

The Rock of Offense

Gospel Preaching - second Hour

By David Simpson

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Bible Text: John 6:60-71; Romans 9:30-33

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Let's look in the Scriptures to John 6, please. If you were to read early in this chapter, you would see that there is the feeding of the 5,000 which would, when you take into consideration women and children, was probably more like 20,000. And certain of them followed after him so we might call them fish and bread disciples because they were following for the fish and bread; they were looking for more. So they were called disciples but you need to think of that term loosely when it appears in what we're going to read. They were disciples but they were disciples in name only. So a person can be a disciple, be a church member, but they are disciples in name only. So that's what you have here. We're going to begin in verse 60 of John 6. Did I give you the chapter? I didn't do that, did I? John 6 and verse 60 to the end of the chapter. Mark your place, I intend to come back here. I might not make it but I intend to come back here a little bit later in the message. Brother Nick is going to lead us so John 6 and verse 60.

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? 61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? 62 What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? 63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. 64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. 65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. 66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. 67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. 70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? 71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

Let's look at our Scriptures to Romans and find the end of the 9th chapter, please. So Romans 9, right at the end of the chapter. Well, I go back and forth a little bit about where to go with our second hour. I don't want to spend both hours in Proverbs. I want the second hour to be more geared toward just bringing a Gospel message to you. So we've gone different places, done a few different things. Right now we're going to spend a few weeks going through the 10th chapter of Romans. We're not going all the way back to the beginning. It's been a number of years now since we finished Romans so we're going to set the table for the 10th chapter by looking at the end of the 9th chapter today and then next week, Lord willing, we'll take some time and go through the 10th chapter. One of the reasons is because it's a chapter that is so misused and abused out in the world of religion and so I think it's well for us to think through this chapter which I've done this before with you so if you want to hear some things in detail, you can go back because I went back and looked at the notes and they are kind of detailed and I'm not going to be as detailed as I was before but I'll try to give you detail here or there.

But I want you to look with me, please, in Romans 9 and I'm going to start with verse 30 and read to the end of this chapter. He said,

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. [I'll talk about that in a minute.] 31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Wherefore? [what can we say?] Because they sought it not by faith, [I'll talk about that, that's important] but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

In verse 30, we have a wonderful statement of grace. He used the word "Gentiles." He had used it back in verse 24 right at the end of that verse talking about Gentiles. He comes to it again in verse 30 and refers to Gentiles. Who is he talking about? He's talking about everyone that wasn't an Israelite, everyone who was not a descendent, a blood descendent of Abraham. The blood descendents of Abraham lived, we say roughly about 2,000 years before Christ, everyone who came from him so that would be Isaac and then Jacob and his sons and then by the time we see them and Moses leads them out, there are about 4 million of them we're told and then all the way down. Now, the bloodlines had become mixed. There is no doubt about that. But still they were referred to as the Jews. That term goes to the Babylonian captivity or to Israelites that were the descendents of Israel which would be Jacob. So that's one group of people and they looked upon themselves as the people of God. If they were an Israelite, they were the people of God. That's what they thought. Everyone else was a Gentile, not a Jew. So that's what is meant by this "Gentile." And then Paul is going to refer to them in verse 31, the other group, as Israel. So you have the Gentiles and you have the Israelites.

But you notice that the Gentiles in verse 30, "followed not after righteousness." Do you see it there? They followed not after satisfying the law. That's what righteousness is, it's the satisfaction of the law; it's the fulfilling of the law. The righteousness of God is the perfect fulfilling of the law. They followed not after righteousness. Now, why not? Well, they didn't have the law. They didn't think about it. It was not in their hand. God didn't give it to them. God didn't give them promises. He didn't give them covenants. God chose out a people, they became a national people, there is national Israel. Now, we know that within that was a very small group of people called the remnant which was spiritual Israel or the Israel of promise but here we're simply making the distinction between the Gentiles and Israel.

So notice these Gentiles followed not after righteousness so from the time of Abraham down or from the time of Moses which would be roughly about 1,500 years before Christ where the law was given, there was no law given to the Gentiles so they didn't follow after righteousness and yet this is grace because it says they "have attained to righteousness." They have arrived at righteousness is what that word "attained" means. Not all of them, but Gentiles who were excluded are now included in God's righteousness. They have arrived at this righteousness, "even the righteousness which is of faith." So this is the way our translators wanted us to understand this. Your translator wants you to believe that the way they came to this righteousness was by their act of faith. That's what the translator thinks this means and that's what he wants the reader to understand. I'm going to give you something a little bit different here, "even the righteousness which is out of," it's not "of" but it's "out of."

