

# **BLESSED IS ANYONE WHO DOES NOT STUMBLE ON ACCOUNT OF JESUS**

Luke 7:18-35

Key Verse: 7:23

**“Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”**

In today’s passage, Jesus answers a question from John the Baptist by showing mighty works of healing and a proclaiming good news. Jesus then says that a blessed person does not stumble on account of Jesus. After that, Jesus speaks to the crowd about John as a great prophet and messenger from God. Though John was great, even the least person in the kingdom of God is greater than John. Jesus then rebuked his generation for being childish, but mentioned also children of wisdom.

The world looks dark and evil deeds abound. So is God really in charge? Is Jesus doing his good work? Sometimes it doesn’t look like it. Sometimes we have doubts and get discouraged and wonder what is happening in the world. Last week, the local Boone School sent out a police report saying there were three armed robberies in this neighborhood. Such things can cause fear. What about when things don’t work out as we had hoped or even prayed? That could cause someone to stumble or lose faith. What should we do? This passage helps us to know what to do as children of wisdom and members of God’s kingdom who do not stumble. Let’s listen to Jesus and learn from him how to be blessed and wise children, especially how to enter the kingdom of God.

## **I. Jesus replies to John the Baptist (18-23)**

**First, “Are you the One?” (18-22).** Look at verses 18-19. **“John’s disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’”**

Luke 3:20 tells us that John the Baptist was in prison, simply because John rebuked Herod the Roman tetrarch for adultery. Let’s review John’s mission briefly. Luke’s gospel began with the story of John’s miracle birth to old parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth. The angel Gabriel foretold about John before his birth (1:15-17): **“...for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”**

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Then, at the birth of John, his father Zechariah prophesied about John (1:76-77): **“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.”**

Then, after the word of God came to the grown man John, he went around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and many people came to him to repent of their sins and be baptized by John (3:3). When people wondered if John might possibly be the Messiah, he answered them all (3:16-17): **“I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”**

So that is the background and ministry of John. When John heard from prison, about Jesus’ healing and preaching ministry, John sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, **“Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”**

Jesus did not answer simply and directly. Look at verse 21. **“At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.”** Rather, than giving a simple answer, Jesus showed what he was doing. Jesus was doing life-giving work. It was the work of God. It recalls Jesus’ words in first sermon in his hometown of Nazareth in 4:18-19, a quote of the prophet Isaiah: **“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”**

Another major prophecy that Jesus was fulfilling was from Isaiah 35:5-6: **“Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.”**

Look at verse 22. After doing more healing miracles, Jesus replied to John’s messengers: **“Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.”**

Jesus decided not to say simply that he is the Messiah, but rather to show it. Jesus was doing the work that was foretold by the prophet Isaiah, the work that

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only God could do. Jesus gave sight to the blind, ability to walk to the lame, cleansing to lepers, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead, good news to the poor.

Perhaps this is not exactly what John expected the Messiah to do. Perhaps he was expecting more fire and judgment, more freeing of captives, more justice prevailing. Jesus did not overthrow the Roman government with fire from heaven. Sometimes God doesn't work as we hope or expect. But God is still in charge. God is still working mightily to bring healing and salvation to the weak and needy.

Sometimes people wonder about Jesus: **“Are you the One, or should we expect someone else?”** Maybe he doesn't answer their specific prayer. Maybe he doesn't give them exactly what they want. Maybe he doesn't fix the world quickly and easily. Is he the One? Or should we expect someone else? But who else can do what Jesus did? Who else could save us and bring us into God's kingdom?

**Second, blessed is anyone who does not stumble (23).** Jesus said one more thing. Look at verse 23. **“Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”** Who is blessed? Jesus says anyone who does not stumble on account of him is blessed. The word stumble can also be translated “fall away” or “be offended.” Whoever does not fall away or is not offended because of Jesus is blessed.

Jesus is like a rock. We can either stand firm on Him or stumble and trip because of Him. 1 Peter 2:6-8 talks about this:

For in Scripture it says: **“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”** Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, **“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”** and, **“A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”** They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

So, here is the question we must ask ourselves: Is Jesus the Rock on which I stand? Is he my firm foundation?

This is also a warning to us not to expect too much from Jesus, that is, not to demand that he does what I want or expect him to. He's not a genie to do my bidding. He's the Lord and Master. Who am I? I'm just his servant and child.

## **II. Jesus speaks to the crowds about John (24-35)**

**First, the way of salvation (24-30).** After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: **“What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man**

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**dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces.”** People flocked out to the wilderness where John preached and baptized people. They were not out there to see tumbleweed blowing in the wind or a man swayed by public opinion. They did not go to see a rich man in a suit, since John wore clothing made of camel’s hair and ate locusts and wild honey.

Jesus added (26-27): **“But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.””**

John the Baptist was a great prophet and messenger from God. His identity as a messenger and his ministry as one who would prepare the way for Jesus was prophesied in Malachi 3:1. Jesus went on to speak of John’s greatness: **“I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John...”** John was a great man who lived with God’s mission and prepared the way for the Messiah, Jesus Christ. He brought many people to the Lord. He helped people to repent and turn to God.

