



Painter in the style of Angelos Akotantos, Icon with Christ the Vine, 15th century, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens. Photo by Tilemahos Ethimiadis, image via Wikimedia Commons.

ROMANS 7–16

CHRIST INVITES ALL TO BECOME HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

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In these chapters written to the Romans, Paul continues to develop the idea that Christ has the power to change lives (chapter 7). This kind of change allows disciples to become joint heirs as the true vine of Israel (chapters 8–12).

The book of Romans is Paul's greatest treatise on the need for both Christ's grace and our good works.¹ Twenty percent of the epistle deals with grace, and thirty percent treats the need for good works. Paul used some words repeatedly, which allows the modern reader to get a better understanding of his definitions. The following are three theologically packed words that he used often:

- *salvation* (Greek *soteria*): Rom 1:16; 10:10; 11:11; 13:11; 2 Cor 7:10; Php 2:12; Eph 1:13
- *justification* (Greek *dikaiosis-dikaioo*): Rom 2:13; 3:20, 30; 4:25; 5:1, 9, 16, 18; 8:30
- *grace* (Greek *charis*): Rom 1:5, 7; 3:24; 4:4, 16; 5:2, 15, 17, 20, 21; 6:1, 14, 15; 11:5, 6; 12:3, 6

The KJV uses words in English that support Augustine and Reformed (or Calvinistic) theology of the translators rather than Paul's original intent. Three examples follow from *Strong's Concordance*:

- *predestinate*: In the KJV, three different Greek words are translated with forms of *predestine*—defined as “foreordain, predetermine, mark out beforehand, to conform to and to assign.”
- *subjected* (Greek *hupotasso*): In military contexts, this word meant “to place or rank under, to subject, to obey.” In nonmilitary contexts, it was “a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden.”²
- *slave* or *servant* (Greek *doulos*): This word refers to someone who belongs to another; a bond-slave without any ownership rights of their own. It is used with the highest dignity for believers who willingly live under Christ's authority as His devoted followers (Rom 1:1; 6:16–20).

Romans 7—Christ's Power to Change Lives

Rom 7 discusses how Christ changes our sinful nature. Paul's argument is filled with both tongue and mind twisters that make it harder to understand.³ Misunderstanding this chapter led to the idea that humans are born sinful, an idea known as the depravity of humankind.⁴ Modern translations may help a little, but each is laced with its own theological bias, which often includes no human agency and the depravity of humankind. The JST has changes in nearly every verse, but even with those changes, it is still difficult to unpack this chapter's meaning. In the KJV, the word *flesh* refers to “sin or sinful,” as it also does in Restoration scripture: “The natural man is an enemy to God” (Mosi 3:19).

Paul covers three main topics:

1. The deadness of the old law (chapters 1–6)
2. The relationship of sin to the law (chapters 7–13)
3. The propensity of the flesh to sin (chapters 14–25)

The deadness of the old law—Rom 7:1–6

Rom 7:1 (NIV). “*Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law.*” Paul is mindful about addressing women in his audience, but the KJV and most other English versions were translated at a time when the English language did not distinguish between gender. The majority of Paul's epistles include far more positive than negative acknowledgements of women.⁵

Rom 7:2 (NIV). “*For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive.*” Paul compares the law of Moses to a married couple. “Just as a woman is not being unfaithful to a deceased husband by remarrying, neither is modern Israel unfaithful to the law of Moses

by transferring allegiance to the Savior.”⁶ The Book of Mormon similarly teaches, “The law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith” (2 Ne 25:25).

Rom 7:5 (JST). “*sin, which were **by not according to the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.***” The Prophet Joseph Smith turned the meaning of this verse completely around by adding “not.” This is the first of fourteen times in this chapter that the Prophet added a word to reverse the KJV’s meaning. Many of the JST changes are words added for clarity or because they may have been accidentally missed in previous translations or transcriptions. Without knowing which words were original to Paul, we must interpret this chapter in light of the development of his larger argument and Christ’s teachings.

Rom 7:6 (BLB). “*to serve in newness of the Spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.*” Paul seems to be addressing an issue that he had had with some Jewish converts (known as the Judaizers) who felt that all Christians should still live the law of Moses. Paul explains that serving God by the letter of the law of Moses led the Israelites to become so absorbed in minutiae that they missed the law’s message. The Spirit testifies of truth and empowers disciples to serve God with greater faith and in the places where He needs them.

The relationship of sin to the law—Rom 7:7–13

Rom 7:7. “*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay.*” Paul repeats these rhetorical questions periodically to make sure his audience understands the message. He does not want to claim the law is corrupt or sinful.

Rom 7:8 (CEV). “*It was sin that used this command as a way of making me have all kinds of desires.*” This can be interpreted as saying that sin can exist only if there is a law, but I do not think that was the intended message. With God, there is right and wrong, truth and error, good and bad, regardless of whether a law labels it so. Taking each verse out of Paul’s greater context and development gives false notions.

Rom 7:10 (JST). “***when I believed not the commandment of Christ which came, which was ordained to life, I found ~~to be~~ it condemned me unto death.***” So many JST changes were made in Rom 7:9–25 that it helps to compare the different versions of the confusing text in parallel manner.

The propensity of the flesh to sin—Rom 7:14–25

Rom 7:24 (JST). “***if I subdue not the sin which is in me, but with the flesh serve the law of sin; O wretched man that I am!***” Paul acknowledges the challenges of natural appetites, temptations, and opposition, but he insists that disciples have the tools to overcome and find freedom from our mortal weaknesses. As president of Brigham Young University, Elder Jeffery R. Holland elaborated:

Too often we are also in servitude to our own bodies. Paul said, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me

Table 1. Comparison of Rom 7:9–25 NIV and JST Rom 7:9–27

NIV Rom 7:9–25	JST (and KJV) Rom 7:9–27
Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.	For <i>once</i> I was alive without <i>transgression of</i> the law once , but when the commandment <i>of Christ</i> came, sin revived, and I died.
I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.	And <i>when I believed not</i> the commandment <i>of Christ which came</i> , which was ordained to life, I found to be <i>it condemned me</i> unto death.
For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.	For sin, taking occasion by , <i>denied</i> the commandment, <i>and</i> deceived me; and by it stew me I was slain .
So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.	<i>Wherefore Nevertheless, I found</i> the law <i>is to be</i> holy, and the commandment <i>to be</i> holy, and just, and good.
Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.	Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good <i>working death in me</i> ; that sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful.
We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. . . .	For we know that the law <i>commandment</i> is spiritual; but <i>when I was under law</i> , I am <i>was yet</i> carnal, sold under sin.
For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.	<i>But now I am spiritual</i> ; for that which <i>I am commanded to do, I do; and that which I am commanded not to allow</i> , I allow not: For what I would <i>know is not right, that I do not I would not do; but what for that which is sin</i> , I hate, that do I .
And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.	If then I do <i>not</i> that which I would not <i>allow</i> , I consent unto the law, that it is good; <i>and I am not condemned</i> .
As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.	Now then it is no more I that do it <i>sin</i> ; but I <i>seek to subdue that sin that which</i> dwelleth in me.
For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.	For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how <i>to perform that which is good I find not, only in Christ</i> .

Table 1 (continued)

NIV Rom 7:9–25	JST (and KJV) Rom 7:9–27
For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.	For the good that I would <i>have done when under the law, I find not to be good; therefore</i> , I do <i>it</i> not. But the evil which I would not <i>do under the law, I find to be good</i> ; that, I do.
Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.	Now if I do that, <i>through the assistance of Christ</i> , I would not <i>do under the law, I am not under the law; and</i> it is no more <i>that I seek to do it wrong</i> , but <i>to subdue</i> sin that dwelleth in me.
So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.	I find then <i>a that under the law</i> , that when I would do good, evil <i>is was</i> present with me;
For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.	for I delight the law of God after the inward man. But <i>And now</i> I see another law, <i>even the commandment of Christ, and it is imprinted in my mind. But in</i> my members; <i>are</i> warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.
What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?	<i>And if I subdue not the sin which is in me, but with the flesh serve the law of sin</i> ; O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?
Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!	I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, So then, <i>that so</i> with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin .

into captivity” (Rom 7:22–23). I don’t mean just the dramatic sins. . . . There are more common kinds of bondage than these. The war in the body of someone who is a little overweight that makes him huff and puff by the time he gets to the top of the stairs, the war of the mattress on his back that he somehow cannot shake in the morning so he misses those precious and most inspirational hours of the day, the war of grooming and personal hygiene that could do much for us—all these are restrictive to our freedom if we don’t control them. But of course certain limitations are sometimes beyond our control.

God has given disciples power to control the natural man through the power of His Spirit. The Book of Mormon repeatedly teaches that by following God’s laws and Spirit, we can overcome our mortal propensity to sin, “Ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free” (Hel 14:30; 2 Ne 2:13–14; 10:23; etc.). It is only the tempter and addictions to sin that reduce our power to act. Through the cleansing power of our Redeemer, implemented through the Spirit, we can become free from the bonds of sin and regain full agency.⁷

Romans 8—God’s Love Extends to All People

In Rom 8, Paul focuses on the Spirit’s role to help Saints become joint heirs with Christ (a topic repeated twenty times in 8:1–27). The Lord’s love is the power, like a magnetic pull, that draws disciples to overcome wickedness and take full advantage of Christ’s Atonement.

Holy Spirit—Rom 8:1–4

Rom 8:1 (NIV). “*there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.*” Those who are “in Christ” obey God, exercise faith, seek repentance, and are baptized. Once forgiven, these individuals are freed from God’s condemnation. If they sin again and do not repent, they offend the Spirit and return to condemnation. If taken out of Paul’s context, this verse can be misunderstood to mean that there will be no punishment for believers. That was not Paul’s intent. Paul refuted this misunderstanding three times in Rom 8:2–4 by referencing the law of Christ saving us.

Rom 8:1. “*walk . . . after the Spirit.*” Only the KJV includes this last sentence; other translations include it in Rom 8:4 (where the KJV repeats it). Disciples who receive Christ’s image in their countenance are “alive with Christ” (Eph 2:5 NIV). In contrast, those who live solely under the law of Moses cannot be saved through their animal sacrifices. The old law continues as a moral and ethical guide but is not the *source* of salvation.

