Snow was falling when Jason stepped outside and started down the sidewalk. It seemed strange to him, not hearing the usual noise and the loud clamor of voices and heavy trucks as they rumbled along the street on their way to he didn't know where. The stillness and the quiet of the late evening was still not familiar to him; it was almost like he was no longer living on the same street where he was born and where he had grown up.
The city's ordinance of re-routing the heavy traffic, which once seemed to whiz by his parents' house, had an almost deafeningly-quiet effect upon the residents of Jupiter Street.

Some liked the new ordinance and arrangement; others grumbled, murmured and complained about it, saying it took business away from them. But there were those, like in every other city and town, to whom the new arrangement mattered not at all. They went about their business in a passive sort of way, totally unconcerned and even unmindful, as to what the city did or didn't do.

The wind picked up, sending the snow scurrying and swirling around him and whipping carelessly tossed-aside papers into the air. He flipped his coat collar up around his neck and hastened his footsteps, realizing that Mr. Wiggins would soon be closing for the night. How many customers did the grocer have? Jason wondered, thankful that tonight had not been his night to work late for the man who always kept his store open for long hours after all others were closed.

Was the extra money Mr. Wiggins made worth it? Jason wondered, snuggling down deeper into the folds of the upturned collar. He knew the man had lost many a good cashier and much store help because of his insatiable desire to make those extra dollars when the other stores had closed and allowed their help to go home at a decent hour.

He felt around in his pocket till his fingers touched a piece of paper. He wanted to make sure the check was still there.

As he turned the corner and the grocery store came into view, Jason saw Mr. Wiggins pushing a long line of grocery carts toward the door of his store. Where was Aaron? he wondered, all but running now. Aaron was to have been working tonight. Oh, he hated it, Jason knew, but that was the schedule. Especially since he, Jason had had to work all that overtime on Christmas Eve.

"Mr. Wiggins," Jason called. "Oh, Mr. Wiggins, wait. I'll push those carts in for you. Where's Aaron?"
"That good for nothing boy didn't show up. And he knows that I always have a steady flow of customers on this night and that I do a good business. Just you wait till I can get in touch with him! He's not worth his salt. I'll find me another boy, see if I don't! A dependable boy."

"Aaron's a good worker, Mr. Wiggins, and he's honest. He always does excellent work for you, does he not?"

"Well . . . yes. But he knows how badly I need him on these very special nights . . . ."

"Maybe there's sickness. Or some kind of emergency. Aaron's a dependable young man. I'm sure something unavoidable happened."

"Okay! Okay! So he is dependable. But the least he could have done was to let me know. I almost called you . . . ."

"I'd have helped you, Mr. Wiggins, you know I would have; even though it's quite unusual for an employer to keep his employees working so late on these very special nights. Now I'll take care of collecting the grocery carts and of bringing them inside the store. You must be exhausted. I'm sorry you were alone, and didn't have any help."

Jason felt a warmth in his heart toward the man. A sudden thought struck him, filling him with new hope. Ever since he had begun working for Mr. Wiggins, he had longed and prayed for an opportunity to speak to him about his soul and where he would be spending eternity after he died. He felt the long prayed for time had arrived. Always, before, there had been hindrances, or someone around; tonight they would be alone.

He pushed the last long line of carts inside and, at Mr. Wiggins' command, he locked the door behind him. Turning the lights out, Mr. Wiggins bade Jason to follow him into his office. Once inside, the man slumped wearily into the desk chair and heaved a sigh of great relief, exclaiming, "What an evening! What a night! And now, young man, what brought you here on this New Year's Eve night? I know you always go to church. . . ."

His sentence trailed. Mr. Wiggins, with hands folded, and twirling his thumbs, eyed Jason over the rim of his glasses which sat precariously close
to the outer extremity of his nose and looked like they would fall off any moment.

"This," Jason answered, pulling the check out of his pocket and laying it on Mr. Wiggins' desk.

The man glanced at it matter of factly and casually; then, still twirling his thumbs 'round and 'round, he said, "What about it?"

"You must not have noticed the amount," Jason replied, shoving it, gently, more closely toward his employer. "You made the amount out for almost double what it should have been."

Still facing Jason, the grocer unfolded his hands. Leaning forward in his chair, a smile tugging at the corner of his mouth, he said, "I know, my boy, I know. And now I am truly convinced of your honesty and integrity and uprightness. I guess you might say it was a test."

"A test? For what?"

"Honesty. And integrity and uprightness."

