

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

THE LENEXA EDIFIER

FEBRUARY

16

2020

THE STRAIT AND NARROW

by Jim Stauffer

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:13–14)

It is amazing how this principle is automatically applied to the many professions men seek to practice in our time while being completely dismissed in religious matters. No man would suggest we change building codes to suit the intended expenditures of erecting a tower for offices. He would insist we design to meet the code and then determine the cost from that point forward. Military strategies have never been designed with the comfort of the soldier as the primary concern. It is the judgment of how to win the battle that determines the plan of attack. The greatest athletes of our time take no shortcuts in training. Those who know them well attest to their insistence on hard work at the perfection of the fundamentals to allow them to perform at a high level of proficiency under pressure. The recent tragedy of Kobe Bryant and his daughter along with several others in the helicopter crash became a testimony to this very fact. Many who spoke of knowing him personally insisted while his talent was great his work ethic was even greater. It is accepted by those who are great at what they do professionally, success is based on acceptance of the hard and difficult pathway to excellence.

Now working for a living, providing for a family and achieving excellence at your profession are admirable traits in a person. But there is a limit to what such excellence can provide. The Psalmist says, *“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” (Psalm 90:10)* God’s wisdom tells us our professional practice can sustain and provide life on earth for approximately 80 years. Modern medicine is attempting to extend that a few years. If you have the right genetics you may live to 90 or so. That is what

working hard and becoming proficient in our earthly endeavor can do. Now think about these passages, *“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (Mat. 25:46)* Jesus speaks of those who He would judge to be unrighteous at His second coming (**Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10**). The Lord describes Hell as a place, *where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:48)*

Now we must ask ourselves if we are being objective at all when we pour all our energy into something that is good for 80-90 years and largely ignore something that will last eternally.

There is a reason for the beautiful and metaphorical description of heaven in the book of Revelation. That reason is the comparative beauty and glory to anything we will ever know on earth. **Rev. 21:4** tells us, *and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying or pain; the first things have passed away.*

Now, in consideration of that heavenly reward versus eternal punishment, consider a passage such as **Eph. 4:1-6** *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* With that under consideration, ask yourself why there are over literally thousands of religions claiming more than one body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God and Father of all.

We must each answer for himself. The Lord has spoken and I believe His word, *....but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15)*

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ABOLISHING THE STUMBLING BLOCK

by Roger Bruner

That the apostles suffered persecution is without dispute. Peter and John were imprisoned (**Acts 5**) and repeatedly threatened. James was put to death (**Acts 12**). The apostle Paul was a prisoner (**Acts 20**). Others, such as Silas and Stephen, were persecuted and/or killed (**Acts 7:16**). Yet, all these were *“faithful unto death”* (**Revelation 2:10**). Have you ever given thought as to why persecution was directed toward them? On the part of those who suffered persecution, it was a result of preaching salvation through Christ. On the part of those who did the persecuting, it was because salvation through Christ was preached. At first glance, you might say, “Well, it was the same reason for both.” I submit that such was not the case at all. The reason I know this is true is because not all who heard of salvation through Christ reacted by persecuting those who preached. In fact, many readily accepted the same message that others rejected. It was this difference in the reaction to the message (i.e., the gospel) that relates to the title of this article: “Abolishing the Stumbling Block.”

Christ was prophesied to be a *“stumbling block”* and a *“rock of offense”*, not in the sense that God **intended** for people to *“stumble”* over Him and thereby be eternally lost (**1 Timothy 2:4**), but in the sense that, in their rejection of him as a savior - as the only means of salvation (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**), He would be **the cause** of stumbling and offense. It is here that a most important Bible truth be understood. There are many texts that relate to this, but one will suffice: **1 Peter 2:6-8**: *“For this is contained in Scripture: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in him will not be disappointed.’ This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone,’ and ‘A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense’; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the Word, and to this doom they were also appointed.”*

Notice the phrase *“disobedient to the Word.”* This explains how Jesus would be a *“rock of offense”* and a *“stone of stumbling”* - His Word! This is a simple, yet most important truth that is missed, as it relates to why some react in disobedience to the Word, whereas others obey the same Word. The Word is what is disobeyed. This Word refers to Jesus’ teachings. This is crucial, because the Word is that which instructs man how to respond to God’s offer of salvation through Jesus. This Word also explains and reveals what sin is: Disobedience to God’s Word. Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s Word, and all who disobey God disobey his Word. **Disobedience is what “stumbling” at the Word means.**

Why do some *“stumble”* whereas others do not?

The apostle John explained why in **John 15:18-25**. Notice especially what is said in **vv. 22 & 24**. It relates to the Word and explains why some *“stumble”* and are *“offended.”* Jesus’ word (i.e., his teaching) brought an awareness and a conviction of sin, as well as its *“wages”* (**Romans 6:23**). To avoid these consequences, according to this Word, one must repent and acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God. However, to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God means acknowledgement of God’s Word, which Jesus taught (**John 12:48-50**).

