



Josefa de Óbidos, The Sacrificial Lamb, ca. 1670–1684, oil on canvas, 55.5 x 78.7 cm, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

ROMANS 1–6

REDEMPTION THROUGH JESUS, NOT THE LAW OF MOSES

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Introduction to the Epistles

What are the Epistles? The New Testament Epistles comprise written letters that express love, answer questions, address challenges, and regulate Church issues. They include some of the sacred writings of the Apostolic Church from two members of the original twelve, other Apostles, and early Christian leaders. They were written to people who were 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 the same, and none of the translations are perfect.

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. Because of the nature of correspondence, we have only half of the conversation—we often miss the question

or issue that initiated the correspondence. The Epistles 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. The one exception to this is 2 Pet 3:15–16, which includes something Paul wrote (probably his epistles) with the scriptures, 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. Early Christians gathered their sacred writings and shared them with other Christians, just as the ancient Israelites had. For many years, Church leaders filtered the growing body of false writings that were purported to have apostolic origins. Thus, the New Testament canon was not agreed upon and closed until AD 382 to 419.² (The Old Testament canon was not closed until after the New Testament canon.)

How were the Epistles organized? The compilers of the New Testament arranged the Epistles by author and length, not chronology. The authors were Apostles or had some connection to the Apostles. We have more letters from Paul than from any other author, so his epistles are first. Then, within each author’s section, the longest letters are first and the shortest last. (The Epistle to the Hebrews was placed at the end of Paul’s letters because the authorship was debated.) When Constantine oversaw the compilation of the Epistles, he wanted Romans first because it communicated what he wanted. It speaks of the gospel as the “power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16); it speaks of Christ’s Atonement, Resurrection, and Judgment and of Christians’ responsibilities to develop and maintain faith, practice repentance, and receive ordinances.³

What are the biases of the translators? Anyone who has tried to communicate a new subject with someone from a different background can appreciate the difficulties of translating biblical texts. In the Epistles, we see a clear bias by the translators—whether they are Eastern Orthodox or Catholic (JB) or Protestant (KJV). The BYU Commentary Series provides new additional translations. As a word of caution, the KJV often includes bias and vocabulary from a Calvinistic theology.⁴

Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans

Author. Paul dictated this epistle to Tertius his scribe (Rom 1:1; 16:22).

Audience. This epistle was written for believing Saints living in Rome whom Paul had not yet visited (Rom 1:7, 10). Paul used excellent Greek and over a thousand complicated words, suggesting his audience was well educated.⁵

Location and date. Paul prepared the Epistle to the Romans while he was at Corinth at the end of his third mission.⁶ The best estimate on the date for this letter is the winter of AD 57–58.

Themes. Major themes of this epistle include the plan of salvation; redemption through Christ, not the law of Moses; justification by faith; the need to prepare for the Judgment; becoming joint heirs with our Savior; and the duties required to attain holiness. Ten of the sixteen chapters in Romans address

Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire, grew from its humble beginnings of a drained swamp in 650 BC to a city that was home to nearly one million people. By the time of Augustus Caesar’s reign (27 BC–AD 14), Rome had paved roads, parks, libraries, gymnasiums, temples, and forums. Its aqueducts delivered running water to the city’s fountains and 170 baths with hot, cold, and warm water. Augustus boasted that he found the city in brick and left it in marble. Over one-half of the city’s population was enslaved or in servitude. Many foreigners lived in Rome, including Jews, who made up 10 percent of the population. Jews were mentioned in the city at Julius Caesar’s funeral in 44 BC. A Roman satire from the New Testament time depicted Jews as an unwelcome reality.

the relationship between the Mosaic law and Christ’s 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—more JST changes are found in this epistle than in any other. Joseph changed 119 verses, or 27 percent of the text. Most of the changes can be found in the footnotes, but five excerpts are located in the Bible appendix.

Keys to understanding Romans

Romans is set up systematically to prove a theory. Paul develops his argument like a defense attorney, as if he were debating with an imaginary opponent in a diatribe. The argument builds throughout the epistle, so readers must take in the whole case, not just its parts, to understand the thesis.

Paul’s thesis is that redemption comes only through our forgiving Mediator, Jesus Christ. His gift of resurrection or immortality is for all, but exaltation requires repentance and obedience.

When the scriptures do not make sense doctrinally, try reading different translations or the Greek definitions of troubling words. Also look for similar doctrines in the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and recent general conference talks. Paul was not infallible, nor are his texts in their original form. Even though he lived in the ancient world, he taught many truths known in the Restoration.

I: Folly of Trusting in Circumcision, Lineage, or the Mosaic Law for Redemption

In Romans 1–4, Paul opens by denouncing any source of redemption other than faith in Christ.

Greetings to the Saints in Rome—Rom 1:1–6

Rom 1:1. “**Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.**” Paulus (meaning “small or little”) is Paul’s Greek name, but it is translated in English as Paul. Roman citizens also received three special Latin names that ended

with *-os* or *-us*, but Paul does not introduce himself with his three Roman names.⁷ Instead, he introduces himself as a servant (translated from the Greek *doulos*, also meaning “a born bondman or slave”) of the Messiah. The population of Rome had “three slaves to one free citizen.”⁸ Paul writes in this way to describe his total submission to the Lord.

