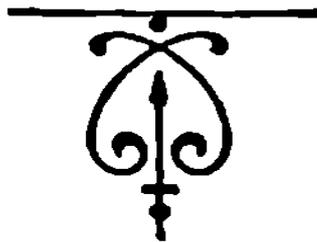




**“STUMBLING BLOCKS”**  
**IN THE WAY**

BY S. J. B. C.

NEW EDITION



**G. MORRISH**

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# STUMBLING BLOCKS IN THE WAY.

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**A**RE you aroused, awakened, and anxious about your soul?

Are you beginning to grope about in your native darkness, looking for light?

Are you even crying aloud, in your pain and distress, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat"?

Let me warn you that Satan—your great enemy—will cast "stumbling blocks" in your way to baulk you in coming to Christ. A "stumbling block" of old was really an idol (Ezek. xiv. 3, 4, 7). It was something put in the place of God. The Enemy's device is to occupy

you with something that will take your eyes off Christ, and hinder you from reaching Him.

Will you let me be your counsellor and friend for a while? Come now, let us bring the search-light of God's Word to bear upon some of these "stumbling blocks," and reveal them; and then use the lever of God's Word to remove them.

### TRYING.

If you listen to the voice of the tempter you may hear him whisper, "It is true your life in the past has not been at all the thing, but turn over a new leaf and *resolve*, with the help of God, to do better in the future." But God will never help you to keep good resolutions. God offers you Christ as a *Saviour*—not a *Helper*, but a SAVIOUR.

“God helps those who help themselves” is a worldly maxim, but it is not the gospel. “God helps those who help others” is Christianity, but till you are saved you must learn that not only are you unable to help others, but you cannot help yourself. In a word, you must learn that you are helpless. In the gospel God saves. You do nothing. A Saviour has done it all. The work was all His own.

What is the use of forming good resolutions. You know from experience you cannot keep them, for you have often made them before, only to break them. “The carnal mind is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (Rom. viii. 7, 8). They may really

want to, but the evil within is too strong for them. They "CANNOT please God."

Alas! how many anxious souls have stumbled at this "stumbling block." The truth of God convicted them, and they wanted to know how matters could be settled between their souls and God; but they determined to "make a fresh start." What was the result? Bitterness and ashes. I would urge you, then, to abandon *trying*, and embrace *trusting*. Both these roads *begin* with T R, but they *end* very differently; one ends in perdition; the other in Heaven. Which are you going to follow?

### REASONING.

Am I one of the elect? Indeed you are *if* you savingly believe on

the Lord Jesus Christ, but not otherwise. God offers salvation to ALL. It is as universal as wind and water, as free as the sunbeam and dewdrop; but if you refuse it and are lost, that is your fault. You will never be able to plead the doctrine of election to God as the cause or the occasion of your everlasting ruin.

If you desire to make any progress in the knowledge of God you must begin by learning the A B C of the gospel alphabet, and the blackboard on which God writes His A B C is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Cease, then, to try and fathom “the deep things of God.” Get into the shallows—the simple gospel. Paul “reasoned *out* of the Scriptures,” it is true, but never *about them*. It is useless to do so.

You cannot understand Election, New Birth, the origin and existence of Sin and Satan, or the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Atonement. These doctrines are not *against* reason, but *beyond* reason. They are matters of *revelation*, not matters of *reason*. “Through faith we understand,” says the Apostle. That is God’s order. Why reverse it, and say, “When I understand, then I will believe”? Do not ignore the fact that you are a fallen being—a blind sinner (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4). It goes without saying that a man cannot see without eyes. Nothing but faith can give eyes—spiritual discernment to the soul.

Here is a man struggling in a bog. Another comes along and wants to pull him out, but the man wants to reason with his would-be

saviour as to how he fell in. What folly! And what folly it is for you to reason as to how you came to be what you are, and where you are, when the fact is plain that you are lost, but Christ is ready to save you!

### PRAYING.

How needless it is to pray for salvation when God is *offering* that to all.

True, you are told to “strive to enter in at the strait gate”; but this does not mean striving with God, but with yourself—your thoughts, doubts, pride, fears, and other things that would act as “stumbling blocks” in the way of your coming to Christ.

You are told not to pray, but to *receive*.—“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become

the sons of God" (John i. 12); not to ask, but to *take*.—"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17); not even to call, until you have really *believed*.—"How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" (Rom. x. 12). Why stand and knock when the door is wide open, and all who will may enter in? (John x. 9). Why go blindly begging for that salvation which God is offering you?

