

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 3 November 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Rock of Offence

1 Peter 2:7-8

On the night when Jesus was born, an angel appeared to some shepherds in the fields outside Bethlehem, and told them that he had come to bring them **“good tidings of great joy.”** The “good news” was that Christ the Saviour had been born that day, in Bethlehem. After the angel had made this announcement, and had told the shepherds where they could find this infant Christ, an enormous army of angels appeared, and sang, **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”**

It has been nearly 2,000 years since that wonderful night; and since then, much of the world has heard this wonderful story of Jesus’ birth. Many people in our Western world don’t mind hearing the story of the tiny Babe in a manger, because Jesus doesn’t seem “offensive” to them—*as a baby*. However, God made it clear, from the time of Jesus’ birth, that many people *would* be offended by Him. On the eighth day after Jesus’ birth, when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised, a prophet named Simeon took Jesus in his arms and prophesied, **“Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against... that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”**

To this day, Jesus Christ is still a stumbling block over which many people **“fall”** in unbelief. To this day, Jesus Christ is still being **“spoken against.”** To this day, Jesus Christ is continuing to expose the **“thoughts”** of many people’s hearts. Some people, upon having their sinful hearts exposed, repent of their sin; however, most people recoil from the light, and *harden* their hearts. Many people have risen again to new life in Christ by believing on Him; but far more are rejecting Him. To those who receive Jesus Christ, He is the Rock upon which their lives are built; but to those who reject Him, He is a **“rock of offence, and a stone of stumbling,”** upon whom they stumble and fall.

I hope that Jesus Christ is not **“a rock of offence”** to anyone in this room! However, I know that it is *very* possible that at least one person in this small place has never been born again. Should there be even one soul here that is lost, I pray that today will be that person’s day of salvation. It is also my prayer that those of you who are saved will find your Saviour to be even *more* precious this morning, and that you will draw even closer to Him today. With this in mind, let’s read today’s Scripture.

Read 1 Peter 2:7-8.

In this first half of **verse 7** Peter says that Jesus is **“precious”** to those who have believed on Him. However, if Christ be **“precious”** to those who believe on Him, what is He to those who *reject* Him? That is the question that we will answer today, as we examine the second half of **verse 7**, and **verse 8**. The title of this message is ***The Rock of Offence***.

I. Christ’s relationship to those who reject Him (vv. 7b-8)

What kind of relationship do lost people have to the Lord? Well, first of all, lost people are **“disobedient”** to the Lord. Peter describes lost people as **“them which be disobedient.”**

Now, this raises a sobering question: Are not even true, born again Christians guilty of disobeying God many times *after* their salvation? They certainly are! Those of us who are saved still have a sinful nature, just as unsaved people have. Paul lamented his own sinful nature when he said, ***“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin”*** (Romans 7:24).

So, then, what is the difference between a lost man’s disobedience and a saved man’s disobedience? There *is* no difference. A saved man’s disobedience is just as vile to God as a lost person’s disobedience is. However, there *is* a difference in a saved person’s *standing* before God. As Judge, God sees a believer as “justified” (as though he were perfectly righteous). Judicially, God does not see a believer’s sin: instead, He sees the perfect righteousness of His Son, which has been imputed to that believer. It is on this basis of Christ’s imputed righteousness that God accepts the believer. In contrast, when God sees a lost person, He sees nothing *but* his sin; and His wrath still abides upon that person.

Another difference between a saved person and a lost person is that a saved person is no longer a *slave* to sin, as lost people are. A saved man has been delivered from sin’s power. He doesn’t *have* to sin anymore. He has been given a new nature, which enables him to perform true righteousness. That is why we can also expect to see a marked difference in the way a Christian lives his life. The pattern of a Christian’s life is that he is no longer *continually* sinning. A lost person can do nothing *but* sin; but a Christian, by God’s grace, is able to ***“mortify*** (put to death) ***the deeds of the flesh.***” A Christian does often stumble into sin, and disobey God; but, unlike a lost person, he doesn’t *have* to remain in disobedience. A believer has the power, through Christ, to go to God for cleansing, and to be restored to right fellowship with God. A lost man, on the other hand, has no relationship with God at all, nor any divine power to overcome sin. That is why John wrote, ***“Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.”*** A lost person’s whole *lifestyle* is one of continual, unbroken disobedience to God—whether in outward act, or in inward thought and motivation.