Rom 1:1. “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.⁹

Rom 1:1. “separated unto the gospel of God.” The Greek word translated as “separated,” *aphōrismenos*, meant “to mark off by boundaries from, set apart.” The boundaries are God’s directions contained in the gospel. The word *gospel* is literally “good news from God.”¹⁰ The gospel is the Lord’s plan of salvation, which we believe God presented during premortal councils. This plan hangs on the appointment of a redeemer to atone for the sins of the world. All doctrines and everything else taught in the scriptures are tangential to this good news. Paul not only was a servant of God but was also commissioned to testify of God on a mission assignment.

Rom 1:2. “promised afore by his prophets.” Paul confirms the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies that foretold types and shadows of the Messiah.¹¹ It was very important to the Jews that Jesus fulfilled the messianic hopes and promises of David’s lineage.¹²

Rom 1:3–4 (BSB). “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.” Paul declares Jesus’s mortal lineage through David and His divine lineage as the Son of God. God appointed Jesus’s dual nature, but it was not predestined (as is misinterpreted in the Latin Vulgate and Calvinistic texts). Rom 1:4 communicates different meanings in different translations, as the table below illustrates.

This verse does not mean that the Resurrection “made” Jesus into the Son of God, as some Christians interpret. Rather, the resurrection of the dead provides evidence of Jesus’s sonship. Paul teaches (as did Luke) that even before Jesus’s Resurrection, He was the Son of God.¹³ We read in Luke’s record that Jesus was conceived when “the power of the Highest . . . [overshadowed]” Mary (Lk 1:35).

Table 1. Comparison of Rom 1:4 in the BLB, NIV, and KJV

BLB	NIV	KJV
Having been declared the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.	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.	And declared <i>to</i> be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Rom 1:5 (JST). “By whom we have received grace and apostleship, **for through obedience, and faith in his name, to preach the gospel among all nations for his name.**” The JST changes clarify our understanding of obedience and redemption. The Savior was the source of the forgiveness and apostolic calling Paul received. The Greek word for “grace” is often translated as “favor” in the KJV.¹⁴ Paul’s combination of words provides an interesting understanding of the “obedience of faith” (NASB), or “that people of all nations would obey and have faith” (CEV). Paul opens and closes his letter with the theme that disciples must demonstrate their faith (Rom 16:26).

Paul’s desire to visit Rome—Rom 1:7–17

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

Rom 1:8. “**your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.**” In Greek, the word for “faith” has a component of action that follows with obedience. In Latin, *fedas* is “loyal.” That the Roman Saints were known for their faith begs the question, what are we known for?

Rom 1:10 (BSB). “**at last by God’s will I may succeed in coming to you.**” Paul hoped and prayed to visit the Roman Saints. Yet God’s answer was not what Paul expected. When he finally arrived in Rome, he was in bonds as a prisoner. In verses 9 and 10, the JST adds a beautiful example of how Paul’s prayers prioritized the most important things: how to serve God and the Saints better.

Rom 1:11. “**I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.**” Paul had wanted to go to Rome in the past, but he was detoured for the Lord’s purposes. He desired to see the Saints, not the beautiful capital city. He wanted to give a spiritual gift “to make you strong” (NIV). This may have referred to the gift of the Holy Ghost, other spiritual gifts, or His testimony-filled witness.

Table 2. Comparison of Rom 1:9–10 in the KJV and JST

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

Rom 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 to receive salvation. Everyone will receive immortality; at some point, “every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Rom 14:11). Salvation must come individually through a personal relationship with our Creator. The hope of salvation allows mortals to believe and grow from one level of faith to another.

Rom 1:16 (NIV). *“first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”* Paul is only partially correct here. In his culture, the word *Jews* referred to all Israelites. The Jews had the opportunity to receive their promised Messiah first, but Adam and Eve were the first to learn of God’s redemptive plan. Paul refers to the time since Moses when God gave the righteous children of Israel an opportunity to serve and learn from Him. However, God is no respecter of persons. Jesus taught that the “first shall be last; and the last shall be first” (Mt 19:30). Paul knew that Jews and Gentiles will both have a fair chance to hear and serve God if they wish.

Rom 1:17 (JST). *“~~from faith to faith~~; through faith on his name; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”* The JST added the importance of placing our faith in the name of Christ. Paul cites Hab 2:4: “The righteous person will live by his faithfulness” (NIV). The key to understanding God is to develop faith in Him and live accordingly so that His Spirit can reveal truths to us. Disciples live and progress in faith.

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.”¹⁵ Verses such as this one developed the Protestant Reformation slogan *Sola scriptura, sola fides, sola gratia*—that is, “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.”¹⁶

God’s wrath against sin—Rom 1:18–32

Paul’s audience included Saints who knew both Old Testament and pagan ideology, so he addressed both camps. First, he addressed God’s wrath against the wicked (Rom 1:18–24), and then he denounced pagan philosophies (1:24–32).

Rom 1:18 (JST). *“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness . . . who ~~hold love not the truth~~, but remain in unrighteousness.”* Paul emphasized 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” (NIV). Every time the scriptures repeat this phrase, it

refers to our perfect God. Jesus is the only divine nature. In Church vernacular we use the phrase to refer to a gift or divine inheritance. This is a unique interpretation as part of the Restoration. Yet, remembering that Jesus alone has the divine nature fosters humility and adoration.

Rom 1:21–23 (NIV). “*their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened . . . and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images.*” Humility and obedience are required to worship God. Pride, on the other hand, creates fools. Paul taught that it is not enough to know God; we must also honor and glorify Him. The Lord’s Prayer exemplifies this as it is one-third worship (Mt 6:9–13).

