

DOCTRINE OF STUMBLING AND STUMBLING BLOCKS

I. Introduction.

- A. This doctrine, as some doctrines can be, is a subtle doctrine to understand and apply.
- B. The believer, who is –V or not grasping the elementary doctrines and making the correct applications with regard to them, will not be able to correctly grasp and assimilate this doctrine.
- C. Generally, most Christians only perceive the concept of the stumbling blocks as applying in a negative or sinful way.
- D. However, Scripture makes it clear that there are legitimate and non-legitimate stumbling blocks.
- E. Stumbling exists in various degrees.
- F. There exists a form of stumbling from which one can recover or one of a permanent fall from which there is no recovery.
- G. When dealing with the concept of stumbling and stumbling blocks, one must identify both the subject (the cause of stumbling/stumbling block) and the object (the one who stumbles).
- H. In every case, the one who stumbles is always culpable for their own stumbling.
- I. Due to the doctrine of volition, each member of the human race is ultimately responsible for themselves. Mat.18:8-9
- J. The one who causes the stumbling may or may not be at fault and/or may or may not be sinning..

II. Vocabulary.

A. Hebrew.

1. כָּשַׁל – verb; used 64x; means to stumble, to waver or stagger, to cause to fall. When followed by a ב, it indicates the thing against which one stumbles.
 - a. כְּשָׁלוֹן – noun; means a stumbling or a fall.
 - b. מִכְשׁוֹל – noun; used 14x; that which anyone stumbles against, a stumbling block, offense.
2. נָגַף – verb; means to strike or smite, used of the foot striking something that causes one to trip.
3. נֶגֶף - noun; used 7x; a striking; most often used of a plague or blow delivered by God; used 1x with #1b (rock of “offense”) above to indicate a “stumbling stone” in Isa.8:14.

B. Greek.

1. προσκόπτω – verb; used 8x; means to strike upon or against something, to stumble; used of rain “pelting/bursting” against something.
 - a. πρόσκομμα – noun; used 6x; means a stumbling block, an obstacle in the way that if struck with the foot causes one to trip or stumble, an offense.

- A.** Legitimate stumbling blocks.
 - 1. There are situations that the stumbling block and the one placing it are righteous and in line with BD.
 - 2. God the Father has constituted His Son, Jesus Christ, as a stumbling block to those who are negative. Isa.8:14-15 cp. 28:16; Rom.9:32-33 cp. Luk.3:34; 1Cor.1:23; 1Pet.2:7-8
 - 3. God has designed His plan so that BD is a stumbling block to –V, to include believers. Joh.6:60-61; Mar.4:17 (believers are in view)
 - 4. The cross is a stumbling block to the pride of the legalist. Gal.5:11 cp. 6:12
 - 5. God lays stumbling blocks without sin (testing) for –V knowing that they will fall over them due to their rejection of His plan. Jer.6:16-21; Eze.3:19-20 (Ezekiel’s commission)
- B.** Non-legitimate stumbling blocks.
 - 1. These are circumstances in which the stumbling block and the one placing it are sinful.
 - 2. False teachers and the false doctrine that they teach are a source of stumbling. Eze.44:9-12; Mal.2:1 cp. 7-9; Mat.16:6,12; Rev.2:14-15
 - 3. STA activity can be a source of stumbling for those inside and outside the local church. 1Cor.10:32 cp. Act.24:16; 2Cor.6:3
 - 4. One’s own STA can cause him or herself to stumble. Eze.14:3-4; Mat.18:8-9
 - 5. Making an issue out of non-essentials before a weaker believer causes that believer to stumble. Rom.14:13,20-21; 1Cor.8:9
- V.** Reasons for personal stumbling.
 - A.** Just as a lack of light in the physical world may eventuate in stumbling, spiritual darkness produces stumbling. Pro.4:18-19; Joh.11:10; 1Joh.2:11
 - B.** Arrogance. Prov.16:18; Jer.50:32
 - C.** Failure under GAP.
 - 1. Failure to listen to the truth. Jer.6:19-21
 - 2. Failure to believe and apply the truth. 1Pet.2:8
 - D.** Religious reversionism. Jer.18:15
 - E.** Inordinate attraction and infatuation with the cosmos. Ps.73:2-16
 - F.** STA activity. Hos.5:5 example of STA activity rationalized and not dealt with.
 - G.** Failure to apply under love/FHS. 1Joh.2:9-11
 - H.** Persecution. Joh.16:1
- VI.** God has made provision so that the believer need not stumble.
 - A.** He has provided BD to prevent stumbling. Ps.119:165; Pro.3:13-26
 - B.** The adjusted communicator attempts to brief those under his charge as to the realities of the A/C so they may avoid stumbling. Joh.16:1
 - C.** Therefore, it is occupation with the truth that mitigates against one stumbling. Joh.11:9-10