Now, where do we go to understand what it means "out of"? Well, most of you know already, you have to go back to the first chapter so I want you to go back with me to the first chapter. This is a very pivotal statement that you need to understand and most of you do but he makes what appears to be a complicated statement but it's actually a simple statement. Verse 17 of the first chapter, he says, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed." The first thing is, the righteousness of God is not attained in the sense that you work at it and you attain it, but it is revealed. The righteousness of God has to be revealed to us and how is it revealed? Well, it's revealed, it says "from faith to faith," but it is the word "from," is "out of," the same as you see over there in 9:30. It is out of faith and into faith. "Out of faith" means "out of the settled the body of truth," what he calls in the third chapter "the faith of God" and also "the faith of Jesus Christ." The faith of God is not God's faith toward something greater than himself or something outside of himself but the faith of God is that it is the faith of which he is the author and the subject. The faith of Jesus Christ is not his faith towards something, it's his faith of which he is the author and the subject.

So that's what he means when he says "out of faith" and then the next preposition there "to" is "into faith." So it's out of the settled body of truth into faith. How does a man or a woman or a young person come to personal faith? Well, it's out of this settled body of truth. It's out of this faith of which God is the author and the subject, of which Christ is the author and the subject. It's out of that settled body of truth and so when we meet that's what I'm trying to do is to declare to you, proclaim to you, send out the message of what

is in that settled the body of truth and it's my hope and prayer that out of that will come into us personal faith and truth. That's how God's people are brought to personal faith. So it is revealed out of faith into faith. So every time he mentions "out of faith," he's going back to what he's already established here as "the settled body of truth." Does that make sense to you?

Now, go back with me to 9:30 then so when he says "even the righteousness which is out of faith," because it's not "of faith" it's "out of," the Greek preposition is ek if you want me to tell you which is "out of." So it is out of that settled body of truth. So how did they attain this righteousness? It's not a good translation for us but it means they arrived at and they came to it. How did they come to it? Out of the settled body of truth. That's grace. That is grace. But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness by the law and works and what is law? Law is a series of requirements and conditions so anything that you put as a requirement or a condition in order to have a right standing before God for you to fulfill, is in the category of works. Now, that is a very important matter to understand. Anything that you put in the category as a condition or a requirement for you to be right with God, even if it's faith, that is law. That's the great travesty of the last 200 years of American history and world history, Christian history, is that faith has been moved from the gift of God to become a condition that you have to exercise in order to have this righteousness. And so these translators going back into the 1600s, so 400 years ago, nearly 500 years ago now, these translators translated this because they were committed to the fact that faith is a condition by which you attain and arrive at righteousness. But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, has not arrived at the law of righteousness. "Wherefore?" verse 32, "Because they sought it not out of faith," out of the faith, out of the settled body of truth, God's faith, Christ's faith, "but as it were by the works of the law." So if you're going to try to come to Christ by some condition for you to fulfill, you're not going to be able to come because it is of the works of the law. So they stumbled at the stumbling stone. "As it is written, now he quotes from Psalms and he quotes from Isaiah, "Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed," or disappointed. That last statement is wonderfully true.

Three negatives concern the Jews. They didn't arrive in God's righteousness in verse 31; they didn't understand the law. The law was to tell them that you can't be saved by it and you need a Savior. They didn't understand that. They didn't seek righteousness out of the faith as we have looked at and they didn't embrace Christ and that's what he comes to, "They stumbled at the stumblingstone." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:23, "But we preach Christ crucified," not just we preach Christ, we preach Christ crucified. We preach Christ and the doctrine, the truth of the crucifixion, "unto the Jews it is a stumblingblock," they stumbled over it, "and unto the Greeks, this is foolish," they said.

So I want to talk with you for a few moments about the rock of offense. The rock of offense. In Galatians 5:11, it refers to "the cross of offense." So we preach Christ and him crucified and Paul said that the cross is an offense. How is it that the cross is an offense? I'm going to give you three things. I want you to look at three verses with me. I want you to go back with me to Matthew 1, first of all, and in verse 21 it says the angel told Joseph

in verse 21, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus," which name means "deliverer, savior," "for he shall save his people from their sins." Now, the first thing that men are offended at is they are offended at the appointment of the cross. If you want to know what the appointment of the cross is, you just study that verse. Let me give you three things about the verse. First of all: the Savior was appointed, "she will bring forth a son and call his name Jesus, he shall save." That's what he came for was to save. He's a Savior. It's true he's a teacher and it's true he's an example and it's true that he's a guide but he came into this world to be a Savior. He didn't come to try to be a Savior. He didn't come to make an opportunity for people to be saved. He came into this world to be a Savior. A true Savior. He was appointed as a Savior.