Rom 1:25. “*worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.*” Paul calls humans to worship God more than their selfish desires. Since the Creation, humans have rebelled against God by disregarding His commandments in favor of their own carnal lusts. Paul enumerates his generation’s sins (which also plague our generation) and denounces their lifestyles that “dishonour their own bodies between themselves” (Rom 1:24).

Rom 1:26–27 (BSB). “*Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. . . . Men committed indecent acts with other men.*” At the top of the list of sins, Paul starts with sexual lusts. Contrary to the Greco-Roman culture of the time—which valued women’s chastity before marriage but winked at men’s promiscuity—in Christ’s church both genders will be judged by the same law. Any breaking of the law of chastity is a sin and requires repentance.¹⁷ The difficulty of this high moral standard for Christians is that disciples must 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”—straight and gay, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female (Gal 3:28 NIV). Paul condemns issues of immorality in nearly every letter as it was a major problem in the Roman world.¹⁸

Rom 1:28–29 (BSB). “*since they did not see fit to acknowledge God . . . [they] have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity.*” When humans do not choose to obey God, His Spirit cannot bless them in the same way, and they fall to Satan’s temptations. Paul listed twenty-one sins, and they reflect his Jewish values. This is seen especially in 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” (Rom 1:32 NIV). In the restored Church, we do not hold the same strict punishment but encourage repentance and returning to the grace of God.

Beware of hypocrisy—Rom 2:1

Rom 2:1 (MNT). “*in judging another you condemn yourself.*”¹⁹ Paul’s diatribe argues that humans judge others in the same areas where they themselves fall short. Sociologists have also observed that if something bothers you about someone else, it is probably because you have the problem. Yet hypocrisy is hard to see in oneself. President Ezra Taft Benson’s talk “Beware of Pride” reminds us that we all have a problem with pride and need to look within ourselves, not at others.²⁰

Repeatedly the Bible counsels us not to judge others; yet, one of the things we were sent to earth to do is learn how to judge between right and wrong. Life is full of choices, and choices require judgment. Jesus taught that we are to “judge righteous judgment” (JST, Mt 7:2). The key is found in the Book of Mormon. God gives every person the Light of Christ at birth. This gift can prompt righteous judgment. The influence of the Spirit will also testify of truth to help the seeker “know good from evil” (Moro 7:16–19).

Universality and goodness of the Judgment—Rom 2:2–6

Rom 2:2 (NIV). “**God’s judgment . . . is based on truth.**” God knows all sides of every situation, and He will judge from His omniscient vantage point. According to Paul, God will give us all “the judgment seat of Christ.”²¹

Rom 2:4 (NRSV). “**Do you not realize that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?**” Paul knew firsthand the blessings of repentance. For Christians, the hope of the Lord’s forgiveness provides courage to change. Repentance is not feeling bad about oneself—it is just 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 come unto Christ to change. Next, as we pray for forgiveness, God empowers and cleanses us to learn “line upon line” and grow into a better disciple (Isa 28:10).

Rom 2:6 (TLV). “**He will repay everyone according to his deeds.**” This epistle is filled with Old Testament scripture. Here Paul cites Pro 24:12, which describes the law of the harvest. In God’s kingdom, how one sows will determine what one reaps. God’s judgment will give back and restore, or repay with vengeance what is just (2 Cor 13:11; Morm 3:15). God will examine the sincerity of our deeds and thoughts. The Judgment will become another restoration of truth.

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 (Mosi 2:23–24; see also 2:41).

Judgment of the righteous and wicked—Rom 2:7–11

Rom 2:7–8 (NASB 1995). “**those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey . . . wrath and indignation.**” God gives the gift of resurrection to all His children, but we will be resurrected to different types of bodies depending on how we lived. Those who valiantly serve Him will receive a reward of enjoying God’s presence in eternal life, or exaltation. (The Restoration provided this separate and unique definition of eternal life.)²² 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 the phrase eternal punishment is another way to refer to God’s punishment, which will be just (D&C 19:10–11).

Rom 2:11 (BSB). *“God does not show favoritism.”* God’s impartiality will be 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 that kind of status may require more accountability). This leveling of the social strata was unheard of in the Roman Empire. God blesses all those who seek to become His people.

Accountability to the law—Rom 2:12–16

Rom 2:12. *“as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.”* New Testament references to the law most often point to the law of Moses as recorded in the first five books of the Old Testament. 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 in Galilee and later to the Kirtland Saints that “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Lk 12:48; D&C 82:3).

Rom 2:13 (BSB). *“it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but it is the doers of the law.”* Paul emphasizes one more time that only those who live God’s law will be justified. Those who have God’s laws or revelation and disregard them will be held accountable. Jesus taught the same thing in His two most important discourses, the Sermon on the Mount and the Last Supper: “Not every one 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.”²³

Rom 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 Spirit can guide 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 (Moro 7:18–19).

Moral duties of Jew and Gentile, Christian and nonbeliever—Rom 2:17–24

Rom 2:17 (NIV). *“if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God.”* Paul’s diatribe now turns to the Jews. He taunts the proud claims of superior spirituality because of birthright. 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. Paul asks them to look within their own souls and change themselves as needed.

Rom 2:20. *“An instructor of . . .”* Paul uses “instructor,” the very word that Jews often called their law. Israelites had the responsibility to teach God’s law.

Rom 2:21 (NIV). *“you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?”* As part of his imaginary conversation, Paul denounces hypocrisy again. 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 Ps 50:16–20; 3:10–18):

- Will you teach yourself?
- Do you steal?
- Do you commit adultery?
- Do you dishonor the temple?
- Do you dishonor God?

