

Title: Christ, the Rock of Offense

Scripture: Romans 9:25-33

Series: God's Saving Grace

1. Introduction:

a. As we have seen previously in Romans 9, Paul defended God's choice (election) by using Jacob and Esau as examples. Before they were born, God decided that the older brother would serve the younger one. Jacob was loved (elected to salvation), and Esau was hated (condemned as a reprobate). Anticipating the objection that this might seem unfair, Paul strongly denied the possibility of unfairness with God.

i. How? He emphasized that God's righteousness is reflected in His character and actions. God is holy, perfect, and wise; everything He does stems from this nature.

1. Paul made this argument using the example of a potter and clay. Just as a potter has the right to shape the same lump of clay into vessels for honor or dishonor, God has the right to do the same with humanity. As His creations, we have no right to question God's decisions or righteousness.

2. Verses 25-26: God's Undeserved Mercy and Grace to Sinners: As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'" (26) "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

- a. As we reach the end of chapter 9, Paul reflects on the history of Old Testament Israel and reminds us of Hosea's story. We talked about Hosea in our last sermon and will revisit the prophecies of this book again today. At God's command, Hosea married a woman named Gomer, who was an unfaithful prostitute. By marrying her, Hosea gave her his name, rescued her from prostitution, and gave her honor. However, Gomer was unfaithful in her marriage vows. She had three children: Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi. The last two names symbolize Israel's condition: Lo-ruhamah means "No pity," and Lo-ammi means "Not my people." These were children of sexual immorality. After her unfaithfulness, Gomer became a prostitute again, shaming the prophet and scorning his grace.
 - i. Instead of rejecting his unfaithful wife, at God's command, Hosea goes to her, redeems her, and restores her to her former honor so that the children of unfaithfulness are restored alongside her. The child "No pity" becomes "My loved one," and the child "Not my people" becomes "My people."
 - ii. By quoting from this book, Paul argues for a deeper and more prophetic meaning than that of Hosea's time. Paul looks at the prophecy of this book and applies it in its greatest fulfillment to the inclusion of the Gentiles. Gentiles who, by birth, were children of idolatry and immorality. Gentiles whose ancestors knew nothing of God's grace. Gentiles like you and me who were enslaved by the most severe sins. We were not the people of God, Lo-ammi, but now, we are God's people in Christ!

1. We know that when anyone is adopted into God's family, they receive undeserved love and grace.
 - a. Even though we have no special claim or merit, God, in His mercy, welcomes us as His people and calls us His beloved through Christ, including those who were the farthest from salvation—the Gentiles.
- iii. Our culture often says that God loves everyone equally, therefore cheapening God's love. People assume, "Of course God loves us; He loves everyone." But in reality, being loved by God is a special privilege, not something we are automatically entitled to. Beloved, no one has any right to God's love; nothing about us would make Him desire us. Yet, in His mercy, He has chosen to love all who, by sovereign election, put their trust in Christ.
 1. Beloved, the mystery of election is that we were first chosen in Christ. We are not Christians because of our own goodness but solely because of God's grace. Our natural condition is evidence of this.
- b. We might wonder why God redeems anyone. Why does He elect a people for salvation? Scripture provides only one answer: the Father's great love for his Son is the cause of the salvation of the elect.
 - i. The Father will not allow the Son's sacrifice at Calvary to be in vain. Had not the Father elected some to believe, Jesus' sacrifice would have been in vain because no one would come to faith on their

own. In other words, Jesus would have died for no reason. But that could never be! Christ dies and heaven is filled with those whom the Father has given to the Son!

ii. Believers, the elect, are a gift from the Father to the Son. Out of His love for Christ, the Father gives Him a people as His legacy.

1. **John 6:37** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

2. **Hebrews 2:11-13** For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, (12) saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” (13) And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

iii. By God's sovereign mercy, we become part of that gift when we repent of our sins and trust Christ as our Savior.

c. Because the elect are a gift from the Father to the Son, all the elect, from Jewish and gentile nations, will come to Christ, and those who were not His people **shall be called the sons of the living God** (v. 26).

i. We must remember that while we are part of God's family now, God has only one natural Son. By being united with Christ, we share in His sonship and become sons of God, even though we weren't naturally His children.

1. So God makes us His people.

3. Verses 27 and 28: Only God's Remnant (the Elect) Will Be Saved: And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, (28) for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay."

