Douglas Collins whistled all the way to Ray's Used Car Lot. His hand squeezed down tightly over the down payment money inside his pants pocket. He had worked long, hard hours to earn the money. But, then, he was used to hard work. It didn't bother him at all.

Ever since he was nine or ten years old he'd been earning money to help pay for his school clothes and other minor needs in the home. Shoveling snow off sidewalks in the winter and raking leaves in the fall, or pulling weeds and mowing lawns in the summertime, kept him and his little sister in school clothes and a good Sunday outfit apiece. He'd even managed to buy clothing
for his mother with his earnings. And, always, he used the money for these necessary things only after the tithes and offerings were taken out and put in the special tithe envelope for Sunday’s giving in the church.

Doug’s father was a sickly and very frail man. He spent most of his waking hours sitting in a wheel chair in front of the living room window watching the world as it passed him by. For all his pain and suffering, he was a kindly man who smiled often and was gentle and loving to his family. Once a healthy, robust, husky man with a will to work and provide well for his little family, Doug knew his dear father must be suffering untold anguish over his physical handicap.

The accident at the plant that caused his physical disability came about through the carelessness of a worker in the department next to where his father worked. The man was fired, to be sure, but his father would never again be the once-strong, capable man of his former years and the disability check that came each month never seemed to stretch far enough to keep abreast of the bills. Doug felt greatly honored that God had provided work for him, making it possible to be the extension of his father’s inadequate disability checks.

He squeezed the down-payment money more tightly inside his pocket and said a hearty, “Praise the Lord,” to God for making it possible, then he walked briskly into the enormous used car lot. Mr. Ray greeted him almost instantly.

“You’re back, I see,” he said, with a broad smile on his face. “I told you I’d be here around this time,” Doug answered.

“I have the down payment for the blue Buick I like so well.”

“Sorry, Doug, I just sold it.”

“You . . . you did? But I told you I wanted it.” Doug looked dumbfounded. “And you . . . said . . . you’d. . . .”

“Someone beat you to it. I'm sorry, Douglas. But business is business. Coming to think of it, I believe it was a friend of yours who bought it. Do you know Craig Matton?”
"I do. Did . . . Craig buy it?"

"One and the same. He put quite a sizable sum down on that little job. But I have others on the lot. Over here is a good Chevy. One-owner car. In excellent condition. I know the former owner well. . . ."

"Thanks, Mr. Ray. I guess I was mistaken."

"Mistaken? About what?"

"I thought the Buick was meant for me; God must have had other plans."

Mr. Ray scratched his head thoughtfully. "I'm sure I don't understand."

"No, I guess you don't. I'm a Christian. I belong to God. I talk everything over with Him before I do anything. And, that being the case, His Word tells us that all things work together for good to those that love Him; so He had a reason for me not getting that car. Well, have a good day. God bless."

"But Douglas, I have dozens of others cars. . . ."

"Thanks, Mr. Ray. Not today."

Doug could hardly believe what had just happened. It seemed unreal to him. Strange, too. Mr. Ray had even promised to hold the car for him while he went home after the money he saved. And to think that Craig had bought it! He knew how well he, Doug, liked that car. They had talked about it a number of times. But Craig said he liked the red Camaro. . . .

Doug shook his head in disbelief. His friend, buying the car right out from under him! And Craig knew he'd planned to get that Buick! Well, he would not allow any wrong feelings to possess him. Oh, no!

Trying hard to put it out of his mind and to forget it, Doug said another, "Praise the Lord," and a hearty, "Thank You, dear Father. You must know something I don't. I will rejoice in even this strange twist of circumstances and trust You to lead me to the car You want me to have." Then he walked on, not realizing he had turned down a street other than that by which he had come.
He was trying to decide to which of the other four used car lots that he was familiar with he should go, when he suddenly became aware of the fact that he was in a part of the city that was all new and strange to him.

He stopped and looked around, trying to get his directions straight, when he saw a neat looking house across the street with an equally neat and clean looking car in front of it wearing a "For Sale" sign on its window.

