



# BE TRANSFORMED

THIS HANDOUT



BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER SIX



FAST FACTS

## ROMANS CHAPTER 6

- Christians should not sin in order to receive grace.
- Christians have been baptized into Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.
- Being baptized into Christ enables Christians to live in righteousness rather than sin.
- Reckon yourself to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ.
- Sinful "freedom" results only in shame and death.
- Being a slave to righteousness produces the fruit of holiness and leads to eternal union with God.

### ON THE CD

- WHOM DO I SERVE?
- OBEDIENCE AND SERVICE
- AM I A SLAVE TO SIN?
- MATTHEW 11:28-30
- INTERACTIVE QUIZ
- MUCH MORE!

## ROMANS 6

Some first-century groups believed that they should engage in sin precisely so that they would receive more grace (see Romans 3:8). St. Paul responds to this misunderstanding of the Gospel by asking, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not" (Romans 6:1-2)! It would be ludicrous for Christians to continue in sin, he says, because we have died to sin (6:2).

*You might have a question at this point: since you are obviously alive, how can you have died to sin? The answer is in verse three: you were baptized into Christ's death when you were baptized into Him. St. Paul starts his discussion on Holy Baptism by stating that we "were baptized into Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:3). This means that Holy Baptism isn't simply a ritual bath or washing: it is the beginning of a new and deep union with Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:13). Because we are baptized into Christ, we are also baptized into His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). This experience is not merely similar to Christ's, or a reenactment of Christ's death and resurrection: it is a true union with Christ in everything*

This real experience enables us to live in righteousness rather than sin (Romans 6:6-7). St. Cyril of Alexandria writes in the fifth century, "As we have been buried, so we must rise with Christ in a spiritual sense. For if to be buried together with Christ means dying to sin, then it is clear that rising with Him means living in righteousness."

Since we have been buried and resurrected with Christ in Holy Baptism, how should we live? St. Paul answers that we should "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:11). This answer is important, not only because it reminds us that we are blessed to be alive in Christ, but also because it reminds us that we should "reckon" ourselves

## SIN

"In Orthodoxy," Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos writes, "we regard sin as an illness of man. Man fell ill and this illness had an effect on the whole human race." Sin is universal: as St. Paul states in Romans 3:23, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (the exception being Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22)). St. John reinforces this point when he says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us...If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives" (1 John 1:8, 10).

According to St. John of Damascus, Adam's fall resulted in the image of God becoming darkened in humanity, thereby breaking communion and unity with God. St. John of Kronstadt agrees: "The problem of our life is union with God, and sin completely prevents this."

Death entered the world as a result of sin (Romans 5:14; 6:23). St. Maximos the Confessor, a seventh century Christian, explains, "Death in the true sense is separation from God, and 'the sting of death is sin' (1 Corinthians 15:56). Adam, who received the sting, became at the same time an exile from the tree of life, from paradise and from God (see Genesis 3); and this was necessarily followed by the body's death."

A prayer we say before receiving Holy Communion tells you how deeply sin can be found in every aspect of our lives: "I pray to You, have mercy upon me, and forgive my transgressions, voluntary and involuntary, in word and deed, known and unknown." St. John of Kronstadt explains the importance of this prayer, "We sin in thought, word, and deed. In order to become pure images of the Most Holy Trinity, we must strive that our thoughts, words, and deeds may be holy. Thought corresponds, in God, to the Father, the word to the Son, and the deed to the all-accomplishing Holy Spirit."

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to be dead to sin, meaning that sin is still alive within us.

After repeating that God's grace is not an excuse for sin (Romans 6:15), St. Paul asks, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" It is impossible to serve two masters (as Jesus points out when discussing God and money in Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13) - each person will ultimately choose to be a slave to sin, or to God.

St. Paul uses the analogy of slavery to reinforce the seriousness of our situation: before we accepted and obeyed the Gospel we were completely enslaved by our sinful desires and activities (Romans 6:17); as Christ states, "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). Now that Christ has freed us from this slavery, however, we must now be slaves of righteousness (6:18). St. Paul explains, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). In his first epistle the Holy Apostle Peter emphasizes this point: "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1:14-16).

Pay attention to St. Paul's statement, "You obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Romans 6:17). This doctrine is the teaching of the Church; Fr. Lawrence Farley explains that at the time this was a basic creedal statement, followed by a moral commentary explaining how to live according to the creed.

Some people reject the idea of serving God - they want complete freedom without any Higher Authority dictating how they should behave. St. Paul, however, asks why anyone would want this type of so-called freedom. Sinful "freedom" results only in thoughts and behavior of which we are ashamed, and inevitably results ultimately in death (Romans 6:21, 23). By being a slave to God and righteousness, in contrast, Christians have the fruit of holiness and the promise of everlasting life in union with God (6:22-23).



## LABOR FOR GOD

St. John of Kronstadt teaches about those who labor for God:

*The Lord does not forsake those who labour for Him, and who stand before Him; for with what measure they mete, He will measure to them in return, and He will reward them for the abundance of the sincere words of their prayer by sending into their souls a corresponding abundance of spiritual light, warmth, peace, and joy.*

## BAPTISM

Christ proclaims the necessity of Holy Baptism when He tells St. Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). Holy Baptism was not merely a mystery which St. Nicodemus was commanded to receive. Christ told His Disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Bible makes it clear that two things are essential in Holy Baptism: belief in Christ (Mark 16:16) and repentance for one's previous sinful life (Acts 2:38). It is for this reason that the person being baptized - or his or her sponsors or godparents - renounces Satan and recites the Nicene Creed. St. Basil the Great tells us about the importance of faith in baptism:

*Faith and baptism are two kindred and inseparable ways of salvation: faith is perfected through baptism, baptism is established through faith, and both are completed by the same names. For as we believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, so are we also baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; first comes the confession, introducing us to salvation, and baptism follows, setting the seal upon our assent.*

The spiritual consequences of baptism - if the Christian has a true desire to die with Christ in the waters of baptism - include the cleansing of humanity from sin, victory over death, and the disappearance of the old nature inherited from Adam. As St. Gregory of Nyssa, a fourth century Christian, teaches, "Baptism is therefore the cleansing of sins, the forgiveness of transgressions, the cause of renewal and rebirth.

Baptism also initiates us into two things. First, as St. Paul teaches in Romans 6:3, we are baptized into Christ. St. Cyril of Jerusalem explains, "Having been baptized into Christ, and having put on Christ, you have been conformed to the Son of God, for God predestined us to be adopted sons and made us to share the likeness of Christ's glorious body (Ephesians 1:5)." Second, our baptism initiates us into the Church (see Ephesians 2:19). St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, comments on this passage, "Holy Baptism is like a door by which those that are baptized enter into the holy Church and become fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

