

Live for God's Interests and Avoid Tripping Your Brother

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God's will and being aligned with His interests. It highlights the dangers of hindrances and stumbling blocks, even from well-meaning friends or family members, that can divert us from God's path. The focus is on denying self, taking up our cross, and following Christ, even in the face of suffering and opposition. The message encourages humility, seeking counsel, and being meek to discern and follow God's will.

Scripture: Matthew 16:23, Philippians 2:4, Romans 14:13, Acts 21:11, Psalms 25:9, Proverbs 11:14

Topics: "Seeking God's Will", "Denying Self and Following Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Father, Lord, we do want to be people of the Book. Lord, there's a lot of books. Lord, Solomon knew it.

There's much books, and with much reading can be weariness. Lord, it can be very weary. We're thankful, Father, for all these books that men of God have written, but Lord, we're thankful here today to have a book from You, a book that does not have error, that has been preserved.

Lord, a book that You've given us that we can understand. Yes, we realize, like Peter said, there are many things that Paul said that are hard to understand. But Lord, we're thankful You've left us with the Helper, the Spirit, who's going to illuminate our minds and help us to understand what Your Word says.

And so, Lord, help us. Help us to be people who are in the Word, reading the Word, studying the Word, diving into the Word all the more this year, knowing it in a greater way. And so, Lord, I just commit this time to You.

Help me to share from this passage, Lord, what Your Word says, Your intended thought, Father, that it would be beneficial for these brethren. Lord, help me to be rightly balanced as Your Word is. In Christ's

name, Amen.

Alright, before I have you turn, a question for you. Who is the man, and I say the man because I can only think of one man who this is true of, but who is the man who put a stumbling block before the Lord Jesus Christ? Who is the man? Who gets that label? Yeah, Peter. And the ESV uses the word hindrance, but it's the same Greek word for stumbling blocks.

That's why I'm using the word stumbling block. Now before we turn to this passage to maybe help it be more memorable in your mind, think about that passage. How does Christ define what the stumbling block was? This is important because one of the things I've got to do to you is to define to you what a stumbling block is.

How does Christ in the text define how Peter was a stumbling block to Him? Can you think about it? What's it say? I didn't catch all that. Say it again. Yeah, setting your mind on the things of man, not on the things of God.

Setting your mind on the things of man, not on God's interests. That's what it says. So turn to Matthew 16.

That's how Jesus defines what Peter was doing to Him. Matthew 16. Not setting your mind on the things of God.

Not setting your mind on God's interests. Matthew 16, let's just read verses 21 and on. And we will look near the end.

There is an important point that can be made from what just had happened prior to verse 21. So I'm not ignoring that, but I'll bring that out at the end because this is an interesting transition here for Peter. Verse 21, From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed.

And on the third day be raised. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. So Peter hears about what Christ is going to do and Peter takes Him aside to rebuke Him.

One thing commendable here is He took Him aside. Far be it from You, Lord, this shall never happen to You. But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan.

You are a hindrance. You are a stumbling block to Me. And then He describes what He's getting at here.

You see the conjunction? For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but you're setting your mind on the things of man. And then right after this, let's read Jesus' teaching that He follows up with. Then Jesus told His disciples, it was on the heel of this wrong thinking in Peter's mind that Jesus gives His teaching in verse 24, then Jesus told His disciples, If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

For whoever would save his life, which is basically what Peter was just telling Christ to do, he will lose it. But whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what is the profit of man if he gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and He will repay each according to what He has done.

Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." So there you go. There are passages. Here you've got interaction between two

people who are close to one another.

And one of these dear individuals puts a hindrance, a stumbling block before the Lord Himself. Right? What a situation that happens. So let me give you some thoughts and let's think about how we can apply all of this.

The first thought, we know this, but it might help to just think about it again. You know what this passage shows me about Christ? He had a mind constantly on whose interest? Whose interest was He primarily concerned about? Where was the mind at? It was on His Father's will and the interest of His Father. He did whatever it took to maintain the mindset even when close friends opposed it.

Right? We're going to see that. It's very interesting how often the people who oppose you and I the most from having the mind of God, it's not the atheist, it's not the lost person, it's close friends. Incredible.

So Peter acted as an adversary to Christ. Using their friendship not to support him during the trial, but to discourage him that he was actually going down the wrong way. Jesus says, I must.

Peter comes in and discourages him from going down that path. That's incredible. No one's ever tried to do something like that to you, have they? And you've never tried to do that to someone, have you? Brethren, it can happen just that fast in such a subtle way.

It's not always as obvious as it is here. And by Peter doing this, he unknowingly echoed the temptation presented by the devil in the wilderness. Right? Jesus, you've got to face the devil after this time of fasting.

