

Women's Bible Study
1 Peter 2:8, September

In choosing unbelief towards the Gospel, we cause for ourselves a stumbling block and destruction. Have you ever watched a child insistent on doing things the most difficult way possible? When asked if they would like help, the response is 'no, I can do it by myself'. This typically leads to an enormous amount of frustration.

Consider what happens when individuals 'walk away' from Jesus and reject His gift. They crumble, they continuously 'trip' over the world's ideals and answers as they constantly try to find direction that will satisfy. Life becomes a continuous journey trying to find fulfillment. Attaining each goal only serves to point to the next. Satisfaction or success in the world is temporary at its best. True peace and fulfillment are only found in Christ. *John 14:6 Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.*

1 Peter 2:7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER [stone,]" 8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this [doom] they were also appointed.

Last week, we discussed the importance of the corner stone of a building. **What was its purpose? How was the building affected if the corner stone was not straight and solid?**

Years ago, my husband and older brothers decided to help my youngest brother finish a stone wall on his ranch. They knew when they started this project, they were working off a foundation that was not the best. However, in their haste to complete the wall they continued laying stone blocks trying and hoping to make something reasonably straight at the finish. You can imagine how it turned out – a bit haphazard and something they laugh about now.

Rejecting Jesus as our Corner Stone is no laughing matter. Our text says the very Corner Stone of our salvation becomes a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to those who refuse Him. Following are warnings to those who reject Jesus.

*John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; **but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**"*

*Romans 2:8-10 **but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. [There will be] tribulation and distress** for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Hebrews 3:18-19 And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? And [so] we see that **they were not able to enter because of unbelief.**

Look closer at what 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense' means:

Stumbling - <proskomma>, a stub, the occasion of apostasy; offence

Offence - <skandalon>, a trap-stick (bent sapling), snare, thing that offends

Picture tripping over something that sticks out. You stumble because you were not paying attention to where you were going! Sometimes it may be because you are in a hurry, or you may be focused on things other than the path you are walking. The Jewish nation in Peter's time was offended by the gospel, they had tradition set in place, they followed their laws of do's and don'ts. Jesus was not the answer they were looking for; He was a stumbling block and many were unwilling to accept Him.

Where is your focus? Is it on Truth?

Isaiah 8:14-15 "Then He shall become a sanctuary; but to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, [and] a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. "And many will stumble over them, then they will fall and be broken; they will even be snared and caught."

Are people offended by the Gospel today? *Matthew Poole's Commentary* says Jesus is not the cause of stumbling but the object of it, They find in Him that which they do not like, "the holiness of His law, and purity of His doctrine, contrary to their corruptions and lusts, and especially His requiring of them faith in Him for the justification of their persons, which was [is] so contrary to the pride of their hearts, ..., seeking to establish their own righteousness, and therefore not submitting to the righteousness of God".

Romans 9:32 Why? Because [they did] not [pursue it] by faith, but as though [it were] by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

Are you pursuing Christ in faith or by works?

The very One who has been rejected by men, is the means to salvation. Jesus is the only secure corner stone on which all else will last. Either Christ is your foundation or your rejection of Him will be your downfall. This is more than just a slap on the wrist, or a careless error that can be corrected. Willful disobedience to the word leads to appointed doom. Our text says, **'they are disobedient to the word, and to this [doom] they were also appointed'**.

There is a price to pay for choosing a life of disobedience. For those Jews and Gentiles who trusted Christ as their Messiah, even though they were persecuted for their belief, their salvation was secure. For those who rejected Christ, their judgment was appointed. This truth is the same today for everyone.

Consider the general population. Most are accepting of blessings – they may even attribute some things to God. The tune of “Amazing Grace” was played at memorials commemorating the 20th anniversary of 9-1-1 several days ago. People want God’s protection, the peace He affords, and the comfort of knowing there is a higher being. Especially when something does not make sense and great loss is involved. What they do not want is to live in obedience to the very One who blesses them. They do not like the idea that the God who gives eternal life and hope also judges with eternal destruction. They want to reap the benefits of a perfect and holy God on their terms.

