

Voice of Thanksgiving

Calling a Company of Believers Together for Prayer

For the Week of May 9, 2010

You know the value of prayer: it is precious beyond all price. Never, never neglect it

SIR THOMAS BUXTON

The Life of Prayer

Stumbling over Me

David Williamson

When my friend Mark and I were in the ninth grade, we went with Mark's Dad to Fort Morgan, Colorado, to see our home town football team play against the team from Fort Morgan. It was a terrific battle, both teams fighting hard, but neither team able to move the ball very far. Fort Morgan had been able to kick a field goal and lead 3 to 0 late in the final period. With only a few minutes left in the game, the Longmont running back, Rich van Felt, broke through the line and out of a tackle and ran more than forty yards for what was the winning score. And although we were shivering with the cold of the night, we were warmed by this exciting victory.

Twenty years later I was asked to help coach a local high school football team. One afternoon the head coach and I were making plans for the next practice and began to talk about games we had seen. I told the story of going to Fort Morgan. And while Pat (the head coach) listened closely, very soon after I began the story, he got this pained look on his face. When I finished he explained. "I played in that game", he stated. "I remember the play you described. I was the guy who made that last attempted tackle. "I had stumbled trying to make the tackle and could not get a good grip on von Felt. He broke free, made that long run, and scored. Von Felt had shoes with a red sole, and as I lay on the ground, after he broke the tackle, I watched those red soles go down the field and our chance of making the play offs come to an end."

In the book of Matthew, chapter 11, Jesus tells us, "***And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.***" The word is translated, *offended* in both the King James and New King James and is translated as *stumbling over* in the New American Standard version. The word in the Greek is *skandalizo*; (scandalize) means to entrap, trip, or entice. Jesus is presenting an important key to successful Christian living and for effective prayer. We are not to stumble over Him.

At first glance this seems very strange. Stumble over Jesus, you must be kidding, He is the Lord, He is my Lord. But the fact of the matter is that many people, including Christians, have been stumbling over Jesus since the beginning of time. This stumbling began before Jesus was even born. Men stumbled over prophecies of Jesus' appearing. How we deal with stumbling is of great importance to our success.

Salvation revolves around a man or woman's response to Jesus. If we receive Him as Lord, we receive His new life. If we reject Him as Lord, we remain in the hold of death. For centuries men

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have stumbled over this choice. Some have rejected Him. Some try to make thing harder, adding the ways and means that one must work through to have new life. Others have claimed requirements of belonging to a group or organization. Others have claimed a variety of alternatives, ways, and means. Still others have tried to throw out the entire question, claiming no standard or requirement at all. However, the Bible is very clear that there is one way to God and all who come to God must come through Christ Jesus and must come God's way.

Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." John 10:7-11 (NKJV)

Beyond dealing with this great and most important stumbling block there still remains other opportunity to stumble. Jesus states there is great blessing to believers who do not stumble over Him. This has vital importance to our life and prayers; we must recognize stumbling, if and where it exists and deal appropriately with it. It would be good for us to review for a moment common points of stumbling. The Greek word for stumbling is useful for this purpose; it means to entice, to trip, and to entrap.

The Devil often uses enticement to cause people to stumble. He likes to use this to keep people from salvation, drawing them into sin. His goal is to draw them in so deep, they believe there is no way out and no hope. The Devil also uses enticement against Christians. He hates God and so he works to destroy everything that reminds him of God, including Christians. His enticement is individualized for each person. He looks for areas of weakness, fear, doubt, or unbelief. He then entices the person with something in that area.

Men and women, who seek Jesus and the fullness of the life He has prepared for us, can have abundant life. However, the abundant life comes only in Christ Jesus. The stumbling by enticement often comes from trying to live life of combination. This is seeking Jesus and something else to be full, complete, and successful. If we are seeking anything without Christ, anything outside of Christ, then we are a candidate for enticing and stumbling over Him.

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." Philippians 3:8-11 (NKJV)

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Stumbling by the trip is very common. A trip can be sin, people trip over sin and can make it a stumble over Him, if they do not receive His forgiveness (this of course must be done His way).

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10 (NKJV)

Beyond the tripping on sin, there is a problem of other things we can trip over. A very common example of this is to trip due to our traditions. The Pharisees missed their long awaited Messiah, because they tripped over Jesus. He did not fit their traditions. Traditions are very common and some can be very good, but they also can be a stumbling over Jesus. There is an old saying, "The cross is where my will and God's will cross." If I am to live a successful Christian life, then my will must change to His will in all things. The same can be said of traditions, everywhere my tradition crosses His traditions then my tradition must change.

