

Prayer:

Slide # 1
Romans

Theme: The Righteousness of God – The Gospel of God

Outline:

- **Prologue:** 1:1-17
- **Doctrinal:** 1:18-8:39
God’s holiness – man’s sinfulness – 1:18-3:20
Justification by grace through faith – 3:21-5:21
Sanctification of the believer – 6:1-8:39
- **Dispensational: 9:1-11:36** (The place of Israel and the church)
- **Practical:** 12:1-15:33 (Duties and privileges of the believer)
- **Epilogue:** 16:1-27

In Matthew 16:18 Christ said “***I will build My church***” (future tense). On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 Christ sent the Holy Spirit to live inside His people and thus began His great work of building the church which consists of all true believers both Jew and Gentile.

This is the great work that God is doing in the world today – He is building a forever family of believers consisting of both Jews and Gentiles that is called THE CHURCH. This is what the NT is largely about!

But what about Israel? How does the truth of the church fit with Israel? This has been a point of misunderstanding for many throughout the Church Age. Many think that God is done with Israel forever and that the Church has forever replaced Israel and therefore they call the Church “***spiritual Israel***”. But that is dead wrong!

God has temporarily set Israel aside and is now building His Church. But when the Church is complete God will again resume His program with Israel bringing about her ultimate restoration.

Romans 9-11 deals with Israel and the Church and how we should properly understand the relationship of these two facets of God’s plan in redemptive history.

Romans 9 deals with the place of Israel in God's program and how that intersects with God's program for the Church. Romans 9 is strong on the sovereignty of God but as we will see in our study today it leaves room for personal responsibility.

In this discussion of divine election and human responsibility, I bring to the table these three presuppositions.

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- 1) God is sovereign.
- 2) People are responsible.
- 3) There is mystery here.

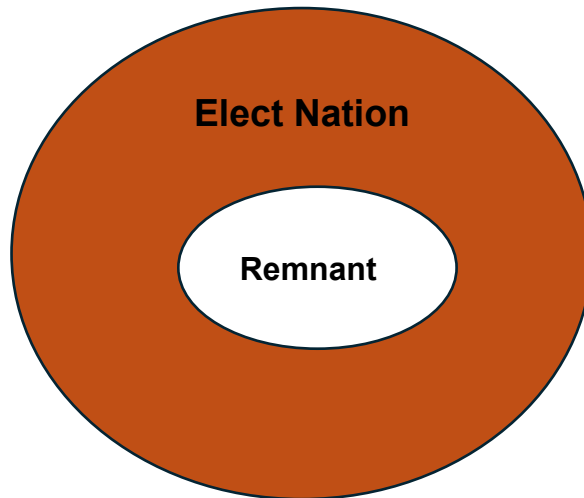
In Romans 9 there are three objections or difficulties dealt with.

- 1) Israel is largely lost in spite of her unique calling and special blessings. However, this does not mean the word of God has failed. Paul explains that "**they are not all Israel who are of Israel**" (9:6). He then goes on to explain what he means by this is that God has always had an elect remnant and God has worked this way so "**that the purpose of God according to election might stand**" (9:11).
- 2) The objector cries that this idea of election doesn't seem fair. Paul asks the question: "**Is there unrighteousness with God?**" and then answers "**Certainly not!**" (9:14). The explanation is that God being God "**has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens**" (9:18).
- 3) This is met with the objection that if God wills all that happens whether in relation to mercy or hardening then how can he hold anyone accountable since it is all according to what He wills (9:19). Paul does not even dignify this irreverent question by directly answering it but rather rebukes the questioner. His response is that God is sovereign and can do whatever He wants just like the potter has power over the clay to make whatever he wants.

Slide # 3

Romans 9 Issues...

- 1) Rom. 9:6: Q. Has the Word of God failed? A. No! God works through election.
- 2) Rom. 9:14: Q. Is election fair? A. God is sovereign over mercy and hardening.
- 3) Rom. 9:19: Q. Why does God find fault if all is according to His will? A. God is sovereign!

Slide # 4**Slide # 5****Vessels of Wrath****Vessels of Mercy**

- The Called
(Jews and Gentiles)
- The Remnant

The KEY point that Paul has made to this point in Romans 9 is that God always has an elect remnant. This is true of the Jews, but now in the Church Age this is true in reference to both Jews and Gentiles as noted by Paul in Romans 9:24.