Rom 8:2. “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free.*” This is the only time we find the phrase *law of the Spirit* in scripture. This use of *law* does not refer to the Mosaic law. The text connects the Spirit with life in Christ. Thus, the phrase evokes both the life the Spirit gave to Adam and Eve and their posterity in the Garden of Eden and the life that Christ gave through His Resurrection. This topic is taught in the Book of Mormon, clearly referring to immortality: “The Holy Messiah . . . layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection” (2 Ne 2:8).

Rom 8:3 (CSB). “*God . . . condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son . . . as a sin offering.*” Paul describes God and Jesus as two beings, with Jesus taking “the form of sinful flesh,” or a mortal body (ABPV). This verse describes the fulfillment of the prophecy given to Eve in Eden. Jesus, as uniquely her seed, became the sin offering. Only He had power to bruise and crush Satan (Gen 3:15 NIV; Mose 4:21).

Rom 8:4 (NIV). “*the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us.*” With a Christological interpretation of this verse, we see Christ as the One who fulfilled the law when He vicariously fulfilled all requirements to redeem humanity from the Fall in behalf of all who walk after the Spirit, not selfish instincts. In the KJV, it is harder to see Jesus as the source of fulfillment, but the text points to Him. The clearest scripture on this point is from King Benjamin: “The natural man is an enemy to God, . . . unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit” (Mosi 3:19).

The natural man versus the man of the Spirit—Rom 8:5–13

Rom 8:5 (NIV). “*Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*” Paul asks the Saints to examine their motives. Jesus also warned that when we serve the devil, we cannot serve God (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:9).

Rom 8:6. “*to be carnally minded is death.*” The Greek word *sarx*, “flesh, carnal,” refers to human nature or the base of operations. The phrase literally translated is “the mind of the flesh,” but the early Latin translation changed “flesh” to “body.” Because of that, some interpret this passage as saying that Paul viewed the physical body as inherently evil (as did some Greeks and the Gnostics). However, within the context of verses 5–6, we see that is certainly not what Paul meant. Paul’s references elsewhere make it clear that he does not see human nature as inherently evil.⁸

Rom 8:8 (JST). “*they that are ~~in~~-after the flesh cannot please God.*” The JST change removes the idea of being born in sin. “Flesh” refers to base nature or selfish desires (CEV), highlighting our mortal choice to follow God or our physical desires or appetites. Paul calls the Saints to seek the Spirit and serve God.

Rom 8:10 (JST). “*If Christ be in you, ~~though the body is dead~~ shall die because of sin, ~~but yet~~ the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*” With the Spirit as our guide, sin and physical challenges become opportunities to draw closer to God. Those with a testimony of the Savior receive the Spirit, which creates a quickening of hope in this life and the next. The problem Paul addresses here is the need to curb the natural man and woman by applying self-control to our natural appetites so that the body can work at its best within the Lord’s guidelines. Paul is not denouncing the body. When our spirit and body work in harmony, we can nourish and benefit from both.

Rom 8:12 (NIV). “*brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to [the Spirit].*” The NIV highlights the role women played in the Apostolic Church, which was serving together with men to build the kingdom of heaven. This was a dramatic departure from both the Judaic and Greco-Roman culture of the day.⁹

Rom 8:13. “*mortify the deeds of the body.*” Paul asked his readers to repent of, or “render extinct,” all evil and damaging habits in their lives. This is a powerful reminder that giving up sin is a process that requires constant effort. As President Russell M. Nelson has taught, “nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is a regular, daily focus on repentance. Repentance is not an event; it is a process.”¹⁰

Regenerative powers of the Spirit—Rom 8:14–17

Rom 8:14 (NIV). “*those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.*” The Spirit has the transformative cleansing power to bridle our natural selfish instincts and purge sin to create daughters and sons of God. This baptism by fire can be felt as a tangible burning or by the fruits of the Spirit.¹¹

Rom 8:15 (ESV). “*you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but . . . the Spirit of adoption.*” When Christ emancipates His disciples from sin, they are spiritually begotten or born again and can pray, “Abba! Father.” (Paul includes the Aramaic and Greek words together, just as Jesus did in Mk 14:36.) Early Christians labored to enjoy the companionship of the Holy Spirit. In so doing, they began the process of spiritual rebirth. They take on a new family—through the name of Christ—and live by the family rules and regulations. Perhaps the most beautiful part of the Lord’s adoption is the Spirit’s witness of love and belonging.

The Prophet Joseph Smith felt that adoption was an important concept in the gathering of Israel.¹² When asked, “How do we become of the house of Israel, by adoption or by direct lineage?” he answered:

Every person who embraces the gospel becomes of the house of Israel. In other words, they become members of the chosen lineage, or Abraham’s children through Isaac and Jacob unto whom the promises were made. The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs.¹³

Rom 8:17 (NIV). “*then we are . . . heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.*” This is the capstone to Paul’s thesis that started with faith (Rom 3–6) then moved to its relation to works (Rom 6), overcoming sin (Rom 7–8), and ultimately God’s reward of exaltation (Rom 8). Christ offers all faithful disciples the opportunity to become heirs with Him and ultimately to inherit the family treasure: eternal life.

Chronologically, Paul had already taught the Saints in Corinth about the three degrees of glory in 1 Cor 15:40–42 (written a year or two before this letter). In 1 Pet 3:7 and Eph 3:6, women are among the joint heirs. Other epistles expresses a similar idea (see Gal 4:7; Heb 2:11–13).

In 1832, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that acted as a prelude to this doctrine: “He that receiveth me receiveth my Father; and he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him. And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood” (D&C 84:37–39; also 76:58). In April 1844 at his last general conference, Joseph addressed the topic of becoming joint heirs with God by inheriting exaltation.

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another. . . . It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to

know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did.¹⁴

The Lord had revealed earlier that God's glory and works would always be greater than humanity's. Heavenly Father will always be our God, but those who become joint heirs can dwell with Him and progress as He does (Mose 1:39). Most Christians share the hope of living with Him again. Rodney Turner explained:

While this may seem incredible to the rational mind that fallen mortals with all of their weaknesses could dare hope to attain the moral and spiritual stature of the very Son of God, yet this is precisely what must occur if the saints are to become "joint-heirs with Christ" to the riches of eternity. Hence the indispensable need for divine grace as primarily manifest in the atonement, the resurrection, and the sanctifying gift of the Holy Ghost. (Alm 5:54; 3 Ne 27:20).¹⁵

All creation anticipates future redemption and glory—Rom 8:18–27

Rom 8:18 (JST). *"the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared named with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* Paul again returns to suffering and the hope that can proceed from it ("tribulation worketh patience" [Rom 5:3]). The sufferings of our probationary state can teach reliance on the Lord, humility, and empathy (Heb 2:10). The Lord gave the same encouragement to those in our dispensation: "For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand" (D&C 58:4; see Eth 12:6). It requires faith to look beyond our present sufferings and live in the hope of the promised life hereafter.

Rom 8:20 (NIV). *"the creation was subjected to frustration."* The nineteen times *creation* is used in the New Testament, the word refers to God's creations. Paul knew from many firsthand experiences that mortality is subject to "tribulation" (JST), not "vanity or futility" (RSV). If Saints accept this probationary estate as a time of sorrow, pain, and growth, they will not feel entitled and complain, "I deserve better."

Rom 8:21 (NLT). *"the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay."* The end of death and decay does not necessarily mean that all God's creations will no longer decompose or become corrupt. Rev 20:1–3 describes a millennium when Satan will be bound. In the Book of Mormon, we learn how that binding will occur: "Because of the righteousness of his people, Satan has no power" (1 Ne 22:26; see D&C 43:30–31). Therefore, God's creations will be set free from Satan's influence and from death and decay.

Rom 8:22 (NASB). *"we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth."* The imagery of childbirth may be part of the natural disaster prophecies of the last days, perhaps speaking of the earth as if it were about to deliver something. The Prophet Joseph revealed that the earth has a spirit that reacts to gross sin (as was seen at Jesus's death; 3 Ne 8:5, 19; Mt 27:45).

Rom 8:23 (ESV). “*the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption.*” The Saints anxiously awaited the Spirit’s witness to transform their hearts from wickedness to righteousness. The “first-fruits of the Spirit” include “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith” (Gal 5:22; see Eph 5:9). The fruits of the Spirit grow from nurturing the Spirit and so are different from the gifts of the Spirit, which are given to disciples to bless and serve others.

Rom 8:24. “*we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: . . . why doth he yet hope for?*” We find an answer to Paul’s hypothetical question in Mormon’s sermon: “What is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal” (Moro 7:41; see Alm 32:21).

God calls us to share His glory—Rom 8:26–30

Rom 8:25. “*then do we with patience wait for [the Spirit].*” The Spirit’s cleansing and sealing power has the means to connect and bind mortals to Christ. Its intercession helps us overcome our weaknesses and receive sanctification by implementing the Savior’s Atonement for the repentant. When we pray with the Spirit, we can be guided to know how to pray. Seeking the Spirit’s guidance allows disciples to learn the language of the Lord and find His answers. It is a symbiotic experience.

Rom 8:28. “*all things work together for good to them that love God.*” This promise is fulfilled in the long term as disciples patiently trust God with an eye of faith. God and His angels work for the Saints’ behalf. The Lord relayed to the Prophet Joseph Smith a similar principle in Liberty Jail: “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7). Disciples’ love for God allows them to look at life’s experiences as learning opportunities from God’s hand.

Rom 8:29 (NIV). “*For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed.*” As mentioned previously, *predestinate* in English presumes no human choice or agency. Yet, its Greek root, *proorizó*, means “to define before or a boundary given before; to determine [our potential destiny] beforehand.” Other translations read “his chosen ones” (CEV) and “He chose specially long ago” (JB). The same Greek word appears five other times in the New Testament but is not necessarily translated as “predestination” (see 1 Cor 2:7; Act 4:28). It helps to remember that the KJV translators were Reformed Protestants who believed the theology of predestination of the elect. Calvin, a Swiss reformer, wrote:

By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation. And accordingly as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestined to life or to death.¹⁶

This misunderstanding took away the role of agency. It also dominated American religious beliefs from the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries. The Prophet Joseph Smith corrected this falsehood: “We can choose to be chosen by how we think and act.”¹⁷

Rom 8:30 (JST). “**him whom he called, them him he also justified sanctified.**” Justification refers to the working of the Spirit that applies the Savior’s Atonement in our lives, while sanctification is the process of becoming holy and pure by the Savior’s Atonement, purging all sin from the soul.¹⁸ In the restored Church, we understand this differently than most Christians do, though we all agree the Savior is key. We believe it is not a battle between faith or works but that both are necessary. On the day the Church was organized, Joseph Smith said, “We know that justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true” (D&C 20:30). Shortly after, when translating Genesis, Joseph wrote, “By the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified” (Mose 6:60).