Now you've got to face Peter. Incredible. You've got people trying to discourage you from this path.

So, first observation here. What is a stumbling block? What is a hindrance? Think about this, right? That's what the passage mentions Peter is and does. It doesn't just say he put one, but Peter is the stumbling block with his attitude.

If you look at the Bible as a whole, are there times a stumbling block is used in a more positive way? It's kind of a positive in a negative way. What's that way? The Scripture talks about who being a stumbling block? Who? Christ! You can say that's a positive use of a stumbling block. Well, the Jews, because their mind was not on the things of God, they were just tripping right over the Lord thinking that this Messiah, this crucified Messiah, there's no way this could be God's way.

The Jews, they didn't understand rightly the mind of God. They didn't understand the mind of God. In our text, a stumbling block is something that gets your mind off of God's interests.

It's something that can trip a believer from moving forward on a path of doing the will of God. And you might say that sounds too simplified. Well, that's how Christ describes it right here.

He turned and said to Peter, get behind Me. You are a hindrance to Me. How? You're not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

It can really be that simple, brethren, of a reality. Let's think about this further. Is there something that can trip a believer from moving forward on a path of God's interest? Christ expresses here.

You could say what Christ is doing. Let's think about this thing of the conscience. Christ expresses in v. 21, He began to show His disciples where He's at and the direction He's got to go.

Right? And you think about your conscience. We talk about I've got to have a clear conscience. Well, what's one way you clear your conscience? Don't just think about it as I confess something where I sinned and stained my conscience.

But you also clear your conscience by moving forward in obedience. There is a sense where I have to do this to positively obey God in order to clear the conscience. The conscience is weighing on me that I must act.

Right? So that's what Christ has here. He must go and be killed. He knows that this is the will of the Lord.

And here Peter is trying to prevent Him from going down that path. He's got to go clear his conscience. He's got to be obedient to God's interest and in doing that, in suffering and dying and being raised, that obedience, the conscience continues to remain clear in this one perfect life of the man Jesus Christ.

Right? James 4.17, for him that know the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. Right? You can sin not just by committing, but by omitting from doing what you know you should do. And here in the midst of all of this desire that Christ had, Peter says, God forbid, Lord, this must not happen to You.

Well, Peter, not only is God not forbidding this from happening, God is what? God has ordained and planned for this to happen. So Peter, his mind is completely off where God's mind is at. And that's where Christ's mind is at.

And so Peter is giving forth a false message to the Lord to discourage Him from continuing on a path He should be on. And specifically in this situation, Peter's wrong mindset is seen by his focus on Christ not suffering. And that's often what happens, right? You talk about the serious suffering you might face by making a certain decision as a Christian.

It might be suffering from your family. It might be physical suffering on the mission field. It might be suffering at your job and being fired because of the stand you take.

And people tend to come in there and discourage you from going down that path because it's going to be one fraught with great difficulty. That's exactly what Peter here is doing to the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus has to press through that, not trip over it, but He's got to continue doing the will of His Father right here.

Now, this idea of a stumbling block being something that prevents you from doing God's interest, I would argue it carries over into the well-known chapter of Romans 14. You don't need to turn there, but Romans 14 talks a lot about stumbling blocks. Think about it.

I'm convinced in my own mind, let's say, that I shouldn't eat meat that was sacrificed to idols. I'm convinced. So for me to eat meat sacrificed to idols, if I do that, even though it's clean for another person, am I doing the interest of God by eating that meat sacrificed to idols? No, I'm not.

Because God's interested in me not eating that meat because in my conscience, my conscience tells me that meat is not something that is actually right for me to eat. So if I go and encourage someone to eat meat or honor a day that they're not convinced in their own mind, what am I doing? Paul says you're putting a stumbling block before them, right? You're setting them up to encourage them to do something they shouldn't do. And they end up tripping.

Romans 14, 13, never put a stumbling block or hindrance it's the same Greek word as we have in our passage, in the way of a brother. In Romans 14, Paul says, do not let what you consider good be spoken of as evil. Isn't that amazing? There are things that are legitimately good for me that could be spoken of as evil.

And that can happen as I wrongly press that on your conscience. When God's actually not interested in you in partaking of that, for you to clear your conscience, you do not partake of honoring that day or eating that meat. So by forcing a conviction you have of something that might be truly clean to you upon someone else, you can ruin something good for other believers by your own emphasis.

I can damage something that's really a blessing in your life by my wrong emphasis on that thing towards you. Again, 1 Corinthians 8, verse 9, But take care of this right of yours that it does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, that's what Paul says, will he not be encouraged if his conscience is weak to eat food offered to idols? So that person's conduct encourages and emboldens someone to do that which, for the one believer, doing that is God's interest.