Paul scrupulously followed the admonition to be an example of the believers (1 Tim 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 since their example preaches to others.

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

Circumcision of the heart—Rom 2:25–29

Rom 2:25 (NIV). *“Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.”* Paul uses the Abrahamic definition of circumcision, using it as a sign of the covenant (Gen 17:11). Because of this sign, the word circumcision is often used in place of covenant throughout the Bible. Paul reminded his audience that the sign of the covenant was only beneficial if they lived and internalized God’s laws. Like a meaningless talisman, the sign becomes void without obedience.

God did not care if Christians were circumcised or not; He wanted (and still wants) covenant people to live their covenants. Connecting Rom 2:26 with 2:14, 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 do not fulfill God’s commandments (Rom 2:27).

Rom 2:29 (NIV). *“a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit.”* From the beginning of this epistle, Paul builds his argument. The climax is that God wants His servants to have soft hearts, or “circumcision of the heart.” This is mentioned least six times in the Old Testament too.²⁴

Paul differentiates between two types of covenant people: those who are His people by name or outward expression and those who are His people by action or inward expression. In Paul’s mind, the first group are “uncircumcised of heart” (2 Ne 9:33; Ezk 44:7, 9). 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 Sam 15:22).²⁵

Paul develops this theme further throughout chapter 8.

Rom 2:29. “whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Paul makes a pun that we miss in English. The name Judea or Judah means “praise.” In other words, Gentiles who praise God are adopted by God.

Advantage to being a Jew—Rom 3:1–7

In chapter 3 Paul contends that unfaithful Jews had no advantage over the Gentiles in the kingdom of God. Despite the Jews’ holy prophets, scriptures, and “sign of the covenant,” God’s wrath will come upon all who do not keep their covenants. Yet, Paul never gave up the promised people—He knew God would always honor *faithful* Israel.

Rom 3:1 (NIV). “*What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew . . . ?*” Paul’s imaginary conversation now develops into a debate with a Jewish rabbi. Paul 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”—that is, prophets, both living and dead. Israelites were “entrusted with the very words of God” (Rom 3:2 NIV). The JST mentions the important need for Israelites to have their hearts in tune with God.

Rom 3:3 (NIV). “*Will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness?*” This question leads to Paul’s next discussion. Paul asks his audience to suppose if some Jews were unfaithful, “would their infidelity nullify God’s fidelity?”²⁶ Paul answers, “Of course not!” and paraphrases Ps 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 truths God can restore are affected by humanity’s faithfulness.

Rom 3:5 (CSB). “*Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath?*” The answer to this question is no because God’s punishment is helpful. In Restoration scripture we do not see God inflicting wrath but correcting out of love. When we understand that His work “brings to pass the immortality and eternal life of man,” we see God’s encouragement to repent in a different light.²⁷ The JST changes are noted below with Rom 3:7.

Rom 3:7 (BSB). “*if my falsehood accentuates God’s truthfulness, to the increase of His glory, why am I still condemned . . . ?*” Paul’s diatribe treats the false argument that if we sin more, then God’s forgiveness and glory can be greater. This mentality desecrates the Lord’s Atonement by prostituting Jesus’s sufferings and sacrifices, and those who act according to it will be held accountable for such a flagrant abuse of forgiveness. Comparing translations of Rom 3:5–8, especially the JST, helps us understand these verses.

Table 3. Comparison of Rom 3:5–8 in the JST, CSB, and NIV

JST	CSB	NIV
<p>But if <i>we remain in</i> our unrighteousness <i>and</i> commend the righteousness of God <i>what shall we say? Is, how dare we say</i>, God is unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man <i>who fears God</i>,) God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie, <i>(as it is called of the Jews,)</i> unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? and not <i>received?</i> <i>And not rather, (as we be Because we are</i> slanderously reported; and as some affirm that we say <i>(whose damnation is just,)</i> Let us do evil that good may come? <i>whose damnation is just,.</i> <i>But this is false.</i></p>	<p>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?</p> <p>Absolutely not! Otherwise, how will God judge the world? But if by my lie God’s truth abounds to his glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner?</p> <p>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!</p>	<p>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.)</p> <p>Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? Someone might argue, “If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?”</p> <p>Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—“Let us do evil that good may result”? Their condemnation is just!</p>

All are guilty before God—Rom 3:9–20

Rom 3:9 (JST). “*are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved before, that both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.*” King Benjamin taught a similar message of humanity’s nothingness and God’s greatness in his last discourse (Mosi 2–4). Paul here quotes nine Old Testament scriptures describing humans’ folly as evidence that all are sinners. His list of sins fits those we see in our day too, including everything from violence and deceit to lying and profanity.²⁸

Rom 3:19 (CSB). “*the whole world may become subject to God’s judgment.*” Paul maintains that the Jews will not be exempt from God’s punishment by trusting in their law (including the oral laws or traditions of the elders).²⁹ Jewish converts in Rome may argue with the gentile converts on this issue. Paul ends this section by calling the whole world to be “accountable to God” (NIV).

Rom 3:20 (NIV). “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.” Paul sums up this portion of his argument by correcting a popular Jewish notion that one is saved by obedience to the law of Moses. Christianity saw the law of Moses as a preparatory law to lead a fallen people to obey and recognize God. Obeying the law of Moses became a guidebook to receive the promised Messiah.

