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Echoes of Grace

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10 CENTS

On this particular morning my friend Garvin and I were alone. Usually we don't travel about Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, without someone local with us. However, we know the city well, and I knew that the school where we were headed for our next appointment was just about a ten- to fifteen-minute walk from the bus terminal. When we arrived at the terminal about 10:30 a.m., we quickly gathered together our satchels and headed across Independence Square at the city center. This area has always been notorious for street crime and violence. However, we figured that there were two of us, that it was broad daylight, and that we were only going a couple of blocks to a high school where they were expecting us that morning.

As we left Independence Square and started up Nelson Street, my friend Garvin's cell phone rang. It was our friend with whom we were staying. Knowing that we would be in transit, he was calling to check on us, to make sure we were okay. As Garvin talked on the phone, we walked slowly along the left side of the street in the close quarters, among the

concrete buildings
and the blacktop maze
of streets and alleyways. You
don't tend to move fast when it's
almost one hundred degrees and humid.

Suddenly, I realized we had a problem. Out of the corner of my eye I could see a young man trailing us. He was well over six feet tall, and his T-shirt was pulled up over his mouth and nose.

Without alerting Garvin, I decided to test the situation, and so I slowed down almost to a stop. The man who was following us slowed down as well. Then I stopped completely! He passed us and then stopped as well. I knew we were in trouble, and I knew that, though we were on a crowded street, there was no one to help us but the Lord.

The moment Garvin pushed the "end" button on his cell phone, the man with the shirt pulled up to his eyes attacked me from behind. If I had not been watching and ready for him, he would have pushed me to the street, but I grabbed a nearby pole and braced myself.

Though I'd never been mugged before, I've had lots of scary experiences. I've wondered if the boat was going to go to the bottom of the sea. Was the plane going to make the runway? We've had our house broken into and ransacked, and I've been in hurricanes, on sides of volcanoes, been held at gunpoint in the jungle, and in other dangerous situations. But I've never had an experience quite like this. It is one

thing to have your *space* violated by another person, but quite another thing to have your *person* violated.

The attacker dove for the money that was in my pocket, which wasn't very much, and he thoroughly roughed me up as well. Of course, as soon as I yelled and struggled away, Garvin was immediately alerted, and we quickly crossed the street. There were some shops there and a lot of people milling about and going here and there. We thought surely there would be somebody that would help us. There were street vendors by the side of the road, as well as shopkeepers, but nobody would even look in our direction. Garvin tried to appeal to one of the vendors for help, but as we learned later, the vendors usually partner with these street bandits by hiding the stolen goods.

Suddenly, both Garvin and I realized my attacker had an accomplice. The first man ducked into a nearby doorway and whispered something to the second man and then started back towards us. By this time, we had moved far enough down the street that I could see the school ahead. I indicated to Garvin that we were going to pray hard and make a run for it. I knew this was our only hope. The school compound was surrounded with a chain-link fence having barbed wire on top and an armed guard at the gate. Once we got inside the chain-link fence, we would be safe.

At this point, things became a blur for me as we took off for the school. Between the gunfire, the

confusion of dodging people and vehicles, the noise and general uproar, I don't remember much of the next few moments. The Lord got us safely inside

the gate and under the protection of the security guards. Once inside, we quickly explained the situation. We were immediately taken to the principal's office. The police were called, as the men were still outside the school gate, evidently waiting for us to leave. That's how brazen these street bandits are even in the middle of the day!

When two police officers arrived, we explained what had happened and were told that we must go down to the police station and make a full report. Although they did not tell us at the time, they knew who my attacker was by my description. We found out later that he was a notorious criminal with the street name of "Ten Cents." The police left the school, and we promised to meet them at the station, having arranged with a teacher friend to drive us there. The police offered to take us, but we opted for the ride with those we knew. Garvin and I were pretty shaken and just wanted to be with friends.

We got into the car and pulled out of the schoolyard. When we reached the corner, there were the two men spread against the wall, and the police had their pistols on them. The one man, "Ten Cents," who had attacked me, saw us out of the corner of his eye. I don't know what kind of fancy maneuver he pulled,

but he left his T-shirt in the police officer's hand and escaped! There was gunfire, but apparently he slipped away through a large drainpipe.