"I . . . I guess I don't understand," Jason answered. Mr. Wiggins began twirling his thumbs again.

"I suppose you don't, Jason; but it's like this: You see, from the day you began working for me I saw you were different from any of the young men whom I have ever had in my employ. For one thing, you have always been conscientious and careful about giving me quality work; nothing slipshod, shoddy or careless. I soon discovered that you were totally and completely dependable and reliable. You have always been here before your work hours began, and you have gone far beyond the line of duty, demand and requirement. I appreciate this greatly, Jason. You could have cashed this check, thinking that it was my fault, not yours, for having written it out for this amount. But you didn't. This is most unusual, my boy. I truly appreciate your honesty. It overwhelms me. There aren't too many of your kind left in this world anymore."

Jason sat on the edge of his chair and faced Mr. Wiggins. Tears shimmered in his eyes. "Mr. Wiggins," he began, "I appreciate all the kind
words you have spoken and the nice things you've said about me; but the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who deserves all the praise and honor and glory and credit for anything good and wonderful in my life. You see, He is the One who changed my life and my heart.

"For years, I had been going down the wrong road; I was on the path of destruction, headed for a Christless eternity. Each New Year's Eve I made a long list of resolutions -- areas in which I wanted to change and do better -- and almost before the New Year's first day was over even, I had broken most of those resolutions. I felt helpless and trapped. I thought, for me, a change for the better was a hopeless thing. Then I heard about Jesus and His power to change lives; to save man's soul and make him a new creature in Christ. Brokenly and unashamedly, I came to Him, confessing and forsaking my sins, and I was gloriously converted."

Mr. Wiggins pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped tears from his eyes.

"What the Lord did for me He can do for you," Jason said kindly. "This wonderful salvation is for 'whosoever will.' Since the day I met you, I have been praying for you. Jesus is waiting, wanting to come into your heart."

Mr. Wiggins heaved a great, heavy sigh. "I guess a mother's prayers never die, Jason," he finally said, while sobs shook his manly frame and broad shoulders.

"I was born into a Christian home," he continued brokenly. "My parents were the epitome of holiness and of uprightness. I was saved as a small child. So was my sister and an older brother. All three of us. Things were going wonderfully well until our father died and was taken from us suddenly while we were still so very young. Our father was a railroad engineer. He was killed when another train, on the same track as Father's regularly-scheduled and rightly moving train, hit him head on. The engineer of the other train was not hurt. Naturally, he was cited and paid dearly for his great error; but it never brought Father back to us.

"Mother kept the family together by taking in washings, ironings and sewing jobs and doing baking; but my life seemed to have fallen apart without Father in the home."
"I became a wayward son. I gave my mother many heartaches. Her faith in God remained unmoved and unshakeable. And, always, she continued to pray for me. Many a night, coming home late, I heard her weeping, praying and interceding to God for my salvation. I broke her heart, Jason. Oh, how I wish I could undo those great deeds of wickedness and sinfulness and tell her how sorry I am for making her weep and pray so much over me and my lost condition!"

Jason said nothing; he listened in silence and his heart was lifted heavenward in an impassioned prayer for the grocer's salvation.

Lifting his head and looking Jason in the eye, Mr. Wiggins said meekly, "I'm ready to change masters, Jason: I want to come home to my Heavenly Father. Please pray for me. . . ."

Walking home in the rapidly-falling snow a short time later, Jason's heart felt like it would burst with joy and happiness. He began to praise the Lord; it was the outlet for his overflowing heart. Mr. Wiggins -- his employer! - - was now a truly born again man. He was a child of God! His conversion was so wonderful. So genuine. So real. But so was the grocer's repentance and sorrow for his sins. And as deep and real as his repentance and his sorrow for sin was, so deep went the well of salvation and his forgiveness.

The town's hall clock struck out the tenth hour and Jason pushed ahead. He would be late getting to the church's watch night service, he knew, but he would have a special guest: Mr. Wiggins was as excited as a child about going with him. He should have brought his old but well-cared-for car instead of walking. Only, he felt he needed the exercise, so he had walked. Besides the exercise derived from walking, Jason valued the time it offered for fellowship and communion with the Lord.

As he slid behind the steering wheel of his car, his heart nearly "exploded" with joy: God had given him enabling grace which had kept him settled and established in Christ throughout the entire year. And he had needed no resolutions! Oh, what a joyous and joyful New Year this was going to be again. And all because of his new birth experience and subsequently being filled with the Holy Spirit.