Now Paul is going to add to this by showing that the elect remnant are those who come to faith.

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The Emphases of Romans 9...

- Romans 9:1-29
 - 1) Sovereignty
 - 2) Election
 - 3) Remnant

Emphasis: GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY!

- Romans 9:30-33
 - 4) Faith

Emphasis: HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY!

Have you noticed that people love to argue about things they don't fully understand – even things God has told them they don't fully understand.

When it comes to the matter of election and faith and how they intersect people will argue all day. I have many books in my library on this very issue! Are people elect because of faith or do they have faith because they are elect? Interestingly, the Bible never speaks directly in these terms! It speaks of the truth of election in a few places. It speaks of the necessity of faith in many places. Both are true – one from the divine side and the other from the human side. How they harmonize is a mystery!

As a Biblicist I emphasize the whole counsel of God. Yes, I strongly believe in sovereignty and election, but at that same time I also believe in human responsibility. How these harmonize is a mystery to me, but in the mind of God there is no conflict. Here is the deal, the Bible says the ways of God are past finding out and I for one believe it (Rom. 11:33).

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God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are taught us side by side in the same Bible; sometimes, indeed, in the same text. Both are thus guaranteed to us by the same divine authority; both, therefore, are true. It follows that they must be held together, and not played off against each other. ... our wisdom is to maintain with equal emphasis both the apparently conflicting truths in each case, to hold them together in the relation in which the Bible itself sets them, and to recognize that there is a mystery which we cannot expect to solve in this world. **-J.I. Packer-** EVANGELISM AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, pp. 22-24

One day an elderly lady was listening to some well-educated commentators debating about things no one fully understands. When they got all done she said, ***“This Bible sure does shed some light on those commentators”***. Indeed it does!

Romans 9:30–33 (NKJV)

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith;

Paul regularly uses this formula as a rhetorical question when wanting to then follow up with an emphatic point (cf. Rom. 4:1; 6:1; 8:31; 9:14).

He now gives the bottom-line conclusion as to how it can be that the called are now comprised of both Jews and Gentiles as seen in verse 24. On what basis has there been more of a Gentile response than that of the Jews? How can this be explained? These are the kinds of questions Paul is grappling with here.

The **Gentiles** (or literally “nations”) by background had no interest in pursuing righteousness – that is in being right with the God of Israel – the one true God as revealed in history and in the Scriptures.

Read in the book of Acts and you will find that generally as the gospel came to the Gentiles, they were all about pursuing idolatry and all manner of vice, and living for self-gratification. They were largely in the pagan category as described by Paul in Romans 1. They weren’t looking for God and had no interest in Him (that is in the one true God of the Bible). They were not pursuing being right with Him at all.

But when the gospel came to them, “out of the blue”, many of them responded to it by faith. Thus, they came to attain a righteous standing before God – “***even the righteousness of faith***”.

The Gentiles discovered the good news is for bad people! They discovered that as bad as they were they could be made right with God simply on the basis of FAITH alone. That is GOOD NEWS indeed! Thus, many of them responded to the gospel which Paul in Romans 1:16 says “***is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes***”.

The key issue as brought out in this verse is the issue of RIGHTEOUSNESS and that righteousness is acquired by faith.

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Romans 9:30 (NKJV)

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue **righteousness**, have attained to **righteousness**, even the **righteousness** of faith;

This issue of righteousness is a prominent issue in the book of Romans. In fact, there is debate on whether the KEY theme is “The Gospel of God” or “The Righteousness of God.” Righteousness is mentioned three times here in one verse. In Romans 9:30-10:21, “righteousness” is mentioned ten times. This shows that this is the BIG idea in this whole context.

Righteousness is the idea of being right with God. And the great issue in view here is HOW one can be right with God. The Gentiles suddenly discovered Justification (this is righteousness) by faith alone! In contrast the Jews thought their works could make them righteous and thus they missed the point of righteousness on the basis of FAITH. The Jews thought they were already GOOD people based on their works!

Concerning the gospel message there are TWO great points made in the NT. There is the MAJOR point concerning Christ – WHO He is and WHAT He has done so that we could be right with God.