Oh, seeking soul, let "Self-Help" die, and breathe into God's ear that word "Lost." Say: "Lord Jesus, I have been resolving, trying, praying—seeking, but now I cease from my vain endeavours and, as a lost sinner, wayward and wayworn; helpless and hopeless; trembling, yet trusting, I rest in Thee and

on what Thou hast done, Thou Saviour of the lost.”

Then will He draw near and fold you to His heart of infinite love; place you on His shoulders of omnipotent strength and bear you rejoicing to His Home of ineffable bliss (Luke xv. 4-7).

### HOPING.

Are you saved? “I hope so.” What do you base your hope on?— Ah! that is the question. What *ground* have you for hoping?

The Prince of Wales hopes to be on the throne some day, but his hope rests on the fact that he is the eldest son of the King, and thus he has a legitimate claim to the crown. Now, it would be very foolish for me to express a hope that I should ever be King of England. I have

no right nor title to the throne. It is equal folly on your part to hope that you are saved, when you know you cannot give a solid reason for such a hope. True, the believer has the hope of going to heaven, but it is on the ground that he is already a child of God, and hence an heir to glory (Rom. viii. 16, 17).

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason for the hope that is in you," says God's Word (1 Peter iii. 15). Come now, can you do it? You say, "Jesus died for sinners." Yes, but do you believe He died for *you*? You say, "God is merciful." Most true; but have you accepted His mercy? Can you say, "I obtained mercy"? (1 Tim. i. 16). You say this and that, and you hope all is right, but hoping that you are

saved will never save you. God's righteousness does not say, “Pay Me what you *can* ;” but, “Pay Me what you *owe* !” Hence if you cannot discharge your spiritual and moral liabilities to God to the very last farthing, you must be lost forever, in spite of all your false hopes to the contrary. Is it not better, then, to own at once that you have “nothing to pay” (Luke vii. 42), and to trust in the One who by His blood has met every claim that Divine righteousness could make ?

I do not hope, but I *know*. “These things *have I written* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God,” says the Apostle John, “that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life” (1 John iii. 2, 14, 19 ; v. 13).

How do I "*know*" that I "*have*"? Simply and solely because "*it is written.*" I believe what God says. It is enough. I rest on His testimony (1 John v. 9, 10); and as another has said, "I often tremble on the rock, but the rock never trembles under me." The blood makes me safe; the Word makes me sure.

It is often regarded as humility to doubt "what God hath said," and presumption to believe; but the reverse is the truth. If a dear one were to buy a costly present and give it to you, and you were to go home and show it to others, would they charge you with presumption for calling it your own? Is it presumption to receive what God offers, and confidently testify to the possession of it?

Are we to be Agnostics, or what? Suppose you see me enter a railway carriage. You come to the door, and enquire, “Where are you going?”

“Don’t know,” is my reply.

“Don’t know!” you say, “you had better be quick and find out.”

“Oh,” I say, “nobody can know.”

What would you think if I talked like that?

And what can I think if a traveller to Eternity tells me he does not know where he is going, and further, holds to the soul-destroying error that “nobody can know”? How different is the voice of Scripture, which says, “*We know . . .*”; “*We are always confident . . .*”; “*We believe and are sure*” (2 Cor. v. 1–6, 8; John vi. 69).

## FEELING.

"Ah," you say, "It is all very well to talk, but I want to *feel* saved." Now, *feeling* saved is the result of *being* saved. If you were in the top story of a house, the lower portion of which was in flames, you *could not* feel saved, but if the fire-escape came along and saved you, then you would feel saved, because you would *be* saved. Your *feeling* saved would flow from the fact that you *are* saved. And yet as to your soul you say, "I am not saved," and in almost the same breath add, "Oh that I could feel saved!" Salvation is a big thing, and embraces much more than the certainty that we shall be saved from wrath (Rom. v. 8, 9), but it starts with that.

Here is a sick man; the doctor examines his case, and prescribes a

remedy. The next day he comes again, and says, “How do you feel now?”

“No better,” is the reply.

“Have you taken the medicine?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Well, I want to feel better.”

What would the doctor say?

“Why, man, you are putting ‘the cart before the horse.’ Take the medicine first, and then you will feel better.”

