

## **BRIDGES TO THE HEART**

*Psalm 46, Galatians 6:2 & 5*

Laughter is learned, but we cry naturally. We are born crying. It's a cry for help. The very first sound upon delivery into the abyss is not laughter, but a cry--a yelp, a yelp for help, "come and get me"--the primal communication. This is the human being's first effort, a cry to close the gap between himself and the rest of creation. It's a cry to bridge the chasm. It's a call for another creature to come close, to feed, to warm, to hold him safe, to overcome his separateness, which is his root fear. So they come. They do come to answer his cry for help--the doctor, then the nurse, then the mother, then the father, then the family, then the friends, etc., etc., and for the rest of his life as he grows and ages--he and "they" will make it their life's work to rescue one another. What is work anyway but the effort to throw up bridges to get at one another--to answer each other's cries for help--to meet each other's needs--constructing in the process a culture (ideas and ideals) and its result, a civilization all for the purpose of crossing the great chasm that exists from birth to death between man and man, and answering the constant cry for help. What is a home or a school or a hospital, but a bridge for crossing--a way of constant crossing over to another to answer the cry of loneliness and ignorance and pain. And all our lives--from beginning to end--we need each other--the body politic to protect by community. Indeed, what is the whole of the *civitas mundi* but the effort to close--as best we can--the gap between man and man. To bridge the awesome chasm of terror between our brain pans--that for minimal existence we may have human life--at least until our death, when suddenly the bridges so carefully constructed and so often crossed, are all down and we are alone again. Sometimes I think that's what is the final chasm--no mere man can cross to answer our last cry for help for there are some cries only God can answer--some bridges only God can construct and cross. Such is the cycle, the life cycle, swift to its close. Three-score years and ten; or fourscore, from a God perspective, what's the difference? It isn't the length, says the Bible, it's the love that counts.

How well we build our bridges to other lives determines our sanity and our happiness. With what intelligence and tact and tenderness we cross over the chasm that lies between us and others to answer their cry for help; and with what grace and gratitude we allow them to know our deepest needs, our fears and guilts and hopes and dreams--and let them cross over to us to answer our own cry of need. That determines our stability. This is a part of what the New Testament means when it says "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ".

Lack of faith on the other hand is to pretend in this life that you do not need anyone's help, to reject the team, the group, and sulk in a corner by yourself, to pretend you can go it alone--to be too timid, too proud, basically too afraid to let anyone build a bridge to your heart--to try to live aloft, aloof, alone--(and I have seen people do this--no, try it--you cannot do it--only try it and fail--but I have seen them try to go it alone even in the midst of a large family or even surrounded by many colleagues or friends. They build barriers to keep them out. "Keep your distance!" So that there is no real warmth, no joy, no laughter in the business and no love in the house--just formal relationships--where even if rights are respected, obligations attended to, no one rejoices.)

To try to keep out those who would love you if you would only let them--to hold at bay those you really do need, is to court disaster. I remember hearing a woman say of her man, to whom she had been formally and faithfully married for years, "He couldn't care less!" --but even I knew it wasn't so--it was just that they both lacked the faith, or were too afraid to say "I need you" and put out their hands, their hearts to one another to comfort one another. I have known parents who could not bridge the chasm between themselves and their children. "I can feed, clothe, medicate, and educate them--but I can't get close to them!" They never caught on that children need love especially when they don't deserve it. They could not meet their cry for understanding, companionship, and affection that frees the child to build unafraid, a life of his own. "Insanity is hereditary, you catch it from your teen age child." Well, we don't have a good family or even a good business if all we have is the material. One family moved five times looking for the house to make them happy, and the bridges to the heart are all down--and everybody is distant to everybody--and ....well, you understand. And for the Christian--"bearing one another's burdens" is "the law of Christ". It's the law of real love--even if, in the final analysis, "each man will have to bear his own load" (Galatians 6:2, 5). But distance is to court, if not insanity or suicide, at least misery. If one's life is securely bridged to the lives of others, the chance of neurosis is greatly reduced.

This is the very nature of the church, those who are in touch with one another, as covenant community. You see, it is the very meaning of "the communion of saints", we profess in the Apostles Creed every Sunday morning. That is we Christians are or are supposed to be the colony of the concerned, the close together, open to one another's needs, aware of the heart's hungers--ready as any true family to sacrifice to meet it. We Christians are supposed to have something to say to each other. There is supposed to be a dialogue

between us--a dialogue of generosity and mercy and kindness and grace--so that we have something to do for one another--actually--"to bear one another's burdens" for "this is the law of Christ". What a tragedy it is; therefore, to be a part of the church--whether gathered or scattered--and yet not to touch in the fellowship of the faith any life creatively--just to say a few prayers, sing a few hymns. To share no faith, no hope, no love, is to miss the whole purpose of it all. How many of us come to church therefore, every Sunday, but never really arrive--just scurry in and hurry out--and speak to no one and hope no one speaks to us--and expect by a few incantations here to get in touch with God? No wonder people like Mark Twain and Thomas Alva Edison thought religion was "rubbish"--for that is how they saw it. We ought to know that one cannot get in touch with God unless one is in touch with one's fellows, for did not God become man in Christ to teach us that? And put us, through Him, in touch with each other? "God is love" --so-- "this is my command: that ye love one another".

God is not simply out there, in the heavens, but here, in the heart, so that when we draw close to answer one another's cry for help--we draw close to God and God to us.

The Lord Christ said that the way to get close to Him is to bridge the human rift, answer the cry for help--and you shall then and only then--find and be found of the heart of God.