

# Stumbling Blocks

Sermon #1009

Study by W.D. Frazee—October 26, 1966

Now turn to the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm. I love this Psalm, Psalm 91, verses 11, and 12. This is one of these wonderful assurances of the protecting care, the loving watch care, of our Lord.

“For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone” Psalm 91:11-12.

bThis sounds like a child of God, would never fall down, doesn't it? Yes. But there is another one, to put with this. The 37<sup>th</sup> Psalm, verses 23, and 24. Psalm 37:23-24. You know, if there was only one verse in the Bible, there is a lot of things we wouldn't know, right? There are many subjects, we need more than one verse. Each verse is true, but as the total light is made from the various colors of the rainbow, so total truth comes from a study of the different revelations of truth, God has given, in various verses. Alright, Psalm 37:23-24.

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand” Psalm 37:23-24.

Is that a good promise? Oh, that is a wonderful promise. We might wonder why the Lord lets anyone fall down, physically, spiritually, or any other way. But I read once a quotation that helped me. The Lord's messenger said, that sometimes the Lord let people make mistakes to keep them from making further mistakes. You remember, the Apostle Peter had an experience one day or one night, he was walking on the water. Now none of us have had that experience, have we? That was marvelous. But as he was walking on the water, something happened, what was it? He began to do what? To sink. And then he had to do what? Cry to Jesus. What did Jesus do? Put forth His hand and lifted him up. Now that was a literal physical experience. Literally he walked upon the water, literally, physically, he sank in the water. And Jesus reached out His hand and lifted him out of what would have been a watery grave, didn't He? That was all very literal, physical, tangible, but in that, Jesus was seeking to teach Peter, a spiritual lesson. Which if he had learned it in that experience, he would have never had the spiritual failure and defeat which came to him, the night of the Savior's betrayal and trial. Do you remember? Do you remember that, that night Peter was so confident, that no matter what anybody else did, he would do what? Be true to Jesus. And yet, when the disciples left the Savior, the one that was leading the flight, was who? It was that same Peter, he was sinking pitifully. The experience up on Galilee, had not taught him the lesson that

Christ designed that he should learn. Oh my dear friends, how many lessons are there in life, if we will just open our eyes and see them.

Some of these things I think, have been impressed upon my mind in recent hours. Yesterday, I heard that Elder Neil was here on the campus, and he was up at Brother Atherton's. And so just before dinner, I thought, "well, I will run up there and see him, and make an appointment for a visit." And as I started out on just a little run, I wasn't breaking any speed limits, but I fell down. I fell down, and fell flat forward. My foot had caught a stumbling block, an old tree trunk that was there in the grass. It had been cut off, it was only, just, oh I suppose, a couple of inches above the ground. And the mower had managed to pass over it, but I didn't. And so as I fell forward, I remember thinking, "now, I wonder just what is going to happen"? And I fell here and broke a rib, and the rest of the force was taken, here on my chin. And so I have two stitches in there now, and this little bandage. But you know, as I was thinking about it, in the night last night, I thought, "there is a sermon in this." And so I want to study with you tonight, some of the things that I have been meditating on. I have given you two texts on this matter. One is God's promise to keep us from falling, the other is a promise to pick us up when we fall. I think both of them are wonderful, what do you say? They are wonderful. Now turn to 1 Corinthians 10:13. Oh, pardon me, it is the 12<sup>th</sup> verse I want. 1 Corinthians 10:12. We are so used to quoting that 13<sup>th</sup> verse, I know, but the 12<sup>th</sup> one, we want tonight.

"Wherefore let him think he standeth take heed lest he fall" 1 Corinthians 10:12.

Is that a good one? That is a good one, for this man, isn't it? Yes. Now do you think I will be a little more careful now? Yes, that's right. I'll be a little more careful. And God wants everyone of us as we walk or run the way of life, to be careful, that's the point. And you will notice, my friends, that running, has its risks. Yet David says, "I will run the way of thy commandments." And I wasn't on a bad errand, I was on a good errand. But there is danger even on good errands, right? So let him that thinketh he is ok, be careful, take heed lest he what? Lest he fall. I think that is good.

Now the interesting thing is, I could have been just three inches to one side, or three inches to the other side, and missed this whole experience. That is one of the first things that I thought about as I looked at the battleground. There are some things that worry me, I suppose nothing ought to worry us, but some things do. But you know that kind of thing doesn't, friends, because I could see that there were so many chances for this thing, not to happen. And while don't misunderstand me, I don't blame God for my falling. I say that God allowed it for a purpose. There is something in that, it may be that in this study we have tonight, somebody is going to get some help. That will keep us, keep you and keep me, from something far worse than a broken rib, my friends. A broken heart is a lot harder to heal than broken ribs. So let him that thinketh he standeth, do what? Take heed lest he fall. And that means to be careful even when we are on good errands, doing a good work, and running the way of God's commandments, and being careful.

