



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.5, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

03/18/08

Program 29 – “**Bridge Over Troubled Waters**” © 1969 Paul Simon

A line from an old gospel song, “Oh Mary Don’t You Weep For Me”, by the Swan Silvertones inspired Paul Simon to write this hit.² That song describes, among other things, Moses parting the Red Sea, and Pharaoh’s army drowning while in pursuit of the Israelites. Simon focused on the line, “I’ll be your bridge over deep water if you trust in me” – obviously speaking of trust in God. Jesus serves as that bridge when we need Him!

The Group, Simon and Garfunkel¹:

- Legendary pop duo, originally formed as “Tom and Jerry” in 1957
- Childhood friends, neighbors, schoolmates
- Significantly influenced by the Everly Brothers
- Numerous hits, including “The Sounds of Silence”, “Mrs. Robinson”, “The Boxer”, “I Am A Rock”, “Scarborough Fair”, “Homeward Bound”, “A Hazy Shade Of Winter”, “At The Zoo”, “Cecilia”, “El Condor Pasa” and “My Little Town”
- Disbanded twice, and pursued successful solo careers, but reunited for a highly acclaimed free concert in New York City’s Central Park in 1981; 500,000 attendees
- Winners of numerous Grammy awards

The Song, “Bridge over Troubled Water”²:

- Reached #1 on Billboard Hot 100 chart in February 1970; stayed 6 weeks
- Won Record of the Year and Song of the Year at 1971 Grammy Awards
- Title song of album by same name – the final one released by this duo
- Written by Paul Simon in 1969; originally had 2 verses (vs. 3) and different lyrics
- “In the '70s, so many people sang a version of this that it became a joke”³, e.g., Aretha Franklin, Shirley Bassey, Roberta Flack, Tom Jones, Aaron Neville, Roy Orbison, Bon Jovi, Johnny Cash, Blind Boys Of Alabama, Supremes, Elvis, LeAnn Rimes, Robert Goulet, Michael W. Smith, Jackson Five, Whitney Houston, the Winans, Peggy Lee, Anne Murray, Willie Nelson, Clay Aiken, Hamilton, Joe Frank & Reynolds, Maynard Ferguson, Charlotte Church, Buck Owens, Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Barry Manilow, Bonnie Tyler, and Barry Manilow

“...God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

-- Hebrews 13:5b, NIV

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_and_Garfunkel

² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridge_over_Troubled_Water_\(song\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridge_over_Troubled_Water_(song))

³ <http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=247>

When you're weary, feeling small,
 When tears are in your eyes, I will dry them all;
 I'm on your side when times get rough
 And friends just can't be found,
 Like a bridge over troubled water
 I will lay me down.

- Theme is similar to Bill Withers' "Lean On Me" (see CC notes to Program 26)
- "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" – Galatians 6:2, NIV
- Key to understanding that the "I" can be Christ!

Like a bridge over troubled water
 I will lay me down.

The "Four Spiritual Laws" gospel tract uses the cross as a bridge to illustrate that "...God has bridged the gulf that separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins."⁴

When you're down and out,
 When you're on the street,
 When evening falls so hard
 I will comfort you.
 I'll take your part.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" – Psalm 23:4, KJV

When darkness comes
 And pain is all around,
 Like a bridge over troubled water
 I will lay me down.
 Like a bridge over troubled water
 I will lay me down.

"You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light" – Psalm 18:28, NIV

Sail on silvergirl, sail on by.
 Your time has come to shine.
 All your dreams are on their way.
 See how they shine.
 If you need a friend
 I'm sailing right behind.
 Like a bridge over troubled water
 I will ease your mind.
 Like a bridge over troubled water
 I will ease your mind.

- Some have speculated that "silvergirl" is a reference to drug addiction, but Paul Simon has stated it was inspired by his wife, who remarked about a few gray hairs she discovered
- Song was originally written with 2 verses. This verse was added, and recorded in a different studio than the first 2 verses
- "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" – John 14:27, NASV

Final Thoughts –

One reviewer has commented --

"I really think this song is about one man who did lay his life down for us -- Jesus... Listen to the words. It could be about a friend, but with the line 'When friends just can't be found'. I really think it is mentioning someone else. Jesus died for our sins, he laid down his life for us. He is there always for us, when we are moving right on by. Also in the 2nd 'I will comfort you. I'll take your part'. Jesus took away our sins when he died for us. He took our place up there."⁵

I agree completely. God's promises are true, and they never fail. Even when we don't "feel" His presence, they are no less true and no less trustworthy. Meditate upon them, and stake your faith to them. When Peter yielded to earthly fear of troubled waters, he began to sink (Matthew 14:29-30). Let's keep our eyes on the One who is able to carry us over troubled waters!

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⁴ <http://www.campuscrusade.com/fourlawseng.htm>

⁵ <http://www.songmeanings.net/lyric.php?lid=7339>