



The Stumbling Stone and the Skewed Plan

by John Himmelberger

Intro

What do you do when God doesn't show up the way you expected? Romans 9:33 confronts us with a hard truth: Jesus is either the cornerstone we build on, or the rock we trip over. This teaching explores how well-meaning people miss the mark by clinging to cultural, political, or religious frameworks that don't align with Heaven. From the Pharisees to the modern church, we've all tried to fit God into our vision. But Jesus didn't come to fulfill our plans, He came to reveal His. And it still offends the parts of us that want control. Let this message challenge, realign, and root you deeper in the Kingdom that cannot be shaken.

My Intention and Assumptions

I hope that your relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is strengthened through this teaching. My assumption is that you have read or are reading all 66 books of the Bible for context. This is meant to be 'salt' and make you thirsty. You're welcome.

About the Author

John Himmelberger is a teacher, pastor, and lifelong learner. With decades of experience walking with Jesus and leading others into transformational truth, John brings a grounded yet radical perspective rooted in Scripture, personal growth, and kingdom living.

<https://johnhimmelberger.com> | johnhimmelberger@gmail.com

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Romans 9:33 – God's Kingdom, Our Collision

Intro: When God's Plan Offends Our Expectations

God never promised to fit our blueprint. That's the tension in Romans 9:33. Paul is quoting Isaiah and pointing to Jesus—the stone placed in Zion. Some would build on Him. Others would trip over Him.

And here's the kicker: it wasn't Rome or the pagans who stumbled first—it was God's own people.

Why? Because Jesus didn't show up as the champion of their vision. He was the interruption to their assumptions.

We're not just talking about first-century Jews. This is for us, too.

1. Why Jesus Became a Stumbling Stone

They Expected Political Power—He Brought a Cross

- The Jews wanted a Messiah to overthrow Rome. Jesus came to overthrow sin.
- They wanted thrones. He came with a towel.
- They wanted control. He brought surrender.

They Wanted Righteousness by Rules—He Offered Righteousness by Faith

- For centuries, they worked the system of the Law.
- Then Jesus came saying, "Come to Me, not to a method."
- That shift from self-earned righteousness to grace? Offensive.

They Claimed Exclusivity—Jesus Invited the Outsiders

- Romans 9 makes it clear: salvation is for Jews *and* Gentiles.
 - That upset the religious apple cart. But it was always God's heart—Abraham would be a father of *many* nations.
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2. How the Misunderstanding Began: Our Idea of the Plan Got Skewed

The Fall – The original distortion

Humanity stopped trusting God's goodness and started trying to define truth for themselves.

Nationalistic Thinking – They made God's covenant only about Israel's earthly rise

Abraham's promise was about nations, not just one. David's throne was eternal, not political.

Religious Legalism – Rules over relationship

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What was meant to train them for righteousness became a burden of performance.

Worldly Thinking – Wanting a God who wins the way we expect

But the Kingdom doesn't come by might. It comes like yeast in dough... slowly, thoroughly.

Spiritual Blindness – Even well-meaning people couldn't see the plan

Jesus wasn't hidden. He was just misunderstood. And only the Spirit could reveal Him.

Satan's Deception – Still sowing division, fear, and distraction

Where God calls for surrender, the enemy offers shortcuts. Where God speaks of eternity, the enemy screams urgency.

3. How the Church Trips Over the Same Stone Today

We don't throw stones at Pharisees anymore—we've just become more refined versions of them.

We Chase Power Instead of Presence

- Some equate Kingdom victory with political wins.
- But Jesus didn't need a Senate seat. He needed surrendered hearts.

We Fear Grace and Default to Control

- Grace scares people who prefer predictable religion.
- Legalism says, "I know where I stand." Grace says, "You stand because of Him."

We Divide Over Denominations and Dogma

- We create tribes and echo chambers, then call it truth.
- Unity isn't uniformity—but it *is* required (John 17).

We Entertain Instead of Transform

- Worship becomes emotional payoff, not holy offering.
- We want revival atmospheres without repentant hearts.

We Focus on Optics Over Intimacy

- Clean on the outside, hollow on the inside. Jesus called that a whitewashed tomb.
- Programs don't make disciples. Presence does.

We Wage War on Culture Instead of Mindsets

- Most spiritual warfare isn't "out there"—it's between your ears.
- Take thoughts captive. Tear down strongholds. Let the Kingdom reign in your thought life.

4. The Realignment: What Romans 9:33 Still Says to Us

God's plan hasn't changed—but we need to. Here's how:

Advance the Kingdom, Don't Just Fix the System

We're here to bring Heaven into hearts—not legislate righteousness.

Live by Grace, Not Fear

Grace is not soft—it's Spirit-empowered transformation.

Unite Around Christ, Not Culture

Jesus isn't Republican, Democrat, Pentecostal, or Reformed. He's King. And we are His body.

Closing Charge: Build on the Stone, Don't Trip Over It

Romans 9:33 is still being fulfilled. Christ is the cornerstone. Some build their lives on Him. Others trip, frustrated that He doesn't match their vision.

Let's be builders. Let's be aligned with Heaven. Let's stop expecting God to bless our plans—and surrender to His.

Because His Kingdom isn't coming. It's here.

And it's nothing like the world expected—but everything we need.