



BE TRANSFORMED

THIS HANDOUT

BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER ONE



FAST FACTS

ROMANS CHAPTER 1

- St. Paul begins his Epistle with a reference to himself as an Apostle, and a description of the Gospel of God.
- Verses 16-17 provide the theme for the Epistle. St. Paul shows that salvation is a righteous act of God, accomplished in Jesus Christ's death and Resurrection, and proclaimed in the Gospel message that he (and the Church) teaches.
- Romans 1:18 begins an extended part of the Epistle in which St. Paul presents the Gospel of the righteousness of God that is offered by faith to all humanity.

ON THE CD

- AM I ASHAMED?
- CREATION SHOWS GOD'S ATTRIBUTES
- THE GRACE OF GOD
- REACHING TO GOD
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- MUCH MORE!

ROMANS 1

St. Paul begins by describing himself. He is a "bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1). This tells us three closely related things. First, St. Paul is a bondservant (slave), meaning that his function in life is to obey and serve his Master, Jesus Christ. Second, he tells us that he was called to be an Apostle. Finally, he says that he was by God in order to proclaim the Gospel message.

St. Paul continues by describing the Gospel of God: it concerns "His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:3-4). The Gospel is centered in, and focused on, "Jesus Christ our Lord." The "Spirit of holiness" mentioned here is, of course, the Holy Spirit. St. Paul uses the term "Spirit of holiness," rather than the more direct "Holy Spirit," to emphasize that this same Spirit also makes us holy.

St. Paul continues by emphasizing his special call by Jesus Christ to proclaim the Gospel (Romans 1:5). St. Paul is able to fulfill his calling to be an apostle because he is given the grace, or power and ability, from God (see Romans 12:3, 6; 15:15).

Verses 8-9 demonstrate for us that membership in the Church is a relationship as part of the body of Christ. In these verses he shows us that our relationship with each other, and our relationship with God (both as individuals and as members of His Church), are inseparable.

St. Paul refers in verses 11-12 to two of his reasons for writing and visiting the church in Rome: he wants to give them a gift that will result in their being established, and he wants to encourage - and be encouraged by - the Romans. The gift St. Paul wants to give is his apostolic

DO I PRAY FOR OTHERS?

Orthodox Christian worship involves praying to God; in fact, as Vasili Rozanov writes, "The soul of Orthodoxy consists in the gift of prayer."

For what should we pray? St. Basil the Great lists four basic elements that should be in all of our personal prayers: glorify God; giving thanks to Him for the mercies He has shown you; confessing your sins and trespasses; and asking Him to grant what you need, particularly in relation to your salvation.

You should also pray for others, asking that God will give to them everything they need. St. John of Kronstadt tells us,

When you are struck by other people's suffering, and the contraction of their souls, so that you are induced to pray for them with a pitying and contrite heart, pray to God to have mercy on them and to forgive them their sins, as you would pray for the forgiveness of your own sins - that is, implore God with tears to pardon them; likewise pray for the salvation of others as you would pray for your own salvation.

Praying for others, which is called "intercessory prayer," is one of the activities of both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ "always lives to make intercession" for Christians (Hebrews 7:25).

St. Paul further tells us that the Holy Spirit engages in intercessory prayer: "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27).

CONTINUE

teaching (see verse 15): by instructing them in their faith, St. Paul will help strengthen the church in Rome. Furthermore, his presence among the Romans will encourage them, just as their faith will encourage him.

As we can see in the article on the theme of Romans, verses 16-17 provide the theme for the entire Epistle. St. Paul shows that salvation is a righteous act of God, accomplished in Jesus Christ's death and Resurrection, and proclaimed in the Gospel message that he (and the Church) teaches. A relationship with God transforms the Christian, empowering him or her to become the person intended by God. Verse 17 - "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith' - can at first seem confusing. In this verse the righteousness of God refers to the righteousness and holiness that comes from God to the believer through faith.

Romans 1:18 begins an extended part of the Epistle in which St. Paul presents the Gospel of the righteousness of God that is offered by faith to all humanity. For the remainder of this chapter he focuses on what we might call the "bad news" for Gentiles: their willfully ignoring God, and instead living in wickedness and depravity, will result in their destruction.



WHAT IS SALVATION?

What does it mean to be saved? Is salvation simply spending eternity with God in heaven, instead of spending eternity separated from Him?

Salvation is ultimately far more than this: it is achieving true unity with God. Bishop Kallistos Ware says "If [a person] is to be 'perfectly one' with God, this means in effect that man must be 'deified': he is called to become by grace what God is by nature." This process, called *theosis* or divinization, is the heart of salvation. Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, summarizing the thought of St. Symeon the New Theologian, provides a more explicit definition of *theosis*:

Divinization is the state of man's total transformation, effected by the Holy Spirit, when man observes the commandments of God, acquires the evangelical virtues and shares in the sufferings of Christ. The Holy Spirit then gives man a divine intelligence and incorruptibility. Man does not receive a new soul, but the Holy Spirit unites essentially with the whole man, body and soul. He makes of him a son of God, a god by adoption, though man does not cease being a man, a simple creature, even when he clearly sees the Father. He may be called man and god at the same time.

Fr. Theodore Bobosh states regarding *theosis*: "A sure sign of being saved is *theosis* - to be changed so purely into the image of God that the light of Christ shines in and through you. It is a perfect gift from God. It is the Way of life for all Christians."

DO I STRUGGLE WITH PASSIONS?

Do you struggle with any of passions listed in Romans 1:29-32? If so, do not give up on yourself as a "lost cause" who lives in total rejection of God. In reality, overcoming the passions is central to the Orthodox life.

The passions are, for lack of a better term, our corrupt impulses; they are the lusts and emotions that turn our attention away from God and onto ourselves. Christ lists some of the passions: "What

comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man." (Mark 7:20-23). St. Peter of Damascus - using the Bible as his basis - created a list of 298 passions, summarizing them as "a falling away from God in all things, utter destruction."



How does God, through His Church, enable you to overcome these passions? St. Theophan the Recluse, a nineteenth century Russian saint, explains how:

Work at finding your primary passion and direct active as well as spiritual warfare against it. I cannot tell just what your primary passion is. Maybe it is as yet undefined; nevertheless, if you begin looking after the heart's impulses more rigorously, it will make itself known to you...Kill the passions both inwardly and externally, and cultivate your good aspects, giving them full range and exercise. The main thing is prayer...After this follows the labor of good deeds...Along with this, spiritually beneficial reading and conversation must take place; prayers and daily Scripture readings must be carried out as well as deeds of self-mortification - renounce yourself when it is necessary.