The second thing that's appointed about the cross is: the people were appointed. That's what he said, "he shall save his people." Now, you know when you go ahead and read the rest of the New Testament as we've seen, that he's not just talking about Israel, is he? He's talking about Gentiles as well so what you study when you study this out is that he's talking about some Jews and some Gentiles but they're his people by election. More people cannot be elected and the elect cannot be lost and that's just that simple. He appointed his people and so all we're looking for in this world in each generation is God's elect. I'm not asking God to elect more, I am asking God to take his word to his elect people. Every radio broadcast, I say that, every one of those broadcasts from the beginning. Now almost five years I have said that because that's what I believe and that's what I want and what I desire is for God to save by Revelation to their heart his people. They were predestined from the foundation of the world. His people are limited and definite, it's a fixed number of people. Our world is offended at that.

But then there's another thing about this that's appointed here and that is: from their sins. That's why he came was to deliver us from our sins. Our sins were remitted from our account to his account. Now, if his people were justified some time before the cross, say like when he elected in eternity, then he didn't need to die, did he? He didn't need to die. If God could just save by decision, by determination, that's all it took. God didn't need to send Christ to the cross but salvation is a work and the work is the work of Christ and it took that work for him as the Savior to put away their sins.

So those three things are appointed about the cross. If you want to talk to your friends, you take them to that verse and show them those three appointments: the Savior was appointed; people were appointed; and the work was appointed through remission of sins. But our world stumbles and is offended at the appointment of the cross.

Here's the second thing they are offended at: they are offended at the accomplishment of the cross. Go with me to Luke 22 and look at verse 37. This is after the Lord's supper with his disciples and he said in verse 37, "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished," and then he quotes the thing that's written from Isaiah 53:12, "he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end." The first thing I see here is an authority because he refers to the Scripture, it is the thing that is written, the thing that is written has authority. It cannot fail. God had it written, that's why he quotes it.

The second thing I see here is: the condition, it must yet be accomplished. As soon as he says "yet," he means that it's something in the future that's going to happen in order for that to take place. So we yet are to sit down to our dinner. We yet are to lay down to take our nap this afternoon. We yet are to change clothes to get some exercise later today. Yet. That means some condition is to be fulfilled and he's the one that's going to fulfill it. And you'll notice that he says "must yet be accomplished in me." So it's "in me." So it's written, it "must yet be accomplished in me," his person and his work. Not just in him ethereally out here that there is some mystical union with Christ. No, it's in union with his person and his work, "accomplished in me."

Then I see substitution here. Can you see it? "He was reckoned among the transgressors." He was not a transgressor but he was reckoned to be among the transgressors. It was imputed. That word "reckoned" is the same word for "impute." It was imputed to him to be among the transgressors. He became accountable for the sins of a limited and fixed and unchangeable number of people called his people. He became their substitute.

Then I see an accomplishment here. He said, "for the things concerning me have an end." That's an accomplishment. It's the second time that he uses the personal pronoun "me," "must yet be accomplished in me; for the things concerning me have an end." It's in him. And the word "end" that is here, is the same word "accomplished" back up here. You might want to make a note of that. That's important in this verse. "This is written that must yet be accomplished in me," have an accomplishment. The same word and do you know what the word is? It's that little Greek word that you've heard me talk about "teleo." It's the same word that Jesus used at the completion of the cross where he said, "It is finished. It is accomplished." So this is accomplished; there is an accomplishment that he came for. He didn't come to make an opportunity. Wouldn't that be foolish if he said, "must yet be an opportunity made in me, concerning me to have an opportunity." But you can go anywhere up and down the roads and they are telling you it's an opportunity but it's ignorance and it's a lie. It's false and it's plain. There is an accomplishment. He accomplished a perfect righteousness by perfectly fulfilling the law. That is righteousness. God accepted it. God reckoned it. By righteousness Christ redeemed his people from the curse of the law, justified them from their guilt and their condemnation. We're not justified in life. This righteousness by which we were justified is revealed to us out of the preaching of the faith and we look at it and we see it and God gives us faith and we say, "That's wonderful. I love that." And when you hear something else, it just makes you recoil. You can't hardly stand it. So once you've heard this, it's hard to go back. You can't go back once it gets in your heart. If you hear something else, you just know it's not true. You know you're being lied to. You can't take it. Men are offended at the appointment of the cross and men are offended at the accomplishment of the cross.

Let me give you one more thing. Turn with me to Galatians 6. So go past the Corinthian books to Galatians. Look in the last chapter, chapter 6. Men are offended at the appointment of the cross, the accomplishment of the cross and they are offended at the attention given to the cross because modern Christendom speaks of good works and success principles and marriage principles and daily miracles, demands for you to

witness, how we can increase attendance and how we can increase dollars. Lots of things they talk about. They say that Jesus went to the cross, as I said, to make an opportunity. Calvinistic men say that he went to the cross and made a ground for forgiveness. Each of them think that they are taking the cross seriously. I don't doubt the sincerity. That's not the question. But the Pharisees were sincere, very sincere. That is not the question. Each is offended at the true meaning of the cross.

