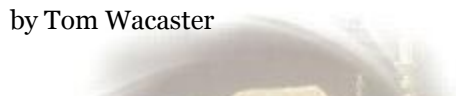


FOUR FLAT TIRES

by Tom Wacaster



On a recent trip out of town I passed through Memphis, Tennessee. Occasionally I have to go to, or pass through, a large town to remind myself why I enjoy living in a small town. On this particular day the traffic was not all that heavy, and my route took me to the north of the city, heading east on I-40. For the most part the state of Tennessee does a good job of keeping their roads clear of debris. On this particular day, however, as I rounded a curb, dead ahead was what appeared to be something like one of those old wire mesh bed springs lying right in my path. I was never really sure exactly what it was because I was too busy dodging the object to preserve my automobile and my sanity. I did manage to miss the item; I cannot say that for the driver behind me - he hit the object with all four tires. I was glancing in my rearview mirror to see how he fared and all I saw was what appeared to be puffs of air shooting out of both front tires and both rear tires. He did not lose control of his car, but he did suffer the unimaginable: all four tires going flat at one time. As he pulled off the road, two or three other drivers dodged the obstacle, and eventually the traffic had slowed to the point where others were stopping to render aid (and hopefully remove the obstacle from the road). As I continued east the images of dodging autos, slowing traffic, and frustrated drivers pulling off the road faded in my rearview mirror. I pitied that poor gentleman who appeared to have suffered four flat tires at one time!

There was an Old Testament character who suffered four flat tires at one time, and so far as the Bible tells us, he was not even riding in a chariot, much less an automobile. His name was Job. And the “flat tires” of which we speak are those trials that come into our lives and take the wind out of our sails and often drive us to our knees in prayer to the Father.

The “obstacle” that Job simply could not dodge was the devil. Asked by Jehovah if Satan had “considered my servant Job,” the devil answered, “Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face” (Job 1:9-10). There followed precisely four tragedies in the life of Job.

“And there was a day when his sons and his daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell *upon them*, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1:13-15).

“While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1:16).

“While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1:17).

“While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1:18-19).

Job suffered immensely; and the worst was yet to come. The devil robbed Job of his business (“flat one”), his property (“flat two”), his associates (“flat three”), and finally his children (“flat four”) – all in rapid succession so that Job had little or no time to respond. With the air taken out of his sails, hope taken from his heart, and joy snatched from his life, “Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:20-21). Instead, we are told, “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:22).

How would we react if, while travelling down the highway on the way to an important meeting, or on vacation, or simply out for a short trip to the local mall, and we were to encounter a flat on all four tires at one time? No doubt life is filled with uncertainties. Flat tires, whether it be one, or four at one time, are nothing more than inconveniences. Perhaps how we react on just such an occasion might tell us a lot with regard to how we would react if we were to suffer as did Job. Don't forget this one thing: When the “flats” of life come along, God is there to help you change your tires. I'll close with the following poem that I hope will comfort some poor soul who might be suffering at this very moment:

He is There

When I need a word of comfort
He is there!
When I struggle 'neath a burden,
He is there!
When the blue skies turn to grey,
And I cannot find my way
At the closing of the day,
He is there!
When I cannot face tomorrow
He is there!
When my life is filled with sorrow
He is there!
When I dread the coming dawn,
And it seems I can't go on,
When my hope is almost gone,
He is there!

--Bill Carr