

Some people have a real knack for being able to share their faith with just about anyone... Within a few minutes of striking up a conversation with someone, they're telling them all about Jesus, and they tell them the whole Gospel:

- the Love of God;
- Our rejection of God;
- The coming judgment;
- And the rescue through the cross;
- The death of Jesus;
- His resurrection;
- His pending return.....

And I used the word “knack”, but it's not a knack...

- It's not practice (that enables them to engage another person);
- it's not because they've been 'well trained';
- Or that they have extra knowledge (You know what you believe – you know the Gospel, and your experience of Jesus is all you need to know)
- It's not because they're just naturally good at it...
- I reckon 90% of them being able to engage with another person (to tell the Gospel) is that they're not afraid to offend...

Now, that's 'my opinion', and it's not at all based on a scientific analysis – it comes more from self-reflection, as I ask myself, “What's the reason that **I** don't do like they do???”

And I have no doubt, that in **at least** 90% of the cases, where all it takes is for me to open my mouth and share the Gospel,

but choose not to, it's because I'm afraid I might offend them...

Not that I'm afraid of **them** being offended – I just don't want to be the one who's offensive to them... I'm very happy for **you** to tell them the Gospel and offend them... I just don't want to be the one who's offensive....

Am I crazy??? Or is there anyone else here who feels that way???

Yeah... What's going on??? The Gospel is the best news ever... Last week, we were talking about how disciples of Jesus are being built up spiritual house, and how even though the world may shame us, we are honoured before God...

We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God... We've been called out of darkness into his marvellous light ... We've received mercy...

The Gospel is the best news ever.... Why do we get it into our heads, that we might offend someone if we tell them the Gospel???

I'll tell you why: Past experience.

The risk of offending someone by telling them the pure Gospel, is more of a ‘likelihood’ than what it is a ‘remote possibility’... Do you know what I mean by that??? It means that:

- some people will receive the Gospel with great joy;
- Some will hear what you say and be polite (but they’ll say “no” to Jesus); and
- Others **will** be offended

This, is not at all, ‘an unfounded fear’ we have, that we might offend somebody... It’s more than a probability – it’s a likelihood: If we share the Gospel, some people **will** be offended.

And that’s what Peter’s saying here:

⁷ So the honour 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.”

You see, no one can ignore Jesus... He’s in your path... And Jesus is the stone – Jesus is the Rock. He’s either the rock that we build our lives upon, or he’s the rock over whom we trip – he’s the rock of offence...

There's lots of questions in life that we can either ignore or put off, or just not get around to... There's lots of options in life that we're free to either take up or reject...

But Jesus isn't one of them.

The Lord Jesus Christ, is the rock in our path. You cannot skirt around Jesus Christ – we either build on Him, or we trip over Him...

Every time a person hears the Gospel being preached, their heart either gets a little bit harder, or a little bit softer, but their heart cannot remain the same...

Now, Peter uses the phrase here, "**A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.**"

Most commentaries take that as 2 ways of saying the same thing... Maybe... Or maybe it's more than that...

But he goes on to say: **They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.**

The Greek for "disobey" (here), isn't just about "disbelieving" – it describes the fallen human condition – to disobey the Word, means that they're living lives of disobedience and rebellion against God...

And there we have it – the simple blunt description, of all who reject Jesus: They're rebellious against God...

And that, my friends, is deeply offensive...

You see, most of us – we like to think that we are our own masters – that we’re responsible for our own destiny – that we’re not answerable to anyone... But the simple truth is, “We **are** answerable – we’re answerable to God”...

I think it was Frank Sinatra who made the song “*I did it my way*”, famous.

And that song really spells out the life philosophy of most people who stumble over Jesus Christ, and their rebellion against God — those who are so filled with pride and self-sufficiency – “*I did it my way*” – Self-determination is king...:

*And now, the end is near
And so I face the final curtain
My friends, I'll say it clear
I'll state my case of which I'm certain
I've lived a life that's full
I travelled each and every highway
But more, much more than this
I did it my way*

*Regrets, I've had a few
But then again, too few to mention
I did what I had to do
And saw it through without exemption
I planned each chartered course
Each careful step along the byway
But more, much more than this
I did it my way*

*Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew
When I bit off more than I could chew
But through it all, when there was doubt
I ate it up and spit it out
I faced it all and I stood tall
And did it my way*

*I've loved, laughed and cried
I've had my fill, my share of losing
And now, as tears subside
I find it all so amusing
To think I did all that
And may I say, not in a shy way
Oh no, no, not me
I did it my way*

And then on the final verse, it begins to build to a crescendo

*For what is a man, what has he got
If not himself, then he has not
To say all the things he truly feels
And not the words of one who kneels
The record shows, I took the blows
But I did it my way*

Aaaggghh!!!

