

Story of David Dolan's near Death Mugging in Florida

July 12, 2011

Shalom from Jerusalem,

Things remain quite tense in this region as the uprising in Syria intensifies, now including apparently government-sanctioned, in not provoked, attacks upon the American and French embassies in Damascus, tensions in nearby Lebanon after Hizbullah's government takeover there, more unrest in Jordan, another overnight attack upon the Egyptian Sinai natural gas pipeline that serves Israel and Jordan, and other tremors.

I opened up my Bible randomly this morning to Jeremiah 49, where the sudden destruction of Damascus by fire is prophesied after the city—said there to be beloved by God—is “not deserted” by its inhabitants (the text implies this comes right after a warning of impending destruction is ignored...which would match all the recent evidence that the brutal Assad family dictatorship cares precious little for its own people). I will send out full details of this month's news in a couple weeks time.

As most of you know, I rarely write much of a personal nature via this large e mail list (over 13,000 the last time I checked, with some posting it to their own lists and web sites as well). However some of you already heard that I was violently mugged in south Florida last April during Passover Week, late on the evening before Resurrection Sunday, and have had some recent medical issues as well (an “incarcerated” hernia requiring immediate attention, which I will update you on with my monthly news report). In light of all that, I feel led by the Lord to share the details of my mugging and recovery with you. I hope my testimony is a blessing to all who read it, and please feel free to share it with others or post or publish it anywhere else as well. All I can say is **our God is SO good!**

MY TRIBUTE: UP FROM A GRAVE SITUATION

By David Dolan

Knowing that the friend I was staying with in Fort Lauderdale was going away for the weekend, another friend phoned me up on Saturday afternoon to invite me out for an evening meal. It was the Sabbath during the week-long Jewish festival of Passover, with Resurrection Sunday just a few hours away. I had invited another non-believing friend to go with me to a special church service the next morning, and was glad that he'd accepted my invitation.

That evening, we drove in my friend's car to a place just off of Oakland Park Boulevard, a major thoroughfare in the area, where we were to meet up with two other of his friends before heading out to eat. While there, the driver became quite ill, vomiting and such, so we decided it was necessary to postpone our dinner plans. By then it was about 9:30 PM, and I said I would simply walk back to where I was staying a couple miles away. The route seemed quite safe as I would be heading along the well-traveled Oakland Park road before turning south on Federal Highway—also known as Highway One since it's America's oldest interstate motorway running from Key West Florida up the east coast to the northern state of Maine. Both roads are well-lit,

six-lane boulevards with many businesses and restaurants lining them, and feature frequent police patrols.

Some 45 minutes later, I was nearing my destination on Federal Highway just north of Sunrise Blvd. when I was violently attacked. I was walking alone along a more vulnerable stretch of the road, home to three large automobile outlets, including a two-block Ford dealership and repair shop, with a Cadillac outlet on the other side and few retail shops or restaurants in the area, and therefore very little nighttime activity. I suddenly heard crashing footsteps approaching and had just enough time to turn my head to spot three young black men rushing down the sidewalk directly towards me. It seems like they'd spotted an opportunity to mug me while passing by in a car, since they later turned up quite a bit north of the city (more on that later).

I barely got a chance to see my assailant's faces, but noticed all three were tall and thin, and probably around 18 years old. Still, their combined weight was certainly much greater than mine. All three simultaneously struck my back and legs, literally propelling me into the air. That is the last thing I remember...thinking I was surely about to die. I'd witnessed a man get hit in a similar manner by a car in the same city a couple years before, horribly splitting his head wide open when he landed next to a sidewalk. Indeed, I struck the concrete sidewalk hard, apparently landing on my right forehead first, the ambulance crew and police later informed me. The muggers then cleaned out my pockets and fled, taking my condominium keys, my wallet and my cell phone, leaving my pockets completely empty. I had my "mini-wallet" with me that evening, as is my custom when going out at night in any big city, so 'only' lost about one-hundred dollars plus one debit bank card and my health insurance information card (which I could have used later that night at the hospital).

