



“He that loveth another  
hath fulfilled the law”

Romans

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Romans

## Introduction to Romans

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Romans was likely written from Corinth toward the end of Paul’s third journey, probably early in the year 58 CE. Several clues help us know this location and time of writing. He was staying at the home of his friend and convert, Gaius (16:23). It was sent to Rome with Phebe of Cenchrea (16:1). Cenchrea was the port city of Corinth. He mentioned preparing to go to Jerusalem to deliver the collection from the Gentile to the Jerusalem saints, which ties to Acts 21. He also mentioned many of the Corinthian saints in the greetings portion of the letter.

Paul addressed some very specific issues, yet he had not yet been to Rome when he wrote the letter. How did Paul learn about the problems of the Roman saints? He knew Aquila and Priscilla very well, who were from Rome and who had labored with Paul in Corinth and Ephesus. They appear to have already been members of the church when they arrived in Corinth in 49 CE, so they (with their ongoing correspondence with friends and relatives back in Rome) could have been the main source of his information.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the writing of Romans, they had already returned to Rome and were holding church meetings in their home (16:3-5).

In general content, Romans is similar to parts of 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians, making it likely these were written near the same time. It is the longest letter in the New Testament. Many consider it Paul’s greatest theological writing,<sup>2</sup> though it can be difficult to read because of the language in the KJV and differences in our culture and Paul’s.

Romans was one of the main books cited by Martin Luther as the source of his reformation doctrines. It is commonly used today to deny the necessity of baptism or any other ordinance and the belief that a single act of faith can save someone.<sup>3</sup> Yet we can find great affinity with Romans and The Book of Mormon on these very doctrines—grace, justification, the Law of Moses, and the duties of saints. A careful reading of Romans shows that Paul would have been very comfortable with the words of Nephi, Benjamin, Mormon, and Moroni.

Joseph Smith made many changes to Romans in his translation, especially chapters 1, 3, 4, and 7, though every chapter has at least one change. These JST changes help us better understand the message of Paul and the doctrines of Christ that he so adamantly taught.

“Romans 3 through 5 support the concept of justification through faith and grace (in fact, the two terms are used more often in Romans than in any other New Testament scripture), but chapters 6 through 8 add the necessity of righteous works. Chapters 12 through 14 identify specific works that lead to salvation. . . . About twenty percent of this epistle deals with faith and grace and about thirty percent with works.”<sup>4</sup>

Romans was carefully composed and worded, as is evidenced by the structure and pattern of Greek reasoning. It was probably written in more than one sitting, perhaps over several days. The body of the letter appears to be chapters 1 through 11 and could have been dictated all at once (though there is a natural break between 8 and 9). Then chapters 12-15 (or at least the first part of 15) appear as another segment, dictated later or even written by Paul’s hand.<sup>5</sup> That section is followed by another addition in 16:1-24, and finally a concluding doxology in the last three verses that may have been added separately as a conclusion. The latter four verses are in different places in

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 172.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, *Introduction*, 559; Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 169: “the most comprehensive treatment of salvation in the New Testament.”

<sup>3</sup> Faulconer, *Romans 1*, vii.

<sup>4</sup> Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 172.

<sup>5</sup> So argues McRay, *Paul*, 269-273.

the letter in the various manuscripts, sometimes at the end as in our KJV, sometimes after 14:23, and in the oldest manuscript of Romans (P<sup>46</sup>, 200 CE), after 15:33.

In summary, In Romans 1-8, Paul demonstrated that God loves all people equally and that Christ's atonement applies to all. He established that all of us need justification— remission of sins—and that Israel's promise of adoption into the family of God applies to all through faith and righteous acts, including baptism. He challenges us to reject sin and walk in a newness of life led by the Spirit, which will sanctify us and make us joint-heirs with Christ.

In the final chapters in Romans, Paul concludes his thinking about how God treats Jews and Gentiles in terms of justification, uses the analogy of an olive tree to represent the position of the two groups in the church, then lays out the moral responsibilities of members of the church to God, each other, themselves, and those who are weaker among them. Finally, Paul concludes with his travel plans, greetings to many individual saints in Rome, and a final testimony.

An overall outline for the book of Romans is as follows:<sup>6</sup>

- 1) Greeting (1:1-17)
  - a) Introduction (1:1-7)
  - b) Paul's prayer of thanksgiving (1:8-15)
  - c) The theme of the letter (1:16-17)
- 2) The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ (1:18 – 11:36)
  - a) The need for justification: sin and judgment (1:18 – 3:20)
    - i) God is seen in the creation (1:18-32)
    - ii) Righteous judgment (2:1-16)
    - iii) Living under the Law (2:17-29)
    - iv) Jewish objections to Christian faith (3:1-20)
  - b) The way to justification: faith in Christ (3:21 – 4:25)
    - i) Justification (3:21-31)
    - ii) The faith of Abraham (4:1-12)
    - iii) The promise given to Abraham (4:13-25)
  - c) The fruits and blessings of justification: joint-heirs with Christ (5:1 – 8:39)
    - i) Reconciliation (5:1-11)
    - ii) Death and sin (5:12-21)
    - iii) Rising with Christ (6:1-14)
    - iv) Our commitment to righteousness (6:15-23)
    - v) The example of marriage (7:1-6)
    - vi) The law defines sin (7:7-13)
    - vii) Fighting the desire to sin (7:14-25)
    - viii) The Spirit guides (8:1-17)
    - ix) The glory of the coming age (8:18-30)
    - x) God is with us (8:31-39)
  - d) God's promises to Israel rejected (9:1 – 11:36)
    - i) The promises to Israel (9:1-18)
    - ii) Gentiles and Israel (9:19 – 10:4)
    - iii) Salvation available to all (10:5-21)
    - iv) The opportunity for the Gentiles (11:1-10)
    - v) Salvation to the Gentiles (11:11-24)
    - vi) Israel will turn to the Lord (11:25-36)
- 3) The moral obligations of Christians (12:1 – 15:13)

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<sup>6</sup> Drawn from a combination of outlines in Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters*, 182-195; Brown, *An Introduction*, 560; Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 844-850; Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 170-185.

- a) Obligations to God—Christian living (12:1-8)
  - b) A Christian life (12:9-21)
  - c) Civic authorities (13:1-7)
  - d) Love one another (13:1-7)
  - e) Put on the Lord (13:11-14)
  - f) Duties toward weaker members (14:1-12)
  - g) Do not offend (14:13-23)
  - h) The gospel is open to everyone (15:1-13)
- 4) Conclusion (15:14 – 16:27)
- a) Paul acknowledges the weight of his words (15:14-21)
  - b) Plans to visit Rome and Spain (15:22-33)
  - c) Greetings to the saints in Rome (16:1-16)
  - d) Final encouragement (16:17-23)
  - e) Final doxology (16:24-27)

## Greeting – Romans 1:1-17

The first few verses are a typical letter opening of the time, though much expanded by Paul, as is typical in many of his letters. The sender is identified (1-6), then the recipients (7a), followed by a greeting (7b). In this opening, Paul introduced the themes that he developed more fully in the rest of the letter. An introduction at the beginning of a letter was normal, though Paul’s lengthy digression between the ‘from’ and the ‘to’ in these verses was not typically part of the greeting. But digressions were very normal in Greek writing. We value brevity and clarity today, often relegating details to footnotes. But Greek speakers and writers valued depth and welcomed digressions such as these as a representation of thoroughness.<sup>7</sup> This section serves as a prologue to the content of the letter.<sup>8</sup>

## Introduction – Romans 1:1-7

1:1 **a servant of Jesus Christ.** The Greek is *doulos* which means ‘slave.’ It is used throughout the New Testament, though a slave in Paul’s day was not the same as the image most of us get from American slavery. Slavery in Paul’s day was “compulsory service by a person who is absolutely dependent on and belongs to the master of a household (using belongs in its strong, economic sense).”<sup>9</sup> The KJV translators softened the word a bit by using ‘servant,’ but Paul literally meant he was God’s slave, that he belonged to him.

1:1 **called to be an apostle.** “Called” means ‘divinely selected and appointed.’ Paul didn’t just decide on his own to become a teacher and church leader. He was called of God.

1:1 **separated.** “Separated” means ‘set apart’ or ‘marked off from others.’ He was especially separated from evil (the same word is used, for example, in Matthew 13:49 and 25:32). We are ‘set apart’ or made holy (the meaning of the similar phrase in Hebrew in the Old Testament) by our calls to service and asked to be different and apart from the world by our covenants with God. Ironically, Paul was a Pharisee, which probably meant ‘separated.’ Before Damascus, he was separated from the rest of the world by his faithful attention to the Law; after Damascus he was separated from the rest of the world by his faithful discipleship to Jesus, the fulfiller of the Law.

1:1 **the gospel.** “Gospel” is *euangelion* in Greek, meaning ‘good news’ or more precisely, ‘news of victory.’ We use the term “gospel” in the Church today to refer to all of our doctrines and beliefs, sometimes even the Church itself. But Paul used it for a very specific concept: the good news of the victory of Christ over death and sin. The good news of God is the atonement.

1:1 **JST**

Romans 1:1 KJV

JST

<sup>7</sup> Faulconer, *Romans 1*, 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, *Dictionary of Paul*, 841.

<sup>9</sup> Faulconer, *Romans 1*, 3.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, ~~called to be an apostle,~~  
separated ~~unto~~ the gospel of God,

Paul, **an apostle** a servant of **God, called of** Jesus  
Christ, **and separated to preach** the gospel,

The changes stress Paul's calling as an apostle first, then his submission as a slave to God. He was called of Jesus Christ, referring back to his vision on the road to Damascus, and separated out to preach the good news of Christ.

1:2 **holy scriptures**. The Greek is literally 'sacred writings.' For Paul and all other early church members, the scriptures consisted of what we today call the Old Testament: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. However, these 'sacred writings' Paul considered scripture were not solidified as they are today. In Romans, for example, he quoted or paraphrased from a book called The Wisdom of Solomon, a book not included in our KJV Bible today but available in the Apocrypha (and Catholic Bibles). The two books compare as follows:

<b>Romans</b>	<b>Wisdom of Solomon</b>
1:18-23	13:1-19; 14:22-31
1:24-26	11:15-16; 12:27
1:29-32	14:23-26
2:3-4	15:1-6
5:12	2:24
5:14	1:14

1:3 **his Son Jesus Christ, which was made the seed of David according to the flesh**. Paul immediately represented the duality of Jesus: he is the Son of God and thus divine, and the son of David (through Mary) and thus human.

1:4 **declared to be the Son of God with power**. "Declared" is *horizō*, meaning 'marked out' or 'appointed.' It is related to "separated" or 'set apart' in verse 1, meaning essentially the same thing. Thus what sets Jesus apart and marks him out is his resurrection from the dead. He was always the Son of God, but with the resurrection he took a new, even greater role, 'in power.' Indeed, "declared" here can also take the meaning 'perfected' (compare Matthew 5:48 to 3 Nephi 12:48, the first before the resurrection, the second after).

1:4 **according to the spirit of holiness**. Paul replicated the pattern from verse 3: "according to the flesh." The flesh versus the spirit is a theme all through Romans. Here Paul was setting that up by contrasting Jesus' own nature: he was born mortally as a son of David through Mary and had the power over death as the Son of God.

1:4 **resurrection from the dead**. After this phrase, the typical Greek text adds "Jesus Christ, our Lord" (not in verse 3, as in the KJV). It is not known why the KJV translators did it this way, except that perhaps their Greek manuscripts may have differed from ours (though the 1550 Greek text, which should be nearly identical to what they used, shows the phrase only in v. 4). Note that footnote d on this verse in the LDS KJV, which does note the additional phrase, is not quite correct in its rendering of the Greek; it should say, "from the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord."

1:4 **JST**

<b>Romans 1:4 KJV</b>	<b>JST</b>
And declared <del>to be</del> the Son of God with power, <del>according to the spirit of holiness,</del> by the resurrection from the dead:	And declared the Son of God with power, <b>by the spirit</b> <b>according to the truth, through</b> the resurrection from the dead:

The JST increases the witnesses of Jesus being the Son of God from three to four. First, it is shown "with power," with various potential meanings. Some would see it as nod to God's power to raise Jesus from the dead.<sup>10</sup> Another potential meaning is the power that Jesus manifest during his own life (as indicated by the emphasis on Jesus becoming flesh in v. 3) doing miracles and wonders. Second is wholly added in the JST, "by the spirit," meaning that the Holy Ghost adds a second witness of Jesus, confirming his status. Third, "the truth" was manifest in Jesus' teachings and his life. And fourth, the capstone of the witnesses, his status as the Son of God was confirmed

<sup>10</sup> Faulconer, *Romans 1*, 24. But that is the fourth point. It could by parallel also be the first, but see the argument for the first points to tie back to verse 3 in the text above.

“through the resurrection from the dead.” Paul’s personal witness of this fact started in Acts 9 and continued throughout his life, including at least one experience after he wrote this letter to the Romans (Acts 23:11).

