

9 August 2015

## Christ Jesus is the stumblingblock (Pt 3 & final Stumblingblock)

### Introduction.

This is the third & final study on the word “stumblingblock” in the Scriptures.

### Three points from our previous study.

1. God Almighty will lay stumblingblocks before his children.
2. Put not a stumblingblock in your brother's path.
3. God is deaf to those who put stumblingblocks up and then enquire of the Lord.

### Three points are established from the Scriptures for this study.

1. The wicked know not what they stumble over.
2. The stumblingblock to the Jew is the gospel of Christ crucified.
3. The Jews stumblingstone was that they sought righteousness by works.

### Our three points in more detail.

1. The wicked know **not** what they stumble over.

#### Supporting Verse

Prov.4: 19 “The way of the wicked [is] as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.”

#### Context and meaning of our verse.

\* This proverb is written to the children (according to verse 1), and specifically to the son (verse 3, 10 & 20). The first instruction is “forsake ye not my law” (verse 2 & 4). Then to the son he says “Get wisdom, get understanding” (verse 5 & 7). He uses the feminine to speak of wisdom, saying: “Forsake her not” (verse 6), “Exalt her” and “embrace her” (verse 8), and she shall give thee a crown of glory (verse 9). Such a son has been taught wisdom, and been led on the right paths (verse 11) and will “not stumble” (verse 12). As for instruction he says: “let her not go, for she is thy life” (verse 13). Then he says “Enter not into the path of the wicked”, verse 15. But “the path of the just is as the shining light” (verse 18). Then we have our verse as a comparison to the path of the just (in verse 18): “The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.” Hence, the path of the just is as a shining light and so they do **not** stumble (verse 12) whereas the way of the wicked is darkness, and therefore they stumble.

#### Other scriptural support.

Jer.13: 16 & Job 12: 25.

#### Application of our verse today.

\* Proverbs form part of the Hebrew Scriptures written to the children of Israel, but our point is no different for the wicked today who know not what they stumble over in the darkness.

#### Illustration.

\* When I was a young boy I was always tripping over something and injuring myself. During one holiday at a batch I remember running to jump from the ground level up to the top step at the entrance, but beside the stairs my Dad had put a knife (sharp end first) in to the ground, and I managed to kick the knife, and so cut my toe in half to just past the nail. It was an everyday occurrence for me to stub my toe while walking on the concrete. My stumbling over things was so regular that it was often joked among family that I could trip or stumble over a blade of grass.

#### Learning from our Illustration.

\* The only difference between me as a young boy and the pathway of the wicked man today is that the unsaved stumble over everything in their path, whereas I would stumble most when playing. The way of the wicked is darkness, when a man walks in darkness he stumbles and because he cannot see he doesn't know what it is that he stumbles over.

#### Challenge & or encouragement

\* Because the wicked does not know what he stumbles over, he is ignorant of it, and as each day his stumbling gets worse, he can only accept his stumbling as normal because he does not know

how to change his behaviour. The pathway of the wicked is not as if it were night time, because at night you have some light from the stars. Rather the pathway of the wicked is as darkness, void of light as it would be like in a tunnel with NO light, you would fall over with every step, not knowing what you stumble over. So is the path of the wicked, he falls not knowing what he stumbles over.

## 2. The stumblingstone to the Jew is the gospel of Christ crucified.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.1: 23 "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness".

Context and meaning of our verse.

\* Paul sets out the purpose of his epistle to the church at Corinth in the early chapter, where he encourages them to: "speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind" (verse 10, confirmed in verse 11). He points out that Christ sent him not to baptize, "but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (verse 17). This gospel includes the cross (verse 18), and in our verse 23 he identified it as "**Christ crucified**" (detailed in 1Cor.15: 1-4). It is **this** gospel that is a stumblingblock to the Jew.

Other scriptural support.

Is.28: 16 and 1Pet.2: 7-8

Application of our verse today.

\* Paul is writing to the Gentile church in Corinth and so our point is applicable to us today.

Illustration.

\* One night on the street I remember seeing a man walk past with a kippah (skullcap) on, and thinking "that man is Jewish". I said to him that "there is only one way to know God and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ" He turned around, looked up to heaven and replied "I worship God in heaven", and he walked off.

Learning from our Illustration.