So say I. Take Christ, the sovereign remedy for all spiritual maladies, and comfortable feelings must be the *result*. “According to His mercy He saved us” (Tit. iii. 5), Paul says, not according to our feelings. The woman with the issue of blood had *to touch* the hem of the Saviour’s garment before she

*felt* healed of her disease. The Israelites bitten by the fiery serpents had to *look* away from themselves to "the serpent of brass" before they *felt* in anywise better. The poor sinner, heart-sick and conscience-smitten, has to *believe* what God says ere he can *feel* eased of his sins. Faith is not the *inward*, but the *outward* look. The place where "peace with God" was made is not in the heart of man, but at the Cross of Christ (Col. i. 20).

"On Jesus' Cross this record's graved—  
Let *sin* be judged but *sinner*s saved."

The gospel presents to us an object outside of ourselves (Rom. i. 3).

A Christian man lay dying, surrounded by his family, and a believer said to him, "Have you peace?"

The dying man had just sufficient.

strength to gasp out, “ Oh, yes, I’m just looking to Him,” and the next moment he was with the Lord.

Some days after, this same brother said to the daughters of the dead man, “ Did you understand what your father meant when he said, ‘ I’m just looking to Him ’ ? ”

They had an inkling of the truth, but were not at all clear, so he went on to ask, “ When your father was alive, whom did you look to for food and clothing, etc. ? ”

“ Oh, we looked to father.”

“ Then if you wanted anything that you could not get yourselves, you looked to your father for it— was that so ? ”

“ Yes,” was the reply.

“ Now,” said he, “ your father was looking to Jesus for salvation in the same way as you were looking to

him for all the necessaries of life."

Dear trembling soul, do not look *in* on what you feel, but *out* to Jesus for salvation. Believing is the *root*, and feeling is the *fruit*. We read in Gal. v. 22 that "the fruit of the Spirit is *love, joy, peace,*" etc. When you receive the Spirit "by the hearing of faith," the fruit will follow as a matter of course.

If you owed a debt that you could not pay, and someone were to pay it and bring you the receipt, you could not feel relieved till you believed the receipt was genuine. Then, if any one were to ask, "Do you feel the debt is paid?" you would reply, "No, but I feel happy because I know it is paid."

You will never feel happy till you have believed that Christ has dis-

charged, by His death, all your liabilities to the throne of God, and as the proof of this, God has raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand (Acts xiii. 38, 39 ; ch. xvii. 31 ; 1 Pet. i. 3-5).

Suppose your friend, instead of paying the debt, became *surety* for you, and was thrown into prison, but one day you meet him walking at liberty, what would you say ?

You would say, “It’s all right, my debt is discharged ; or he could not be out of prison.”

So a risen Christ is an unanswerable proof to me that my sins are all gone, for He could not be where He is, if a single sin remained against me. Hence my “faith and hope” rest not only on what Christ has done for me, but *on God*, and on what God has done, who has shown

His complete satisfaction with the work of Christ by raising Him from the dead, and putting Him where He is (Rom. iv. 24, 25; 1 Pet. i. 21).

"If Christ has my discharge procured,  
And freely in my place endured  
The whole of wrath Divine—  
Payment God will not *twice* demand—  
*First* at my bleeding Surety's hand,  
And then *again* at mine."

Do not make your feelings your saviour; they are as changeable as the weather. Said a quaint old saint, "He who looks upon Christ through frames and feelings is like one who sees the sun on water, which quivers and moves as the water moves; but he that looks upon Him in the glass of His Word—by faith—sees Him ever the same."

I have heard of a man who was always troubled about his soul ex-

cept on “communion days,” when he had “pleasant glows.” Unhappy man! He made a saviour of his feelings—his emotions. What a contrast to another, who exclaimed as he was dying, “I’ve got my naked feet on the naked rock—there is nothing between!” Sure foundation! May it be yours!

Do you remember the mistake Isaac made, and why he made it? “And Jacob went near to his father, and he *felt* him, and said, The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau” (Gen. xxvii. 12–21, 22). His *feelings* told him one thing, the *voice* told him another! Which was right? Anxious sinner, I conjure you not to trust to your feelings, but to the voice—the Word of God. Nothing else is sure. Is it not safer to believe than it is to feel?

Why? Because feeling casts me on *self*, but believing casts me on *God*. Self may deceive me, God never will.

An anxious soul was brought under the power of the Gospel one night, and on leaving the place said, "If I have any difficulty, may I call and see you?"

"Certainly," the evangelist replied.

The next morning he called and said, "I decided too hastily last night. I have been looking for some token that I am saved, but cannot find any."

"Did I not tell you that you could see me this morning?"

"Yes," he said.

"Well, why didn't you ask for my watch as a token that I would keep my word? Why should you look

for a token from God—can't you take Him at His Word?”

I repeat the question, “Can't you take Him at His Word?”

