



ROMANS 1–6

REDEMPTION THROUGH JESUS THE CHRIST,
NOT THE LAW OF MOSES

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLES

What are Epistles? The answer is simple. Epistles are letters written to answer questions, address challenges, or regulate church issues. They include some of the sacred writings of the Apostolic Church from two members of the twelve, other apostles, and other early Christian leaders collected together as additional scripture. They were written to people on the path of discipleship. The authors often used scribes who wrote with a quill on parchment, papyrus, or vellum. Those copies were rewritten over and over (and in some places, edited) and finally translated. There are hundreds of Greek copies of each letter, but none are exactly the same, nor are the translations perfect, but I prefer NIV and BSB.

It is equally important to know what the Epistles are not. They are not an introduction to the gospel, nor a systematized exhaustive list of teachings, doctrines, theology, or procedures of the early church. By nature of being correspondence, we only have one half of the conversation—we often miss the question or issue that initiated the correspondence. They are not chronological, comprehensive, nor in their original form.

When did the Epistles become Scripture? In the New Testament, the word “scripture” always referred to the Old Testament, except for 2 Peter 3:15–16, where something Paul wrote was included with the scriptures (which probably referred to his Epistles, but that comment may have been added later).¹ Peter’s reference is the first hint of the creation of a new prophetic witness or new Testament, collected as a body of Christian writings. Early Christians gathered their sacred writings and shared them with other Christians, just as the ancient Israelites had. (In fact, the Old Testament canon was not closed until after the New Testament canon.) Church leaders filtered the growing body of false writings that were purported to have apostolic origins. The canon was not agreed upon and closed until AD 382.²

How were the Epistles organized? The compilers of the New Testament arranged the Epistles by size, not chronology. Paul wrote the most canonized Epistles, so his letters are first. His longest letter is first, and the shortest is last

(Hebrews was placed at the end because the authorship was debated).

In addition to its length, when Constantine oversaw the compilation of the Epistles, he wanted Romans first because it communicated what he wanted to be said. It speaks of “the gospel” as the “. . . power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16), of Christ’s work of atonement, resurrection, judgment, and Christians’ responsibilities to develop and maintain faith, practice repentance, and submit to ordinances including baptism, and the receiving the Holy Ghost.³

What were the Bias of the Translators? Anyone who has tried to communicate a new subject with someone from a different background can imagine part of the difficulties of translating biblical texts. Especially in the epistles, we see a clear bias by the translators—whether they are Eastern Orthodox or Catholic (JB) or Protestant (KJV). This is why the JST is so valuable. Also, the BYU Commentary Series provides new translations from the perspective of the restoration. As a word of caution, the KJV often includes bias and vocabulary from the five principal Calvinistic doctrines (all of which were denounced by the Prophet Joseph Smith).⁴



Saint Paul Writing by Pier Francesco Sacchi, 1520s via Wikimedia Commons.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE ROMANS

- **AUTHOR:** Paul (Romans 1:1), and scribe, Tertius (Romans 16:22).
- **AUDIENCE:** Believing saints (Romans 1:7), whom Paul had not yet visited (Romans 1:10), living in Rome. Paul wrote this “general epistle,” in excellent Greek and with extensive vocabulary (over 1,000 complicated words), suggesting his audience was well educated.⁵
- **LOCATION WRITTEN:** Probably, from Corinth or at the end of Paul’s 3rd Mission (Romans 1:11–13; 15:19–27; Acts 20:2–3).
- **DATES:** Winter of AD 57/58 (give or take a year or two).
- **THEMES in ROMANS:** The Plan of Salvation; Redemption through Christ, not the Law of Moses; Justification by Faith; Prepare for Judgment; Believers can become joint-heirs with our Savior; Duties to attain holiness. Ten of the sixteen chapters in Romans address the relationship between the Mosaic Law and the Christian Gospel. Most of these themes are used as an exploration of how Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses with His redeeming and universal sacrifice.

Understanding Romans: Romans needs to be read in the JST: There are more JST changes in this Epistle than any other. Joseph changed 119 verses or 27% of the text. Most of the changes are in the footnotes, and five excerpts in the Bible appendix, many are in our footnotes, but I’d suggest looking at the Hite, or other JST versions of Romans to read Joseph’s interpretation.

KEYS TO UNDERSTAND ROMANS

1. Romans is set up systematically to prove a theory. Paul writes as if he were arguing with an imaginary opponent in a *diatribe*. He develops his answers like a defense attorney. Often diatribes become monotonous. Yet, the reader must take in the whole case, not just its parts, in order to fully understand his thesis.
2. Resurrection or immortality is a gift from our Redeemer, but Eternal Life or exaltation requires repentance and the sacrifice of our all. It works only in conjunction with the forgiveness of our Mediator.
3. If something doesn’t make sense doctrinally, read a different translation or the Greek definition of trou-

bling words (i.e. Romans 3:24). Also look for similar doctrines in the Book of Mormon, D&C, and Conference Reports. Paul was not infallible, but he probably taught truths in keeping with the restoration.

Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire, grew from its humble beginnings of a drained swamp in 650 BC to boast the largest population of the empire, nearly one million people. By the time of Augustus Caesar's reign (27 BC-AD 14), they had paved roads, parks, libraries, gymnasiums, temples, forums, aqueducts to deliver running water to the city's fountains and 170 baths with hot, cold, and warm water. Augustus boasted he found the city in brick and left it in marble. One-half of the city were slaves-servants. Many foreigners lived in Rome, including Jews making up 10% of the population). Jews were mentioned as early as Julius Caesar's funeral in 44BC. In a Roman satire from the time, Jews were depicted as an unwelcome reality.



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I: FOLLY OF TRUSTING IN CIRCUMCISION, LINEAGE, OR MOSAIC LAW FOR REDEMPTION

In chapters 1–4, Paul opens his first diatribe denouncing any source of redemption other than faith in Christ.

Greetings to the Saints in Rome

Romans 1:1-6

Romans 1:1 “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus” (NIV) *Paulos* is actually his Greek name (meaning “small or little”) but is translated as Paul. The “*os/us*” is a Latin ending which speaks to Paul’s Roman citizenship, but he does not introduce himself with his full three-names that were a sign of Roman of citizenship.⁶ Instead, he introduces himself as a servant (or also translated from the Greek, “*doulos*,” a born bondman or slave) of the “Messiah/Christ” (Hebrew and Greek for the “Anointed One”). Rome had “three slaves to one free citizen.”⁷ Paul uses the word to describe his total submission to the Lord.

“called to be an apostle” The word “*apostolos*” means, “one sent, messenger or delegate,” which reinforces Paul’s use of “born bondman.” Paul was called by the resurrected Christ to witness and serve Him (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). To some degree, so are each one of us. “Many are called” (Matthew 22:14; D&C 121:40).

“and set apart for the gospel of God” (NIV) The word, “set apart/“*aphorizó*”/separated” meant, “to mark off by boundaries from, set apart.” I appreciate the fuller meaning of “setting apart” in the context of this verse: a servant of God, sent on an assignment or mission, with a special commission and blessing. The boundaries are God’s directions contained in the gospel. The word “gospel” or “good tidings” is literally, “Good News from God” (KJV, DBT, WEB).⁸ The gospel is the Lord’s plan of salvation. We believe God presented it during premortal councils and it pivots on the appointment of a redeemer to atone for the sins of the world. All doctrines and everything else taught in “the scriptures” (Old Testament writings and more), are tangential to this good news.

Romans 1:2 “promised afore by his prophets” Paul confirms the fulfillment of prophecies, types and shadows of the Messiah.⁹ It was very important to the Jews, that Jesus fulfilled the Messianic hopes and promises of David’s lineage given from many prophets (i.e. Psalm 89:4; Isaiah 7:11; 9:7; 11:1; etc.).

