

Title: **Stuck in the Mud!**

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We sat all morning in the cold and didn't see any deer. As Mike Eison and I had walked to our respective hunting places well before sunrise, we managed to kick up a couple of bedding deer, but the only wildlife we saw for the rest of the morning was noisy squirrels. Later in the morning we walked back to my truck and ate some lunch. We decided to hunt another location in the evening and drove back to the "tag-in" board near the entrance of the lease to mark our location for the benefit of other hunters.

The road to the board, however, is a single lane in width and recent rains had caused both sides of the road to turn into soft mud. As a result, I couldn't turn the truck around and so we backed up the road until we came to a turn-off for a green field. It seemed like a good place to turn around, but the angle of the turn-off made it difficult to back into it, so I backed past it and then pulled forward and into the entrance of the turn-off.

I was unfamiliar with the turn-off, but quickly realized that the road was sloping slightly down from the main road. Looking down the turn-off, I could also tell that it was probably not going to be possible to drive the truck very far. We had not gone more than a few feet into the entrance of the road to the green field, so I decided to back out to the main road.

Immediately my rear wheels began to spin in the soft soil of the entrance and the truck didn't move at all. I moved the truck forward just a foot or so and tried again to back up. Again the rear wheels of my 2-wheel drive truck spun with no traction. Thinking that perhaps the soil in the middle of the path was firmer, I pulled forward again and to the right.

That didn't work either. Both of the rear tires spun and threw mud all over the sides of the truck. By this time, it had become obvious to both of us that we were really stuck. After a few minutes of studying the situation to determine our options, Mike and I realized that we essentially didn't have any! One might think that in the forest we could find plenty of wood to jam under the tires that were now deep in the mud, but there was very little available.

We couldn't get the truck out of the mud! I should mention at this point that Mike was absolutely useless in all of this (just kidding!). It looked like the day was going to end with a very long walk to get where we could use a phone to call a wrecker who could pull the truck out.

That was when we heard an ATV coming from the direction of the "tag-in" board. The driver, another hunter, had a strong rope and tied it to the hitch of the truck and the back of the ATV. Even though the ATV was a 4-wheel drive, the truck didn't budge. In fact, my efforts to help by backing just dug the wheels in deeper. We were practically down to the rims on one side.

The ATV driver had a Tundra truck also and so he went to retrieve his truck. He returned in his truck, towing a trailer with the ATV onboard. Using two ropes tied together, we attempted to pull out the truck and each time the knots joining the ropes pulled apart. I tried jacking up the truck by the hitch harness in order to put some rocks under the tires, but the shocks absorbed the travel of the jack. I crawled under the truck in the mud, put the jack under the axle and we finally managed to get some stones under the tires. Still the ropes pulled apart.

Discouraged, Mike and I had just about concluded that a tow truck was still in our immediate future, but our hunter friend wouldn't give up. He kept trying and finally managed to pull the truck out. It would be hard to adequately describe the relief and gratitude we felt when the truck was sitting back on the road.

The whole “truck in the mud” experience reminds me of the dangerous nature of sin. So many people believe that they can engage in a little bit of sin without being overcome by sin or entirely mired in it. Unfortunately, one doesn’t have to “jump wholeheartedly into a life of sin” to become a slave to sin. Like my truck, one becomes mired one step at a time. Our sins begin to mount in number and before we know it, we are “up to the rims” in sin.

As we struggled to get out of the mud, our efforts resulted in my truck being “coated” in mud – underneath, sides, side mirrors and even the windshield! In the same way, sinners are entangled in the pollutions of the world (2 Peter 2:20; Romans 7:24-25), stained with the blemishes of sin (Ephesians 5:27; 2 Corinthians 7:1).

The harsh, cold truth is that we can’t deliver ourselves from our sins any more than I could get my truck out of the mud by myself or even with the help of useless Mike. We can repent of sin, try to change our lives or cancel our sins by doing good to others, but none of those efforts can remove the guilt of our sins. It is only through forgiveness, i.e., God’s grace, that we can be free from our sins. We cannot deliver ourselves. We need the help of a Savior, a Redeemer (Ephesians 5:23; Romans 3:21-26).

The man who pulled out my truck wouldn’t take anything for his efforts. My rescue was free, but not without cost to him. He wouldn’t let me pay him for the taillight on his trailer that was busted when the ropes separated under pressure and one became a missile!

My salvation is free in the sense that I do not have to pay for my sins, but it was not without cost to Jesus. He paid the price for my sins on the cross (Romans 3:24; Isaiah 53:10-11).

What a relief the sinner feels when he is freed from his guilt, washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ! May God be praised for His wondrous grace!