

# Mark 9:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

## Analysis

Jesus warned: 'whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea' (ὅς ἂν σκανδαλίσῃ ἔνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ, καλόν ἔστιν αὐτῷ μᾶλλον εἰ περίκειται μύλος ὄνικὸς περὶ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ βέβληται εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν). The verb 'offend' (skandalizō, σκανδαλίσῃ) means cause to stumble or fall into sin. 'Little ones' (mikrōn, μικρῶν) refers to humble believers (v. 36-37 used children as examples). Causing believers to stumble into sin or apostasy brings severe judgment. A millstone (mylos onikos, μύλος ὄνικὸς, 'donkey millstone'—the large upper stone turned by donkey) tied to one's neck ensures drowning. Jesus says this horrible death is better than facing God's judgment for destroying faith. The hyperbole emphasizes how seriously God regards harm done to His children. Leaders bear special responsibility for those under their care (Hebrews 13:17; James 3:1).

## Historical Context

Roman execution methods included drowning with weights, though not typically millstones. Jesus' vivid imagery shocked hearers—death by drowning with massive millstone was horrifying. The 'donkey millstone' weighed hundreds of pounds, distinguishing it from small hand-mills. This hyperbole emphasized the gravity of causing believers to stumble. First-century Judaism took seriously the responsibility of teachers not to mislead students (Matthew 23:13-15). Jesus'

warning applied particularly to leaders whose false teaching or immoral example destroyed others' faith. Church history records tragic examples: clergy sexual abuse, financial exploitation, doctrinal heresies leading multitudes astray. Paul echoed this concern (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 4:16). The phrase 'little ones that believe in me' shows genuine faith exists among the seemingly insignificant—those often most vulnerable to exploitation.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does Jesus' severe warning about causing believers to stumble challenge leaders to guard their example and teaching carefully?
2. What does the phrase 'little ones that believe' teach about God's fierce protective care for vulnerable believers?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ	ὅς	ἄν	σκανδαλίσῃ	ἔνα	τῶν	μικρῶν	τῶν
And	whosoever	G302	shall offend	one	G3588	of these little ones	G3588
G2532	G3739		G4624	G1520		G3398	

πιστευόντων	εἰς	ἐμέ	καλόν	ἐστιν	αὐτοῦ	μᾶλλον	εἰ
that believe	in	me	better	it is	for him	G3123	that
G4100	G1519	G1691	G2570	G2076	G846		G1487

περίκειται	λίθος	μύλικὸς	περὶ	τὸν	τράχηλον	αὐτοῦ
were hanged	a millstone	G3457	about	G3588	neck	for him
G4029	G3037		G4012		G5137	G846

καὶ	βέβληται	εἰς	τὴν	θάλασσαν
And	he were cast	in	G3588	the sea
G2532	G906	G1519		G2281

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 18:6** (Faith): But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

**Matthew 18:10** (Parallel theme): Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

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