When I finally came to sometime later, I was seated on the bloodied sidewalk with a male ambulance medic propping me up as a female medic ran her finger back and forth in front of my face, attempting to fully revive me. After I regained consciousness and remembered the attack, I thanked the dozen or so policemen and medics assembled there for rescuing me. The medics later informed me that I'd lost a lot of blood, indicating I had come very close to death. In fact, my hair was caked with drying blood, and my face and shirt as well (although it had long been one of my favorite summer shirts, there was no choice later but to toss it out). I'd sustained a very deep gash just above my left eyebrow which the medics said was still bleeding when they arrived, probably about twenty minutes after the attack one estimated. I have *no idea to this day* who informed the police and rescue personnel that I was prone face down unconscious in a pool of blood on that sidewalk, but may the Good Lord eternally bless them!!

I was rushed to Broward General Hospital and quickly received both brain and neck CT scans to determine if I was suffering from brain hemorrhaging or any other unseen internal damage. Thankfully nothing showed up, but I did have some nerve damage to my left eye that remains to this day (I subsequently discovered it is especially noticeable when landing in an aircraft). Still, my eyesight was okay and I would recover, they informed me.

As a male nurse was stitching up my wound a few hours later, I asked him how soon I could leave the hospital—knowing every hour was costing me big money (my late father asked me jokingly during his last full day on earth, "How much is this hotel costing us?"). The nurse said he'd check, but added I could probably leave soon after dawn. Still thinking I could take my friend to church with me that Resurrection Sunday morning (I was not exactly in my right mind), I slipped out past the unoccupied front desk (it was after all very early on a holiday weekend) wearing only the torn black summer shorts and blood-soaked shirt that I was mugged in. I had

no money for a taxi, or my stolen cell phone to call my local friends (I had earlier called my mother's home in far-away Idaho, using a hospital phone. It was the only number I could recall at that point by heart. I'd been urged to inform *someone* I was there by a worried doctor as he waited to examine my CT results).

As I walked the two miles or so from downtown Fort Lauderdale to where I was staying opposite the city's largest 'Galleria' shopping mall, I realized I had left the hospital too soon. I was extremely weak and thirsty. I stopped and gulped down water from several lawn hoses along the way. I traveled on back streets since I assumed the police would think they had some nut job on their hands (no comments from my friends!) if they spotted a tall white guy walking around in a blood-soaked shirt early on Easter morning! Indeed, the friend I was staying with later commented that I looked like I was "bearing the stigmata of Christ" on my body, and I guess in a way I was.

As I sat down to rest next to an giant Oak tree in a park bathed in soft early morning light, I thought of the Lord and what He had suffered that Passover eve so many moons ago here in Jerusalem, and His resurrection from the dead as that awful Saturday night morphed into a joyous Sunday morning. A song came to my mind and I began to sing it. I'd learned the lyrics by heart while in a church choir before first setting off for distant Israel in 1980. *How can I say thanks, for the things You have done for me? Things so undeserved, yet you gave to prove Your love for me. The voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude. All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe it all to Thee.*

While crossing my last major intersection (Sunrise and Federal Highway) twenty minutes later, a police car came to a red light stop not far from where I was passing. I prayed that the Lord would shield me from his eyes, and that indeed seemed to occur, or else he was just so used to the weird things one sees on the streets of south Florida that he simply ignored me.

When I finally arrived at the condo building, the main-entrance guard—an African-American woman who told me she was also a trained medic—scolded me sharply for walking home alone in that condition. She sat me down and got some drinking water before informing me she didn't have access to a spare apartment key that was locked away in the closed condo office. I knew my friend would not be back yet (it was just about 7:00 AM), so I wasn't able to get in. Despite my lack of sleep and significant loss of blood, I then decided to walk to another friend's house about two miles away—the same friend I'd invited to church, to eat something and wait for my other friend to return home. However, the caring sweet guard would not let me do that, saying she'd pay for the taxi herself and I could repay her later on. Just then a tenant came out and offered to drive me to my new destination...another great blessing in the wake of the darkest night of my life.