Suppose you have comfortable feelings to-day, and make them the ground of your peace, and to-morrow you are laid on a death-bed. The adversary comes and says “You are not Christ's.”

You reply, “Yesterday I felt all was right.”

“I know it,” he replies, “I put those comfortable feelings into your heart to deceive you.”

How could you answer him? You wouldn't be able to answer him at all. SATAN always gets the best of us when we argue with him. Even Michael the Archangel felt he was no match for Satan in this way (Jude 9). If, however, you rest on

the Word of God—its testimony concerning Christ—you will rest in Him and His Work and His Word, apart from your feelings and everything else. Then, if Satan tempts you to doubt, you will be able to do what Michael did—stand aside and let God speak. You will be able to say, “*The Lord* rebuke thee, O Satan,” and thus use “the sword of the Spirit” against him. “IT IS WRITTEN.”

Could you be in a worse plight than the poor dying thief? His was a nameless past, a desperate present, and a hopeless future. He could not do anything to remedy matters (neither can you), for his hands and feet were nailed to a cross; but he had four things free (and so have you—his eye, ear, mouth, and heart. Thus he *looked* away from

himself to Christ, and *heard, confessed, and believed* Him. Say, *will you?* (Rom. x. 1–12.)

Just a word now on another “stumbling block.” I shall call it

### FOREBODING,

or fearing about the future. This “stumbling block” is often a great obstacle, owing to the tendency of the soul to *rest on its faith*, instead of *resting on the One on whom faith rests*. Faith is indispensable for salvation, but it is only the *means*. Faith is the eye that sees and the ear that hears; the hand that receives and the foot that comes; but Christ is the *Object*.

“Is your faith strong?” said a visitor to a dying girl.

“No,” was the reply, “but my *Jesus* is!”

She knew it was not her faith that saved her, but her Saviour.

It is sometimes said, "If I were to receive Christ I could not hold out." No, *you* could not, but *Christ* can! In His strength

"The weakest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and hell oppose the way."

Said a lady to a poor drunkard,  
"Come, my man, sign the pledge,  
and keep it."

"Oh, missus," said he, "I don't want something to keep, but something to *keep me*." By-and-by he found—not *something*, but *Some-One*, who did keep him, and so may you.

My confidence is not in you, but in Him (2 Thess. iii. 6; Phil. i. 6). The dog returns to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire, because it is

*their nature* to do so. But not so “the Lord’s flock.” A sheep of Christ may slip into the mire, but it does not love the dirt ; and “the Great Shepherd” has *pledged His Word* that not one of His “little flock” shall ever perish (John x. 28).

“The least, the feeblest of the sheep,  
To Him the Father gave ;  
Kind is His heart the charge to keep,  
And strong His hand to save.”

When I first took my place as a Christian I thought my salvation depended on my hold of Christ, so I held him, as it were, with one hand, and worked with the other. But now I let *Him hold me*, with the result that I have both hands free to work for Him who has saved me.

Courage, Faint Heart ; should you receive Christ, you will become a new creature. “If any man be

in Christ he is a *new creation* ; old things are passed away ; behold all things are become *new*”—new objects, new desires, new joys, etc. (2 Cor. v. 18). Even in the old creation around you, you will view things differently.

“Since I knew, oh, since I knew,  
I am His and He is mine,  
Birds with gladder songs o’erflow,  
Flowers with deeper beauties shine.  
Heaven above seems brighter blue ;  
Earth around is sweeter green ;  
Something lives in every hue  
Christless eyes have never seen.”

And, as you ponder the love of Jesus your love to His blessed person will increase, and become more and more intense. Thus intuitively because you love him you will try to please Him, and shrink from doing anything that would tarnish the name, or violate the word, or

damage the truth, or offend the eye, or grieve the heart of your gracious Saviour.

One final appeal: suppose, some clear and beautiful night, you find yourself gazing up with adoring wonder into the starry heavens, lost in a measureless abyss. Suddenly you seem to see the more brilliant luminaries move, and presently, to your amazement, they come together and form themselves into letters and then into words, and lo, you read written right across the heavenly vault, in characters of light, those blessed words, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts xvi. 31). Would you believe *then*? Would the rationalist and the legalist believe *then*? Would the world’s modern Jannes and Jambres believe

*then*, and own—“ This is the finger of God ” ?

I know not, but this I do know, that I would rather have those soul-saving words written in the Book of God than across the heavens, for the Eternal Truth Himself has declared: “ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall never pass away.”

S. J. B. C.

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BY THE SAME WRITER.

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