A lost person is completely controlled by his flesh, and lives in continual disobedience to God (even though he may appear to others to be a “moral” person). However, there is one *particular* act of “disobedience” which makes a lost person “lost.” There is one particular thing that a saved person has *obeyed*, which a lost person has *not* obeyed. Let’s see what it is.

Read Romans 6:14-17.

According to **verse 17**, there is a ***“form of doctrine*** (or teaching)” which saved people have obeyed. What is this ***“form of doctrine”*** which saved people have ***“obeyed”***? Well, let’s look at a couple more Scriptures, and find out.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

Read Romans 10:9-16.

In **1 Corinthians 15**, Paul gives us a very clear definition of the Gospel. The “Gospel” is the “good news” that ***“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was***

buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” However, this “good news” is not forced on anyone. In order to be saved from the penalty of your sin, you must personally *believe* the Gospel. You must personally *trust* in Jesus’ saving work for you on the cross, and in His resurrection. In **1 Corinthians 15** and in **Romans 10**, Paul emphasises that you must *believe* the Gospel “in your *heart*.” This means that you must lay down your arms, and surrender your life to Christ. Salvation is very simple; and it is free for the taking. Yet, according to **verse 16**, there are many who have not “*obeyed the Gospel*.”

Now, did you catch that? Paul said that not everyone has obeyed “*the gospel*.” There you have it! *The Gospel* is the “*form of doctrine*” that Paul was talking about in **Romans 6**. The *Gospel* is the “*form of doctrine*” which saved people have “*obeyed*,” but which lost people have *disobeyed*. Those who are “*disobedient*” are those who have not believed the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This means that they have no relationship with Christ at all. Why? Because by rejecting Christ’s Gospel, they are rejecting *Him*.

What else does Peter say about a lost person’s relationship to Christ? Let’s look again in **verse 7**. (Read **1 Peter 2:7**.)

Not only are lost people “*disobedient*” to Christ, but they have “*disallowed*” (or, “rejected”) Him. Now, as we saw last week, Peter is quoting here from **Psalms 118**. In **Psalm 118:22** David wrote, “*The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.*” This is one of the hundreds of prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament. *Jesus* is the foundation Stone whom “the builders rejected.” But who, exactly, are the “*builders*” who rejected Him? They are the very people who should have been the first ones to *receive* Him—namely, the Jewish nation. God intended for the Jewish nation to praise Him, and to be a spiritual sanctuary of worship to Him. Sadly, though, the overwhelming majority of the Jewish people rejected their Cornerstone, and crucified Him. And why did they crucify Him? Paul answers that question in **Romans 9**. He explained that “*Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.*” Why have they not attained to the law of righteousness? Paul said that it was because “*they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone.*”

Because the Jews were *self-righteous*, and thought that they could *earn* their way to heaven by trying to keep the Law, they didn’t like it when Jesus pointed out their sin. They didn’t like it when Jesus told them that their own righteousness couldn’t save them, and that they needed to trust in *Him* for forgiveness and salvation. Therefore, they “*stumbled*” at the stumblingstone. Jesus, the very “Stone” upon which they should have built their nation, became a Stone upon which most of them stumbled in unbelief! This was prophesied by **Isaiah**, as well.

Read Isaiah 8:13-14.

To this very hour, most Jewish people are rejecting their Messiah. Now, how is God taking this rejection? Is God sitting up in heaven and “biting His nails” because the Jewish people won’t receive Him? Is His plan thwarted? Not one bit. God is grieved; but His plan of redemption is not in vain. Even now, there is still a remnant of Jewish people who believe on the Son; and in the future, a *tremendous* number of them will believe on Him; and they will receive Him as their King. This will happen on the day when Christ returns to earth at the end

of the Tribulation. At that time, the “Stone” that was rejected 2,000 years ago will truly become the *“headstone of the corner.”* Today, Jesus is the Rock upon which the *church* is built; but in the future, He will be the Headstone *and* Foundation Stone for the nation of Israel.