But look what he said in Galatians 6, toward the end of this book in verse 14. This is how you know when you look into the heart of Paul how he felt about things, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Before the cross was the glory of God's people, it was the glory of God. The cross has always from eternity that you and I cannot think of, the glory of God has been the cross of his Son. God is eternally and immutably just and justifier by this cross. His attribute of justice and his work as justifier met in the cross. At and by and in connection with the cross, God became just and justifier. The Psalmist speaks of mercy and truth meeting together. Righteousness and peace kissing each other. It's the Psalmist's prophecy of what took place at the cross. God's perfect righteousness and his perfect peace met in the finished and final and complete work of Jesus Christ. With law fulfilled and justice satisfied, God reckoned the resulting righteousness earned by Christ to his people. He declared them justified. It's a legal act so before him we were declared to be righteous and Paul called him just and justifier. Well, it's no wonder that God's people give attention to the cross. It's no wonder that we can't leave it. We can't stop talking about it because it's the only glory we have. We don't glory in buildings or personal accomplishments or anything else. We glory in the cross.

Now, let me show you some people who couldn't do that. Go back with me to our reading in John 6. They just couldn't find it in themselves to do it and we're told why: they were offended just like our world is offended at the appointment of the cross, at the accomplishment of the cross and to the attention given to the cross. In verse 60 of John 6, they said, "This is an hard saying." They didn't mean it's hard to understand, they meant, "This is hard to swallow. This is hard to accept." So when you talk to your friends or your acquaintances and your family and you explain the things that you hear, you go to the Scriptures and you think, "If I can just be a little bit more clear," but they're saying, "This is a hard saying." It's not that they don't understand, it's a hard saying because they can't swallow it. They can't accept it. They can't believe it because that means that granddaddy was wrong and mama is wrong and the pastor that I've loved for yea so many years is wrong and I'm wrong and my profession is wrong. "I've got to repent, that's what I'm being told. This is hard. This is hard."

Look down in verse 64, it says, "Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." By that he meant Judas Iscariot. So then it's quoted, John does this, he quotes what Jesus said back in verse 44 of this chapter, "I say unto you, that no man can." The word "can" is a word for ability. "No man has the ability to come unto me except it were given to him of my Father." Now, I could show you a number of other people in the Scriptures who were offended but that's what we see at the end of Romans 9. He calls them a stumblingstone and a rock of offense. Don't be

surprised that men are offended at him because they don't like the appointment of the cross, the accomplishment of the cross nor the attention that we give to it just the way it is. But we love it. We're still excited about it. That hasn't changed.

Alright, I'm going to read and we're going to partake of the elements of the Lord's table but I want to turn over to 1 Corinthians 11, you can if you wish. He said in verse 26, "For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Well, there are a lot of things that we could maybe say here but the first thing I want you to look at is the word "show" in verse 26. "You do show," or declare is what that word means, "the Lord's death." We declare the Lord's death to ourselves and to one another, to our world. We declare that our salvation is by his death. That's where we put our attention is his death. "Until he comes." That's our message for the last century, for this century. If the world lasts, they'll be believers in the next century and they'll still be majoring on the one thing, the Lord's death until he comes.

What does it mean to eat and to drink unworthily? Well, he tells us down in verse 29 at the very end, "not discerning the Lord's body." Not discerning what the Lord accomplished by his body, that his body and his blood is the completeness of our salvation. Not one thing that I do, not one decision I make, not one prayer I pray but all has to do with his body and if you believe that, if you believe that, there are two things that a believer should do: they should be baptized and declare it and then they take the Lord's table. They are baptized once but they take the Lord's table over and over again, every time declaring the Lord's death until he comes back so all of our lifetime, we're doing the same thing. So now as we partake of the Lord's table, it's for you to look in your heart and to discern in your heart, "Do I believe that his body on the cross is the whole of my salvation?" We don't want children to rush into thinking about this and determining that, we want them to think about it but when we become of age, we reach toward adulthood, we make this determination that, "I believe this. I discern this. The Lord's body is the whole of my salvation." That's what we do. We declare our faith in those ways. So when we pass these elements, it is for us to determine that, "Yes, these elements are for me. I declare the Lord's body as my salvation."

This is what Paul said when he passed the elements and led the congregation in taking the Lord's table, he quoted what Jesus said, "After he had given thanks and broke the bread," he said, "Jesus said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." Paul then said to the congregation, "After the same manner also he took the cup, and when he had supped, he said, This cup is the covenant," it's translated new testament but it's the covenant, "in my blood: this do as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me."