



"DON'T FALL IN!"

"Oh, I won't!" The ice had just gone out of the creek so the water was very cold. Going down to the creek was our summer playground. I lived two houses from the railroad track that led to the creek about a half mile away. The creek had even been the site of late 1800's water powered wheat mill. The creek bed was dramatically lower in elevation than the prevailing land. That required a railroad trestle (a tall railroad bridge) over the creek to maintain a level grade for the trains. This trestle was the thing of fear, great challenge, and a rite of passage for grade school age kids who dared to even venture there.

Dave, his youngest brother, Mike, and I hurried down the railroad track to get to the creek, not for a trestle crossing, but to see if our car tops were still where we had left them in the fall. "Car tops" were our canoes of the day. An old automobile junk yard near the railroad tracks was the source of "car tops." As junk cars were cut up for scrap metal, the top, or roof, was cut off of the rest of the car. We had learned that if you took one of these older roofs that was more rounded and turned it

upside down, it would float and worked as a boat. All you needed was a board to lay across the inverted car top for a seat and another smaller board to be used for a paddle and you had a "car top" boat.

Dave and I each found our car tops. With three boys and two car tops we had to improvise. The obvious solution was to have two boys in one boat and one in the other. It never crossed our minds to ask if the car top would support the extra weight without riding too low in the water. All we thought we needed was an extra board seat and paddle then all would be well.

Mike and I were in one car top and Dave was in the other. I was in front. As we crossed to the far side of the creek, I looked down and saw a thin layer of water coming over the front edge of the car top.

WE WERE TAKING ON WATER!

I turned to Mike and said, "Hey Mike! You had better slide back a little because I'm taking in water up here!" He replied, "I'm taking in water back here too!" As the older boy I knew what that meant. I made the decision, "Let's paddle for the shore!" I pointed to the closet shore; it was our only hope. This was the shore of the creek that was away from the town. I started to paddle hard for this shore, but I wasn't making very good progress. I looked behind me, and saw that Mike had turned around and was facing the other way. He was paddling for the **other side** of the creek. There was no time; we were going down now! I was about three feet from shore and I thought surely I can jump that far. As I pushed off the front edge of the car top to jump to the shore, it scooted away from me towards the middle of the creek. Without a solid base for me to push off from, instead of my landing upright on the shore, I landed half on the shore line and half in the water – it was cold! Quickly I turned to see how Mike was doing. Our car top had sunk! Mike was waste deep in the water and **still paddling** for the far side of the creek as he went down.

What had gone wrong? Why did Mike turn around and paddle for the far side? How had a fun afternoon turned into a potential tragedy? Mike had a **great fear of being hit by a train and dying on the railroad trestle**, so he had made an irrational decision. He turned around and paddled into deeper water rather than to the safety of the near shore. His fear of death paralyzed him from taking the real safe way out. He could have crossed over the trestle or taken a roundabout two mile walk back to town.

This was a wild day on the creek but also an excellent illustration of how even simple things could turn into a major spiritual crisis. What if Mike had not survived? Was he right with the Lord? Where would he have spent eternity?

While facing an overwhelming fear that was out of the Israelites' control, the Lord told the prophet in Isaiah 8:12,

DON'T FEAR WHAT THEY FEAR."

The implication is don't be afraid, but trust the Lord to be with you. Trust his promises.

The fear of death and its consequences that had terrorized Mike was addressed by Jesus in John 5:24-25 NIV. He said, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; **he has crossed over from death to life.**" This promise does not say we won't die, so therefore, be fool hardy; but it is a solid promise of a good eternal outcome.

It's hard not to draw a comparison between "he has crossed over from death to life" in this verse and "crossing over" on the trestle far above the icy water below.

Mike survived! He swam and made his way to the other side, but he was sputtering, drenched, and cold. Dave was laughing so hard that he stood up in his car top, lost his balance, and did a complete belly flop into the icy creek. He also made it to the shore. I crossed over to the other side on the railroad trestle far above the icy water.

I want to know what will happen to me. I want to know that I have "**crossed over from death to life!**" I need Jesus. I believe and hold on to His promises. When I know Him, I don't have to "**fear what they fear.**"

How about you? Have you accepted Jesus as your Savior? Have you crossed over from death to life? **Now is the time.**

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