Read Romans 11:25-27.

For now, we are living in the *“times of the Gentiles.”* Right now, Gentile powers are still controlling the land of Israel, as they have been doing for 2,600 years. However, this will one day come to an end. When Jesus returns, the “times of the Gentiles” will halt immediately! At that time, Jesus will become the Headstone of the restored house of Israel. However, to the unbelieving Gentile world, Jesus will become another kind of “Stone.” On that day, Christ will be the Stone that *smashes in pieces* all the kingdoms of the earth. Christ will then set up *His* Kingdom, and will become like a great mountain, filling the whole earth. (You can read all about this prophecy in **Daniel 2.**)

Now, maybe you’re thinking, “All this end-times prophecy is interesting, Pastor; but are these things really relevant to *my* life?” You’d better believe they are! You see, whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, Jesus is still the Rock. He is the Foundation Stone upon which every true New Testament church is built. He is the Stone of Israel, upon which the House of Israel will one day be built. He is the Rock upon which every believer’s life is built. He is the Rock upon which *every* soul *must* build his life—or else fall to ruin. *No one can ignore the Lord Jesus Christ!* If you *think* that you don’t need Christ, and you are rejecting Him, then He is a *stumbling* stone to you—a Stone which will one day crush you, and destroy you.

When a Christian tries to tell a lost person that he needs the Lord Jesus Christ, that unbeliever may smile and say, “I’m really happy for you. I’m glad that this ‘Jesus thing’ is working out for you”; but deep inside, he is *not* happy at what he is hearing. The fact that someone is trying to show him that he is building his life upon a wrong foundation is grating and annoying to him. He doesn’t *like* to hear that he is a hell-deserving sinner, and that he needs to repent. To the unbeliever, the truth that “Jesus is the Rock” is **offensive!**

That is exactly what Peter is telling us in **verse 8**. Let’s read that verse again. **(Read verse 8.)** To a lost person, Jesus is a *“stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word.”* He is the One upon whom unbelievers trip, and are wounded. Whether an unbeliever be Jew or Gentile, man or woman, adult or child, Jesus is an offence to him.

Now, in what sense is Jesus an “offence” to unbelievers? Well, the word “offence” is translated from the Greek word *skandalos*. A *skandalos* is a “snare”—something that causes someone to trip, or to get caught in a trap. Throughout Scripture, a “snare” is, spiritually speaking, something that causes someone to *sin!* Now, how could Jesus *cause* someone to *sin?* Doesn’t Jesus *hate* sin? He surely does. He hates sin so much, that He died on the cross to pay the price for our sin, so that we could be *freed* from sin! How, then, would Jesus be the *cause* of people’s stumbling into sin?

The answer is simple: *Jesus* isn’t the problem: *sinners* are the problem. Sinners naturally hate and recoil from righteousness; thus, they naturally hate and recoil from *God*. When God reveals Himself to them through His Word, and shows them that they need to repent and

believe on His Son, they recoil from Him; and by recoiling from Him, **they sin all the more!** In this way, Jesus is a “stumbling block.” By revealing Himself to lost men, Jesus becomes a stumbling block to most of them—because most people reject Him, and bring even more damnation upon themselves. Let’s see what Jesus said about this.

Read John 3:16-20.

As Jesus was speaking with Nicodemus, He made it clear that sinners are *already condemned* by their sin. You don’t have to do something “*really*” bad to be condemned, because you are *already* condemned. Furthermore, when sinners are exposed to the light of the Gospel, most of them recoil from the light, because they don’t want to have their sin exposed; and by recoiling from the light, they make their condemnation even greater. That is exactly what Jesus told His disciples on the night before His crucifixion.

Read John 15:22-24.

