

Themes

The structure of this passage is fairly straightforward:

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God (1), so ...
we boast in our hope (2)
we boast in our suffering (3-10)
we boast in God (11)

Paul is still describing God's gospel: what God has already done in Christ to restore our relationship with him is solid ground for assurance that he will save us from his wrath on the last day. The gospel is ...

• FUTURE-CENTRED

As the problem is future, so must the solution be. 5:9 is a key verse that demonstrates that the passage is about 'great expectations' not 'great experiences'. As Christians, we are 'fully convinced that God is able to do what he has promised' (4:21), but we do not yet see that salvation. We need to stress this because our world is obsessed with the here and now, and mocks future promise as 'pie in the sky when you die'. Modern Christianity is no less infected, preaching a gospel of present blessings and then tottering when present blessings are conspicuously absent. But true Christianity is about hope and promise: 'The promise of one day being with Jesus in a perfect world is the Christian's only hope for complete relief. Until then, we either groan or pretend we don't' (Larry Crabb: Inside Out).

• GOD-CENTRED

The problems all started with people rejecting God's revelation, rejecting God's glory and being estranged from him. The solution consists of a new revelation from God (3:21; 5:8) so that we're restored to a new relationship with him. Man was always meant to glory in God, but only as the result of the gospel do our lives become genuinely God-centred again. So boasting now, not about who we are, but about who God is, is entirely appropriate.

• SURE

Paul leaves us in no doubt that our hope will not disappoint us. We are sure

⇒ ***because of God's gift of his Son (6-10)***

God has already reconciled us when we were his enemies, justified us when we were sinners. Even when we were still under his wrath, he acted in love: love and wrath co-exist on the cross. So we can be sure that now we have been reconciled/declared righteous, God will save us on the last day.

⇒ ***because of God's gift of the Holy Spirit (5)***

This isn't fully explained until ch 8. Paul's point there will be that every Christian has the Holy Spirit, leading us to battle against sin. So that battle is proof to us that we are God's children, and so heirs, certain of heaven.

Commentary

1-2 The change summarised in this verse is from being 'under sin' and 'under the Law' to standing in 'grace', in God's favour. 'Reconciliation' (10-11) is a relationship word meaning 'make up after a quarrel' ... in other words, 'peace' (1) instead of 'enemies' (10). Twice here we're told that this is 'through' Christ (ie through his atoning death).

2b A clear hallmark of the justified believer is his new perspective on the future. The OT expected that when God acted to rescue his people he would be glorified (eg Isaiah 40:5; Ezekiel 36:22-23) and Israel would share in his glory (which of course we otherwise fall short of, cf 3:23).

3 Here is the surprise in the passage: our attitude to present sufferings is the same as to future glory! These 'sufferings' are all the pain, hostility and frustration that comes from living in our fallen world (8:18-27); but Paul says we 'boast' in them. How does this work?

Rather than undermining confidence in our future hope, suffering produces the opportunity and need for endurance which, in turn, produces character – the Greek word used here describes the 'provenness' of a character that has stood up under examination – and finally, a character thus proven will have stronger confidence in the future. 'Hope, like a muscle, will not be strong if it goes unused' (Douglas Moo). In simple terms, only a true Christian will stick at it through sufferings ... so if we do stick at it through sufferings, in that very enduring, there are extra grounds for confident hope.

How can we be sure that our confidence about what God will do is well founded? This is the natural question to which Paul gives 2 answers:

5-8 ***Our confidence depends on the cross***

Our experience of the Holy Spirit within us is not that we have intense feelings of love for God (although that may well be true cf 1 Peter 1:8-9), but rather that the Spirit converts us and convinces us of God's love for us, as expressed in the gospel. The demonstration of God's love is hanging on the cross. The greatest imaginable human love might, under unusual circumstances, give one's life for another (if that person was thought worth such sacrifice); the cross is remarkable because it is love for the weak/ungodly/sinners/enemies of 1:18-3:20.

