

A WORD WITH YOU - By Ron Hutchcraft

9351 – “Deadly Neglect”

Proverbs 27:23, 24

November 14, 2022

Our friend, Ruthie, loved crossword puzzles, and she hates bridges. So when she's riding with us and there's a bridge, she knows what to do. She covers her face with her crossword puzzle book until it's over. I've teased Ruthie about this a lot. But then two bridges in a week collapsed in different parts of the U. S., and I was wondering if I should buy a crossword puzzle book. Oh wait—I'm driving.

I'm Ron Hutchcraft and I want to have **A WORD WITH YOU** today about **“Deadly Neglect.”**

It really isn't funny. One minute you're on the bridge. The next minute you and your car are in the icy water below. Thankfully, no one died on those bridges. One was in Washington State, the other one was in Missouri. But when that Interstate bridge in Minneapolis caved in some years ago, it cost 13 people their lives.

I'm not excited to hear that 1 in 9 U. S. bridges is “functionally obsolete” or “structurally inadequate.” Fact is, bridges that aren't properly maintained and repaired are in danger of going down, whether it's a bridge between cities or a bridge between people. And all too often I have been guilty of neglecting some very important bridges. Maybe it was to my wife, my children, my coworkers, my friends.

Oh, there was a day when I put a lot into building that bridge. I wanted to be connected to their heart. I've never made a decision that I didn't care about that, anymore than I made a decision to let weeds grow in my garden. All you have to do to weaken a bridge is nothing. It's called neglect.

It's not that we reject people we love, we just neglect them. We get too busy for them. We fail to repair the things that break. We forget to hug them, to set aside time for them, to listen to them. In short, we take them for granted.

In our word for today from the Word of God, Proverbs 27, verses 23 and 24, God says, “Be sure that you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds...for a crown is not secure for all generations.” Basically, if you want it to be there tomorrow, take care of it today.

See, relationships, like bridges, collapse when they're not cared for. Oh, the final cave-in may come suddenly, but there's really nothing sudden about it. There's a slow, almost imperceptible deterioration. Now, one day it's gone. That's why the Bible says to “be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry” (James 1:19). When you stop

having time to listen, you start feeling the strain, the tension, the distance. Then comes that jolt that jars the bridge and exposes the damage neglect has done. And everything comes apart and the bridge collapses.

Is it over? Not necessarily. See, bridges can be rebuilt stronger than ever at a price. Doing whatever it takes, changing whatever you have to change, and spending whatever it costs to rebuild that bridge. But it's worth it to recover all you've lost on the other side.

The collapse of a relationship? It's a wakeup call to look where we haven't looked before—up. Because what I can't fix, God can: broken relationships, broken families, broken hearts. He promises, "I will give you back what you lost to the stripping locusts" (Joel 2:25 NLT). And "bestow...a crown of beauty instead of ashes" (Isaiah 61:3).

Sadly, though, when we reach up for God, we realize how far we are from Him, and there's a reason. The Bible says, "Your sins have separated you from your God" (Isaiah 59:2). We've done life "my way" instead of His way, and we've left this yawning chasm between us and our only Hope. We need Him, but there's no bridge.

Oh, we try to build a bridge to God. That's what every religion on the planet is. But they all fall short, because no religion can pay the death penalty that sin demands. All our bridges to God fail to reach the other side. But that's why God did what only He could do. He built a bridge from heaven to us. God's Son, pouring out His life to save yours and mine by paying our death penalty. The Bible says, "He gave Himself for our sins to rescue us" (Galatians 1:3).

So the Bridge is open today. God's waiting on the other side for you with open arms. But you have to cross that Bridge; you've got to belong to the God who made you. If you've never experienced His love, start today. Reach out, open your heart to Him. Tell Him, "I'm yours."

Go to our website. We've got the information there that will help you cross over. That's ANewStory.com. Because the bridge God has built will get you home safely.

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