
Words of Truth

When You Become A Stumbling Block To Yourself

By: Brian A. Yeager

We know that no man is to put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way (Romans 14:13). This is true in regard even to our spiritual liberties we have in Christ. Paul, through inspiration, wrote this: *"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend"* (I Corinthians 8:9-13).

It is good that we are concerned about how our actions affect others (Romans 15:1-3, Galatians 5:13, and Philippians 2:3-8). In fact, this is plainly commanded: *"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth"* (I Corinthians 10:24). Our Savior had the mindset of being a servant (Matthew 20:28 and Luke 22:27). He washed the feet of His followers just to teach the act of serving with a mindset of humility (John 13:1-17). The Apostle Paul was a servant (II Corinthians 4:5). The Apostle Paul understood, and put into action, that the interests of others needed to come before his own desires (I Corinthians 9:19-23).

That being said, we cannot overlook ourselves in our focus of not causing others to stumble. Paul, while certainly being other people focused, also made sure his life was in order. Notice what he said in regard to that point: *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"* (I Corinthians 9:27). In fact, the inspired Apostle taught Timothy this same principle when he said this: *"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee"* (I Timothy 4:16). We cannot help others if we ourselves are lost (Matthew 7:1-5 and Romans 2:1-29). This is why it is important to remember that we can cause ourselves to stumble.

You Can Trip Over Yourself

In sermons and classes I often say that the biggest obstacle most people must overcome to get to Christ is, themselves. There are some Scriptures upon which I base this principle. Notice those Scriptures: *"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts... Then said Jesus unto his*

disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Isaiah 55:6-9 and Matthew 16:24). When you are converted to the Lord you leave the old you behind. This is why we talk about putting off the old man and becoming a new creature in Christ (Romans 6:1-18, Ephesians 4:15-32, and Colossians 3:1-17).

Knowing that you can stand between you and the Lord is important. Notice what Jesus said: *"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered"* (Luke 11:52). Why would anyone cause himself or herself to stumble? Doesn't make sense, does it? Yet, when you have some agenda, personal belief, doubt, lust, etc. you set yourself up to stumble. You have to be sure you stop being a servant to you so that you do not trip over you. When the Lord is the height and depth of your life, you have nothing high or low that can trip you up (II Peter 1:3-10). Yet, if you start casting things in front of your own path you are sure to trip up.

When You Set Yourself Up For Failure

Jesus died for us to be saved (Romans 5:6-10). Yet, some people seem to want to be lost. Now, I am not talking about people who sin and ignore the truth through hardness of heart (Hebrews 3:8) or ignorance (Ephesians 4:18). I am talking about people who create sin in their own minds to bring about their own condemnation. We know it is wrong to add to the word of God (Proverbs 30:5-6, Mark 7:1-9, and Revelation 22:18-19). That is what these folks do. They twist Scriptures to their own destruction (II Peter 3:15-17). It is not that they do not study the word of God. They do study. However, they take what God says and take it too far (I Timothy 4:1-5).

The way to be sure that you or I are not doing this is to be honest Bible students with a desire to be saved rather than a desire to be lost. Now, I am not saying we should deceive ourselves (Galatians 6:3 and James 1:21-25). What I am saying is what the Scriptures teach. Let God's word guide us, not ourselves. Notice: *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way... There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death... O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps... And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God... It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (Psalms 37:23, Proverbs 16:25, Jeremiah 10:23, Luke 4:4, and John 6:63).

Conclusion

There is much in the world that we have to overcome. Why would you want yourself to be something else you have to overcome? We should all bring our thinking into submission to Christ (II Corinthians 10:5). When we start being our own standard, it's going to be a bad thing for us (Proverbs 21:2). If you find, through self-examination (II Corinthians 13:5), that you are causing yourself to stumble; get out of your way. There is a race before us. It is time to run it. Set aside all the things that weigh you down (maybe that is yourself) and look to Christ who is the source and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-3). Don't trip on you. That's plain STUPID!