

"A Bridge over Water"

When I think of the title of this *Build-'Em Up* story, it reminds me of a song by a group, Simon and Garfunkel: "Like a Bridge over Troubled Water". In comparing such as possibility to the picture below, the ideal of "troubled water" - as an analogy to difficulty or impassable problems - just doesn't do it for me. About the only problem possible in this knee-level water below is the remote possibility of sinking into the muddy bottom and losing a shoe; but otherwise, this water is not an impasse or obstruction between "here and there".



Perhaps more convincing examples would have been the bridges that cross segments of the rivers along the coast and on some major water ways. Without only the least of awareness from a bridge or bank, one can quickly realize that the waters and tide and be rigorous - even beyond for the best of swimmers. Thus, I beg of you to consider the picture beyond the shallow water beneath the bridge and, with imagination, apply the title and verse to a much more daunting and vigorous body of water.

Matthew 14...

But Jesus was quick to comfort them. "Courage, it's me. Don't be afraid."

Peter, suddenly bold, said, "Master, if it's really you, call me to come to you on the water."

He said, "Come ahead."

- *The Message*

What most impressed me about this little pond is the bridge: built like some Roman structure of the empire, its rocks, mortar and arch make for a lasting effect. Only wide enough for a person, it still has the presence and prestige of such antiquities of the Old World. It is a bridge worthy of a picture - don't you think?

On the sunny winter day that I took this picture, I think I crossed this little bridge and went over to an proportionally small island in the center of the pond. The setting is very pleasant and somewhat memorable - as my children were occasionally brought to this park and pond - whether to fish or just to play. To be there is to draw from the simple remembrance that it

was a place for them - as it is now a place for me - but has always been a place for the bridge passing over the shallow, muddy pond.

In the simplest definition, a bridge is anything that connects two divided points. In the matter of the key verse from Matthew, the "bridge" connected Christ with Peter; and unlike any bridge we've ever seen or could imagine, this one was not visible or tangible. When Christ called Peter, he was standing on the water without any apparent aid; and when Peter stepped out of the boat, he stepped onto water and nothing more.

What prompted Peter to ask to be called out; or expressed another way, what would cause a person to leave the apparent safety of boat to presumably step-out to the water? At the other point was Christ - who responded to the asking with the call to "come ahead". If nothing more, Peter exhibited a moment of unmistakable faith and, seeing this faith in him, Christ obliged with the action on words of faith. Faith is like that; not words alone, but the action or "the walk" to back "the talk" - and in this event, the walk on water.

Think of a scene from the Indiana Jones' sequel, "Search for the Holy Grail", where Harrison Ford throws gravel over a otherwise invisible bridge between on cliff and another. What you see (or don't see) is not always what's real; but sometimes, the seeing takes patience...and maybe a little gravel to mark the way. *Seeing is believing* for Peter who - on seeing the savior atop the water - believes that he could do the same...and for a moment, he does.

Peter could be profound in such expressions of faith; he was recorded as being the one who first identified Christ as the messiah - only to deny any knowing of Christ later-on - after Christ is arrested... In the closing of the gospel, he does wait to be called by Jesus - nor does he have any ambition to walk on water - but he jumps from his boat and swims to meet Jesus on the shore.

Christ is the bridge between God and man: sin has separated man - or caused an enmity between God and man; Christ came to bridge that separation - or to act as an intermediary between man and God. When Adam sinned against God, the separated condition began; but with the arrival of Christ - who is perfect - God and man can be bridged or restored in their

relationship. If you think of sin as being like water - in that it separates one point from another - than you see the analogy between the Christ and a bridge.

A bridge can be an expensive item - as even the small man-bridge in the picture took some expense to construct. Real bridges costs a lot of money and, for the citizen, is paid for through highway taxes, tolls, and other means. When Christ becomes the bridge for our sin, he does so at his expense only. We don't have to spend money or pay taxes for the bridge; he has already paid the price and offers himself as a gift to each of us.

When you consider that Peter did not offer anything except faith, the bridge that is described as free becomes visible and tangible. At one point is God who longs for his children; at the other end is the children who may or may not want to be with him; and in the middle is a sea that seems impassable, even deadly. Whether the water seems rough or calm is of little apparent issue - because it is still a chasm. The water may be seem crystal clear but it may be murky - but no matter the apparent clarity or the level of activity, it remains a divide.

What seems daunting or impossible is not so for Christ. Remember that Peter actually walked on the water - by faith - and only began to sink when he became afraid; but with outstretched hands to Christ, Peter was lifted from the water. Christ was there as a bridge to both receive Peter and to save him. Christ is committed to us - just as he was to Peter; but the question for us is whether we are committed to him.

Peter was not lifted out of the boat; he acted on his own will to come to Christ - as we each and all must do. He did ask Christ before acting, but he had to combine "the walk" with the "the talk" - putting action to his expressed words to form the faith needed in such commitment. Yes, we will fall at times - as Peter sank moments later - but Christ is there to lift us out of the water (or cleanse us of our sins) and restores us to himself.

Though a righteous stumbles, he will not fall - for the Lord will lift him up in due time.