



## Chewing Gum Remedy

by Alden W. Follett

It was either Adam or Calvin who said, "Look, Dad. There is chewing gum in this shop!"

Then it was either Calvin or Adam who said, "There really is, Dad! Would you get us some? Please?"

The twin boys had stopped in front of a small shop in an African city near where their father was teaching in a mission school.

"I am afraid it would cost too much," Father said. "You have seen how things are here. Soap, salt, and flour are terribly costly. I doubt we have enough money for chewing gum."

It was either Calvin or Adam who answered, "But, Dad, we have not had any since we left Australia."

And then it was either Adam or Calvin who added, "That is right, Dad. And we have been in this country six months. That is a long time, you know. We could at least find out how much it costs."

"All right," Father relented. "We will go in and check the price. But if I buy some, you will have to chew it in small pieces. Likely there will not be any more for a long time."

The twins quickly agreed to chew only half a stick every two weeks. "That way we can make it last a long time," said one of the boys.

"That way it will seem not to have cost so much!" their father said with a smile.

Several weeks after father bought the chewing gum, the twins heard him talking to one of the other teachers about visiting a school in a neighboring country.

"May we go too?" Adam asked.

Father told them the plan. The twins, their older brother and sister, Mother, and Father would travel in their small van. The other teacher and his wife, whom the children called Uncle Al and Aunt Margaret, would travel in their own car. Two days of driving would get them to the other school. They would stay there a few days and then return home.

For several days the two families spent their spare time getting ready for the trip. Then early one morning the two heavily loaded cars started on the journey. A few hours later they came to a yellow line painted across the highway. At each end of the line, beside the road, was a large, standing cement ring. Nearby stood a sign: "You are now at the equator."

When Father stopped the car, the twins hurried out.

"I am in the Southern half of the earth!" Calvin yelled.

Their older brother stood with a foot on each side of the line. "I am standing in the northern half and the southern half!"

Several hours later the two families arrived at a mission hospital where they stayed with friends overnight. Starting early the next morning, they followed the highway through a game park where the wild animals can wander free. There the twins saw





elephants, hippopotamus, buffalo, and some big white birds lined up like soldiers, swimming and diving together.

Crossing the border into the other country, they found the road almost not able to travel on. Their small cars had to avoid the deep ruts cut by huge trucks. In some places they had to drive around huge rocks. In other spots mud made the cars slide down the road sideways.

After about three hours on the rough road, the twins began to feel hungry. "Can we stop and eat?" they asked.

"But we have not gone very far into this country yet," Father said, a worried look on his face. "I was hoping we could get farther down the road before we had to stop. But now that you said something about it, I am hungry too, after all this driving."

Father and Uncle Al both stopped their cars under a spreading thorn tree. While Aunt Margaret and mother brought out the food, Adam and Calvin explored the road where they found tracks in the soft earth.

"Are these buffalo tracks, Dad?"

"Yes, they are," said father; "and I hope we finish eating before the animals that made them come this way again."

"Let us at least begin eating before they return," Mother said. "Lunch is served."

The eight travelers gathered around the "table," a heavy cloth spread on the ground beside the car. They bowed their heads and thanked God for a safe journey, the food, and the beauty all around.

The meal was almost over when Adam pointed under their car and asked, "Say, Dad, is that oil on the ground?"

Father crawled partway under the car and answered, "You are right. There is a leak in the oil pan."

"Is it a serious problem?" Mother asked.

Father looked worried. "It could be. We have lost almost one-half liter since we stopped, and probably more along the road." He lifted the hood and checked the oil. "It is almost a liter low. If we can not stop the leak, we will not get past the next two mud holes before the engine burns out."

"We will need to see what is causing the leak before we know how bad it is," Uncle Al said.

Father crawled under the car again. With a paper towel he wiped the dirt from the place where the oil was running out slowly.

"I hope it is not serious," Aunt Margaret said. "We have not seen anything that even looked like a repair shop for miles."

"This is beginning to look bad. If we cannot drive our car, what will we do? We can not walk with all the animals around, and towing would be impossible on this road."

Father slid from under the car. "I found what the trouble is. Oil is leaking from a small crack."





Walking to the trunk of his car, Uncle Al took out a strip of rubber cut from an inner tube. "Maybe I can wrap this around in some way and stop the leak." He crawled under the car.

After a few minutes he twisted his way out looking troubled. "I can not make this work. But if somebody had some chewing gum, I think I could stop the leak."

Calvin's eyes lit up. "Hey, we have chewing gum!"

"All right," said Uncle Al. "I have a job for you two. I want each of you to chew half a stick, and then I will see what I can do."

The twins gladly turned to the task, but after about five minutes they had to give up the gum.

Taking a paper towel and the gum, Uncle Al crawled back under the car. He wiped away all the oil and then pushed the gum into the crack. When he crawled out a few minutes later, he said, "The leak is stopped. I think it will hold."

Father added oil to the engine, and the travelers continued on their way, arriving at their destination shortly after dark.

At worship time that evening mother asked Uncle Al, "How did you know the twins had chewing gum?"

"I did not," replied Uncle Al. "When I was under the car and discovered I could not make the rubber strip work, I prayed, 'Dear God, You know we are in serious trouble. We need Your help.' Then two words flashed into my mind: chewing gum! I tried to forget the thought. Where would a person find chewing gum in this place? I doubted that there was any within hundreds of miles, but something made me ask."

Then either Adam or Calvin said, "I think Jesus helped us find that chewing gum."

And either Calvin or Adam added, "I think it is good that we got hungry when we did."

And Father said, "I think so too. When we bought that gum, we were prepared for an emergency that we had no idea would happen. It reminds me of Isaiah 65:24." He found the text and read,

"Before they call  
I will answer;  
while they are still speaking  
I will respond."  
Isaiah 65:24 CWK

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