

One day, the tax officer came with his second notice. Naturally, Abdullah was filled with anxiety about how to make the payment. He thought of borrowing money from his neighbours, but realised that they were too poor themselves. He could not think of a way out.

Then matters grew worse. The walls of his cottage were quite old and needed repairs. While going about the replastering he noticed a pot hidden inside one wall. Excitedly, he took it out and emptied it. The papers inside fell apart at his touch; but at the bottom he found an ancient coin. When he examined it and rubbed it clean, it shone like gold. His first thought was, "Now I will be able to pay my taxes!" He began to relax. Looking forward to relief, and money to spare, he lit up a cigarette and smoked it contentedly.

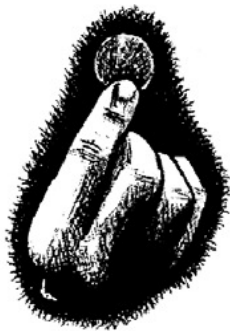
That very evening the tax officer, who was also his friend, stopped by to say hello and see how things were going. He knew that in line with his duty, he would soon have to serve the final notice to Abdullah to pay his taxes. After friendly conversation, Abdullah told the officer about the "gold" coin. The officer asked to see it.

When the coin was brought, the officer bounced it on a stone to see if it rang true. As he returned it to Abdullah, with a sad face, he said, "This coin does not ring true, my friend."

"Did it not come to me from my forefathers and possibly their ancestors from long ago? How can you say that it is not good?" Abdullah asked.

The officer turned the coin over and examined it closely, then said, "Part of it is good, but part is bad. It will not pass when you offer it."

Abdullah became very angry and said, "How dare you



talk badly about my ancestors and attack their good names! Do you think they did not know how to tell whether a coin was good or not?"

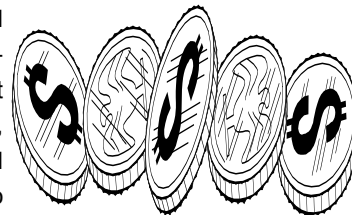
The officer replied gently and quietly, "I know nothing about your forefathers, my brother, but I do know that this coin does not ring true and that it will not pass. If I allowed you to appear at the court without warning you about it, I would not be your true friend."

At this Abdullah became even more angry and refused to speak to his friend any more. The officer got up, said goodbye, and went on his way.

That night Abdullah could not sleep because he was again filled with anxiety and doubts. He began to talk to himself, "Would my father and his fathers preserve the coin if it were not genuine?"

He concluded that they would not have saved a worthless coin. Having comforted himself with this argument, his peace returned and he decided not to think about it any longer.

In this state of mind, he made no effort to make sure the coins were genuine right up to the payment day. He did not even think of what would happen if it was worthless, and he could not pay his taxes. Finally, the last notice arrived instructing him to come to the tax office and make his payment.



Taking his shiny "gold" coin, Abdullah went to the office and took his place in line at the money-changer's table. Like the tax officer, the money-changer dropped the coin on a stone to see if it rang true. It gave off a dull, heavy sound. The money-changer gave it back to Abdullah and said, "My brother, this coin does not ring true; please give me another."

Abdullah's face turned pale. He replied "I have no

other. I beg you, Sir, take this whatever it is worth; though it be mixed metal, such a large piece of it must have some worth."

The money-changer answered, "No doubt there is a little gold in it, but it is all mixed with worthless metals. I cannot accept it. You know that the government requires payment in pure gold. You have three days to come up with the payment. See what you can do."

Abdullah had no words to say. His pride would not allow him to go to the tax officer and admit he had been foolish in trusting in this worthless coin. He was too proud to ask for help. In the remaining three days, he could do nothing. On the fourth day, the police came to take him to prison. As he was led away his neighbours heard him say, "It is my own stupidity. My punishment is on my own head. I trusted something that did not ring true." Friend, are we surprised at the carelessness of Abdullah?