I have a clear conscience to partake of that meat that is sacrificed to idols. God is interested in me in exercising my liberties in partaking of the meat. But then this person comes along and they encourage and embolden someone to do that which their conscience is informed that this is not right to partake of it.

So you get what I'm saying? One person by partaking is following through with the interests of God. The other person who's emboldened and encouraged to partake is now not doing God's interest. Even though it's clean for the other person, because for them, God's interested in them abstaining from that because their conscience isn't clear.

So a negative stumbling block, you could actually think of it as a wrong type of encouragement. It gives a person a wrong type of boldness. Right? Peter's trying to encourage and give Christ a wrong type of boldness.

The boldness to not go and suffer. That's not the type of boldness that the Lord Jesus Christ needs right there. He needs boldness to go die, not to abandon the path.

So the person whose conscience says, oh, I can't eat such and such, they need courage to keep on with that conviction, not a beating over the head to break their conscience conviction and go and partake of that thing, because then all of a sudden, they've now not followed through with God's interest. So, you see, if you look at this passage, this is about God's interest. A stumbling block is a hindrance that can trip.

They might not fall, but it could trip you from moving forward on a path of doing the will of God. Jesus says to Peter, you're not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. So when you think about your conscience and you think about the will of God in your life, I've got to take the next step this week in my life to keep doing what is the revealed will of God that I can discern in my life.

And there might be people like Peter close to your friends who get in the way and seek to prevent me from going down that path, because their minds are not on the interest of God. So a stumbling block is something that's going to prevent me from going further in that direction than I should. For Christ, it was the cross.

For you, for I, I don't know specifically what it is. But it might be not partaking in certain things. I recently shared that clip of William Grimshaw talking about his cow becoming an idol, and it's interesting, someone was commenting on that and said this is really weird for Christians.

How could a cow become an idol? This is so silly. Brethren, that's not silly. If you're seeking to really walk near and dear to the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to find things like a violin or a cow or whatever it might be that could get in the way of your heart in Christ, and you've got to cut that right arm off and throw it away.

It doesn't matter what another person might discourage you and say, well, that's being a little too radical. No, if God is interested in you cutting the arm off, don't let anyone convince you not to get rid of that thing radically that is causing you to sin. God is interested in you doing that, not making excuses to it or being discouraged by someone else with the wrong notion that it's being too radical.

So, point two, how serious is this matter? And keep in mind, the traits or qualities in a person that would lead Christ to describe them as a stumbling block or a temptation to the soul, they're not necessarily going to be what you typically would associate with wickedness, right? Don't tend to think of Peter and think, oh yeah, a stumbling block. Is that one of the first things that comes to your mind? Oh yeah, Peter, the man who sought to hinder Christ from going to the cross. Right? You don't tend to think and identify Peter with that.

That's who Peter is right here in this text. Right here at this point. He is being a tool of Satan.

Get behind me. Satan. He's being a tool of the devil.

That's incredible. You and I could be tools of the devil in other people's lives and discourage them from going down a path that is truly the will of God. So how is this a serious matter? Three quick thoughts.

Number one, based on Christ's response. Right? Verse 23 if you just got here. Matthew 16, 23.

He turned and said to Peter, you know, you're really discouraging me. Come on, Peter, don't you understand all the prophecies? Is that what he said? Get behind me, Satan. I mean, imagine being there.

That's just... What does Titus say? Rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith. This is a sharp rebuke to get Peter to be sound in his correct processing of the will of God for the Lord Jesus' life. Peter's being an adversary.

If Christ would have heeded, He didn't in any way, but if He would have heeded, He would have been disobeying the Father. All these prophecies would have not been fulfilled and all of us would be in hell. I mean, Peter, look what your little comment here hypothetically could have produced.

If it would have caused Christ to stumble. He didn't stumble. He never stumbled.

How serious is this? Well, the lexicons, they mention a stumbling block. It causes a person to be led into sin. And causing a person to be led into sin is obviously pushing them towards what? Towards destruction.

If I encourage someone to partake of something that they don't have a clear conscience to do, I'm leading them into sin. Peter is seeking to lead Christ into sin. By choosing a route of not suffering and not losing life and not denying to self, he would have been sinning.

You see, a stumbling block gets your mind off the interest of God and into a realm that is sin. Even if it is just avoiding specific suffering, when it was the will of God to go down that path, you've now sinned. And you may say, well, I'm not sinning by committing specific sin.

I'm not in immorality or whatever it is. You're sinning by avoiding a path of suffering that God has designated for you. How serious is this? I didn't remember this, but the text Jeff dealt with last Sunday in the 10 A.M. Romans 16 and 17 has the exact same Greek phrase.

