

Saving Sophie

a bird's-eye tour of Paul's letter to the church at Rome

4. Romans 3.27-5.21

"By faith alone, through grace alone..."

Here's an outline of this whole section, which may prove helpful.

The fundamentals of faith (3.27-31)

humility: hope: holiness

The primacy of faith (4.1-25)

it's thoroughly biblical:

faith involves believing the promise of God

the teaching of Scripture (4.1-8)

- the example of Abraham (vv.1-5)
- the example of David (vv.6-8)

the meaning of the sacrament (vv.9-12)

- righteousness and ritual
circumcision was subsequent to, and the seal on, Abraham's being accounted righteous

the nature of salvation (vv.13-17)

- undeserved
- unconditional
- unrestricted

the backdrop to the statement (vv.18-25)

- the example of Abraham (vv.18-22)
- the encouragement to ourselves (vv.23-25)

The nature of faith (5.1-21)

it's essentially relational:

faith involves believing *into* the Person of Christ

faith issues in *reconciliation* through Christ (vv.1-11)

- a relational revolution (vv.1-2)
- a radical rejoicing (vv.3-11)

faith consists in *identification* with Christ (vv.12-21)

- the Adam's family (vv.12-14)
- with Jesus it's bigger and better (vv.15-17)
- the one-for-all principle (vv.18-21)

4. Romans 3.27-5.21 [w/b Sunday 23rd July]

“.. the promise comes by faith.. ”

The third key word in understanding God's salvation is **'faith'**. At the heart of the good news is a promise God made that through His Son Jesus *He* Himself would effect for us everything that needs to be done to secure that salvation: salvation is thus by 'grace'.

If it is by grace on God's part, however, then it must be by 'faith' on our part – a gift we receive rather than a prize we deserve. So, having set out the grace of God in the gospel (1.18-3.26), Paul turns in this whole section to address the subject of faith – explaining *why* it must be by faith, and *what* that faith entails.

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1. Read Romans 3.27-31. The 3 sets of questions Paul asks here highlight 3 corollaries of salvation being by grace: he points to the basic qualities characterising faith.

Why, according to Paul, is there no room for boasting?

As you follow Christ and are changed by His Spirit, how can you avoid subtly 'congratulating' yourself on the faith you exercise and the life you thereby live?

If our salvation is not dependent on our 'keeping the law', how do we nonetheless *uphold*, rather than *nullify*, the law?

2. **Read Romans 4.1-8.** Paul underlines that this has always been God's way of salvation by referring to two key figures from 'The Law' (Abraham) and 'The prophets & writings' (David).

Read Genesis 15.1-21: how is the *grace* of God underlined in this chapter, as opposed to any '*works*' on the part of Abram?

What three statements about God's *gracious* dealing with our sin does David make in the verses quoted by Paul?

3. **Read Romans 4.9-12.** The Jews had come to see the 'rite' of circumcision as an integral part of righteousness: Paul now knocks that notion on the head, and explains the implications of a right understanding of the 'rite'.

How does Paul demonstrate that the 'rite' of circumcision is not integral to righteousness before God (vv.9-11)?

What are the implications he draws from this (vv.11-12)?

4. Read Romans 4.13-17. Abraham is the 'archetypal' believer in the Old Testament: so Paul now summarises for his readers, from the experience of Abraham, what characterizes God's salvation.

Why is God's promise (of salvation) worthless if it were those who 'live by law' (rather than those who 'live by faith') who are the heirs of it (vv.13-15)?

What reasons does Paul give for God insisting that His promise comes to us 'by faith' (vv.16-17)?

5. Read Romans 4.18-25. Paul now draws certain lessons from the parallels between Abraham and ourselves.

What aspects of Abraham's story does Paul highlight here? And why? (vv.18-22)

On what basis can God 'credit righteousness' to those 'who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead'? (vv.23-25)

6. Read Romans 5.1-11. Faith is essentially relational: it's not simply a case of believing certain truths, but, on the back of those truths, trusting, and entrusting ourselves to, a certain Person – and finding in Him a genuine reconciliation with God.

How, according to Paul, does our trusting in Jesus affect our past, present, and future experience? (vv.1-2)

As those who have trusted in Jesus, why will joy now characterize our living? (vv.3-11)

7. Read Romans 5.12-21. Paul now contrasts what we once were 'in Adam' with what we now are 'in Christ': trusting in Jesus brings us into a new family and a new realm, where what is true of Him becomes true of all His people.

What two truths does Paul underline in relation to the experience of Adam and his descendants (vv.12-14)?

What three contrasts does Paul draw between Adam and Jesus (vv.15-17)?

What does Paul say flows from our being united with Christ (vv.18-21)? And in what ways will that change both your experience and your manner of living?