Howard and the Nails

There was once a very bad boy whose name was Howard. This troubled his father, who was a very good man. He had tried to help Howard but nothing had worked. One day Father thought of something. He said, "Howard, here are a hammer and a can of nails. Every time you do a wrong thing, I want you to hammer one of these nails into this post." "OK, Daddy, I will," said Howard. After a few days, Howard came to Daddy and said, "I used all the nails in the can, and the post is almost all filled up." Father went to the post and found it full of nails. "Howard," he asked sadly, "have you done something wrong for each of these nails?" "Yes, Daddy." "Oh, Howard, how sad. Won't you be a good boy now?" Howard thought for a little bit and finally said, "Daddy, I'll try. I know I have been very bad. I'll ask God to help me do better." "Now then," said Father, "every time you are good, pull out a nail and put it back into the can."

After a week, Howard came to Father and said, "Come here, Daddy. I have pulled out every nail, and the can is full again." "Well, I'm glad to see it, my son. But isn't it too bad that the marks of the nails are still in the post? That's the way it is with sin, Howard. It always leaves its marks. But if you tell God you are sorry and you really mean it, He will forgive you through Jesus. Isn't that a wonderful promise? You'll try harder, won't you?" "Yes, Daddy," promised Howard. "God will help me to be pure and kind." ❖