Romans 1:3–4 “who was a descendant of David according to the flesh, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God” (BSB) Paul declares Jesus’ human and divine existence. He does not speak pejoratively by emphasizing the “flesh” and “*sperma/seed*.” His dual nature is “declared,” meaning “appointed or set forth” or “established.” It does not mean something spoken, nor “predestined” (as the Latin Vulgate text and the reformer Calvin misinterpreted). This is the only time in scripture that we find “Spirit of holiness.” Romans 1:4 is a verse that has different meanings with different translations:

BLB

“Having been declared the Son of God in power according to *the* Spirit of holiness, by resurrection from *the* dead: Jesus Christ our Lord”

NIV

“And who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord”

KJV

“And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”

This verse does not mean that the resurrection “made” Jesus into the “Son of God,” as many Christians understand. Rather, Paul teaches here that before the resurrection, Jesus was also the Son of God.¹⁰ This confirms Luke’s record that Jesus was conceived when “the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee” (Luke 1:35). The resurrection of the dead provides evidence of His Sonship and also declares that appointment.

Romans 1:5 “Through Him and on behalf of His name, we received grace and apostleship to call all those among the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith” (BSB) The Savior was the source of Paul receiving forgiveness and his apostolic calling. “Grace” is often translated as “favor” in KJV (i.e. Luke 1:30; 2:52; Acts 2:47; etc.).

Grace/charis: “a gift or blessing brought to man by Jesus Christ, (b) favor, (c) gratitude, thanks, (d) a favor, kindness.”

Faith/pistas: “belief, trust, confidence; fidelity, faithfulness.” The root word “persuade,” gives the core-meaning, “divine persuasion.”

Paul’s combination of words provides an interesting understanding of the “obedience of faith,” (NASB), or “so that people of all nations would obey and have faith” (CEV). We assume Paul really liked it as he opens and closes his letter with this theme (Romans 16:26). We too must demonstrate our faith-filled obedience on His Name to all the nations. Note the **JST** changes that clarify our understanding of redemption.

KJV ROMANS 1:5-6

By whom we have received grace and apostleship,
for obedience to the faith
among all nations, for his name:
Among whom *are* ye also *the* called of Jesus
Christ:

JST ROMANS 1:5-6

By whom we have received grace and apostleship,
through obedience, ***and*** faith ***in his name,***
to preach the gospel among all nations;
Among whom ye also are called of Jesus Christ

Paul’s Desire to Visit Rome

Romans 1:7 “To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people” (NIV) Paul writes to converted, holy people, or “saints” (KJV) about important matters of Jesus’ higher law. “Saints” is not a light title to carry.

Saints/hagios, an adjective: “set apart by (or for) God, holy, sacred.”

Romans 1:8 “your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world”
Knowing that the Roman saints were known for their faith begs the ques-

tion, “What are we known for?” In Greek, faith has a component of action that follows with obedience. In Latin, “*fedas*” is loyal, and shared roots with “fidelity”.

Romans 1:9–10 “at last by God’s will I may succeed in coming to you” (BSB) Paul gives us an example of praying, but be careful for what you pray for, as the answer may not be what you expect. I doubt Paul expected to come to Rome in bonds as a prisoner. The JST adds a beautiful example of how Paul’s prayers prioritized the most important things, how he could serve God better, and sought for blessings on others.

KJV ROMANS 1:9–10

For God is my witness, whom I serve *with my spirit* in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, *if by any means now* at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

JST ROMANS 1:9–10

For God is my witness, whom I serve, ___ that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, ***that you may be kept through the Spirit, in the gospel of his Son, Making request of you, to remember me in your prayers, I now write unto you, that you will ask him in faith, that if by any means,*** at length, I may serve you with my labors, and may have a prosperous journey by the will of God, to come unto you.

Romans 1:11–15 “I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift” (NIV) Paul had wanted to go to Rome in the past, but he was detoured for the Lord’s purposes. His desire stemmed from more than wanting to see the beautiful capital city; his heart “longed/desired, to pursue with love” to see the saints in order to bless them. He wanted to give a spiritual gift “to make you strong” (NIV). He hoped it would help the saints become “established/*sterichthenai*/fix firmly, direct myself towards, (b) support; strengthen.” If these saints had the gift of the Holy Ghost, was he referring to the initiatory blessings of washings and anointings or perhaps the temple endowment? The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that: “The apostles after their endowment, were qualified to ordain others after the holy order of God to teach repentance and remission of sins also or, in other words, to teach all those things that Christ had commanded them to teach.”¹¹

Romans 1:16 “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” The gospel—or Christ’s plan and example—is the way God empowers all who believe in order for each person to receive salvation. Everyone will receive immortality; at some point, “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to God” (Romans 14:11). Salvation must come individually through a one-on-one relationship with our Creator. The hope of Salvation allows mortals to believe and grow from one level of faith to another.

“first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” (NIV) The Jews were “first” because their ancestors made covenants that lead them to become a chosen people. God’s blessing to them allowed their posterity to have the opportunity to serve God and learn of Him. God is no respecter of persons though. Jesus taught, “the first shall be last, and the last shall be first” (Matthew 19:30). All will have a fair chance to hear and serve God if they wish.

Romans 1:17 “through faith on his name; as it is written, the just shall live by faith” (JST) The JST added the importance of placing our faith on the Savior. Paul cites part of Habakkuk 2:4, but there it is even clearer that “live” required action, “the righteous person will live by his faithfulness” (NIV). The key to understanding God is to develop our faith so that He can reveal His Spirit and truths to us. As disciples progress in their obedience, they may receive God’s *full* justification and receive all He has for them.

This was significant insight to the Reformer, Martin Luther. He recorded his struggle with this concept: “Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that the ‘just shall live by faith.’ Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us through faith.”¹² Verses such as this one developed the Protestant reformation slogan, “sola scriptura, sola fides, sola gratia”/“scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone.” Such thoughts were a reaction to incorrect religious practices, but do not contain the whole truth. Yet, in the process of seeking a greater understanding of faith, Martin Luther realized, “Faith leads you in and opens up God’s heart and will, that you should see pure grace and overflowing love. This it is to behold God in faith that you should look upon his fatherly, friendly heart, in which there is no anger nor ungraciousness.”¹³

God’s Wrath Against Sin

Romans 1:18–32

Paul’s audience included saints who knew the Old Testament and pagan ideology, so he addressed both camps. First, he mentions the wrath of God against the wicked. Then denounced pagan philosophies for eight verses.

Romans 1:18–20 “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness . . . who love not the truth but remain in unrighteousness” (JST) Paul emphasizes that God will punish those who do not repent, and that humans suppress the truth through their sins. Not only is revelation of more truth stunted by sin, but wickedness also leads one to disregard and even deny truth. Since the creation, God has revealed His “divine nature.” Every time the scriptures repeat this phrase, it always refers to our perfect God. Jesus is the only Divine Nature. In church vernacular we use the phrase “divine nature,” as a shared gift or inheritance with humanity. This is a unique interpretation as part of the Restoration. Yet, by remembering that He alone has the Divine Nature fosters humility and adoration.

Romans 1:21–23 “their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened . . . and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images” (NIV) Humility and obedience are required to worship God, otherwise, pride makes us fools. Paul taught that it was not enough to know God, we must also honor and glorify Him. We have an example in the Lord’s Prayer, where one third of Jesus’ prayer was worship.

Romans 1:24–25 “worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator” God has revealed truth to humanity since the creation, but many have rebelled and not worshipped Him. It is the fault of humans that God’s divine message and image became obscured to the world. Paul enumerates his generation’s sins that show their apostasy and their custom of no longer worshipping God. All of them are close to our generation’s problems.