- D. Faith-resting situations to the Lord instead of pursuing your own course of action and attempting to advance or deliver yourself prevents stumbling. Isa.40:27-31
 - E. The doctrine of Separation keeps the path clear of impediments/obstacles that would trip the believer. Pro.4:14-19 cp. 1Cor.15:33
- VII.** Degrees of stumbling.
- A. Just as one can catch their foot in the physical realm for any number of reasons, so spiritual stumbling can occur in a number of ways. Jms.3:2
 - B. The believer is to pray for God's deliverance from any situation that would permanently cause him to fall. Mat.6:13
 - C. There are various degrees of stumbling i.e., from losing your balance momentarily to a stumble that produces a complete collapse and fall.
 - D. The positive adjusting believer is supported by the Lord and can recover from any stumble. Pro.24:15-16
 - E. An example of losing your balance would be reacting to the prosperity of the cosmos. Psa.73:2ff
 - F. However, you are to bring doctrine to bear on the matter, rebound your foolishness and move on. Psa.73:17ff
 - G. More severe stumbling occurs when one does not bring doctrine to bear on the issue and runs with the STA. Mat.26:30-34
 - H. If one does not bring forth and apply BD that they have, some situations may eventually do them in. Luk.8:13-14; 1Tim.6:9
 - I. Failure to make the MAJG is a permanent form of stumbling. Phil.1:10 ("blameless/without stumbling/ἀπρόσκοπος)
 - J. The anti-dote to avoid fatal stumbling (reversionism) is to sustain the virtues of spirituality throughout life. 2Pet.1:10b cp.vss.5-7
 - K. To stumble over another's violation of the law of love does not get the believer off the hook as far as any excuse for not making the MAJG.
 - L. Failure to believe in Christ as Savior equates to an eternal, permanent and really painful fall. Mat.11:6 cp. Rom.9:32-33; Act.13:38-41
 - M. National and personal reversionism leads to the fifth cycle of discipline and the sin unto death (SUD), called stumbling. Eze.14:7-8; 36:15; Jer.6:15; 46:6; 50:32; Dan.11:19
- VIII.** Stumbling and the Day of the Lord (Tribulational and 2nd Advent period).
- A. Unbelievers are called stumbling blocks and will be purged at the 2nd Advent. Mat.13:41
 - B. Believers will stumble under persecution. Mat.24:10
 - C. National Israel will no longer be a stumbling block to itself since God removes outside interference of the other nations. Eze.36:15
- IX.** Concluding observations.
- A. Stumbling blocks such as human viewpoint, persecution, etc., are daily parts of life in the cosmos.

- B.** God must allow volition to run its course, so under His permissive will He must allow stumbling blocks.
- C.** This does not mean that He approves of those who cause sinful or unrighteous stumbling.
- D.** In fact, those communicators responsible for being unrighteous stumbling blocks are under woe and especially on God's hit list. Mat.23:13-16,23,25,27,29
- E.** A special curse is placed upon anyone who causes +V to stumble. Mat.18:6,7; Luk.17:1-4
- F.** All unbelievers and the stumbling blocks they produce will be removed at the 2nd Advent. Mat.13:41
- G.** God is able to sustain the positive believer and protect him from the fatal misstep. Pro.24:16
- H.** We are not to express inordinate joy when evil befalls those who oppose us. Prov.24:17-18
- I.** Truth is said to stumble when one does not isolate their STAs and pursue BD. Isa.59:12-15
- J.** The only way to completely ensure that we are not a source of unrighteous stumbling to others is to be in FHS and apply BD. 1Joh.2:10

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen

Jud.24-25