A hymn to God’s Love—Rom 8:31–39

Rom 8:31 (JST). “**If God be for us, who can be prevail against us?**” Ultimate failure is out of the question for disciples of Christ. No person can ultimately thwart God’s plan. Our heavenly parents have power to help all their children return to them. We assume that most of God’s children will be exalted, as throughout the history of the earth, the majority of those born have died before the age of accountability and “are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven” (D&C 137:10).

Rom 8:33. “God’s elect.” For most Christians after Augustine, the elect of God included those who were baptized or who had covenanted with Him. The King James Version translators and most Protestants from the sixteenth century saw the elect as those whom God predestinated to success.¹⁹ The basic tenets of the Calvinistic doctrine of election are summed up in the initialism TULIP:

- **Total depravity:** from birth to adulthood, all are in sin until God elects them for regeneration
- **Unconditional election:** individuals are predestined for eternal life without any effort, only by God’s choice
- **Limited Atonement:** the Savior’s Atonement covers only the few whom God elected
- **Irresistible grace:** humans have no ability or agency to resist God’s choice of election through grace
- **Perseverance of the Saints:** those whom God elects are the Saints who will persevere eternally

The Book of Mormon denounces all five of these points and claims that Christ’s Atonement was for all inhabitants of the earth—both humans and animals.²⁰

- Against total depravity: “Little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin. . . . For awful is the wickedness to suppose that God saveth one child because of baptism, and the other must perish because he hath no baptism” (Moro 8:8, 15; also verses 19, 22).
- Against unconditional election: “They were a wicked and perverse people . . . [saying,] O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish” (Alm 31:24, 28; also verses 16–31).

- Against a limited Atonement: “It must needs be an infinite atonement” (2 Ne 9:7; also verses 11, 26).
- Against irresistible grace: “Teach . . . repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin” (Moro 8:10).
- Against perseverance of the Saints: “if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish” (Mosi 4:30; see 3 Ne 18:15, 18).

To further combat this prevailing false doctrine, Joseph Smith published an article on election: “This is the election that we believe in, . . . in the words of the beloved Peter and Paul, we would exhort you to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.”²¹

Rom 8:34. “Christ . . . maketh intercession for us.” This is a beautiful doctrine. With our Savior pleading our cause, Paul asks, “Who can condemn us?” No one can compare to Him. Having Him is better than all the world’s best advocates defending your case or the best surgeon healing you. Everything will work out eternally for those who receive the Savior’s Atonement and valiantly serve Him.

Rom 8:35. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Paul pictures God’s love as a song. This is the most encouraging message of hope and love in the Pauline corpus. Especially during times of trial (“tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword”), disciples can hold to this hope. Trials are also gifts of love that help us grow. Our limited perspective necessitates building faith and trust that God directs the world for good. Even though no outside source can stop God’s love, internal sins like selfishness and pride do separate humans from God.

Rom 8:36 (BSB). “we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” Paul quotes Ps 44:22, highlighting Jesus as the lamb being slaughtered. Lambs are one of the few animals that do not protest at the time of slaughter—they are submissive to the end. Jesus too went “as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isa 53:7).

Rom 8:38–39 (NIV). “I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This is so beautiful and requires no explanation, just time to ponder until the truth of it sinks deeply into our hearts.

Romans 9—Israel Chosen through Faith

In the next three chapters, Paul explores who is included in Israel and looks back at the Old Testament.²² So far in Romans, Paul cites over a dozen Old Testament scriptures.²³ In this chapter, he doubles that number, referring to Old Testament witnesses from Abraham, Isaac, Esau, Moses, Hosea, and Isaiah, among

others. He opens new ideas on what it means to be a chosen people elected by God. This chapter begs the questions, “Who are chosen and what are they elected to?”

The KJV translates *ekloge*, “chosen,” as “elect” in part because the Reformed (Calvinist) translators believed in a predestined election to grace. But the Prophet Joseph Smith clarified this:

The election of the promised seed still continues, and in the last day, they shall have the Priesthood restored unto them, and they shall be the “Saviors on mount Zion,” the “ministers of our God.” . . .

The whole of the chapter [Romans 9] had reference to the priesthood and house of Israel; and unconditional election of individuals to eternal life was not taught by the apostles.

God did not elect or predestinate that all those who would be saved should be saved in Christ Jesus, and through obedience to the gospel; but he passes over no man’s sins, but visits them with correction, and if his children will not repent of their sins, he will discard them.²⁴

Paul’s lament for his people—Rom 9:1–5

Rom 9:2 (CSB). “*I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.*” Ironically, just after Paul’s song of God’s love, the next words are filled with anguish over the plight of Paul’s kin (*sug-genes* means “related by blood”). Paul gives a sad reflection that is similar to Moses’s prayer in behalf of his wicked people in Ex 32:32. Paul calls on Christ and the Holy Ghost to bear witness to the truth of his sorrow for his brethren. Note the parallelism between the Savior and the Spirit.

Rom 9:3 (JST). “~~For~~ (For once I could wish have wished that myself were accursed from Christ,) for my brethren.” This parenthetical in the JST is a flashback as Paul recounts his days as a staunch Pharisee. At that time, Paul rejected Jesus as the Messiah and took pleasure in persecuting the Saints.

Rom 9:4 (JST). “Who are Israelites; ~~to~~ of whom pertaineth are the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants . . . and the service of God.” Paul explains that the laws and blessings of the gospel are available to all—they universally apply to everyone. Rather than using the political name Jews, Paul uses the honorific title Israelites. The present tense is also significant. The Jews still have the right to boast of their heritage with their God-given name.²⁵ The Lord made covenants with Abraham, Moses, and several other prophets.

Rom 9:5 (NIV). “*the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.*” Paul refers to Christ as God because He is the Creator of this earth, the God of the Old Testament, and our spiritual Father as we are born again. Latter-day Saint scholar D. Kelly Ogden explained these verses: “Paul was emphatic in his love for the Jewish people, but their way was not the way of salvation, even though Christ came through them. Because the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah, they forfeited great blessings. Still, the word of God had not failed. The Gentiles accepted the gospel and were adopted into the house of Israel.”²⁶

God's promises to Israel have not failed—Rom 9:6–18

Rom 9:6. *“They are not all Israel, which are of Israel.”* The Israelite birthright is not enough for us to be God’s covenant people. But baptism is not enough either. Paul returns to teach that we disciples must live up to our covenants. We must receive the cleansing of the Spirit and live worthily of its direction and sanctification to become children of Christ. This verse has led some to question, Does Israel’s failure to receive the Messiah mean God’s purposes have failed? Paul simply answers no, then illustrates God’s dealings with Israel in the past. God will keep His promises, even though Israel did not.

Rom 9:8 (NIV). *“In other words, it is not the natural children . . . who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.”*

More than a birthright, one needs a heart like Abraham’s to be considered his offspring. The Bible mentions eight sons born to Abraham (Hagar bore Ishmael, Sarah bore Isaac, and Keturah bore Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah), but Isaac is the promised one who carried the priesthood.

Rom 9:9 (NIV). *“For this was how the promise was stated: ‘At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.’”* Sarah, Rebekah, Isaac, and Jacob are examples of God’s foreknowledge and of individuals who kept their covenants with God.

Rom 9:11 (NIV). *“before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand.”* Paul describes the twins Jacob and Esau as innocent before their birth. This speaks of a premortal existence and our innocence at birth—both of which are unique doctrines of the Restoration. “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence” (D&C 93:29–30).

Rom 9:12 (BSB). *“The older will serve the younger.”* In Jacob’s day, birth order dictated the birthright (to the inheritance, priesthood, and more). God’s direction that Esau was to serve Jacob was shocking and contrary to the traditions of that time.

Rom 9:13–14 (BSB). *“Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’ What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Certainly not!”* According to some translators, “hated” also means “displeased with” or “rejected.” Our view of God does not include Him hating His children. We believe that God’s omniscient design is not based on mortal status. This discussion falls next to Rom 8:37–38, which reminds us that God loves all His children (see Mose 1:39). God will address any unfairness when we return to heaven.

Rom 9:15. *“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.”* Paul quotes Ex 33:19. The translation and theological bent sound like Augustine and Calvin with their ideas of election. This also developed the idea that humankind is helpless in controlling its destiny and only God has control. This is a misunderstanding of the truth as described in 2 Ne 19:17; Alm 5:33; 24:42; D&C 88:40; 97:2.

Rom 9:16 (ESV). *“it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God.”* God intervenes with humankind according to His wisdom, love, and omniscience. This verse can purport predestination in English.

Rom 9:18 (BSB). *“God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden.”* God’s purposes are higher than our mortal ways and understanding. Alm 13:3 describes those on whom God has mercy: “This is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.”

Without the witness of the Book of Mormon assisting its interpretation, this verse is one of many that can be confusing since it mixed up Calvin and other Reformers into thinking that God had complete control over who was saved and so taught humanity to remain passive in their spiritual practices. This Puritan interpretation preceded modern born-again rationale, which claims that a single spiritual experience is sufficient to assure individuals that they are elect.²⁷ In order to clarify these misconceptions, Joseph Smith published a sermon on this topic.²⁸

Paul gives Pharaoh credit for hardening his own heart in the Greek version of these verses, even though in the English translations it is unclear whether God is doing the hardening or not. In fact, the Old Testament usually gives God credit for doing everything. It was the Reformed theological practice to honor God in *all* things.²⁹ In addition, interpreting this as saying God controls all is inconsistent with everything Paul has said in Romans about the importance of faith and righteous works.