Romans 1:26–27 “Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones . . . Men committed indecent acts with other men” (BSB) At the top of the list of sins, Paul starts with sexual lusts. Unlike the Greco-Roman culture of the time—that valued women’s chastity before marriage, but winked at men’s promiscuity—in the early church Paul taught that both sexes will be judged by the same rule. Any breaking of the law of chastity is a sin and unacceptable to God.¹⁴ He denounces homosexuality as reversing God’s creation. The difficulty of this high standard of morality for Christians, is teaching and striving to live the law of chastity, while having room in our hearts to love all. All those who follow our Redeemer, are “all one in Christ Jesus” (NIV): straight and gay, “Jew nor Gentile . . . slave nor free . . . male and female” (Galatians 3:28). Paul condemns issues of immortality in nearly every letter as it was a major problem in the Roman world (i.e. 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10; etc.).

Romans 1:28–32 “since they did not see fit to acknowledge God . . . They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity” (BSB) When humans do not *choose* to obey God, then His Spirit cannot bless them in the same way, and they fall to temptations. Paul listed 21 sins. They reflect his Jewish standards and values, especially his closing death sentence: “those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.” In the restored church, we do not hold the same strict punishment, but encourage repentance, and “retain[ing] the knowledge of God.”

ROMANS 2

Beware of Hypocrisy

Romans 2:1

Romans 2:1 “In judging another, you condemn yourself” (AB¹⁵) Paul writes in a diatribe like the Stoic philosophers, as if he were arguing with an imagined critic. He argues that we humans judge others in the same areas where we ourselves fall short. Sociologists have also observed that if something bothers you about some-

Christ the judge and praying angels by Giovanni da Milano, 1365 via Wikimedia Commons.



one else, it is probably because you have a problem with it. Yet hypocrisy can be hard to see in oneself. This is why President Benson’s talk on pride was so helpful in reminding us that we all have a problem with pride, so we should keep looking deeper.¹⁶ Repeatedly the Bible councils us not to judge others. Yet one of the things we were sent to earth to do is learn how to judge right from wrong. Life is full of choices, which requires judgement. The key to this paradox is found in the Book of Mormon, “judge righteous judgement.” Moroni 7:16–19, explains how to do that. At birth God gives every person the “light of Christ,” which can prompt righteous judgement. The influence of the Spirit will also testify of truth to help the seeker “know good from evil.”

Universality and Goodness of The Judgment

Romans 2:2 “God’s judgment . . . is based on truth” (NIV)

God knows all sides of every story; no one can escape God’s judgment . . . so we can leave the judging to God. Paul’s reference to God’s judgment is Christ’s as our glorified judge. Paul later cites “the judgment-seat of Christ” in Romans 14:10 and repeats it in 2 Corinthians 5:10. The same phrase is found eight other times in the Book of Mormon.

Romans 2:4 “Do you not realize that what is good about

God is meant to lead you to repentance?” (AB) Paul knew first-hand the blessings of repentance. Only the stubborn and prideful do not seek repentance. For Christians, the hope of the Lord’s forgiveness gives them courage to change. “Repentance is not feeling bad about ourselves, in fact, it’s quite the opposite.” It is a form of self-appreciation, because it leads us to recognize our weaknesses, which then allows us to see ourselves more honestly and accept our flaws. Next, as we pray for forgiveness, God empowers and cleanses us “to learn little by little and grow into a better person.”¹⁷

Romans 2:6 “He will repay everyone according to his deeds” (AB) This Epistle is filled with Old Testament scripture; here Paul cites Proverbs 24:12. It is the law of the harvest again. In God’s kingdom, how we sow determines what we reap. God will “give back or restore,” what is just at the judgment (Mormon 3:15). There, He will examine the sincerity of our deeds as well as our thoughts. In a sense, the judgment will become a restoration of truth, too. That delayed gratification requires faith to follow Him. Elder Neal A. Maxwell spoke on the challenge of a delayed judgment:

Seeing the unrighteous prosper and pleasure-seekers go unpunished can take its toll too, unless we are meek. So can the accumulation of afflictions and our awareness thereof. Such harrowing can create the fertile soil of self-pity with its “I deserve . . .” It is a surprisingly small step from weariness in well-doing to self-pity. The imagery of being grounded and rooted, of not being “moved away,” warns us of that one small step that, when taken, nearly ensures a second.

Often, we do not receive an immediate or full repayment for our service to God, yet we are blessed in other ways as King Benjamin taught. “In the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him. And secondly . . . [if you] do as he hath commanded you . . . he doth immediately bless you (Mosiah 2:22, 24; also see 41)

Judgment of the Righteous and Wicked

Romans 2:7–10 “those who by perseverance in doing good seek for . . . immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey . . . wrath and indignation” (NASB) God rewards all mortals with immortality or the gift of resurrection. Additionally, those who valiantly serve him will receive an additional reward of enjoying God’s presence in Eternal Life as the gift of exaltation. The restoration provided this separate and unique definition of Eternal Life (D&C 20:14; 76:78–79; 88:4–5; 132:24; Moses 1:39; etc.).

Paul refers to the results of God’s punishment as the sinner feeling “wrath and indignation,” or “anger and fury” (ABPE). We learn from modern revelation that “Eternal punishment” is another word for “God’s punishment,” which will be just (D&C 19:10–11).

Romans 2:11 “God does not show favoritism” (BSB) God’s impartiality will be especially evident in His judgment. God’s judgment will be based on what one has become—this is a result of one’s desires, knowledge and actions. A higher social status in life will not help one at the judgment bar (and it may require more accountability). This leveling of the social strata was unheard of in the Roman Empire or in any other empire for over a thousand years. God opens the door for all those who seek to become His people. God’s rewards do not require money or station, but come with obedience and service.

Accountability to the Law

Romans 2:12 “as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law” The New Testament reference to “the law,” most often refers to the Law of Moses, recorded in the first five books of the Old Testament (also known as the Torah or Pentateuch). Those who are blessed to know God’s laws in this life are judged with the responsibility and accountability of having them. Similarly, Jesus taught this in Galilee, and later to the Kirtland Saints, “where much is given, much is required” (Luke 12:48; D&C 82:3).

Romans 2:13 “it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but it is the doers of the law” (BSB) Paul hits the nail on the head one more time: only those who live God’s law will be justified. If they have God’s laws or revelation and disregard them, they will be held accountable. Jesus taught the same thing in one of his two most important discourses, the Sermon on the Mount and the Last Supper: “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven,” and “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (Matthew 7:21, 24; John 13:17 ESV; also see James 1:22, 25; D&C 89:18).

Romans 2:15 “the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their thoughts*” When disciples internalize God’s laws, the laws become a guide to their thoughts. The Book of Mormon teaches that people are born with a conscience, or the “Light of Christ,” to help distinguish “good from evil” (Moroni 7:18–19).

Romans 2:16 “God judges people’s secrets” (NIV) Even the most secret thoughts and desires are known to God, and Jesus will include them in His judgment.

Moral Duties of Jew and Gentile—Member and Nonmember

Romans 2:17–24

Romans 2:17 “If you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God” (NIV) Paul’s diatribe now turns to the Jews in his audience. He taunts the proud claims of superior spirituality because of an Israelite birth-right. He warns the Jews that if their Law of Moses puffs them up with more knowledge, they need to beware of pride and of looking down on others for their ignorance. Instead, Paul asks them to look within their own souls and change themselves as needed.

Romans 2:19–20 “An instructor of . . .” Paul uses the very word that Jews often called their law, the Instructor. Israelites had the responsibility to teach God’s law, and share the light He gave them from scripture and the prophets, with the rest of the world.

