



BE TRANSFORMED

THIS HANDOUT

BEING TRANSFORMED BY AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS



FAST FACTS

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

- The Holy Apostle Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans approximately 57 AD.
- The theme of the Epistle is that salvation is a righteous act of God, accomplished in Jesus Christ's death and Resurrection, and proclaimed in the Gospel message that St. Paul (and the Church) teaches. A relationship with God transforms the Christian, empowering him or her to become the person intended by God.

ON THE CD

- THE PURPOSE
- PHOTOGRAPH OF RUINS OF CORINTH
- ST. PRISCILLA
- AM I TIRED?
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WHO IS ST. PAUL?

The Holy Apostle Paul was born in the city of Tarsus, in modern-day Turkey (Acts 21:39). He was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5), and was a member of a wealthy family who were citizens of the Roman Empire (Acts 22:25, 27). His Hebrew name was Saul, but he was also called by the Latin name Paulus (which we know as Paul) (Acts 13:9).

St. Paul traveled to Jerusalem to study theology and law under the famous rabbi, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Despite the fact that Gamaliel refused to persecute the early Christians (Acts 5:34-39), St. Paul at first viewed the Christians as a threat that needed to be destroyed. The Apostle first appears in Acts 7:58, where he guarded the clothes of the men who killed St. Stephen; he went on to make "havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison" (Acts 8:3).

When St. Paul was traveling to Damascus (the modern-day home of the Patriarchate of Antioch) to capture Christians in the city, Jesus appeared to him in a vision; after this vision, the Apostle was blinded until he was healed in Damascus by St. Ananias (9:1-18). St. Paul was then baptized, and began to preach about Christ throughout Damascus (9:18-21).

St. Paul spent three years in inner Arabia (Galatians 1:17). We do not know exactly what he did during this time, but the Church traditionally teaches that he spent most of his time meditating and praying by himself. He was then introduced to the other Apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-28), and he later joined St. Barnabas in Antioch (11:25-26).

It was in Antioch, approximately 48-49 AD, that St. Paul began his first great missionary journey (Acts 13-14). He and Ss. Barnabas and Mark traveled to Cyprus

THE THEME OF ROMANS

The theme of the Holy Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans is clearly seen in Romans 1:16-17:

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

In this 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 saving relationship with God transforms the Christian, empowering him or her to become the person intended by God.

The Epistle to the Romans teaches us that, through our relationship with God, we can "Be Transformed!"



CONTINUE

and Pamphylia, and then he and St. Barnabas traveled to Pisidia and Lycaonia. In approximately 49-50 AD, Ss. Paul and Barnabas attended the Council in Jerusalem, where the Apostles decided that converts to Christianity did not need to be circumcised in fulfillment of the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1-35).

In approximately 50-52 AD, Ss. Paul and Silas went on St. Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-18:22). They traveled through Syria, Cilicia, and Lycaonia. They then went through Phrygia and Galatia, and later into Macedonia (after St. Paul experienced a vision telling him to go there) (16:9). They traveled to Philippi, Thessalonica and Athens, where St. Paul gave a famous speech at the Areopagus about worshipping the one true God (17:19-24). Finally, St. Paul spent one and one-half years in Corinth. On his way back to Antioch, St. Paul briefly stopped in Ephesus.

St. Paul's third missionary journey occurred approximately 53-57 AD (Acts 18:23-21:16). He spent approximately three years in Ephesus, where his preaching persuaded many people who practiced magic to burn their expensive books (19:19). He traveled through Macedonia and Greece; it was during his three months in Greece that he wrote his Epistle to the Romans (see Romans 15:25-26). He then journeyed back to Jerusalem to deliver to the church there money that had been donated by the Macedonians.

On his trip to Jerusalem St. Paul stopped in Caesarea, where St. Agabus prophesied that he would be captured and delivered in chains to the Gentiles (Acts 21:11). A mob attacked St. Paul in the Temple in Jerusalem, but he was rescued by Roman soldiers and taken back to Caesarea (21:27-23:33). During a trial before the governor of Judea, Porcius Festus (and later King Herod Agrippa II), St. Paul claimed his right as a Roman citizen to be tried before Caesar: he was then taken to Rome (25:11-12).

St. Paul was briefly shipwrecked off the Island of Malta during his journey to Rome (Acts 27:41-28:1), but he eventually arrived safely and spent two years under house arrest (28:30) before eventually being freed. He then traveled to Spain, but soon returned to the churches in Macedonia, Ephesus, and Crete, and then moved on through Epirus before returning to Rome.

St. Paul was beheaded by Roman soldiers on the Ostia highway in Rome in approximately 64 AD; he is traditionally believed to have been martyred on the same day that the Holy Apostle Peter was crucified on Vatican Hill. St. Paul was approximately sixty years old when he died.

St. Paul shares a feast day with St. Peter on June 29th.



DO I READ THE BIBLE?

A lot of people avoid the Bible because they think it is a dusty old book that has nothing to say about modern life. They may also think that, because the Bible is so old, it is impossible to understand. Some people even think that the Bible is simply a book of "bad news," full of unpleasant rules designed to make life less fun. In reality, however, the Bible is exciting and challenging, understandable, and very relevant for modern life.

First of all, the Bible is exciting because it challenges everything we think and do. The Bible isn't simply a boring collection of rules and "inspirational quotes:" it shakes us up and forces us to look at how we see the world and live our lives. It gives us teachings and examples about standing up for what we believe, overcoming problems, caring for others, and - most importantly - developing a deep relationship with God while living in a shallow society.

Furthermore, the Bible is understandable. This doesn't mean that anyone can simply pick up the Bible, read it for an hour or two, and understand everything they need to know. Instead, the Bible is understandable because there are many resources which help us understand the background of the biblical texts, as well as determining precisely what each biblical author was saying. The traditional teachings of the Church regarding biblical passages help us apply these passages to our spiritual lives, and avoid some of the strange interpretations and practices that some individuals develop on their own.

Finally, the Bible is very relevant for your life as a 21st century Christian. Most importantly, the Bible in general - and the Epistle to the Romans specifically - will help you grow in your relationship with God. The Bible is more than just a book of theology, however: it also helps us to cope with issues we face every day. For example, the Bible teaches us how to handle money (Proverbs 13:11; Ecclesiastes 5:10), how to treat others (Colossians 3:12), and teaches us about the attitude we should have toward work (Proverbs 14:23; Colossians 3:23).

As we read the Bible, you'll find that you agree with what Blessed Augustine of Hippo wrote in the fourth century: people who read the Bible "will find there in much greater abundance things that are to be found nowhere else, but can be learnt only in the wonderful sublimity and wonderful simplicity of the Scriptures."

