



MAIN COMMENTARIES ON 'ROMANS'

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

Alan F. Johnson gives an excellent overview of this theme in the Epistle to the Romans: we will look at a brief overview of this to understand the how St. Paul develops this theme.

St. Paul begins his Epistle by showing that all people desperately need God to save them: Gentiles rebel against God through idolatry and a multitude of sins (1:18-32), while Jews and Christians are condemned when they compromise God's grace through a misplaced sense of self-righteousness (2:1-3:20). Only God's grace, accomplished through Christ's death and resurrection and freely received by the Christian, can result in reconciling a person to God (3-4). Being reconciled to God, entering into a relationship with Him, gives each Christian a new life in Christ: the person can experience profound joy (Romans 5) and overcome sin in his or her life through the power of the Holy Spirit (6-8).

St. Paul then looks at how Jews and Gentiles have rejected or ignored the truth about Jesus Christ and His saving work (Romans 9-11). He spends the majority of the remaining chapters examining how Christians should live in the Church and the world (12:1-15:13).

The *Orthodox Study Bible* lists the following subthemes in the Epistle:

1. The natural mortality and actual sinfulness of all (1:18-3:20).
2. Salvation through Christ apart from the Mosaic Law (3:21-4:25): we live by faith in response to grace, rather than by the dead works of the law.

3. New life in Christ: freedom from sin, death and the law through our sacramental identity with Christ, established in Holy Baptism (chs. 5-7).
4. New life in the Holy Spirit: the power to be Godlike, established in chrismation (ch. 8).
5. God's plan for Jews and Gentiles, and their reconciliation in Christ (chs. 9-11).
6. Christian life in the Church and in the world (chs. 12-16).

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