But there is also the MAJOR point that Christ must be received by faith. This is no small point. And this is the very point Paul is making here that distinguishes how the Gentiles responded (generally) by faith, versus how the Jews responded (generally) in unbelief.

Think about this. Romans begins by emphasizing the obedience of faith in Romans 1:5 and ends with the same emphasis in Romans 16:26. Right out of the gate in his introductory remarks Paul make the issue of believing the gospel in Romans 1:16-17. After showing all are under the condemnation of sin Paul at great length shows we are justified (or made righteous) before God on the basis of faith.

Slide # 9

- Rom. 3:22 “through **faith** in Jesus Christ”
- Rom. 3:22 “on all who **believe**.”
- Rom. 3:25 “by His blood, through **faith**”
- Rom. 3:26 “justifier of the one who has **faith** in Jesus.”
- Rom. 3:27 “by the law of **faith**.”
- Rom. 3:28 “a man is justified by **faith**”
- Rom. 3:30 “justify the circumcised by **faith**”
- Rom. 3:30 “uncircumcised through **faith**.”

As we come to Romans 4 we have a whole chapter (essentially) given over to the example of Abraham who was justified by faith alone.

Slide # 10

- ***Abraham in Romans 4...***
 - Just by faith (Rom. 4:3)
 - Not by works (Rom. 4:5)
 - Not by circumcision (Rom. 4:9-12)
 - Not by law (Rom. 4:13-15)

It's in that same chapter of Romans 4 that we have perhaps the strongest text in the NT showing that we are saved by faith ALONE.

Slide # 11

Romans 4:5 (NKJV)

5 But to him who **does not work but believes** on Him who justifies the ungodly, **his faith** is accounted for righteousness,

Paul then emphasizes in Romans 5:1, "***having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.***" Then, spring ahead to our study today in Romans 9, where the great distinction (in general) between Gentiles and Jews has been that Gentiles have responded by FAITH. Paul develops this theme at length in Romans 10 and 11 before he goes on to the practical section in the remainder of the book.

So strong is the emphasis on the responsibility of FAITH in Romans that you could almost say the great point of the book is not only the gospel message, but **HOW we must respond to it by faith!** In fact, a strong argument is to be made that the real emphasis in Romans is HOW we are made right with God on the basis of faith and then how we should live. The issue is RIGHTEOUSNESS and how it is acquired. This is no small emphasis.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE is what set the Gentile world on fire when the gospel first went forth as recorded in the book of Acts. This is the great truth that reignited the Gentile world in the days of the reformation. Frankly it is this truth that I learned in my conversion which forever radically altered my life. I am radically committed to the truth of justification by faith alone. There can be no compromise here!

This is powerful truth – life changing truth! FAITH is the great KEY to righteousness. This is what Paul learned in his conversion and he never recovered as he spent the rest of his life preaching this message.

Slide # 12

Philippians 3:9 (NKJV)

9 and be found in Him, **not having my own righteousness**, which is from the law, but that which is **through faith** in Christ, the righteousness which is from God **by faith**;

Paul here in his most personal testimony makes a double emphasis on having the righteousness from God which is received by faith!

31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.

Again, Paul is speaking in general terms as not all Gentiles responded in faith and not all Jews rejected. As noted last week God always has a remnant.

But in general, Israel “**pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness**”. Really, the sense here is that they were “pursuing the law **FOR** righteousness”. They were attempting to be righteous before God on the basis of law keeping.

Note, we are not told that the Jews were pursuing after righteousness, but after a law by which, through their self-efforts, they hoped to attain righteousness! – **William Newell**

Israel was serious, not really about righteousness, but about keeping the law for righteousness. Their thinking was that it was their outward law keeping efforts that made them right before God. It was all about externals – not true internal righteousness. Thus, they were fanatical about pursuing (more literally) **a law** of righteousness”.

They had the law of God but in their pursuit of it they often perverted it. To protect it they put up all kinds of other laws as a sort of wall around it to protect it – to help protect themselves from breaking it. They took from the OT that law keeping was the KEY to righteousness before God. And we can sort of understand why.

When you go places like Deut. 27-28 you find God promises to bless those who keep the law and to curse those who don't.

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Deuteronomy 27:26 (NKJV)

26 ‘**Cursed is the one** who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.’ “And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’ ”

Deuteronomy 28:1–2 (NKJV)

1 “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.