Romans 2:21–23 “**You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?**” (NIV) As part of Paul’s imaginary conversation, he denounces hypocrisy. Those who do not apply the law in their hearts have squandered their inheritance. Paul gives five moral challenges and a question about the Torah (backed with a quote from the Psalm 50:16–20; 3:10–18).

1. Will you teach yourself?
2. Do you steal?
3. Do you commit adultery?
4. Do you dishonor the Temple?
5. Do you dishonor God?

Paul scrupulously followed the admonition to be an example of the believers (1 Timothy 4:12). Here he stresses the importance of teachers adhering to their own counsel. When God calls disciples and they become baptized members of his church, they must recognize the importance of being doers of the word as their example preaches to others.

Romans 2:24 “**As it is written: ‘God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’**” Paul recites Isaiah 52:5 (possibly from memory, as it differs somewhat). Paul observes that Israel was to be a light to the world, but instead their behavior has brought dishonor to God and His covenant people. Paul purports that the Jews did not fulfill their vocation as God’s chosen people.

Circumcision of the Heart

Romans 2:25–29

Romans 2:25–27 “**Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not**” (NIV) Paul uses the Abrahamic definition of circumcision—as a sign of the covenant (Genesis 17:11). Because of this sign, the word circumcision is often used in place of “covenant” throughout the Bible. Paul reminded them that the sign of the covenant was only beneficial if they lived and internalized God’s laws. Like a meaningless talisman, the sign was devoid without obedience.

God does not care if Christians were circumcised or not, He wanted (and still wants) covenant people to live their covenants. By looking at Romans 2:26 in light of Romans 2:14, it appears that God accepted the Gentiles because they kept His commandments. Their “righteousness” was “counted for circumcision.” Even attempts to live the “letter” of the Law without the Spirit of the law are not following God’s commandments (Romans 2:27).

Romans 2:28–29a “**a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit**” (NIV) From the beginning of this Epistle, Paul builds his argument up to this point. The climax of

Paul's Epistle is that God wants His servants to have soft hearts or "circumcision of the heart." This is not new, as we find the Lord teaching it at least six times in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; etc.). Disciples align their desires, thoughts, and actions to follow their Savior—including His example, words, and inspiration from the Spirit. When this happens, the Spirit "adopts" Gentiles so that they, too, can inherit Israel's role as God's servants.

Paul differentiates between two types of covenant people: 1) those by name or outward expression, and 2) those by action or inward expression. In Paul's mind, those of the first camp are "uncircumcised of heart" (2 Nephi 9:33; Ezekiel 44:7,9; etc.). Richard Anderson summarized:

Paul seems to contrast inner attitude and outer conformity, but he really means ritual righteousness as against moral righteousness, for Paul has described the moral Gentile as one obedient 'inwardly' (Rom. 2:29). Paul is clearly stating the Old Testament principle as still true: 'To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams' (1 Samuel 15:22).¹⁸

Paul develops this theme through chapter 8.

Romans 2:29b "whose praise is not of men, but of God" Paul makes a pun that we miss in English. The word, "praise," means "Judah." In other words, when Gentiles obey God, He will give praise to them and give them a new name as he adopts them into Judah/Israel.

ROMANS 3

Paul continues contending that unfaithful Jews had no advantage over the Gentiles in the Kingdom of God. Despite their holy prophets, scriptures, and "sign of the covenant," God's wrath will come upon those who do not keep their covenants. Yet, Paul never gave up the promised people—He knew God would always honor *faithful* Israel.

Advantage to Being a Jew

Romans 3:1-7

Romans 3:1-2 "What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew?" (NIV) Paul's imaginary conversation now turns to a debate with a Jewish rabbi. He basically asks, "Is there any advantage in living the old law?" Have you asked the same question about your covenants? Paul answers, "YES!" The advantage is having the "oracles of God" or living and recorded prophets. Israelites were "entrusted with the very words of God" (NIV). The JST footnote adds the important need for Israelites to have their hearts in tune with God.

Romans 3:3–4 “Will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness?” This question leads to Paul’s next discussion. He asks his audience to suppose if some Jews were *unfaithful*, “would their infidelity nullify God’s fidelity?”¹⁹ Paul answers, “Of course not!” and paraphrases Psalms 51:4. Obviously, God’s promises will be fulfilled, regardless of whom he uses to do his work. God’s judgment, will not change and is completely upright. However, the amount of truth that God can restore is affected by humanity’s faithfulness.

Romans 3:5–6 “Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath? Absolutely not!” (CSB) God’s punishment is actually helpful. In the restoration we do not see God inflicting wrath, but actually correcting us out of love. When we understand that His work brings “to pass the immortality and Eternal Life of man” we understand God’s encouragement to repent and to stop sinning in a different light.²⁰ The **JST** changes are noted below with Romans 3:8.



Joshua passing the River Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant by Benjamin West via Wikimedia Commons.

Romans 3:7 “if my falsehood accentuates God’s truthfulness, to the increase of His glory, why am I still condemned” (BSB) Paul’s diatribe includes the false argument: “if we sin more, then God’s forgiveness and glory can be greater.” The same argument is used by people who knowingly sin, rationalizing that they can repent when

they take the sacrament, before they go on a mission, or before they die. This mentality desecrates the Lord's atonement, and all will be held accountable for such a flagrant abuse of forgiveness. It prostitutes Jesus' sufferings and sacrifices. Compare different translations to help to understand Romans 3:5–8. I especially appreciate the JST of these verses.

JST/KJV

5 But if we remain in our unrighteousness and commend the righteousness of God, how dare we say, God is unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man who fears God,) 6 God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world? 7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie, (as it is called of the Jews,) unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? and not received? Because we **are** slanderously reported; 8 And some affirm that we say (**whose damnation is just,**) Let us do evil that good may come. **But this is false.**

CSB

5 But if our unrighteousness highlights God's righteousness, what are we to say? I am using a human argument: Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath? 6 Absolutely not! Otherwise, how will God judge the world? 7 But if by my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? 8 And why not say, just as some people slanderously claim we say, "Let us do what is evil so that good may come"? Their condemnation is deserved!

NIV

5 But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) 6 Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? 7 Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" 8 Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is just!

All are Guilty Before God

Romans 3:9–20

Romans 3:9–18 "Then are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have proved before, that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin" (JST) King Benjamin taught a similar message of humanity's nothingness and God's greatness, in his last tower discourse (Mosiah 2–4). Paul then quotes six to nine Old Testament scriptures as

evidence that that all humans are sinners. His list fits our day too—everything from violence and deceit to lying and profanity.²¹

Romans 3:10	Psalms 14:3; 53:4
Romans 3:11–12	Psalms 14:2–3; Ecclesiastes 7:20
Romans 3:13	Psalms 5:10; 140:4
Romans 3:14	Psalms 10:7
Romans 3:15–17	Isaiah 59:7–8 or Proverbs 1:16
Romans 3:18	Psalms 36:2b

Romans 3:19 “The whole world may become subject to God’s judgment” (CSB) Paul persists that the Jews will not be exempt from the God’s punishment by trusting in their law (which here may include references to the oral laws or “traditions of the elders” Mark 7:3).²² There may have been a problem in the church in Rome with the Jewish converts arguing with the Gentile converts on this issue. Paul ends his argument with a double parallelism.

every mouth
may be silenced
and the whole world
held accountable to God (NIV).

Romans 3:20 “No one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin” (NIV) Paul sums up this portion of his argument by correcting a popular notion—that one is saved by one’s obedience to the Law of Moses. Christianity taught that the Law was only for leading a fallen people to recognize the source of their salvation. It was not “the promise,” but only a guide to their Promised Messiah. The Law was only a lower law given to a population of slaves who did not know how to take full responsibility for themselves (i.e. “Moses you go for us”). Humanity cannot vindicate itself; we all need a Redeemer.

