

The Rock That Offends

Romans 9:30-33

In Paul's day there were a small number of Jews who believed in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls as well as a rapidly growing number of Gentiles. Paul says this had been the eternal purpose of God --- to grace a remnant within Israel (v.29) and to save an innumerable company of people from all over the world. This was a shock to the nation of Israel. *They* were the chosen people of God and they knew God like no others!

I. There is no relationship with God apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh. There is no salvation apart from trusting Him. Some might say, "No, I trust in God, but not Jesus." Christ and God are the same. Paul makes this point very clearly by quoting from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 8:14) "*Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear . . . and he shall be for you a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to Israel.*" Many feel in our day that "all faiths lead to God" but there is truly only one path. "*I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me*" (Jn 14:6). This causes people to stumble. They are offended. **Why?** "*I work harder than you!*" This is exactly what the Jews in Paul's day thought. But they should have known:

II. There is no righteousness before God apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

The Jews had the sacrificial system given to them by God (Lev. 17:11) to teach them their hopelessness of having any right standing before God apart from the Messiah. Within every Jew and Gentile is a conscience touched with the sin's guilt and shame. "*And the people said unto Moses, 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die'*" (Ex. 20:19). Sinners need the removal of their sin. When a Jew took a lamb to the courtyard of the Tabernacle, leaned his hands on the head of that lamb, confessing his sin, he proclaimed his belief that his sin and guilt were being transferred to that innocent lamb. The innocent lamb then bore the death due the sinful Jew. Isaiah, prophesying of the coming Messiah, proclaimed, "*He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him*" (Isaiah 53:10). Salvation is the work of the Lord (Jonah 2:9).

III. There is no reward from God apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

The Jews sought to be righteous before God by their religious activity. Before we focus on the Jews to the exclusion of all other religious people, including Baptists, we need to remind ourselves that the nature of man always gravitates toward self. We all have a tendency to strive to attain or keep our right standing before God by conforming to some standard that we have established as the goal for which we aim. The Jews "*followed after the law of righteousness, (but) did not attain it . . . because they sought it not by faith*" (Rom. 9:31-32). God rewards the person who trusts Him.

You can do a great deal without faith, but nothing that is pleasing to God