We cannot counsel God but should heed His guidance—Rom 9:19–23

Rom 9:20. *“Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”* Paul continues, saying that we cannot counsel God. We can trust God’s will because He is omniscient, divine, good, and noble and knows what’s best for us. The answer to the question in this verse could be Jac 4:10: “Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works.” Paul again uses familiar Old Testament imagery of the potter and clay from Jer 18:6, Isa 29:16, 45:9.

Rom 9:22 (BSB). *“What if God, intending to show His wrath and make His power known, . . . prepared for destruction?”* God’s punishment will roll forward when the wicked are ripe for destruction.³⁰ However, we also have the promise that “God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amo 3:7).

Rom 9:23. “vessels . . . afore prepared unto glory.” Latter-day Saints see this as referring to the premortal life (like Act 17:26). But Calvinists interpret this as evidence of God’s predestination.

God does not act arbitrarily—Rom 9:24–29

God has promised blessings in store for those adopted into the house of Israel. Verses 25–29 are four different Old Testament prophecies that testified of who makes up the “real” Israel, showing God’s foreknowledge.³¹

Rom 9:25. “I will call them my people, which were not my people.” To show that God does not act arbitrarily, Paul turns to the Old Testament prophets Hosea (Osee) and Isaiah (Esaias). In doing so, he shows how God always planned to have the Gentiles become part of His covenant people.

- Hos 2:23: “And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.”
- Hos 1:10: “The children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, . . . Ye are not my people.” Paul quotes this from the Septuagint (LXX), as it was the Bible used most often in that day.³² This is in part why the text does not repeat the Hebrew text exactly as we have it in our Old Testament.
- Isa 10:22: “A remnant of them shall return” and be saved. We know one remnant became the people from the Book of Mormon.
- Isa 1:9: “Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and . . . Gomorrah.”

In the New Testament, Paul translates “Lord of Hosts” from the Hebrew *Sabaoth*, meaning “hosts or armies, and uses it as “a military epithet of God” (which is also in Jam 5:4; D&C 88:2; 87:7).³³ Interestingly, in D&C 87:7, it fits this military definition, but it does not in D&C 95:7.³⁴

Rom 9:28. “he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness.” This is our hope too. Our prophet Russell M. Nelson reported in general conference that our “time is running out.”³⁵

Israel stumbles because of its lack of faith—Rom 9:30–33

Rom 9:30. “even the righteousness which is of faith.” Paul returns to his argument on the benefits of faith. He concludes that God has not been unfaithful to His promises and continues to offer mercy. At the same time, Paul praises the living Gentiles for their faith to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. Romans leads all New Testament books for the number of times the words *grace* and *faith* are used.

Rom 9:32. “they sought it not by faith. . . . For they stumbled at the stumblingstone.”³⁶ That stone was Jesus, the Messiah (1 Pet 2:7–8). The Jewish nation and beyond knew of Jesus and His works and teachings, but without faith they did not recognize His messiahship. This returns us to Paul’s

early theme: “[Salvation] is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed” (Rom 4:16). Perhaps the house of Israel did not have the faith needed to receive Him because they did not have meekness. Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote,

Meekness permits us to seek spiritual things by faith. Ancient Israel failed, said the Apostle Paul, for “they sought it not by faith.” Without real faith, individuals find one issue or another to stumble over. Unfortunately, it is difficult to show the proud things, which they “never had supposed,” especially religious things they do not want to know.³⁷

Our culture falls into the same trap, and the “arguments against the over-obedient people must not be misunderstood by the under-obedient secular cultures today.”³⁸

Rom 9:33. “I lay in Sion a stumblingstone . . . and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” Paul again quotes Jesus’s fulfillment of two more Isaiah prophecies (Isa 8:14 and 28:16).

Romans 10—Who Is Israel?

Rom 10 examines two aspects of pursuing righteousness. Paul quotes at least six Old Testament scriptures, suggesting that either his audience was largely Jewish converts to Christianity or that they had a problem with Judaizers arguing that the gentile converts needed to more fully live the law of Moses.

Israel’s future salvation comes through faith in Christ, who fulfilled the law—Rom 10:1–5

Rom 10:1. “my . . . prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” Paul reaffirms his deep love for his fellow Israelites so as not to offend those he corrected. Like the parent of a wayward child, he still hopes the people might recognize their Messiah as the source of redemption. The people of Israel will be saved from death—but only faithful Israel will receive celestial glory, or the “third heaven” (2 Cor 12:2).

Rom 10:2. “they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” Earlier in Rom 9:3, Paul recalled his own zeal gone awry and now diagnoses zeal as one of the Jews’ stumbling blocks. The Jews intimately knew the details of their law but not that it was only meant to point toward their Messiah.³⁹ We, too, live in a world of zealous people who stumble without the knowledge of God’s will. Personal revelation is needed to refine zeal and align it with God’s plan to build His kingdom on earth.

Rom 10:3. “they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto . . . God.” Paul juxtaposes “God’s righteousness” with the Jews’ “own righteousness.” In a Jewish setting, righteousness often meant “justice or justness.”

Rom 10:4. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” Paul agrees with the prophet Nephi’s perspective that the purpose of the law was to prepare the way for the Messiah: “My soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this

end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him.”⁴⁰ The law was only temporary; like spiritual training wheels, its purpose was to remind the people of their duty toward God and to help them find more spiritual balance. “End” in this sense refers to termination and, in a relative sense, something eternal. The last phrase, “for everyone who believes” (AB), is key to understanding the rest of the chapter.

Rom 10:5 (Anchor Bible). “*The one who does these things will find life in them.*” To illustrate Jesus as the finisher of the law (Rom 10:4), Paul cites Lev 18:5, with a double meaning. It can refer to Israelites as well as to Jesus as the one who completed the law. The Anchor Bible’s translation points to the Savior as the source of life, while the KJV is confusing. Whether or not you see a Christological meaning in this text, humans can all find meaning and purpose to life by living Christ’s commandments.

The new way of righteousness is open to all with faith—Rom 10:6–13

Paul enters a discussion on faith by quoting five more Hebrew scriptures. In contrast to the law of Moses, whose statutes prescribed specific rules (like limiting one’s steps on the Sabbath), Jesus’s higher law required disciples to walk by faith in Jesus. Paul repeats Jesus’s teachings on faith and adds more.

Rom 10:6–9. “*the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise. . . . The word is . . . in thy heart: . . . confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus.*” Paul uses a Midrashic explanation of two verses in Deuteronomy and one in Psalms.⁴¹ Rather than examining the verses microscopically, Paul’s larger argument from verses 6–9 teaches that faith growing in our heart can lead to the courage to confess Jesus. Faith leads disciples to follow Jesus.

Rom 10:10 (Anchor Bible). “*Such faith of the heart leads to uprightness; such profession of the lips to salvation.*” Repentance and confession must come from the depths of one’s soul. Some Christians who take this verse out of context use it as evidence that confession alone is sufficient for salvation. Yet, that is not Paul’s whole message. This verse is part of his thesis that disciples need to develop faith and follow the Lord’s commandments.⁴²

Rom 10:11 (NAB). “*For the scripture says, ‘No one who believes in Him shall be put to shame.’*” Paul cites Isa 28:16. Some interpret this to mean belief will develop into a strong, sure knowledge. Others interpret it from the perspective of predestination, claiming that if one receives God’s gift of belief, they cannot forget or change their position because they are of the elect and receive “perseverance of the saints” (one of the TULIP doctrines in the Reformed belief; see Rom 8:33).

The Book of Mormon again gives us clarity on how to interpret this verse. In their visions of the tree of life, Lehi and Nephi saw how those who partially believed were affected by the temptations of the world over time. They were ashamed and let go of the rod (that is, the word of God), thereby forfeiting their goal to partake of the fruit of the tree of life (1 Ne 8 and 11). The inability to change one’s station speaks against our view of Christ’s Atonement and of repentance as well. Nephi’s concluding sermon includes a longer elaboration on this universality of God’s invitation to “partake of his goodness” (2 Ne 26:33), which Paul addresses next.

Rom 10:12. “For there is no difference between the Jew and Greek: for the same Lord over all.” This was shocking for both the Jews and Gentiles, especially in Rome. Their society had strict class distinctions. Citizens had great civil rights and a voice in the government, wore togas, and received bread and circuses, in stark contrast to the third of the population who were either servants or enslaved.

Rom 10:12. “rich unto all that call upon him.” God richly blesses those who call on Him. Those blessings are the enjoyment of His Spirit, His commandments, and His covenants—true wealth.

Rom 10:13. “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” To save is the work of the Savior’s Atonement.⁴³ Paul quotes a portion of Joe 2:32, which reads, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” Joel speaks of the last days when the gifts of the Spirit will be poured out on believers. There will be mutual communication between the Lord and those who find deliverance on the temple mount in the holy city.

Paul’s use of Joel evokes its temple context as a place of deliverance. Paul knew of the Jewish temple rituals. He had seen animal sacrifices, priestly washings, and clothings (Act 21:26). He also had his temple blessings.⁴⁴ Paul’s audience may have even understood this temple context, but without that background we lose the significance of where and how lasting deliverance and vicarious salvation come.

The necessity for preachers called by God—Rom 10:14–21

Rom 10:14. “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” Paul uses a step-by-step style of logic to describe that the need to seek or call on God must be preceded by belief and authority from God to preach (the Greek word for “apostle,” *apostellósin*, means “one sent [from God], messenger, commissioned”). Paul does not just ask for a preacher; he asks either for Apostles or for those who have been called of God to preach. We see this today with our full-time missionaries, teachers, and everyone whom God calls to share the gospel and do His work.

Paul culminates his list with the wonderful prophecy from Isa 52:7: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.” But then, he contrasts this hopeful message with the sad observation, “Who hath believed our report?” (Isa 53:1).

Rom 10:17. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Like Paul in this verse, Joseph Smith also taught, “Faith comes by hearing the word of God through the testimony of the servants of God, that testimony is always attended by that Spirit of prophecy and revelation.”⁴⁵

Rom 10:18–21 (NIV). “Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First, Moses says . . .” Paul repeats his questions from verses 18–21 and answers by citing Ps 19:4, Deu 32:12, and Isa 65:1–2. Paul shows that even though the Gentiles were not a single nation forged by God as Israel was, they still understand that the heavens testify of God’s glory.