All Share Without Distinction Through Christ’s Redemption

Romans 3:21 “the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify” (NIV) Paul had been a lifelong student of the scriptures—both the “law and prophets.” He interprets them as a witness of the coming of “The Righteous of God,” Jesus (Romans 3:26). Throughout his Epistles Paul refers to the Old Testament scriptures that prefigured the promised Messiah as the means of justification and redemption (Romans 13:8; Galatians 3:25; etc. see also 2 Nephi 11:4; 25:24–27).

Romans 3:22–23 “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” This is at the heart of the Plan of Salvation. Grasping the realization that we need the Redeemer is what life is all about—we cannot do it alone. We are in desperate need of a Savior. These verses sound like Lehi’s message: “no flesh can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8). Christ is the only way we can be redeemed. When we internalize this doctrine, it has the power to enlighten all aspects of our lives—our interactions with others, ourselves, and with God—for we “all . . . come short of the glory of God.”



Recreation of the High Priest offering sacrifice at the Israelite tabernacle. Photo by Daniel Smith.

Romans 3:24 “Being justified freely [only] by his grace through the redemption” The word “freely” is changed in the JST to “only.” Jesus’ atoning sacrifice is the only way we are saved from death and the effects of the Fall. It is a gift from God that builds a reciprocal relationship, which requires give and take.

Romans 3:25 “God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith on his blood” Paul uses “propitiation” which is a form of the word meaning “priestly sacrifice.” It is not the blood of animals, though, but our Savior’s redeeming blood. Paul pictures Jesus as the High Priest making “propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17, NKJB). Paul attests to the Atonement and never moves far from this subject.

Romans 3:26 “to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and to justify the one who has faith in Jesus” Paul has Jesus as the subject of righteousness again. Because He is just, we can be justified through His atonement. But it takes faith in Christ to receive justification. This is repeated in the Book of Mormon, “And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which over powereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:15).

Romans 3:27 “Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded . . . Is He not the God of Gentiles too? Yes” (BSB) Paul’s argument includes the “law of faith,” within the realm of believers and “doers” (Romans 2:13). Salvation is the complete gift of immortality, and sanctification is the process.

Romans 3:28 “man is justified by faith alone” (JST) Critics have seen fault in the restored church for putting too much emphasis on human effort, and yet that is not what our scriptures and doctrine state. For the third time in this chapter, the JST added the word, “alone,” to the Bible to further emphasize that only in Christ can we be saved.

Romans 3:30 “God . . . will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith” (BSB). For the tenth time in this chapter, Paul returns to the problem of the Mosaic traditions overshadowing Christ’s teachings. I assume local Judaizes (those Jewish converts who wanted Gentile converts to live the Law of Moses), were a local challenge (see Acts 15:6–21).³⁰

Romans 3:31 “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law” (NASB). It is important to differentiate between the Law of Moses and God’s law. Jesus fulfilled the latter, with its animal sacrifices, extra washings, and 613 written laws. However, God’s higher laws were still intact. Jesus repeatedly taught the need to follow His teachings, “If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:17; also, Matthew 7:21, 24; James 1:22, 25, 27; etc.). He also repeated the Ten Commandments as still applicable within His higher laws. Similarly, the Book of Mormon teaches that we are justified “by grace that we are saved after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). No man can “earn” salvation on his own. We establish the law through faith, and faith has power. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught; “Where faith is, there will be some of the fruits: all gifts and power which were sent from heaven, were poured out on the heads of those who had faith.”²⁴

ROMANS 4

Abraham Justified by Faith

Romans 4:1-6

The entire chapter answers Paul's preceding question on establishing the law through faith by illustrating "the law of faith" (Romans 3:27), with the examples of Abraham and of a psalm. Paul cites "the law and the prophets" in Romans 3:21, and in Romans 4, reaches back to the first Book of the Law to show God blessing his prophet Abraham for his works and faith (Genesis 12-24). The apocryphal accounts that were written between the Old and New Testaments, always spoke highly of Abraham.²⁵ Baruch taught that God implanted "the unwritten law" in Abraham's heart.²⁶ This carried over to the late Second Temple period when Jews saw Abraham as their most important forefather (For more, see earlier commentary on Matthew 3:9²⁷). Similarly, Jesus honored him as a ruler in heaven (as well as opening a potential heavenly door for Gentiles' adoption into Abraham's seed): "Many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11). Abraham was the model example that his audience of Jews and Christians knew and trusted.

Romans 4:1-3 "Abraham believed God" Before Moses received the Law, Abraham believed and obeyed God. It was his faith that motivated him to follow God in righteousness. For Paul the order was important. Abraham first believed the Lord, then God taught him precepts, Abraham lived them, God tested him, found him loyal, and blessed him.

Romans 4:4-5 "But to him that . . . believeth on [H]im who justifieth . . . his faith is counted for righteousness" (JST) These two verses are difficult to understand in any translation. The JST helps to realize that Paul thought that the problem with relying on our efforts or works, was that laborers felt they deserved compensation. But that is not the case with God; He does not owe us anything. We are always in God's debt. When we approach and obey God with a heart and mind filled with belief and faith, then God counts our service for righteousness and rewards accordingly.

DAVID CELEBRATING THE SAME FAITH

Romans 4:6-8 "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven; whose sins are covered" (NIV). Paul gives a second example from another beloved ancestor, the Psalmist David, "the man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). Paul quotes (or paraphrases) Psalms 32:1-2, on the blessed state of forgiveness. The psalm does not attach forgiveness to actions but to God's graciousness in covering them. This stems from the Old Testament roots for "atone" and "to clothe," which we will discuss in Romans 5:22.



“the Lord will never count [the sin] against him” (NIV) as long as repentance occurs, God grants forgiveness, and the sin is not repeated.

ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BEFORE CIRCUMCISION

Romans 4:9 “Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness . . . before . . . he received circumcision as a sign” (NIV) Genesis 17 describes the promises to Abraham’s prosperity, with circumcision as the “sign of the covenant.” But, Paul makes the point that God justified Abraham’s righteous before the sign of circumcision (Genesis 15:6).

Romans 4:11–12 “the father . . . not of circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of their faith” Paul claims that all who walk in faith will be included in the family of Abraham. But, this was a dramatic departure from Pharisaic the teachings of his day. Then, circumcision had become an important part of eternal salvation. Years later, the Talmud recorded:

Abraham will sit at the entrance of Gehenna [hell] and will not permit any circumcised Israelite to descend into it. . . . And what does he do with those who have sinned immoderately in their lives? He removes the foreskins from children who have died before circumcision and puts them on the hardened sinners so that they can descend into *Gehenna*.²⁸

In contrast to this mentality, Paul taught that if God’s promised blessings come from faith, then the faith-filled gentile who repents will receive the same blessings as the Israelites.

As with Abraham, God’s Promises Come to People of Faith

Romans 4:13–17

Romans 4:13 “The promise to Abraham . . . that he would inherit the world . . . through the righteousness that comes by faith” (CSB) It was not through the Law of Moses or the Aaronic order that God gave Abraham and Sarah His assurance of posterity.²⁹ In restored modern scripture, we learn that God covenanted with Abraham through the higher priesthood, which priesthood Abraham received from Melchizedek (D&C 124:58; 132:32; Abraham 2:9–11).³⁰

Romans 4:14 “If those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing” (NIV) Paul explains that if salvation came only from the Mosaic Law, then faith would not be needed—which then made God’s promises to Abraham void. The “heirs” appears to refer to the “heirs of salvation,” or those whom God will give exaltation (Hebrews 1:14). The prophet Joseph explained: “the heirs of salvation may confess the Lord and bow the knee; the rewards for faithfulness, and the punishments for sins, are so much beyond the narrow-mindedness of men, that every man is constrained to exclaim: ‘It came from God.’”³¹

Romans 4:15 “where there is no law there is no transgression” (NIV) With a slight change in meaning, we read in the Book of Mormon, “Where there is no law given there is no punishment” (2 Nephi 9:25). The one-word difference is significant. Jacob’s claim protects the ignorant sinner. But Paul’s word sounds as if the nature of sin or “transgression” itself changes without a law. As there are many ways to interpret the Pauline text, it is immensely helpful to have the Book of Mormon as a second witness.