Table 4. Old Testament references in Rom 3:10–18

Romans	OT Reference
Rom 3:10	Ps 14:3; 53:4
Rom 3:11–12	Ps 14:2–3; Ecc 7:20
Rom 3:13	Ps 5:10; 140:4
Rom 3:14	Ps 10:7
Rom 3:15–17	Isa 59:7–8 or Prov 1:16
Rom 3:18	Ps 36:2

All share Christ’s redemption—Rom 3:21–31

Rom 3:21 (NIV). “the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.” Paul had been a lifelong student of the scriptures—both the Law and Prophets. He interprets them as a witness of the coming of Jesus (3:26). Paul’s epistles refer to the Old Testament scriptures as pointing to or prefiguring the promised Messiah as the means of justification and redemption.³⁰

Rom 3:23. “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” This is at the heart of the plan of salvation. Realizing that we need the Redeemer is what life is all about. We cannot do life 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 Ne 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, including our interactions with others, ourselves, and God.

Rom 3:24 (JST). “Being justified **freely only by his grace through the redemption.**” The Prophet Joseph Smith strongly felt that only through Jesus’s atoning sacrifice can we be saved from death and the effects of the Fall. It is a gift from God that builds a reciprocal relationship.

Rom 3:25. “God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” Paul here uses the word “propitiation,” which means “priestly sacrifice.” It is not the blood of animals but our Savior’s redeeming blood. Paul pictures Jesus as the high priest making “propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17 NKJV). Paul attests to the Savior’s Atonement and never moves far from this subject.

Rom 3:26 (BSB). “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 Him. But it takes faith in Christ to receive salvation. 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 overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance” (Alm 34:15).

Rom 3:27–29 (BSB). “Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. . . . Is He not the God of Gentiles too? Yes.” Paul explains the need for the law of faith in Christ. It, not one’s genealogy, is the foundation of obedience for all believers (Rom 2:13). Salvation is the complete gift of immortality for all.

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

Rom 3:30 (BSB). “God . . . will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.” For the tenth time in this chapter, Paul returns to the problem of the Mosaic traditions overshadowing Christ’s teachings. Paul attacks local Judaizers (those Jewish Christians who wanted gentile Christians to live all the laws of Moses).³¹

Rom 3:31 (NASB 1995). “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.” It is important to differentiate between the law of Moses and Jesus’s law. Jesus fulfilled the former, with its animal sacrifices, extra washings, and 613 written laws (as rabbis later counted). However, God’s higher laws were still intact. Jesus repeatedly taught the need to follow His teachings: “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”³² (Paul also repeated the Ten Commandments, showing that they are still applicable within God’s higher laws. Similarly, the Book of Mormon teaches that we are justified “by grace . . . after all we can do” (2 Ne 25:23). We cannot earn salvation on our 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.”³³

Abraham justified by faith—Rom 4:1–6

In its entirety, chapter 4 answers Paul’s preceding question on faith by illustrating the law of faith with examples from Abraham and the Psalms (Rom 3:27). Paul cites the Law and the Prophets in Rom 3:21 and in Rom 4 reaches back to the first book of the Law to show God blessing the prophet Abraham for his works and faith (Gen 12–24).

The apocryphal accounts that were written between the Old and New Testaments always spoke highly of Abraham.³⁴ Baruch taught that God implanted “the unwritten law” in Abraham’s heart.³⁵ This thinking carried over to the late second temple period, when Jews saw Abraham as their most important forefather.³⁶ Similarly, Jesus honored Abraham as a ruler in heaven and opened a potential heavenly door for Gentiles’ adoption into Abraham’s seed: “Many will come from east and west, and will recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens” (Mt 8:11 BLB; note the plural “heavens” in this literal translation). Abraham was the model example for both Jews and Christians.

Rom 4:3. “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, which Abraham lived. Then God tested him, found him loyal, and blessed him.

Rom 4:5 (JST). “**But to him that ~~worketh not~~ seeketh not to be justified by the law of works, but believeth on him that who justifieth not the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.**” These two verses are difficult to understand in any translation. The JST helps to clarify that if we seek a reward for our works, we are seeking compensation. But God does not owe us anything. We are always in His debt. God will reward righteous believers if they serve and obey Him in faith.

David celebrated the same faith—Rom 4:7–8

Rom 4:7 (JST). “**Blessed are they through faith whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.**” Paul gives a second example of faith from another beloved ancestor: David, “a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam 13:14). Paul quotes (or paraphrases) Ps 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 Hebrew roots for *atone* and *to clothe*, which will be discussed in Rom 5:22.

Rom 4:8 (NIV). “**the Lord will never count [the sin] against them.**” As long as complete repentance occurs, God grants forgiveness.

Abraham was justified before circumcision—Rom 4:9–12

Rom 4:9–10 (NIV). “**Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness . . . before [he received circumcision as a sign].**” Gen 17 describes the promises to Abraham’s posterity with circumcision as the sign of the covenant. But Paul makes the point that God justified Abraham’s righteousness before the sign of circumcision was given (Gen 15:6).

Rom 4:12. “**the father . . . not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith.**” Paul makes a dramatic departure from the Pharisaic teaching of the day that circumcision was needed for eternal salvation. We also see this teaching a few centuries later in the Talmud:

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*.³⁷

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.