The fact that the condo guard that morning was a very nice *black African-American* woman (she informed me she only works weekends and holidays) was just the beginning of something important which would gradually unfold over the next couple of weeks. The second act was to shortly occur.

After I got to my friend's place (he gasped when he saw my still-oozing stitched wound) and gobbled down some food and drank lots of water, he dialed my cell phone several times. Each attempt to reach someone ended up with my voice mail: "*Hi, I'm at the beach...*" which is usually were I wasn't but *wished* I were, yet not that particular morning! Later my friend drove me back to where I was staying, and thankfully my other friend (whose number was of course in my

missing phone) was there waiting for me...the guard had informed him about my mugging. He was equally shocked by my head-wound (I had cuts and bruises on my legs and arms as well—I landed pretty hard it seems) and after uttering the ‘stigmata’ comment, immediately phoned my number, again with no answer.

Finally about an hour before noontime, someone answered my stolen phone. My friend immediately handed his cell to me. The voice sounded like it belonged to a black adult male, not that of a teenager. I wasted no time, telling him I’d been harshly attacked and spent the night in the hospital, and was told that I’d come close to death. He said nothing. Then I stated quite forcefully that I *really* needed my phone back, not having recorded many of the numbers anywhere else. I added that I’d simply have the Sim card switched off later that day, so it wouldn’t be worth anything to him anyway after that.

Apparently himself in a bit of embarrassed shock, he finally spoke, stating he’d bought the phone around midnight at a Wal-Mart in Deerfield Beach (considerably north of Fort Lauderdale, which is when I realized the muggers must have been traveling by car). He reported he’d gotten it from a young man who claimed he was selling his own phone because he needed money to put some fuel in his car. I again pleaded with my unnamed caller to return my hijacked phone to me. He replied that he would “speak with my wife” and call me back shortly.

About twenty minutes later, he phoned to say that his dear wife—who he said was just back from Easter Sunday service—was *insisting* that he drive the phone back to me! I was delighted, but surprised that he would do that, to say the least. I had already explained to him that I possessed no American driver’s license to legally head up north his way. I arranged for us to meet at an IHOP restaurant just across Federal Highway from where I was staying. We set a time, and he added he would drive south with his wife.

When he finally arrived a half hour later, it was not a woman but a *young man* riding in his passenger seat. He (I think deliberately) opened that window instead of his own to hand me my stolen phone. The young man could not avoid gazing at me, with my damaged face just inches away from his own. He appeared to be about the same age and build as the teens who assaulted me (if the guys had only just *asked* for my possessions, it would have saved me \$8,000 in hospital bills, which I have termed “my second mugging” even though I am, of course, extremely grateful for the medical teams’ timely intervention). I handed the apparent father the same amount of money that he said he’d paid for the phone (\$20), and a bit extra to cover his gasoline bill. Although old and now battered, my well-used phone was nevertheless far more valuable to me than that amount of money.

Then I popped my big question: What *exactly* did the young man look like who sold him my stolen phone? With barely concealed anger in his voice, he looked straight at his apparent son and proclaimed, “*Just like he does!*” I’m guessing that the father must have heard my phone ringing in his son’s possession and then demanded to know how and where he’d acquired it. I can almost hear his mother’s voice in my mind’s eye after she returned home from a special Easter church service to learn the ugly details of my mugging from her husband: “You nearly *killed* someone for a hundred dollars and a cell phone? I will not travel down there with your father! *You* need to go instead and look this guy straight in the face, head wound (now scar) and all!” And that is exactly what took place. If the scenario I’ve presented is indeed an accurate one, I pray that silent young man learned a lesson that Sunday which will alter his life in a positive way.

I was subsequently quite disturbed to discover that *anytime* I saw a black man approaching me on a sidewalk or in a store, I would cringe and sense instant fear. This was for the most part totally irrational, occurring in the middle of the day on crowded streets, supermarkets and the like. I've never been a racist, and was proud when my fellow Americans elected a man of color as their President (although not so thrilled over most of the things he has done since then—another story I won't go into here!). I'll get to the last segment of this part of my testimony later on.