Romans 4:16 “Ye are justified of faith and works, through grace” (JST) Even though the word “grace” can mean gift (Romans 1:5), God’s “grace,” is more as there is a relationship of loving kindness. The JST clarifies the doctrine that it is through God’s grace that we can be justified if we combine good works and faith. In two more chapters, Paul will discuss how it is not a matter of either works or faith, but both are like two sides of the same coin (Romans 6:1).

Romans 4:17 “I have made thee a father of many nations” This refers to *Abraham’s* name change (from *Abram*, “the father [is] exalted” to “father of great multitudes.” His new name symbolized his new role as a co-creator.

Romans 4:18–19 “He believed, hoping against hope” Abraham trusted God’s promise for posterity even though the hope seemed in vain. Even at ages one-hundred and ninety, he and Sarah had enough faith to receive their promised son. Their faith became the power to conceive (After Sarah’s death, Abraham married Keturah and had six other children, Genesis 25:1–2).

Romans 4:20 “He did not waver in unbelief at God’s promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory” Abraham did not doubt God’s promises. As the father of all believers, Abraham’s faith is a “type” of Christian faith that holds to God’s promises. Paul loved this theme and expands on it again in Hebrews 11:11. Faith has power to strengthen disciples to accomplish God’s plans. Trusting in our Creator’s power more than our own makes us fully convinced that God is capable.

Romans 4:22–24 “it was credited to him as righteousness” This is the third time Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 (Romans 4: 3, 9). Faith has the power to develop ‘status of rectitude before God’ for all believers.” Abraham’s pattern of faith should be ours. I think he used the “dead” womb earlier to correspond with the death and resurrection of Jesus as the source of our faith.³²

Romans 4:25 “who was given for our transgressions and raised for our justification” Paul concludes his example of Abraham with this thesis: Paul included the story of Sarah and Abraham’s righteousness for believers “that the Lord will deliver us from our sins and was raised for our justification.”³³

II: RECONCILIATION AND FORGIVENESS THROUGH THE AT-ONE-MENT OF CHRIST

Romans 5

In chapters 5–8, Paul turns to his second doctrinal issue. After proving the folly of trusting in circumcision, Abraham and Sarah’s lineage, or the Mosaic Law for redemption, Paul elaborates on the saving nature of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. Only through Him can humanity be reconciled to God. In chapter 5, Paul shares God’s divine answer to the human predicament—Jesus, as our Redeemer. In chapter 6, Paul returns to the need to follow Him with good works.

Once Justified Through Christ There Are Many

Romans 5:1–2 “ . . . being justified by faith . . . we have access by faith into this grace . . . and rejoice in hope”

Once we have shown our fidelity to God, we are justified through Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. Then we may receive God’s gifts of peace, grace, hope, and even patience through tribulation. (For the Greek definitions of faith and grace, see Romans 1:5.)

Romans 5:3–5 “we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope . . .” (BSB) Paul taught that our times of suffering can help us progress in the areas that matter the most. These verses contain one of the most comforting sources of peace during our trials. Whether they are general tribulations of mortality or tailor-made trails, our Master teacher gives us these lessons to help us become as He is. Learning through our experiences is one purpose of our second estate. By taking Paul’s words one step further, if we react impatiently to our problems or become angry at our trials, we communicate that we know more than God does. The same idea that tribulation can lead to perfection has been repeated in modern revelation too.³⁴

“the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” The Spirit becomes God’s vehicle to cleanse and fill repentant humanity with His love. For those who have sincerely sought forgiveness with a broken heart and contrite spirit have often been filled with God’s love as a sign of His forgiveness.

Jesus' Suffering and Death Accomplished Justification, Salvation, and Reconciliation

Romans 5:6–8 “while we were still powerless Christ died for the ungodly . . . [and] still sinners, Christ died for us” (BSB). After Paul used Abraham as an example of faith, he then compared Christ’s accomplishment. These verses are some of the great New Testament explanations of what is involved in divine love. As mortals we had/have no means to save ourselves.³⁵ But Jesus’ willingness to die for all sinners—who do not deserve such graciousness—contrasts sharply to ordinary powerless humans who at times may offer their lives for another. He offered His life and grace to overcome sin and death.

Romans 5:9 “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath” After four thousand years of practicing animal sacrifices, the final or real performance happened when the Son of God took upon Himself the sins of the world to redeem the world through His blood (Moses 5:5–7).

Romans 5:11 “. . . Joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” This is the only use of the word “*at-one-ment*” in the KJV translation of the New Testament. However, there are three more uses of the same Greek word, *katallagé*, that are translated “reconciliation.” The word, “at-one-ment” was first used in 1526 in William Tyndale’s English Bible. He created the word to describe the process of becoming at one with God. The word for atone in Hebrew, stems from the Semitic root “*kaphar*: to cover, arch over, forgive, expiate,” and in the Arabic “*kafat*: a close embrace.” Hugh Nibley explained its origins:

It was the custom for one fleeing for his life in the desert to seek protection in the tent of a great sheik, crying out, . . . whereupon the Lord . . . puts the hem of his robe protectively over the kneeling man’s shoulder (*katafa*). This puts him under the Lord’s protection from all enemies. They embrace in a close hug [standing at the doorway to the tent] . . . the Lord makes a place for him and invites him to sit down beside him—they are at-one.³⁶

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi speaks of this in his psalm: “O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies!” (2 Nephi 4:33; also see 2 Nephi 1:15).

In the KJV Old Testament we find 81 uses (all but four occur in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers—including the original temple rites of the Day of Atonement). The D&C uses it three times, the Pearl of Great Price twice, and the Book of Mormon forty-two times. (As the Book of Mormon is one third the length of the Old Testament, this places it in the milieu of the old Hebrew temple rites, with a similar word ratio as seen below).

WORD RATIO OF SCRIPTURAL USAGE OF ATONEMENT

TEXT:	ATONEMENT + ATONE (WITH SUFFEXES)	RECONCILIATION	TOTAL	WORD RATIO / 1000 WORDS
Old Testament 610,303 words	81 <i>kaphar</i>	5 <i>kaphar</i>	86	0.141
New Testament 180,565 words	1 <i>katallagé</i>	3 <i>katallagé</i>	4	0.022
Book of Mormon 266,944 words	29 + 13	0	42	0.157
D&C 1–138 111,117 words	3 + 2	1	6	0.054
Pearl of Great Price 30,362 words	1 + 1	0	2	0.066

Death Through Adam—Life Through Christ

Romans 5:12 “just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death was passed on to all men, because all sinned” (BSB) Because of the Fall of Adam and Eve, humanity is born into a fallen, sinful world. In the fourth century, St. Augustine used this verse as his basis for “original sin” (that humans are born with sinful natures). But that is not what it says—nor what Paul meant. Death passed onto all men, but not Adam and Eve’s original transgression (Article of Faith 2). The word “sin/*hamartia*” means: “missed the mark.”

Romans 5:13 “For before the law sin was in the world: Few matters are more well established in the yet sin is not imputed to those who have no law” (JST) In Paul’s Epistles, most often, the word “law” refers to the Law of Moses, so he is saying that before Moses, there was still sin. Paul knew that God taught earlier prophets the laws of the Gospel, as eternal principles of happiness. The word “imputed” meant “to reckon, or lay to one’s charge.” It is also translated “taken into account” (BSB). It describes our responsibility to follow, knowing God’s laws (as discussed above in Romans 2:12).

