

Section Two -- God's justification of some unrighteous human beings through Christ (3:21-5:21)

Section Three -- God's sanctification of justified human beings through Christ (6:1-8:39)

Section Four -- The status of Israel in God's covenant purposes (9:1-11:36)

Section Five -- Practical exhortations related to the implications of receiving God's grace in Christ (12:1-15:13)

In this exposition we will confine ourselves to the first three sections, dealing with the great themes of Condemnation, Justification, and Sanctification.

However, before proceeding we need to look more closely at the theme of the epistle (1:16-17) and its key ideas. Paul says:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

There are four key words in this theme that should be noted: gospel, salvation, righteousness, and faith.

(1) What is the gospel?

On the one hand, the gospel is the good news that God has graciously accomplished salvation for sinful human beings through Christ and His redemptive work -- His incarnation, atonement, and resurrection -- and that God graciously applies that salvation to sinful human beings through faith in Christ and His redemptive work.

On the other hand, the gospel is the good news of salvation by Christ's redemptive work applied through faith.

(2) What does salvation mean in this context?

Salvation is deliverance. In verse 16 salvation means deliverance from sin. However, since sin is a very general term, we need to make it more specific.

Does salvation in this usage mean deliverance from the guilt of sin, i.e., deliverance from liability to transgressed Law?

Does salvation mean deliverance from the penalty of sin, death?

Does salvation mean deliverance from the power of sin, the power of innate depravity?

Or does salvation mean deliverance from the presence of sin, the very presence of innate depravity?

What does salvation mean, when Paul says that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation? Which meaning is intended here? Or are all four needed for the fullness of salvation?