

WE HAVE A BRIDGE

Ephesians 2:11-22

David P. Nolte

There are bridges and then there are BRIDGES. Some are small and short and others HUGE AND LONG. Among the lesser would be the tiny bridge across Mill Creek on Highway 226 just a few feet west of Tapper Lane. Among the greater would be the Golden Gate Bridge, quite a bit farther from Tapper Lane.

Some people have a phobia about crossing a bridge, especially high ones like this: SLIDE

I made the mistake once, while crossing a high bridge, when I said, “Boy, this would be a horrible time for an earthquake!” After being verbally assaulted by wife and children, I wisely became silent.

Well, today Linda sang about a special bridge,

“I don’t need to walk on water; a bridge was built for me.
God gave His Son who gave His life on a cross at Calvary.
I can walk in faith, sheltered safe because of what He did
I don’t need to walk on water; I have a bridge.”

Let’s think about bridges for awhile this morning and ponder how Jesus is our Bridge! Let’s check the Scripture for some clues. “Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ which is performed in the flesh by human hands – remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” **Ephesians 2:11-22 (NASB)**.

I. A BRIDGE SPANS A GAP:

- A. Maybe that gap is a river or a chasm or road. For mankind the gap is the separation from God because of sin: “remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, . . . having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”
1. Isaiah said, “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.” **Isaiah 59:2 (NASB)**.
 2. Separated but we have a bridge: Linda sang, “I have a bridge, it’s Him.” And Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” **John 14:6 (NASB)**.
- B. We read in Ezekiel God’s desire to span the gap, “The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have wronged the poor and needy and have oppressed the sojourner without justice. I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.” **Ezekiel 22:29-30 (NASB)**.
1. Among the *people* He found none to stand in the gap.
 2. But He *did* find that one in Jesus Christ.
 - a. John tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” **John 1:1, 2, 14 (NASB)**.
 - b. Between where we were and God is was a huge gap. Jesus stood in the gap reaching from God to man and from man to God.
 - c. Jesus. “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” **Philippians 2:6-8 (NASB)**.
 3. The Divine Word became the Flesh and blood Jesus. He did that to span a gap!
 - a. He brought God and Man together in His incarnation – He was God in the form of a man.
 - b. “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” **2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (NASB)**.
 4. Jesus spanned the gap between Holy God and sinful man by blending both in one body and giving Himself up to death on the cross.
- C. Jesus is the bridge that spans the gap
1. Between our need and God’s provision.
 2. Between our sin and God’s righteousness.
 3. Between our guilt and God’s grace.
 4. Between our weakness and God’s power.

- D. She was only a tiny girl, unused to traveling, and it happened that in the course of the day, her train crossed two branches of a river and several wide streams. The water awakened doubts and fears in the child. She did not understand how it could be safe to cross. As they drew near the river, however, she saw a bridge across a body of water. Two or three times the same thing happened: finally, the child leaned back and relaxed. “Somebody has put bridges for us all the way!” she sighed with relief. Those gaps were spanned and she was safe. Jesus has spanned the gap and we are safe!

A BRIDGE SPANS A GAP AND,

II. A BRIDGE CAN BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER:

- A. Bridges provide access between two separated points and once a bridge spans a divide, people can move from one side to another and come together.
1. Cities are brought together, businesses are linked, people are able to gather from one side to the other.
 2. So the bridge built by Jesus brings people who were separated and divided, together.
 3. As Paul wrote, “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.”
- B. Jesus brings people who were separated into fellowship. “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.”
1. The Law God gave on Mt. Sinai was a covenant between Him and the Israelites – but excluded the non-Israelites. There was a great rift between Jew and Gentile.
 2. Jesus came, fulfilled the demands of the Law and brought a covenant that brought Jew and Gentile into the one household of God.
- C. With whom are you experiencing a rift? From whom are you alternated? Jesus wants to bring you together in peace, so He instructed us through the Scriptures:
1. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!” **Psalm 133:1 (NASB)**.
 2. “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”
 3. “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”
 4. ‘If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” **Romans 12:14-20 (NASB)**.
 5. “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” **Matthew 6:14-15 (NASB)**
- D. In the mid 1950s, the world was shocked when five missionaries were killed by some Auca Indians in South America. The missionaries were trying to reach these primitive people with the Gospel. Later, the tribe welcomed into their community the wife of one of the martyred missionaries and the sister of another, and translation work on the New Testament began.

The translators had difficulty putting the word reconciled into the Auca language. They searched for an equivalent but found none. Then, one day a translator was traveling through the jungle with some of the Aucas. They came to a narrow, deep ravine, and the missionary thought they could go no farther. The Aucas, however; took out their machetes and cut down a large tree so that it fell over the ravine, they delimbed it, permitting them all to cross safely.

The translator, listening intently to the Auca, discovered that they had a word for “tree across the ravine.” This seemed to be the best way to express the meaning of the word reconciled.

The great “ravine” between us and others was bridged by Jesus Christ. If we are His and they are His we are all one family and He is the “tree across the ravine,” the Bridge, that enables us to live in peace and unity with others\ from whom we were separated.

A BRIDGE SPANS A GAP AND CAN BRING US AND OTHERS TOGETHER.

III. A BRIDGE MUST HAVE A SOLID FOUNDATION:

- A. “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.”
 - 1. You will probably remember the account of The John Day Bridge, which collapsed on December 22, 1964, just 15 months after completion as a result of the footings of one of the piers being established on compacted sand and gravel approximately 14 feet above bedrock. If the footings for that pier had been founded on bedrock, the pier would not have collapsed even under the extreme flooding conditions. As it was, the bridge, not firmly established, went down, taking with it 3 lives. Jesus built a bridge that is founded on a good footing:
 - a. God’s unchanging love.
 - b. God’s unfailing promise.
 - c. God’s unstained character.
 - d. God’s unparalleled wisdom.
 - e. God’s unlimited power.
 - 2. Let all other foundations crumble! His is rock solid.
- B. The song by John Keene says,
- C.

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”

In every condition, in sickness, in health;
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth;
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be."

D. The bridge Jesus built is on that firm foundation; it can support the full weight of:

1. Every burden.
2. Every fear.
3. Every sin.
4. Every need.
5. Every sorrow.
6. Every man, woman and child

E. Our bridge is well founded! Let me illustrate a strong foundation for a bridge. In the years 1867 through 1874, James Eads built the first steel bridge in America. It spanned the Mississippi River at St. Louis, Missouri. No one believed that it would support its own weight. To prove his bridge, Eads ordered 14 locomotives to stop on the bridge at the same time. The people then trusted the integrity of the bridge.

Our Bridge has stood every test, every attack, every load and every situation, and it still stands. But as Linda's song said, "Sometimes *my faith* can get so low. But when it's down to sink or swim, I can walk above the waves, I have a bridge, it's Him."

PRAY. INVITATION