- a. In these verses, Paul refers to God's promise to Abraham: "**I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the seashore**" (Gen. 22:17). He explains that, although Israel's descendants are numerous, only a remnant would be saved. This remnant, the elect among Israel, is the true fulfillment of the promise to Abraham.
 - i. This has always been the case. Consider all the people God delivered from slavery in Egypt. Only a few were allowed to enter the Promised Land; the vast majority did not make it.
 1. Jesus warns about this in **Matthew 7:13-14**
"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. (14) For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."
 - a. The few who do find it are God's elect, His remnant.
 - b. Beloved, remember what we have already read. **Romans 9:6-7** But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, (7) and not all are children of Abraham

because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”

- b. So, what about us today? Is membership in the visible church enough to ensure safety? Because we are part of the greater group, do we dare claim to be part of the remnant of God?
- i. Beloved, we have learned that being God's people is not about outward appearances or birthright but about inner transformation. Israel serves as our example. Merely following rituals, such as circumcision, was not enough. Both the Old and New Testaments teach that what is required is a changed heart.
 - ii. The same applies to the Christian community today. Church membership or baptism does not guarantee redemption. A true Christian is genuinely transformed internally, not just externally.
 - iii. Therefore, we know that not everyone in the visible church is part of the kingdom of God. Jesus warned that tares would grow alongside the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30) and that people could honor Him with their lips while their hearts remained distant (Matthew 15:8).
 - iv. The most alarming warning Jesus gave concerns the final day: **"Many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and perform many wonders in Your name?'"** (Matthew 7:22). Jesus will respond, **"I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"** (v. 23). So, some will argue, "I was baptized," or, "I was a

deacon," or, "I taught Sunday school," but the Lord will still say, "**I never knew you.**"

1. Jesus' warning was directed at people in the visible church, and Paul also warns us here. We have been repeatedly cautioned that relying on church membership or good deeds to prove our place in the kingdom is spiritual suicide.
 - a. Only those who genuinely love Christ and trust Him for salvation are part of the invisible church that truly belongs to Christ.
 - b. We must remember that the state of our soul might be hidden from others, but it is always visible to God.

- v. However, do not misunderstand what we are saying. The church does have value, but only for the truly converted, God's elect. The church is where the means of grace are most concentrated. Through the church, God works most profoundly in the lives of the remnant.

4. Verse 29: Saved by God Alone: And as Isaiah predicted, "If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah."

- a. If no remnant existed and no seeds were left, the harvest would end forever. Even as God judged Israel, a remnant (an elect group) remained to bear fruit in its season. The prophet said that without this remnant, Israel would have become like Sodom and Gomorrah, which God destroyed in judgment.

- i. This verse teaches that God's election is the only cause of heaven's population. If God had not set

apart a remnant for Himself (the elect), all of humanity would be like Sodom and Gomorrah, condemned to hell.

- ii. So, again, we are taught that only God can save. His sovereign choice ensures heaven's population.

5. Verses 30-33: Self-Righteousness Produces Death: What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; (31) but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. (32) Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, (33) as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

- a. Paul poses another rhetorical question: "**What shall we say then?**" (v. 30a). How should we respond to the troubling history of Old Testament Israel? **The Gentiles, who did not seek righteousness, have attained it—specifically, the righteousness that comes by faith** (v. 30b).

- i. How incredible God's plan is. We, gentiles by birth, benefit from the gospel even though we never actively sought it. It was not in our nature to pursue the things of God. The Gentiles were unaware of the history of redemption, had no interest in studying the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and did not care about the Law of Moses. Despite

this, they found what they were not looking for in God's mercy.

- ii. We weren't seeking or pursuing God. Yet, by His grace, He pursued us and found us. That is the essence of the Christian message: "I once was lost, but now am found."

b. But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness (v. 31). How can it be, Paul asks, that those outside the covenant community of Israel found the Pearl of Great Price. At the same time, those on the inside missed it?

- i. The answer to this mystery is found in verse 32.
Why has Israel not attained to the Law of righteousness? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone.

- ii. The one God appointed as the cornerstone of His kingdom became a stumbling block and a stone of offense. Israel stumbled over grace and rejected their Messiah because they couldn't accept receiving God's salvation apart from their own righteousness, their own goodness. Most members of Israel sought God's righteousness through human efforts and missed the kingdom of God.

- 1. This same error is widespread in churches around the world today. It is argued that most Christian church members in our country believe they can reach heaven through their good works.
 - a. When asked about salvation, 90% of people give a "works righteousness" answer, such as, "I tried to live a good life," "I went to

church," or "I gave my money to good causes." Only one in ten responds, "There is no reason why God should let me into heaven except that He promised to bring me into His family if I put my trust in His Son."

- i. Beloved, this last answer is our only hope in life and death—not our own righteousness, but His.
- iii. This has been the issue throughout Romans. Whose righteousness matters? Whose righteousness justifies? Not ours.
 1. The tragedy for the Jewish nation is that they sought the kingdom of God based upon their own righteousness, so they missed their Messiah.
 - a. As we read in **John 1:11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.
- iv. They did not seek righteousness by faith but by the work of the law. They stumbled at that stumbling stone, Jesus Christ. Israel was offended by Jesus, as many are today. They were ashamed of a suffering servant.
 1. But this is God's wisdom. Those who trust that cornerstone and don't trip over Him will not be put to shame.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 1:23-24** but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, (24) but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

- b. **1 Peter 2:7-9** So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” (8) and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. (9) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

6. Benediction:

- a. **1 Peter 2:10** Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Pastoral Blessing: Numbers 6:24-26 The LORD bless you and keep you; (25) the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; (26) the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Public Reading of Scripture
1 Peter 2:1-10