Another thing that I observed, is that this thing I stumbled over was not in plain sight. There wasn't a sign up, I didn't see it. Also it was rather small. And

some of the great dangers in life, friends, are hidden, and they are small, not big. Now do you know what our family did this noon? We celebrated 24 hours after the experience I just told you about, and we did what the Lord told Israel to do back there in the days of the theocracy, when there was a criminal that had to be stoned to death. The people that had witnessed the thing, or had been injured by it, they were to come and cast the stone, do you remember? And I found out after I had, had this experience, that some other people had, had some trouble with that, not as serious as mine however, it could have been so. But a little girl had run her bicycle over it, and she didn't feel particularly comfortable. And even the lawnmower had a bit of trouble with it. So it had been an offender, this was the third or fourth offense. And so it got executed, at noon today.

Now if you will turn to Isaiah the 57<sup>th</sup> chapter, and the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, you will see what God wants you and me to do. With all these things that people might stumble over, might fall down. Isaiah 57:14, beginning with the 4<sup>th</sup> word.

“...Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people” Isaiah 57:14.

Is that a good text on this? Now they say, “foresight is better than hindsight”, but I will tell you, friends, there is one thing worse than not using foresight, and that is, not even using hindsight. If you slip on a banana skin, do what? Pick it up, get it out of the way, so that neither you nor anybody else will slip on that again. So this thing that put me down yesterday, is not going to bother me anymore. That's that. That's that. And it is not going to bother anybody else anymore, that's settled. Come friends, shall we be just as careful about things in our Christian experience? When we have found that something is a stumbling block, either to us or somebody else, what should we do with it? What does this text say? Take it out of the way, get rid of it. Say, if we had always done that, wouldn't there be a big pile of rocks somewhere? Or a big pile of stumps? Now I am sure that many here tonight, perhaps all, have put some stumbling blocks out of the way. You can look back along the road, and see where God has helped you to put some things away. Some things that you used to stumble over, that you don't stumble over them anymore, they are out of the way. Thank God for every one of them. But if there is anything else that you have stumbled over, even one failure or falling, is too bad. But after we have fallen over a thing once, after we see that in our experience a certain thing causes us to stumble, what is the thing to do about it? Get it out of the way, get it out of the way. Take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people.

Now in this, we should be thinking not merely of ourselves, but of others. Turn to Romans the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter, and the 13<sup>th</sup> verse. Romans 14:13.

“Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way” Romans 14:13.

There are people that like jokes, they call them jokes, that cause people to stumble. A friend of mine was telling about an experience in a college auditorium, where one of the students was going around adjusting the windows that were high

windows. One of the other students, just to create a laugh, he put out his foot out like this, as the other student came along, with his eye up there on the window, and of course, he fell over. Now this text says to do just the opposite of that. Don't do that. Don't put a stumbling block in anybody's way. Don't put an occasion to fall. Is it funny to make somebody fall? No, it isn't funny, it is too bad, either physically or especially spiritually. So we are to examine our lives, (watch this point) not only to get out the stumbling blocks that might make us fall, but the stumbling blocks that might what? Make somebody else fall. Now this is a close text, this takes love. But this was the spirit of the Apostle Paul.

You will remember he wrote to the Corinthians. They had asked him some questions about eating food that had been offered to idols. He wrote back and told them, he said, "well an idol isn't anything, so as far as I am concerned, it wouldn't hurt me to eat food that had been offered to idols" but he said, "if there is a weak brother around, whose conscience would be affected by that", and he would begin to reason like this, "well there's Paul, he is an Apostle and he is eating the meat offered to idols, I guess it is all right for me to eat it, and so I guess I will go to the idol feasts and join in." Do you see, friends? Paul knew that it wouldn't hurt him if he ate some food that had been offered to idols, but he said, "if that is going to make my brother fall, if that is going to make my brother stumble, it is not for me." If you would like to read about that it, is in first Corinthians the eighth chapter, I merely refer to it.