But what about our own carelessness? Better that we take account of the debt that we owe God, the Lord of the whole universe, and to examine the warnings He has sent us. God Most High gives each of us three warnings that we must appear before Him on the Day of Judgment. The first is the voice of conscience, that small voice inside us telling us the difference between right and wrong. God warns us by our conscience that when we do wrong we will be punished. This is like the first notice sent to Abdullah.

Our second warning comes through the written Word of God. The Tawrat (Law of Moses), the Zabur (Psalms of David), and the Injil (Gospel of Jesus) all teach clearly that death comes because of sin, and

after death comes the judgment. The third warning is more dramatic and painful. When sickness comes and death seems near, we become painfully aware that we are going to meet God and will have to answer for everything we have done. Without a shadow of a doubt, we will have to pay up, like Abdullah.

It is time to examine your own life. In what do you put your trust? Will it ring true in the presence of God on Judgment Day?

You may be trusting in the way handed down to you by your forefathers, assuming it must be true. Dear Friend, test your set of beliefs to see if they are pure; whether it will indeed get you through the Judgment Day of God.

God requires that every prayer be said with a pure heart, free from any selfish desire, or anger, or revenge. Have your prayers been "pure gold?" No matter how hard we try, no matter how many times we say our prayers, or how much we give to the poor, or how sincerely we observe the fast, or go on pilgrimage, we come back to the same problem.

God says in his Holy Word, *"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.* (Romans 3:10-12)

The holy books and our own hearts, when we are honest, tell us that we have sinned and come short of God's righteous demands. Surely, then, to trust in our supposed good works is to trust in a false coin.

But God has not left us in this miserable condition. It is the shining, pure gold of a life lived without a single sin - the life of Jesus, the Messiah. He offered Himself in your place as a per-



fect payment for your sins. His perfect life satisfied the demands of a perfect God for a perfect sacrifice to meet the demands of a perfect law. His resurrection from the dead was complete and undeniable proof of this.

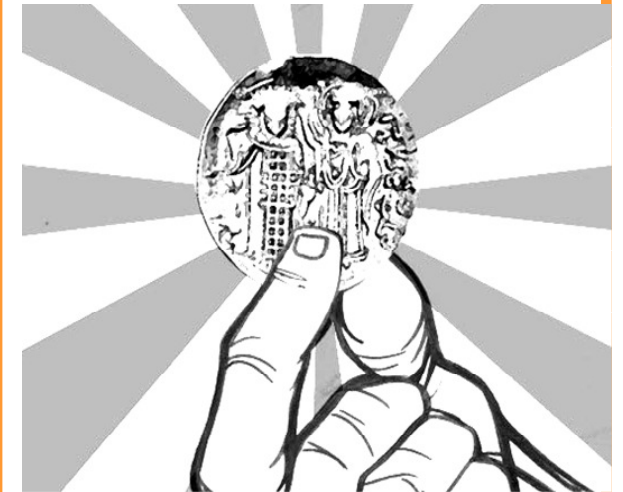
If you place your trust in Jesus the Messiah with all your heart, an amazing thing happens. What you could not do for yourself, He does for you. You are weak; He is strong. You sin; He is sinless. He died in your place to save you from eternal punishment. When you sincerely believe in Him as your Saviour and Lord, He washes you clean from your past sins and sends His Holy Spirit to live in you. He gives you a new nature, and helps you to learn a new way of living for God. Instead of presenting God with your good works (the worthless coin), He presents you with a new power to live a godly life, and entrance into eternal life with Him.

Therefore, my friend, throw away the worthless coin in which you may be trusting. Instead, receive by faith the pure gold, the sinless Messiah, as your Saviour and Lord.

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THE STORYTELLER



The Gold Coin which did not ring true

Abdullah lived in his cottage at the edge of the village. He earned his livelihood by selling vegetables, which he grew on his small plot of land. He had done this work since he was orphaned as a small boy.

As time passed, old age overtook him. Now the ploughing, sowing, weeding, and watering had become too much for him. He was not only worried about how to earn a living, but also the special problem of paying taxes.

Each spring season he received his tax notice. Usually he laid it aside until he could earn enough cash from his vegetable crop to pay the amount. But this year was different. There was a drought. Many plants withered and his crop was hardly enough to fill a basket.