Romans 11—Israel’s Remnant Chosen by Covenant

Paul continues to answer the question, “Who is Israel?” He answers with examples of Israelites by lineage, land, and covenant. He warns the gentile converts that the Jews are still beloved of God. To illustrate the need for the two groups to work together, he gives an allegory of an olive tree with branches grafted in. Nearly one-third of the text (28 percent) comes from Old Testament citations.

God will not reject His people; They stumble but are not fallen—Rom 11:1–6

Rom 11:1 (NIV). “*Did God reject his people? By no means!*” Paul spends the chapter elaborating on the answer to how the Jews can they be saved if they rejected Jesus. This question opens the discussion of the mystery of God’s love (verse 25).

Rom 11:2 (NASB). “*do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah . . . ?*” As usual, Paul finds his answers in the Old Testament prophets. The first example he offers is the case of Elijah, who complained that all of Israel had denounced God, but the Lord knew of seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal, the foreign god (1 Kng 19:10, 14, 18). His subtheme is that a remnant will be saved.

Rom 11:5 (NASB). “*a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.*” One of the most consistent parallels between Jac 4 and Rom 11 is the idea that a remnant was chosen and saved by grace.⁴⁶ Paul uses the word *election* to refer to God’s conditional selection. The word appears seven times in the KJV New Testament, with four of those (over 50 percent) in Romans. It does not denote a dictator’s nomination.

Rom 11:6. “*if by grace, then is it no more of works.*” Paul makes it clear that Jesus is the Savior. Yet, at the same time, he repeats that righteousness is needed for full salvation (see Rom 11:22). He balances that by emphasizing here that grace and salvation come from God—not the righteousness of those saved. Grace is shown clearly in God’s ability to turn the fall of Israel into the salvation and grafting, or adoption, into the house of Israel of the Gentiles. Trouble comes when this verse is taken out of Paul’s context and made into a question of how God can still keep His covenant with the Jews. Neither Paul nor the Lord ever denounced the need for obedience (Paul even lists the Ten Commandments in Rom 13). Paul wants to teach Christ’s miraculous gift of redemption and grace outside of the law of Moses, even for the Jews who rejected the Lord (see Jam 2:17–18).

The irony of Israel’s temporary stumbling—Rom 11:7–15

Rom 11:7 (NIV). “*What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened.*” The NIV translation also was done from the perspective of the Reformed doctrine of the elect. The Restoration taught a new definition of election. All may choose to be chosen (D&C 121:34–35). Yet, even though Israel generally did not accept their promised Messiah, He can still save them!

Table 2. Comparison of Jac 4 and Rom 11

Jac 4	Rom 11
“Because they desired it . . . God hath done it, that they may stumble” (4:14)	“Have they stumbled that they should fall?” (11:11)
“Killed the prophets” (4:14)	“They have killed the prophets, and digged down thine altars” (11:3)
“Their blindness . . . came by looking beyond the mark, [and because of it] they must needs fall” (4:14)	“The rest were blinded . . . given . . . eyes that they should not see. . . . Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see” (11:7–8, 10, 11)

Rom 11:8. “as it is written.” Paul corrects a potentially dangerous attitude of superiority among the Roman Saints by quoting Deu 29:4, Isa 29:10, and Ps 69:22, in which Israel is described as “in stupor or sluggish.” Similarly, Jac 4 speaks of Israel’s stumbling and the reasons for it. It is fascinating to study these two accounts and compare their shared key words.

We find these themes throughout the Old Testament, though nowhere but in these two texts—Jacob and Romans—do we find them all mentioned together. Furthermore, both accounts are followed by the allegory of the olive tree.

Rom 11:11. “Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.” God used the Fall to open another doorway. His foreknowledge allowed Him to plan this in a way that would motivate the Jews to look to their Savior.

Rom 11:13–14 (NIV). “I am the apostle to the Gentiles . . . in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people.” The Lord often teaches us through irony, which even Jesus Himself faced repeatedly during His mortal mission. God also molds us so that we are capable of doing exactly what we previously detested. We see this here in Paul, who left his strict Pharisaic life to welcome Gentiles into the fold.

Allegory of the olive tree—Rom 11:11–24

Rom 11:16. “if the root be holy, so are the branches.” Paul leads into his allegory of the wild olive tree by establishing that the health of the branches comes from the root. It is theoretically possible that Paul had access to Zenos’s record or perhaps, more probably, that a third text quoted (or even preceded) Zenos. Several differences can be found between the allegories in Jac 5 and in this chapter. For example,

- Jacob has at least five trees, Paul has one;
- Jacob emphasizes the fruit, Paul emphasizes the branches; and
- Jacob’s account includes a Lord of the vineyard, Paul’s does not.

These differences suggest that Paul did not quote Zenos's allegory as Jacob did. Yet, the similarities are consistent enough between Jac 5 and Rom 11 that we assume that Paul probably referenced a similar secondary source. (The Old Testament has symbolic interpretation of olive trees in Jdg 9:8–9; Hos 14:16; Ps 52:8, 80; Isa 17:6; 24:13; and Jer 11:16, for example.)

For Paul, the olive tree is Israel, and grafted branches represent different groups of Gentiles. The branches grafted into the tree become holy because of the strength of the root. Paul may use the root to symbolize the covenant made with the fathers or perhaps Jehovah Himself—he does not say.

Rom 11:17. “some of the branches be broken off . . . a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them.” The Lord of the vineyard works to save the trees by changing what they presently are to something better. Ironically, the wild Gentile branches will save Israel. The olive tree is their promise and warning.

Rom 11:18–19 (JST). “Boast not against the branches. . . . The branches were broken off, that **I we might be grafted in.”** Paul repeated his warning to the Gentiles to not think themselves superior to the unbelieving Jews, even though they accepted the message of Christianity.

Rom 11:20–21 (NIV). “they were broken off because of unbelief . . . if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.” Paul warns the Gentiles against haughtiness (KJV), or pride, conceit, and arrogance (RSV, NASB, NIV). The Gentiles, as “adopted children of the covenant should maintain their gratitude to Israel for opening the door of salvation.”⁴⁷ Paul is especially grateful to the Jews for their work in preserving the oracles of God (Rom 3:1–2).

Rom 11:23. “God is able to graft them in again.” Grafting becomes an agricultural image for adoption. Figuratively speaking, the Gentiles became part of Israel (for example, Ruth, the woman from Moab, became the grandmother to King David). Christians believe that baptism is an adoption into Israel through covenant making. Paul and Jacob taught that the new branches do not change the nature and destiny of Israel. Rather, Israel is still the chosen family and guardian of the Abrahamic covenant. Ironically, by grafting in the wild gentile coverts, the branches of Israel became rejuvenated.⁴⁸ As James Faulconer said, “the olive tree shows, Israel can trust the Lord because only He has power to save his people, in spite of what might appear to us to be impossible odds. Our choice is to despair or to trust the Lord.”⁴⁹

The final reconciliation—Rom 11:25–36

Rom 11:25. “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” The “fulness of the Gentiles” refers to that time and beyond when the Gentiles would have the opportunity to accept the gospel. The Jews had that blessing before the meridian of time, and the Gentiles have first priority now. But later, the Jews will have another chance. That is the mystery of how God's love and gift of salvation is extended even to the Gentiles.

Rom 11:26–27 (ESV). Paul quotes two sections of Isaiah, 59:20, 21 and 27:9, which are both filled with hope of the Lord's cleansing.

The Deliverer will come from Zion,
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob;
and this will be my covenant with them
when I take away their sins. (Rom 11:26–27 ESV)

Rom 11:29 (NIV). *“for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.”* The KJV’s “without repentance” is actually just a negative participle meaning that God will honor His side of the covenants made with Him.

Rom 11:30–32 (RSV). *“For God has consigned all men to disobedience.”* These three verses communicate different messages depending on the translators’ understanding of God’s purpose. Some translations seem to imply that God intentionally made humanity disobedient so that He could show more mercy: “For God has imprisoned all in disobedience, so that He may have mercy on all” (Rom 11:32 HCSB). That would not fit the God we worship, nor the loving God that Paul just described (Rom 8:37–38; see Mose 1:39). It is true that we become spiritually imprisoned by our sins, as the NEB describes: “In making all mankind prisoners to disobedience” (Rom 11:32 NEB). However, God did not make us wicked. It is our rejection of God that causes our imprisonment, not God’s rejection of us.

The Book of Mormon again provides a clearer understanding God’s role in disobedience and mercy.

- “And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free” (2 Ne 2:4; see verses 5–9)
- “The fall came by reason of transgression” (2 Ne 9:6)
- “The atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world, that thereby salvation might come to him that should put his trust in the Lord” (Mosi 4:6; see verses 7–11)
- “This fallen state . . . man had brought upon himself because of his own disobedience” (Alm 42:12)

Rom 11:33–36 (NIV). This is a beautiful poetic conclusion filled with Old Testament scriptures. The NIV translation reads like a chiasm (which Paul uses in other epistles too):

- A Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
- B How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!
- C “Who has known the mind of the Lord?” [Lev 24:12].
- D “Or who has been his counselor?” [Isa 40:13].
- C’ “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?”
- B’ For from him and through him and for him are all things [Job 41:11].
- A’ To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Romans 12—Our Conduct to God as Living Sacrifices

Paul's "greatest epistle on grace is also the greatest epistle on keeping God's commandments." This is one of the ten chapters that deals with "the relationship of the Jewish law to the Christian gospel."⁵⁰ More than any other Pauline letter, Romans includes rules for righteousness. Within chapters 12–15, Paul lists over fifty Christian commandments.

Rom 12:1 (NIV). *"brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy . . . offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."*

Paul pled with his audience to become clean for the Lord's work. This can only be done through Christ's Atonement. Once cleansed, disciples can better serve God. Paul's idea of offering or presenting a sacrifice to God evokes the Old Testament temple rites. Christians usually think of our Savior as the unblemished lamb brought to the slaughter, but Paul encouraged the Saints to offer their lives—time, gifts, desires, generosity, thoughts—as a perfect, unblemished sacrifice to the Lord. Paul bridges grace and keeping our covenants, from "We establish the law" in Rom 3:31 to "Which is your reasonable service" in Rom 12:1.