2 And all these **blessings shall come upon you** and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

Thus, in the mind of the Jews they were the special chosen people of God. They had the law of God and kept it in a way no other people on the face of the earth did – starting with circumcision when they were 8 days old.

The problem with the Jews is that they never realized that in all their law keeping they forever came up short! They thought they were more holy than they were and they thought God's standard was lower than it is.

Thus, they failed to realize that not only did they not live up to the standard of the law for righteousness – in fact it condemned them.

Slide # 14

Romans 3:19–20 (NKJV)

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become **guilty** before God.

20 Therefore **by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified** in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

James 2:10 (NKJV)

10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet **stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.**

But the Jews outwardly took the law very seriously and thought they could keep it to the point of being accounted “righteous” before God. Thus, they saw law keeping as their basis of being right with God. The law was their pride! To be a Jew was to be a law keeper!

In contrast the Gentiles knew nothing about the law and cared nothing for the law. They were all just a bunch of depraved sinners and treated that way by the Jews. So, when the message of grace and justification by faith was preached to them – that was GOOD NEWS indeed and they were very receptive.

Another problem the Jew had was PRIDE. In his efforts to keep the law and thinking he could keep it well enough for God to count him righteous he became very SELF-RIGHTEOUS. This mentality catered to self-righteousness and religious pride which is reflected in them looking down on the Gentiles who did not have the law.

The gospel is always for the down and out. The gospel is always for the out and out blatant immoral person. [The religious person] never perceive[s] that they are the ones standing in the need of the gospel, and the reason why they are not converted is not because are too bad to be saved; it is because they are too good to be saved.

– **Steve Lawson**

This is what Christ meant when He said...

Slide # 15

Luke 5:31–32 (NKJV)

31 Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

32 I have **not come to call the righteous, but sinners**, to repentance.”

Unless you know you are sick you don't think you need a doctor. Unless you realize you are a sinner you don't think you need repentance. Christ can't help you unless you acknowledge you have a sin problem!

Religious people are the most difficult people to reach with the gospel – church members, who think they are good enough to be saved.

– **J. Vernon McGee**

“You have to get them lost before you can get them saved!” Most people think they are good people. They think their odds of getting to heaven are probably better than most. People tend to think pretty highly of themselves. They don't see their utter sinfulness. They tend to measure themselves up against other people instead of God (cf. Rom. 3:23)! Therefore, they don't see their lost condition. And the worst are religious people who think they are okay because of their religion. They feel good about themselves because of religious good works and consequently they are self-righteous!

And right here was the Jewish problem. They thought they were okay! They were serious about the law. They thought they were GOOD people!

In contrast the Gentiles knew they were sinners. It didn't take much to show them that they came up way short of God's law and were in need of salvation. Thus, the sinner Gentiles tended to be much more responsive than the self-righteous sinner Jews.

To think that filthy rotten Gentiles could be righteous before God was an affront to the Jews. In their minds they didn't even have the law which was the basis for righteousness. **Thus, they failed to realize God's way of righteousness is by FAITH.** But this idea of acquiring righteousness on the basis of faith was nothing new, as Paul has already demonstrated from the example of Abraham (cf. Rom. 4).

Hardly a passage in the NT is stronger than this one [here in Romans 9:30-31] in its exposure of the futility of works as a means of justification. – **Expositors**

It was not the pursuit of the law itself but the way the Jews pursued it that he saw as wrong. Paul consistently saw the law as meant to lead people to Christ and therefore to a right standing with God.

– **Leon Morris**

32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

Why? Here is the great issue. WHY specifically has Israel not attained to the law of righteousness. Now we might expect him to say “**Because they are the non-elect**” since he has just earlier in the chapter emphasized election so strongly.

But that is not what he says.

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Was it because they were not elected? The answer is that they did not obtain righteousness because they did not believe.

– **The Nelson Study Bible**

We might expect that Paul would say because they have not received mercy in keeping with God hardens or gives mercy according to what He wills. But that is not what he says at this point.

Rather, he says the WHY is because they did not seek it by faith! Here he makes this singularly a matter of human response and human responsibility! The problem was their lack of faith! The issue is made to be a lack of faith!

Significantly, Paul’s answer on this occasion makes no reference to God’s purpose in election (11), but instead attributes Israel’s failure to arrive to her own folly: because they pursued it not by faith.