It is an example of this principle that Paul is talking about. That we are not to do, even that which may not seem to us harmful, if it causes the fall of somebody else. Years ago, the Lord's messenger had an interesting experience on this point. In harmony with the Bible writers, she bore a plain testimony on plainness of dress. In harmony with Paul's statement to Timothy, and Peter's epistle. She spoke against the wearing of jewelry and all unnecessary adornments. But one time in the midst of a solemn meeting, where many were reaching out after God, there was somebody that got a great burden and distressed, because they said, "Sister White wore gold." They said that some years before, somebody had given her a little watch, and she said it was an excellent timekeeper, so she kept it because of that. And she wore it where she could get at the time. This was long before the time of wristwatches. But these people were having a lot of trouble and distress, because "Sister White wore gold." What do you suppose she did? She said, she sold the watch, rather than cause them difficulty.

Now mind you, she didn't feel that for her to have that gold watch was hurting her at all, or was wrong. But she went the second mile. We need wisdom when to do that, friends. It would be too bad, if we had to let everybody's conscience on us, because I don't think anybody should do that, but you see what Paul is talking about here. You see what the Lord's messenger is talking about. We need to watch our example, not only lest we fall, but lest what? Lest others fall.

You know, the person who thinks that he can drink a little wine, without ever getting drunk. And there are thousands of people, probably millions, that can do that. But if they would understand this principle, even if they thought that it would never do them any harm, for the sake of some weaker brother or sister, they might abstain from all intoxicants, lest the weak one, stumble and fall. Let's turn to Matthew the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter. Here is another example, Matthew 5, verses 27 and 28.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a women to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” Matthew 5:27-28.

Now Jesus says that a man can commit adultery, where? In his heart. And this, Jesus says, he can do, by doing what? Looking. Looking. Looking with what in his heart? Lust. Now the question that I want to raise is this. Are there stumbling blocks that could be put in the way of people like this? Let me tell you an experience that came to me. Some months ago, a long way from here, there isn't a one of you that know the man I am going to tell you about. But there are probably thousands of other men like him, no question about that. This man I am going to tell you about, that none of you know. I was holding a meeting in a certain place, and this man came to me for counsel. He was in a desperate battle with the Devil and with himself, over this matter of lust. He had tried to do colporteur work, but when he went out in the homes of the people, the women he saw, were dressed in such a way, that his lust was uncontrollable. He was counseling with me, trying to get some help. Of course we went to the Bible, to help him get some help.

Now you know, friends, what I believe? I believe that it must be true, that there are a lot of women that don't understand this. I can't believe that any Christian women would deliberately dress in such a way, that she knew she was putting a stumbling block before men. I can't believe that. And so I have to believe, that there must be a lot of Christian women, that just don't see it, they just don't see it. And just because the world introduces fashion, which just fills the whole battlefield with booby traps, there is no reason for Christians to say “amen” by their example. What do you say? So do what, with the stumbling block? Take them out of the way. And you know, my dear friends, thank God, it is possible for a Christian women, a Christian girl, to dress in such a way, that men who are having these battles, are diverted from lust, instead of having it arouse them. It is possible for the purity of Jesus to be revealed.

And now, may I say something further? Following these immodest fashions, isn't the only way to put stumbling blocks before men. If a professed follower of Jesus dresses in an untidy way, a slovenly way, a careless way, does not such a person put a stumbling block in the way of people accepting the beautiful principles of dress reform? Don't they? Why sure.

That stump we cut out of the way today, isn't the only thing that people can fall down on. My advice, dear friends, is in spite of the fact that we got rid of that stumbling block, watch your step, there are a lot of other stumbling blocks. And oh I pray, that every women here, young or old, will aspire not only to be dressed in modest apparel, but as Paul says, attractive. Attractive to God in heaven, you understand, not to the lust of Hollywood and Paris. It is a wonderful thing, friends, to see beautiful attractive dress on those who love the Savior and love His appearing. I thank God for all the evidence in that direction that we see here tonight. And I pray that we shall continue the upward road, or using the figure that we are using tonight, get all the stumbling blocks out of the way. What do you say?

Now there is another stumbling block I would like to have you notice. Ezekiel the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter, and the 19<sup>th</sup> verse. Ezekiel 7:19. Speaking of the great time of trouble that is just ahead. It says.

“They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumbling block of their iniquity” Ezekiel 7:19.

Gold and silver, a stumbling block? Oh yes. Gold and silver a stumbling block. They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare. Turn and read it in 1 Timothy, the sixth chapter. Here is a stumbling block indeed. And the fact that it is beautiful, does not make it any the less terrible. 1 Timothy 6:9.

“But they that will be rich...” 1 Timothy 6:9.

...notice it isn't just those that are rich, but those that are determined to get rich. You might be as poor as can be, but if you fit this classification be careful.

“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts,...” 1 Timothy 6:9.

So one way to fall, is to stumble over gold, stumble over riches. The effort to acquire, what other people have. Now Paul tells us how to be happy in the eighth verse.