Abraham’s faith secured God’s promise—Rom 4:13–17

Rom 4:13 (CSB). “**the promise to Abraham . . . that he would inherit the world was . . . through the righteousness that comes by faith.**” It was not through the law of Moses or the

Aaronic order that God gave Abraham and Sarah His assurance of posterity.³⁸ In restored modern scripture, we learn that God covenanted with Abraham through the higher priesthood, which priesthood Abraham received from Melchizedek.³⁹

Rom 4:14 (NIV). *“if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing.”* Paul explains that if salvation came only from the Mosaic law, then faith would not be needed—which would then make God’s promises to Abraham void. “Heirs” here refers to the “heirs of salvation,” or those to whom God will give exaltation (Heb 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.’”⁴⁰

Rom 4:15 (NIV). *“where there is no law there is no transgression.”* The Book of Mormon has a similar teaching but with a slight change in meaning: “Where there is no law given there is no punishment” (2 Ne 9:25). The one-word difference is significant. Jacob’s claim protects the ignorant sinner. As there are many ways to interpret the Pauline text, it is immensely helpful to have the Book of Mormon as a second witness.

Rom 4:16 (JST). *“ye are justified of faith and works, through grace.”* Even though the word *grace* can mean “gift” (Rom 1:5), God’s grace is more than just a gift 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 that both are like two sides of the same coin (Rom 6:1).

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

Rom 4:18. *“Who against hope believed in hope.”* Abraham trusted God’s promise for posterity even though the hope seemed to be in vain. Even at the ages of one hundred and of ninety, Abraham and Sarah had enough faith to receive their promised son. After Sarah’s death, Abraham married Keturah and had six other children (Gen 25:1–2).

Rom 4:20 (CSB). *“he did not waver in unbelief at God’s promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.”* Abraham did not doubt God’s promises. Abraham’s faith is an example to Christians to trust God’s promises. Paul loves this theme and expounds on it again in Heb 11:11. Trusting in our Creator’s power more than our own makes us fully convinced that God is capable.

Rom 4:22 (NIV). *“it was credited to him as righteousness.”* This is the third time Paul quotes Gen 15:6 (see Rom 4:3, 9). Faith gives believers the power to develop integrity before God. Paul referred to a “dead” womb earlier (Rom 4:19) to correspond with the death and Resurrection of Jesus, who is the source of faith.⁴¹

Rom 4:25 (NIV). *“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”* Paul concludes his example of Abraham with this thesis.

II: Reconciliation and Forgiveness through the Atonement of Christ

In Romans 5–8, Paul turns to his second doctrinal issue. After proving the folly of trusting in circumcision, lineage through Abraham and Sarah, and the Mosaic law for redemption, Paul elaborates on the saving nature of Jesus’s 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.

Faith brings peace and joy—Rom 5:1–5

Rom 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’s 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 my comments on Rom 1:5.)

Rom 5:3–4 (BSB). “*we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*” 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 trials. Whether they are general tribulations of mortality or tailor-made trials, our Master Teacher gives us these lessons to help us become like Him. Learning through our experiences is one purpose of our second estate. 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. The idea that tribulation can lead to perfection has also been repeated in modern revelation.⁴²

Rom 5:5. “*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 hearts with His love. Those who sincerely seek forgiveness with a broken heart and contrite spirit can be filled with God’s love as a sign of His forgiveness.

*Jesus’s suffering and death accomplished justification, salvation, and reconciliation—
Rom 5:6–11*

Rom 5:6–8 (BSB). “*while we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly . . . [and] still sinners, Christ died for us.*” After Paul used Abraham as an example of faith, he discussed Christ’s accomplishment. These verses are some of the great New Testament explanations of what comprises divine love. As mortals we have no means of saving ourselves.⁴³ But Jesus’s 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.

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

Rom 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 *atonement* 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 *atonement* 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 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 [at the doorway to the tent or tabernacle] . . . the Lord makes a place for him and invites him to sit down beside him—they are at-one.⁴⁴

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 Ne 4:33; also see 1:15).

The Book of Mormon uses words for *atonement* seven times more than the New Testament and even more than the Old Testament. Significantly, the Old Testament uses it in the context of ancient temple rites, and the Book of Mormon uses it in context of Jesus’s atoning blood.

Table 5. Scriptural usage of words relating to atonement

	<i>Atonement and atone</i> (with suffixes)	<i>Reconciliation</i>	TOTAL	Ratio per 1,000 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	42	0	42	0.157
D&C 1–138 111,117 words	5	1	6	0.054
Pearl of Great Price 30,362 words	2	0	2	0.066

Death through Adam, life through Christ—Rom 5:12–21

Rom 5:12 (BSB). “**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.**” Because of the Fall of Adam and Eve, humanity is born into a fallen, sinful world. In the fourth century, Saint Augustine used this verse as the basis for original sin (original sin is the idea that humans are born with sinful natures, not just into a fallen world). But that is not what the text says—nor is it what Paul meant. Death passed onto all humankind, but Adam and Eve’s original transgression did not (Article of Faith 1:2). The word hamartia, translated here as “sin,” means “missed the mark.”

Rom 5:13 (JST). “**For until, before the law sin was in the world.**” Paul uses the word *law* for the law of Moses (and sometimes the oral laws); but he argues that before Moses, there was still sin. From the beginning of the earth, God taught His laws.

Rom 5:13 (JST). “**yet sin is not imputed when there is to those who have no law.**” The word *imputed* meant “to reckon, or lay to one’s charge,” or “taken into account” (BSB). Paul explains that those who have God’s laws have the responsibility to obey them (see Rom 2:12).

Rom 5:14 (BSB). “**Adam . . . is a pattern of the One to come.**” 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” (Lk 3:38). Also, as Adam is the father of our mortal bodies, Christ is the father of our immortality. Elsewhere, Paul refers to Jesus as the second Adam (1 Cor 15:22, 45) and lists several examples of their parallels (Adam’s name can be translated as “man”). Eve was equally involved but not included in Paul’s parallels with Adam.

