

Summer in Romans
Romans 9
Pastor Randy Stroming
Why People Stumble Over Christ

Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is where we ended last week in the assurance that nothing can take away God's Love from us. Paul begins this next text with passion in His voice and a very serious tone.

Rom 9:1-2 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

Paul is concerned about people who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Can you imagine what Paul must have felt like as he thought about his Jewish friends? Paul a Jew but now trusting that Jesus is the promised Messiah. To reject Jesus Christ is to cut oneself off from God to condemn oneself to hell to choose separation from God for eternity.

Paul explains in verse 4 - what a waste. The Jews seemed to have the inside track with God. #1 Chosen specifically by God. Which demonstrated God's presence with His People. #3 to them belong the covenants that God set forth his promise. To send a Savior that will come from Israel to redeem Israel. It's Jesus

Do you know what a caricature is? One definition says that it's "a representation, especially pictorial or literary," "An exaggeration by means of often ludicrous distortion of parts or characteristics."

Today we have a distortion of who Jesus is. Some want

* Jesus is my buddy. While it is true that Jesus calls believers his "friends," He is not just a pal. If we saw Him as He really is, we would fall flat on our faces. When the Apostle John saw Jesus in the first chapter of Revelation, he says: "I fell at his feet as though dead" (Rev 17:17).

* Jesus is my good luck charm. People who have this image of Jesus think that just because they have Him around their neck or carry Him in their purse that they'll be protected. Friends, Jesus is not lucky, He is Lord.

* Jesus is my social conscience. In this caricature of Christ, Jesus is an example for us as we seek to be involved in horizontal goodness. Since Jesus was a nice man and a good teacher, I should be nice to others. Friends, Jesus is an example but He's so much more.

We need to see Jesus for who He really is. When we do, we will either stumble over Him or stand on Him. Unfortunately, some people today don't stumble over Him because they've shrunk the Jesus to a more manageable size.

Paul writes verse 30 "What then shall we say?" This is his common way of saying, "Here's what I mean." we uncovered this truth: God is supremely sovereign and we are responsible for our response to Him.

The question is never with a Holy God but sinful people...

Drop down to the end of verse 32: "They stumbled over the 'stumbling stone.'" The word, "stumbled," literally means to strike, slam, or dash against (It carries with it the idea of suffering harm, taking offense, and being annoyed or enraged). Like stubbing your baby toe on the coffee table in the middle of the night, so is someone who stumbles over the stumbling stone...

Stumbling Stone #1: SINNER

The first stone that makes many people stumble is the struggle to admit that they are sinners. Look at the second part of verse 30: "That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, One thing they did have figured out was that they were sinners. They knew that their behavior would never qualify them as righteous; the only way for that to happen was "by faith." Literally this means "out of, or from" faith and is not just a mental assent but a firm conviction and surrender to the truth. They received something they weren't even looking for, much less striving to attain, but they got it because of faith.

Stumbling Stone #2: SAVIOR

The Jewish people at that time struggled to admit their sinfulness and as a result didn't see their need for a Savior. Notice the contrast in verse 31: "But Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it." Even though they pursued the Law, they couldn't reach the Lord behind the Law, because they somehow thought they could attain righteousness on their own. They were grasping but could never reach the goal of righteousness. The word "attained" means to come suddenly and unexpectedly upon a goal. Israel was working hard but they couldn't get to where they needed to be.

The Jews tried to keep the law scrupulously, they offered gallons upon gallons of animal blood on the altar; they followed the dietary laws and did whatever else they thought they should do. Romans 9:32

Gives some more clarity about this: "Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if by works.

God wants more than just ritualistic rule-keeping; righteousness comes out of a relationship with Him by faith.

This idea goes all the way back to

Gen 15:6 "Abraham believed in the Lord and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."

Christianity is God reaching down to save his people. Religion is Man trying to reach up to please God. As a result, most of the Jews recoiled from Jesus because He failed to meet their expectations and they were offended by His exclusive claims.

One commentator explained it this way: "The offense of the Cross, at which they stumbled, is not simply the fact that it is a cross, whereas they expected a Messianic throne; the Cross offended them because...it summoned them to begin their religious life, in a relationship from the very beginning, at the foot of the Crucified, and with the sense upon their hearts of an infinite debt to Him, which no 'works' could ever repay."

Stumbling Stone #3: SIMPLE

Check out verse 33: "As it is written: 'See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.'"

The little word "see" in Hebrew narrative means "look!" and is designed to call attention to something. Paul wants every one of us to look to the stone in Zion that causes some to stumble and also to the rock that will trip up those who are filled with pride. Those who are unwilling to fall on their own will be made to fall from the force of the rock. This same rock is the refuge for those who respond in repentance and faith.

Robert Haldane said: "A free salvation becomes an offense to men on account of their pride – men's desire is to

do something...to merit their salvation, at least in part.” The requirement is simple – it’s called trust. Once we settle our sinfulness and see Jesus as Savior then we’re called to simple trust.

Simple - God’s will is that we look to Jesus. Not a Jesus according to our will and what we want to see. But a Jesus that comes according to God’s will and what we need to see. We pray in the Lords Prayer that God’s good and gracious will be done to strengthen us in our Faith.

Will you trust the One who will never let you down? Don’t be content with a caricature of Christ when you can have the real thing. Jesus Personal Lord and Savior.