I'll read it in another version I call upon you, brethren, to mark those who the divisions and the stumbling blocks contrary to the teaching that you did learn are causing and turn away from them. Isn't that amazing? Mark them. You know what? Honestly, Romans 16 in a subtle way not in a subtle way, that's the wrong word.

Romans 16 is being lived out in Matthew 16. Right? Peter puts forth a stumbling block and who does he get marked by? Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus marks them right away. Get behind me, Satan. Basically, turn from this.

We're all thinking here, Peter. The third reality on how serious this is. We think often about Jesus.

He's coming back for the lawless, right? Coming back for those who are living in all manner of immorality and sin. Listen to Matthew 13. The Son of Man shall send forth His messengers and they shall gather up out of His kingdom all the stumbling blocks and those doing unlawfulness.

Isn't our Lord Jesus the One who said if you cause a little one of these to stumble, it's better what? A millstone tied around your neck and be thrown into the depth of the ocean. He's saying that would be a better judgment for you. He's not saying that will be your judgment.

That would be a better situation to face. You see, discouraging someone from God's interests that often involve suffering, you don't look at Jesus right here and say, oh, wow, this is a really minor thing that I've done towards my brother or towards my sister. No, I think this is far more of a serious reality because if they don't do, if they're rightly discerning the will of God and you're preventing them from doing that which God has given them the faith to do and you discourage that because of some supposed suffering, you're now encouraging them to take a path of sin even though they're not committing sin, but they're sinning in the sense by being passive and not following through with God's plan.

You see what I'm saying? That's what's happening right here. Jesus is determined to go and suffer and obey the Lord, and Peter is standing in the way and being a tool of the devil. That's what's happening right here.

He's being a stumbling block. I don't like the ESV just using the word a hindrance. It doesn't capture the reality of it.

You know, you're hindering me. No, you're being a stumbling block to me. This is a serious reality from Peter.

One last comment on how serious. Mark LaCour was here for one of our mentor treats. He had a brief article on this and he quoted the verse, whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better to have the millstone.

And he says this. He says, child abuse, obviously not literal, but he's referring to spiritual, in the Kingdom of God is a good way to be fitted with a concrete necktie for eternity. It's not literal children Jesus has in mind, but weak Christians who have little knowledge of their liberties in Christ.

Those with oversensitive consciences who can easily be influenced to follow another Christian's actions for which they don't have any faith. Those in positions of leadership or strong in convictions are called upon to be stepping stones for the weak, not stumbling blocks. Children shouldn't have to adjust their walking stride to keep up with the adults, but the other way around.

And those adults who do that the best are the ones Jesus calls great in God's Kingdom. Alright, so we better watch out. So that leaves me in point 3. Who often becomes stumbling blocks? Well, based on the text, the answer is believing friends.

Right? Friends. A man who is near and dear to Jesus was the one who put the stumbling block. It wasn't the Pharisees.

It wasn't his enemies. It was his friend. Do you get that? Brethren, you and I can bear the responsibility for succumbing to the enemy's influence and temporarily align yourself with the devil and take another believer's minds off of God's interests.

You can do that. I can do that. Richard Baxter said good men oftentimes do the devil's work though they know it not.

You see, you and I have got to be here today. We've got to be living our life in this church recognizing that one day could be true of you, could be true of me. So God help us for that not to be a reality.

Peter hearing about everything that's going to happen with Christ, yeah, his mind was in the wrong place. Well, that can happen to you. It can happen to me.

These friends, they believe they have good intentions. Right? Peter thought he had good intentions. But Peter, your intentions were entirely in the opposition to God's will.

Right? Totally in opposition to it. And Christ was interested in doing the will of God. You've got many examples in the Scriptures, but one obviously that should come to mind is the Old Testament example of the spies.

In Numbers 13, they brought back a bad report to Israel. And here you really have this moment. It's clear the will of God is to go into the land and conquer the land.

Right? It's very obvious. But people sought to hinder them from advancing where they should advance. Numbers 13, verse 31, we are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.

And what did their report do? It took away courage. It wasn't the enemies coming and saying look how tough we are. It was those within Israel itself.

Right? Those within the nation. Those who had seen the miracles. Those who had witnessed the will of God.

They're the ones now stepping up to the plate and putting a stumbling block and a hindrance before this nation to go in there and do the will of God. And ironically, just like them, they saw many mighty miracles

and many wondrous things and then they were a stumbling block. That's exactly what we have in our passage.

If you don't know Matthew 16, you just look right up. Before all this interaction, what just happens? Verse 16, Simon Peter said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah.