Rom 5:17. “**by one man’s offence death reigned.**” Adam’s Fall brought death, while Christ’s Atonement bought immortality and the opportunity for eternal life. Jesus conquered death for Himself and all humankind.

Rom 5:18. “**by the offense of one judgment came.**” Adam’s trespass led to condemnation for all; so too the obedient act of Jesus’s righteousness led to justification for all who repent (D&C 19:18).

Rom 5:19. “**by the one man’s disobedience.**” Adam brought condemnation and Christ brought justification. Jesus’s obedience opened the way for purification. Through Jesus, the eternal consequence of Adam’s action became null and void.

Rom 5:20. “**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.⁴⁵ 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, making way for the main actor, Jesus, to perform.

Rom 5:21 (BSB). “**sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life.**” Since the beginning of the world, sin has multiplied, but Christ’s gift has infinitely greater ramifications. Paul personifies sin as Satan with the understanding that Jesus is doing battle with the forces of sin to defeat Satan. This truth was also understood in the Book of Mormon, which reestablished the fact that the law of Moses was given to direct Israelites to their promised Messiah.⁴⁶

Faith, good works, and baptism—Rom 6

After his treatment on Christ's grace in chapter 5, Paul next logically develops our 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—Rom 6:1–15

Rom 6:1–2. *“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.”* Paul returns to the question raised in Rom 3:31: “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? (NASB). Paul clearly answers (and repeats this answer a third time in 6:15). He argues that when we are dead to sin, we can receive forgiveness by our Redeemer and have no desire to return to our sins or repeat our faults. 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.

Rom 6:3 (BSB). *“all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.”* Baptism includes the beautiful symbolism of Jesus's death, burial, and Resurrection. When Paul writes, “We are buried with him,” he implies not only baptism by immersion but also the symbolic idea of burying our old life to take on a new life in Christ's covenant (Rom 6:4). By accepting baptism, Christians accept the Lord's atoning sacrifice. When early Christians were baptized, they symbolically walked through Jesus's death and burial. They started by stepping down a few steps into a large baptismal font (as if they were figuratively being buried in a watery grave on Good Friday), next lying down under the water (as if in the tomb on Saturday) and then ascending out of the water and up the stairs to the other side of the font, rising up into a new life (like His Resurrection on Sunday morning).⁴⁷ Baptism also symbolizes dying with the Lord and burying our sins.

See Mt 3:13 for a discussion of the Greek word underlying “baptize,” which meant “to cause a change” more than just referring to ceremonial immersion. We become softer—like a cucumber becoming a pickle.⁴⁸

Rom 6:4. *“we also should walk in newness of life.”* Paul does not see Jesus's death as a tragedy but as part of God's plan to atone for our sins and open 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. It releases us from all our previous obligations with sin to start over in this new life serving God (Mose 6:59).

Rom 6:6. *“our old man is crucified with him.”* Carrying the symbolism even further, Paul describes baptism as crucifying “the body of sin,” or sinful desires.

Rom 6:7 (JST). *“he that is dead to sin is freed from sin.”* The cleansing power of the Holy Spirit can take away addictions and attitudes that cause us to sin. This does not mean that sin will not exist in the next life. We will still have agency and can choose selfishness and disobedience.

Rom 6:10 (BSB). *“He died to sin once for all.”* Jesus had no sin, but by dying He covered all sins.

Rom 6:13–14 (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 that avoiding it

requires active vigilance. Sin should not be our master or have control over our appetites. Only righteousness begets freedom.

The bondage of sin comes in part because satanic deceptions teach that we cannot change. This idea denies the power of Christ’s Atonement. No one is permanently addicted to sin. Thanks to God’s grace, we are all free to choose—“Because that 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 Ne 2:26; 10:23).

Rom 6:15. “shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.”

By repeating similar words from Rom 6:1, like two bookends, Paul reinforces the need for obedience to God.

The cost of Christian discipleship as servants of righteousness—Rom 6:16–23

Rom 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 by avoiding promptings due to insecurities or self-centeredness. God’s inspiration leads to the best, most direct route. And God’s timing is part of His plan. When we obey the Lord’s commandments and the Spirit’s promptings, we serve our divine Master.

Rom 6:17 (JST). “**ye are not the servants of sin.**” By adding “not,” the prophet Joseph attacked the concept of original sin that he repeatedly found in the KJV. Compare three verses of the JST and KJV below.

Table 6. Comparison of Rom 6:7, 17, 19 in the KJV versus the JST

KJV	JST
For he that is dead is freed from sin. . . .	For he that is dead <i>to sin</i> is freed from sin. . . .
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. . . .	But God be thanked, that ye <i>are not</i> the servants of sin, <i>for</i> ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. . . .
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.	I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have <i>in times past</i> 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” (Moro 8:8).

Rom 6:18. “Ye became the servants of righteousness.” In a culture in which many either were enslaved or lived in servitude, Paul’s words would have been easier to understand than they are today. *Slave* and *servant* were the same word. Servants worked as indentured servants in that time, and slaves usually were set free after a specific time limit (seven years for Jewish men, and at age thirty to forty for Romans).⁴⁹ 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. Paul’s audience at the time had a better understanding of what was required by obeying one’s master. This gave a stronger commitment to the call to become servants of the Righteous One.

