

## Stumbling Blocks 09-30-18 AM

One does not have to drive very long to come across a road hazard of something that has been dropped on the road. Some of the more common things that fall off vehicles include ladders, furniture, trash, and debris.

The source of these road hazards tend to be one of three things. The first is carelessly loaded vehicles. People put too much into a vehicle too small, or fail to properly tie down a load. Second, road hazards are lost by people who are driving recklessly. Reckless drivers may swing off the road a moment, and rocks are flung onto the drivers behind them. Even secured loads come off when a driver is reckless. Finally, there are the dangers in unmaintained vehicles. Cars with loose bumpers, mufflers or bad tires are a danger to those around them.

The nature of the danger of road hazards is unique. A simple chair or mattress might be considered the most non-dangerous item in the home, but when it comes off a car at 55 miles an hour they become a missile or a wall. There are three things to consider about these dangers. First, the vehicles closest to the offender are the ones most likely damage, and damaged the worst. Second, the drivers who lose things very often have little or no knowledge of the offense, and suffer no damages themselves. Finally, the damage from a very small thing can be catastrophic, even resulting in death.

You may already understand that this is not about driving, it is about being a Christian. Christianity is described as "the Way" (Acts 18:25, 19:9,23, 24:14, 24:22, etc.), and as a path or road we travel to heaven. We view the plan of salvation much like a journey to another city; we describe that road as being purchased by the blood of Christ, and we are obligated to provide the gas and obey the rules of the road. There is a term in the bible that describes road hazards we leave in the road. That term is "Stumbling Blocks".

*Matthew 18:7 "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!"*

*Luke 17:1-2 He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble."*

Consider now what we learned about road hazards in terms of the nature of stumbling blocks. Stumbling blocks are caused by three things. First, there are carelessly loaded LIVES. These are Christians who are not in control of our lifestyles; their lifestyle controls them. Second there is reckless LIVING. These lives are by those who like to put one wheel in the darkness, and don't know that they are kicking up obstacles to those behind them. Finally, stumbling blocks/road hazards are caused by unmaintained LIVES, those who do not take the Christian walk seriously and do not maintain their relationships in the way of Christ

Consider too what we learn about the nature of road hazards. First, it is those closest to the Christian who causes the stumbling block that are hurt the worst. Who suffer most? Husbands, Wives, Children, and Brethren. Second, there is the minimal knowledge of the harm caused, and that the person who causes the stumbling block is often unharmed entirely. Finally, the issue is that stumbling blocks cause massive damage to those around us. Indeed, souls are being lost because of these things.

Here are four examples of the problems we may create that are stumbling blocks:

1. The Words You Say – Matthew 12:36
  - Things that discourage others
  - Things that encourage others to sin
2. The Things You Do – 1 Peter 4:1-5
  - Things that encourage sinful behavior
  - Things that discourage righteous behavior
3. The Clothes You Wear – 1 Timothy 2:9
  - Things that bring about lust
  - Things that bring about covetousness
4. The Associations You Keep – Ephesians 5:11
  - Encouraging the unruly
  - Discouraging the faithful

Being equipped with this understanding, what do we need to do to avoid causing others to be harmed? First, we can work on having carelessly loaded lives. We need to be mindful of our lives (Titus 2:12) and lifestyles, and think that even if something we do does not cause us to sin, how does it harm others? Second, we need to work on reckless living. Weaving in and out of darkness is deadly to all. We need to practice spiritual self-control (Galatians 5:23). Finally, we need to maintain our lives. We are told in a number of places how to maintain our Christian relationships (husbands, wives, parents, children, employees, employers – Eph. 5-6, Col. 3-4). These parts of our lives need to be maintained, and we need to walk worthily (Colossians 1:10).

*Therefore be careful how you (DRIVE), not as unwise men but as wise - Ephesians 5:15*