



BE TRANSFORMED

THIS HANDOUT

BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER TEN



FAST FACTS

ROMANS CHAPTER 10

- Many first century Jews had zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge of faith in Jesus Christ.
- Righteousness comes through whole-hearted belief in God, and salvation through confessing this belief.
- "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).
- Faith comes from hearing preached the Word of Christ.
- Nature has taught the world about the majesty of the Creator.
- The Hebrew prophets prophesied that Gentiles would turn to God.

ON THE CD

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ROMANS 10

St. Paul begins Romans chapter ten in much the same way as he began chapter nine: proclaiming his great love for the zealous people of Israel (Romans 10:1-2). There is a problem, however, with their zeal: it is not according to knowledge (Romans 10:2). Have you heard the phrase, "You can be sincere, and still be sincerely wrong?" That is the problem with this group of people. They work to make themselves righteous by following the Law, but reject the Person to Whom the Law points: Jesus Christ (10:3-4). The Jews understood keeping the Law to be the source of life (Deuteronomy 6:25); the problem is that it is impossible to fully keep the Law, meaning that humans need salvation apart from the Law (see Galatians 3:10-14).

In Romans 10:6-8, St. Paul adopts another statement by the Holy Prophet and Godseer Moses (from Deuteronomy 30:12-14) to reinforce the righteousness of faith. Moses teaches that the Israelites have no excuse for not following the Law: it is neither too high or low to be found, but instead "is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (Deuteronomy 30:14; quoted in Romans 10:8). Likewise, the first century Jews have no reason to reject faith in Christ: they are unable - and have no need - to rise to heaven or descend into the abyss to find Christ and make His righteousness available, because He is available to them in the "word of faith" preached by St. Paul and other Christians (Romans 10:8). Notice the meaning St. Paul finds in Moses' teaching that the word is "in your mouth and in your heart:" "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Righteousness comes through your whole-hearted belief in God, and you confess - during such parts of the Liturgy as the Nicene Creed, and to others in evangelism - this transforming belief.

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PATIENT EVANGELISM

Lifestyle evangelism can involve tremendous patience. While some people immediately fall in love with Orthodoxy upon being introduced to the Faith, far more require a substantial amount of time as they wrestle with the theology and traditions that may differ greatly from their religious background. We should be entirely supportive, willing to answer their questions and help them become involved in the Orthodox spiritual life while at the same time not harassing them or putting undue pressure on them to convert.

We should also remember that our friendships should not be contingent upon our friends converting to Orthodox Christianity. If they decide not to convert - or even if they never show interest in Orthodoxy - we should continue our friendships. There are few things more spiritually damaging to non-Christians than to have Christians abandon friendships when it is clear that the non-Christian will not convert. We should always do everything with love for others.



Romans 10:11 echoes a theme from 5:3-5: Christian belief and hope is not unfounded, and will not be proved false; God will fulfill His promise of salvation and reconcile us to Him. This promise is not restricted to the physical descendents of Abraham; it is given to all people, as even the Jews should know because it is promised by the Holy Prophet Joel, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Joel 2:32; quoted in Romans 10:13 and referenced in Acts 9:14).

There is a problem for the Gentiles: how are they supposed to know that they need to call on the Lord (Romans 9:14)? How shall they believe in Him if they've never heard of Him? "How," St. Paul asks, "Shall they hear without a preacher?" In this passage St. Paul addresses one of the reasons for which he writes the Epistle: to explain to the church in Rome his mission to the Gentiles. He continues, "And how shall they preach unless they are sent" (9:15)? St. Paul is saying that he, an apostle (Romans 1:1), is being sent by God to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.

St. Paul understands the underlying point of the objection of some Jews: how could the Gentiles have heard God's good news, since God never spoke to them (Romans 10:18)? The answer is that God *has* spoken to the Gentiles. St. Paul quotes Psalm 19:4 as evidence that nature proclaims the Creator. Since God has spoken to the Gentiles, it is inaccurate to object that He does not care about them.

St. Paul foresees another objection: even if God *did* speak to the Gentiles, how were the Israelites supposed to know that He did so? The Apostle believes the answer lies in a prophecy from the Holy Prophet and Godseer Moses in Deuteronomy 32:21: God would provoke the Israelites to anger through His interaction with a group of people who - according to the standards of the Law - were so corrupt that they did not even deserve to be called a nation (see Romans 10:19). St. Paul further quotes the Holy Prophet Isaiah, who boldly prophesied that God would be found by those who did not seek Him (Isaiah 65:1, quoted in Romans 10:20). Isaiah's description of the Gentiles matches St. Paul's description in Romans 9:30: the Gentiles did not seek God, and yet after hearing the Gospel, they humbly submitted themselves to Him.

In contrast to the Gentiles, who until the work of the Apostles had little opportunity to learn about God beyond studying nature, Israel had full opportunity to learn about God and the righteousness of faith that He demands. St. Paul, after quoting Isaiah 65:1 about the Gentiles, now quotes Isaiah 65:2 about Israel: "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people" (Romans 10:21). Those Jews who rejected Christianity therefore could not plead ignorance, for God had spoken to them throughout their history.



INVITE FRIENDS TO CHURCH

First, we should think carefully about the service to which we first invite them. Usually the best service for inquirers to attend first is Vespers; the shorter service will enable them to experience Orthodox worship without being overwhelmed by the length and complexity of the Divine Liturgy.

We should *absolutely* let our friends know what to expect during an Orthodox service. The icons, incense, crossing, bowing, and other elements of Orthodox worship can be completely overwhelming to an individual who does not know what to expect. We should first explain in advance what will occur in the service, as well as the fact that visitors are not expected to know all the ritual behavior expected of Orthodox Christians; they should know that they can simply observe what happens and participate as they are inclined, without any pressure to know exactly what to do and when to do it. Allowing our friends to use a prayer book or text of the service will enable them to follow along with us.

We should, if possible, also let people in our parish know beforehand that we will be bringing a visitor with us. We should ensure that our friends are warmly welcomed by members of the parish community, and - if they come to Divine Liturgy - they should be provided with refreshments during the time of fellowship after the service.



PROCLAIM YOUR FAITH

We must proclaim our faith, as St. Maximos, the seventh century patriarch of Constantinople, teaches,

Complete salvation depends not on the faith of the heart alone, but also upon confessing it, for the Lord said, 'Who-soever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven' (Matthew 10:33)...If, then, God and the divine Prophets and Apostles command that the mystery of faith be confessed in words and with the tongue, and this mystery of faith brings salvation to the whole world, then people must not be forced to keep silence with regard to confession, lest the salvation of people be hindered.