



## Falling Down

While walking around I have fallen down numerous times over the past two and a half years. Five of those tip-overs were due to seriously spraining my right ankle and the result is always shed blood and injury. The first of those was day number twenty-two of the walk and it was written about in the May-June 2002 issue of *Loaves and Fishes*.

Of all the times I've fallen only three incidents have happened in public. It has been interesting being a part of the events that unfolded after I'm lying on the ground sometimes injured.

I fell while walking with two friends in snowy Iowa this past winter. Praise God Daniel didn't hesitate as he reached out and pulled me back up to my feet. I am still grateful for his kindness.

Earlier in Colorado at ten thousand plus feet elevation my new friend, Scott, went above and beyond the call of duty when he lifted me off the pavement. You see, Scott was already carrying my heavy backpack while I was carrying his five-pounder. We were heading down a fairly steep stretch of highway and I was playing tourist gawking at the splendor of the mountains. Landslides are common during the spring thaw in the Rockies, thus, there was a pile of rocks scattered onto the roadway. Usually, I'm carrying my own pack and am being quite careful where I place my feet, but I wasn't paying attention. My left shoulder took the brunt of the fall and was injured pretty badly. When my right ankle buckles I go crashing, this time due to the steep downhill grade. I continue to be grateful Scott picked me up when he was already carrying my load. Playing tourist is something I do much more carefully these days.

Three months after Scott bailed me out my right ankle folded again, this time because I misstepped off a curb in Denver. I was about ready to cross a busy intersection, but ended up sprawled out face first with my heavy backpack stretching from mid-back to well over my head pinning me down. I laid for what seemed like five minutes when in actuality it was closer to a minute, with the big monster on top of me. No one asked if I was O.K. or came to help. They were probably in a hurry doing something important or maybe I looked scary to them, I don't know. After a couple of minutes I made it to my feet and was stunned and bloody. I stumbled across the intersection and wondered if some of the motorists thought I had too much to drink or maybe I was just out of it. Well, at least no one reached out to me in a negative way. Because, at the time, the walk was many thousands of miles long I wasn't surprised by the lack of assistance. Not too many of us would help out a staggering bloody homeless-looking man. It seems whenever I'm in my greatest need no one dares to help out, even when traffic is stopped and right next to me.

Late one afternoon I was seriously looking for a place to stay before the impending severe storms engulfed me. Many of the usual places to sleep don't cut it during thunderstorms. My options are much more limited when big weather is closing in. For instance, a dry culvert becomes risky when rain is on the way.

Praise God, an old abandoned feed store/grinding mill appeared at the right time. A large window and window frame had been removed which allowed me to easily disappear into the bowels of the building. Traffic was non-existent at just the right moment as I "flew"



**Daniel helps Don up**

through the large opening. A feeling of big-time thankfulness overwhelmed me because I knew no one saw me enter my new home. It didn't make, the place stunk from a layer of bird and rodent feces all over. It didn't make, it was noisy due to the slapping up and down of many loose metal roof pieces as they kept time with the gusty winds. What did make, was no one saw me and I had a roof in places over my head that offered protection from heavy thunderstorms. At least I hoped so.

The sun was lowering in the west as my eyes adjusted to the darkness inside the building. Snooping around for the best place to bed down became top priority. After awhile I noticed the reason for strong odors. The place was home to hundreds of English Sparrows who accounted for the fresh poops, stink, and bird noise. These birds could never get a job in Birdie Choir. "Tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet, tweet!" Their singing group was louder and less melodic than the banging roof. I continued to be thankful for the twenty-year abandoned feed store. So what, it was tweet, tweet, tweet. I had me a place, where I'd get some dry sleep.

After searching the building for my best possible resting place I found an old four foot by eight foot sheet of plywood that wasn't covered with excrement and filth. I almost laid the plywood down for cleanliness protection from the environmental conditions on the floor, but dust came out of a six inch diameter pipe twelve feet

above where my bed would be. Obviously I wouldn't knowingly lay my bedding down under a hole in the roof, bird's nests, or roosting places. Even though I doubted birds would be hanging out in the pipe, I didn't want to experience bird squirt in the middle of the night. My second choice, five feet away, became my first choice.

Camp was made by laying the plywood down on the poops. On top of the plywood went my ground cloth, air mattress, and sleeping bag. I settled into my sleeping bag and stared at the ceiling above. More dirt and dust dropped down from the pipe and shortly thereafter a small bird, who was desperately flapping its wings, plopped to the poopy floor where I would have been trying to sleep. Is God good or what?! Yuk! Getting hit with a baby bird from twelve feet isn't something I yearn for. Ever. Honest.

The little thing didn't move, and if you think I was about to get out of my bed, put on my shoes, and traipse through the poops in order to investigate a baby bird that probably broke its neck, you are highly mistaken. I am the man walking across America for Jesus who needs his sleep. I work hard and don't have the energy to deal with a bird's troubles.

After about five minutes the "dead" bird raised its head and yells out, "TWEET, TWEET, TWEET" over and over at the top of its lungs. "Man, I thought you were dead, shut up, and I need my sleep" went through my mind.

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