1:5 **By whom we have received grace and apostleship.** From Jesus Christ, Paul received grace—love, favor, and mercy—and a call to serve. It was always his claim that his commission was directly from the Savior. This phrase could also be taken to mean ‘the blessing of apostleship,’ meaning that a call to be such a special witness was, in fact, a spiritual gift, not just a duty.<sup>11</sup>

1:5 **for obedience to the faith.** “For” means ‘toward’ or ‘unto,’ meaning that his apostleship was to bring about obedience to the faith. Paul’s other clear theme in Romans—and in many of his letters—is that salvation is the combination of obedience (works) and faith. Here he introduces the idea. He develops it in more detail in other chapters, then at the end of his letter comes back to it: “for the obedience of faith” (16:26). To characterize Paul’s writings as faith *versus* works is to not only misunderstand Paul but to ignore his many calls to righteous living as our contribution toward salvation. Paul would have felt very comfortable with Nephi’s words that we must teach all people “to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

1:5 **JST**

Romans 1:5 KJV	JST
By whom we have received grace and apostleship, <del>for</del> obedience <del>to the faith</del> among all nations, <del>for his name</del> :	By whom we have received grace and apostleship, <b>through obedience and faith on his name, to preach the gospel</b> among all nations:

The KJV text and other translations speak of “grace and apostleship” giving Paul and his companions the authority to call people to obedience and faith (or, “the obedience that comes from faith,” NIV). In the JST, it is rather a statement of how they received grace and apostleship—through their own obedience and faith in Christ. Thus armed and commissioned, they are ready to preach the gospel to the world.

1:6 **the called of Jesus Christ.** An ambiguous phrase, this could mean several things, including: ‘called by the name of Christ’; ‘called to belong to Christ’; or, ‘called by Christ’ to serve in some way. All three are appropriate. The wording of the JST (“ye also **are** ~~the~~ called of Jesus Christ”) supports the last possibility best.

1:7 **To all that be in Rome.** This verse was the greeting to the recipients “in Rome,” who are “beloved of God” and called (“invited to be,” not “named”) “saints.” Both titles given by Paul to the Romans are not so much statements of the quality of the members of the church there but about their covenant status with God. That is, because they had promised to leave the world behind out of love for Christ, they became ‘holy’ or ‘set apart’ (the meaning of “saints”) and thus loved of God in a special way (compare Deuteronomy 7:13). Put another way, they were “saints” (‘holy,’ ‘chosen’) because God loved them by virtue of their covenant relationship. This is yet another major theological point of Romans—that obedience doesn’t make a person holy, but that being made holy (loved of God and called to a new life) requires obedience as the correct preparation and response.

1:7 **Grace to you and peace.** Most Jewish letters of the day—indeed, most encounters between Jews—were accompanied with the greeting “peace.” Paul added “grace,” making his openings distinctive and reflective of his doctrine and belief. Grace is amazing to Paul, having been a great sinner against the truth, and he never forgot from whence his forgiveness came.

### Paul’s prayer of thanksgiving – Romans 1:8-15

1:8 **your faith is spoken of.** Paul was addressing those who were already church members, not nonbelievers. Their faith (and their being “steadfast,” adds the JST) was well known. That they were covenanted, baptized followers of Christ is an important context—he was not preaching to people who were unfamiliar with Christ or who had not

<sup>11</sup> Faulconer, *Romans 1*, 30.

yet entered into a covenant relationship with God. That means he didn't have to explain everything at a 'beginner' level but could assume a foundational understanding and teach at a higher plane.

1:9 ***I serve with my spirit.*** The Greek *pneuma* can have several meanings, including spirit, soul, mind, and disposition. The sense here is that Paul serves God with the commitment of his soul and mind—we would say 'his whole heart.'

1:9 ***JST***

Romans 1:9 KJV	JST
For God is my witness, whom I serve <del>with my spirit in the gospel of his Son</del> , that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;	For God is my witness, whom I serve, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, <b>that you may be kept through the Spirit, in the gospel of his Son;</b>

Though this is fundamentally a change in word order, it greatly clarifies what is an awkwardly worded verse in the KJV. Instead of Paul serving the gospel of Christ with his spirit, he prays that the Holy Spirit will keep them thriving in the gospel of Christ.

1:10 ***Making request, if by any means now at length.*** A simpler translation of this verse would be: 'Desiring for a long time that I somehow might be blessed by the will of God to come to you.' Paul hoped to soon visit the Romans when he wrote this.

1:10 ***JST***

Romans 1:10 KJV	JST
Making request, if by any means <del>now</del> at length I <del>might</del> have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.	Making request <b>of you, to remember me in your prayers, I now write unto you, that you will ask him in faith, that</b> if by any means, at length, I <b>may serve you with my labors, and may</b> have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

The substantial reworking of this verse ties it back to verse 9; he was praying in their behalf and now he solicited their prayers and faith in his behalf. In fact, requesting their faith and prayers was the first purpose of his writing. But Paul did not ask them to pray for his benefit except that it might bring him safely to them, so he might serve them.

1:11 ***spiritual gift.*** Not necessarily the gift of tongues or prophecy but more likely the gift that comes from God, that of salvation through Christ (getting back to the theme of the letter).<sup>12</sup>

1:11 ***to the end ye may be established.*** 'For the purpose of strengthening you.'

1:11 ***JST***

Romans 1:11 KJV	JST
For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, <del>to the end ye</del> may be established;	For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, <b>that it</b> may be established <b>in you to the end;</b>

This movement of words with the addition of four small new ones changes the reason Paul desires to impart a spiritual gift to the Roman saints. In the KJV, the gift is desired in order to establish (Greek *stērizo*, also meaning

<sup>12</sup> Faulconer, *Romans 1*, 46.

‘support’ or ‘strengthen’)<sup>13</sup> the saints. The verb tense of *stērizo* is aorist, meaning it applies to a specific point in time: in the JST, the spiritual gift is what should remain in them “to the end.”

1:12 **comforted together with you.** Paul clarified that the gift he hoped to share with them did not apply just to them. He wanted to be “comforted together” (literally ‘encouraged together’ in Greek). Paul did not want to come across as arrogant or focused on himself.<sup>14</sup> Many can relate to the sense of this verse, if they have traveled a fair amount and gone to church in many distant lands, often where they don’t even speak the language. In every case, walking into a ward or branch for the first time, visitors are made to feel welcome and encouraged by the immediate bond shared with fellow Saints. We may have also experienced meeting people in a business setting and hearing some little clue (“I lived in Germany for two years” or “I have six children”) that makes a person ask, “Are you LDS?” When a positive response is received, we feel an almost immediate bonding with that person, because we know we are mutually encouraged by our faith.

1:13 **not have you ignorant.** ‘Not have you unaware.’

1:13 **oftentimes I purposed to come unto you.** ‘Many times I intended to visit you.’

1:13 **but was let hitherto.** ‘But was prevented until now.’ The JST changes “let” to “hindered,” a prime example of Joseph Smith modernizing KJV archaic words as part of his translation effort.

1:13 **some fruit among you also.** “Fruit” (*karpos*, literally fruit of the tree or vine, figuratively an effect or result) was one of Paul’s favorite metaphors, here referring to converts to Christ. Anciently, Hebrews offered the first fruits of the season to God as a recognition that it all came from Him (Pentecost was also called the Feast of the Harvest or Feast of the Firstfruits; see BD 673). Paul spoke of Jesus as the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). We taste of those firstfruits now (8:23). Converts are referred to as firstfruits (16:5; Philippians 4:17) who bear fruit through their service (15:28), and the fruits of the Spirit are known among the saints (Galatians 5:22). To Titus, Paul counseled pruning with a sharp knife (Titus 1:13) those who were unfruitful (Titus 3:14).<sup>15</sup>

1:14 **I am a debtor.** An *opheiletēs* is someone who owes something to another or who is bound by duty or obligation. This echoes Jesus’ teaching that to serve God, we must first serve each other (Mark 9:35; 10:44). Paul comes back to this concept in chapters 3 and 4.

1:14 **to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians.** “The Greeks and non-Greeks”; “Barbarians” (*barbaros*) was not a demeaning term but simply referred to those who did not speak Greek or live in that culture. Many readers/hearers of the letter in Rome would consider themselves *barbarous*, since Latin was more likely to be their native language.

1:15 **as much as in me is.** ‘according to my eagerness.’

## The theme of the letter – Romans 1:16-17

1:16 **I am not ashamed.** Paul could have had reason to be ashamed, because his preaching the gospel brought him persecutions, beatings, imprisonment, and more. But he boldly stood forth in all circumstances and declared his testimony. See Psalm 119:46.

1:16 **the gospel of Christ.** The “gospel” is the good news that Jesus took upon himself our curse and yet was raised from the dead, overcoming the curse of death and sin.

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<sup>13</sup> BDAG 945.

<sup>14</sup> Faulconer, *Romans 1*, 47-48; Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:10-11.

<sup>15</sup> Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 40-41.



1:16 **the power of God unto salvation.** ‘The ability of God to be the means of deliverance.’ We are delivered (saved) from sin, death, the power of the adversary, physical and spiritual challenges, and our own weaknesses by God’s inherent strength, power, and ability.<sup>16</sup> See D&C 68:4.

1:16 **to every one that believeth.** ‘To each person that puts their faith/trust in God.’ “Believeth” is too passive a concept by itself. Paul’s call to faith was an act of trust, commitment, and action.

1:16 **to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.** As seen throughout Acts, Paul’s pattern of preaching was to go to a city, find the synagogue, and first preach to the Jews. When he converted everyone he could there (usually god-fearers or proselytes) or was rejected by the Jews in that city, then he took his message to the Gentiles and further expanded the number of converts.

1:17 **For therein.** The antecedent is “the gospel” is verse 16.

1:17 **therein is the righteousness of God revealed.** This is a transitional phrase, moving us from the greeting to the body of the letter. The point: “God’s dealings with the faithful reveal his righteousness.”<sup>17</sup>

1:17 **the righteousness of God revealed.** *Dikaiosunē*, meaning ‘he who is as he ought to be’; it can also mean ‘purity’ or even ‘justice.’ A better translation in this context is perhaps ‘the justice of God made known.’

1:17 **from faith to faith.** “From faith to faith” explains how the revelation of divine righteousness occurs: if we exercise faith, we will come to see the righteousness of God.<sup>18</sup>

1:17 **JST** “...For therein is the righteousness of God revealed ~~through from faith to faith~~ **on his name.**” In the JST, God’s justice and goodness are revealed as we exercise faith on his name. In other words, the more we know God through our faith in him, the more our confidence in his perfection grows.

1:17 **The just shall live by faith.** From Habakkuk 2:4 (though the Hebrew says, “the just/righteous shall live by his faith” and the Greek LXX, “the just/righteous shall live by my faith). Today we might call this Paul’s ‘text’ for his letter. “Live by faith” is ‘have life through faith,’ with the verb “live” (*zaō*) being a rich word that can mean ‘come back to life,’ ‘be restored to health,’ or refer to the conduct of one’s life.

## The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ – Romans 1:18 – 11:36

Romans is fundamentally divided into two parts—this first part about justification being achieved through faith in Jesus Christ, the second (chapters 12-15, basically) about the kind of moral lives that Christians were expected to live. This first section uses a powerful, expanding explanation of justification to convince us of the need for, path to, and blessings of it.

### The need for justification: sin and judgment – Romans 1:18 – 3:20

In this section of the letter Paul taught why we need God and the atonement of Christ by explicitly pointing out our sins. Through the end of chapter 8, Paul appears to use a Greek form of argument called diatribe where the writer argues to an imaginary opponent. With that structure in mind we may better understand some key passages, such as 2:1 and 7:8-23.

### God is seen in the creation – Romans 1:18-32

Here Paul expresses his view of salvation for all who do not hear the word of God, for God is manifest in his own creation and through what we call the spirit of Christ (a Book of Mormon term and not Paul’s but one he alludes to in these verses).

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<sup>16</sup> Faulconer, *Romans 1*, 57.

<sup>17</sup> Faulconer, *Romans 1*, 72.

<sup>18</sup> Faulconer, *Romans 1*, 64.

As mentioned above, the first few verses of this section appear to be a loose paraphrase of Wisdom 13 where the author chided the wicked for worshiping nature and idols.

1:18 **the wrath of God is revealed.** As God’s righteousness is manifest through faith (v. 17), so his wrath is revealed “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.”

1:18 **who hold the truth in unrighteousness.** ‘Who restrain/suppress truth by sin.’ Wicked behaviors keep truth from spreading.

1:18 **JST**

Romans 1:18 KJV	JST
For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who <del>hold</del> the truth in unrighteousness;	For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who <b>love not the truth, but remain</b> in unrighteousness;

The Greek word translated “hold” in the KJV is *katechō*, with the meaning of restrain, hinder, or prevent.<sup>19</sup> Many modern translations use “suppress” here (e.g., NASB, NIV, NAB, and RSV). In the JST, God’s wrath is revealed against those who do not love truth and remain wicked, equating the opposite love of truth with a desire to change direction and live according to that truth. This judgment of the unrighteous only comes when they are fully accountable, “after” God’s truth is “manifest to them” and “revealed unto them” (v. 19 JST). Though God is invisible to them (“things which are not seen,” v. 20 JST), he is “understood by the things that are made” (v. 20), which echoes Alma’s statement to Korihor that “all things denote there is a God” (Alma 30:44). Even when the unrighteous know God through his works, they do not acknowledge him or show gratitude but their “hearts are darkened” (v. 21 JST).

1:19 **that which may be known.** ‘Because the things we know about God are clear to them, for God has made it clear in them.’ Everyone has the Spirit of Christ which manifests to us the ‘basics’ about God and proper behavior (Moroni 7:16-19).