9-10 ***Our confidence depends on our justification/reconciliation***

Paul's point is that what God has done for us in the past proves that he'll not neglect us in the future. He's done the difficult thing (giving up his life for sinners, justifying the patently guilty, reconciling enemies), so surely he'll do the comparatively easy thing (continuing to treat those declared 'not guilty' as 'not guilty', friends as friends).

Launching question

What do you think is the best thing about being a Christian? When you are with your friends, what do you enthuse about regarding your faith?

The story so far ...

5:1-2 is a summary of what Paul has already said the gospel has achieved: put this summary into your own words.

In the context of Romans, why is 'peace with God' worth shouting about?

Something to shout about

The word translated 'rejoice' is the same as the word 'boast' in 3:27-31.

In this passage what does Paul say we boast about?

Why is boasting permitted now, when it was excluded before?

How has the Christians' perspective on the future changed?

How has the Christians' perspective on the present changed?

What is the link between our present circumstances and our future hope?

How does Paul say that Christians can be sure of God's love for them (... and this may be particularly an issue when they're suffering)?

Being honest, where do we usually look to gauge God's view of us day to day?

How do I know God loves me?

What is remarkable about the cross as a demonstration of love?

When we use the word 'hope', it tends to combine desire and uncertainty: what does the Bible mean by 'hope'?

How does our knowledge of what God has done for us in the past give us confidence for the future?

Put v9-10 in your own words

Remember that Paul is still explaining the gospel solution: what is main point here about Judgement Day?

Can Christians be sure that they will be in heaven? isn't this arrogant?

Why is it important that Christians are sure they're going to heaven?

Try to work out an answer to the friend in this scenario:

Imagine tragedy strikes the life of a Christian friend. He starts to doubt that God loves him, and then worries that he's not a real Christian because if he were, God wouldn't have let this happen. Maybe his future is not secure ...

How might this study change the way you pray this week?

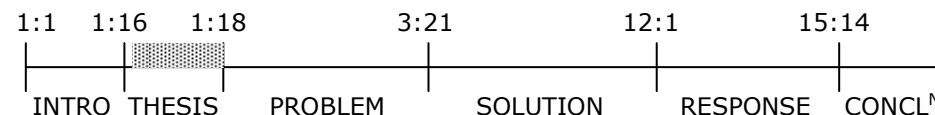
What would Paul say is the best thing about being a Christian?

Summary

Paul's letter to the young church in Rome has long been understood as 'a compendium of Christian doctrine'. Certainly it is difficult to imagine a more comprehensive summary of 'the gospel of God'. But Paul writes this gospel into a specific context, appealing to both Jewish and Gentile Christians to accept one another just as God accepts both (which he does on the same basis, from the same plight, by the same means). These studies focus on 'the melodic line' of this gospel running through the letter.

The gospel logic

Paul writes *Romans* with a very tight logic:



We must keep asking how each passage fits into Paul's developing argument. For example, 3:21-26 ([Study 3](#)) is a good summary of the gospel because it is a precise solution to the problem Paul has defined. In this study, the word translated 'rejoice' is exactly the same word as 'boast' in 2:17, 23; 3:27; 4:2: why does Paul say 'boasting is excluded' but then go on to say 'Therefore we boast ... and boast ... and boast' (5:2, 3, 11)?!

Theme Sentence

We have every cause to 'boast' because our future salvation is certain.

Ideas for application

- 5:1-11 tells us to 'boast' in who God is and what God has done! Let's!
- In particular, Christians view 'sufferings' differently. How important it is that we understand what this passage teaches so that we're fully prepared to 'boast in our sufferings' when they come.
- At times, we all wonder if God loves us. Sometimes we see ourselves as lovable because, wrongly, we think ourselves worthy in God's eyes. At other times, we may feel overwhelmed by our sin and feel totally unlovable. But Paul turns us back to the cross where love is proved.
- Many Christians lack assurance: Paul gives us solid grounds to be sure that our future is guaranteed. It's not to be found in our current experience but in what God has done as evidence for what he will do.