Rom 12:2 (BSB). *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* How do we renew our minds? The Spirit has power to transform repentant natural men and women into holy priests and priestesses to the Most High God.

Christian conduct toward others—Rom 12:3–20

Rom 12:3 (BSB). *"Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought."* Paul called for humility in Christian thought and conduct. He reminds his audience to respect one another and to not look down on others (unlike the Jewish and Greco-Roman societies, which enforced segregated class systems).

Rom 12:5 (BSB). *"so in Christ we who are many are one body, and each member belongs to one another."* God loves variety in people and in His creations—all are different, and all are important. The diverse gifts still conform to God's commands to become "one body in Christ." In 1 Cor 12:21, Paul also wrote about each person's responsibility to serve in order to build the kingdom in "the body of Christ."

Rom 12:6–7 (CSB). *"we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith, if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching."* This is a shorter list of the gifts of the Spirit than the one that Paul is known for in 1 Cor 12 (compare D&C 46 and Moro 10:8–19). These God-given gifts are not for personal aggrandizement but are given for serving others and honoring God (D&C 46:12). Paul encouraged the members to seek the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor 14:12 (see D&C 46:8: "That ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given").

Rom 12:8. *"he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence."* Paul asks the Saints to give of their means. The KJV's "simplicity" is elsewhere translated as "generously" (NIV) and "liberality" (RSV).

Rom 12:9. “Let love be without dissimulation.” The list of the gifts of the Spirit concludes with the most important—love. Paul used the form of divine love, *agape*, often translated as “charity.” We need sincere, genuine love, “without hypocrisy” (RSV). Paul repeated these teachings from other epistles.

Rom 12:14. “Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.” Paul next recounted Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:44; compare Rom 12:21).

Rom 12:15. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Paul now paraphrased from Jesus’s parable of the lost sheep (Lk 15:6). Also see Mosi 18:8–9 and D&C 42:25, in which the same theme was revealed in this dispensation.

Rom 12:16 (NIV). “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” Paul encouraged the Saints to associate with those different than themselves and to be humble.

Rom 12:18 (NIV). “as far as it depends on you.” The JB renders this, “Do all you can.” This hints at the law of consecration.

Rom 12:20. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” As always, we are admonished to feed the poor, even if they are our enemy.

Rom 12:21. “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” How do we follow this counsel? By returning kindness for anger, love for hate, honesty for deceit, generosity for greed, forgiveness for resentment, selflessness for egotism, faith for despair. (The Lord’s balance of law and punishment is beautifully described in 2 Ne 9:25–26.)

Romans 13—More Christian Commandments

In Romans 13–14, Paul deals with the specific problem of unifying the Jewish and gentile Christians. Their efforts to integrate were exacerbated by the Roman persecution that removed all the Jews from Rome for several years. When the Jews returned to Rome, a rift developed between the two groups. This brief Jewish persecution negatively affected the early Saints in Rome.

Respect for authority—Rom 13:1–7

Rom 13:1 (JST). “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power in the church but of God.” The first commandment of this chapter in another translation reads, “You must all obey the governing authorities” (JB). The Prophet Joseph changed this from a discussion of the state to a discussion of the Church.⁵¹ For Joseph, this is all about following the Lord and His leadership. Commentaries without the JST wonder whether some political unrest spurred on this counsel. The community of Saints in Rome would have been especially conscious of imperial authority.⁵²

Without the JST, Paul seems to be supporting the Roman propaganda that Caesar or political figures were divinely appointed. As the Greek reads now, Paul too felt that all power was given by God. It does

not seem possible for an Apostle to share this perspective. Paul saw unrighteous government leaders firsthand through the martyrdom of James and the imprisonment of Peter to his own repeated abuses of power.⁵³ Additionally, the KJV's translators may have believed that all power was divinely bestowed.

The counsel to be subject to our leaders is still in place. In 1842, despite the lack of protection the US government had given Joseph Smith and the Church members as they were being chased out of three states, Joseph penned: "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law" (Articles of Faith 1:12). The point the text tries to make is that we must be good, law-abiding citizens.

Rom 13:2 (JST). "*Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves **damnation punishment**.*" This JST change is in keeping with the teachings of the Restoration that punishment is temporary but damnation is permanent. The discussion on resisting the ordinances (*diatagé*, also translated "institution") seems consistent with the JST change to make this a discussion about the Church, not the state. Also in keeping with a Church perspective, Paul references only the citizens' responsibilities.⁵⁴

Rom 13:3 (NIV). "*Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.*" This verse includes the second commandment of this chapter: do what is right. It can be read from either the previous JST perspective—of God's authority—or from the perspective of the political authorities' power. In the new Christian Church that had already faced persecution in the Roman Empire, it was important for Paul to teach about being good citizens. The JB reads, "Good behavior is not afraid of magistrates; only criminals have anything to fear." This seemingly implies that Paul had great faith in his government—but while obeying the laws, he was tortured.

Rom 13:4 (BSB). "*he is God's servant . . . an agent of retribution to the wrongdoer.*" Religious leadership is often referred to as being in servitude to God. On the other hand, local and national leaders could enforce the law with the sword (a symbol of penal authority legitimately possessed to coerce recalcitrant citizens to maintain order for the common good).

Rom 13:5 (BSB). "*submit to authority, not only to avoid punishment, but also as a matter of conscience.*" As Christians, we hope to do well not because we are motivated by fear of punishment but for the sake of goodness. In AD 58, shortly before this epistle was written, Caesar Nero passed a decree to regulate tax collection. Tacitus recorded that the people in Rome complained about publicans collecting indirect and unfair taxes, so Nero ordered that all taxes be publicly posted and enforced.⁵⁵

Rom 13:6 (JST). "*pay ye **tribute your consecrations also unto them: for they are God's ministers**.*" This third commandment is to pay tribute. (It is also the third time Paul mentions the delegated nature of authority; see verses 1, 4, and 6.) In the KJV, Paul emphasizes civil duty as part of good citizenship in God's kingdom as well as in the Roman Empire. Christians' heavenly citizenship does not exempt them from their civic duties.

Rom 13:7. “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.” Remember that *phobon*, translated here as “fear,” also can mean “reverence” or “respect” (AET, RSV). Jesus likewise emphasized the importance of paying tribute to Caesar (Mt 22:17–21).

Love fulfills the law—Rom 13:8–10

Rom 13:8. “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.” Paul counsels Christians to not go into debt or to “leave no debt outstanding” (RSV). The one exception is the debt of love (see Rom 13:10). The obligation of charity sums up the whole Mosaic law and all the obligations of Christian life as well. Paul speaks of love as something we owe our neighbor and God.

Rom 13:9 (BLB). “For, ‘You shall not commit adultery’ . . . ‘murder’ . . . ‘steal’ . . . ‘covet.’” Paul expounds on exactly which laws he meant by quoting the last five of the Ten Commandments (each of which deals with loving one’s neighbor). Nearly all the Old Testament commandments are summed up in the Golden Rule. (Jesus used almost the same words in Mt 19:18; Mk 12:28–34; Deu 6:4–5; Lev 19:18). The Ten Commandments became part of the Christian laws of the gospel. Of the fifty commandments that Paul lists in these two chapters, over a quarter deal with loving one’s neighbor. Paul probably knew of Jesus’s new commandment introduced at the Last Supper to love as He does (Jn 13:34). Another quarter of the commandments in these two chapters deals with loving God.

Rom 13:10 (NJB). “Love can cause no harm to your neighbour, and so love is the fulfilment of the Law.” The message of love became one of the most oft repeated of Paul’s themes. John the Beloved taught this same message.⁵⁶

Be awake spiritually—Rom 13:11–14

Rom 13:11. “it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Paul refers to ending our spiritual complacency as waking from our slumber so that we might better prepare to meet the Savior. This verse has an eschatological motivation. The early Saints expected the Lord’s Second Coming within a generation or two.⁵⁷

Rom 13:12. “the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” Paul repeats the imagery of day and night. The night represents evil and spiritual darkness, which the Holy Spirit can dispel (compare Eph 5:8). The day represents the present time to work (1 Ths 5:8; Heb 10:25). Paul’s dressing with light, or “putting on the armor of light,” is figurative. The Holy Spirit’s guidance and protection are real and can become armor against the adversary. If we do nothing to offend the Spirit, it can even become more powerful than metal armor. Disciples put on this armor of light each day as they pray, study the scriptures, and repent. There are many other ways to don the armor, including church and temple worship and service and missionary work. Earlier, in 1 Ths 5:8, Paul described the armor of God as faith, charity, and hope. Earlier still, Jesus also taught

us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation” (Mt 6:13). The Spirit’s armor disappears when we succumb to temptation or lose our focus on doing God’s will. (Paul discusses this more in Eph 4 and 6.)

Rom 13:13 (NIV). “*Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, . . . immorality and debauchery, . . . dissension and jealousy.*” In this verse, Paul references seven more commandments from in the Old Testament to help disciples become better citizens of God’s kingdom.⁵⁸

Rom 13:14 (NIV). “*Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.*” The twentieth command, to “clothe ourselves with the Lord,” is another of Paul’s themes and is repeated in Gal 3:27 and 5:16. Clothing ourselves with the Lord can include asking Him to help us live as we should. Paul’s twenty-first commandment in this chapter—to avoid lusts of the flesh—is also repeated in Gal 5:17 and in many other letters. The word *enduo*, or “clothe,” shares the same Greek roots for “endow.” As we put on the Lord’s clothing of light or “robes of righteousness,” we are empowered with Jesus’s Atonement (D&C 29:12; 109:76).

Romans 14—Striving for Unity in the Church

Paul turns from his general message of love to address specific issues that challenged the Roman Saints, offering thirty more commandments in the process. Most of their local challenges were related to the Jewish purification rites, holy days, and dietary codes. The epistle is filled with evidence that some of the Jewish Christians (known as Judaizers) clung to their Judaic oral laws even after converting to Christianity. The Judaizers tried to enforce the oral laws or Jewish traditions for all Christian converts. After Paul’s first apostolic mission, the Jerusalem Council attempted to settle that issue once and for all. Peter and James the Evangelist set the parameters for the entire Church.⁵⁹ Earlier in this epistle when Paul challenged the Judaizers he used Old Testament scripture, but here he paraphrases Jesus’s words to hopefully end the clash of opinions.