We went to the police station and filled out an official report. As we were answering questions from the officer behind the desk, the two policemen whom we had dealt with at the school entered the room. In that large room full of desks with men and women filling out reports, interviewing people, and bustling back and forth, it seemed like utter confusion, until one of the officers who had just entered announced in a loud voice, "It was Ten Cents!"

It still makes my blood run cold to recall the initial silence and then the ripple of murmured conversation that went around the room. The officer we were dealing with at the desk leaned over and explained that "Ten Cents" was a very notorious and dangerous street-gang leader in Trinidad and that he had been given the name "Ten Cents" because he would kill you for as little as ten cents!

With our police interview concluded, we were urged to get in the car that was waiting for us and to leave Port-of-Spain immediately. We were urged never to travel in the city alone and without local friends to escort us with secure transportation.

To put this story down on paper has been very difficult for me. For about a year following the incident, I would wake up in the night and see people running in every direction, and still, in my mind, I would

The Daily News
EXTRA! EXTRA!

“TEN CENTS”
GUNNED DOWN ON
NELSON STREET!

hear gunfire and smell the gun smoke. In fact, it took going back to Trinidad a year later and driving down Nelson Street in a secure vehicle to finally get me past the trauma of the whole

affair. But the real cure was prayer and the Lord Himself, who is the Great Physician.

You may understandably ask, “Then why did you take the trouble to record this story if it was so painful?” There are several reasons.

It’s important to understand that our enemy Satan only wants us for what he can get out of us. He’s a taker and a destroyer. I am reminded of the statement in the Bible recorded by Solomon who said, **“The way of transgressors is hard”** (Proverbs 13:15). I am told that many of these men start their life of street crime at eight or nine years of age, and usually they do not live long. **“The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened”** (Proverbs 10:27). In fact, just a few years after this incident, “Ten Cents” was murdered at twenty-three years of age. The Trinidad newspaper carried the following headline on Thursday, December 10, 2009:

“TEN CENTS’ MURDERED!”

The story began: “Murderer accused Joel ‘Ten

Cents' Patino, 23, of East Dry River, was gunned down on Nelson Street in Port-of-Spain on Tuesday evening ...”

To live a life of sin and crime is one thing, but to enter into the next life without Christ is fatal. The Lord warned, **“I say unto you My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him”** (Luke 12:4-5).

By contrast, God is a giver and delights to give many wonderful gifts to mankind. **“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning”** (James 1:17).

Satan can never rob a true believer in the Lord Jesus of his or her salvation. The Lord said, **“I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand”** (John 10:28). Thankfully we have One who is greater than Satan, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. **“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world”** (1 John 4:4). I am thankful that I have the great giving Lord Jesus as my Saviour and my Friend. Do you?

You can find out more about how He delights to deliver in the next story, *The Prisoner of Glatz*. ◀

THE PRISONER OF GLATZ

In a fold of a mountain range in Upper Silesia, through which the wild Niesse river forces its passage down to the Oder, stands the impregnable Prussian fortress of Glatz, a natural fortress, almost unequalled in the world, surrounded by mountain peaks like walls. The valley itself is shut out from the rest of the world, and anyone enclosed by the massive walls and gratings of the castle is as if buried alive.

Here lay the Count of Montague, formerly pampered but now hopelessly trapped. By treason and the attempted murder of Frederic William III of Prussia, he was condemned to solitary imprisonment for life. For a whole year he lay in his frightful, lonely cell, without one star of hope. They had left him only one book—a Bible—and this, for a long period, the skeptical Count would not read, or, if forced to take it up to kill time, it was only read with anger and bitterness against the God it reveals. But the more he read the Bible, the more he felt the pressure of the gentle hand of God on his heart.

On a stormy November night, when the winds howled around the fortress, the rain fell in torrents, and the swollen Niesse roared down the valley, the Count lay sleepless on his cot. The storm in his heart

was as fearful as the one outside. His past troubled him; he was convicted of his shortcomings and sins. For the first time in his life, his heart was soft, and he genuinely repented. Rising from his cot, he opened his Bible, and his eye fell on, **“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me”** (Psalm 50:15). This Word of God reached his soul and he cried to God for mercy. And that gracious and compassionate God heard the cry of this sufferer in the storm-beaten dungeon of Glatz.

