

Saving Sophie

a bird's-eye tour

Paul's letter to the church at Rome

“the gospel .. is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.. ” [Romans 1.16]

Few books of the Bible provide such a comprehensive and in-depth statement of the gospel as Paul's letter to the Romans. This series of studies is intended simply to familiarize us all (in the case of some, *again*) with the landscape of the letter.

May the result of our studies be that we exclaim with Paul, *“Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! .. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory for ever! Amen!”* (Rom.11.33-36)

You can find the background to this series [here](#).

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1. Romans 1.1-17 [w/b Sunday 2nd July]

“the gospel is the power of God for .. salvation”

The Bible’s message announces God’s great rescue mission. The Lord saves! This series of studies picks up on 8 key components of that ‘salvation’ and explores each in turn.

This first, introductory passage highlights the word ‘**gospel**’. The word itself occurs 4 times through this passage (5 in the NIV translation which inserts an additional use of the word at the start of v.2, by way of explanation): and the very frequency of the reference points to the care Paul is taking at the outset of this letter to set out his stall, and to clarify the essence of the gospel he proclaims.

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1. **Read Romans 1.1-17.** The message which Paul will be explaining through the course of the letter is described by him as ‘gospel’ (literally, ‘good news’).

How has this message been ‘good news’ for you?

It’s possible for us to lose something of the thrill we had when the ‘good news’ first came home to our hearts: how can we ensure we retain that initial joy?

2. **Read Romans 1.1-4.** Paul starts this letter with a concise summary of the distinctives of his message.

What does Paul say are the main features of the gospel?

Why are the particular truths which he highlights about Jesus so important for the message?

3. Read Romans 1.5. Having presented in summary form the essence of the gospel, Paul now proceeds to set out his own credentials as an apostle.

What is the distinctive role he saw himself fulfilling as an apostle?

What does he mean by the '*obedience of faith*' (that's how the original translates)?

Why do you think he used that phrase?

4. Read Romans 1.6-7. The church at Rome was not one which Paul himself had established: he had yet, therefore, to meet the believers and is careful to greet them in a positive way.

What do you think he is intending to highlight in the terms he uses to describe them?

How does this greeting prepare his readers for the message of the gospel he'll be setting out?

5. **Read Romans 1.8-10.** Paul understood the faith of the believers in Rome to be the fruit of the Spirit's work in their lives.

What human instrumentality does Paul see God using in generating faith in a believer?

What lessons might this have to teach us?

6. **Read Romans 1.11-15.** Paul has been eager to spend time with the believers in Rome: here he explains why.

In what ways will Paul have envisaged the believers at Rome and himself mutually encouraging one another?

How would Paul have envisaged there being such a mutual blessing within a fellowship such as ours?

What steps might you yourself take to foster such mutual encouragement?

7. **Read Romans 1.16-17.** As he rounds off his introduction prior to beginning his exposition, Paul provides what has become a classic broad-brush-stroke description of the gospel.

What two statements does Paul make here about the gospel?

Why are these two statements such good news for us all?

What does Paul mean by saying that the gospel is *'first for the Jew, then for the Gentile'*?