No contention—Rom 14:1–12

Rom 14:1 (NIV). “*Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters.*” The schism between the weak and strong Saints in Rome may have started with the expulsion of the Jews from Rome (AD 49). The early-second-century historian Suetonius looked back on the reign of Claudius Caesar (AD 41–54) and recorded, “As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.”⁶⁰ If only the Jews were driven out of Rome, the Christian Church would have developed with only Gentile converts. After Claudius’s death, when the Jewish Christians were allowed to return to Rome, they were probably startled to find their fellow Church members not living any of the Mosaic laws. It is to this divided group that Paul reiterates the importance of no contention, patience, moderation, and compassion.

Rom 14:2. *“one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.”* Even though there was not a Jewish prohibition against all meat, some individuals (like Daniel) abstained. Many Jews from a gentile community avoided meat because the meat sold in markets had been previously sacrificed to idols. Avoiding meat offered to idols was one of the four rules that the Jerusalem Council passed onto Christians (Act 15:20). Many other groups also avoided meat—including Orphics, Dionysiac mystics, and Pythagoreans. Some Christian converts may have come from those groups and continued to avoid meat.

Rom 14:3–4. *“Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not. . . . Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?”* Paul begins with a commanding voice (which he uses dozens of times in these last four chapters). Paul cares more about the inappropriate judging and lack of fellowship than dietary rules. In the New Testament, servants often symbolized Christ’s disciples. Paul’s message is that we should not judge God’s servants; they are trying to follow Him.

Rom 14:5 (NIV). *“One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike.”* The Jewish holy days, including the Sabbath, had many traditions and rules. It seems that some Christians still observed them meticulously, while others did not. Paul himself continued to celebrate some of them (for example, being at the temple for Passover or Pentecost [Act 18:21; 20:16]), and yet he encouraged the Saints to let everyone decide for themselves. This is really the promise of discipleship—everyone needs to “be fully persuaded in [their] own mind” (Rom 14:5). Trying to persuade anyone against their will “only requires more arduous backpacking and backtracking!”⁶¹

Rom 14:6 (NIV). *“Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God.”* I love the idea that every day belongs to the Lord. We can honor God at every meal by giving Him thanks for it and dedicating our strength to His work.

Rom 14:7–9 (BSB). *“For none of us lives to himself alone, and none of us dies to himself alone. . . . For this reason Christ died and returned to life.”* We do not choose when we live or die—that is God’s choice. We also do not live alone but have a community to influence, bless, and serve. We cannot selfishly go about each day because we owe a debt to our Redeemer for our breath. The most important person in our life is Christ, who lived and died so that we could live more fully.

Rom 14:10. *“why dost thou judge thy brother? . . . for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”* Paul challenges the Saints to greater heights by putting the matter of judgment into the hands of the Lord. He confronts his readers with the same questions that Jesus did, recalling the statement that “with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged” (Mt 7:2). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus followed the command to judge not with a cross-examination of why we see only the faults of others: “And why do you look at the splinter in your brother’s eye, but not notice the beam in your own eye?” (Mt 7:3–5 BLB). Paul’s parallels conform in both words and content to two sections of Jesus’s Sermon on the

Mount. This example and previous extensive use of the Sermon on the Mount suggest that the sermon was available in some form even before Matthew wrote his Gospel.

Rom 14:11 (JST). “**For I live, saith the Lord, as it is written ~~As I live, saith the Lord,~~ And every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess swear to God.**” This great day may be at the Second Coming. Paul adds another Old Testament quote from Isa 45:23 (which he repeats in Phm 2:10). Similar promises are found in modern revelation (see D&C 76:110; 88:104). Even inhabitants of the telestial kingdom will have to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. Elder Neal A. Maxwell repeatedly elaborated on this verse:

Submitting, but only episodically, is a telltale sign. Such reluctance is evidence of weak faith. So is putting off obedience. Sufficient submissiveness to kneel now means we will not be strangers to that posture later when “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ.” . . . It will take no faith to renounce worldly things when these are among the ashes of a melted planet.⁶²

Rom 14:12. “**then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.**” According to Paul, the Judgment will include God asking for a stewardship accounting from each person.

Christ’s rules—Rom 14:13–21

Rom 14:13 (CSB). “**let us no longer judge one another.**” There is space for judging between good and evil but not for judging unrighteously. We find the tool to accomplish this in the Book of Mormon: “The light by which ye may judge . . . is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged. . . . [Search] diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing . . . ye certainly will be a child of Christ” (Moro 7:18–19). The antithesis of righteous judgment is pride, the root of all evil.

Rom 14:13 (CSB). “**Instead decide never to put a stumbling block or pitfall in the way of your brother or sister.**” Intentionally wanting someone to fall or trying to step on another to raise oneself up comes from pride.⁶³ Among charity’s attributes is building others up (1 Cor 13:5). Rather than judging one another unkindly, we can learn through the Spirit how to love. In line with this message, Elder Ulysses Soares encouraged, “Latter-day Saints should consider ways to be uplifting, supporting, understanding and forgiving, as well as look for the good in others.”⁶⁴

Rom 14:14. “**by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself.**” To Paul’s Jewish audience this carried connotations of cleanliness versus uncleanness in food and washing. To Christians, though, the Lord’s cleansing left nothing unclean. The Greek word here for “unclean,” *koinos*, means “common.” It also seems that Paul was familiar with Jesus’s judgments on ritual purity that are recorded in Mk 7:15: “There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him.” The parallel between the texts in Paul and Mark is even closer in Greek. The word translated “defile” in Mark also means “to make unclean or common.” Paul’s ideas probably came from reflecting on Jesus’s statement—objects

do not cause impurity by themselves. Again, Paul quotes Jesus to sensitively address the subject rather than come at it with only his perspective.

Rom 14:15 (NIV). *“If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love.”* Paul asks the Saints to put matters of these things into the perspective of redemption. If your behavior offends a fellow Saint, especially a “weak member,” stop it. Allowing people to fall away over little matters is wrong. There should be no vaunting by the strong.⁶⁵

Rom 14:17 (BSB). *“the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* This addresses the early Church’s problem of unity. At times when differences or faults become annoying, it helps to keep an eternal perspective and emphasize what truly matters. “The essence of the kingdom does not consist in freedom from such things as dietary regulations, but in the freedom of the Christian to react to the promptings of the indwelling Spirit.”⁶⁶

Rom 14:20 (BSB). *“Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.”* As a conclusion, Paul repeats the message he gave in verse 13—to not offend fellow disciples over little issues. Christianity was becoming an international church, and the Jewish Saints struggled to learn how to take a broader view.

Rom 14:22 (HCSB). *“Do you have a conviction? Keep it.”* The Anchor Bible referred to the issues of Jewish dietary and holiday practices as convictions. Separating out what really matters, those things with eternal implications, from social practices is a good exercise in our day, too.

Rom 14:23 (NIV). *“But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.”* Paul teaches that doubt can be spiritual poison. He also teaches that whatever we do without faith—or that is not motivated by our dedication to Jesus Christ—is spiritually inert and ultimately a sin. On the other hand, our actions and thoughts that are motivated by the Spirit will empower us. The same is true of the fruits of the Spirit; they lift and enlighten.

Romans 15

Follow Christ’s example—Rom 15:1–7

Rom 15:1. *“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”* After directing the stronger Saints to help the weaker ones, Paul reemphasized the underlying Christian doctrine of selflessness. Christians are to serve and bless others, not act according to their selfish desires. Disciples of Christ must consecrate their time and energies to bringing others to Christ. Selflessness includes giving more than receiving, being less self-conscious and more compassionate, caring less for the self and more for others, being less defensive and more loving, and being less vain and more humble.

Rom 15:2. *“Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.”* Paul moved from dietary laws to Christ’s laws. He urged believers to help one another as Christ did. Remember, the italicized words in KJV are not original to the Greek but were added by the translators for the flow in

English. If we take out both instances of “his,” the second phrase points to Christ. The ASV reads, “Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying.” The word *please* also means “accommodate,” so we can interpret this verse as teaching the need for edifying converts.

Rom 15:3. “For even Christ pleased not himself.” One key to following Christ is selfless service. As selfishness and pride are the root of sin, disciples become more Christlike when they become more selfless. Paul quotes Ps 69:9 to contrast Christlike selflessness with self-centeredness: “For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.”

Rom 15:4. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.” Paul speaks of his beloved scriptures, which included the books in our Old Testament and more. Paul explains the purpose of scripture is for our patient learning so that we can receive comfort and hope (2 Tim 3:15–17).

Rom 15:6. “glorify God, even the Father of our Lord.” This verse defines Paul’s understanding of God, “The Father of our Lord.” Even though the Trinity and the modern historical Jesus movement question the literal definition of Jesus as the Son of God, Paul believed it.

Rom 15:7 (NLT). “accept each other just as Christ has accepted you.” Jesus was the supreme example of becoming one with His Father, and we are to follow His submissive example of unity.

Neighborly conduct and ministering to the Gentiles—Rom 15:8–13

Rom 15:8. “minister of the circumcision.” This refers to Israelites. Paul transitions from talking to the Jewish Christians to speaking to the gentile Christians. As prophesied, Jesus taught the Jews, but that group as a whole (who was first to hear the gospel) will be the last to accept it.

Rom 15:9 (NIV). “As it is written.” Paul demonstrates that prophecies foretold the Gentiles receiving the gospel covenant, quoting five Old Testament passages. This Davidic verse comes from 2 Sam 22:50 and Ps 18:49.

Rom 15:10 (NIV). “Again, it says.” Paul quotes Deut 32:42.

Rom 15:11 (NIV). “And again, ‘Praise the Lord.’” Paul quotes Ps 117:1.