He crossed the street and walked around the car, checking its tires and its exterior out well. He liked what he saw. He even liked the metallic silver-blue color. It was a later model than the Buick even.

He hurried along the sidewalk to the door and pushed the door bell. In a little while a silver-haired woman stood framed inside the doorway.

"Good afternoon, Ma'am," Doug greeted warmly. "I'm interested in the car. Are you the owner?"

"I am, young man."

"May I ask how much you're asking for it?" Doug asked.

"Would you like to see what condition it's in first?" the woman asked, stepping out to the porch, followed by a German shepherd that eyed Doug menacingly.

"If you please, yes, Ma'am. And thank you."

"Go ahead," the woman ordered kindly. "So long as Giant sees you will do me no harm you have nothing to fear. Here, take the keys and look inside. Take it around the block, if you want to. I've taken excellent care of the car, as you will see. I haven't used it much since my husband passed away. Driving makes me nervous anymore."

Douglas was amazed when he saw how new and clean everything looked inside the car. And beneath the hood, too. The motor started immediately. The brakes functioned like they were new. Everything was in A-1 condition. And when the woman told him her asking price, Douglas nearly had a shouting spell.
"I'm Douglas Collins," he said, introducing himself, "and I'm a Christian. I have a sizable down payment, Ma'am. I want the car. I'll have to borrow the rest of the money from the bank, since it's to be cash, you say." And then he told the woman what had happened only a short time earlier and how God had directed his feet down this particular street.

"I don't know how you feel about God," Doug remarked softly, looking full in the woman's face, "nor if you even believe in God. But to me, and in my heart, He is very real. Each morning, before leaving my bedroom, I ask Him to order my day and to guide my footsteps in His way. And just now, what I thought was a wrong turn down the wrong street -- a street, incidentally, which I have never been on before to my knowledge -- God directed my steps to your car. It wasn't a wrong turn at all," he added jubilantly.

A smile crossed the woman's face and parted her lips. Tears shimmered in her eyes. "I believe everything you have told me," she replied. "Everything! I could have sold this car many days ago, to a dozen or more people. But always, I refused. I knew the right buyer hadn't come along yet. You see, young man, I too am a child of God. I wanted a Christian to have our car. Neither my late husband nor I ever smoked. We have taken excellent care of the car, and it has never had the smell of cigarette smoke in it. I wanted a buyer who I knew would appreciate this and who would keep it this way. Come inside, please; we will discuss figures over a cup of hot chocolate. I feel I should cut the asking price considerably. We will work out these minor details around the kitchen table. I feel clear that the right buyer has come along. Now Giant," she said, speaking to the ever-watchful dog, "you go ahead and wait for me on the porch. He becomes overly-protective at times," she said to Doug with a smile on her face.

The dog, obedient beyond anything Douglas had ever seen, ran quickly along the sidewalk to the porch and then turned and waited by the door for the woman.

"I'll call my son," the woman told Douglas. "He'll have the papers and everything ready for you this afternoon yet. And by the way, I'm Mrs. Johnson Hooper, widow of the late Judge Hooper, a man noted for his uprightness and his integrity."
Doug felt honored. He told Mrs. Hooper so: few judges had the wonderful reputation that Judge Hooper had.

He felt like he was dreaming as he drove the like new car homeward several hours later. He had learned from his earliest boyhood days that anything and everything God did was always only the very best, and today again he was fully and completely reassured of the fact. His heart was a well overflowing with praise and thanksgiving to his Heavenly Father for the wonderful answer to his prayers.

He thought of Craig then, and of Mr. Ray, and how disappointed he had been in not getting the Buick. But he was thankful that he had had no bitterness nor hard feelings toward either one: years ago, at the altar, God had sanctified him wholly and entirely and that old root of bitterness had been eradicated and removed. His soul was enjoying the bliss and the joy of the sanctified ever since. What Craig had done was devious and subtle, as well as crafty; but Douglas felt nothing in his heart toward his friend but pity and Divine Love. Oh, the glory of being completely sanctified! he thought.