Three days after my brutal mugging, I was finally ready to exit the condo apartment (I was frankly still too weak to go out before then). I needed to replace my canceled debit card at a nearby local bank branch. I took the only remaining legal identity with me, my US passport. An earlier version was stolen from my car five years before while shopping up in Idaho. After securing a new debit card, I decided I'd head for an hour or so to the nearby Fort Lauderdale beach, thankful to be alive and wanting to take in some sun on my disfigured left forehead. I was deliberately wearing large sunglasses which partially obscured my stitched wound, so hoped I wouldn't appear too scary to the other beachgoers!

When I returned back to the condo unit around 5:00 PM, I apparently suffered what medical folks call a "post-traumatic panic attack" as I thought afresh about the fact that the muggers were in possession of my set of stolen building and condo unit keys, with the unit number engraved on one of them. Even though the keys did not reveal the name of the condominium compound on them, the violent mugging took place just two blocks away, so it would be an intelligent guess that the building had most likely been my destination...the only tall housing complex in the area (the key number suggested it was probably a ninth floor unit, which it was). Still, I realized it was highly unlikely that the muggers would attempt to enter the complex, with an armed guard and security cameras everywhere (interestingly enough, it houses quite a few Israelis, and about half the residents are Jewish, mostly "snowbirds" from up north). So I actually hid my passport...from myself! I didn't remember the "panic attack" at all the next morning, but definitely experienced another one later on when I couldn't locate my precious passport! I wrote to some friends about this, and also informed the police that it must have been stolen while I was at the beach...she commented wryly that I was apparently "having a very bad week!"

Later that afternoon, I was sitting out near the condo pool enjoying a pity party with myself. Actually I was complaining to God. Why was it that I—who has always tithed, mostly to Israel-based works, and donated other funds to help out various friends—the object of a violent assault that nearly cost me my earthly life? Okay, I have more than one fault and don't always obey the Lord as I should, but still, why me?" I assume most of you have either thrown or attended similar parties at some point in your lives.

It was not more than an hour later when an acquaintance phoned to tell me that she and her husband had just heard of my terrible mugging and wanted to drive two hours across the state, from Naples on the west coast, "to bring you a gift." These are folks that I had only met briefly when speaking at their church in 2010, and one more time after that. They're friends of close friends of mine who helped fund the second printing of my first novel, *The End of Days*, in 2005 (the couple—longtime supporters of the radio ministry I labored with in South Lebanon in the early 80s—had taken me to dinner here in Jerusalem and handed me a small bag which seemed empty apart from some wrapping tissue paper, but actually contained a very generous check resting quietly at the bottom). The female caller said the couple would drive over the next day.

The gift was not at all what I expected, but another generous monetary one, this time in hundred dollar bills! Well, they didn't have a clue that ALL of the cash I possessed at that time was stolen by the muggers, along with my debit card to access the small change remaining in my account. Another credit card connected to another US account was still safely stashed in my main wallet, but that bank has no Florida branches, and anyway I didn't know the code to draw out money with it. At least I could use it at some restaurants and other places, but not at the grocery store or many other locations, and therefore I really needed some cash. Through the kindness and generosity of my new friends, the Lord provided more than enough to meet my immediate needs.

I had earlier been expecting that I'd replenish my financial resources after returning from three speaking engagements in the New York City area in mid-May before heading up to Idaho and then back home to Israel. But in these days of heightened airport security, how could I possibly fly up to Newark without any legal identification, and how could I quickly secure that in south Florida? The problem was resolved when I was a mere seconds away from hitting a button on my laptop computer which would have officially registered my missing passport as stolen. The State Department site warned that once this was done, you could never legally use the cancelled passport again even if you later discovered it had only been misplaced. So I decided to take *one last look* around in the condo unit before doing so, even though I'd already searched through it thoroughly several times. With bright Florida sunshine pouring in through an open window, I spotted the edge of something under the bed-frame...it was my missing passport!

