

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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2. Romans 1.18-3.8 [w/b Sunday 9th July]

“.. justified freely by His grace.. ”

This series of studies in Paul's letter to the Romans picks up on 8 key components of God's 'salvation' and explores each in turn: here we come to the second of these 'key components', and that's the notion of 'grace'.

The theme of 'grace' lies behind the whole section from 1.18-3.26, but it's so basic and important that we'll take a couple of studies to look at it, making use of the 'free' week we have (with there being no morning service at Gilcomston on Sunday 9th July) to allow for an 'extra' study.

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1. **Read Romans 1.18-3.8.** The Bible's message only makes sense as '*good* news' when we understand just how desperate is the human condition. It's with that, therefore, the human condition, that Paul begins his letter.

In the light of what Paul writes in this whole passage how would you describe the 'human condition'?

As you read the passage what contemporary parallels come to mind?

2. Read Romans 1.18-20. Paul is concerned to explain that the basic human condition exposes us, in a moral universe, to God's wrath.

What does Paul say warrants the 'wrath of God'?

Why is it, according to Paul, that we are 'without excuse'?

3. Read Romans 1.21-31. There is a pattern and progression to sin which Paul here sets out in a series of parallel statements ("*.. they exchanged .. God gave them over ..*")

What are the three 'exchanges' to which Paul refers?

What does Paul mean by saying that '*God gave them over..*' (vv.24, 26, & 28)?

How do you see this finding expression today?

4. Read Romans 1.32. Having the way in which our natural rebellion against God is expressed, and the consequences of that, Paul now concludes this section with a statement summarizing the essence of our rebelliousness.

What three things characterize our rebelliousness?

How would you illustrate this statement in a contemporary context?

5. Read Romans 2.1-16. Paul now moves on to describe the two main ways in which we commonly try to excuse ourselves before God: the first, in these verses, is the appeal to 'respectability'.

Why does Paul say (again!) that we have no excuse?

Paul underlines three important truths about the judgment of God – in vv.1-5, vv.6-11, and vv.12-16: what are these truths which he highlights here?

6. Read Romans 2.17-29. Here Paul starts discussing a second way in which we try to excuse ourselves, namely, the appeal to 'religion'.

In vv.17-24 Paul speaks about those who 'brag about the (bible)': what does he have to say to those who claim they have a bible and know its contents?

How might Paul's reference (in vv.25-29) to the sacrament be applied in our own contemporary context?

7. Read Romans 3.1-8. Paul here addresses potential objections which some may have to what he has just said about the inadequacy of any appeal to our religious activity.

How does he answer those who conclude that there is no benefit in their Jewish pedigree (vv.1-4)?

What is the essence of the second objection which Paul anticipates (vv.5-8), and what answer does he give?

What lessons for effective engagement with today's society and their 'objections' to the gospel message might we learn from Paul?