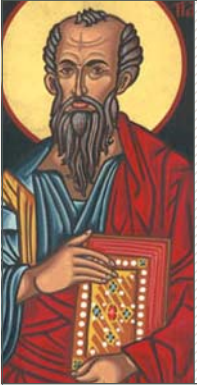




BE TRANSFORMED

THIS HANDOUT

BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER FIVE



FAST FACTS

ROMANS CHAPTER 5

- Christians have been justified by faith.
- Justification gives peace and access to the Father and His grace.
- You should glory in tribulations, because enduring tribulations builds perseverance, which in turn builds character, which gives you hope.
- God's love is proved by the fact that Jesus Christ died for us while we were still sinners.
- We have received reconciliation with the Father through Jesus' death and resurrection
- Sin and death entered the world through Adam, but the grace of God and the hope of salvation were given to the world through Christ.

ON THE CD

- PEACE
- AM I EXCITED ABOUT GOD?
- SIN AND DEATH
- PATIENCE OF JOB
- INTERACTIVE QUIZ
- MUCH MORE!

ROMANS 5

St. Paul opens chapter five with an important statement about Christians' relationship with God: "Therefore, having been justified by faith..." (Romans 5:1). This builds upon his concluding point in chapter four: Jesus died and was raised for our justification which, as he says in this verse, we receive through faith.

Justification results in a new relationship with God. St. Paul lists some of the tremendous blessings that result from this relationship. First, justification brings "peace with God" (Romans 5:1). He explains this peace in verses 10-11: Jesus gives us peace by reconciling God and humanity (see below). Christ also gives us access to God the Father and His grace (Romans 5:2; see also Ephesians 2:18); through Christ and His work justifying us, every Christian has access to the Father (see Hebrews 9:11-15).

It is easy for us to pass over St. Paul's mention that we stand in grace, but we shouldn't: this is a particularly powerful statement about God's transforming work in our lives. St. John Chrysostom tells us that God's grace "hath no end, it knows no bound, but evermore is on the advance to greater things." Because God's grace transforms us, and we can currently experience this transformation, we have the hope of even greater transformation.

St. Paul explains in verses 3-5 that Christians can experience hope even when undergoing difficulties. As Christians experience tribulation, we develop perseverance. As we grow in our ability to persevere under tribulation, our character becomes stronger and refined. As our character grows, we develop hope in God. This hope is not simply wishful thinking that God will step in and relieve our current suffering: it is the peace that comes from our relationship with God, "Because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us"

JUSTIFICATION

Bishop Kallistos Ware summarizes justification:

When we Orthodox speak about salvation, we do not have in view any sharp differentiation between justification and sanctification [which the Orthodox Study Bible defines as "the process of growth in Christ whereby the believer is made holy as God is holy, through the Holy Spirit"]...Orthodoxy links sanctification and justification together, just as St. Paul does in 1 Corinthians 6:11: 'You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.' The references to justification in the opening chapters of Romans (for example 3:20, 24, 28), we understand in the light of Romans 6:4-10, which describe our radical incorporation through baptism into Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Salvation, as already stated, is not a single event in our past life but an ongoing process of growth in Christ. It is not simply to turn our face in the right direction and to take the first step on our journey, but it is to continue walking until by God's grace we attain our journey's end. We Orthodox, then, 'see 'justification' and 'sanctification' as one divine action.



CONTINUE

(Romans 5:5). St. Ephraim the Syrian, a fourth century saint, summarizes this point, "There is a misery that is profit, it is a fountain of joys."

The love of God is the basis for our hope, because it was His loving action for us that enables us to have hope. Christ's love is so great that He died for us even when we separated ourselves from Him. In fact, He died specifically to end this separation (5:10). St. Paul reminds us of this to reinforce his point: if the Father loves us so deeply that He had His Son die in order to reconcile us to Him, and He did this even though we were at war with Him, then we can definitely put our hope in God now that we have been justified (5:9).

Sin entered the world, St. Paul explains, through the sin of Adam; death is the result of this sin (Romans 5:12, 14; see Genesis 3). In verses 14-15 St. Paul briefly breaks away from this point to note that, because the Law did not exist before it was given to Moses, those who lived before the Law are not believed to have engaged in as egregious a sin as those who knew the Law but nonetheless sinned. At the same time, even though the people before Moses did not sin in the same way as did Adam, they nonetheless suffered the same condemnation of death.

Returning to the main point, it would be easy for us to despair: if I suffer death because Adam sinned and died, then life is truly hopeless. There is hope, however, in the free gift of salvation offered by Christ. Adam was a "type" - or pattern - of Christ in that the effects of the actions taken by both were universal. Adam's sin resulted in death and condemnation for all, while the gift of grace offered by Christ is freely offered to all (Romans 5:15-19). We can be hopeful because the two situations are not identical in power: Christ's gift of grace is far more powerful and effective than Adam's sin (5:15). This can be seen in the ways in which St. Paul describes Christ's gift: it is "much more" than Adam's fall (5:15); it is an abundance of grace (5:17) that abounded much more than sin (5:20).

St. Paul concludes the chapter by telling his readers that the purpose of the Law was to awaken God's people to the seriousness of sin and their inability to overcome sin on their own. However, while sin abounded (and still abounds in the world today), the grace of God abounded much more in the saving work of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:20).

WORSHIP IS EXCITING!

Khouria Frederica Mathewes-Green describes how exciting the Divine Liturgy can be:

Heaven will strike earth like lightning on this spot. The worshippers in this little building will be swept into a divine worship that proceeds eternally, grand with seraphim and incense and God enthroned, 'high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple' (Isaiah 6:1). The foundations of that temple shake with the voice of angels calling 'Holy' to each other, and we will be there, lifting fallible voices in the refrain, an outpost of eternity. If this is true, it is the most astonishing thing that will happen in our city today. I believe it is true.

YOU ARE INFLUENTIAL

Life is about relationship. Relationships can sometimes be a tremendous blessing; they can sometimes be a tremendous problem. The things you do - the way in which you live your life - can have a significant impact on not only yourself, but also your current friends and family, people around you, and even your potential future spouse and children.

Just think: if you alienate someone from Christianity because you failed to live up to your Christian values, your behavior might also result in that person's friends and family rejecting Christianity after they hear about you. A bad example could have a negative impact for generations. At the same time, however, living a righteous life could have a positive impact for generations. Superb examples of this are the saints, whose lives continue to positively impact the world centuries after their repose.

If you marry and have children, your influence on those children can be profound. St. John Chrysostom teaches, "Generally, the children acquire the character of the parents, are formed in the mold of their parents' temperaments, love the same things that parents love, talk in the same fashion, and work for the same ends." If your character is that of a righteous Christian, your children will have an example to follow; if however, you are hypocritical or abusive, your children will be damaged by your parenting.

Your friendship can also be a powerful influence on people. In a retreat for teens from the Orthodox Church in America, a writer states,

My friends have a unique effect on me. Sometimes they make me feel loved and cared for; at other times they give my life meaning and purpose or they remind me how unique and important I am. My friends are a powerful force in my life. They ease the burdens I sometimes face. They comfort me, help me, cheer me up, and are concerned about me as a person.

What kind of influence do you want to have?