That same night in his castle, at Berlin, King Frederic lay sleepless in bed. Severe pain tortured him, and in his utter exhaustion he begged God to give him one hour of refreshing sleep. The favor was granted, and when he woke again, he said to his wife, “God has looked upon me very graciously, and I may well be thankful to Him. Who in my kingdom has wronged me most? I will forgive him.”

“The Count of Montague,” replied Louise, “who is imprisoned in Glatz.”

“You are right,” said the sick king; “let him be pardoned.”

Before dawn in Berlin, a messenger was sent to Silesia, taking a full pardon to the prisoner in Glatz.

Have you returned **“unto the Lord”** and discovered that **“He will have mercy ... and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon”** (Isaiah 55:7)?

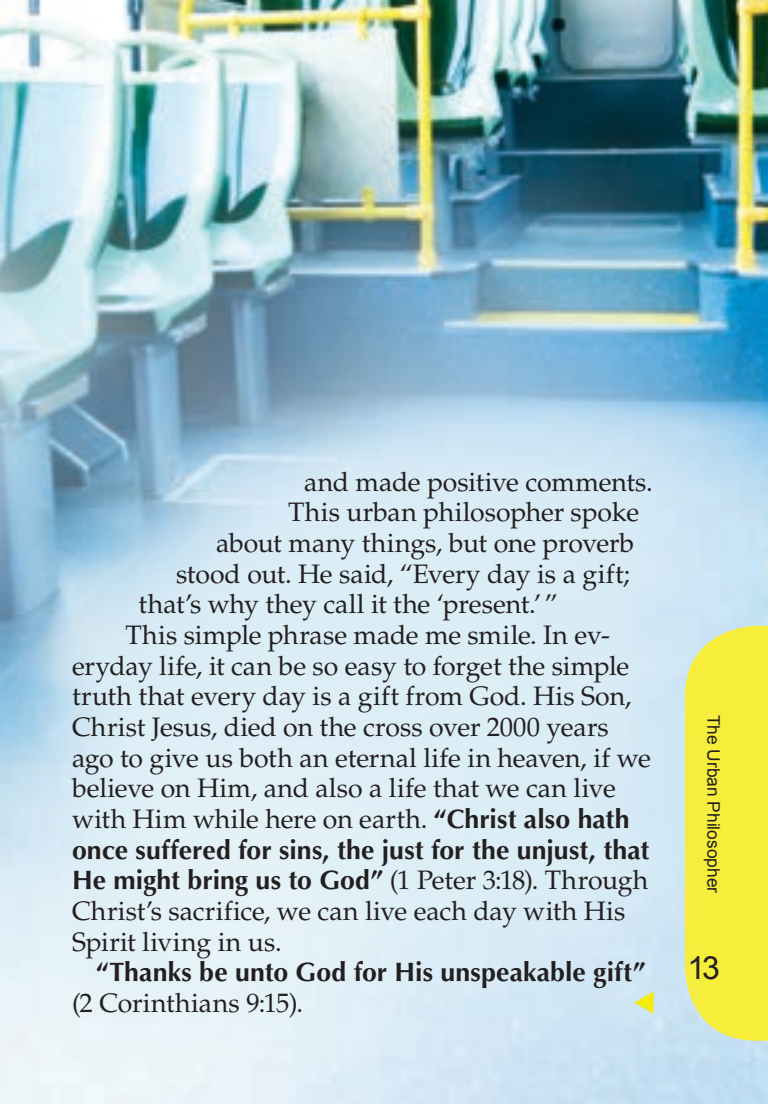
Find out more about the God who gives in *The Urban Philosopher*. ◀



THE URBAN PHILOSOPHER

I'm a university student. To save money, I ride the public transit buses to the campus, and I meet a lot of interesting people on those rides.

