
Helpful Resources

Map of Paul's Missionary Journeys (p.59)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

While Paul was in Corinth, he wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome (*Acts 20:2, 3*). Rome was the dominant political and military force of the western world. Paul knew that whatever happened in Rome could potentially influence the empire (*Rom. 1:8*), and so he desired to travel there and share the gospel (*Acts 19:21; 23:11; Rom. 1:15*). He even aspired to use Rome as a launching pad for expanding the gospel's reach to the west (i.e., Spain).

However, before Paul could get to Rome, news from the Christians there had already made it to him (*Rom. 1:8*). Evidently, those who had heard the gospel preached at Pentecost returned to Rome and planted a church (*Acts 2:10*). Thus, Paul was excited to encourage their faith through his letter and subsequent visit (*Rom. 1:11-13*). The primary focus of Paul's letter was the doctrines of the gospel. Thus, Paul's letter to the Romans is the most thorough explanation and application of salvation in all the Bible.

No one does a better job than Paul at clarifying the essentials of the gospel and our salvation. Salvation is simply the process of how a person is made right with God, and essentials are those things that are necessary or required. But why do we need to be made right with God, and what is the process? Let's consider some of the gospel essentials.

- Gospel Essentials
 1. **The Power of God for Salvation** (*Rom. 1:16*): From beginning to end, salvation is a work of God, not man. He is the One who instigates salvation, accomplishes it, and secures it. Therefore, there is no room for us to boast about our salvation.
 2. **For Anyone and Everyone** (*Rom. 1:16*): Salvation is not just for Jews or Gentiles. Anyone can be saved. People from every nation and language can come to Christ.
 3. **All Sinful** (*Rom. 3:9-23; 5:12, 14, 18, 19*): Why is salvation necessary? Every person has inherited a sinful nature from Adam. Because of that nature, every person has sinned. God is holy, and He expects holiness, which sinful men cannot achieve. Therefore, no one is in right standing with God and cannot enjoy fellowship with Him.
 4. **Wrath of God** (*Rom. 1:18; 2:2, 5, 8*): God's response to sin and ungodliness is righteous anger. He has been offended by mankind's rejection and disobedience, and the punishment is physical and spiritual death, expulsion from His fellowship.
 5. **Judgment** (*Rom. 2:3, 5, 6, 11-16*): Because we are God's creation, we are accountable to Him and to His laws. Those who reject or disobey His laws will be judged and condemned. "It is appointed for men to die and after this comes judgment" (*Heb. 9:27*).

6. **Without Excuse** (*Rom. 1:20, 21; 2:1, 14, 15*): Some people might excuse themselves from sin, judgment, and condemnation, but that will not work. Because of creation and conscience, Paul says that no man is without excuse. All know that God exists, and all instinctively know His laws, for they are written on our hearts.
 7. **Works Don't Work** (*Rom. 2:17-3:8, 20*): It is tempting to believe that we can somehow earn God's favor through our character and conduct. But all humans are flawed, imperfect, and corrupt at heart. Therefore, God cannot accept anything we do. Besides, He is the offended party. He gets to determine how our relationship can be mended.
 8. **In Christ Alone** (*Rom. 3:24-26; 4:24, 25; 5:6, 8, 15, 17-19, 21*): The means by which God has established mankind's redemption is through a perfect sacrifice. Since no man is sinless, He sent His sinless Son to be crucified on the cross. "He made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us, that we might be made righteous in Him" (*2 Cor. 5:21*). Thus, Christ is the only way to the Father. There is no other means of salvation (*Acts 4:12*).
 9. **Justification** (*Rom. 5:1*): Because of what Christ has done, a means of salvation is possible. Those who are saved are justified, declared righteous, and viewed as having no sin. All charges are dropped, and we are forgiven. Our fellowship with God is restored.
 10. **Believe by Faith** (*Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:27, 28; 4:3, 5, 13, 16, 20; 5:1*): For this justification to take effect and salvation to be made complete, one must confess with His mouth and believe in his heart by faith. However, even that faith is given by God, as no man in his depravity would seek God or believe in His Son (*Eph. 2:8, 9*).
- The Father of Our Faith

While the Jews claim Abraham as their founding father (which he is), Paul masterfully claimed Abraham as the father of our faith — Christianity. Abraham believed God by faith before he was circumcised, meaning before he became "Jewish." In other words, Abraham believed God by faith while he was still a Gentile (*Rom. 4:9-12*). That means Abraham is father of all who are saved by faith, Jews and Gentiles (*v.13-21; Gal. 3:6-14*). So then, when we sing the song, "Father Abraham had many sons, and many sons had Father Abraham. I am one of them, and so are you..." we are referring to Paul's argument in *Romans* (and *Galatians*).

The Bottom Line

Salvation is a work of God, not man. He determines what is required to be made right with Him.

Questions to Consider

1. Recall your salvation experience. What gospel essentials were you taught or told?
2. Were you ever taught, or did you ever believe, that salvation was by works? Explain.
3. Salvation by works is a man-made concept. Explain why.
4. Why must God determine how man is to be saved?
5. If all men are sinful, then why does society believe that people are basically good?
6. What is the hidden truth behind why people reject God or ignore His authority?
7. Why must salvation be in Christ alone? Aren't there many paths to God?
8. What do we mean by salvation is by faith alone?
9. This list of gospel essentials is not exhaustive. What would you add? Why?
10. How is the gospel or salvation process being distorted or compromised today?