Several weeks later in the New Jersey outskirts of New York City, the last installment of my "black fear" saga unfolded. After spending an emotional Friday touring the 9-11 terrorist attack sight with a Jewish friend who lives very close to it, I spoke at one of the largest Messianic congregations in the United States, Beth Israel. I began by mentioning that I was very glad to be there (to be alive actually, but I didn't state that to them), especially in light of a mugging I'd suffered a few weeks before which nearly cost me my life. That weekend was Israel's 63rd independence anniversary celebration, so of course I focused on that topic and was, as always, very warmly received.

Afterwards, about a dozen people came up to speak with me, some of them friends. Then just as my driver-friend from Manhattan was about to take me back to my hotel, a *black* man about my age slowly approached holding an open Bible in both of his substantial hands. I was internally upset when that same irrational fear swept over me. Here was a smiling brother in the Lord walking toward me in a still-crowded congregation building carrying a Bible! I scolded myself for my gut reaction, even if it was involuntary. He said, "I have some scriptures I want to share with you" before adding that he wanted to "apologize for that attack you suffered" as if he'd had the slightest thing to do with it. Well, I hadn't mentioned at all that the muggers were young *black* men, or anything else about them. He went on to read several reassuring scriptures concerning God's love and protection for His children, prompting small tears to well up in my eyes. I'm sure he had absolutely no idea what his kind gesture meant to me.

Then this thoughtful man announced that he had a special gift for me "to help heal the wounds from that mugging." However, my driver-friend said we really needed to go as he had to return early the next morning for a scheduled men's prayer breakfast, and I needed to travel early to central New Jersey to speak at another Messianic meeting. My friend then asked the gift-giver if he could bring it with him on Sunday morning, when I was due to speak there again, and the kind man answered affirmatively. On the way to my hotel, my Jewish friend informed me that he

was acquainted with the man who worked, as he does, as a men's clothing haberdasher. When we drove up on Sunday morning, there he was faithfully waiting by the side entrance to the congregation building where only pastoral staff and special speakers enter. He handed me a clear plastic bag draped over a hanger containing two Italian silk dress slacks, a beautiful cashmere sweater and a lovely silk tie—my friend later estimated there combined worth at several hundred dollars. I was blown away! When I later tried on the slacks, they fit perfectly...he is a professional clothier after all!

So that is the story of the violent mugging which took me to the gates of untimely death and back again this past April during Resurrection Weekend of Passover Week. I can only conclude by quoting more of the song I sang that morning—*My Tribute*, written by the anointed black African-American artist Andre Crouch:

How can I say thanks, for the things You have done for me? Things so undeserved; yet You gave to prove Your love for me. The voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude. All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe it all to Thee.

To God be the glory, to God be the glory, to God be the glory, for the things He has done. With His blood, He has saved me. With His power, He has raised me. To God be the glory, for the things He has done.

*Just let me live my life; let it be pleasing Lord to Thee. And if I gain any praise, let it go to Calvary. **With His blood, He has saved me. With His power, He has raised me. To God be the glory, for the things He has done!***

DAVID DOLAN is a Jerusalem-based author and journalist who has lived and worked in Israel since 1980.

- [HOLY WAR FOR THE PROMISED LAND](#) (Broadman & Holman), his latest book, is an overview of the history of the Israel and of the bitter Arab-Israeli conflict that rages there, plus some autobiographical details about the author's experiences living in the land since 1980. It especially examines the important role that militant Islam plays in the conflict.
- [ISRAEL IN CRISIS: WHAT LIES AHEAD?](#) (Baker/Revell), which examines the political and biblical prospects for a regional attack upon Israel, settlement in the disputed territories, and related topics, is also available for purchase, along with an updated edition of his popular end-time novel, [THE END OF DAYS](#) (21st Century Press).
- **David Dolan is currently working on his new novel with the probable title THE LORD REIGNS.**

You may order these books at a special discount price by visiting his web site at www.ddolan.com, or by phoning toll free 888-890-6938 in North America, or by e mail at: resources@yourisraelconnection.org. To schedule David Dolan for a speaking engagement, e mail alohashalom@gmail.com

DOLAN'S NATIONALLY TELEVISED DVD, "FOR ZION'S SAKE" is also available for purchase. Click the title under "BOOKSTORE" for more details.

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