

The Spirit Used a Sewed Finger

by Walter L. Wilson, M.D.

Among the many duties which I had in a large factory was that of being the factory physician, attending to the sicknesses and accidents which might occur among the employees. Quite a few women were employed in this plant, being principally occupied with the operation of sewing machines. Every safeguard was placed on these machines to prevent accidents, but in spite of this some employee would be careless and let the hand become entangled in the belt or in the wheels.

One morning, as I sat at my desk, preparing the mail for quotations and distribution to the various desks, one of the factory girls presented herself with a bleeding finger. I asked her to be seated by my emergency operating table while I examined the wound and prepared the dressings. Finding that it was only a superficial wound of the skin, I inquired, "How did this happen? You must have been quite careless or else your machine is out of order." She excused herself by saying that perhaps she had been a little careless and was sorry for the accident. I dressed the wound, reproved her for being so careless and urged her to exercise more carefulness in the future. I then phoned the engineer on the floor and asked him to have one of the mechanics examine the machine at which Bertha H-- worked to see if there was any fault with either the feed or the foot. He reported shortly saying that the machine seemed to be in perfect condition. After that, the incident was dismissed from my mind.

After about ten days, the same young lady appeared again at my desk with the same finger torn much worse than on the previous occasion. The finger needed more careful attention, the wound was deeper and of a more serious character. I carefully dressed it and repaired it, and again raised the question as to why she should permit this damage. Again she professed ignorance and said that she was sorry for permitting it to happen. I reproved her more forcefully than on the former occasion and told her that if she were injured again I would have to request the foreman to dismiss her from the service. Such carelessness made her presence undesirable. After she left the office, I phoned the foreman of the floor and asked him to make a personal

investigation of her machine to ascertain if there was any fault in the equipment. He reported that the machine was in perfect order. Again I dismissed the matter from my mind.

Another ten days passed, when to my great astonishment Bertha presented herself to me a third time, accompanied by a sympathizing operator who helped her to the office. She fell into the chair rather overcome with the pain and I soon observed that it was the same finger which she had injured on the two previous occasions. This injury was really serious. The needle had penetrated the finger, piercing the bone and had broken off inside the bone. The only way to remove it was by splitting the finger down from the end, for the needle was embedded too firmly in the bone to be extracted with forceps.

I proceeded at once to do that which was necessary for the finger, and at the same time I told her that we could no longer keep her as an employee. It seemed to me that she was entirely too careless, and it was running too great a risk to have her in our employ. Having finished the dressing, I said to her quite earnestly, "Bertha, the Scripture says, 'Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' This is a serious accident; you may suffer from blood poison. You do not know what complications may follow. Are you ready to meet God? Have you arranged with the Lord for your trip to eternity? Tell me, Bertha, has this ever been considered by you seriously?"

The question stirred her heart quite deeply. She leaned over on the table, gazed at me most earnestly, and said: "Doctor, you have asked me a question that has troubled me greatly for some weeks. I am not ready to die. I do not have peace with God, and this is the third time I have come to your office in order that you might tell me how to be saved. I was not careless at the machine, and there is nothing wrong with the machine. I deliberately placed my finger under the needle the first time, thinking that while you were dressing it you would talk to me about Jesus. I went away from your desk disappointed. You said nothing to me about salvation, and I felt that you did not care for my soul. I spent most of that day crying because of my disappointment. As the days went by, my soul-troubled deepened and I decided to again place my finger under the needle; but this time to cause a deeper wound so that you would take more time in dressing it, and so perhaps would think about my soul. Again, you let me

leave your office with no help for my heart. My distress was deeper than ever. I was so disappointed and heartbroken to think that you would not help me to be saved, that I cried most of the time since then, and have not been able to eat nor sleep as I should.

"This morning," she continued, "I came to work with the determination to injure myself so severely that you would have to give me more time and perhaps would think of my soul. I deliberately put my finger under the needle. I was willing to suffer the pain and run the risk of losing my hand, if only I could get you to talk with me about the salvation of my soul."

You can well imagine how my heart was condemning me as I listened to the heart-cry of this lost soul. What deep sorrow filled my heart as I was so forcefully reminded of the fact that I had been out of touch with the Lord both of those days when this girl came to my office. Evidently, I had come to work on both of those morning without being in touch with the Holy Spirit. He was not guiding me. I had held my mind away from Him and used my eyes for other purposes. Was it possible that other broken hearts had come to me when I was out of touch with the Lord, and the opportunity to help them was lost? Thoughts of this kind surged through my mind as I looked in the tear-stained face of this troubled soul, and heard her accusations of my indifference.

"You are right in your statement," I said. "You did come to see me, and I did let you leave with no word for your heart and no gospel for your soul. I am very sorry and feel very guilty. I do ask my Lord to forgive me. Now that you have come again, I am happy to tell you of the Saviour who came to seek and to save that which was lost."

I took my Bible and together we read Romans 4:7 — "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered."

"Miss Bertha," I said, "there is a lovely Lord who can give you this blessing today. 'The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins' (Mark 2:10). I know that is what your heart wants, and I know that God wants to give you that blessing. In Luke 7:37-50, the story is told of a young woman who wanted the peace of forgiveness as you do. She came to the Lord Jesus, knelt

at His feet, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. The Saviour, seeing her desire, said to her, 'Thy sins are forgiven ... thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.' He will do this for you, Bertha, if you, too, will kneel in His presence and tell Him that you trust Him. He came to save you, He died to pay your debt, and now if you present yourself to Him, He will forgive you at once."

We knelt together at the side of the medicine cabinet, and there she told the Saviour that she believed His Word and accepted His forgiveness. Tears of joy now followed the tears of sorrow. Her soul was at rest. She and the Lord Jesus had met and her soul was saved. As she turned to leave the office, she paused a moment at the door and said: "It was worth it, Dr. Wilson; I am so glad I did it, and I am so glad He did it."

Christian, are you in touch with God? Are souls turning away in sadness from your presence because you are out of touch and have nothing to give them?

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