

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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9. Romans 15.8-16.27 [w/b Sunday 3rd September]

“.. Christ has become a servant ..”

‘Ministry’ is the final ‘key word’ in Paul’s letter. It’s this theme which, fittingly, gives coherence to this last part of the letter. God’s saving work in our lives issues in our becoming, in Christ, essentially those who serve.

In this final section Paul helps us understand the principles of ministry (15.8-13), discern the parameters of ministry in our own circumstances (15.14-21), embrace the practicalities of ministry (15.22-33), retain the priorities in ministry (16.1-23) and secure the purpose of ministry (16.25-27).

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1. **Read Rom.15.8-16.27.** Try reading the whole passage at a single sitting, recognizing that its underlying theme is that of the ‘ministry’ (service) of all God’s people.

What general lessons do you come away with from this passage?

Read yourself into the testimony Paul gives in **1 Tim.1.12-14**: it’s sometimes said that *‘we are saved to serve’*. How has that found expression in your life?

2. Read Rom.15.8-13. Paul here sets out four basic ‘principles’ of ministry, applicable to every believer, whatever the particular sphere of ministry to which a person is called:

The ministry of the Son of God (vv.8-9a): what three aspects of the ministry of Jesus does Paul highlight? Since we share in His continuing ministry what does this have to teach us about where the priorities in our work must lie?

The furtherance of the glory of God (v.9a): for what in particular did Paul see God being glorified? How do we ensure that that is reflected in our life?

The direction of the Word of God (vv.9b-12): how did the Word of God shape Paul’s thinking about his ministry? How will the Word of God similarly shape our thinking?

The empowering of the Spirit of God (v.13): beyond the glory of God, what does Paul suggest are the three great ‘ends’ of ministry? Why is the empowering of the Spirit so important?

3. Read Rom.15.14-21. The account of his own ministry which Paul gives in these verses affords an insight into, and some guidelines about, how we discern the specific ministry to which we are called.

Paul recognized a number of specific features about in the ministry to which he’d been called: how can we learn to discern the specific sphere of service to which we are each called?

What do you think Paul means by '*the priestly duty* (or service) *of the gospel*' (v.16)?

4. Read Rom.15.22-29. Ministry involves some fairly routine tasks and some important disciplines: in particular Paul here highlights the place of *planning* in a missional manner and *providing* for others in material ways.

How good are you at planning? What lessons do you learn here from Paul about planning with a gospel perspective?

How does Paul's concern to provide practical help to the saints in Jerusalem challenge you? What do you think the implications of this are for a local fellowship such as ours?

5. Read Rom.15.30-33. Mutual prayer is not an optional extra, but one of the basic practicalities of all ministry. Paul prayed for, and sought the prayers of, people he'd never met.

Paul asks prayer for 4 specific matters: list 4 specific things you would ask prayer for.

What is the 'struggle' to which Paul refers? How do the prayers of God's people make such a difference?

6. Read Rom.16.1-20. The list of people whom Paul is careful to greet underlines that all God's people are involved in ministry. Don't be tempted to skip over the list! Reflect on these greetings.

Notice how Paul has something to say about almost every individual: do you think positively enough about those around you? Try writing a single sentence which gives a positive slant on those alongside whom you serve in Christ.

Why should those whose doctrine is 'contrary to what you have learned' be avoided? What might that mean in practice?

7. Read Rom.16.21-27. Paul's final greetings and his 'doxology' alike give expression to the message he has expounded.

How did Paul's 'team', whose individual members join him in sending their greetings, by its very composition reflect the gospel of grace?

Read **Rom.11.36** again, which concluded the first part of the letter: how does this final doxology which ends the letter mirror that earlier doxology?