Romans 5:14–19 “Adam . . . is a pattern of the One to come” (BSB) In a sense, Adam prefigured Jesus. He was a type of Christ as the only other man created by God. Both are called “son of God” (Luke 3:38). Also, as Adam is the father of our species, Christ is the father of our immortality. Later, Paul refers to Jesus as the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45). Paul lists several examples of their parallels (“Adam” can be translated “man”). Eve was equally involved, but Paul does not include her to keep his parallels.

“By one man’s offence death reigned,” Adam’s fall brought death, while Christ’s Atonement bought immortality and the opportunity of Eternal Life. Jesus conquered death for Himself and all earthly life.

“by the offense of one judgment came,” Adam’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so too the obedient act of Jesus’ righteousness led to justification for all who repent (D&C 19:18).

“by one man’s disobedience . . . ” Adam brought condemnation and Christ brought justification. Jesus’ obedience opened the way for purification of righteousness. Through Jesus, the eternal consequence of Adam’s action became null and void.

Adam and Eve Expelled from Paradise by Anton Robert Leinweber, 1910.



Romans 5:20a “The law entered . . .” In Greek the word used for, “entered” means “to come in by the side of.” In classical Greek plays, it was used for supporting actors who would enter the stage briefly and leave again.³⁷ This is how Paul saw the Law of Moses—it was just a supporting actor who briefly played its role, and then left the stage for the main actor to perform.

Romans 5:20b–21 “Sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life” (BSB) Since the beginning of the world, sin has multiplied, but Christ’s gift has infinitely greater ramifications than Adam’s transgression. This truth was also understood in the Book of Mormon which clearly established the fact that the Law of Moses was given to direct humanity’s hopes and faith toward Jesus, the Promised Messiah (see 2 Nephi 11:4; Jacob 4:5; Jarom 1:11; Mosiah 13:30; Alma 25:16–17; 34:14).

Paul personifies “sin” (Satan) with the understanding that Jesus is doing battle with the forces of sin and defeats sin/Satan.

ROMANS 6—BAPTISM

After Paul’s treatment on Christ’s grace in chapter five, he next logically turns to the need for good works. He teaches faith’s relationship to works, and then his climax in chapter 8 teaches of Exaltation. Here in Chapter 6, Paul deals with baptism more thoroughly than in any other Epistle.

Dead to Sin and Alive to Christ

Romans 6:1–2 “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid” Paul returns to the question raised in 3:31, “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? (NASB). Paul answers loud and clear—NO. Those who deliberately sin, abuse, or take advantage of the Savior’s gift do. (He repeats this idea in 6:15.) He argues that when we are “dead to sin,” or receive forgiveness by our Redeemer, we should have no desire to return to our sins or repeat our follies. It logically follows that after disciples receive their Master’s gift of forgiving grace, they need to offer the gift of service to Him through good works.

Romans 6:3–4a “all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (BSB) Baptism includes the beautiful symbolism of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. When Paul writes, “we are buried with him” he not only infers baptism by immersion, but also, the symbolic idea of burying our old life, to take on a new life in Christ’s covenant. By accepting baptism, Christians accepted the Lord’s atoning in a very memorable way. When early Christians were baptized, they symbolically walked through Jesus’ burial, starting by stepping down a few steps into a large-sized baptismal font—as if they were figuratively being buried in a watery grave on Good Friday—and laying down under the water—as if in the tomb on Saturday—and then ascending out of the



Aguas de Mormon by Jorge Cocco.

water, up the stairs to the other side of the font, rising up to a new life—as like His resurrection Sunday morning.³⁸ It also symbolizes dying with the Lord and burying our sins.

In Matthew 3:13, we discussed that the Greek word underlying “baptize,” which meant more than to ceremonial immerse, meant to actually cause a change. We become softer—like a cucumber becoming a pickle.³⁹

Romans 6:4b–5 “. . . we also should walk in newness of life” Paul does not see Jesus’ death as a tragedy, but as a part of God’s plan to atone for our sins that opened the way for new life. The newness of life is another way of saying “born again.” When converts agree to the baptismal covenant they promise to serve the Lord and God. It releases us from all our previous obligations with sin to start over from scratch in this new life serving Christ. (See Moses 6:59.)

Romans 6:6–8 “our old man is crucified with him” Carrying the symbolism even further, Paul describes baptism as crucifying “the body of sin,” or sinful desires. The JST addition adds, “dead *to sin* is freed from sin” (Romans 6:7) The cleansing power of the Holy Spirit has that power to take away addictions and attitudes that cause us to sin. It can give us a new heart to have no more desire to say and do anything that might offend God.

In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin describes this: “If ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sin, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls . . . always retain [it] in remembrance” (Mosiah 4:11).

Romans 6:9 “death no longer has mastery over him” (BSB) If death has no more power or “dominion” over Jesus, does that also mean He has no more physical pain or effects of aging on the mind and body? What about the emotional pain from the separation of death?

Romans 6:10 “he died to sin once for all” (BSB) Jesus had no sin, but by dying to sin, he covered all sins. I do not think this verse means that sin will not exist in the next life. We know we will still have agency and can choose selfishness, which is a sin.

Romans 6:11–14 JST “Yield yourselves unto God . . . For in so doing sin shall not have dominion over you..” Paul warns that “sin” can remain a temptation after baptism and it requires active combat. Sin should not be our master or have control over our appetites. Only righteousness begets more freedom.

The bondage of sin comes in part because satanic deceptions teach that we cannot change. This idea denies the atonement. No one is permanently addicted to sin. Thanks to God’s grace, we are all free to choose—“they are redeemed from the fall, they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law” (2 Nephi 2:26; 10:23).

Romans 6:15 “Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid” By repeating similar words from 6:1, like two book ends, Paul reinforces the need for obedience to God.

The Cost of Christian Discipleship—Servants of Righteousness

Romans 6:16 “to whom ye yield yourselves servants . . . ye obey” We choose who we will follow. It is when we yield our all to God that we become His servants. Even though our paychecks may come from another employer each month, as Christians, we work for God. When we follow the Spirit’s bidding from morning until night, God will pay us with Eternal Life. We must not limit His plan for us by avoiding promptings due to insecurities or stubbornness. God’s inspiration leads in the best, most direct route. And God’s timing is part of His plan, too. When we obey the Lord’s commandments and the Spirit’s promptings, we serve our Divine Master.

Romans 6:17 “ye were not the servants of sin” (JST) By adding “not,” the prophet Joseph attacked the concept of original sin that he repeatedly found in the KJV. Here are three verses to compare the JST with the KJV.

KJV—ROMANS 6:7, 17, 19

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

JST—ROMANS 6:7, 17, 19

7 For he that is dead *to sin* is freed from sin.

17 But God be thanked, that ye *are not* the servants of sin, *for* ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have *in times past* yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

The Book of Mormon clarifies this issue as well: “Little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them and the law of circumcision is done away in me” (Moroni 8:8).

Romans 6:18 “Ye became the servants of righteousness” In a culture where one third of the Roman Empire were slaves and half of the city of Rome were either servants or slaves, Paul used words that they understood better than we do. Slave or servant, was the same word. Servants worked more as indentured servants in that time, and slaves usually had a time limit (seven years for Jewish men, and age thirty to forty for Romans).⁴⁰ They served their masters as doctors, teachers, scribes, personal assistants, farmers, household help, and garbage men. Servitude was so widespread that even slaves owned slaves. The audience had a better understanding of what was required by obeying one’s master. This gave a stronger commitment to the call, “become servants of the Righteous One.”

