

April, 2004

Dear Friends,

On March 5, 2004, Max Aldrich passed away. My dear old friend and elder in the first church I served as a young minister, struggled with Parkinson's Disease for many years.

It was just a few weeks before that I'd had a conversation with Max's son and we had reminisced about all the kind things his father had done for others over the years. I told Kevin about the time, more than 30 years ago, when his dad stopped by the parsonage unexpectedly on a Saturday morning. He asked if I would take him to Auburn. (He was a little evasive about the purpose of the trip.) When we got to town, our objective became clear. Max had noticed that the tires on our old Pontiac Tempest were getting pretty thin. That day, I returned home with four new tires... a generous gift from our dear friend, Max.

Now... As God's providence would have it, on the same day that we were discussing Max's kindness of 30 years ago, I found myself standing near the automotive section in our local Wal-Mart store. I walked a young minister friend. He explained that he had unexpectedly found a flat tire when he had gone out to his car that morning. Upon closer inspection, he discovered that he needed to buy more. He wasn't complaining. He wasn't asking for a thing. But the Spirit's message was unmistakably clear. We spoke for a while and then, before I left, I went to the counter and discreetly paid for the tires.

On the phone, later in the week, my minister friend thanked me for the tires. He seemed surprised to hear me say, "Those tires are from my good friend, Max. I really had very little to do with it. It just took 30 years for them to get to you." A few weeks later... on the day of Max's memorial service, I presented to his family a Thank You Note for the tires. But it wasn't from me. It was from my young minister friend.

Many thanks to Max's family who gave me permission to share this story as a reminder that... A gift remains in transition. If that process stops... it ceases to be a gift and becomes a mere possession. I'm happy to report that the tires thoughtfully provided more than 30 years ago by my old friend Max just slipped back into the gift column once again.

Am I to be a conduit through whom God's blessings flow or the place where an ever increasing accumulation of blessings become my possessions? "Thanks, Max. The gift of your example was worth more than the tires." As it should be... As it should always be...The gift goes on...The gift goes on and on.

If you made a contribution in March, your receipt is enclosed. I'm happy to report that, because of your special contributions, last month's donations were especially strong. Next month, we'll resume our dialogue as we address the challenge of dealing with our recent budget shortfall. I ask you to join me in prayer as we ask God to provide for our significant ministry needs. Thank you for your faithful support. We are partners, together, in a vital ministry. Without your help, it could not be done.

God bless,

Lee Bracey
Executive Director