nothing so dreadful there—that, while the shadows COULD become the hiding place of some evil thing, they themselves were nothing more than the absence of light—and that in any case, the remedy was not in fright to blow out the light, but instead to renew the oil.

The little woman was immediately relieved,

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