Romans 6:21–22 “now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruits unto holiness” The fruits of holiness or righteousness are the fruits and gifts of the spirit. This is another favorite topic in Paul’s other Epistles. The fruits include: “love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23; 1 Corinthians 12–13; also see D&C 46:8–30; and Moroni 10:8–20).

Romans 6:23 “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus” (BSB) This is the greatest of all of God’s gifts that He can give to his children. Both Paul and Joseph Smith taught that being “saved in the kingdom of God . . . is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater” (D&C 6:13).

ENDNOTES

1. The Old Testament was not canonized by this time (not until the Christians began closing their tome, did the Jews see the need), but an open body of ancient sacred writings are referenced by “holy scriptures.”
2. Ignatius of Antioch (AD 50–108) referred to seven New Testament books as scripture Marcion of Sinope (AD 85–160), recorded the first list of 10 exclusive Pauline Epistles and one Gospel as scripture. The Muratorian list from AD 170 includes over 20 books that were considered as scripture. Origen of Alexandria (AD 184–253) recorded a list of our twenty-seven New Testament books as scripture. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/muratorian-metzger.html> (accessed 7/26/19).
3. Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 169–180.
4. Lynne H. Wilson, “A New Pneumatology: Comparing Joseph Smith’s Doctrine of the Spirit with His Contemporaries and the Bible,” *BYU Studies*, 51.1 (Winter, 2012). The five main Calvinistic doctrines know as TULIP (all of which were denounced by the Prophet Joseph Smith). It helps to be aware of them in order to recognize their influence in the KJV translation.
 - a) Total depravity of humanity: from infancy to adulthood, all are sinful until God elects them for regeneration
 - b) Unconditional election: is for those who were predestined to Eternal Life without any effort, only by God’s grace
 - c) Limited atonement: meaning the Savior’s atonement only covers those whom God predestined, not all
 - d) Irresistible Grace: the elect humans, whom God chose, have no ability or agency to resist His choice
 - e) Perseverance of the Saints: those whom God elects are the saints who will persevere eternally
5. The Book of Acts has better Greek than Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.
6. Only Roman citizens were allowed to have three names: *Praenomen* (personal given name) *Nomen* (clan or gens name), and *Cognomen* (family name). Paul’s Hebrew name, Saul, recalls the first Israelite King and star of Benjamin. As Benjaminite’s themselves, his parents chose to name their son after the most famous person in their tribe. The word Saul means “desired” in Hebrew. According to a description of Paul by Joseph Smith on January 5, 1841, (which he may have quoted from a biblical dictionary that has a similar description, or perhaps from revelation), “He is about five feet high, very dark hair; dark complexion; dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small, black eyes, penetrating as eternity; round shoulders, a whining voice, except when elevated, and then it almost resembled the roaring of a lion. He was a good orator, active and diligent, always employing himself in doing good to his fellow man.” (Joseph Smith with Alma P. Burton compiler, *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1965). 264.
7. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible: Romans, A New Translation* (NYC, NY: Doubleday, 1993), 231.
8. James Strong, *The New Strong’s Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995, reprint 1890) All Greek or Hebrew definitions are taken from Strong’s.
9. For references see Topical Guide: “Jesus Christ, Prophecies about,” and “. . .Types of”

10. Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: Romans*, 235.
11. *Elders' Journal*, vol. 1 (August 1838), Far West, Missouri, August, 1838, No. 4, 49). This statement follows Joseph administering the washing and anointings by two years, but it predates the first endowments given in 1842 in the Nauvoo Red-brick store. Joseph may have been referring to something else too. Later in Nauvoo, he also taught that “Paul . . . knew . . . all the ordinances, and blessings were in the Church (Andrew Ehat and Lindon Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 9–10; 42, 210, 327–331). Similarly, at a Relief Society meeting in Nauvoo, in 1842, Joseph taught: “The society should move according to the ancient Priesthood” and that he “was going to make of this Society a ‘kingdom of priests’ as in Enoch’s day—as in Paul’s day” (Ibid. 110).
12. John K. Carmack, *New Testament and Latter-day Saints* (Orem, UT: Randall Book, 1987), 279.
13. Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 178.
14. Spencer W. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 80–86.
15. Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: Romans*, 4.
16. Ezra T. Benson, *Beware of Pride*, General conference, April 1989.
17. Rebekah Wilson, not published, July 21, 2019.
18. Anderson, *Anchor Bible: Understanding Paul*, 175.
19. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 327.
20. Even the flood was a gift of love to give everyone one either side of the veil a chance to learn without the wicked traditions blinding their minds and hearts.
21. Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible*, 334.
22. For more on the oral laws see previous commentary from Matthew 8:2–4 and John 3:1.
23. Romans 3:1, 9, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. For more on Judaizers see xx.
24. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:355.
25. The book of Jubilees recorded that Abraham was “Perfect in all his deeds before the Lord” and “pleasing in uprightness all the days of his life” (Jubilees 23:10). “None has been found like him in glory; he has kept the law of the Most High” (Ecclesiasticus/Sirach 44:19–20).
26. Joseph Fitzmyer, *Spiritual Exercises based on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995), 65, 235. Citing 2 Apocalypse Baruch 57:2.
27. Matthew 3:9 and Luke 3:8 record John the Baptist correcting the Pharisees and Sadducees: “[You] say within yourselves, ‘We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.’” Jesus understood the universality of Abraham’s promises as he said in Matthew 8:11, “many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham . . . in the kingdom of heaven.”
28. Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: Romans*, 380; quoting Genesis Rabbah 48:8.
29. Genesis 12:2, 7, 12; 13:14–17; 15:4; 17:8, 16, 19; 18:18.
30. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:554–55.
31. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:252–253.
32. Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: Romans*, 388.

33. Raymond Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament* (New Haven, CT: Doubleday, 1997), 567.
34. D&C 24:8; 31:9; 54:10; 66:9; 98:23–24; 67:13; 122:7; etc.
35. Robert Millet, ed., *Studies in Scriptures: Acts to Revelation* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 47. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, “we must tell them they cannot be saved by the works they are doing, for man cannot save himself. Instead they must turn to Christ and rely on his merits and mercy and grace.”
36. Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 559. Proceeding Nibley’s quote it reads: “The Arabic *kafara* puts the emphasis on a tight squeeze, such as tucking in the skirts, drawing a thing close to one’s self. Closely related are Aramaic and Arabic *kafat*, meaning a close embrace, which are certainly related to the Egyptian *hpet*, the common ritual embrace written with the ideogram of embracing arms. It may be cognate with the Latin *capto*, and from it comes the Persian *kaftan*, a monk’s robe and hood completely embracing the body. Most interesting is the Arabic *kafata*, as it is the key to a dramatic situation.
37. NA, *Life and Teaching of Jesus and His Apostles* (SLC, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of LDS, 1979), 318.
38. Millet, *Acts to Revelation*, 49. “The godly anguish and suffering of the repentant soul is typical of the excruciating pain experienced by the laboring mother as birth of the infant is imminent. The water used in the baptismal proceedings is symbolic of a body of water in which dirtiness and uncleanness are washed away. Paul taught that the process of being taken down into the water is representative of Christ’s burial in the tomb for three days. The rise from the watery grave is in the likeness of the Master’s rise to a newness of life in the resurrected state. Further, the innocent and pure state of the new candidate for the kingdom is like unto the wholly innocent newborn at birth. Baptism thus becomes the channel by which one is both legally initiated into the church and also spiritually initiated into the blessings of the atonement of Christ.”
39. James M. Boice in the “*Bible Study Magazine*,” May 1989. “The clearest example that shows the meaning of *baptizo* is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be ‘dipped’ (*bapto*) into boiling water and then ‘baptized’ (*baptizo*) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptizing the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism (eg. Mark 16:16. ‘He that believes and is baptized shall be saved’). Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with Him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!”
40. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4.545. Ken Campbell, ed. *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 135.