1:20 **the invisible things of him.** The attributes of God that all men know through the Light of Christ, mentioned in verse 19, are invisible to the eye of man.

1:20 **from the creation of the world are clearly seen.** Even though God’s power and righteousness are invisible to us, the universe he has created testifies of them. Compare Alma 30:41-44. Such a manifestation and testimony of God leaves us all “without excuse.”

1:20 **eternal power and Godhead.** ‘Eternal strength and divinity.’

1:19-20 **JST**

Romans 1:19-20 KJV	JST
Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath <del>shewed it</del> unto them.	Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath <b>revealed</b> unto them
<del>For</del> the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, <del>even</del> his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:	the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, <b>which</b> are clearly seen, <b>things which are not seen</b> being understood by the things that are made, <b>through</b> his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

God reveals knowledge about himself to mankind from the beginning of time, and both things which are seen and those which are not are comprehended through the creation which God made with his eternal power. See commentary above on 1:18 JST.

<sup>19</sup> BDAG 532.

1:21 **when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.** Even with these witnesses all around them of God's existence, the wicked do not accept or show any gratitude to God.

1:21 **vain in their imaginations.** 'Fruitless in their thoughts.'

1:21 **foolish heart was darkened.** This is a parallel phrase to the previous 'vain in their imaginations,' since the heart was considered the seat of thought; their 'ignorant minds are deprived of light.'

1:23 **changed the glory of the uncorruptible God.** Thinking they're wise but actually acting foolishly (v. 22), they gave up the true knowledge of the immortal God and turned to mortal idols created by their own hands.

1:24 **God also gave them up.** Here and in verses 26 and 28, this phrase means 'God abandoned them' because of their wicked choices. He gave them the truth but they rejected it and Him; they first abandoned him, so he does likewise, respecting their agency. The phrase comes from Psalm 81:12.

1:24 **to dishonour their own bodies.** Idolatry and sexual sin are often tied together. "Dishonour" is *atimazō* meaning 'to treat with contempt.' It could involve more than fornication, perhaps including marks and tattoos, cutting, or other similar physical acts.

1:25 **served the creature more than the Creator.** Worshipping idols and breaking other commandments turns truth into lies and makes the creation more important than the Creator, as many do today, 'worshipping' the world itself rather than the one who gave us the world.

1:26 **their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.** In verses 26-27, Paul condemns any sexual practice which is not "natural," which may include homosexuality, pederasty, bestiality, and more.

1:28 **things which are not convenient.** 'Those things which should not be done.'

1:29 **filled with all unrighteousness.** In verses 29-31, Paul provided a list of wicked behaviors, including: "unrighteousness" ('injustice'); "malignity" ('bad character' or 'craftiness'); "whisperers" ('slanderers'; 'gossipers'); "backbiters" ('evil speakers'); "despiteful" ('insulting'); "without understanding" ('foolish'); "without natural affection" ('unloving'); "implacable" ('without a covenant').

1:32 **worthy of death.** Those who commit these evils know they are doing wrong by the light of Christ. Such acts contrary to God's commandments are "worthy of death," not meaning that they merit capital punishment in the earthly sense, but that these sins lead to spiritual death (the opposite of 'have life' in v. 17). Sadly, those who do them not only know they are wrong but "have pleasure in them." The JST adds at the beginning of the verse, "And some are inexcusable," strengthening the condemnation of the practices in verses 29-31.

### [Righteous judgment – Romans 2:1-16](#)

Lest his readers/listeners miss the point—that we're all condemned by our sins—Paul approached the subject from the perspective of a Jew striving to live the Law of Moses. Yes, it was a privilege to have the Law, but the problem was that because no one could keep the Law perfectly, the Jews were subject to the same judgments as those without the Law.

2:1 **thou art inexcusable.** 'You are without defense.' We cannot stand in judgment of others because we are also sinners and are under the same condemnation.

2:2 **the judgment of God is according to truth.** But we can be sure that God's judgment is just.

2:3 **thou shalt escape the judgment of God?** Do we think we'll escape that judgment, who have also sinned?

2:4 **Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness.** 'Do you think little of the abundance of his kindness.' God's kindness and patience is supposed to lead us to repentance; the opportunity to repent is kindness from God, through the Atonement of his Son.

2:5 **But after thy hardness.** ‘But according to your stubbornness.’ God’s wrath and judgment will be revealed on the day of judgment.

2:6-11 These verses form a chiasm (an ancient form of parallelism where topics repeat themselves in a hierarchal format), which helps in understanding the message (key parallel phrases bolded):<sup>20</sup>

A 6 Who will **render to every man** according to his deeds:

B 7 To them who by patient continuance in **well doing** seek for **glory** and **honour** and **immortality, eternal life**:

C 8 But unto them that are contentious, and **do not obey** the truth, but obey unrighteousness, **D indignation** and **wrath**, 9 **Tribulation** and **anguish**,

C’ upon every soul of man that **doeth evil**,  
of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

B’ 10 But **glory, honour**, and **peace**, to every man that **worketh good**,  
to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

A’ 11 For there is **no respect of persons** with God.

2:6 **render to every man.** Quote from Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12.

2:7 **seek for glory and honour.** We don’t typically promote seeking for glory and honor, but in Paul’s context, he ties this to “immortality” and “eternal life,” so we know the glory and honor he is advocating are the blessings of following God.

2:11 **there is no respect of persons with God.** Meaning, God does not favor one over another but gives all an equal opportunity for his blessings. Compare Deuteronomy 10:17 and Helaman 3:27-28.

2:12-16 To better understand this section, first read 12 and 16, which form one thought. Then come back and read 13-15, which appear to form a parenthetical digression relating to judgment, but which break the train of thought in 12 and 16.

About the message of these verses, Bruce McConkie wrote: “Paul here announces that all men — all living souls, whether they have knowledge of gospel law or not — shall be judged by the law of the gospel. Specifically, he says, those who sin, having not the law, shall perish, meaning they will be condemned for disobedience to a law they never had. . . . To show the justice of such a course the Apostle, having previously named the sins of sexual perversion, murder, fornication, and wickedness of every sort, now says that the Gentiles who have not the law given them by revelation, nonetheless have the law written in their hearts so that their minds and consciences bear record that they should not violate the laws of God. This is another and quite an expressive way of saying that ‘the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil’ (Moroni 7:16; D&C 84:46). Hence every man, in and out of the Church, whether he has the gospel law or not, is accountable for his deeds and will be judged by gospel standards.”<sup>21</sup>

2:12 **in the law . . . by the law.** This is Paul’s first mention of “the law” (Greek *nomos*) in Romans, though he will use the term a total of seventy-eight times. In most cases, he was referring to the Law of Moses, though in some instances (such as this one) he was referring to the laws of the Christian gospel.

2:13 **not the hearers . . . but the doers of the law shall be justified.** Listening to God and his prophets and other ministers is not enough; justification—being made righteous—comes by following God’s laws, which includes repentance and forgiveness under the power of the Atonement.

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<sup>20</sup> Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:16.

<sup>21</sup> McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:222.

[Living under the Law – Romans 2:17-29](#)

2:17 **thou art called a Jew.** Verses 17-20 is a single sentence, forming one thought and setting up the hard questions in verses 21-24. Jews had the Law and claimed to know the will of God. They called themselves “a guide to the blind” (v. 19) and “a light of them which are in darkness” (v. 19) and believed that it is so.

2:21 **teachest thou not thyself?** A Jew, as part of the chosen people of God, may teach the Law to others, but verses 21-24 give many examples showing that unless he can also live it without any violations, “the name of God is blasphemed” (v. 24, quoting Isaiah 52:5).

2:25 **circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law.** If the circumcised Jew (meaning one who was fully committed to the Law) was obedient, he “profiteth,” but if he was disobedient, his circumcision had no value. Using that same logic, Paul stated that the uncircumcised could therefore be blessed if they were obedient. In other words, circumcised or uncircumcised (or any other outward sign) makes no difference; but a ‘circumcised heart’—a spiritual commitment and willing obedience—can make Jew and Gentile alike before God. “Inner motives are more important than outer motions”<sup>22</sup> (cf. 1 Samuel 15:22; D&C 64:22).

2:29 **in the spirit, and not in the letter.** This verse is the origin of the phrase ‘Obey the spirit of the law, not the letter.’

[Jewish objections to Christian faith – Romans 3:1-20](#)

3:1 **What advantage then hath the Jew?** What was the blessing of being a Jew, then? They had “the oracles of God” (v. 2) which can refer to both living prophets and the scriptures. What a blessing it is to have living prophets among a people, as we do today with our prophets and apostles.

3:1 **JST**

<b>Romans 3:1 KJV</b>	<b>JST</b>
What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?	What advantage then hath the Jew <b>over the Gentile?</b> or what profit of circumcision, <b>who is not a Jew from the heart? But he who is a Jew from the heart, I say hath [v. 2] much every way . . .</b>

Joseph Smith made clearer the important issue of being part of the chosen people—the condition of a person’s heart, meaning thoughts and feelings, toward God.

3:3 **what if some did not believe?** If we don’t believe and ignore the prophets and many ancient Jews did and many modern people do today, will that unbelief nullify faith in God?

3:4 **God forbid.** The KJV translators used this phrase many times in Paul’s letters to translate the Greek phrase *mē genoito*, literally, ‘may it not be.’ The word “God” is not in the Greek at all. When I see this phrase in the KJV, I substitute my personal favorite translation, taken from teenagers and grandkids: ‘No way!’

3:4 **it is written.** The quotation is Psalm 51:4, where David acknowledges that God was just for judging him in the relationship with Bathsheba.

3:5 **JST**

<b>Romans 3:5 KJV</b>	<b>JST</b>
But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)	But if <b>we remain in</b> our unrighteousness <b>and</b> commend the righteousness of God, <b>how dare</b> we say, God <b>is</b> unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man <b>who fears God.</b> )

<sup>22</sup> Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 172.

If we, in our sinful state recognize God’s perfection, how can we possibly turn right around and criticize him for judging us?

3:6 **then how shall God judge the world?** If God is not fully righteous, trustworthy, and consistent, how can we have confidence in his ability to judge the world? Paul is teaching that God’s glory increases by his judgment.

3:7-8 **JST**

Romans 3:7-8 KJV	JST
For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?	For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie <b>(as it is called of the Jews)</b> unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?
And not <del>rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.</del>	And not <b>received? Because we are</b> slanderously reported, and some affirm that we say, <b>whose damnation is just),</b> Let us do evil, that good may come. <b>But this is false.</b>

Paul was not a liar, though he was accused of being one by his enemies and his words were falsely reported. Doing evil things so that the Atonement of Jesus might more fully apply to you is false logic and not Christian doctrine.

3:9 **are we better than they?** The summary verse of this section and the previous two chapters is here: Are Jews better than Gentiles or Christians better than unbelievers? No, says Paul, “they are all under sin.”

3:10 **As it is written.** Verses 10-18 are mostly quotations from Old Testament scriptures to support Paul’s point that we are all under sin and that we cannot ‘fix’ that by the deeds of the law. If you cross reference these with the KJV, you’ll have to jump around to a number of references: Psalm 14:1b-3; Psalm 5:9b; Psalm 140:3b; Psalm 10:7a; Isaiah 59:7-8a; Proverbs 1:16; and Psalm 36:1b. But Paul wasn’t cobbling together his supporting text from this hodge-podge of sources. Rather, he was simply quoting from the first half of what is the 13th Psalm in the Septuagint (Greek LXX) version of the Old Testament, which is very different from the same Psalm (14) in the KJV and Hebrew Masoretic Text available to us today and even compared to the Hebrew texts of Psalms in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is one of the more dramatic demonstrations of New Testament apostles using the Greek version of the scriptures when speaking to those outside of Judea and Galilee.

Romans 3:10-	Psalm 13:1-3 LXX	KJV
10 There is none righteous, no, not one:	... there is none that does goodness, there is not even so much as one. (v. 1)	... <i>there</i> is none that doeth good. (Ps 14:1; 53:1)
11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.	... to see if there were any that understood, or sought after God. (v. 2)	... to see if there were any that did understand, <i>and</i> seek God. (Ps 14:2; 53:2)
12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.	They are all gone out of the way, they are together become good for nothing, there is none that does good, no not one. (v. 3)	They are all gone aside, they are <i>all</i> together become filthy: <i>there is</i> none that doeth good, no, not one. (Ps 14:3; 53:3)
13 Their throat <i>is</i> an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps <i>is</i> under their lips:	Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: (v. 3)	... their throat <i>is</i> an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue. (Ps 5:9) ... adders' poison <i>is</i> under their lips. (Ps 140:3)
14 Whose mouth <i>is</i> full of cursing and bitterness:	whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; (v. 3)	His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: ... (Ps 10:7)
15 Their feet <i>are</i> swift to shed blood:	their feet are swift to shed blood: (v. 3)	Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: ... (Isa 59:7) For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. (Prov 1:16)

16 Destruction and misery <i>are</i> in their ways:	destruction and misery are in their ways; (v. 3)	. . . wasting and destruction <i>are</i> in their paths. (Isa 59:7)
17 And the way of peace have they not known:	and the way of peace they have not known: (v. 3)	The way of peace they know not; (Isa 59:8)
18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.	there is no fear of God before their eyes. (v. 3)	<i>there is</i> no fear of God before his eyes. (Ps 36:1)

The point of Paul’s quotation of Psalm 13 (LXX) is that people are quick to deny the Lord and do evil and that no one is truly righteous on their own. He sums it up in 19-20: obeying and living the Law of Moses will not bring justification of the sinner.

### The way to justification: faith in Christ – Romans 3:21 – 4:25

Having made the case that we are all sinners, Paul explains how we can overcome our sin—through our faith in the saving power of Jesus Christ.

#### Justification – Romans 3:21-31

3:21 **the righteousness of God without the law is manifested.** ‘The justice of God apart from the Law of Moses is made known.’ This is done through the scriptures (“the law and the prophets”) and “by faith of [in] Jesus Christ” (v. 22) to Jew and Gentile alike, “for there is no difference” (v. 22).

3:23 **all have sinned.** One of Paul’s most quoted verses; its role here is to remind us of his previous argument and help in the transition to his teaching of the Atonement.

3:24 **JST “Therefore being justified freely only by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”** The JST emphasizes that it is not just a freely given gift, but that only by grace that we can be redeemed, thereby strengthening one of Paul’s clearest statements of grace. Compare 2 Nephi 2:5-8; 25:23.

3:25 **propitiation.** The Greek word, *hilastērion*, is only used twice in the scriptures, here and Hebrews 9:5, where it is translated “mercy seat.” Today, we would probably translate this ‘atonement’ (as does the NRSV and NIV) or ‘offering’ (compare to 5:11 below). Because the Ark of the Covenant with the mercy seat was the place of the offering by the high priest for all the people on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:13-15), it was called *hilastērion* in Greek. That Jesus was our *hilastērion* emphasizes that the symbolism of Yom Kippur and other Jewish feasts and activities all pointed to him and his atoning sacrifice.

3:26 **just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.** God’s act of setting Jesus as a our ‘mercy seat’ in the presence of God makes him ‘righteous’ (“just”) and able to likely justify all who believe in him.

3:27 **Where is boasting then?** ‘What do we have to boast about, then? Nothing. By means of the Law or our deeds? No, only through the law of faith.’

3:28 **justified by faith without the deeds of the law.** “Justification is being put back into a right relationship with God, to be declared righteous.”<sup>23</sup> The Greek term used here, *dikaioō*, means ‘to render righteous or such as he ought to be,’ judged and declared forgiven of sins. This is not to be sanctified (*hagiazō*, consecrated, purified, free from the guilt of sin) which is related to perfect (*teleios*, meaning complete, finished, fully matured). We can be justified without wholly changing our nature; we cannot become sanctified or perfected without doing so.

Martin Luther and other early reformers read this scripture and decided that faith was the *only* thing needed for salvation (and Joseph Smith interestingly added the same thought into the verse in his translation: “. . . a man is justified **alone** by faith . . .”). But to conclude from this verse that Paul saw no role of works in salvation is to misread the apostle. To counteract a strong sentiment among Jews that keeping the 613 commandments in the Torah would ‘earn’ a person a spot in heaven, Paul was making it painfully clear that there is nothing we can do to earn our way to heaven. Historically, Luther faced a similar situation to Paul, with a corrupt church leadership teaching that people could buy their way into heaven by supporting the building of a chapel or other donations to

<sup>23</sup> Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 404.

the church. The concept of grace was lost in that day, so when Luther ‘discovered’ it in Paul, it became all-consuming to him, the fixation of his entire reformation. But Paul teaches the power of grace in these first chapters, then carefully leads us through our role of good deeds in the later chapters, striking a balance that resonates with Latter-day Saints today, reflected in a longer quotation from Bruce McConkie:

Many Protestants attach greater importance to Paul’s statements about being justified by faith alone than they do to almost any other single thing in the Bible. They so interpret these pronouncements as to “justify” themselves in breaking from the Catholic fold; and they erroneously conclude that men are saved by grace alone without doing the works of righteousness.

What is lacking in the sectarian world is a true knowledge of the law of justification. Simply stated that law is this: “All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations’ D. & C. 132:7), in which men must abide to be saved and exalted, must be entered into and performed in righteousness so that the Holy Spirit can justify the candidate for salvation in what has been done. (1 Ne. 16:2; Jac. 2:13-14; Alma 41:15; D. & C. 98; 132:1, 62.) An act that is justified by the Spirit is one that is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, or in other words, ratified and approved by the Holy Ghost. This law of justification is the provision the Lord has placed in the gospel to assure that no unrighteous performance will be binding on earth and in heaven, and that no person will add to his position or glory in the hereafter by gaining an unearned blessing.

“As with all other doctrines of salvation, justification is available because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, but it becomes operative in the life of an individual only on conditions of personal righteousness. As Paul taught, men are not justified by the works of the Mosaic law alone any more than men are saved by those works alone. The grace of God, manifest through the infinite and eternal atonement wrought by his Son, makes justification a living reality for those who seek righteousness. (Isa. 53: 11; Mosiah 14: 11.)” (Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed., p. 408.)

... What price must men pay for this precious gift? Not conformity to Mosaic standards, not compliance with the ordinances and performances of a dead law, but the price of faith, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith that includes within itself enduring works of righteousness, which faith cannot so much as exist unless and until men conform their lives to gospel standards.

Does salvation come, then, by works? No, not by the works of the law of Moses, and for that matter, not even by the more perfect works of the gospel itself. Salvation comes through Christ’s atonement, through the ransom he paid, the propitiation he made; without this no good works on the part of men could redeem them from temporal death, which redemption is resurrection, or redeem them from spiritual death, which redemption is eternal life.<sup>24</sup>

3:29 **Yes, of the Gentiles also.** A point Paul fought to make most of his adult life as a Christian—God was not just for the Jews, but the universal God of the whole world.

3:31 **we establish the law.** Faith shows the reason Jews had the Law—to make them aware of our sinful state and lead to repentance and reliance on Jesus’ atoning sacrifice.

#### [The faith of Abraham – Romans 4:1-12](#)

4:1 **Abraham our father.** Jewish tradition held Abraham up as one who kept the law perfectly, even before it was given! Paul set out to show that Abraham’s faith preceded his works and was the important factor in his relationship with God.

4:3 **Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.** Quote from Genesis 15:6.

4:4 **to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace.** With a reliance on the works of the Law, there is only an obligation to keep working; grace does not factor in.

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<sup>24</sup> McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:230-231.



4:5 **faith is counted for righteousness.** If we were without fault in obeying the law, we would not need grace. But even without good deeds, faith is “counted for righteousness”—it begins to make us who we ought to be.

4:6 **David also described.** Verses 7-8 contain a quote from Psalm 32:1-2, ascribed to David, that teaches that God imputes or ascribes righteousness to someone without works.

4:9 **faith was reckoned to Abraham.** The crux of the Abraham argument is that Abraham received all his blessings before the Law and before he even obeyed the Law, represented by his circumcision (vv. 10-12). Quote from Genesis 15:6. Compare Galatians 3:8.

### The promise given to Abraham – Romans 4:13-25

4:13 **not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law.** The promises of Abraham pre-existed Abraham himself; anyone exercising “the righteousness of faith” was “heir of the world.” In the JST, Enoch received similar promises to what we call the Abrahamic Covenant, which were renewed to his seed, including Noah, and thus pre-dated Abraham significantly (see Moses 7:51; 8:2; addition starting Genesis 14:23 JST (Appendix in LDS Bible).

4:15 **the law worketh wrath.** ‘The Law brings about anger/agitation.’

4:15 **where no law is, there is no transgression.** If the Law is what is required for salvation, someone without knowledge of the Law cannot sin. Nephi explained it slightly differently: “Where there is no law given there is no punishment” (2 Nephi 9:25; see also 2 Nephi 2:11-15).<sup>25</sup>

4:16 **JST**

Romans 4:16 KJV	JST
Therefore <del>it is</del> of faith, <del>that it might be</del> by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to <del>that</del> only <del>which is</del> of the law, but to <del>that</del> also <del>which is</del> of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,	Therefore <b>ye are justified</b> of faith <b>and works</b> , <b>through</b> grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to <b>them</b> only <b>who are</b> of the law, but to <b>them</b> also <b>who are</b> of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

A clear statement of the dual necessity of faith and works in salvation, more like what James will later say (James 2:17-26). Yet both Paul and James are completely reliant on grace.

4:17 **a father of many nations.** In verses 17 to 22, Abraham believed God’s promise of seed, even though he and Sarah were very old. Verses 17 and 18 quote Genesis 17:5, and 18 also quotes Genesis 15:5.

4:22 **it was imputed to him for righteousness.** “Impute” is ‘count’ or ‘calculate.’ It is the same word in Greek (*logizomai*) as in Romans 4:3, where it is translated “counted.”

4:24 **us also, to whom it shall be imputed.** Just as Abraham’s faith was counted to him as righteousness, so will it be with all of us, if we believe in Christ.

4:25 **delivered for our offenses.** “Delivered” is ‘given into the hands of another’ which also means ‘condemned’, ‘scourged’, ‘put to death.’ Jesus did nothing wrong himself but was punished for our sins and resurrected so we can be justified and forgiven.

### The first fruits and blessings of justification: joint-heirs with Christ – Romans 5:1 – 8:39

Paul spent the next four chapters outlining the blessings of relying on Jesus for our justification and admonishing us to live worthy of those blessings.

<sup>25</sup> Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 174.

## Reconciliation – Romans 5:1-11

5:1 **we have peace with God.** To be at peace with God is a tremendous benefit of the Atonement. The Greek word for “peace” (*eirēnē*) has the added meaning of safety and prosperity, much like the Book of Mormon common blessing to “prosper in the land” (1 Nephi 4:14 and many others).

5:2 **we have access by faith into this grace.** The term here for ‘having access’ means to be admitted into the presence of the court or king, a term that would have been familiar to members living in the emperor’s city.<sup>26</sup>

5:3 **we glory in tribulations.** *Thlipsis* or “tribulations is a marvelous word meaning to be ‘pressed’ or ‘pressed together.’ Paul taught that we glory in such challenges because they build patience in us ( see 2 Corinthians 4:17).

5:5 **the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.** The gift of the Spirit fills us with God’s love, giving up patience and hope in our testing (v. 4).

5:7 **scarcely for a righteous man will one die.** Among men, to die for another who is “righteous” is rare. To die for another who is undeserving is unheard of. Yet that is just what Jesus did for all of us: “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (v. 8).

5:9 **now justified by his blood, we shall be saved.** In verses 9-11, Paul taught that justification and salvation are two different things. We start by being justified—forgiven and set ‘right’ before God—then are ready for salvation. Both are through the Atonement.

5:10 **reconciled to God.** “Reconciled” is *katallassō*, meaning ‘to restore a relationship’ or ‘to change from enmity to friendship.’ Jesus restores our relationship to God, making us no more his enemies.

5:11 **we have now received the atonement.** This is the only time this English word appears in the KJV New Testament. The word was essentially created by William Tyndale when he translated the New Testament from Greek into English in 1526 (he spelled it “attonment”). The Greek word, *katallagē*, is found in three other verses and translated either ‘reconciliation’ or ‘reconciling,’ though related forms are found in many other instances, including verse 10. It has two meanings: 1) exchange, as in changing money for equivalent values; and, 2) adjustment of a difference or restoration to favor.

## Death and sin – Romans 5:12-21

5:12 **as by one man sin entered into the world.** Verse 12 sums up the rest of chapter 5: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Sin entered the world in the garden of Eden but was conquered in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross at Golgotha. “Adam gave the offense (the Fall); Christ gave the free gift (the Atonement). Adam brought death; Christ brought life. Adam brought condemnation; Christ brought justification. Because of Adam there is an abundance of sin; because of Christ there is an abundance of grace.”<sup>27</sup>

5:14 **who is the figure of him that was to come.** Though Paul doesn’t use the term ‘second Adam’ for Jesus, it is this set of verses (and 1 Corinthians 15:45) that give us that notion. Adam was a “figure” (*tupos*, the mark of a blow, a model or pattern) of Christ, though in Paul’s theology, an opposite type, a mirror image almost.

5:15 **through the offence of one.** Because of the transgression of Adam, we all experience a world of sin and death, but so through the “gift of grace” of one man, we experience justification and reconciliation.

5:20 **where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.** Though sin fills the earth, the gift of God overcomes it all. There is no limit to the power and depth of the Atonement; it overcomes all evil and all consequences of evil.

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<sup>26</sup> Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:29.

<sup>27</sup> Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 176.

## [Rising with Christ – Romans 6:1-14](#)

6:1 ***Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*** Paul asks the provocative question: Since sin brings God's grace, should we sin in order for his grace to be visible and evident in the world. "No way!" is his answer (v. 2).

6:3 ***baptized into his death.*** Baptism is designed to remind us of Jesus' burial and resurrection. As he was raised up as a resurrected being, so we are raised from the water into a "newness of life" (v. 4) Our bodies are "crucified with him" (v. 6) that our "sin might be destroyed" (v. 6) and we can "live with him" (v. 8).

6:9 ***death hath no more dominion over him.*** Jesus will never die again, nor will anyone resurrected like him. He was the first to experience this state among the Father's children.

6:11 ***dead indeed unto sin, but live unto God.*** Changed by our covenants and the Spirit, we can be "dead" to sin and consequently alive to the things of eternity.

6:12 ***Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.*** Paul continued to develop his pattern: We all sin and so need a redeemer; Jesus is the Redeemer; we accept him by baptism; then in our "newness of life" we must reject sin and live the commandments to the best of our abilities, yielding ourselves to God's will.

## [Our commitment to righteousness – Romans 6:15-23](#)

6:15 ***shall we sin, because we are . . . under grace?*** One of the challenges of many Protestant churches who emphasize faith and grace alone is the notion that once saved, nothing we do matters; we cannot fall from salvation and grace. This notion developed here by Paul is the counter to that argument that many of them use.

6:16 ***ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are.*** We will be a slave one way or the other, Paul taught. Our only choice is to be a slave to sin, or a slave to God.

6:17 ***JST*** "But God be thanked, that ye ~~were~~ **are not** the servants of sin, ~~but for~~ ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." The KJV emphasizes the change, while the JST emphasizes the commitment and blessing from it.

6:18 ***made free from sin.*** 'Free from the dominion of sin,' we become slaves of "righteousness unto holiness" (v. 19; "holiness" can also mean 'sanctified').

6:21 ***the end of those things is death.*** Following sin leads to death, but following God is "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 23).

## [The example of marriage – Romans 7:1-6](#)

This can be a challenging chapter to understand. Two things help. First, realize that Paul, like Nephi (2 Nephi 4:17-29) and Joseph Smith (Joseph Smith-History 1:28-29) was sharing his private feelings and challenges. Secondly, Paul was contrasting his former life before the road to Damascus to the life he had lived since that great day. This comes out especially well in the JST version of this chapter, which is substantially changed.

7:2 ***the woman which hath an husband.*** In verses 1-4, the metaphor Paul used is that of a woman married to a husband. While the husband was alive, she could not remarry. To do so would be to become an adulteress. But after he died, she was free to remarry. So the Law of Moses was dead to Jews, proselytes, and God fearers who had come to Christ, and they could 'remarry' "him who is raised from the dead" (v. 4).

7:5-25 There are very significant changes in the JST in these verses, and they are all in the JST Appendix in the LDS scriptures, so I won't retype them here. Fundamentally, the changes let us know that Paul is contrasting his old life with his new in Christ.<sup>28</sup> The KJV makes it appear that Paul's flesh, which wants to do evil, is somehow at war with his spirit, which wants to do good, and the flesh appears to be winning. This text sounds very gnostic where the body was considered evil and unholy, and which viewpoint is contrary to Paul's other teachings throughout his letters. The JST is more like the Paul we read in the rest of the New Testament.

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<sup>28</sup> Ogden and Skinner, *The New Testament*, 177-178.

7:5 **the motions of sins.** ‘The suffering that comes from sins.’

### The law defines sin – Romans 7:7-13

7:8 **concupiscence.** This is desire, craving, or longing, especially for that which is forbidden.

### Fighting the desire to sin – Romans 7:14-25

7:24 **O wretched man that I am!** Nephi used the same phrase in 2 Nephi 4:17.

### The Spirit guides – Romans 8:1-17

I am certain that if Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* would have been a Christian instead of a Jew, half of the things he said when he quoted scripture (“As the good book says . . .”) would have come from Romans 8. It is a marvelous chapter full of memorable lines and thoughts, made all the clearer by the subtle but important changes in the JST.

To help with this chapter (and many others in Paul’s letters), there are three concepts that we need to understand: slavery, redemption, and adoption.<sup>29</sup>

**Slavery:** Slavery was a very common institution in the Roman empire, with millions serving in those roles. Slaves were property, controlled by their master who was responsible for everything about them. He had total authority over them, including their lives. The traditions associated with Roman slavery are well documented. Slavery was also an OT institution, though with somewhat different traditions than in the Roman world. As Paul talks about slavery, he sometimes refers to the Old Testament concept and sometimes to the Roman.

In the Old Testament, prophets often referred to themselves as an *ebed* or slave—so Amos 3:7, “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants [slaves] the prophets.” In the NT, Paul and others referred to themselves as a *doulos*, as in Rom 1:1. The words mean the same, slave, and are usually translated “servant” in the KJV. Though common and accepted as a practice, slavery could be repugnant as an individual situation, especially in an OT context. However, in many cases, it was done out of economic necessity. Under Roman law, slaves were not for life and were typically freed at about 30 years of age. Scholars often use the term ‘bond-servant’ for such arrangements.

**Redemption:** A redeemer (Hebrew *gō’ēl*) was a close family member who had the responsibility to buy his kinsmen out of bondage. (A redeemer was also to buy back lost property, avenge blood, and kill a relative’s murderer, to receive atonement money, and to help in a lawsuit.) Redemption (*gā’āl* or *pādāh* in Hebrew, *lutron* in Greek) was the act of paying a price to for the release of someone or something. Yahweh is often described in the OT as Israel’s Redeemer, doing for Israel what they cannot do for themselves by paying the price to bring them out of slavery.

**Adoption:** Paul uses *huiōthesia* to describe the term translated ‘adoption.’ There were several steps to adoption. First, a covenant was made. Covenants were the way to create family relationships (the meaning of the phrase, for example, in Genesis 2:23-24 where Adam made a covenant with God and Eve, recognizing Eve as part of his family). Fathers also adopted sons and daughters, as reflected in Psalm 2:7. Second, there was often a new name associated with adoption, demonstrating the changed status of the adopted person and the authority of the adoptee. When the Lord calls us his children and adopts us into his family, we take upon ourselves his name, thereby falling under his rule and protection.

In the New Testament, baptism was the covenant activity by which Christ adopted us and thus was in a position to be our Redeemer and bring us out of slavery to sin and the world. By accepting this covenant, we submit ourselves to God, in essence, exchanging our former slavery for slavery under him, through which he promises, if we are faithful slaves, suffering all that he requires of us, that he will one day give us everything that he has—the inheritance of fully adopted children.

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<sup>29</sup> for more details, see the excellent essay on this by Jennifer Clark Lane, “Hebrew Concepts of Adoption and Redemption in the Writings of Paul,” in Hoskisson, ed., *The Apostle Paul*, 80-95, and Faulconer, *Romans 1*, 3f.

8:1 **walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.** Walking after the Spirit frees us from the slavery of sin and death because Jesus condescended to take on flesh and pay the price of sin (v. 2). The Law of Moses could not accomplish this—it took a Redeemer (v. 3).

8:2 **hath made me free from the law.** The best manuscripts have ‘made you free.’ Paul was not bragging but stating something about how the gospel of Christ frees us all from “sin and death.”

8:5 **they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.** Or, “those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh” (NRSV).

8:6 **to be carnally minded is death.** “Carnally minded” or *phronēma tēs sarkos* could be literally translated ‘flesh-thinking.’ Other translations use “the mind set on the flesh” (NASB) or “The mind governed by the flesh” (NIV). It is someone who’s mortal passions and motivations drive their behaviors. Nephi says this exact thing in 2 Nephi 9:39.

8:7 **enmity.** ‘Hostility, hate, or antagonism.’ Paul taught that someone who is “carnally minded” (v. 6) is in a state of hostility towards God.

8:8 **JST** “In” is changed to “after” relating to the flesh and the Spirit, so those “after the flesh” will not please God.

8:9 **have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.** Receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost is the manifestation of our adoption by Christ, the outward symbol of our inner covenant.

8:10 **the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life.** The next few verses say this some concept in several different ways: mortal choices that lead to sin bring death, but spiritual, eternal choices bring life.

8:11 **quicken your mortal bodies.** ‘Bring to new life your bodies which are subject to death.’

8:12 **we are debtors.** We are obligated not to live after the flesh but according to the Spirit (v. 13).

8:13 **mortify the deeds of the body.** ‘Put to death the actions of the body.’ This verse represents Paul’s main theme in this section, which is that we have a paradoxical choice: live the way the world lives—and die; or live the life that God wants, putting to death, as it were, mortal desires—and live forever.

8:13 **JST** “For if ye live after the flesh, **unto sin**, ye shall die; . . . ye shall live **unto Christ.**” Not just live as we do in mortality but “unto Christ,” leading to all the great blessings Paul introduces next.

8:14 **they are the sons of God.** Following the Spirit brings us into an adoption relationship with God, and we become his sons and daughters.

8:15 **the spirit of bondage again to fear.** Our slavery to God is not something to be feared because it is, in fact, an adoption, giving us the right to say, as Jesus did, “Abba, Father” (compare Mark 14:36), addressing God in a most personal and intimate way.

8:16 **The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit.** The Holy Spirit speaks directly to our eternal spirits, teaching us truth, including our eternal and divine parentage.

8:17 **if children, then heirs.** Fully redeemed and adopted, we become “joint-heirs with Christ.” If we are willing to “suffer with him” then “we may be also glorified together” as one family unit. For those who question the LDS doctrine of the deification of man, they need look no further than Romans 8 to see that Paul taught the same doctrine.

### [The glory of the coming age – Romans 8:18-30](#)

Not only are we the children of God eternally, but all of creation itself comes from him and eagerly waits for the day that we will realize that full potential.

8:18 **the sufferings of this present time.** No suffering in this world equals the glory that we may inherit.

8:19 **For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.** Or, “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed” (NIV).

8:20 **the creature was made subject to vanity.** Or, “For the creation was subjected to futility” (NIV). God gives us trials not because we want them, but because it is part of the plan in which we have hope. It also implies that the world, in its futility and weakness, cannot exist without God holding it all together.

8:20 **JST** “For the creature was made subject to ~~vanity~~ **tribulation.**” This change captures the sense of the verse wonderfully. Creation struggles under the weight of mortality, which includes suffering and being pressed down.

8:21 **the creature itself also shall be delivered.** God’s creation, the universe itself, is redeemed by God to inherit the full freedom available to his creations. And creation can’t wait, groaning and in pain until then (v. 22).

8:23 **even we ourselves groan.** Through the Spirit, we can just get a hint of the future rewards, so that we almost groan in anticipation.

8:24 **hope that is seen is not hope.** “Hope” (*elpis*) is an expectation of a future prospect; in Greek, it can be positive or negative, meaning we can hope for a positive result or a miserable one, though Paul predominantly uses it in the positive way. Like faith, it is only hope when that future result is unseen (compare Hebrews 11:1).

8:25 **we with patience wait.** Because the Spirit has given us this taste of our potential inheritance, we have hope. Without that understanding, there would be nothing to hope for. But with it, we can patiently wait.

8:26 **the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.** The Holy Ghost helps us overcome our weaknesses. It conveys God’s will to us and the feelings of our hearts back to God. It is the ‘transport mechanism’ between us.

8:26 **JST** “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with ~~groanings~~ **striving** which cannot be ~~uttered~~ **expressed.**” The Holy Ghost doesn’t just groan but strives to bring us to God and righteousness.

8:28 **all things work together for good to them that love God.** Not that aligning with God will make our lives perfectly smooth, but that even our trials and sufferings become blessings, if we love and trust God.

8:29 **whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.** *Proorizō*, which is not ‘chosen without agency’ and some religions interpret it, but ‘appointed or decided beforehand.’ The LDS term ‘foreordination’ captures the meaning here wonderfully.

8:30 **predestinate . . . called . . . justified . . . glorified.** Paul’s progression is from appointed beforehand; to called out and chosen; then made righteous and forgiven; and finally honored, praised, and made glorious.

8:30 **JST** Changes “justified” to “sanctified.”

#### [God is with us – Romans 8:31-39](#)

8:31 **JST** “If God be for us, who can ~~be~~ **prevail** against us?” A reminder of the story of Elisha readily comes to mind: “Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them (2 Kings 6:16).

8:32 **He that spared not his own Son.** God giving up his own Son is evidence of his vast incomprehensible love for us and willingness to give us everything.

8:33-34 **Who shall lay any thing.** Or, ‘Who can possibly speak anything against us, once we have entered into this covenantal, adoptive, redemptive relationship with God? Who can condemn us? Christ died, or more importantly is risen, and sits on God’s right hand of authority, supplicating in our behalf’ (AT).

8:35 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** Verses 35-39 are a poetic and powerful testimony of the love of God and Jesus for us. It begins by affirming the power of Jesus’ love for us, which allows nothing between us and him—not trials, calamities, persecution, famine, nakedness (representing sin perhaps, for the Atonement covers us), dangers, or warfare.

8:35 **tribulation, or distress, or persecution.** Paul personally experienced most, if not all of the things in his list. His testimony was that even in all of his trials, he continued to feel the love of God.

8:36 **As it is written.** Paul quoted Psalm 44:22; later Roman saints will indeed be “killed all the day long” in the great persecutions of Nero and others.

8:37 **we are more than conquerors through him.** A conqueror in their society was a powerful individual, held in high esteem and feared by all. Through Jesus Christ, his followers are more than that, for they have not conquered others but themselves, overcoming sin and death, something no mortal conqueror could ever hope to do.

8:38 **neither death, nor life.** In verses 38-39, in a wonderful burst of hyperbole, Paul presented a series of mostly opposites designed to represent ‘everything’ on earth or in heaven cannot get between us and the love of God.

### God’s promises to Israel rejected – Romans 9:1 – 11:36

Paul’s main point in chapters 9-11 is found in 9:6, “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect,” which is better translated, “But it is not as though the word of God has failed” (NASB), and 9:14, “Is there unrighteousness with God?” From his earlier arguments about Jews and Gentiles being equal before God, a Jew might argue, then, that God’s word to Israel in the scriptures (the Old Testament) must somehow be wrong, for there they were treated with exclusivity and great promises, but Paul taught that these things apply to everyone. To respond to this concern, Paul turned to the Bible itself to show that God had always intended these promises to apply to Jews and Gentiles alike. In short, he explains what it means to be of the covenant people.

“The intricate argumentation of Romans 9-11 is impressive evidence of the depth of Paul’s knowledge of the Jewish scriptures. The sophistication of his interpretation once again betrays the strength of his intellectual formation. The quality of the writing is also remarkable, and the hymn, in which he sings out his adoration with extraordinary eloquence (11:33-36), is arguably his greatest literary achievement.”<sup>30</sup>

### The promises to Israel – Romans 9:1-18

Paul was saddened by the Jews, his brethren and kinsmen. He reflected on the marvelous promises from God made unto their fathers by covenant but said that not all Jews had lived up to their covenant.

9:1 **I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness.** ‘With my whole soul do I bear my witness.’

9:2 **great heaviness and continual sorrow.** Paul experienced sadness because of those who rejected him among the house of Israel, his own people.

9:3 **JST** “(For **once** I could ~~wish~~ **have wished** that myself were accursed from Christ,) for my brethren.” This change made the statement a parenthetical remark, a reference, perhaps, to Paul’s former actions before his conversion. It also makes clear that Paul’s “great heaviness and continual sorrow” (v. 2) apply directly to his “brethren” and “kinsmen.”

9:4 **Who are Israelites.** Paul spoke here not just of Jews but more broadly—descendants of Israel/Jacob. Paul implied the covenantal relationship of these people to God by the very word he called them—Israel, since that means ‘one who prevails with God.’<sup>31</sup>

In this verse are listed six things God gave to Israel:<sup>32</sup>

1. Adoption – “Christ is the natural Son of God because God is his Father ‘after the manner of the flesh’ (1 Nephi 11:18). As such he is God’s heir and shall inherit all that his Father hath. . . . All those who join the Church have power given them to become the sons and daughters of Jesus Christ by adoption.” See also D&C 39:1-6 and Mosiah 5:7.

<sup>30</sup> Murphy-O’Conner, *Paul: A Critical Life*, 339.

<sup>31</sup> Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:54.

<sup>32</sup> McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:275-276.

2. Glory – The condition of being in the presence of or like God. Israel knew God’s glory, but also didn’t receive a fullness of it (see D&C 84:23-25).
3. Covenants – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all made covenants with the Lord which applied to the entire family of Israel. Further covenants through the Law of Moses attempted to bind them to God.
4. Law – Through prophets, commandments were given that would bring the people closer to God and prepare them for the Messiah.
5. Service – “Service” is *latreia*, referring to Israel’s right to serve and worship in the temple.
6. Promises – Great promises are associated with faithfulness to the covenants and the law.

9:4-5 **JST** “And the promises ~~whose are~~ **which are made unto** the fathers . . .” This change ties the end of 4 and the beginning of 5 together.

9:5 **the fathers**. Referred to the Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

9:5 **as concerning the flesh Christ came**. Jesus was a Jew in the flesh through his mother Mary.

9:5 **JST** “Christ ~~came~~ **was**, who is **God** over all, ~~God~~ blessed forever.” Joseph Smith’s version is a valid way to punctuate the Greek, which has no punctuation (though he knew no Greek nor was he looking at it). In fact, the NIV closely matches the JST: “Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!”

9:7 **In Isaac shall thy seed be called**. Paul’s point in verses 7-9 is that being a descendent of Abraham (“children of the flesh” through Isaac, v. 8) doesn’t make you one of the children of God (in the sense of the fulfilling of the covenant, a joint-heir with Christ). Only the “children of the promise” (those who keep God’s commandments, v. 8) are counted as “the seed” (v. 8), meaning those who receive the blessings of God. Verse 7 quotes Genesis 21:12.

9:10-13 To finalize his message, Paul cited the birth of Jacob and Esau to Rebekah. Promises were made about all of these children before they were born—thus before they had done anything to merit God’s blessings or displeasure. The Old Testament references are: v. 9 (Genesis 18:10, 14); vv. 10 and 12 (Genesis 25:22-23); v. 13 (Malachi 1:2-3).

9:14 **Is there unrighteousness with God?** ‘Is God being unjust?’ This is the question he will answer.

9:14 **God forbid**. “Not at all!” (NIV); “May it never be!” (NASB); ‘No way!’ (AT).

9:15 **he saith to Moses**. This verse quoted Exodus 33:19, saying basically God gets to choose who gets his blessings.

9:16 **not of him that willeth**. ‘It doesn’t depend on a man’s desire or running [efforts], but on God, who shows mercy’ (AT).

9:17 **the scripture saith**. This verse quoted Exodus 9:16. In the Old Testament, Yahweh used and even raised up evil men to accomplish his purposes; they sometimes being unwitting partners of God.

9:18 **whom he will he hardeneth**. In the Hebrew of the Old Testament, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart appears to be done sometimes by Pharaoh and other times by God. Paul appeared to refer here to the latter. However, in the JST, all Old Testament references are changed to indicate that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (though interestingly, there is no JST change in this verse in Romans). Scholarly opinion is varied on the actual meaning of the Hebrew, many noting that in each case where the hardening is attributed to God, it follows only after Pharaoh had already done it himself. The conclusion is that God will not work against a person’s agency and they understood this, but anciently many were inclined to attribute every action to God, and Paul seems to be following that custom here.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Vincent, *Word Studies*, 3:105.



## Gentiles and Israel – Romans 9:19 – 10:4

9:19 **Why doth he yet find fault?** ‘How can he [God] blame us? For who can oppose his will?’ Without a proper understanding of agency, some might ask how God can judge us when he controls the whole universe and can make anything happen.

9:20 **repliest against God.** ‘Who are you to dispute with God?’

9:20 **Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it.** This quote is probably from Isaiah 29:16, but this is a familiar Old Testament theme (compare Isaiah 45:9; Jeremiah 18:6), because making pottery was something everyone knew. The idea was to compare the power of God to the power of men.

9:21 **one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor.** The potter could make beautiful pots and other items used for honorable things—even for the temple—or he could make pots for dishonorable (unclean) things, such as chamber pots to hold human waste. The type of use was what made them clean or unclean, not the clay from which they were made. So we are all made by God, but it our actions that determine our standing before him. (Jeremiah 18:1-11 teaches the same idea.)

9:22 **the vessels of wrath.** God has the power to show his wrath and pour out judgment upon us who deserve it, since we are “fitted [rendered] to destruction.” But he instead shows love and mercy by patiently making known the eternal riches and glory that he has prepared for the faithful from before the foundations of the world (v. 23), whether they are Jews or Gentiles (v. 24).

9:25 **Osee.** Or, Hosea. The quotes are Hosea 2:23 here and 1:10 in verse 26. Hosea was speaking of the lost tribes of Israel, but Paul applied it to non-Jews “which were not my people,” but who will be called God’s people.

9:27 **Esaias.** Or, Isaiah. The text quoted in verses 27-28 is Isaiah 10:22-23, making a different point but one in Paul’s message: God’s promises were still fulfilled, even if he only saved a “remnant” (a portion) of the Jews.

9:29 **as Esaias said before.** The quote is from Isaiah 1:9 LXX, strengthening the point in the previous two verses: by saving even just a remnant, God shows his mercy, because otherwise we would have all been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah.

9:30 **What shall we say then?** In verses 30-33, Paul summarizes that the Gentiles, who were previously not righteous, were newly blessed of God (v. 30). The Jews, however, to whom great promises were made, had lost their privileged position (v. 31). Why? Because many Jews sought to be saved by works without faith, while the Gentile converts exercised faith unto good works (v. 32). Verses 32-33 combine the ideas in two scriptures, Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14, which was similar to what Jesus did in Matthew 21:42, though he added Psalm 118:22.<sup>34</sup>

10:1 **my heart’s desire.** Paul opened his heart, saying that more than anything he wanted to see more of his own people accept Christ. Compare 1 Nephi 6:4. Much of chapter 10 is a side-bar, an addendum to Paul’s main points started in chapter 9 and completed in 11. It’s as if he had to pause for a minute and express some wonder at the fact that more people among the Jews are not saved. But in spite of God’s patience in sending them Christ himself and other inspired teachers, they rejected Jesus and those Jesus sent.

10:2 **they have a zeal of God.** The Jews had great zeal towards God, but they did it in the ignorance of their traditions, not revelation.

10:3 **ignorant of God’s righteousness.** Today Paul might say, ‘Being unaware of God’s perfection, they go about trying to perfect themselves in their own way, but they haven’t submitted themselves to the perfecting influence of God.’

10:4 **Christ is the end of the law.** ‘Christ was the very reason for the law and the only way the laws of God could have any impact to make a person more like what he or she ought to be.’

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<sup>34</sup> Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:61.

## [Salvation available to all – Romans 10:5-21](#)

10:5 ***That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*** The quote is from Leviticus 18:5. Both the Greek and the original Hebrew words for “live” imply more than ‘be alive’; they include the added sense of revive, quicken, and restore. ‘Keep God’s commandments and you’ll be restored to new life.’

10:6 ***speaketh on this wise.*** Verses 6-8 are loose quotes from Deuteronomy 9:4 and 30:11-14, putting these verses with some parenthetical commentary in the mouth, as it were, of “the righteousness which is of faith.” Moses’ words were a call to obey the law. Paul used them to refer to Christ’s power being beyond that of men—he ascended to heaven and was raised from the dead—something none of us could do.

10:9 ***confess with thy mouth . . . believe in thine heart . . . thou shalt be saved.*** Verses 9-13 are important verses for the Protestant Reformation. Taken on their own, they could be seen as supporting a doctrine of salvation by confession of faith alone. But in the context of all of Paul’s writings, and given that he was writing to already baptized members of the church (and so wouldn’t emphasize something they had already done), and wanting to counter the Jewish concept of salvation by adherence to their interpretation of the Law of Moses, we know that Paul’s full message included the importance of faith but also much more. In other words, Paul’s point here was not to outline the conditions of salvation as much as to convey that those conditions apply to everyone, Jew and Gentile alike.

“But to call upon God in the sense meant involves a knowledge of him, the acceptance of the gospel of his Son, and total adherence to its truths.”<sup>35</sup>

Said one Protestant theologian: “Obedience to the commandments was not thought of as earning salvation, which came rather by God’s grace, but was nevertheless required as a condition of remaining in the covenant; and not obeying the commandments would damn.”<sup>36</sup>

10:11 ***stumbled that they should fall?*** This quote is from the end of Isaiah 28:16, where it talks about God setting up a sure foundation, a cornerstone.

10:11 ***not be ashamed.*** He shall not be ‘dishonored’ or ‘disgraced.’ This goes back to Paul’s statement at the beginning of the letter that he was not ashamed of the gospel (1:16).

10:12 ***the same Lord over all is rich unto all.*** “Rich” means ‘richly blesses.’

10:13 ***whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord.*** Quote from Joel 2:32. Joel’s context is the judgments of the last days and that whoever calls on (appeals to) the Lord will be delivered (preserved from God’s judgment). Paul’s meaning is related, though broadened to mean that whoever believes in God will have God’s blessing—of safety, health, and deliverance from judgment.

10:15 ***how shall the preach.*** After using great logic in v. 14 to establish that people can only be converted by properly authorized preachers, or ‘heralds’ (“be sent” in 15 is the verb *apostellō*, related to the noun for apostle), Paul quoted from Isaiah 52:7 to drive home the point that such authorized servants preach the good news of Jesus—even according to Isaiah! Compare Nahum 1:15.

10:16 ***not all obeyed the gospel.*** Even those who have been taught by authorized servants have not all obeyed. Paul quoted from Isaiah 53:1. (Note that the JST moves this verse to after verse 18.)

10:17 ***faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*** “Hearing” (*akoē*) has a dual meaning; it is both the act of hearing and the thing heard. A valid (and more understandable) translation could be, ‘So then faith comes by hearing, and the message [of the gospel] comes by the word of God.’ The “word of God,” of course, alludes to

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<sup>35</sup> McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:281.

<sup>36</sup> E. P. Sanders, cited in Murphy-O’Conner, *Paul: A Critical Life*, 336; Sanders is praised as having resolved nicely this sticky issue of faith versus works among scholars; how nice that his ‘solution’ agrees so wonderfully with 2 Nephi 25:23!

both using the scriptures in our teaching as well as doing so by the Spirit, which concepts are both captured in 2 Nephi chapters 32-33 (see also 3 Nephi 23:14).

Joseph Smith taught, “Faith comes by hearing the word of God, through the testimony of the servants of God; that testimony is always attended by the spirit of prophecy and revelation.”<sup>37</sup>

10:18 **Have they not heard?** Israel had all heard because “their [the authorized servants] sound went into all the earth.” Paul quoted four verses to wrap up his desire for Israel to be saved but his despair that so few of them listened: Psalm 19:4 (v. 18); Deuteronomy 32:21 (v. 19); and Isaiah 65:1-2 (vv. 20-21).

### [The opportunity for the Gentiles – Romans 11:1-10](#)

Paul wrapped up his discourse on the promises of God to Israel and to all the world by using the familiar metaphor of an olive tree to show how the combination of Israel and Gentile would ultimately benefit both. LDS Christians are very familiar with this from Jacob 5, which is a quotation from the prophet Zenos, a man whose writings appear to be on the brass plates but not in our present Old Testament. Did Paul have access to Zenos’ writings, or at least some writings that stemmed from Zenos’ parable? Many would see Isaiah 5 as being influential here.

11:1 **Hath God cast away his people?** Lest anyone think that all of Israel are like those that rejected the prophets and disobeyed God, Paul let us know that a remnant had definitely been preserved “according to the election of grace” (v. 5). The remnant started with Paul himself, who was an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin. But there were others, and he used the story of Elijah from 1 Kings 19 (vv. 3-4, which pick out phrases from 1 Kings 19:10, 14, 18). There Elijah feared he was the only one left who still worshipped Jehovah, but the Lord assured him that he had “seven thousand men” who were still faithful (v. 4). Even so, Paul reasoned, there was a remnant of believers among the Jews who had been singled out (“election”) by the grace (“gift”, “good will”, “mercy”) of God.

11:2 **God hath not cast away his people.** Quote from 1 Samuel 12:22 LXX, but Paul adds “which he foreknew,” tying God’s relationship to Israel even to events before their birth.

11:6 **if by grace, then is it no more of works.** Israel was not chosen because they ‘earned’ it through their works, but by the free gift of God (also v. 5). If it were by works, then grace would cease to be.

11:7 **the election hath obtained it.** Israel had not obtained what it so earnestly sought for, but “the election” (those ‘singled out’) have. The rest are just too blind to see, as illustrated by the scriptures Psalm 29:4 (v. 8, compare to Isaiah 29:10) and Psalm 69:22-23 (vv. 9-10).

11:9 **Let their table be made.** Paraphrasing Psalm 69:22 here (which is closer in the LXX but still revised here), Paul drew on the metaphor of the king’s banquet table, set so beautifully, turning out to be a trap. He used- three words to represent the trap, each progressively capturing different types of creatures—first birds (“snare” or *palida*, meaning a bird trap), then animals (“trap” or *thēran*, a trap or net to catch beasts), then man (“stumblingblock” or *skandalon*, meaning a ‘stick-trap’ or a trap triggered by pulling on a stick but metaphorically something that causes a person to trip or fall).

### [Salvation to the Gentiles – Romans 11:11-24](#)

11:11 **Have they stumbled.** ‘I say, then, have they [Israel] stumbled to fall beyond recovery? No way! But through their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, which can provoke them [Israel] to envy’ (recall Deuteronomy 32:21 and Romans 10:19). Paul hoped that seeing the Gentiles so blessed would cause a little consternation among the Jews. But if the Gentiles are blessed because of the Jews’ sins, how much more will they be blessed when Israel is righteous (v. 12)? Paul next answered that question.

11:13 **I speak to you Gentiles.** Lest there be any confusion, he made it clear that he was now speaking just to the Gentiles, which he can do since he is “the apostle [sent one] of the Gentiles.” To “magnify [his] office” means to do whatever it takes to “save some of them” (V. 14).

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<sup>37</sup> *Teachings*, 148.

11:15 **the casting away of them.** This verse echoes verse 12 in concept: ‘If God’s rejection of the Jews means restoring favor to the rest of the world, how much would their being received into God’s kingdom be like becoming alive after being dead?’ (JST) replaces “receiving” with “restoring.” Paul is likely tying this to the Jews’ rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, which ultimately brought blessings to the whole world.

11:16 **if the firstfruit be holy.** ‘If the first portion of the dough is holy, so the whole batch is holy.’ You cannot pull quality dough out from a batch of dough that has gone bad—all relating to Israel being good, in the end. The metaphor may tie to the showbread used in the holy place in the temple.

11:16 **if the root be holy.** Verses 16-24 are where Paul teaches similarly to the Parable of the Olive Tree as found in Zenos’ teachings (Jacob 5). The good tree and the root are the house of Israel. The broken off branches are unrighteous Israelites. The wild tree is the world, and its branches are Gentile converts who are grafted into the good tree. These wild branches are nourished by the root, so Paul counsels them not to boast. True, the other branches were broken off because of unbelief, but “if God spared not the natural branches, take heed [Gentiles] lest he also spare not thee” (v. 21). If they believe, the first branches will be grafted back into the tree. All of this is “contrary to nature” (v. 24), Paul knows, but he wants to stretch the metaphor to make his point: wild branches would normally bear wild fruit, but because they become the elect and submit themselves to God, grace makes their fruit wonderful. The natural branches which are cut off can also experience the grace of God, be grafted back in, and bear the fruit they were intended to bear. The branches do nothing to earn this but are transformed by the gardener.

### [Israel will turn to the Lord – Romans 11:25-36](#)

11:25 **ye should be ignorant of this mystery.** ‘You should understand this secret, so you are not arrogant—Israel is blind today until the fullness of the Gentiles comes, but then Israel should be saved.’ The quote is from Isaiah 59:20-21 (vv. 26-27), but the concept was well portrayed in Zechariah 13-14, when future Israel will gain forgiveness at the Second Coming. See also D&C 45:19-30, 51-53.

“The Jews, in other words, will be saved in exactly the same way as Paul was. His commitment to the Law had not only blinded him to the true role of Christ, but it had engendered bitter hostility. That attitude was changed by a completely unexpected encounter on the road to Damascus, where Christ took the initiative. So will it be for all Israel, at the Parousia [Second Coming] when Christ appears in glory. Then the Jews will no more be capable of rejecting him than Paul had been.”<sup>38</sup>

11:28 **they are enemies for your sakes.** The Jews were enemies of the gospel, so that the Gentiles might have it (the Jews rejection of the message is what drove it out among the Gentiles), but Israel is loved of God for the sake of the covenants made to the patriarchs.

11:29 **without repentance.** Or, “irrevocable” (NASB).

11:31 **through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.** Before Paul’s preaching, the Gentiles largely “have not believed God” (v. 30) but now have God’s mercy in their lives. Paul has them consider the errant Jews who don’t believe but who might come to God’s mercy through the Gentiles actions.

11:33 **O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!** Verses 33-36 are a Pauline doxology (words of praise). It is likely that this was the end of the letter when it was first written and that the rest of the letter was added a bit later either in one part or up to three more. He quotes Isaiah 40:13 (v. 34) and Job 41:11 (v. 35). On some of the wording, compare to D&C 76:22-24.

### [The moral obligations of Christians \(12:1 – 15:13\)](#)

Having concluded his point on Jews and Gentiles, Paul now spoke to all Christians, laying out their responsibilities to love and serve God, their neighbors, and themselves, and especially to those whose faith was a bit weaker.

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<sup>38</sup> Murphy-O’Conner, *Paul: A Critical Life*, 340.

## Our living sacrifice – Romans 12:1-8

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This section and the next use a Greek writing style called *paraenesis*, a stringing together of “admonitions of general ethical content.”<sup>39</sup> The list appears fairly random with no central theme, but all relate to good behavior. That he ‘beseeches’ them to act in these ways shows the necessity of a righteous life accompanying faith. It could also be that Paul read his previously dictated letter and decided to balance the message with the next sections or at least add a few more thoughts before sending it.

12:1 **I beseech you.** This Greek term, *parakaleō*, represents a transition phrase, moving from one topic to another.<sup>40</sup> It therefore is a strong clue that this was a separate writing activity—something he added after having read the previous section (perhaps some days later).

12:1 **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.** In Paul’s day, almost all temples practiced animal sacrifice, but Paul challenged the Roman saints to present themselves to God as a “living sacrifice,” set apart from the world and pleasing to God, with a broken heart and contrite spirit. See 3 Nephi 9:19-20.

12:1 **your reasonable service.** ‘Your logical service’ or what it makes sense for you to offer, given your covenants; “your spiritual service of worship” (NASB).

12:2 **be not conformed to this world.** ‘don’t follow the patterns of behavior of the day.’

12:2 **be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Today we might say, ‘transform yourself with a complete mind make-over.’

12:3 **not to think of himself more highly than he ought.** ‘Acting with humility and sound judgment (“soberly”), do some self-evaluation, measured against the faith God has given you.’

12:4 **many members in one body.** This is a metaphor that Paul developed more fully in other letters (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

12:6 **gifts differing.** Another theme also in other letters (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:1-11), Paul says that members of the church should each use the gifts given to them for the good of all, whether it be prophecy, service (ministry), teaching (exhortation), giving, ruling, or showing mercy (concludes in 7-8).

## A Christian life – Romans 12:9-21

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The rest of this chapter is a seemingly random collection of admonitions to Christian behavior, a great ‘laundry list’ of things to do and be.

12:9 **Let love be without dissimulation.** ‘Without hypocrisy.’

12:10 **in honour preferring one another.** “Honor one another above yourselves” (NIV).

12:11 **not slothful in business.** “Not lagging behind in diligence” (NASB).

12:12 **continuing instant in prayer.** “Devoted to prayer” (NASB); the sense is that of persevering, staying faithful.

12:14 **Bless them which persecute you.** See Matthew 5:11-12.

12:15 **weep with them that weep.** See Mosiah 18:8.

12:16 **Be of the same mind one toward another.** “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position” (NIV).

12:17 **Provide things honest.** ‘Do what is right.’ Compare 2 Corinthians 8:21.

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<sup>39</sup> Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:75.

<sup>40</sup> Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:73.

12:19 **give place unto wrath.** “Leave room for the wrath of God” (NASB). Quote from Deuteronomy 32:35.

12: 20 Quote from Proverbs 25:21-22.

### Civic authorities – Romans 13:1-7

13:1 **be subject unto the higher powers.** Scholars debate whether the words in verses 1-7 apply to secular or religious authority.<sup>41</sup> But the JST makes Paul’s intent clear: “For there is no power **in the church** but of God.” Paul knew well that secular authorities, while certainly tolerated by God and allowed to stay in their roles (based on agency) by him, were not all approved of him. So here he was saying, ‘Submit yourselves to your church leaders, for they are ordained of God.’ Try reading this, for example, as ‘bishop’ when it talks about a leader or ruler. Compare D&C 58:21-22, which is clearly about secular leadership.

13:2 **receive to themselves damnation.** Both the Greek and the JST soften the meaning here. The Greek is *krima*, meaning ‘judgment’ or ‘a matter decided in a court.’ The JST changes “damnation” to “punishment.” Those who strongly oppose God’s ordained ministers risk official church action.

13:3 **do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise.** Paul counseled them not to fear rulers but to do good and their example will result in praise.

13:4 **JST** “he beareth not the sword **rod** in vain.” Not many church leaders will use a sword against a sinner, but a rod was a common tool of punishment in Paul’s day in Jewish synagogues and Gentile courts. Paul knew all about it, having been beaten many times (2 Corinthians 11:25).

### 13:6-7 **JST**

Romans 13:6-7 KJV	JST
For for this cause pay ye <del>tribute</del> also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.	For for this cause pay ye <b>your consecrations</b> also <b>unto them:</b> for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.
Render <del>therefore</del> to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute <del>is due</del> ; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.	<b>But first,</b> render to all their dues, <b>according to custom,</b> tribute to whom tribute; custom to whom custom; <b>that your consecrations may be done in fear of him</b> to whom fear <b>belongs, and in honour of him</b> to whom honour <b>belongs.</b>

When Joseph Smith was translating this, the law of consecration was just starting to be understood. These changes reflect such a focus, reading into the first century text similar issues regarding consecration as the Church was struggling with. See D&C 134:6 for a secular application.

### Love one another – Romans 13:8-10

13:8 **he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.** Just as Jesus taught (Mark 12:30-31), love is the greatest commandment. All the other commandments are comprehended in “love thy neighbor as thyself” (v. 9) which is “the fulfilling of the law” (v. 10). Quotes from Exodus 20:13-15, 17; Deuteronomy 5:17-19, 21; Leviticus 19:18.

### Put on the Lord – Romans 13:11-14

13:11 **it is high time to awake out of sleep.** This poetic section is a marvelous call to action for all of us. The imagery of starting a new day and putting aside the dark works of the night for the righteous works of the light is one that we can draw on every morning as we begin our day with prayer.

“Time is short, so wake up, because salvation is closer in Christ than we could have ever believed before we knew him. The night is over and the day arrives, so throw off the works of darkness like an old blanket and get dressed in the armor of light and truth. Behave honestly, as you do in the daytime when everyone can see you. Don’t be

<sup>41</sup> See Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:77f.

involved in immorality and drunkenness, in adultery and lust, nor contention and jealousy. But clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't give in to the flesh and its lusts.'

## Duties toward weaker members – Romans 14:1-12

This chapter and part of chapter 15 are best understood by remembering that: 1) Jews were forbidden to eat certain foods and emphasized certain days of feasting and celebration; 2) Jesus did away with those restrictions and is in charge of this and all other matters; 3) Old habits and customs die hard for Jewish converts to Christ; 4) Gentile converts had no such eating laws or feast days; 5) Jews were sometimes offended when Gentiles ate food forbidden under the Mosaic Law or ignored their holidays (see #3); 6) Gentiles couldn't understand what the big deal was, and so; 7) Both were offended at each other.

Paul's counsel is (chapter 14):

- God is in charge; "whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord" (verses 1-9).
- We are accountable to him and him only; "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (verses 10-12).

14:1 **not to doubtful disputations.** 'no quarreling over opinions.'

14:2 **who is weak, eateth herbs.** This doesn't mean that weak people are vegetarians! Rather, the dispute was about meat offered to pagan idols, which some Gentile Christians felt was fine to eat, while some Jews argued that violated God's laws. The "weak" person is probably one who simply didn't want to take sides, so just avoided eating meat altogether.