– **John Stott**

Instead of seeking righteousness on the basis of faith, Israel has sought it by the works of the law. The NASB leaves off “works of the law” and simply has “**by works**”. Israel tried to attain a righteous standard before God on the basis of WORKS instead of by FAITH! There is the bottom-line issue!

Righteousness is by faith, but the Jews did not come in faith. They sought the right goal indeed [righteousness], though they did it in the wrong way, “but as of works”. – **Leon Morris**

From the human responsibility angle they failed in the matter of FAITH. God's way of being right with Him is on the basis of FAITH ALONE, and Israel completely missed this reality! They thought it was by works, when in reality it is by FAITH! This is an all-important point!

Do you see how serious this is? Because they did not understand salvation by faith alone, Israel completely missed it! By way of application anyone who adds anything to FAITH is missing the mark! To add anything such as sacraments, good works, baptism, rituals, church attendance – name what you will. To add anything to FAITH is to not understand God's program of how we attain righteousness!

We are made righteous before God on the basis of FAITH alone! That's what the Bible teaches! Only those who put all their faith in Jesus alone for salvation are truly saved! This means that many professing Christians are not really saved because like the misguided Jews they are still trusting in a works based system to get them to heaven!

This is a most serious matter because one's eternal destiny depends on it. Perhaps you have heard of Harrison Butker – the kicker for the Kansas City Chiefs. I have a lot of respect for his courage and for taking stands for conservative biblical values and so forth. However, Harrison is a very strong Roman Catholic and he says this is what drives his convictions. Now whereas I applaud a lot of his stands, when it comes to his faith – if indeed he holds to the official teachings of Roman Catholicism that is a problem.

Slide # 17

Canon 9. If anyone says ***that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required*** to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, ***and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will***, let him be anathema. – **Council of Trent**

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- *“If any one saith, that man is truly absolved from his sins and justified... and that by this faith alone, absolution and justification are effected; let him be anathema.”*
- **Canon 14** at the Council of Trent

Justification by faith alone was the central doctrine of the Protestant Reformation. It was said to be the article on which the entire church stands or falls! And that is exactly what Paul is teaching here in Romans 9. This is what the Jews missed. This is what so much of organized Christendom continues to miss whether it be reflected in baptismal regeneration, sacramentalism, moralism, legalism, or other forms of aberrant Christianity.

Right here is the great issue through the ages in terms of human response/human responsibility!

Slide # 19

Romans 9:32 (LSB)

32 Why? Because they did **not pursue it by faith**, but as though it were **by works**. ...

You can't have it both ways! Either you are saved by faith alone or you are saved by works! This is the great issue related to human response as framed by Paul in the book of Romans!

Slide # 20

Heretical View

- Faith + Works = Justification

Biblical View

- Faith = Justification → Works [Fruit]

God's plan of salvation is not for those who try to work their way to heaven or try to earn God's favor. Rather, it is for those who realize they could NEVER be good enough and so they must depend on (put their faith) in Jesus as the God-Savior!

Within the camp of conservative Christianity there is a debate over the issue of faith. Strong Calvinists see faith as simply a gift from God. They don't see people exercising faith – rather God just gives people faith. Certainly, God is behind anyone coming to faith, but that does not cancel out the human response of faith. I admit there is mystery here, but I also see human responsibility and human response.

“Abraham believed God, and it [his faith] was accounted to him for righteousness.” (Rom. 4:3). Biblically you cannot get around the fact that Abraham believed and it was this act of believing that was accounted to him for righteousness. The act of believing was on the part of Abraham. God did not believe for Abraham. God didn’t do it for him. No, Abraham believed. This was the personal response of FAITH!

This is important because many don’t teach the personal responsibility to believe. They just believe that God somehow zaps people with faith if they are one of the elect. But the Bible clearly places the onus of responsibility to believe on personal accountability! We are responsible to believe and God will hold us accountable for it (cf. Jn. 3:18).

It is not a question of whether or not we are among God’s elect. That is a mystery known only to God. He offers us salvation by faith. The offer is made to “whosoever will” (Rev. 22:17). After we have trusted Christ, then we have the witness and evidence that we are among His elect (Eph. 1:4-14; 1 Thess. 1:1-10). ... No one will deny that there are many mysteries connected with divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Nowhere does God ask us to choose between these two truths, because they both come from God and are a part of God’s plan. – **Warren Wiersbe**

We need to understand that faith is not a work! It is not meritorious! Faith lives in harmony with grace! Grace emphasizes the God side of the equation while faith emphasizes the human response side of the equation. There is no conflict between believing and grace.