Those who didn’t want to acknowledge this Word persecuted Jesus. In **John 15**, Jesus informed those who were commissioned to preach this same message that they would also receive persecution for the same reasons. Jesus had told Nicodemus in **John 3:19-21**, *“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”*

This explains why some react with persecution. Their *“stumbling”* is their disobedience to the Word. The Word is the *“stumbling block.”* The abolishing of the stumbling block can be done in one of two ways. One way is by persecuting the teacher of the Word because of hatred of the Word. Another way to “abolish” the stumbling block is to accept the Word by obeying it. It is a simple concept. If *“stumbling”* is by disobedience to the Word, then the *“stumbling”* is removed by obedience to the Word. The response to the Word reveals the nature of the heart. A good heart obeys. An evil heart disobeys (**1 Peter 1:22-23**).

Our attitudes toward God’s Word reveals our hearts. Attitudes govern actions. If you consider yourself *“born again,”* it was by the message that Christ and the apostles delivered. If you believed the message, you obeyed something that the message commanded. If you were *“born again”* apart from obedience, then the message was not what Christ and the apostles delivered. The apostle Paul said, *“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”* (**Romans 6:17-18**).

Taken from For Publication February 19, 2020

Coronavirus?

Even as I am typing these words there is a press conference on television concerning the coronavirus and its likely effects in the San Antonio, Texas, area. Everyone is concerned, and why wouldn’t we be? At

this point there have been over 1370 deaths and 60414 cases of infection worldwide which gives a little more than 2% death rate. And this doesn't even take into consideration those who survive the infection but suffer life changing results. People are concerned!

There is another infection that it seems no one is concerned about. Its infection rate is 100% and the mortality rate is 100%. In other words: Everybody gets it and everybody who gets it dies from it. And yet most people act as though not talking about it will make it not real. It's called the spiritual disease of 'sin'. Paul said in **Romans 3:23** "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*", and later on in **Romans 6:23**, "*For the wages of sin is death*". We have all known this about mankind since, well, forever! Solomon, the wisest man said at the Temple consecration in **2 Chronicles 6:36**, "*(for there is no man that sinneth not)*". While the cure and inoculation against the 2019 novel coronavirus disease is still being perfected the cure for sin is ancient and well documented, and 100% effective!

Unfortunately, the cure is why no one wants to talk about the disease. The cure is the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Most of the world does not want to submit to Jesus (**John 3:36**) and that's why they don't talk about the disease. But ignoring cancer doesn't make it go away. Pretending the snake doesn't exist doesn't make the bite harmless.

IT DOESN'T WORK WITH SIN EITHER!

TAKE THE MEDICINE THAT WORKS!

Cleveland Reddinger

How to Answer When You Don't Know the Answer

No one likes to be 'put on the spot.' We dread the possibility of being asked questions that we can't answer. This is especially true when the questions are about religion.

Without a doubt, one of the biggest hindrances to spreading the gospel is this fear of being asked questions. Many Christians feel uneasy about their level of Bible knowledge. Thus, to avoid potentially embarrassing situations, they do their best to sidestep any discussion that might turn to religious themes. This is sad, because it keeps us from many 'open doors' for personal evangelism.

Since no one has ALL of the answers, it is important for us to know what to do when questions arise that 'stump' us. Here are some suggestions:

1) Realize -- and be ready to explain -- that there are simply some pieces of information that we do not have because God has not supplied them. "*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God*" (**Deut. 29:29**). But, we have "*all truth*" (**John 16:12, 13**), and "*all things that pertain unto life and godliness*" (**2 Pet. 1:3**). So, every piece of essential information has been supplied.

2) When you do not know the answer, it is best to simply admit it. This is much better than trying to 'bluff' your way through. Humbly say, "I don't know." But do not fail to add: "I'll find out and get back to you on that." Following this procedure will actually provide additional opportunities to teach. It keeps the door open to further discussions.

3) Study, study, study! You will feel less intimidated and more willing to engage in biblical discussions if you build your confidence level by increasing your Bible knowledge. Pay special attention to areas where you presently feel 'weak' in knowledge and understanding. Be well prepared to deal with popular denominational errors. Be ready to explain 'issues' that divide brethren.

4) Never shy away from a chance to talk about God and His Word. The more you do this, the easier it will become. Every such conversation serves as an opportunity for you to 'sharpen your sword.'

By Greg Gwin Taken from the Beacon Electronic Edition

I LEARN BY LISTENING

I was well acquainted with Brother R.A. McCurry who lived here and passed away some time ago. He went to school very little, and had to work for a living all his long life. He did not call himself a preacher though he preached some. He read much and was a good thinker. In combatting the idea that a sinner can do nothing to be saved, he quoted **Luke 13:24**, "*Strive to enter in by the narrow door*". He then asked. Does not striving require an effort? Can a person strive without doing something? The question that gave rise to the command to strive to enter in by the narrow door shows that Jesus was talking about entering by the narrow door into salvation. Think about it.

In a conversation with a Baptist preacher, this passage was quoted as it is in the King James Version, "*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (**Mark 8:36**) Said Brother McCurry, "A man - what man? Not the unregenerate man, for he is lost whether he gains the world or gains nothing. And not the regenerate man for you say he can do nothing to cause his soul to be lost. Now what man? The question has not been answered.

Yes, I learn by listening.

Doctrinal Discourses, Robertson L. Whiteside

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

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SUNDAY MORNING SERMON: WHAT I CAN BE AND STILL BE LOST



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10