



BE TRANSFORMED

THIS HANDOUT

BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER EIGHT



FAST FACTS

ROMANS CHAPTER 8

- There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.
- Christians who live according to the Spirit grow in life and peace.
- Christians are the adopted children of God and joint heirs with Christ.
- Because we do not know the things for which we ought to pray, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us.
- “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).
- Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

ON THE CD

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ROMANS 8

Romans chapter eight continues the point made at the end of chapter seven: because we have been saved by Christ from our bodies of death (Romans 7:25), St. Paul can conclude, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1). St. Gennadios, bishop of Constantinople in the fifth century, proclaims, “Look how great Christ’s grace is in that He has set us free from condemnation!”

How have we been set free from the law of sin and death? Through the “Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:2). St. John Chrysostom explains that “the Spirit of life” is just a way of saying “the Spirit,” in other words, the Holy Spirit. The main point of Romans chapter eight is that Christ and the Holy Spirit both work to transform Christians. The Law is incapable of saving humans because we are too weak to fully observe it; Jesus, however, became human and therefore was able to condemn sin in the flesh and breaks sin’s inexorable hold on us (8:3).

The mind can be used to serve either God or sin. Those who reject God, and instead serve their selfish desires, become consumed with these desires: they think only about their passions, dedicate their lives to satisfying their passions, and eventually are destroyed by them (Romans 8:5, 6, 7). Christians, however, who live according to the Spirit, dedicate our lives to growing in relationship with God, and therefore grow in “life and peace” as we are united to Christ (8:5-6). Christians can experience life and peace because we are in the Spirit, and the Spirit of God dwells in each of us (Romans 8:9).

Romans 8:14-17 is one of the most beautiful and hope-promoting parts of the Epistle: instead of being fearful slaves of God, we should experience peace (Romans 8:6) because we are the children of God (8:14-15). While we

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THE SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

The Holy Spirit was poured out on Christians at Pentecost, marking the inauguration of the Church and equipping the Church to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth (see Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit also inspired the holy prophets and biblical writers. St. Peter tells us that no true word of prophecy was given without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:21). Similarly, St. Paul tells us that Holy Scripture is “given by inspiration” (2 Timothy 3:16); the Greek is *Theopneustos*, which literally means “God-breathed.”

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Church is not limited to the past. He continues to guide and direct the Church in fulfilling its God-given mission. St. Paul tells us that God “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

The presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit of the Church inspires St. Irenaeus to say, “Where the Church is, there also is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there also is the Church.” It is His presence that guarantees that the gates of Hell will never prevail against the Church (Matthew 16:18).



previously rebelled against Him, He has now adopted us (8:15); we can therefore address Him as "Abba, Father" ("Abba" is a term of endearment, similar to calling Him "Daddy"). It is easy for St. Paul to claim that we are adopted; how can we know that this is the case? Because "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16).

Because we are children of God, we are also "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). Contrary to the belief of some modern Christians, being a joint heir with Christ does not necessarily mean that our lives will be easy and trouble-free: Christians are called to "suffer with (Christ), that we may also be glorified together" (8:17). This suffering, even though it may be intense, nonetheless pales in comparison with the glory which shall be revealed in us as Christ's joint heirs (8:18). We humans are not the only ones who wait for this revelation of glory: all "creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God" (8:19). What is this "revealing of the sons of God" for which creation - and we ourselves - waits with such painful anticipation (Romans 8:23)? We wait for the redemption of the body, when death will be fully conquered and our bodies - now corruptible and mortal - will be perfected.

Because the Holy Spirit dwells in us, He helps us as we wait for our redemption. St. Paul notes that we often do not know the things for which we should pray - and he notes that we *ought* to know them - but the Spirit prays for us "with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). This does not mean that the Holy Spirit simply moans with misery; as Blessed Augustine says, "The Holy Spirit, who intercedes with God on behalf of the saints, does not groan as if he were in need and experiencing distress. Rather he moves us to pray when we groan, and thus he is said to do what we do when he moves us."

God uses our present suffering for our future good. He says, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose." This is God's purpose: to conform us to the image of the Son (Romans 8:29). Those whom God "foreknew" (from the Greek *proginosko*, meaning to know in advance) have been "predestined" (from the Greek *proorizo*, to determine or decide in advance) to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). These Christians, predestined to be conformed to Christ's image, are justified and ultimately glorified (8:30).

When we think of everything St. Paul teaches in Romans chapter eight, it becomes easy to understand what Fr. Lawrence Farley describes as the "jubilant climax" in verse 31: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" How can we doubt that He will glorify us (Romans 8:32)? Who can bring a criticize or condemn us (8:33-34)? It does not matter what we suffer, it does not matter how terrible our circumstances may be: God will always be with us, and will always love us. In addition to earthly problems, St. Paul says, "Neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, Nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:39).

YOU CAN TRUST GOD

Only God can unfailingly assist you during times of tribulation and struggle. Even if He chooses to allow you to suffer through the problems in order to accomplish His greater purpose in your life (Romans 8:28), He will always be with you to strengthen you during the bad times. A psalm attributed to Holy King David reinforces this belief: "I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised" (Psalm 18:1-3; see also 2 Samuel 22:2-4). The Holy Prophet Habakkuk gives a beautiful description of relying on God during times of trouble:

*Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls -
Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The LORD God^d is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer's feet,
And He will make me walk on my high hills.*
(Habakkuk 3:17-19)

The Holy Apostle Peter puts it simply, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Most importantly, only God can save you from sin and death.

How can you begin trusting God in everything? How can you experience this kind of trusting relationship in your daily life? A great way to start is by paying special attention to the litanies prayed during each Divine Liturgy. These litanies cover a wide array of the greatest concerns in our lives, from blessings for all Christians to protection from all afflictions and dangers. You might find it helpful to pray for these things throughout the day.



HELP SAVE CREATION

Through the baptism of Christ, humanity and creation are reconciled: the natural world is a source of grace and healing in our worship of God, and we can rightly exercise beneficial stewardship over nature. Earth will only be returned to this condition by humanity cooperating with God's saving work. Fr. Stanley Harakas explains that "this process can only happen through the mediation of man, the priest who refers creation back to the Creator. Creation expects fallen man to mediate for its salvation... Each of us should contribute as much as we can." Your efforts at recycling, at reducing pollution, at renewing damaged areas, and other environmental activities will allow you to cooperate with Christ in His work to sanctify the world.