“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content”  
1 Timothy 6:8.

And I know you all have both, I can tell by looking at you. So we should be very happy, contented, people, right? That's right. And listen friends, if our use of money in any extravagance, in home or furniture, or dress, or in any other way, is a stumbling block to other people, we need to remember that puritan plainness and simplicity, should mark the dwellings and apparel of all who are looking for the coming of Jesus. Part of the reason for simplicity, is that our influence may keep from putting any stumbling blocks in the way of others.

But now I come to the biggest stumbling block of all. And I am so glad, friends, that here is something we can do something about. In Volume 9, page 189, there is a statement I used to hear Elder Luther Warren quote many a time. It impregnated itself on the brain cells of this man, and I want to share it with you again tonight.

“If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one” Testimonies, Volume 9, page 189, paragraph 4,

Then lack of love, is a what? A stumbling block. Lack of courtesy is a stumbling block. Lack of kindness is a stumbling block. Lack of humility is a stumbling block. Now what did our text in Isaiah say to do about the stumbling blocks? Take them out of the way. Well how can I be more loving, by naturally having a selfish disposition? How can I be more courteous, if my tendency is to be rough and rude? How can I be more kind, if my tendency is to be thoughtless about others? My dear friends, the remedy is looking unto Jesus. It is as we behold Him that we are changed. How careful He was of the feelings of others. You remember that shrewd cunning tax collector, that came to Peter, and he said, "doesn't your Master pay tribute"? Peter, quick to speak, he said, "Yes." So when they were in the house, Jesus asked Peter about it. He said "tell Me Peter, of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute and taxes, of their own children, or of other people"? "Other people" Peter answered. And then Jesus said, "The children are free." This is the temple tax, that the tax collector was trying to collect, and Jesus, as God's Son, is free of that. One reason the tax collector asked, he wanted to put Jesus in a position of either paying the tax and thereby somebody would say, "well He isn't God's Son, because He pays tax like everybody else. Or else He would refuse to pay the tax." So Peter had said quickly, "yes, He pays tax." Now watch. Jesus having canvassed the whole thing, He had shown that He was framed. He said, "nevertheless, lest we should offend them." That would literally mean "cause to stumble." Lest we should put a stumbling block in somebody's way, "let's pay the tax, Peter. Take your hook and line and go down there to the sea, cast in the line, take up the fish that comes, you will find a piece of money in its mouth, it will just be the right amount to pay My tax and yours."

Lest we should what? Offend them. Oh friends, how careful Jesus was. He did all He could, to make other people happy and satisfied. Now even He couldn't do it, because it is impossible to fully satisfy the unconverted heart. And the proof of that is, that only after three and a half years of public ministry, the whole nation turned against Him, and did what? Nailed Him to the cross. And so after we do all we can to be pleasant and kind and tenderhearted and pitiful, we might get rejection too. But we have the promise that there will be a hundred times more souls saved, then if we go at the thing roughshod and careless. Let's take truth to people in nice packages, what do you say? In our manner, our words, our attitude, let's take the stumbling blocks out of the way. Well, these are some of the lessons that God has been giving me the last few hours, friends. Have you gotten a blessing tonight? I have, and by God's grace, I want to do three things. I want to be careful as I walk and run. I want to be careful lest I what? Fall. Number two, I want to get out of my life, anything that might cause me to stumble. And number three, I want to as far as I can and know how, and God can teach me, to get out of my life, anything that would cause anybody else to stumble. Do you join me in those three things? How many would like to tonight? God grant it, friends, God grant it.

Now I want to give you a little time to praise the Lord. Are you happy tonight for life and blessing? Are you happy for at least enough health and strength to come up these stairs tonight, be in this upper room, and share in this vesper hour? Are you thankful for the blessed hope in your heart? Are you glad that Jesus is your Friend? And before you speak, I want to tell you a little experience. You know, I am thankful that I didn't break my leg or break my arm, or something like that. But there

are several of you here tonight, that I was about to say, you have more to be thankful for than I do.

Let me tell you this story. Down in South America one of our missionaries was telling, as the missionaries got together in their meeting and experience, how he had passed over a very dangerous road, a very narrow trail, where the horse stumbled and almost fell off the path. But he said the Lord kept Him, and he was thanking the Lord about it. And when he sat down, another missionary got up and said, "Brother I want to thank the Lord too. I went over that same trail and the Lord helped and my horse didn't even stumble." So some of you can be thankful that you walked or ran all week and haven't fallen down. Am I right? Oh friends, how much we have to thank God for tonight. What is your testimony, your witness?

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