And he goes on. He says, on this rock, I will build My church. And on this rock, I will build My church.

The gates of hell will not prevail against it. And then, what's happening a little while later? Get behind me, Satan. Gates of hell aren't going to prevail against it.

And then, you're becoming a tool of the devil just right after that. You see, you and I can have an incredible experience in a meeting and a closeness to God. It can happen in a Sunday meeting.

It can happen in a prayer meeting. It can happen in your devotional life. And literally, the very next hour, just like a husband who wakes up in the morning and has great devotions and is impatient with his wife at the breakfast table, and he kind of stands back and he thinks, man, the Lord just met with me in the Word of God.

How did I just fall into grieving the Spirit of God by sinning against my wife at breakfast and being impatient? Brethren, that's the same thing that can happen here. You can be in tune and saying the right things of God, then a moment later, being a mouthpiece of the devil in another believer's life. This is an incredible reality.

Now, Caleb, what he gave was an encouraging response. He was interested in God's interest. I named one of my sons Caleb because of this verse I preached on it years ago.

You want to see a man who is interested about God's interest? Numbers 14, 24, the Lord commends Caleb. My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit, he has followed Me fully. I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.

You see, that's where Caleb's mind was at. I'm fully following the Lord. And he's the one, he speaks up right there and takes a stand.

So God is interested in those who are interested in doing His will. So what friends can put stumbling blocks? Just two closing thoughts on this point. Number one, those with undeveloped knowledge and discernment.

That's what you see happening with Peter. Obviously, if Peter fully understood all the prophecies of Isaiah and everything, he wouldn't have been saying what he was saying. You understand? So you having undeveloped knowledge in certain areas as a Christian can actually cause you to say things to people that you'll come back later and realize, why did I discourage them from that? That's really consistent with the character of God and His Word.

That's number one. Or, you're fully aware of God's power. The Israelites, they were not blind to the power of God.

Their issue was a lack of faith. In Joshua's day, they lacked the faith. They were overly fearful.

They doubted the power of God. And they didn't go forward. Alright, point number four.

Just like many other truths, it's possible to take this one to an extreme as well. And so as I was studying and thinking about how Peter responded to Christ and Christ's response to him, it drew my mind to Acts 21. And I thought, well, okay, is this in any way parallel? Let me read this.

You could turn if you wanted to turn to Acts 21. You don't have to. 21, verse 11, "...while we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

And coming to us, he took Paul's belt..." Anyone ever had someone take your belt off? "...and bound his own feet and hands and said, Thus says the Holy Spirit, this is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. When we heard this, we and the people urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What are you doing? Weeping and breaking my heart, for I am ready not only to be in prison, but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said to him, Let the will of the Lord be done." You see why this passage came to my mind as I'm thinking about this? Now, Paul is told about his suffering in a prophetic way. My point is whether it actually perfectly came and happened as was said. But you had people trying to stop him from going.

And to suffer. And Paul says to them, you're breaking my heart. The apostle Paul's heart got broken.

Breaking someone's heart. That is how the ESV renders it, right? I'm reading different versions. Sometimes you get the wrong version pasted in your notes.

Does Paul say, get behind me, Satan? Does he use the word stumbling block here? He doesn't. He doesn't. So that to me is an interesting... There's a difference here.

Are the people hindering Paul from going in the direction by saying which he believes God should have him go? You could argue the people are hindering him, but the truth is, prophetically, Agabus is seeking to warn him, and the people based on this, their discernment for Paul is don't go and do this. And this is the Paul who the Spirit of God had prevented from going other places. And the Lord uses a means and counsel in our lives.

These people are giving him counsel. And I'd also say this, was Paul's path forward as clear to him as it was for Christ on His way to the cross? No. Christ said, I must go.

And he literally had to. There was no other route than Golgotha and crucifixion. But you know what? There's a difference for you and me in our lives.

And so we don't want to put ourselves in the Lord Jesus' place in all these situations and say that we have a perfect comprehension of God's will. At the same time, we don't want to be in a place where we're hesitant and uncertain and we're looking for a sign. But even if you are like fearful Gideon, you know what? The Lord can do things for you at times, which is incredible to me, His patience with Gideon.

But Paul said he's ready to suffer. Whatever tomorrow brings, suffering didn't discourage Paul. And so it would seem like these people here again, you hear about someone suffering and you're almost like, oh, let's protect you.

Let's protect you here. Paul's fine with it. And the people in the end, Luke included, they say let the will of the Lord be done.

So these people were resigned. If Paul's going to go and he's going to suffer and all this is going to happen, let that be God's will. So you see, there's a difference in Acts 21 from Matthew 26 when you think about this whole issue of putting a stumbling block in the seriousness of that phrase and what was happening right there in Matthew 16.

