

Tom Ames' Prayer

Steve Earle

Everyone in Nacadoches just knew Tom Ames
Would come to some bad end
Well the Sheriff had caught him stealin' chickens and such
By the time that he was ten

And one day his daddy took a ten dollar bill
And he tucked it in his hand
He said, "I can tell you're headed for trouble, son
And your momma wouldn't understand"

So he took that money and his brothers old bay
And he left without a word of thanks
Fell in with a crowd in some border town
Took to robbin' banks

Well, outside the law your luck will run out fast
And a few years came and went
Till he's trapped in an alley in Abilene
With all but four shells spent

And he realized prayin' was the only thing
That he hadn't ever tried
Well, he wasn't sure he knew quite how
But he looked up to the sky

Said, "You don't owe me nothin' and as far as I know
Lord, don't owe nothin' to You
And I ain't askin' for a miracle, Lord
Just a little bit of luck will do"

"And You know I ain't never prayed before
But it always seemed to me
If prayin' is the same as beggin', Lord
I don't take no charity"

Yeah, but right now Lord with my back to the wall
Can't help but recall
How they nearly hung me for stealin' a horse
In Fort Smith, Arkansas

Judge Parker said, "Guilty," and the gavel came down
Just like a cannon shot
And I went away quietly
And I began to file and plot

Well they sent the preacher down to my cell
He said, "The Lord is your only hope
He's the only friend that you gonna have
When you hit the end of Parker's rope"

Well, I guess he could have kept on preachin' till Christmas
But he turned his back on me
I put a home made blade to that golden throat
And asked the deputy for the key

Well, it ain't the first close call I ever had
I'm sure you already know

I had some help from you Lord and the Devil himself
It's been strictly touch and go

Yeah, but who in the hell am I talkin' to
There ain't no one here but me
And then he cocked both his pistols and he spit in the dirt
And he walked out in the street