Those who saw and heard Jesus, yet still rejected him, were already sinners before Jesus came to them; but by rejecting the Light of the world, when He was right there among them, their sin became much greater. Because Jesus had come to them, they had no “*cloak for their sin.*” In other words, they had even *less* excuse for rejecting God’s gift of salvation, because they had seen *the Saviour Himself*, and still rejected Him. Time and time again, Jesus warned the people in the cities of Galilee (cities like Chorazin, Capernaum, and Nazareth) that their judgment would be far *greater* than the judgment on the incredibly wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Zidon, and Tyre. Why? Because the Saviour of the world had been right there in their midst, and they had rejected Him. (In fact, about **80%** of Jesus’ ministry was in the cities around the Sea of Galilee!) Jesus said to the people of these cities, “***But I say unto you, That is shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.***” The more truth that you’ve heard, the greater is your accountability before God.

Do you know who will get the worst hellfire? It won’t be the sodomites, who never heard a real presentation of the Gospel, and who ignorantly spat on the Bible, and who marched in LGBTQ parades, and flaunted their sinful lifestyle in everyone’s faces. No, it will be those who sat in Bible-preaching churches Sunday after Sunday, and who heard the true Gospel over and over again, yet who never acknowledged their unworthiness in the sight of God, and who never truly repented of their sin, and placed their faith in Jesus! It will be the people who proudly assured themselves that “I’m O.K. with God,” even though they had heard the truth again and again. It will be the people who prayed a “sinner’s prayer” at some point in their lives because they wanted a free ticket to heaven, yet who never truly repented of their sin—and who continued to resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit until He finally *stopped* convicting them, and left their hearts as cold and hard as stone.

It isn’t merely the heathen who “***stumble at the word, being disobedient.***” The world is also full of people who claim to be *Christians*—who sing songs about Jesus, go to church, and even read their Bibles—yet who are offended at, and stumble over, the Lord Jesus. How is this possible? How could someone who really *feels* that he “loves Jesus” be offended at Him?

Well, the question is not, “Do you *feel* as though you love Jesus?”: the real question is, “Which Jesus do you love?” If he be a Jesus of your *own* creation—a Jesus that you have created after *your* image, to suit *your* lifestyle, and the way of salvation that *you* prefer—then you do not know or love the true Jesus; and you have not experienced His salvation. If you kneel and pray to a *statue* of Jesus, then you do not know the true Jesus. You are praying to a Jesus of your own making. You are praying to a “Jesus” that has eyes, but sees not, and who has ears, but hears not. If you believe in a “Jesus” who is a created being, and not the eternal God in human flesh, then you do not know the true Jesus. The Bible says in **1 Timothy 3:16** that “**God was manifest in the flesh**”; thus, to “believe in” a Jesus who is *not* God in human flesh is to reject the true Jesus. If you’ve erected a “Jesus” in your heart who is like a genie in a bottle—a Jesus to whom you go when you want something, but to whom you have not submitted your life in repentance and faith—then you do not know the true Jesus. If you believe in a Jesus who tells you that you are a pretty good person (even though you are constantly disobeying God’s commands), and that you will make it to heaven because you’ve lived a pretty good life—then you do not know the Jesus of the Bible.

The true Jesus reveals the thoughts of our hearts, and lays them bare. The true Jesus exposes our sin, so that we can see where we really stand before a holy God. The true Jesus shows people that they are lost, and on their way to hell. The true Jesus doesn’t say, “Oh, it’s all right. I know you’re hurting. It’s not really your fault that you’ve done wrong. You haven’t ‘sinned’ so much as you’ve been ‘sinned against.’” Jesus does *pity us* because of the sorrow that our own sin has caused in our lives; but He doesn’t sweep our sin under the rug. Our sin *must* be paid for in full; and *He paid for it*, on the cross! To reject Jesus’ free gift, and to tell God that you are O.K. because you are a good person, is to insult the Lord Jesus! The true Jesus says, “Repent of your sin! Flee from the wrath to come! **Believe on me alone!**”

Are you resting your life and eternity upon Jesus? Or are you stumbling upon Jesus, and treasuring up even greater damnation against yourself? Are you inwardly rejecting the true Jesus, and His message (even though you may profess His name)? I hope not—because there is a terrible destiny for those who reject Him. This leads me to my second point.

