

How Carefully Stumbling-Blocks Must Be Avoided

by Clement of Rome

The sermon emphasizes the importance of avoiding stumbling-blocks and prioritizing the well-being of others in order to live a life that honors God.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 5:8, Romans 14:13, 1 Corinthians 8:9, 1 Corinthians 10:32, 1 Thessalonians 5:22, 1 Timothy 5:2, 1 Peter 2:11, 1 John 2:10

Topics: "Moral Purity", "Christian Conduct"

Description

Clement of Rome emphasizes the importance of being cautious and avoiding situations that may lead to temptation or false accusations, even if it means refraining from good deeds like praying or reading Scriptures in the presence of a lone believing woman. He urges believers to prioritize the well-being and spiritual growth of others over personal desires, especially in matters that could cause a fellow believer to stumble or be led astray. Clement stresses the need to love God and neighbor by being vigilant not to be a stumbling block to anyone, whether Jew, Gentile, or fellow Christian, and to always act in a way that promotes purity and righteousness.

Transcript

But if, moreover, we chance upon a place, and find there one believing woman only, and no other person be there but she only, we do not stop there, nor pray there, nor read the Scriptures there, but we flee as from before the face of a serpent, and as from before the face of sin. Not that we disdain the believing woman-- far be it from us to be so minded towards our brethren in Christ!-- but, because she is alone, we are afraid lest any one should make insinuations against us in words of falsehood. For the hearts of men are firmly set on evil.

And, that we may not give a pretext to those who desire to get a pretext against us and to speak evil of us, and that we may not be a stumbling-block to any one, on this account we cut off the pretext of those who desire to get a pretext against us; on this account we must be on our guard that we be to no one a stumbling-block, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor yet to the Church of God; and we must not seek that which is profitable to ourselves only, but that which is for the profit of many, so that they may be saved. For this does not profit us, that another stumble because of us.

Let us, therefore, be studiously on our guard at all times, that we do not smite our brethren and give them to drink of a disquieting conscience through our being to them a stumbling-block.

For if for the sake of meat our brother be made sad, or shocked, or made weak, or caused to stumble, we are not walking in the love of God. For the sake of meat you cause him to perish for whose sake Christ died. For, in thus sinning against your brethren and wounding their sickly consciences, you sin against Christ Himself. For, if for the sake of meat my brother is made to stumble, let us who are believers say, Never will we eat flesh, that we may not make our brother to stumble.

These things, moreover, does ever one who truly loves God, who truly takes up his cross, and puts on Christ, and loves his neighbour; the man who watches over himself that he be not a stumbling-block to any one, that no one be caused to stumble because of him and die because he is constantly with maidens and lives in the same house with them-- a thing which is not right-- to the overthrow of those who see and hear. Evil conduct like this is fraught with stumbling and peril, and is akin to death. But blessed is that man who is circumspect and fearful in everything for the sake of purity!

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