

Don't Be A Stumbling Block

July 28, 2019

In Matthew 16 Peter had just proclaim that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. When he said that, Jesus told him he had received that revelation from the Father. Jesus had also said to him:

"You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hades shall not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 16:18-19

Wow! Even if Peter didn't understand exactly what Jesus was talking about, it was pretty heady stuff! Enough for Peter to get the big head I would think. At least be feeling pretty important.

The Scripture continues in verse 21 with:

From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid [it,] Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Matthew 16:21-23

When Jesus starts to talk about all the bad stuff He's about to face, Peter steps in with this new authority that he's been given and says, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to YOU!"

I'm sure Peter felt pretty good about stepping up to defend his friend and teacher - his Lord. He thought he'd done a good thing. Until Jesus turns and says to him, "Get behind Me, Satan!"

What a slap in the face!

I've always felt kind of bad for Peter here because he had just been given this great honor by Jesus and then comes a very hard blow! Life is like

that isn't it? Anytime we start to feel proud about something we've done or said we can be sure there is a crash around the corner.

Jesus called one of His best friends Satan when he was saying that he wasn't going to let anything bad happen to Him. Why?

Jesus explains in the next phrase

"You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

This is huge! We need to get this down! When we set our minds on man's interests instead of God's interest we are being used of Satan and have become a stumbling block for what God wants to do in people's lives and for the world.

Think about it - What is God's interest here in the life of Jesus?

He's all about saving the world!

John 3:16 -

*For God so loved the world that **He gave His only begotten Son** that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
John 3:16*

Jesus Himself said:

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give His life** a ransom for many."
Mark 10:45*

Jesus came to die. Scripture is clear and Jesus was clear. His purpose in coming to this earth was mainly to be the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

So here Peter is looking at man's interest - not wanting his friend to suffer at all, even temporarily - instead of looking to God's interest in saving the world.

So we see why Jesus was so harsh with Him because God's interests in a person's life are always for their salvation and sanctification - for their good - and anything or anyone that comes in the way of what God wants is a stumbling block in that person's life from the devil!

So what's the application to our lives?

First of all - What are **God's Interests** in our lives?

Our Salvation - to have an abundant eternal life

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.
2 Peter 3:9*

*This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.
2 Timothy 2:3-4*

Our Sanctification - to live a holy life

*It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.
1 Thessalonians 4:3-7*

Second - What are **Man's interests?**

Comfort, Security, Respect, Love, Honor, Pleasure, etc.

God is not opposed to those things but when we choose them over His interests, we are getting in His way.

I think we can infer from this Scripture and others that:

When we interfere in someone else's life in order to keep them or us from suffering, and it hinders their salvation or sanctification, we are a stumbling block and doing the work of the devil.

Beside this passage in my Bible I have written:

"How many people have I been a stumbling block to because I was more concerned for their desires and comfort than for God's purposes in their lives?"

When someone you love is suffering do you step in and try to get them out of it without thinking about what God may be doing in their life?

When you decide what action to take concerning another person do you choose the thing that will hurt the least even though it may not be according to God's interest in that person's life?

Jesus continues this passage with Matthew 16:24-27:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.

Beside that passage in my Bible I have written:

"Don't be the stumbling block that keeps another person from denying themselves, taking up their cross and following Jesus."

This is hard for us because we don't want the people we love to suffer. Most of us don't want the people we know to suffer, especially because of something we have the power to control. But we always have to look at what God wants first - and He wants people to be saved and sanctified first and foremost - not to be kept from feeling bad. We all know this even

though we don't like to admit it - it's the suffering in our lives that God uses to strengthen us and to make us like Jesus - to build our character and perseverance. And if we are those people who never want anyone to suffer then we will probably find ourselves often becoming a stumbling block to what God wants to do in another person's life.

I remember years ago when this passage first hit me I was at another church and there was a situation where someone wanted to do something that - obvious to everyone else - they were not gifted to do. The pastor didn't want to hurt their feelings and continued to allow them to do it. We understand because none of us want to hurt other people's feelings. But the question is - do we avoid causing suffering in a person's life and possibly become a stumbling block to what God wants to do with that person. I don't know where that person is or what they're doing but hopefully somewhere along the line someone had the courage to tell them the truth - even if it hurt - so that they could really begin to do and be what God wanted in the first place.

How much growth do we hinder in another person because we step in and prevent them from suffering?

I know some people don't believe this - especially Paul, but I don't like confrontation. I prefer to just keep quiet and let relationships be superficial. But is that serving God's interests or mine? It makes me feel better when everybody's happy with one another and acts like they like and approve and accept everything - whatever. So that's my interest - to keep the peace. But what about what God wants?

He wants people to be saved and sanctified. By keeping quiet and acting like it's all good, am I a stumbling block to them? Am I allowing Satan to have his way in their life? Because I'm making them think "it's all good" do they think God thinks it's all good?

I'm not saying that God is all about suffering but He does allow quite a bit of discomfort in our lives in order to shape us into the people he wants us to be and if we are acting as agents against other people's discomfort just so we are comfortable, then we are stumbling blocks to people.

We have a culture that is determined to not offend or make anyone feel bad about their choices and desires. We want everyone to feel comfortable and no one to suffer any consequences for anything.

But could it be that in God's eyes our interests have become so man-centered instead of God-centered - we care more about what people think and feel than what God thinks and feels - that we are literally a stumbling block - a tool of Satan to prevent the salvation and sanctification of the people that God wants to save and sanctify?

It's a serious question.

So I will leave you this morning with these two questions to ponder:

Am I being a stumbling block to someone because I am more concerned for their desires and comfort than for God's purposes in their lives?

Am I the stumbling block that keeps another person from denying themselves, taking up their cross and following Jesus just because it's in my interest - because it's what I want and it's easier and more comfortable for me?