And so that's one example of how you could take it too far. The proud might tend to take it that way since their own way is always right in their own eyes. Isn't that what the Proverbs say? A man's way is right in his own eyes.

And so that could be an area for some of us. Do I have this perception that my way is always right and there's an inability to hear counsel? We could end up being like in a place we don't want to be. But brethren, we can break people's hearts.

Have you ever broken someone's heart? Like Paul says right here, you're breaking my heart. I mean, what's Paul saying he wished their response would have been? You know, really to get on board and be really encouraging, right? Like, brother, this is Kevin Waddell, something like Kevin Waddell. You know, this would be great to see you getting bound up and tortured.

They want us on board. And encouraging them as they go down this path of doing God's interest, which often is a dangerous path of suffering. And then we make the comment encouraging them to go down a path, a different path.

Now that different path might very well be the will of God. We see that in Paul's life in Acts 19. This crowd, all this stuff's happening.

And Paul wished to get in among the crowd. And what did the disciples do? Paul, no. No, we're not going to let you get in there.

That's not God's will for you right here. And in Acts 20, after the uproar ceased, Paul, he didn't make it in, they prevented him. Paul was sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.

Right? I mean, even the Lord Jesus would disappear in the midst of suffering because His time had not yet come. You understand? Don't take from this passage a wrong idea that just because you're suffering and it's a path of suffering, it must be the will of God. Now God's will might not be for that to happen yet.

I hope you understand. Because remember, this isn't all about not suffering. That's not the issue.

The issue is God's will and doing God's interest. That's what he says in v. 23 of chapter 16. You're not setting your mind on the things of God.

That's the issue. Where is the mind at in perceiving this? Yes, often, in the path of the Christian, it's granted that we should not only believe in Him, but also suffer. So often, the issue of suffering is obviously wrapped up in this whole situation.

Okay, what time have we got? The Pharisees, you know, they caused people to stumble by teaching a works-based salvation in Matthew 23. They tied heavy burdens on people, hard to bear, but laid them on

people's shoulders. And I was thinking about that verse, and I thought, you know, I remember at a fellowship conference, someone got up, and they were recommending a book.

And they made that statement, every Christian should read this book. It wasn't anyone here who made that comment. And do you have a problem with that statement? Multiple people had problems with that person making that statement.

And you can say, well, they're being hypersensitive. No, if you just take their statement for what it meant. Every Christian should read this book.

It almost implies that if you don't read the book, there's something not spiritual about you and you're missing out. Well, you can't say that. I get it why people were bothered by that statement.

If I at the start of this message say to you, everyone should be doing the Horner Bible reading plan. No, that's not right. You understand? So there's these more subtle ways by which we could put something before someone to make something strike on their conscience that shouldn't strike on their conscience and we're putting a hindrance before them.

So there's a lot of subtle examples that we could fall into here. Alright, a fifth point. How does Christ deal with the stumbling block? Well, v. 24, then Jesus told.

He gave a very clear teaching and explained what God's interests looked like. Many a sermon can be given on all of these verses, but brethren, I trust you know it. It's denying Himself.

Taking up your cross. Losing your life. It doesn't talk about the cost of family in a strong way right here as it does in Luke 14, but you know the parallel accounts.

The Lord's saying, you want to be interested about Me? You're going to suffer these things. These are going to be issues that you're going to have to face. Especially with family, as one said, the devil is most potent when he operates through the affections of a caring mother, a noble father, or a courageous brother, a beautiful sister, or a devoted lover.

We must learn to assert ourselves even to those who love us dearly when their misguided affections attempt to divert us from a noble path of purpose and responsibility. When the demands of our energy and sacrifice seem overwhelming, we should firmly say, get thee behind Me, Satan. You see, if you read missionary biographies, if you read church history, you find all manner of examples of people and they might be well-meaning family members who ultimately are put in a stumbling block before a believing child to prevent them from going down a path that truly is the will of God.

They can look at the Bible. They can add up everything. And they realize this is God's path.

And what do they have? Family standing in the way. And we've seen that, right? We've seen people who they count family more valuable than Christ. And they end up maybe even going to another church where the doctrine isn't that good because, well, I want my family member to come to that church, and in the end, it actually ends up leavening both of them.

And they end up in a bad place. So brethren, you could be hearing this sermon and rightly think of a situation in which someone wrongly discouraged you from marching forward in a path that was the Lord's will. It might have been major.

It might have been more subtle. It could be subtle. Here's a subtle example.

We're working through Hudson Taylor's biography, Volume 1. And Taylor met with a missions expert. This is before he's ever been to China. This is a really subtle example.

