

The Letters of Paul, Part 1

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Dave LeFevre

Introduction

Metaphors abound in the way we teach and are taught the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are part of worship every Sunday and certainly when we go to the temple. And they are found all through the scriptures, sometimes making it challenging to know when something is factual or metaphorical. Paul especially loved metaphors and used them often in his writings. Many of his metaphors involved things beyond the Jewish world of the Old Testament because he was speaking to people influenced by and living in Roman and Greek culture. When we have a greater understanding of this cultural context, we can better understand and apply Paul's writings to ourselves today. This class offers a few examples of such metaphors in Paul's writings.

Like Jesus, Paul often drew on items that people encountered in their daily lives to illustrate gospel principles and teachings. Unlike Jesus, however, more of Paul's metaphors came from city life rather than the rural images that the Savior often invoked, though items from the countryside are still present in Pauline writings. Metaphors involving families were also important to the apostle, giving him the opportunity to express beautiful teachings in the language and experiences of his listeners.

City Life

Until modern times, no period of history was more urban than Paul's. The Roman Empire emphasized city life and saw it as the fulfillment of civilization. Paul spent his life not in small towns or villages (like Jesus and the Twelve) but in the large, busy towns of what is today Turkey, Greece, Syria, and Italy.

Children of darkness and Light

At **night**, cities were **dark** and **dangerous** places. Narrow streets were more likely to be the home of robbers and murderers than anything else; being out after dark was avoided by most city dwellers (something we see in the early chapters of 1 Nephi as **Nephi** finds **Laban** in the streets at night with no one else around).

Paul referred to people who wandered the dark streets as those doing "the works of darkness" (**Romans 13:12**). For Paul, like many parents today counseling their children against staying out too late, sin happened at night, in the dark. Those who obeyed God were the "children of light" (**1 Thessalonians 5:5**; **Ephesians 5:8**), a phrase also used by Jesus on at least two occasions (Luke 16:8; John 12:36) and found among the **Dead Sea Scrolls texts** as well, in the Community Rule (e.g., Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 127). It also relates to many of Jesus' other sayings, such as from the Sermon on the Mount: "The light of the body is the eye. If your eye is healthy, then your whole body will be full of light: 23if your eye is unhealthy, then your whole body will be full of darkness. If the light in you is darkness, then your whole body will be full of darkness. If the light in you is darkness, how great a darkness it will be!" (**Matthew 6:22-23**). This is a metaphor that we can appreciate better if we imagine a world with no electricity, no streetlamps, no flashlights, nothing but fire to light the way.

Foundations

1 Corinthians 3:10-11 refers to how foundations for buildings were laid. With no building inspectors or approval processes like today, many city buildings had inadequate foundations and sometimes collapsed. Paul drew on this concern to advocate for a strong foundation of faith in Christ. Related to this idea is **Colossians 2:7** where Paul counsels to be “rooted” and “built up” in Christ, “established” in their faith. **Ephesians 2:20-22** continues this, with a building founded on apostles, prophets, and Christ. This building miraculously “grows” to become a “holy temple in the Lord.”

Harmologeō

Masons used a process called *harmologeō* (or *sunarmologeō*, which emphasizes the unity) to create a stone building, which involved cutting, rubbing (sanding), and fitting the stones precisely, then drilling holes and putting bronze dowels between the blocks, held in place with molten lead. Paul referred to this twice in **Ephesians 2:21** and **4:16**, translated “**fitly framed**” and “**fitly joined**” in the KJV and “joined together” in TWNT. In the first, the building is the Church, made of many different ‘blocks’ or members, their diversity combining on the foundation of Christ and apostles to create a “holy temple.” In the second, the Church is a body made of all its different and various members but still securely joined together to create a single, functioning unit. Both verses emphasize the solidity of the bond that exists between members when the Church is built on the correct foundation. Once the building is joined in this way, it becomes a single unit—a building, not a collection of stones—just as mixing ingredients together and baking them creates a new thing, such as a cake. The individual ingredients are still there but cannot be separated from each other anymore and have come together to create something greater.

Tents

We have come to so comfortably call bodies “tabernacles” that we may have lost sight of the original metaphor, which is found in **2 Corinthians 5:1-4**. Paul made a contrast with a “tent” (“tabernacle” in the KJV) and a city house, comparing our bodies to the tent and our eternal state to the house. The comparison is striking because of the temporary nature of both the tent and our physical bodies, compared to the long-lasting nature of a stone-built house. Paul knew about tents, being a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:1-3); in fact, it’s perhaps surprising that he called upon his profession for metaphors so rarely.

Vessels

Homes were generally sparsely furnished in Paul’s day, but the homes of the wealthy had nice furnishings, art, and other items (lamps, pottery, dishes, etc.). Paul alludes to this in **2 Timothy 2:20-21** and **Romans 9:19-24**. In 2 Timothy, he encourages Timothy to be like the gold and silver vessels which are used for good purposes and not the wood or clay vessels which can be used for mundane or even dirty things such as chamber pots. Being like the honorable vessel lets the servant be “prepared for every good work.” The Romans verses make a similar comparison and call to action on the part of the believer to be clean. The potter (symbolic of the Lord) makes honorable and dishonorable vessels of the same clay, he noted, and the vessel cannot complain about the way it was made. But God patiently waits for the unclean vessels to be cleansed because he is prepared to bestow “the richness of his glory” on the clean vessels, which are symbolic of his mercy and thus called “the vessels of mercy.” Paul himself was called to be a “**chosen instrument**” unto the Lord, carrying his name before Gentiles, kings, and the house of Israel (**Acts 9:15**). Elsewhere he speaks humbly of his own role,

referring to himself as one of the “clay jars” (2 Corinthians 4:6-7) that carry “this treasure” of the gospel to the world, so that people will recognize that it is from God and not men.

Country Life

Oxen

When Paul recounted to Agrippa the Lord’s appearance on the road to Damascus to him in Acts 26:13-15, he explained that the resurrected Lord said, “it is hard for you to **kick the prod**” (“kick against the pricks” in the KJV; it also says this in the KJV in Acts 9:5, but that is not in the Greek text; it was added by Erasmus to harmonize with Acts 26.) A ‘prod’ is an ox goad, a pointy stick used to prod the animals along. Kicking it only hurts the ox, which is how the Lord used it with Saul.

Oxen are referenced in a couple other contexts in Paul’s writings. The first is in 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be equally **yoked** to nonbelievers.” Some cite this as a warning against mixed marriages with Christians not to marry non-Christians, but understanding the metaphor helps clarify that it is broader than that. Oxen were put in pairs when they worked. Some oxen worked best on the left side, some on the right. When you had the right pair working together, they were ‘equally yoked,’ sharing the load and cooperating well. If you put two ‘left’ or two ‘right’ oxen together, they would be “unequally yoked,” causing problems getting the work done. The broader context of the verse is for believers to not work together in many contexts with non-believers, for their goals and interests would not match and they would work against each other.

Paul used a similar reference to yoking in a positive sense in Philippians 4:3. He referred to another person (unnamed) as his “faithful companion” (“**true yokefellow**” in the KJV), meaning that they were an excellent pair. He admonished this person to help some sisters in Philippi, with a confidence that it would go well based on the metaphor used.

Trapping

The Greek *skandalon* occurs several times in Paul’s writings. Though translated variously in his letters in the KJV, *skandalon* is not once written as ‘trap,’ though that is the primary meaning. Instead, the translators were aware of the metaphor and attempted to select words that conveyed Paul’s sense rather than a literal rendition. A trap, of course, is a hunter’s tool for catching game. Hidden well and baited to attract prey, it is at best dangerous and potentially deadly to the unwary.

Paul used the word at least six times, most of them in Romans, which makes sense because of the prominence of hunting among the Romans:

- “a **stone** that will cause people to **stumble** [*proskommatos*] , and a **rock** that will make them **fall** [*petran skandalou*]” (Romans 9:33, quoting Isaiah 28:16; 8:14).
- “a snare and a trap [net] and a **stumbling block** [*skandalon*]” (Romans 11:9, quoting Psalm 69:22-23).
- “never place a **stumbling block** [*proskomma*] or trap [*skandalon*] in front of a brother or sister” (Romans 14:13).
- “divisions and **scandals** [*skandalon*]” (Romans 16:17).
- “to the Jews a **scandal** [*skandalon*]” (1 Corinthians 1:23).
- “the **offense** [*skandalon*] of the cross has been removed” (Galatians 5:11).

In some cases, Paul used *skandalon* in the hunting sense but in others in the tripping up sense, meaning that the message of Christ was a 'trap' to those who could not accept it in faith—not a trap set by God to snare them but something that tripped them up and entangled them through their own culture and belief, their misunderstanding of the mission of the Messiah. This trap kept them from believing Paul's message and embracing the good news about Jesus.

Farming

The people of Corinth were saying they belonged to different people—Paul, Apollos, Peter, or Christ (1 Corinthians 1:12). Paul's answer was to compare them to a farm, worked by several slaves and owned by a master. "I **planted**, Apollos **watered**" (1 Corinthians 3:5). But they are just slaves working the land for God who "**caused it to grow**" (3:6). Though not in the English translation, in the Greek, Paul's and Apollos' efforts are past tense (aorist)—something already done. But God causing it to grow is in the present and ongoing tense (imperfect)—it is still happening. Paul also reminds us that the farmer works the land but the final outcome is beyond his control. Note that in verse 9, he shifts abruptly to a building metaphor, already discussed above but making the same point.

Family Life

Arrabōn

Arrabōn has two principle meanings. The first is a business transaction in which an item or amount was given as a pledge toward a final transaction or business relationship. The second is related in concept but a different application—the *arrabōn* was the pledge of fidelity given by a man to his wife-to-be at betrothal, typically in the form of a ring that she wore on the third finger of her left hand. In both cases, an *arrabōn* was a promise of something greater, a token of a full payment at a future date.

Paul used the word three times in his letters, which in the KJV is always translated "earnest" (think of earnest money in a real estate transaction which is a pledge to complete the transaction) but translated variously in TWNT, but always tied to the Holy Spirit:

- ²¹And God establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, ²²who sealed us and gave us his Spirit in our hearts as a **promise** (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).
- God prepared us for this very thing and gave us the Spirit as a **guarantee** (2 Corinthians 5:5).
- ¹³...and after you believed in him you were sealed by the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the **first installment** of our inheritance for our redemption as God's possession to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Thus the Spirit is given to us as the promise or pledge of something greater—in this case, eternal life with God—and as a promise of the Lord's complete fidelity to us in our relationship.

Marriage

One of the customs of the Jews was a one-year betrothal—somewhat equivalent to a long engagement in our day. A role played by a good friend was 'friend of the bride' whose job it was to act as a liaison between the parties and to ensure that the bride was delivered on the wedding day with her virginity intact. It is common in the Old Testament to portray Israel as God's bride and Paul picked up on that same imagery with the Corinthians, speaking of himself as the friend of the bride standing between the bride (his converts) and the

groom (the Lord) and striving to present the bride as pure and clean to the groom. In **2 Corinthians 11:1-3**, he feared that the Corinthian Saints had been “beguiled” and “corrupted” by Satan and would not be ready for the wedding.

Dropping the friend of the bride role, Paul also used the marriage metaphor with the Saints in Ephesus (**Ephesians 5:25-28**) to instruct men to love their wives, using Christ’s love of the Church as his example. Here are two parts of the wedding ceremony, both described in the obscure verse 26. First, the bride would wash herself before the wedding, a ritual cleaning (in a *miqva* among the Jews) symbolic of her purity and preparation. So the Ephesians were compared to a bride presented to the groom after “**washing her with water,**” which would also have reminded them of their own baptisms. Second, the bride is bound to the groom by **the spoken word**, a covenantal binding through specific words spoken in the ceremony (often simply, ‘I love you’). Baptism is thus a symbol of a marriage bond that not only cleanses the bride (church) but binds her to the husband by words properly spoken, and the groom presents the bride to himself a church “in glory, without spot.” Paul’s conclusion draws the parallel to how men should treat their brides (alternate translation): ‘So owe [a debt from the marriage covenant] men love to their wives.’”

Schoolmaster/Pedagogue

Paul used many images of family life, but perhaps the most powerful was the *paidagōgos*, rendered “schoolmaster” in the KJV, guardian in TWNT. The pedagogue was hired by the family to escort the child to school until age 16, protect him from harm or abuse, and educate him to be a decent, productive member of society. The best-known passage about this is **Galatians 3:23-26**, where he compares the Law of Moses to a pedagogue that prepared people for (and in his day kept them from — “held as prisoners”) the gospel of Christ.

However, once they learned the gospel, it caused them to leave the pedagogue behind as they became ‘adults’ and thus fell under the influence of their Father. In other words, as he explained in **Galatians 4:1-3**, the period of pedagogy can be compared to slavery, though it is temporary, ending as the child comes of age. So the law was in effect “to lead us until Christ came” (3:24 NLT).

Adoption

Adoption was different in the Roman world than in ours today. Adoption was often practiced with older children, even adults, in order to shift them from one *paterfamilias* to another for political, financial, or other reasons. The formal adoption first consisted of the existing father or guardian relinquishing all authority over the child (*mancipatio*, which was actually a thrice-repeated sale) after which the new father went before the magistrate and declared the child his (*vindicatio*). If the former father had no objections, the magistrate declared it so, and it was as if the child had been reborn. All of this was witnessed by a neutral observer. The adoptee relinquished all claims to his former family and received full rights in the new one. His debts from the previous family were cancelled and no one could ever bring up any event from his former life — it was gone. He was reborn as a new person, and now fully subject to the rules (*potestas*) of this new family.

A good scripture on adoption is **Galatians 4:3-7**, immediately after Paul’s discussion of the pedagogue. Here he emphasized the bondage of the Saints under the world (the previous ‘family’). Then God sent Christ as a redeemer (*go’el*) of those who were slaves under the Law of Moses to adopt them into God’s family. Once sons of God, we could call God *Abba*, and no more are we slaves but sons and heirs.

Romans 8:12-17 also illustrates this concept, taking us from being debtors and doomed to death to heirs of all the Father has and joint-heirs with Christ. But this adoption has a price—we have to “put to death the actions of the body” (8:13) and be “led by the Spirit of God” (8:14). Finally, we have to “suffer jointly with [Christ]” (8:17). That is the *potestas* of this new family. We are not slaves so that we should fear God but are truly adopted so that we may call him Abba, our Father. If we ever doubt, the Spirit acts in his role as the designated witness to tell us that it is true (8:16).

Slavery and Freedom

In Roman thinking, there were basically two kinds of people in the world—**slaves** and **freemen**. Both were governed by law but with different levels of rights and support.

Today we don’t encounter slavery very often but in the ancient world it was a fact of daily life. Scholars estimate that there were **2-3 million slaves in Italy alone** and that the majority of the population in Rome was freed slaves (Romans typically freed their slaves at age 30). The Old Testament accepts slavery as a fact of life, giving Jewish masters rules of kindness and tolerance. Paul used this common institution to teach some of his most important doctrines.

Slavery was different in the Roman world than our image of slavery today. Slaves could earn **money** and have **jobs**, and some slaves became quite wealthy in their own right, even able to **buy** their own **freedom**. But many had **hard**, pitiful lives and earned just enough to keep themselves fed and clothed. It all **depended on their masters**.

Note: The English word ‘slave’ only occurs twice in the KJV Bible, Jeremiah 2:14 and Revelation 18:13. But the Hebrew and Greek words for slave (*‘ebed* and *doulos*, respectively) are found hundreds of times, typically translated as “servant.”

Choose your master

Paul taught that without Christ we are **slaves to sin** and to the devil in **Romans 6:16-23**. He likened sin to slavery but said we can also **choose to be slaves to God**: “you are slaves of the one whom you obey” (6:16). The Romans were slaves to sin previously but because they obeyed “from the heart” (6:17), they had become “**free from sin**” (6:18) and “**enslaved to righteousness**” (6:18). Paul assured his listeners that he was speaking metaphorically—“I am speaking in human terms” (6:19); they were not truly slaves but the image was appropriate. The difference is in the **reward**—being a slave to sin brings **death**, but being enslaved to God brings **eternal life** (6:23).

Branding

Sometimes slaves were branded on their **foreheads** (or their hands) as a mark of ownership or perhaps as a punishment. In Greek, these **marks** were called *stigma* (singular) or *stigmata* (plural). Slaves weren’t the only ones to get them; some **soldiers** would brand or tattoo the name of the commanding officer on their forehead to show their loyalty. **Religious devotees** might also brand the name or sign of their god in their foreheads, showing that they were ‘holy slaves’ to that god. (You still see this in some religions today where marks are placed in foreheads to represent commitment and fidelity to that belief system.)

Paul represented himself as carrying the *stigmata* of Jesus (**Galatians 6:17**). This does not mean he branded Jesus’ name in his forehead but used the practice as a metaphor to represent his commitment to Christ. It could

also have reference to **wounds** and **scars** received as a result of his ministry and travels, saying in effect, ‘My body proclaims my allegiance to Christ.’

Today in some circles, the word ‘**stigmata**’ has come to mean to have wounds or marks that **mimic** the **wounds** Jesus suffered in his crucifixion, but that was not the meaning in Paul’s day. (Interestingly, the term is also the origin of the word “astigmatism,” which means ‘without a mark’.)

The concept is found elsewhere in the New Testament—notably in Revelation where people receive “the **mark**, or the **name** of the beast” (Revelation 13:16-17) in their hands or foreheads. The word there is *charagma*, which is similar to *stigmata* in that it represents a stamp or imprinted mark such as would be received by an animal or slave.

Becoming a Slave

A common way of acquiring slaves was through **war**. The conquered nation often faced deportation and enslavement of its citizens. Most of the slaves in the early days of the Roman empire were gained in this way. This was the situation Paul referred to in **Romans 7:23-25**, likening **sin** to the attacking **army** making war on him (his “members,” 7:23) and **battling Christ’s law** which is firmly planted in his thinking and emotions (“mind,” 7:23). Any victory by sin brings with it captivity, slavery to the attacking sin, causing Paul to exclaim, “Wretched man that I am!” (7:24). He thanked God that it was his desire to live “the Law of God” (7:25) but still recognized that the **war continued** and he sinned according to the flesh.

Recognizing this **propensity to sin**, Paul explained to the Corinthians (**1 Corinthians 9:27**) that he punished his body and brought it into slavery. Paul did not literally beat himself black and blue but was again speaking of the victor leading the conquered from battle into slavery; Paul does not want to be a slave to sin, so he takes his own body into slavery, fighting back against the control that Satan attempts to have on him.

Purchasing Slaves

Slaves were **bought** and **sold** and otherwise treated as **property**. Corinth in Greece was a well-known center for slave purchasing. Paul referenced the practice twice in his letter to them (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 7:22-23**), telling them they were “**bought with a price**.” Some have seen in this a reference to the Hebrew concept of a **redeemer** (which will be discussed shortly) but the context shows that in both cases he was speaking of the **buying of slaves**.

Freemen

1 Corinthians 7:22 also illustrates another aspect of slavery—being freed. Unlike slavery in the pre-Civil War United States, slavery in the Roman Empire generally ended in freedom, typically at **age 30**. Slaves could also **purchase** their own freedom as they earned money from a trade or craft. A freed slave was called a *libertus* in Latin or an *apeleutheros* in Greek (the word Paul used)—translated “freedman” in this verse. A freedman **became a Roman citizen if his master was one**, so for many, slavery was a way to elevate themselves beyond that they could otherwise enjoy. As a result, the freedman owed **allegiance** to his former master who now became his **patron**. In many cases, the former slave remained in the **employ** of his patron, even living in his house rather than face the world alone. This is the circumstance of Paul’s comments in this verse—the former slave to sin is now a freedman in the Lord, owing his respect, loyalty, and service. So in a gospel paradox, those who were **slaves to sin** before their conversion are now **slaves to Christ**, willing and able to serve him

with their whole being. In other words, the Christian is fully committed to Christ and his kingdom. Paul made a similar statement in **Romans 6:22**, noting that freed from sin, they were now slaves to God.

Slave Wages

Staying with Romans 6 for a moment, it was mentioned that **slaves could sometimes earn money** to keep for themselves. Faithful slaves might even be set up in a **business** venture by their master, paying him back through the gains of the business. The slave could be given assets to manage—animals, land, or a business of some kind—and allowed to keep some of the profits for himself. Some masters even paid their slaves a **wage**. So Paul declares that sin pays **wages** to its slaves—**death (Romans 6:23)**. But when you are God's slave, his wage of "eternal life" is infinitely more generous, so much that it is "the **gift** of God...in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Redemption

As a Jew, Paul would have understood **two concepts of redemption**. First, from the Old Testament was the idea of a *go'el*, someone who paid a **ransom** or other price to free another from prison, slavery, or debt. Land was also redeemed (if someone in the family sold it to an outsider out of financial distress, as in Jeremiah's case), as were widows (such as Boaz 'redeeming' Ruth). This is why the **oldest son got a double portion** of the inheritance—to have funds to redeem other family members, if needed.

But **Roman** thinking about a redeemer was **only** someone was paid a ransom to bring another out of **slavery**—the other situations were never considered as part of redeeming. Paul's use of the metaphor is nearly always in the **Roman sense** and rarely the Jewish.

Consider **Ephesians 1:7**, where he says that in Christ "we have redemption." In other words, Jesus paid the ransom for us to buy our freedom as slaves to sin and Satan. But the ransom was not gold or silver but "his blood." We receive "forgiveness of sins, according to the wealth of his grace."

In **1 Timothy 2:6**, Paul says that Jesus paid the ransom for us. The Greek word used for "ransom" is *antilutron*, which appears to be **created by Paul** to convey the full sense of a **ransom** (*lutron*) paid by **substitution** (*anti*, meaning 'instead of' or 'in behalf of'). In other words, the ransom is not just a payment of funds, but one person **substituting** himself for another. Jesus was able to be this substitute-ransom because he was without sin and thus an appropriate **exchange** for all of us who are enslaved by sin (compare Matthew 20:28, "...to give his life as a ransom for many").

The Law

Though Paul used the term "the law" often to refer to the Law of Moses, he also understood Roman law very well and used references to elements and practices in Roman law throughout his letters. Understanding some of these helps clarify what points Paul was trying to make.

The Will

Similar to our law today, a person recorded a **last will and testament**, determining the disposition of their assets, etc. A will, once executed, could be changed in any way; it was **binding** on all parties. Paul compares God's promise of salvation to such a will in **Galatians 3:15-18**.

The word he uses, *diathēkē*, is here translated “contract” and “covenant” but strictly speaking covenant should be a *sunthēkē*, an agreement between parties, so Paul is making a different point. A *diathēkē* is the will, a one-way agreement that is binding and cannot be changed. Paul uses the great example of a *diathēkē* of **God to Abraham from Genesis 12:3-7** (and others) where nothing is recorded that would cause us to think that Abraham merited these great promises in any way, nor did God demand anything of Abraham in exchange—it was simply God’s **grace** that offered him magnificent **unilateral promises** of blessings, land, and posterity. Paul points out that this promise—God’s ‘will’ to Abraham—predates the Law of Moses, and thus the Law can have no effect on the promise (“does not nullify” or “void the promise”). His point of this whole chapter is captured in verse 13 and ties back to the last section: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us” (**Galatians 3:13**). Thus the promise (‘will’) of salvation through God is unalterable and eternal.

Citizens and Aliens

In the Roman Empire, someone with **Roman citizenship had special privileges**. Their **marriages** were recognized by Roman law, which ensured the rights of inheritance. They could conduct **business** under the protection of that same law, and they had access to the Roman **court** system (discussed next). They were less likely to suffer poor treatment when **arrested**, something Paul invoked more than once. Citizenship was something that only a **minority** of the population experienced.

Noncitizens were *peregrini*, or **aliens**, either from conquered or allied territories; anyone else was technically considered an **enemy** and would probably be made slaves if captured. Aliens had some legal rights, too. Some groups could **self-govern**, as Rome generally allowed the **Jews** to do (thus the Sanhedrin in Jesus’ day could function relatively independent of Rome). Likewise, Roman citizens living outside of Italy could form self-governing **colonies** which, in essence, extended Roman law to their location, letting them be governed as if they were on Italian soil. This was called a *politeuma*. **Philippi** was such a colony (Acts 16:12), and Paul’s letter to them thus highlights those two situations—citizens and aliens living together.

Appealing to their Roman colony status, he said, “Only let the way you live your life be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (**Philippians 1:27**). The verb translated “live your life” is *politeuma*, tying it to citizenship. In other words, you may be living far away from God physically, but like being in a colony, you are still **part of his kingdom** and should live accordingly.

Likewise to the Ephesians, Paul evoked the same metaphor when he said that the Gentile converts were “without Christ [before their conversion], being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope” (**Ephesians 2:12**). The atonement of Christ took them who were “apart” and made them “near by the blood of Christ” (2:13). Jesus “broke down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility” (2:14), referring to the marked wall in the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem that said, ‘No Gentiles past this point.’ The Savior tore it down and opened the worship of God to all, so that they were “no longer foreigners [aliens] and noncitizens [living outside the borders], but fellow citizens [*sumpolitēs*] with the saints and household of God” (Ephesian 2:19).

Advocate

Roman law was a great achievement in Paul’s day. The **peace** generally enjoyed in the Mediterranean world at that time was in large part due to the codified **laws** of the Empire. Roman **citizens** were the only ones that access to the **full law**, but others were impacted by it in large and small ways. Based on former religious

practices, legal proceedings followed precise formulae—not adhering to the rules would cause you to lose more quickly than having a poor case. Thus, you **needed someone with you who ‘knew the system’** to have any hope of victory in court.

Two roles were common in Paul’s day. The *advocatus* was a legal advisor, much like an attorney today. Once in the court, the *patronus* spoke on your behalf, an orator who knew how to present the case and argue for his client. Paul needed both of these people when he was arrested the second time in Rome but instead, **stood alone**: “At my first answer [*primo actio* or first hearing] no man stood with me, but all men forsook me” (2 Timothy 4:16). Paul was writing to Timothy **between this first hearing and his formal trial**, saying that no *advocatus* or *patronus* had stood with him, so he spoke for himself. But Paul was not really alone: “But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me...I was delivered from the lion’s mouth” (2 Timothy 4:17). Paul had a divine *advocatus*. He trusted that God would deliver him “from every evil action” and preserve him—not for something else in this life but “into his heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18).

Earlier in his life, Paul used this image of the dramatic courtroom scene in his letter to **Rome**. Paul speaks of **prayer**, exclaiming that when we approach the judgment bar of God, we don’t even know the **words** we are supposed to use in prayer—a clear reference to the **complexities** of the Roman judgment system. But we don’t need to worry, because the **Holy Spirit will be our patronus** and speak words in our behalf that are so powerful that they cannot even be repeated. In addition, we have a **second patronus and advocatus** who stands in the privileged position on the right hand of the judge. He also intercedes on our behalf and directs us in our own defense. With an advocate who gave everything for us and already paid the price for our crimes, how can the judge not hear him? How can the charges not be dismissed?

Called (*kaleō*) and Judgment Bar (*bēma*)

Staying with Romans 8, we see another reference to a legal activity: “30And those whom he foreordained he also called. And those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Romans 8:30). To be “called” (*kaleō*) in this example is to be **summoned** to court or to the judgment bar of the Lord (the *bēma* or platform where the judges sit and hear the cases; see Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10; note that *kaleō* **also** means to **call out** and get attention [related to this] and to **call** someone/something **by name** or even give them a name, as in ‘called his name Jesus’). Once at the bar, the cry goes out: “Who will bring any charge against God’s elect?” (8:33), a call for the prosecuting attorney. They are ready to try the case, with the accused called and in the court. But there is no case because “It is God who justifies” or declares the person free of guilt.

Justification or Righteous (*dikaioō*)

That leads to the next legal term, one which we hear often in an LDS context—**justification**. Each day in Roman courts, plaintiffs were **called** and **heard**, sometimes **condemned**, sometimes **acquitted**. When they were acquitted, they were declared *dikaioō*—**justified** (sometimes translated “righteous”), acquitted of any crime. To be justified did not mean the person was any different, just that they were **absolved** of the **crimes** of which they were accused. In other words, justification changed to status of the person from **suspected** of wrongdoing to **free**, to return to their life, but did not change the person himself or herself.

But what causes the Lord to declare us justified when we clearly don’t deserve it? **Romans 3** explains this conundrum: “just as it is written, There is no one who is righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10, quoting Psalm 13:1). Paul offered **examples** of many sins that would alienate us from the Lord in the next verses (11-18, not

included here). He then stated that **under the Law** of Moses, “no one will be declared to be righteous,” for the Law is so **complex** that to try and understand it just brings “a knowledge of sin” but **no relief** from its demands (3:20), “because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). But God still justifies—forgives and acquits his people, makes them righteous—“freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ” (3:24). Christ can redeem and justify us because “God put [him] forward on the seat of mercy [a sacrifice of reconciliation], through faith in his death” (3:25). And because God declared him “just” [upright and righteous], he became “the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (3:26).

When are we acquitted/justified? When we are **baptized**; when we worthily take the **sacrament**; when the **Spirit speaks forgiveness** to our souls. Paul continued: “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Trial or calamity or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or a sword?” (8:35). Christ, our *advocatus* and *patronus*, will allow nothing “to separate us from the love of God” (8:39).