The rebellious pride of man – something which is so admired, this spirit of self-determination actually gets viewed as some kind of virtue,,, When this rebellious pride encounters the rock of Jesus Christ, there will either be a miraculous repentance and rebirth,,, or an enormous collision of angst and offence...

It's a choice every one of us have to make – Jesus is in our path... And it's interesting here, that Peter doesn't overlook it – he says that they were destined to disobey...

*I was talking about this during the week to someone, and he told me, "He used to worry that when he shared his faith and the other person rejected Jesus – he used to worry that it was his fault – maybe he should've done it better. And he felt responsible that the other person wasn't saved, because he was inadequate in how he shared it... But now he's realised that that's between them and God... **His** job, is to not be ashamed of Jesus, and to share His faith. And if Jesus gets rejected, that's not his fault..."*

God told us a long time in advance, that many would reject Him... And so Jesus is the cornerstone, and many will become disciples of Jesus, and build their lives on this cornerstone,, but God has already told us that many people will stumble; many people will be offended, so don't be surprised... And don't be put-off.

But you know what?— We keep on sharing the Gospel, because although many **are** destined to disobey the word, what a wonderful gift of God it is, for those who don't stumble...

Isn't God wonderful!!! He's called us out of darkness, and into His marvellous light... And He's still calling many out of the darkness today...

I just love the way that the Apostle Peter keeps touching on things that Jesus taught...

John 3:16 : Most of you will know that verse. Say it with me.

But, do you know who Jesus was talking to when He said that??? It was Nicodemus – you know, the Pharisee who secretly came to Jesus, and Jesus told him about the need to be ‘born again’ – it’s all part of this one discussion...

But not many of us know what Jesus went on to say after John 3:16

John 3:17-21 (ESV)

¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that

it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

Out here at St George, we're currently going through a bit of a mouse plague – not a big one, but noticeable... Now, if you've ever experienced a mouse plague, you'll be very aware, that mice don't like to be caught in the light... They can be there, happily gnawing away at something, but as soon as you switch a light on, they run and hide...

The rebellious like to live in darkness... BTW, are you starting to see why the Gospel is offensive... Anyone who's not a Christian, but by some miracle of God, happens to be listening to this (here in church/online),,, It doesn't take a genius in comprehension, to pick up that the preacher's just called them rebellious... And I only call them rebellious/disobedient, because that's what the Scripture says...

And the rebellious like to live in darkness – Why? (more offensive) Because the light exposes their evil deeds...

You see, if I (as an unrepentant, sinful, fallen human) – as someone who rejects God,, If I compare myself to the rest of fallen humanity, in my eyes, I probably don't look that bad... - in fact, some people are worse than me. Not many, but some...

But when the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, shines His light on me, and He exposes me for who I am,,, reality kicks

in... And my perversion and evil and rebellion is seen for what it is...

And so, in our life's journey, when we encounter the rock of Jesus Christ, we have a choice to make:

- We either quickly scurry away from the light, because we actually like to live in the evil and rebellion that we've known up until now;
- Or we come to the light...

As the people of God, we didn't start out perfect... It wasn't because of our immense righteousness, that God chose us. Where did God find us? He found **us** in the darkness... Let's never forget, that we were the rebellious – we were the disobedient. But He called us out of the darkness, and into His marvellous light...

V¹⁰ 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.

Isn't God wonderful...

And now, as the people of God, and as the royal priesthood of God, we are the ones who proclaim the excellencies of God...

- Who's going to tell this broken and fallen world, of the excellencies of God, if we don't?
- Who's going to offer the mercy and grace of God, to a people who, up until now, live in darkness, because they don't want their rebellion against God, to come to light???

That's us. We together, are the priesthood of God.

Let's not be ashamed of Jesus. Fancy, there being a bunch of priests, who are ashamed of Jesus...

Let's proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

No, not everyone will appreciate it. Some people will be deeply offended...

But for the sake of those who will respond to the Gospel, let's get on with it.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,

We thank You, that somebody did this for us:

That they took the risk of offending us,

For the chance that we might respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lord, we thank You that you've called us, out of darkness, and into Your marvellous light.

And Lord, give us hearts, to love like You love – that we would love those who hide in the darkness,
And that we would take your word into the Darkness;
That **they** would have the chance to experience the grace and mercy of God, like we had that chance...

Lord, we ask that You would empower us by Your Holy Spirit;

Lord, make us into that Royal priesthood described here in Your word,

That we would proclaim the excellencies of God,
And the marvellous things that You have done for us.

Give us a holy boldness, Lord...

Lord, help us to accept that some people will be offended – they'll either be offended by us, or they'll be offended by somebody else – because the offence is Jesus Himself (not us)...

And so Lord, if it be so, let us be so unashamed of You,
that we're willing to be seen as the offensive ones, if
that's what it means to honour You...

In Jesus' Name,
Amen.