We also can be tripped up on excuses, limiting God, worldliness, assumptions, rumors, lies, and the list goes on and on. The key is that we must seek to know Jesus, His nature, will, and plans. When there are things presented in the Bible where we differ from what is presented, then these are points of stumbling over Jesus. With the help of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, we need to get beyond these stumbling points and walk as He wants us to walk and not stumble over Jesus.

The word, entrap, means to catch in a trap or to lure into danger, error, difficulty, compromising situation, or embarrassment. This is a stumbling block that is common and also can be very subtle. The Devil likes to work a person into an error or bad situation. He works to cause the person to stumble into sin. If he cannot get sin, he strives for a situation that ruins a reputation, a testimony, or causes the person to be ineffective or quit. A great example of this is the compromising situation. This is a place or action that is not sin, but has the appearance of evil. There are things that may be okay for others, but if we are going to walk in the fullness of what God has prepared for us and if we are going to be effective in prayer, we must not have even the appearance of evil.

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 1 Corinthians 6:12 (NKJV)

My friend Pat (head coach of the team, who stumbled instead of making the tackle) claims that if he had taken one more step over, he could have hit the runner square on and made the tackle. He is sure if he had made that tackle they would have won and made the play offs. One more step.

For Christians we are called to make one more step to keep from stumbling. If we depart from iniquity we can keep from stumbling. As Paul describes this, we can be a vessel for honor, useful for the Master. As men and women of prayer this is what we want, to be useful in bringing God's power and His answers to this world, by prayer. Our salvation in Christ; provides remedy for all the forms

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of stumbling. The key is for us to be cleansed, this comes by drawing close to Jesus. We flee from and avoid those things that take us away from Him. This includes even the appearance of evil. It is growing increasingly important that we walk with Christ and not stumble over Him. He is looking for men and women in whom He can show Himself strong. Men and women who will not stumble, who cannot be enticed, tripped, or entrapped.

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

2 Timothy 2:19-26 (NKJV)

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

2 Tim. 3:1-5 (NKJV)

Men and women who will not stumble, who cannot be enticed, tripped, or entrapped.

Let us pray!

A Call for Prayer

Pray for Marianne and David Dean – Missionaries on college campuses in East Asia. Pray for their continued ministry to college graduates and young professionals. They had more than 20 people come to a recent recruiting event, pray for these people to be involved in the fellowship group and continue to grow and mature in Christ. Pray for the two new families who will be joining the ministry team; pray for a quick transition and molding together of the team. Pray for provision for Deans and the other families and for open doors of opportunity to minister.

Pray for the BBB Conference in Poland the last weekend in June. Pray for opportunities for pastors and wives to attend. Pray for provision for the conference; meeting the cost of travel, accommodations, food, and the meetings. Pray for the leaders of the conference; pray for guidance

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and direction for meetings, so the meeting times will help to meet the needs of pastors from both East and West. Pray for encouragement and help for pastors. Pray for preparation for helping people deal with the trials and tribulations of life and all they face in their home country.

Continue Faithful in Prayer

Continue to pray for the ministries listed here and use this as a spring board for praying for nations, churches, pastors, ministries, and people close to your heart and according to the Spirit's direction. Your faithful prayers make a difference!

Pray for Pastors of Churches

DK Limbu Daniel – Pastor of a church in Nepal
Jacek Gromadzki – Pastor of a church in Kolobrzeg, Poland
Mark and Patty Spencer – Pastors of a church in Longmont, Colorado
William (Bill) Williamson – Pastor of a church in Cedaredge, Colorado
Charles and Janice Wilson – Pastors in Wyola, Montana

Pray for Nations and the Churches of Nations

Israel and the peace of Jerusalem
Churches in Belarus
Churches in Lithuania

Pray for Leadership over multiple Churches

DK Limbu Daniel – Church planter among Nepalese people
Marek Kaminski – Bishop of Poland and co-founder and leader of the BBB Conference

Pray for Christian Ministries

Joyce Abrahamson – Head of a Christian school in Brazil
John Coon – Ministry in Europe and the USA
Marianne and David Dean – Missionaries on college campuses in East Asia
Lori Farquhar – Children's Ministry Director
Bernd and Heike Pastor – Ministry in Germany
Mark Spencer – Worldwide ministry, and co-founder and leader of BBB Conference
Patty Spencer – Worship leader, and musician
William (Bill) Williamson – Leader of a mission outreach to India
David Williamson – Writer and editor of *Voice of Thanksgiving*

Calling Christians to Effective Fervent Prayer

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