And the guy, he looks at Taylor and he says, why, you would never do for China. He explained at length. And this is the expert, right? He's got to be right.

I mean, he's the missions expert on China, so everything he says has got to be gold, right? What did he draw attention to? The lack of character in his life? Is that what he drew attention to? No. His fair hair and gray-blued eyes. He said, they call me red-haired devil and they would run from you in terror.

You could never get them to listen at all. And yet, replied Hudson Taylor quietly, it is God who has called me. So he had a resolve.

And he knows all about the color of my hair and eyes. This is a subtle way, a subtle comment. And you can say, well, it's right to consider objective things like that.

Yes, if you're going to go to a certain country and you're covered in tattoos and someone comes up and says, well, hey, you know that tattoo on your arm right there that might be causing offense over there, that's something to consider, right? You don't just say, get behind these Satan. No, those are objective things you want to think about. This does not at all go away with the reality of the absolute need for counsel.

But by faith, Taylor, he kept marching forward. Or maybe you know of a situation in which you believed you knew the will of the Lord, but you were wrong. You were wrong about it.

And I thought about David. Oh, rushing in to kill Nabal. But thankfully, he had a discerning friend who kept David from stumbling.

This friend eventually became his wife after her husband died. But Abigail, and isn't it often the women who see through the rash behavior of the men? And maybe not always, but that can be the case. And it was there.

And David could have said, get behind me, Satan. And he could have took out his sword and said, you're the wife of the enemy. But you know what? He let the righteous woman strike him and he realized his perspective was wrong.

He let his blood settle down and he realized, you just saved me from blood guilt. Incredible. So all of this really brings up the topic of knowing God's will, which that's not the purpose right now, but I'd say you want to know God's will, you consider Matthew 24-28.

You're going to see those realities there. Denying self, suffering, losing your life. It's going to be happening there.

That's your best life now. That's the best we're going to get right here right now in verses 24-28. So make sure you know it.

Yeah, knowing the will of God. I had this quote. I thought I'd share this.

It really struck me. Just a brief thought on knowing the will of God. That might help some of you.

This is from A.T. Pearson on George Mueller from his biography. Any believing child of God may safely gauge the measure of his surrender to the will of God in any matter by the measure of impatience he feels at the obstacles in the way. For in proportion as self-will sways him, whatever seems to oppose or hinder his plan will disturb or annoy him.

And instead of quietly leaving all such hindrances and obstacles to the Lord to deal with them as he pleases, instead in his own way and time, the willful disciple will impatiently in an energy of the flesh set himself to remove them by his own scheming and struggling. And he will tolerate no delay. In this careful weighing of matters, many sincere disciples fail.

They're prone to be impatient of delay in making decisions. Impulse, too, often sways. And self-willed plans betray into false and even disastrous mistakes.

Life is too precious to risk one such failure. There is given us a promise of deep meaning in Psalm 25. The meek He will guide in judgment.

And the meek He will teach His way. Here is a double emphasis upon meekness as a condition of such guidance and teaching. Brethren, do you have that? Do you have that humility? If you go on in making decisions, and you don't have any concern for counsel and input, not counsel like Absalom where you're getting it from all the younger people, and there's just this impatience, this hastiness, I've got to move now or I'm going to miss the will of God.

As Conrad Murrell said, oftentimes, that's the devil. If you can go and you can talk to others and you can get input and abundance of counselors, there's safety where there's no guidance that people perish. Are there going to be Phinehas situations where you've got to take the spear and go and slay the people who are leavening the camp? Absolutely, there's going to be situations like that.

But Mueller was a man who really lived by faith in the Lord, yet at the same time, he recognized the hindrances in these different things from the Lord, and he didn't want to be impatient and force his way. I read that a while back. It's a profound thought.

May God help us. Another kind of closing application. Maybe you've got someone who's wrongly encouraging you to go forward in a path that God doesn't want you to take.

There could be someone here today. You might have people encouraging you to make a decision, and God's not in it. Just like someone telling you to eat meat when in your conscience you know you shouldn't eat meat.

And maybe you're not handling it right. You're not seeing it as serious as it is. Brethren, if they pressure you into something and your conscience isn't clear, and you make that decision, you want to keep a clear conscience.

You want to be surrendered to the will of God. Yeah, I thought of David again. David, you're in a cave, right? And the king Saul who's trying to murder you and kill you, he comes into that cave.

David's comrades have an opportunity to counsel David. And what was their counsel? They appealed to the providence of God that God put Saul here for you to kill him. David wrongly listened to them.

He went up. He didn't even kill Saul. All he did was cut the rope.

Just cutting the rope struck his conscience. So we could be like that. We could be like those men in that cave.