\* The gospel of Christ crucified was a stumblingblock to the Jewish man in our illustration. So, how do believers proclaim Christ crucified to the Jew, who at the first mention of His name stumble? Don't speak the first thing that comes into your head when you are faced with witnessing to them (like I did), because when their elders teach the young of what the "Christian Church" has done to them over the centuries, they only add to the spiritual stumblingblock that the Scriptures speak about in 1Cor.1: 23. Think how you would feel if your ancestors had been murdered by Roman Catholics (RCs) in the "dark ages" and then by RCs in the Holocaust, and you only knew **the** "Christian Church" as RC, would you not see **their** "Christ" as a stumblingblock?

Challenge & or encouragement.

\* Let us remember as we proclaim Christ crucified, that the Lord Jesus Christ is also a "rock of offence" to all who "stumble at the word", (1Pet.2: 7 & 8) which reveals Christ crucified. But Christ was foretold to be a stumblingblock to the nation of Israel, which came to pass during the time He was on earth, and the gospel of Christ crucified is a stumblingblock today. Your challenge: when given the opportunity by God to participate in proclaiming Christ to the Jew, that you do so with meekness and lowliness, and from **their** Scriptures, for "blindness in part is happened to Israel" (Rom.11: 15) who stumble at the gospel of Christ crucified.

## 3. The Jews stumblingstone was that they sought righteousness by works.

Supporting Verse.

Rom.9: 32 & 33 "Wherefore? Because [they sought it] not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

Context and meaning of our verse.

\* Paul is sorrowful for Israel, his “kinsmen according to the flesh” (verse 3), who were given the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants and the law (verse 4), and of whom Christ came (verse 6). “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect, For they are not all Israel which are of Israel” (verse 6). But there is a remnant which shall be saved (verse 27), not of works (verse 11). “As Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed we had been as Sodoma, and had been made like unto Gomorrha” (verse 28). Now Paul questions how the Gentiles attained that which they did not follow after. And he points out that whereas the Jews “which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness” (verse 31). Now we have the crux of the matter, Israel sought right standing (righteousness) before God not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone (our verse 32), as we covered in our previous point.

\* How do we now understand our verse? Under the law Israel sought righteousness by obedience to the law (i.e. by works and faith – “But without faith it is impossible to please Him” Heb.11: 6). When Christ came Israel as a nation stumbled because salvation was then by faith **only**, and excluded works of the law. For “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness” (Rom.10: 3), but they (Israel) continued to seek righteousness by works of the law, and hence stumbled at the stumblingstone.

Other scriptural support.

1Pet 2:7–8.

Application of our verse today.

\* Paul is writing to the Gentile church in Rome and so our point is applicable to us today.

Illustration.

\* The Messianic congregation that Karen and I went to in 2000 & 2001 ended up moving away from Yeshua (Jesus) and toward the law, until eventually we wrote to them and explained what we believed to be happening. Then six months later they folded, and the elders who where Jews went back to the Synagogue. They sought a right standing before God by works, and so stumbled at the stumblingstone because they sought it by works and not by faith alone (Eph.2: 8).

Learning from our Illustration.

\* The book of Galatians puts forward the Jewish struggle with law (works) and faith for salvation. Where some required the saved Jews to obey the law. That was the same battle that Karen and I experienced, and is the same struggle that any so-call Christian church has that seeks right standing before God by works and faith, and **not** faith alone.

\* Roman Catholics believe their works will contribute to their salvation, to their right standing before God. Mormons believe in good works, Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, and many of the main-stream Protestant churches who now take their doctrine from the gospels believe either they can lose their salvation, or works contribute to their right standing before God. Therefore, neither of these examples are any different to the Jew who stumbles at the stumblingstone when they seek God’s righteousness by works of the law and not by faith alone.

Challenge & or encouragement.

\* A free gift of the magnitude that God gave, His Only begotten Son, is specially referred to as a stumblingblock to the Jew in our second point, and in this our third point we found that they stumbled because they sought it not by faith but by works. And that is the reality of every man’s challenge when faced with what to do with God’s free gift of His Son. Perhaps the unsaved man looks at Christ and sees He is too good to be free, he thinks he has to pay something, so he stumbles. And hence our question from our previous teaching that we gave you to think about: What is a stumblingblock to all non-believers? Christ is the stumblingblock.

Summary of our three points.

1. The wicked know not what they stumble over.
2. The stumblingblock to the Jew is the gospel of Christ crucified.
3. The Jews stumblingstone was that they sought righteousness by works.