Slide # 21

Romans 4:16 (NKJV)

16 Therefore it is **of faith** that it might **be according to grace**, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are **of the faith** of Abraham, who is the father of us all

Slide # 22

FAITH DEFINED...

- Faith is contrary to works.
- Faith is taking God at His Word.
- Faith is dependence and reliance upon God.

- Faith from the heart affirms the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures.
- Faith works in harmony with Grace. Grace is God's unmerited provision - faith is the non-meritorious response.

Worldwide through the ages this is the great issue before God. All the religions of the world reject a “**grace through faith**” concept. They are all works oriented. There is no exception. All the false religions of the world, all the cults, all the forms of false Christianity all add works to the equation in one form or another – and thus all reject “**Justification by Faith Alone!**” Indeed, this is the great issue on which the Church stands or falls! And this was the great issue that Israel stumbled over.

They did not seek righteousness by faith, but rather by works. This is always the great issue in terms of human response! What is the response that God demands! It's faith! Just faith! It has to be real from the heart! But indeed, we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone! This is a hill to die on!

To truly come to God through faith means to renounce all merit and all works as the basis of righteousness! This is what Paul meant when he said that he counted all things loss so that he might gain Christ (Phil. 3:8). True faith puts all trust in Jesus alone as Savior!

Slide # 23

1 Corinthians 1:21 (NKJV)

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, **it pleased God** through the foolishness of the message preached **to save those who believe.**

This pleases God – to save all those who believe! This is His sovereign and pleasurable desire! This is the way God has chosen to work.

But faith must have an object! The key reason Israel rejected FAITH is because they “**stumbled at that stumbling stone**”. They rejected God's object of faith! The stumbling stone was the Messiah Who is the object of true faith.

A stumbling stone is a stone in the path that one stumbles over and falls to their own detriment. The idea here is that the stumbling stone is the obstacle that prevented them from attaining the righteousness of faith. The stumbling stone is that which caused their fall, their failing, their ruin.

The Jews instead of putting their FAITH in Jesus as their Messiah took offense at Him. The idea of “offended” in the NT literally means “**caused to stumble**” (cf. Lk. 7:23).

The Jews were offended at Jesus on two counts: 1) Who He claimed to be; and 2) the truth of His cross.

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John 10:33 (NKJV)

33 The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for **blasphemy**, and because **You, being a Man, make Yourself God.**”

John 19:7 (NKJV)

7 The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law He **ought to die**, because **He made Himself the Son of God.**”

Jesus flat out told them “if you do not believe that I am [that is the eternal God], you will die in your sins.” (Jn. 8:24). But the Jews could not get over Jesus’ claim to be God! They could not accept this and thus stumbled over the TRUTH of Who Jesus is as the eternal I AM.

The other thing they stumbled over was the truth of His cross.

Slide # 25

1 Corinthians 1:23 (NKJV)

23 but we preach **Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block** and to the Greeks foolishness,

The cross was a thing of shame. The Jews knew that the law in Deut. 21:23 said, “**he who is hanged on is accursed of God**” (Gal. 3:13). That ran contrary to everything they believed about the coming Messiah. He would reign supreme. He would be held in honor. No way would He have to experience the indignities of a Roman cross. In the minds of the Jews this was totally unbecoming of their glorious Messiah! Even the idea was repulsive.

The truth of the cross is also offensive to a works righteousness mentality. It says you can’t do it – Jesus in GRACE on the cross has done it for you. The cross humbles human ego. This is what Paul meant by “**the offense of the cross**” in Galatians 5:11. The cross says we are depraved rebel sinners so bad that we can’t do anything to save ourselves. That is humbling!

A works righteousness caters to self-righteousness and pride. In contrast the cross is all about grace showing that we can't do it which is why Christ had to do it for us.

So, the cross was offensive to the Jews because in their minds it didn't fit their profile of a dignified Messiah, and it also it offended their religious pride! Therefore, they stumbled at the Messiah Who became a stumbling stone to them.

And to back up what Paul is saying he quotes OT Scripture...