One day as I was staring out the bus window, I overheard two men talking. At first I didn't pay much attention, but as their conversation developed, it caught my interest. The one seemed to be expounding on life, while the other listened attentively



and made positive comments. This urban philosopher spoke about many things, but one proverb stood out. He said, “Every day is a gift; that’s why they call it the ‘present.’”

This simple phrase made me smile. In everyday life, it can be so easy to forget the simple truth that every day is a gift from God. His Son, Christ Jesus, died on the cross over 2000 years ago to give us both an eternal life in heaven, if we believe on Him, and also a life that we can live with Him while here on earth. **“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God”** (1 Peter 3:18). Through Christ’s sacrifice, we can live each day with His Spirit living in us.

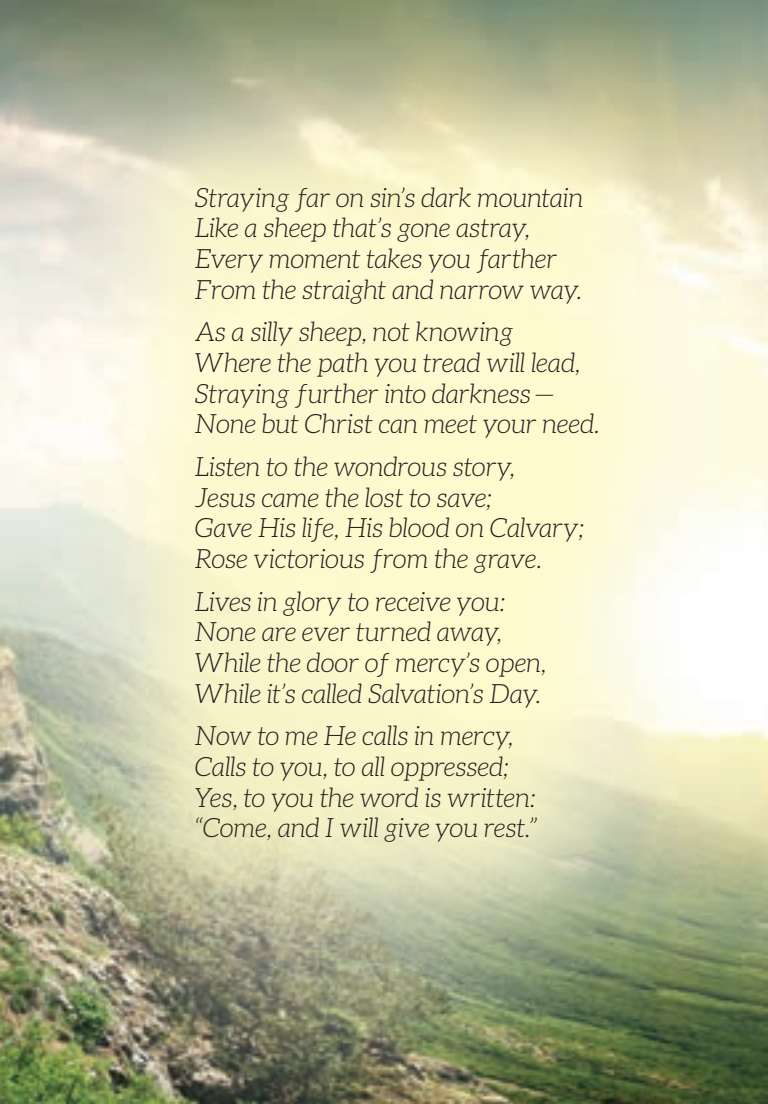
“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15). ◀



Salvation's DAY

Salvation's Day

14



Straying far on sin's dark mountain
Like a sheep that's gone astray,
Every moment takes you farther
From the straight and narrow way.

As a silly sheep, not knowing
Where the path you tread will lead,
Straying further into darkness —
None but Christ can meet your need.

Listen to the wondrous story,
Jesus came the lost to save;
Gave His life, His blood on Calvary;
Rose victorious from the grave.

Lives in glory to receive you:
None are ever turned away,
While the door of mercy's open,
While it's called Salvation's Day.

Now to me He calls in mercy,
Calls to you, to all oppressed;
Yes, to you the word is written:
"Come, and I will give you rest."

ECHOES OF GRACE

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“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

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