

Four Flats in One Day

1 Peter 1:6-7

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

When you're doing God's work there are lots of things that go wrong. When you're working in Brazil, which is a spiritist culture, you can be sure that the devil is involved in making many things go wrong.

It wasn't uncommon in Brazil for us to get flat tires. There were many horse drawn carts on the roads that the poorer classes used to transport building supplies. The horses often threw a shoe and the nails ended up in the road and people got flat tires. So for us it was not unusual to have a flat tire. We would change it and go to the tire shop to have it repaired.

One particular day stands out in my memory because it involved at least four flat tires in the same day. It happened to be a time when college youth corp workers came from the United States to help us with our ministry. The first flat took place as I went to cross the town, which was around 15 miles to pick up our children from school. On the way I had a flat tire. I had to change the tire for the spare and drop the original off to be repaired. All this made me late for picking the kids up from school.

I took the kids back home and stopped at a tire shop to pick up the repaired tire. Then Marilyn needed the car to go across town to a ladies meeting. On her way to the meeting she had a flat tire. She was able to find a phone and called me to let me know what was happening. I said there wasn't much I could do about it, not having another car. She eventually found somebody to help change the tire. When she got back I took it to the tire store to be repaired. That was flat tire number two.

Then the evening came when the youth corps workers were coming in by the bus and needed to be picked up at the bus station. On the way to the bus station I had another flat tire, making me late picking them up. We got to the bus station and were able to pick up the four youth workers putting their luggage high on the roof rack of the car. Imagine five big people with their luggage packed in and on top of a small car. I mentioned to them that we already had three flats that day. As we sat in the parking lot packing things into the car I could hear a hissing sound of air leaking out of the tire, and I had no spare to change it.

I told them what we had been through that day with three flat tires already and the fourth one was deflating. It was already late at night. We were about 25 miles from center city and had to go through the entire city to get to the other side of the town where our home was. I said, "Guys we need a miracle. We have to make it home on this tire. It's the middle of the night. It's dangerous on the streets of Porto Alegre and there's no place to get a tire repaired at this time of night."

We drove all the way praying that God would enable that tire to stay inflated until we got to our house. Thankfully we made it to our house. As we pulled into the driveway I got out of the car and I stood there with the four students and said, "Listen!" We all listened as the last air escaped from that tire and it went flat.

It seems like a small thing that one would have four flat tires in one day. But it illustrates the difficulties of working as a missionary in a culture of spiritism and the occult. Satan opposes the work of ministry. He can do it through electronics, he can do it through flat tires, through people, or through life events. He is going to hinder you in any way he can.

