

Stumbling
Are You the Victim or Culprit?
11/26/2017 Sunday AM

Scripture: Luke 17:1-4, Matthew 4:19, 1 Corinthians 8:9-13

Introduction

- Last week we spoke about Being Christ's Ambassadors: Understanding Our Mission.
- We saw where we are called to be Christ's ambassadors and that means we are an "authorized representative or messenger" for Christ.
- Being an ambassador requires that we take action as we serve the Lord.
- Often times in the world we are living in today, we may find ourselves as "ambassadors in chains."
- This morning we are going to discuss **Stumbling: Are You the Victim or the Culprit?**

Luke 17:1-4

¹Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. ²It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. ³So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

- V. 1 – The "things that cause people to sin" is the Greek word *skandalon* which means – "any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall, (a stumbling block, occasion of stumbling) i.e. a rock which is a cause of stumbling."
- It is often used throughout the Bible as "stumbling block" and most times it means to "cause to sin."
- **What is v.1 saying to us?**
- Here Jesus is teaching His disciples and what He says at first should be encouraging to people, "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come."
- Jesus readily admitted that there would be things that would come our way that would cause us to stumble.
- However, He doesn't stop there. He says, "but woe to that person through whom they come."
- Yes, there may be things that cause people to stumble and sin, but "WOE" to the person that placed the stumbling block on the path!
- V. 2 – Jesus goes on to say that, "It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin."
- Vv.3-4 – Jesus says, "So watch yourselves." Then goes on to teach about forgiveness.
- Causing someone to stumble and sin is pushing them away from God and it is the direct opposite of what God has called us to do.
- **Matthew 4:19** says, "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." Right here Jesus called His disciples, and all of us, to bring people in, not push them away.
- Remember from last week's message, we are called to be God's ambassadors and He is making His appeal through us.
- **What are ways we can cause people to stumble?**

1 Corinthians 8:9-13

⁹Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? ¹¹So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. ¹²When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.

- Paul addresses stumbling blocks several times in his letters.
- Here to the Corinthian church Paul is speaking to them about eating food that was sacrificed to idols.
- The question had been raised as to whether or not it was proper for them to eat this food.
- Paul addresses this in a very interesting way, because he does not give them a yes or no answer.
- ²It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.
- V.9 – He tells them to “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.”
- The message that Paul is sending is a powerfully important one. Just because you and I might have the freedom to do something, does not necessarily mean that we should do it.
- **Thinking along these lines, what are some modern day examples of this?**
- Vv. 10-11 – Paul explains that as ambassadors for Christ, we are being watched by other people, and at times there are people that are “weak” watching us.
- They may not have the knowledge that we have and they may misconstrue what they see us doing and that may lead them to sin.
- We could in effect “destroy” someone by our actions, even though they may be technically okay actions.
- V.12 – This is a powerful and hard-hitting verse. “When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.”
- When we cause someone to stumble and sin, we “sin against Christ!”
- Understand that Paul is speaking to the Corinthians about actions that they are actually free to do.
- V. 13 – Paul displays a level of humility and Christlikeness in this verse that is unapparelled really.
- He says, “¹³Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.”
- Paul’s position is that if he is doing something that is causing his brother or sister to sin, he will cease doing that, even if it was something that was actually okay for him to do.
- **What about you, can you commit to that?**
- What Paul was modeling was, thinking about the interest of others above his own interest.
- As ambassadors for Christ, redeemed at set free, we no longer walk according to the letter of the law.
- However, just because something is permissible does not mean that it is appropriate.
- We must “watch ourselves” as Jesus said and we may need to survey those actions that we partake in that are permissible and ensure they are not causing others to stumble.
- The last thing I want Jesus to tell me on my judgment day is that I pushed people away from the cross rather than bringing them closer, what about you?

Wednesday Night Adult Bible Study

The Elementary Truths

Hebrews 5:11-14