II. The destiny of those who reject Him (v. 8)

(Read verse 8 again.) Did you notice what Peter said at the end of verse 8? He said, “**whereunto they were appointed.**” “**Whereunto**” means “unto which”; and this phrase “unto which” is referring back to the word “**disobedient.**” What Peter is saying is that those who reject Christ are *appointed* to disobedience! He’s saying that they are appointed to *unbelief*.

Now, please don’t misunderstand this. This is not Calvinism! This verse does not say that God *predestinates* some people to be lost, and not to believe, so that He can damn them. God does *not* make men like robots, with no choice but either to believe and be saved, or to disbelieve and be damned. That is not the God of the Bible!

God sincerely offers salvation to *everyone*. However, when a person rejects God’s gracious offer of salvation again and again—when a person refuses to listen to the Word of God and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and hardens his heart continually—there comes a point when God gives that person *exactly what he wants*. God “appoints” that person to continue in his

unbelief. How does He do this? It's simple: He doesn't bother him anymore! He doesn't convict him of his sin anymore.

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that no one can come to God unless the Holy Spirit illumines that person to the truth, and woos and draws him to respond to Jesus' call. Jesus said, ***"No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day"*** (John 6:44). When the Holy Spirit stops convicting a lost person of his sin, his sentence is as sure as if he were already in hell!

Those who are "appointed" to disobedience (which is unbelief) have been "appointed" to unbelief **because they have already made their choice not to believe**. God now *helps* them to disbelieve (and thus disobey) by not convicting them of their sin anymore. This will be the case for multitudes of people who heard the Gospel and rejected it, and then missed the Rapture. In **2 Thessalonians 2:11**, we are told that ***"for this cause God shall send them great delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."***

Some people lose their chance of repentance during their lifetime, because of their constant rejection of the Light. Others are given the chance to repent right up to the last moment of their lives, and are then appointed to *eternal* unbelief. *That*, my friends, that is the most horrifying prospect of all. Those who are appointed to disobedience because they *chose* to disobey God's command to repent and believe *will continue in their sin for the rest of eternity!*

Read John 5:28-29.

Read Revelation 22:10-11.

Jesus made it very clear that there will be a physical, bodily resurrection for the saved, and for the unsaved. However, the saved and the unsaved will receive two totally different *kinds* of resurrected bodies. Saved people will have glorified bodies that are fit for eternity in heaven with God. Unsaved people will have bodies that are fit for eternal destruction in hell. Also, saved people will have **no sin** in their resurrected bodies. Unsaved people, on the other hand, will still have sinful natures; and they will remain in their sinful condition for all eternity. Sin is what they chose to love and cling to; and God will give them what they wanted...forever! That is why God said, ***"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."*** The warning is clear: Believe on the Son before He "appoints" you to unbelief...forever!

Conclusion: If it seem that I am trying to inflict fear this morning...*I am!* Should you be without Christ, you *need* to fear your condition before God! You *need* to realise the danger you are in! Jesus said of Himself, ***"And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder"*** (Matthew 21:44). In other words, if you be unsaved, you will *not* be able to stand before Christ to be judged. On that day, Christ will be like a mighty boulder that *falls* upon you. You will be "crushed" in judgment! However, it doesn't have to be this way. Should you be quaking inside right now because you know that you need to repent of your sin and trust Christ as Saviour, *please*

do not walk away this morning, and try to shake off the conviction of the Holy Spirit. God is showing you that you need Him! Place your faith in Christ today, while the door is open!

Now, should you be saved already, this morning's message should serve as a sober reminder to you. If you have already placed your faith in Christ, you are eternally held and kept by the power of your Redeemer. However, there are others around you who need Him. Won't you care enough for their souls to show them that they need to build their lives upon the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ?