

JESUS' WARNING ABOUT BEING THE CAUSE OF SIN TREATS THE POSSIBILITY OF LEADING OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY INTO SERIOUS SIN.

- **The warning** (vv. 1–3a) treats the topic of causing someone to sin. This is inevitable within the Christian community, but woe to the one responsible for being the source of stumbling in the body. The term skandalon probably refers to serious enticement to sin, like actions leading to apostasy. Jesus says the fate of the culprit is worse than if a huge millstone were placed around his neck and he were cast into the sea. In sum, death would be a better fate than to face God’s judgment for his crime. That is how seriously Jesus takes causing sin in the body. The members of the body are called the “little ones.” They are special objects of God’s tender care. [Bock, D. L. (1996). *Luke* (pp. 438–439). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.]
- **The major responsibility for this warning resides with teachers.** So Jesus issues a final warning for his disciples to watch themselves (v. 3a). The present imperative indicates the constancy of attention Jesus’ followers should give to their spiritual walk. [Ibid.]
- **Sin is to be rebuked, which reveals the community’s commitment to righteousness.** Yet the sinner’s repentance should produce the church’s forgiveness. Disciples pursue spirituality in dependence on each other for support. Religion is not a private pursuit, but is a shared family responsibility. It is a supportive environment, not a matter of keeping a constant watch on each other. This is why forgiveness is central. [Ibid.]
- The very first evidence Luke mentions of the Spirit’s presence in the church is that

they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching. One might perhaps say that the Holy Spirit opened a school in Jerusalem that day; its teachers were the apostles whom Jesus had appointed; and there were 3,000 pupils in the kindergarten! We note that those new converts were not enjoying a mystical experience which led them to despise their mind or disdain theology. Anti-intellectualism and the fullness of the Spirit are mutually incompatible, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Nor did those early disciples imagine that, because they had received the Spirit, he was the only teacher they needed and they could dispense with human teachers. On the contrary, they sat at the apostles’ feet, hungry to receive instruction, and they persevered in it. Moreover, the teaching authority of the apostles, to which they submitted, was authenticated by miracles: many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. The two references to the apostles, in verse 42 (their teaching) and in verse 43 (their miracles), can hardly be an accident. Since the teaching of the apostles has come down to us in its definitive form in the New Testament, contemporary devotion to the apostles’ teaching will mean submission to the authority of the New Testament. A Spirit-filled church is a New Testament church, in the sense that it studies and submits to New Testament instruction. **The Spirit of God leads the people of God to submit to the Word of God.** [Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Acts: the Spirit, the church & the world* (p. 82). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.]

- **σκάνδαλον [skandalon]:** Things that cause people to sin. The term skandala has a broad semantic range that includes the meaning things that cause people to sin. This refers to anything that might cause believers (the “little ones” of 17:2) to lose or lessen their allegiance to Jesus Christ. [Stein, R. H. (1992). *Luke* (Vol. 24, p. 429). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.]

- JESUS’ WARNING ABOUT being the cause of sin treats the possibility of leading others in the community into serious sin. Such defection can result from serious **doctrinal deviation** or be caused by **dangerous practical advice about sin.** [Bock, D. L. (1996). *Luke* (pp. 441–442). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.]
- **The church today is prone to pay too little attention to details of doctrinal teachings** in God’s revelation, a response that puts the community at risk. [Ibid.]
- **Some practical errors emerge because theological errors stand behind them.** The spiritual and theological advice we give should be carefully thought through in terms of its faithfulness to maintaining a strong walk with God. [Ibid.]
- **The last timeless theme of this text is service without strings attached.** Sometimes we want to bargain with God, but Jesus instructs us to understand what being a servant of God means. A “servant” responds to God without question as a matter of duty. [Ibid.]
- Yet no thanks is offered to the slave, since he is simply doing what is commanded. The ser-

vice of Jesus’ servants works in precisely the same way. Our attitude should be that we have only done our duty. **Obedience is not a matter of merit (though God does honor it), but of duty.** [Ibid.]

- **Faith that does not result in faithfulness will not accomplish God’s work.** [Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 244). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.]

- **This story emphasizes faithfulness to duty no matter what the demands might be,** and the argument is from the lesser to the greater. If a common servant is faithful to obey the orders of his master who does not reward (thank) him, how much more ought Christ’s disciples obey their loving Master, who has promised to reward them graciously! [Ibid.]

- **A faithful servant should not expect any special reward, since he did only what he was told to do.** The word translated “unprofitable” means “without need”—that is, “nobody owes us anything.” The servant was indeed profitable; after all, he cared for his master’s fields, flocks, and food. The statement means, “My master does not owe me anything extra.” The fact that Jesus will reward His servants is wholly a matter of God’s grace. We do not deserve anything because we have obeyed Him and served Him. [Ibid.]