John 3:18-21 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. "But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Those who reject Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection as God’s perfect plan and way for salvation, are given over to sin, allowed to sink down into the depths of life without Christ. God let the nation of Israel wander and suffer because they rejected Him and ‘did it their way’. The word doom is used in my translation. To be doomed is a pronounced sentence of certain failure or destruction.

“Their disobedience is not ordained, the penalty of their disobedience is”, (Bigg). They rebelled against God and paid the penalty”, *Robertson’s NT Word Pictures*.

We are unable to fully comprehend the mind and perfect judgment of God. So, our immediate reaction may be to think this seems ‘unfair’ to be appointed to doom. How this completely fits in concert I cannot explain. However, because of God’s grace in my heart, I understand the consequences of acceptance or rejection of Truth. My heart is moved in humility toward gratefulness that somehow God has allowed me to see my desperate need of His grace and mercy.

“First in place and importance is the thought that a spiritual fact like election, which belongs to the innermost purpose and work of the Eternal, necessarily leads us to a region where comprehension is impossible, and where we can only reverently apprehend. The doctrine passes upward to the sphere where antinomies live and move, where we must be content to hear what sound to us contradictions, but which are really various aspects of infinite truth. Let us be content to know that the Divine choice is sovereign; and also that "his tender mercies are over all his works," that `He willeth not the death of a sinner,' that "God is love." Let us relieve the tension of such submissive reliance by reverently noting how the supreme antinomy meets one type of human need with its one side, and with its other another. To the "fearful saint" the Divine sovereignty of love is a sacred cordial. To the seeking penitent the Divine

comprehensiveness of love opens the door of peace. To the deluded theorist who does not love and obey, the warnings of a fall and ruin which are possible, humanly, from any spiritual height, are a merciful beacon on the rocks”, www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/election.

The mind of God is something to which we cannot attain.

Isaiah 55:9 "For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

Job 38:4-7 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell [Me,] if you have understanding, who set its measurements, since you know? Or who stretched the line on it? "On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

His Majesty is far above our comprehension and His Divine will and plan is humbling to the lowly saints who are called. Consider your own position in Christ. If you can attest to His power in changing your life for eternity, it is because of His love and mercy; it is only by His grace that you claim Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Peter, in his letters, urges the believers to focus on what they do have rather than the difficulties they are facing. We can do the same. Look at the truths in a familiar verse –

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

God loves us. He gave us Jesus so that we would not die but have eternal life.

Return to 1 Peter 2:7-8, This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER [stone,]" and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this [doom] they were also appointed.

What is your response? How are you purposed to action?

What example can you follow? What sin can you avoid? What promise can you claim?

God chose Israel to be His people, but they refused to listen. In Jeremiah 13, God tells Jeremiah of the destruction which will come upon Israel because of their disobedience. This is his call to the nation to repent in humility before God, "Listen and give heed, do not be haughty, for the LORD has spoken. Give glory to the LORD your God, before He brings darkness and before your feet stumble on the dusky mountains, and while you are hoping for light He makes it into deep darkness, [and] turns [it] into gloom, v. 15-16. This is a weighty section of scripture yet a reminder to all that God's

perfect love also includes God's perfect judgment. There is an intense need to respond to the Gospel now, tomorrow may be too late.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary says, "The lost shall lay all the blame of their ruin on their own sinful perversity, not on God's decree; the saved shall ascribe all the merit of their salvation to God's electing love and grace".

Christ is not the cause of stumbling but the object of it as men give way to their own depravity. The Christians being addressed by Peter were in danger of turning back to a system of works rather than faith because they were alienated, ridiculed, and persecuted. Jesus gave His life as the ultimate sacrifice for mankind, choosing to suffer beyond what is conceivable, to save an undeserving mankind. The difficulties we may face in our choice to follow Christ are small compared to the eternal future promised to those who persevere.

There is an inherent urgency to share the Gospel because there is severe consequence in rejecting God.