33 As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

Paul has two thoughts here and he combines them by conflating two Scripture references from Isaiah. **Isaiah 8:14-15** emphasizes the LORD being a stumbling stone to Israel because they refused to trust in Him. **Isaiah 28:16** emphasizes a stone placed in Zion that is a sure foundation to whoever believes in Him.

In quoting Isaiah in this way Paul shows that what is happening with Israel is the unfolding of God's prophetic program. It is all happening exactly as prophesied by God in the OT.

God laid in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense. Zion is the poetic name for Jerusalem. It was there just outside the city gate that the Messiah was crucified and thus became the rock of offense.

There are many illusions to the Messiah being a ROCK in one form or another.

Slide # 26

New Testament references to the prophetic STONE as fulfilled in the Messiah.

Matt. 21:42 (Ps. 118:22)

Mk. 12:10 (Ps. 118:22)

Lk. 20:17 (Ps. 118:22)

Acts 4:11 (Ps. 118:22)

Rom. 9:33 (Isa. 28:16)

Rom. 10:11 (Isa. 28:16)

1 Cor. 3:11 (Isa. 28:16)

Eph. 2:20 (Ps. 118:22)

1 Pet. 2:6 (Isa. 28:16)

The way Paul puts this together it shows that on the one hand Christ is a stumbling stone to those rejecting Him, but on the other hand those who believe on Him will not be put to shame. Peter brings out this very same dual truth in 1 Peter 2:6-8.

In Isaiah 8:14, where the quote about a stumbling stone is taken from, the context is that the Jews were warned about not putting their trust in a foreign power in light of the threat from Assyria. Instead, they were to put their trust in the LORD. Sanctuary could only be found in God.

However, to not put their trust in Him would be to stumble over the rock truth of God – which is what they did. The parallel thought as applied by Paul is that Jesus as Messiah LORD is the STONE over whom Israel stumbles (cf. Gen. 49:24; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 28:16; Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45). Instead of trusting Him they stumbled over Him.

The phrase “**whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame**” is taken from Isaiah 28:16. In the Hebrew “**not be put to shame**” is more literally “**not make haste**” which has the nuance of “**panic**”. In the Greek it is translated as “**not put to shame**”.

The idea is that belief in the Messiah will prove valid. It will not be found ill-founded. It will never prove to be embarrassing. There is no disappointment in belief in Jesus as the Messiah! On the other hand, unbelief carries with it eternal grievous disappointment – the idea of eternal embarrassment for being eternally wrong!

What we see in Romans is THREE essential things related to how we are saved.

- 1) We are saved by faith (Rom. 1:16).
- 2) We are saved by faith alone (Rom. 4:5).
- 3) We are saved by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 9:33).

Romans 9 is very strong on God's sovereignty and the doctrine of election, but it ends on the issue of BELIEF! Here, Paul presents two contrasting responses to the STONE that God has placed in Zion. Some are offended by Him and reject Him in unbelief, while others believe in Him and will never be put to shame.

Christ is the Messianic Stone of Scripture. God's prophetic plan all fits together in Him.

1. ***To God Christ is the SMITTEN stone.*** In Isaiah 53:5 we see, "He was "bruised for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5). Isaiah 53:10 says, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him" (cf. Ex. 17:5-7; 1 Cor. 10:4).
2. ***To the Jews Christ is the STUMBLING Stone.*** They stumbled over Him in the rejection of unbelief (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23; 1 Peter 2:8).
3. ***To the world Christ the SMITING Stone.*** In Daniel 2:34-35 we find the Messiah STONE smashes the kingdoms of this world and sets up His everlasting kingdom (cf. Dan. 2:44-45).
4. ***To the Church Christ is the CHIEF CORNER Stone*** (cf. Ps. 118:22; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20). In faith we rest in Him Who is our sure foundation in time and for all eternity (Isa. 28:16).

Ella Wheeler Wilcox (Not from a Christian Perspective)

One ship drives east and another west
 With the selfsame winds that blow.
 Tis the set of the sails
 And not the gales
 Which tells us the way to go.

....

As we voyage along through life:
Tis the set of a soul
 That decides its goal...

It is true that it is the set of a soul that determines one's destiny.

How is your soul set in relation to Jesus? This is the ultimate issue in time and for all eternity!

Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame!

Have you believed on Him?