He saw his father's smiling face from inside the living room window as he drove the car into the clean garage beside the house.

"How do you like it?" Doug asked, hurrying from the garage into the living room, where his father was wheeling the chair toward Doug.

"I . . . I thought you went after a Buick, son. This is no Buick."

"I know, Dad. God had other plans than what I thought I was to have. Talk about wonderful and great and caring and precious, that's our God. Mr. Ray sold the Buick just before I got there with the money. Every bit of it was on schedule with God's time clock. The Buick could in no way compare with what the Lord had reserved for me at the home of Mrs. Johnson Hooper, widow of the noted, late Judge Hooper."

"You mean you got the car from Judge Hooper's widow, Doug?" Mr. Collins asked, his face brightening up.

"I do, Dad. It's a real miracle." And Doug told his father what happened, in full detail, and how he thought he had taken the wrong street, only to discover the turn was God-ordered and God-planned.
"Wait till you see inside the car!" Doug exclaimed. "It's like new! And the price is considerably lower than the Buick and it runs like a dream. Care to go for a ride?" he asked, smiling.

"Why Doug, I'd love to go."

As Doug wheeled his father out to the garage, Craig drove by with the Buick. He blew the horn loudly to make sure Doug saw him, then he sped away down the street.

Daily, Doug thanked God for the like-new car. He often went by and had prayer with Mrs. Hooper or just stopped in to see if she needed anything. His many little visits seemed to be as eagerly anticipated by Giant as they were by the late Judge's widow.

The car proved to be everything Mrs. Hooper said it was, and more. He was thankful that it had become his, a special kindness-gift from God to him.

Doug marveled at the new look of health in his father's eyes and on his face. His outlook on life had received a tremendous thrust upward since he -- Doug -- was able to take him to a rehabilitation center where he was learning how to use his limbs again and how to do things for himself, painful though the process was and exceedingly slow. Still, he was learning. And regaining, to some degree, the self confidence which the awful accident seemed to have totally destroyed.

Two months went by Doug's car was in A-1 shape and condition; it ran like a dream. Each day brought new praise and thanksgiving from the young man's lips for the car and its faultless performance.

He was checking the tires one evening when a voice startled him. "Some car you have there, Doug!" the voice exclaimed. "I got a lemon; a real lemon. I'll never buy another thing from Mr. Ray."

Doug looked up from what he was doing and saw Craig standing beside the car. Getting to his feet, he exclaimed, "Really, Craig! How's that? You having troubles?"
"Troubles! Don't mention the word even! That's just about all I've had with that Buick." Craig dropped his head.

Doug touched Craig's shoulder lightly. "I'm sorry," he remarked, with feeling and real compassion and pity in his voice.

Craig's lips trembled. "You . . . really mean that, Doug; I can feel it all the way down here," and he slapped a hand over his heart. "But I'm the one who needs to say I'm sorry. I thought I'd beat you out of the Buick, and I did. But look what I got! Well, I am sorry. Not because you didn't get the troublesome car but because of what I did to you, and how I treated you and even shunned you after buying the car. Forgive me, please. You were the best friend I ever had and I . . . I pulled a dirty one on you. I don't deserve a friend like you; but I've come to tell you I'm sorry. I'm not where I should be spiritually or I wouldn't have done what I did."

"Hey, you're freely forgiven. You know this. In my heart, I hold nothing against you, Craig. And as for the Buick, God had other arrangements and plans for me. I'm glad I didn't get it. Not because of the troubles you say it's giving you, but because it wasn't God's choice of a car for me. He worked everything around so I'd get the car He had waiting for me. It's like new, Craig!" Doug exclaimed joyously. "And as for your spiritual condition, why not come inside? My folks and I will be happy to pray for you."

"Thanks, Doug, I'll appreciate this. I want to get things settled so good that I'll be just as kind and wonderful as you were to me when I shunned you and treated you so mean."

"Then let's pray," Doug said, leading the way inside the house to his parents.