Then Jesus said, **“...yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”**

John was a great man of God. No one can replace his role as the last Old Testament prophet to prepare people for Jesus Christ. John was a true prophet of God. Yet even so, our way to greatness is to be in the kingdom of God, that is, to enter the kingdom of God. How can we do that?

Verses 29-30 help us to see how: All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.

Those who accepted John the Baptist as God’s servant and messenger were prepared to accept Jesus. John helped them to see they were sinners and to confess and turn from their sins. John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus (Ac 19:4). So those

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who repented and were baptized could believe in Jesus. The way to be saved from sin and enter God's kingdom is to repent of sin and believe in Jesus.

Acts 2:38 says, **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**

Last year on Easter Sunday, ten people in our church sincerely repented and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ as their sincere confession of faith. Since then, they have been growing in the grace of Jesus as servants of Christ and children of God. This year, we are praying for others who want to be baptized on Easter Sunday as their sincere repentance of sin and faith in Jesus.

Have you sincerely repented of your sins and put your trust in Jesus Christ to save you? Or are you trusting in your own goodness? Good intentions or even good deeds will not get anyone into God's kingdom. We like to rule our own lives, depending on our own ability or knowledge or wisdom. But our way is wrong. We need our sins forgiven and taken away. Acts 10:43 declares about Jesus: **“All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”**

God's way is right. We need to follow his way, not our own. Pride makes us think, “I'm not that bad. I'm a good person. At least, I'm better than many bad people.” The Bible says, **“no one is good, except God alone”** (18:19). The Bible also says that Jesus is the only one who can save us from our sins. Acts 4:12 says, **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”**

One television evangelist was caught in financial and sexual sins and went to prison. From prison, he wrote a book titled, “I Was Wrong.” After repenting, God has been restoring his life and has given him a new ministry. Proverbs 28:13 says, **“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”**

1Jn 1:9-10 concurs: **“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”**

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Instead of pretending we are right, we need to come to God as we are, confessing our sins and accepting that I am wrong but God is right.

**Second, children of wisdom (31-35).** This passage has one more section of rebuke from Jesus for his generation. Look at verses 31-34. Jesus went on to say, **“To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other: ‘We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.’ ‘For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’”**

This rebuke is actually not for everyone in Jesus’ time, but for those who rejected John and Jesus. They thought John the Baptist was too extremely ascetic and disciplined, too crazily religious. Jesus, on the other hand, was not religious enough, because he enjoyed going to parties with tax collectors and other public sinners. They didn’t like John and they didn’t like Jesus. They did not want to accept John and Jesus as messengers and ministers of God. By rejecting John and Jesus, they were rejecting God and God’s purpose for themselves. They were like children who played games by their own rules, changing the rules according to their own convenience and comfort.

Jesus concluded saying in verse 35, **“But wisdom is proved right by all her children.”** Wisdom has children or followers. They are those who love and seek wisdom. In this passage, they are those who repented and received John’s baptism, and who also believed in Jesus as God’s Messiah. Only some of the crowd would eventually accept Jesus as the Messiah. He was very popular among the people for now. But for some of them, if he didn’t do what they wanted or give them what they asked for, they would stop following him. May we not be so foolish.

For the first 18 years of my life, I attended church. But after one semester in college I honestly confessed to myself: “I don’t really believe in God. I don’t know what I believe.” At that time, I confidently declared to one Northwestern philosophy professor: “You know what my one word of life is? People.” I was very humanistic. I was confident mainly in my own ability, knowledge and righteousness. I thought I was a pretty good person. At the same time, I knew I was a sinner, for there were things in my life that were not right: lustful desires, disrespect for people, condescension, pride, arrogance, greed. Within one year,

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somehow my confidence shifted and I found a new one word of life: Jesus. I can only explain the difference because of Bible study, a serious Bible-believing community, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

The song Living for Jesus describes my heart's desire and new life purpose: Living for Jesus, a life that is true, Striving to please Him in all that I do; Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free, This is the pathway of blessing for me.

**Refrain:** O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee, For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me; I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne; My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

Through this Bible passage I was challenged newly in my faith and life: am I following a Jesus to my own liking or the Jesus of the Bible? I see that I often want the work of God to be easy or easier than it often is. I'd like to say a quick prayer or spend a few minutes and see all problems solved. But an easy-going attitude does not agree with Jesus' words to take up my cross or with Paul's words to fight a good fight and run the race. I repent my proud, complacent and easy-going spirit and pray to yield my idea and spirit to Jesus' word and Jesus' way.

In this passage we learned that there are foolish people who want God to play by their rules. Then there are children of wisdom. Children of wisdom are those who enter the kingdom of God through repenting of sin and believing in Jesus as the Messiah. They are those who do not stumble on account of Jesus.

Have you decided to follow Jesus, no turning back? May God give us all humility to repent of all our sin and bear the good fruit of repentance. May God give us all faith to trust Jesus alone as the One who came to save us and bring us into the kingdom of God.