Rom 6:22. “now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness.” The fruit of holiness or righteousness is the fruits and gifts of the Spirit. This is another favorite topic in Paul’s epistles. The fruits include “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance.”⁵⁰ Holiness is also translated “sanctification” (ESV), which is a process of becoming more like God through His Spirit’s cleansing. It is also a theme in the Restoration.

Rom 6:23 (BSB). “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.” This is the greatest of all God’s gifts 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).

Notes

1 The Old Testament was not a closed canon by this time (after the Christians closed their canon, the Jews saw the need to close theirs). The word *scripture* in the New Testament refers to ancient Israelite sacred writings known as the Law (or Torah), Writings, and Prophets.

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 ten exclusive Pauline Epistles and one Gospel as scripture. The Muratorian list from AD 170 includes over twenty books that were considered scripture. In the Muratorian fragment Origen of Alexandria (AD 184–253) recorded a list of our twenty-seven New Testament books as scripture. Saint Augustine tried to stop the rise of false teachers who claimed authority by closing the Christian canon. The Councils of Carthage in 397 and 419 also agreed to close the canon.

3 Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2007), 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 Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2012): 119–152. The KJV translators belonged to the Reformed tradition, and some held a Calvinistic bias. The five main Calvinistic doctrines are known as TULIP

(all were denounced by the Prophet Joseph Smith). Readers of the KJV translation will recognize them as they read. They are

- a. *Total depravity*: from infancy to adulthood, all humans are sinful until God elects and regenerates them
- b. *Unconditional election*: this is given to those who were predestined to eternal life by God's grace
- c. *Limited atonement*: the Savior's Atonement covers only those whom God predestined, not all
- d. *Irresistible grace*: the elect humans, whom God chose, have no ability to resist God's choice
- e. *Perseverance of the Saints*: those whom God elects are the saints who persevere eternally

5 The book of Acts has better Greek than the Epistle to the Romans.

6 See Act 20:2–3; Rom 1:11–13; 15:19–27.

7 Only Roman citizens were allowed to have three names, which were the *praenomen* (personal given name), *nomen* (clan or gens name), and *cognomen* (family name). Paul's Hebrew name, Saul, recalls the first Israelite king, who was the star of the tribe of Benjamin. The name 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." Alma P. Burton, comp., *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1965), 264.

8 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1993), 231.

9 Act 9:4; 22:7; 26:14.

10 Rom 1:1 DBT, WEB; "Euaggelion," *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2098.htm>. All Greek and Hebrew definitions are taken from *Strong's*.

11 For references, see Topical Guide, "Jesus Christ, Prophecies about" and "Jesus Christ, Types of," online at churchofjesuschrist.org.

12 See, for example, Ps 89:4; Isa 7:11; 9:7; 11:1.

13 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 235.

14 See, for example, Lk 1:30; 2:52; Act 2:47.

15 John K. Carmack, *The New Testament and the Latter-day Saints* (Orem, UT: Randall Book, 1987), 279.

16 Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 178. Martin Luther's quote continued, "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."

17 Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1969), 80–86.

18 See, for example, 1 Cor 5:1; 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10.

19 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 4.

- 20 Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” April 1989 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.
- 21 Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10. The phrase is also found eight times in the Book of Mormon.
- 22 See, for example, D&C 20:14; 76:78–79; 88:4–5; 132:24; Mose 1:39.
- 23 Mt 7:21, 24; Jn 13:17 ESV; see Jam 1:22, 25; D&C 89:18.
- 24 See Deu 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; and so forth.
- 25 Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 175.
- 26 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 327.
- 27 Mose 1:39. Even the flood was a gift of love to everyone on either side of the veil, as it was a chance to learn without the wicked traditions blinding their minds and hearts.
- 28 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 334.
- 29 For more on the oral laws, see previous commentary from Mt 8:2–4 and Jn 3:1.
- 30 Rom 13:8; Gal 3:25; see 2 Ne 11:4; 25:24–27.
- 31 Rom 3:1, 9, 19–21, 27–31. For more on Judaizers, see Act 15:6–21.
- 32 Jn 13:17 NASB; see Mt 7:21, 24; Jam 1:22, 25, 27.
- 33 “History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843],” p. 1530, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/173>.
- 34 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.” Sirach 44:19–20.
- 35 2 Baruch 57:2; see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Spiritual Exercises Based on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995), 65, 235.
- 36 Mt 3:9 and Lk 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 Mt 8:11, “Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham . . . in the kingdom of heaven.” For more on this mindset, see my earlier commentary on Mt 3:9.
- 37 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 380, quoting Genesis Rabbah 48:8.
- 38 Gen 12:2, 7, 12; 13:14–17; 15:4; 17:8, 16, 19; 18:18.
- 39 D&C 124:58; 132:32; Abr 2:9–11.
- 40 Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 1:252–253.
- 41 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 388.
- 42 D&C 24:8; 31:9; 54:10; 66:9; 67:13; 98:23–24; 122:7.

43 Robert L. Millet, ed., *Studies in Scriptures*, vol. 6, *Acts to Revelation* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 47.

44 Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989), 559. Nibley's quote also 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."

45 *The Life and Teaching of Jesus and His Apostles* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 318.

46 See 2 Ne 11:4; Jac 4:5; Jar 1:11; Mosi 13:30; Alm 25:16–17; 34:14.

47 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."

48 James M. Boice, in *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 (e.g., Mk 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!"

49 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:545. Ken Campbell, ed. *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 135.

50 Gal 5:22–23; 1 Cor 12–13; see D&C 46:8–30; and Moro 10:8–20.