We wrongly read the providence of God and give counsel to David that was not right counsel. So God help us. All of this, I trust you see, we really need spiritual vigilance.

We need to stay in the previous mindset that Peter had in Matthew 16. If Peter could go from saying, Thou art the Son of God, to falling into this just right afterwards, the same could happen to you and to me. I could give this sermon right now and then fall into the very thing that I'm talking about.

I could fall into that very thing in the midst of even preaching. And the preacher's got to be cautious of that. Trying to make sure they're touching all these bases and saying what the Word of God says and not committing the very thing that they're talking about.

What it all comes down to, are you about the interest of God? That's what Jesus said. Jesus is basically looking at Peter and saying, Peter, you think about God, the Father's concerns and His interest. That's your priority.

Oh, and let me give you a teaching here on losing your life and suffering and dying to self. This goes along with Jesus in Matthew 6. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. This goes along with Matthew 7. Picture of Judgment Day.

Who goes to heaven? The way He says it there, it's not teaching a work salvation, but He says it's the One who does the will of My Father. That is the evidence of a person who's a believer. We see it again in Philippians 2. The mind of Christ.

That's the same reality here, right? We have a mind not set on the flesh, but on God, on the Spirit. And we see that mindset in Philippians 2. And He says there, have this mind among you which is in Christ Jesus. And that mindset is one of looking not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others.

And you know from Paul in chapter 1, what he's saying there is the interest of others, their spiritual well-being, right? Because that's why he desired to remain. For their progress in the faith. Right? For their progress.

That they wouldn't shrink back when they faced the giants in the Promised Land. Or, you know, physically right now, face Hamas shooting rockets into Lebanon. And situations that some of our missionaries face.

How are they going to handle that situation? Remember what Paul said of Timothy? Philippians 2. It's a sad statement actually, as many would say. Paul says, I have no one like Him. Wait, what do you mean? Aren't there a lot of people like this guy? I have no one like Him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.

Talking about Timothy. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. Are you here today to seek the interests of Jesus Christ? If you're here today to seek your own interests, if you're here today for selfish ambition, if you're here today to promote yourself, if you're here today in any way to think about self, I can tell you, turn from that.

That is not of God. That is not of the Lord. Thankfully, we have a Christ who not only blesses Peter for his statement, but He's ready to reproof.

So thank God, the Lord Jesus is in the work and in the business of correcting us through His Word and through members in this body. Let me end on a quote from Conrad Murrell. God's will does not necessarily have to be the thing we would hate.

He makes us to delight in and enjoy our labors and pursuits, even in the midst of trials and troubles. That being true, I would counsel you to undertake to do exactly what you would like to do. And if God will permit you to do that, you need not consider anything else.

I want to end on that statement. It's a helpful statement where you don't overcomplicate knowing the will of God. If there is good that God has put on your heart to do, not 100% for certain it's the Lord, but most likely it probably is the Lord if it's consistent with the Word of God, go and do that.

Be ready to do good. And God's interested in you doing that, brethren. So brethren, we want to be an encouragement to one another.

And we want to be those who are thinking about the interest of God. That's what we find right here. So let me just read the verse one more time.

Peter took Him aside. Verse 22, began to rebuke Him. Saying, far be it from Me, Lord, far be it from You, this shall never happen.

But He turned and said, Peter, get behind Me, Satan. You are a hindrance to Me, for you are not set in your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. So God help us.

Let's pray. Lord, we want to be about Your interest. We want to be seeking first the Kingdom of God and Your righteousness.

Lord, we want that. We really do. Lord, help us to be in Your will.

Lord, I don't know everything You're doing in different brethren's lives. Lord, we do know there's verses, this is the will of God, Your sanctification. So we trust that one of the purposes for us even here today is for our sanctification.

So Lord, help us encourage one another on, Lord, in acts of faith. Lord, to do great things for You, the great God. Lord, to not underestimate Your power.

To not shrink back at different opportunities that we might have. And Lord, You know. You know of certain opportunities that's just not right.

It's not the right timing. Lord, help us not to be deaf to Your voice there either. And so Lord, we look to You.

We look to You to guide us. We know it's true. If we're fully surrendered to You, we can't make a wrong move.

So Lord, help us to rightly know in our own hearts if we're surrendered to You. And yet, Lord, at the same time, help people not get trapped in some introspective bondage where they end up just sitting down and

not marching forward. Lord, free us from that, Father, please.

And so Lord, we thank You. We thank You for Your goodness to us. Lord, here we've got some time to fellowship and to talk.

Lord, I pray You help us to live out these truths, to live out every truth in Your Word. Lord, be with us as we continue our meeting and gathering today. In Christ's name, Amen.

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