14:3 **not judge him.** Paul said that neither group should judge the other.

14:5 **esteemeth one day above another.** As mentioned in the introduction, some thought certain days were holy and merited observation, while others saw "every day alike." It was all dependent on their cultural backgrounds. The day of Sabbath observance may have been a part of this, with Gentiles following the resurrection day of Sunday and Jews wanting to maintain their traditional Sabbath on Saturday.

14:8 **we are the Lord's.** People in both camps of eating and religious holidays belonged to the Lord and had made covenants with him.

14:11 **For it is written.** Quote from Isaiah 45:23. See also D&C 76:110.

## Do not offend – Romans 14:13-23

Paul continued his charge to curtail disagreements in the church on various topics of worship and behavior.

- Don't "judge one another any more," but instead focus on not putting a "stumblingblock" in the way of your brother (v. 13).
- "There is nothing unclean of itself" but everyone is entitled to their opinion (v. 14).
- If a brother is upset by your eating certain things, exercise charity toward him and don't eat those things (vv. 15-20).
- Food is not more important than your fellow saints, so don't let this disagreement be cause for offense and a greater sin (vv. 21-23).

14:17 **the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.** Issues about food are not the message of Christ, but "righteousness, and peace, and joy."

14:19 **follow after the things which make for peace.** Great advice in all ages and wards and stakes.

14:22 **Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God.** Don't make judgments of others based on your own interpretations of scripture, practice, or Jesus' teachings. Each person should be their own judge in these regards.

## The gospel is open to everyone – Romans 15:1-13

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Paul continued in chapter 15 with more admonitions to support each other:

- Those who are strong need to help the weak, and edify them, just as Jesus did (verses 1-3).
- Scriptures give us hope that we can be united and promise that the Gentiles are part of God's plan and people (verses 4-13).

15:3 ***The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*** Quote from Psalm 69:9.

15:4 ***written for our learning.*** Referring to the Jewish scriptures "written aforetime," Paul wrote they were written for the benefit of the saints who understood Christ's gospel, giving them hope.

15:9 ***For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles.*** Quote from 2 Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49.

15:10 ***Rejoice, ye Gentiles.*** Quote from Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX.

15:11 ***Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles.*** Quote from Psalm 117:1.

15:12 ***There shall be a root of Jesse.*** Quote from Isaiah 11:10.

15:13 ***the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace.*** Another verse that sounds like a closing to the letter. It is possible that he concluded here, then added the final section below sometime later.

## Conclusion – Romans 15:14 – 16:27

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In the final section of the letter, Paul outlined his plans for the future and offered personal greetings to a number of Roman members, showing that he already knew many of them, even though he had not yet been to the city.

### Paul acknowledges the weight of his words – Romans 15:14-21

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15:14 ***ye also are full of goodness.*** Paul ended the letter full of doctrinal points and calls for improved behavior with a statement of his positive outlook on the Roman saints. He thought them full of knowledge and able to teach one another.

15:15 ***as putting you in mind.*** "So as to remind you again" (NASB).

15:16 ***I should be the minister of Christ.*** "Minister" (*leitourgos*) is a political position, someone performing a public service in behalf of the state, military, or temple. As he is a "sent one" (*apostolos*) of Christ, so he is such a minister in the kingdom of God.

15:18 ***I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me.*** 'I won't presume to speak of anything but that which Christ has accomplished through me.'

15:19 ***from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum.*** 'From Jerusalem [on the east] to as far as north-western Greece [on the west].' These are the limits of Paul's travels—so far—though we have no record of him traveling west past Macedonia, where Illyricum is located (modern day Croatia and Bosnia) outside of this comment.

15:20 ***lest I should build upon another man's foundation.*** Paul spent much of his life breaking new ground, taking the gospel where it had not been before. But he also went to places where other missionaries had clearly been, because there were Christians there when he arrived. Nevertheless, Paul appears to take seriously the charge to take the gospel to all the earth. His pattern in a city was to first preach to the Jews, then preach to the Gentiles, then organize a church, and finally call local leaders to carry on. Then he would move on to the next field of labor, writing letters and sending his companions back to check on and strengthen the churches he left behind. When he could, he also visited them again personally. But he seems to have the vision that his apostolic call was to open new areas for preaching much more than stay and strengthen a local area—that's what bishops and elders are for (as he explained in his letters to Timothy and Titus).



15:21 **as it is written**. This verse quotes from Isaiah 52:15.

## Plans to visit Rome and Spain – Romans 15:22-33

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15:23 **to come unto you**. Paul wanted to go to Spain (vv. 24, 28). This could be because the Iberian Peninsula was only occupied by Romans in Paul's lifetime, so it was just at this time that it was relatively safe to go there as a Roman citizen.<sup>42</sup> It is not known if Paul achieved this goal, though the writings of Clement, an early church leader, says he did (1 Clement 5:7).

15:24 **I trust to see you on my journey**. Rome was not his destination but a stopping place on the way to Spain. It seems that it wasn't until he got to Jerusalem and was arrested, several months after this letter, that he learned from the Savior himself that Rome would be a more important destination (Acts 23:11).

15:24 **JST** "if first I be somewhat filled ~~with~~ **through** your ~~company~~ **prayers**." "Company" isn't in the Greek, of course (the meaning of the italics in the KJV) but it is implied by the verb "filled." The JST teaches here that one of Paul's reasons for writing is to solicit the Romans' prayers in his behalf, as it also makes clear in verse 30.

15:25 **But now I go unto Jerusalem**. This is one of the clues to the timing of the writing of this letter, because it ties in with his third journey in Acts 20-21. Paul's primary reason for getting to Jerusalem was to give them the donation of the Gentile saints (v. 26) and show the Gentiles cared for the Jews in Jerusalem (v. 27).

15:26 **Macedonia and Achaia**. Two regions of Greece, including Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth.

15:29 **I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel**. Paul was confident of a positive reception in Rome.

15:31 **That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea**. Paul sensed that trouble was ahead. Acts portrayed him learning of this trouble before he even left (Acts 20) and during his trip to Jerusalem (Acts 21). But like Jesus, he sets his face to Jerusalem and boldly goes, "ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13).

15:32 **may with you be refreshed**. Or, 'renewed in your company.'

15:33 **the God of peace be with you all**. This is another potential letter ending. One can easily imagine Paul finishing the letter, then having a little more time as his letter carrier, Phebe, didn't leave for a few more days, so he decided to add a few personal greetings at the end before sending it away.

## Greetings to the saints in Rome – Romans 16:1-16

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Paul sent greetings to many people in Rome, an unexpectedly large number for a city he had not visited. He probably encountered these saints in his many travels in Asia and Greece. Some were perhaps like Aquila and Priscilla, Jews who had to leave Rome for a time. Others were perhaps traveling Gentiles that Paul or others had converted. The Church quickly became a "small world" as you travelled and made connections, as it often is today; how many times have you been asked, "Oh, you're from [your town]? Do you know so-and-so?" and your answer is, "Well, yes, that person is in my stake."

The majority of the people Paul addressed here are Gentiles and most names are typical of slaves or 'freemen,' slaves who had been set free.<sup>43</sup> This should not be surprising in a city with millions of slaves.

16:1 **Phebe . . . a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea . . . a succourer of many, and of myself also**. This sister carried the letter to Rome, so Paul introduced her to them. She was called a "servant," one of the cases where this word is not *doulos* (slave) but instead *diakonos*, usually translated "deacon." Some translations call Phebe a 'deaconess,' but that probably isn't Paul's meaning. The word means an attendant, a minister, even someone who serves food and drink. It could well be that Phebe was an ancient Relief Society President type of person. She appears to have hosted a branch of the church in her home at Cenchrea, one of two port cities of Corinth. It's not

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<sup>42</sup> Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:89.

<sup>43</sup> Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 3:91-92.

known why she was traveling to Rome, but Paul asked them to support her because she had been a support to him (v. 2).

16:3 **Priscilla and Aquila.** In Greek, he wrote her name as “Prisca” but the KJV translators followed Luke’s convention of using the longer form of her name (Acts 18:1). This couple assisted Paul in many cities, including Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. We don’t know anything about them risking themselves for Paul (v. 4), but it could have been in either of the first two cities.

16:5 **greet the church that is in their house.** Prisca and Aquila seem to have been the hosts of yet another house church. How many of these there were in Rome, with its huge population, is unknown.

16:5 **my wellbeloved Epānetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia.** Nothing more is known about this person, who was evidently one of Paul’s first converts in Asia (“Achaia” is probably an error in the KJV Greek text as the oldest manuscripts say “Asia”).

16:6 **Mary.** Miriam was the most common woman’s name at this time. We do not know who this was.

16:7 **Adronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles.** This verse has given rise to much controversy. The reading in Greek is somewhat ambiguous: it could say that they are “outstanding among the apostles” (NIV) or “respected among the apostles” (NLT); it could also mean that they were ‘apostles’ themselves. In other words, they could just be known by the apostles, or have that title applied to them. The interesting thing is, Junia is a woman. Some commentaries try to make the point, therefore, that the title “apostle” should not be restricted to the Twelve but should include women. But as we have learned, the term *apostolos* means ‘one who is sent.’ You don’t have to make Junia an ordained member of the Quorum of the Twelve to call her an *apostolos* in Greek. She and Andronicus (apparently her husband) were probably missionaries, perhaps a senior couple sent out with authority to preach the gospel. Paul called them his relatives (“kinsmen”) and said they were in prison with him, but nothing more is known about either statement.

16:8-15 Paul mentioned a host of other people in these verses. We know nothing about most of them but their names here, but a few of them stand out:

- Amplias (v. 8) – This name is associated with the royal household in Rome.
- Urbane (v. 9) – Though a common slave name, this one was found on the same inscription with Amplias, making it likely he was a slave of the royal household.
- Stachys (v. 9) – An uncommon name, also found on inscriptions in the royal household.
- Aristobulus (v. 10) – A brother of Herod Agrippa and close friend of the emperor Claudius, he appears to have also hosted a church at his house (JST changes “household” to “church”; also in v. 11).
- Herodian (v. 11) – Probably not a name but a title, perhaps a Jewish slave or former slave of Aristobulus. He is also Paul’s “kinsman.”
- Tryphena and Tryphosa (v. 12) – Probably sisters, also found among inscriptions of the royal house.
- Persis (v. 12) – Another female name.
- Rufus (v. 13) – Mark 15:21 also mentions him; he was the son of Simon of Cyrene who carried Jesus’ cross.
- Philologus, and Julia (v. 15) – Probably husband and wife, also perhaps of the royal household. The verse seems to indicate that they also hosted a house church (“saints which are with them”).
- Nereus (v. 15) – Also listed as a servant of the emperor’s household.
- Timotheus (v. 21) – Timothy, Paul’s companion and the recipient of two of Paul’s letters.
- Lucius (v. 21) – Perhaps the same Lucius mentioned in Acts 13:1.
- Jason (v. 21) – Mentioned in Acts 17:5-9.
- Sosipater (v. 21) – Probably Sopater of Acts 20:4.
- Tertius (v. 22) – Paul’s scribe or amanuensis, who writes, “I Tertius, who wrote this epistle . . .”
- Gaius (v. 23) – A person Paul baptized at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:14) and who was Paul’s host while he was in that city. He probably hosted a church in his house also (“mine host, and of the whole church”).

- Erastus (v. 23) – His name and position was found on an inscription in Corinth, where he worked with Paul (Acts 19:22; 2 Timothy 4:20).

16:16 **JST** “Salute one another with a holy ~~kiss~~ **salutation.**” Paul’s kiss on the cheek was a salutation of their day.

### Final encouragement – Romans 16:17-23

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16:17 **I beseech you.** This interesting little sidebar in verses 17-20 was inserted in the middle of the greetings, almost like a P.S. to his letter.

16:17 **mark them.** ‘fix your eyes on them.’ Watch and avoid those teaching false doctrines.

16:18 **their own belly . . . deceive the hearts.** This was priestcraft, to preach pleasing words for hire (see 2 Nephi 26:29).

16:19 **wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.** ‘Be very knowledgeable about that which is good, and clear about evil’; know the difference and avoid the evil.

16:20 **the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.** “Bruise” is better translated ‘break,’ ‘crush,’ or ‘shatter.’ This echoes Genesis 3:15 and Moses 4:21.

### Final doxology – Romans 16:24-27

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Paul’s final words are a prayer of sorts, at least a doxology (words of praise). Some believe that Paul didn’t write it, that it was added to the letter much later because it is found in different places in various manuscripts. But whether these are Paul’s words or another, they appropriately capture a correct attitude, since the letter is dedicated to “him that is of power,” who reveals “the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the [Old Testament] prophets” (which prophets Paul has extensively quoted in this letter) “to all nations,” who is the only one who is wise—may glory be forever brought to him through Jesus Christ.

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### Abbreviations:

- AT – Author’s translation (also indicated by single quotes around translations)
- BYU – BYU New Rendition
- CJB – Complete Jewish Bible
- ESV – English Standard Version
- JST – Joseph Smith Translation
- KJV – King James Version
- LXX – Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)
- NAB – New American Bible
- NASB – New American Standard Bible
- NIV – New International Version
- NJB – New Jerusalem Bible
- NLT – New Living Translation
- NRSV – New Revised Standard Version
- TNT – William Tyndale 1534 New Testament
- TW – Thomas Wayment translation

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