

Saving Sophie

a bird's-eye tour of 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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8. Romans 12.1-15.7 [w/b Sunday 20th August]

“.. offer your bodies as living sacrifices ..”

Paul has spent 11 chapters setting out what God has done for us in Christ in fulfillment of His purpose and working through what that means for us in terms of our experience. He turns at this point to work through how our response to God's grace is to find expression. The 'key word' through this next section, therefore, is 'love'.

God's people have always been summoned to express their faith in a response characterized by love – see, for instance, the famous passage in Deuteronomy 6.4-5. Through this section of his letter Paul effectively spells out what love means in practice.

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1. Read Rom.12.1-2. Love means .. exalting the Lord. Paul underlines that our heart's love is directed first to the Lord Himself.

What does the call to *'present your bodies as a living sacrifice'* mean?

How does Paul try to ensure that this doesn't become a 'good work' by which we earn God's favour?

Why is the *'renewing of your mind'* so important? And how does that happen?

2. Read Rom.12.3-8. Love means .. embracing the church. We are made by God to live in community. Using the illustration of the human body, Paul stresses that it is in our life lived *together* that the Lord Jesus becomes 'visible' to the world.

The 'grace given us' (see vv.3 & 6) points to the different function or calling each of us will have within the body of Christ: how are we to discern our particular 'function' and recognize the gifts we've been given?

What is the point Paul is making in vv.7-8, and how does that challenge you?

3. Read Rom.12.9-21. Love means .. blessing the neighbours. We are to love our neighbour as ourselves (Lev.19.18): some are easier to love than others, but the principles by which we're to live remain the same.

Read these verses carefully: what challenges you in them most?

".. *as far as it depends on you..*" (v.18): what steps might be required of you to 'live at peace with everyone'?

4. Read Rom.13.1-7. Love means .. respecting the State. As well as being 'neighbours' we're also citizens. Paul sets out certain principles of citizenship, applicable regardless of the political system under which we live.

What is the basic principle set out in vv.1-5?

What two reasons does Paul give for this in v.5?

How careful are you to fulfill the practical application of this principle in vv.6 & 7?

5. Read Rom.13.8-10. Love means .. fulfilling the Law. The Law of God is never set over against love, but is presented to us consistently as the God-ordained expression of love.

How does loving others 'fulfil the Law'?

Augustine of Hippo once famously said – *Love God and do what you please*: do you think that's a good summary of what Paul is urging here?

6. Read Rom.13.11-14. Love means .. anticipating the future. Love is the life of God, and therefore the life of heaven itself. Paul insists that we're to start learning to live that life now!

What does that life of the future day look like and entail?

What does it mean to 'clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ'? What do you find challenging in seeking to do so?

7. Read Rom.14.1-15.7. Love means .. living the gospel. At the heart of the gospel is the Lord's *welcome* extended to us in Jesus. Paul underlines that we are to express just that sort of 'welcome' (see 15.7) in all our relationships.

What reasons does Paul give in 14.1-4 for our adopting a careful welcoming attitude towards those with whom we disagree on 'non-essentials'?

Why is it important, according to 14.5-12, that we are each 'fully convinced' on matters where it's not always easy to see what the right approach should be?

In 14.13-15.6 we're exhorted to be careful to build one another up (see 14.19 & 15.2): what guidelines does Paul give for our being thus 'constructive'?