Rom 15:12 (NIV). “And again, Isaiah says, ‘The Root of Jesse.’” Paul quotes Isa 11:10 but mistakenly identifies the root as Christ. Latter-day Saint scholar Sidney B. Sperry explained a possible reason:

Examination of Rom 15:12 demonstrates that Paul was closely following the Septuagint (LXX, Greek translation) text of Isa 11:10 rather than the Hebrew. As a matter of fact, the LXX version is only a paraphrase of the original Hebrew. We notice that the Greek version of Isa 11:1 translates the Hebrew text, “stem of Jesse,” as the “root of Jesse” and uses the same phrase in Isa 11:10. Of interest is the fact that the Greek word *riza* (root) is used in both verses to translate different Hebrew words. Paul would be quick to discern that the “root of Jesse” of the LXX text of Isa 11:1–5 was the Christ. And when he observed that the phrase “root of Jesse” was used again in verse 10, he would naturally assume that it, too, had reference to the Christ. Hence the reason for his quotation in Rom 15:12.⁶⁷

Rom 15:13 (NLT). *“I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely.”* Exquisite hope comes from the beautiful feeling of the Holy Ghost. If our testimonies are not growing, we may feel less joy and peace and need to get back on our knees, humbling our hearts to consecrate our will to God. We mortals undulate through our spiritual understanding. As covenant servants of God, however, we have a responsibility to return to His work and bless others through the Spirit’s sanctification.

Paul’s reason for writing the Roman Saints—Rom 15:14–22

Rom 15:14–15. *“ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another . . . I have written the more boldly.”* Paul shares his purpose in writing: to boldly admonish the Saints to preach to the Gentiles.

Rom 15:16. *“That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.”* Paul uses his title as the Apostle or minister to the Gentiles. God prepared a way for Gentiles to become a covenant people through sanctification by the Holy Ghost, which accomplishes spiritual adoption.

Rom 15:17. *“therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ.”* Paul glories in Christ’s work, which he feels privileged to share. He speaks of those things he personally experienced—God blessed his ministry with signs and miracles to bring souls to Christ. He wants to give the glory to God in his epistle.

Rom 15:19. *“from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”* The geographical boundaries of Paul’s missionary work thus far reach from Jerusalem to the western coast of Greece (currently Albania and Macedonia).

Rom 15:20 (NIV). *“It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known.”* Paul liked opening new mission fields rather than working in those already established. However, the early Christian historian Eusebius (AD 263–339) tells us that “Peter arrived in Rome on the heels of Simon Magnus to preach the gospel there in the second year of Claudius (A.D. 42).” Another source from AD 354 documented Peter as the founder of the Christian Church in Rome.⁶⁸ Paul wrote this letter over a decade later (probably near 57 or 58).

Rom 15:21. *“But as it is written.”* Paul cites a different version of Isa 52:15, or he paraphrases it.

Rom 15:22 (NIV). *“often been hindered.”* By the time Paul wrote this letter, he had tried to visit Rome once but was hindered.

Paul’s future plans—Rom 15:23–31

Rom 15:23 (NIV). *“many years.”* Paul speaks as if Christianity had been in Rome for several years.

Rom 15:24 (JST). *“Whensoever When I take my journey to Spain . . . filled with your company through your prayers.”* We do not know for sure whether Paul made it to Spain. Clement of Rome wrote in AD 96 that Paul reached the boundaries or “limits of the west,” which sounds more like Spain than Rome. Paul’s letters speak of different imprisonments in Rome (see Phm and 2 Tim). Perhaps he traveled to Spain in between his first and second Roman imprisonments.

Rom 15:25. “now I go unto Jerusalem.” The autobiographical sections explain that Paul wrote the Roman Saints while wintering in Greece (probably in Corinth, where he had spent eighteen months on his previous mission). He told them that he hoped to visit after carrying the tithes and offerings to Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1–8), on his way to Spain.

Rom 15:27 (NIV). “the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings . . . share with them their material blessings.” Paul asks the Gentiles, who are “debtors” spiritually, to give their money freely to the Church. “Carnal things” here refers to money or material blessings.

Rom 15:28. “sealed to them this fruit.” Monetary contributions are gifts of love that grow. The most important fruits are sincere hearts. Paul received spiritual witnesses in Ephesus that he would testify in Rome. He planned on heading there after his trip to Jerusalem (Act 19:21). He doesn’t know as he writes that he will travel to Rome as a prisoner to testify of Christ to Caesar.

Rom 15:30 (NIV). “join me in my struggle by praying.” Paul asks the Saints for their prayers in his behalf. Paul sounds leery of the brooding trouble in Jerusalem and is all the more looking forward to Rome.

Romans 16

Commendation and greetings—Rom 16:1–25

Rom 16:1. “I commend unto you Phebe our sister.” Paul lists twenty-four Saints in Rome by name and twenty-six other individuals—including many women. Ten of the names are Latin, eighteen Greek, and two Hebrew. The first is Phebe, who was from Cenchrea, Corinth’s south port (other cities with the same name existed elsewhere, but most scholars place Phebe there). She carried Paul’s letter and seems to have helped him and others in the Church.

Rom 16:3. “Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus.” This couple, fellow tentmakers, first met Paul in Corinth after being driven from Rome with Claudius’s expulsion of the Jews. Now we learn they returned to Rome after the order was lifted.⁶⁹ Paul describes them as willing to sacrifice their own lives for his. They must have made many dear friends in the other “churches of the Gentiles.”

Rom 16:5. “Likewise greet the church that is in their house.” Church congregations often met in homes (just like the Saints did in the first decades of the Restoration). Buildings not only were an extravagance financially but were also unwise without state recognition (see verses 10 and 11).

Rom 16:7. “Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners.” “Kinsmen” probably refers to Israelites. Were these people also in prison with Paul previously? Additionally, this verse suggests they were Apostles. There were other Apostles that we don’t know about, but were these two just people sent, or members of the Quorum of the Twelve?

Rom 16:10. “household.” The word “household” is added here in English to make sense of the sentence and is not original to the Greek. The JST changes it to “church.”

Rom 16:16 (JST). “*Salute one another with an holy **kiss salutation**.*” The JST changes “kiss” to “salutation.” (The same change is made every time “holy kiss” is mentioned in 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Ths 5:26). I wonder if the French tradition of greeting friends with a *bisous* came from these scriptures.

Rom 16:17 (NIV). “*I urge you . . . to watch out for those who cause divisions.*” Perhaps a personal greeting sparked Paul’s memory of disunity. He counsels his readers to avoid those who cause offence, foster dissensions, and teach false doctrine. We are far more tolerant in this generation, but his advice is still good. We can continue to nurture and love people like this without following them.

Rom 16:18. “*For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Serving Christ requires living the laws of the gospel. *Belly* is the word used to refer to the seat of the carnal affections, as we use *heart* today.⁷⁰ The “belly of hell” signifies the grave or underworld (Jn 2:2). Definitely one who serves their own belly serves their own desires, not God’s. Beware of smooth talking, or “fair speeches.” The innocent can easily be led away by deceptive flatterers.

Rom 16:19 (NIV). “*be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*” Paul emphasizes the audience’s commitment in contrast to that of the dissenters. He also gives lavish praise for their obedience—the Roman Saints have become a legion in the early Church.

Rom 16:20. “*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet.*” Gen 3:15 prophesies that the Lord will crush the serpent, who personifies all evil. Paul implies that false teachers are influenced by Satan.

Rom 16:21 (NIV). “*Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.*” This letter ends with greetings from the eight male leaders traveling with Paul. Timothy and Luke are with Paul in Corinth and send their greetings to Rome. Lucius may refer to Lucius of Cyrene from Act 13:1 or possibly to Luke from Col 4:14 and 2 Tim 4:11.

Rom 16:22–23. “*I Tertius. . . Erastus.*” In 1 Cor 1:14, Gaius hosted Paul and his scribe Tertius. Erastus was the Corinth city treasurer (Act 19:22). Archeologists found the same name on a stone slab: “Erastus, in return for his position as city treasure laid this pavement at his own expense.” Could it be Paul’s friend?

Rom 16:25 (NIV). “*Now to him who is able to establish you.*” “Glory to the God of wisdom through Jesus Christ” is the theme of this hymn of praise, or doxology. Similarly, Christ’s spirit will strengthen us as well as the Roman Saints when we consecrate our lives to Him.

Notes

1 The Pauline letters have been scrutinized by textual scholars for generations. Paul’s epistles may have fallen into various categories: either he wrote the letter, he dictated the letter to a scribe to record his dictations, he delegated a trusted disciple to record his thoughts, or he assigned someone to send an epistle. The epistles that are most consistent and contain his name and style are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, and Philemon. Ephesians is within the Deutero-Pauline category, or letters probably edited or written

by another in Paul's behalf. Ephesians was the only epistle that did not fall within the literary style of Paul in a stylometry test. John L. Hilton and Bruce Schallje, unpublished stylometry studies (in author's possession)

2 Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977–1981), 8:41.

3 Robert L. Millet, ed., *Studies in Scriptures*, vol. 6 of 8, *Acts to Revelation* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 50.

4 The “depravity of man” means that because Adam and Eve fell, every human—infant and adult—is enslaved to sin. In their fallen nature they are completely unable to choose. Only God can help them. They cannot refrain from evil on their own. The Book of Mormon denounced this doctrine in Mosi 3:16–18 and Moro 8:8–14.

5 This will be demonstrated in more detail in discussions on 1 Cor 11 and 14.

6 Millet, *Acts to Revelation*, 50.

7 Jeffrey R. Holland, *However Long and Hard the Road* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2002), 58.

8 See, for example, Gal 5:13; 6:8; 1 Cor 7:3–4.

9 Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ's Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA: Good Sound Publishing, 2015), chapters 1–5. We will discuss the handful of troubling verses in 1 Cor 14:34–35 and elsewhere.

10 Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” April 2019 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.

11 See Rom 8:23; Gal 5:22; Eph 5:9. These fruits are love, joy, peace, hope, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and so forth.

12 E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 269. John Wesley's teachings on adoption and how it related to the witness of the Spirit dominated Methodist thought in the nineteenth century and may be why Joseph Smith was interested in it initially. Methodists interpreted a spiritual adoption as an immediate and inward testimony of the Holy Spirit giving an assurance of forgiveness. This was the doctrine through which they interpreted the ecstatic emotional experiences of the revivals. The witness of the Spirit assured them their salvation was “immediate, palpable, and emotional.” Methodists saw a dual nature in the role of the Spirit: first, conversion, and second, sanctification. It was the Spirit that allowed them to experience perfection after their “new birth.”

13 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1954–1956), 3:245–246.

14 See Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Orem, UT: Grandin, 1991), for original text from four scribal accounts. Spelling here from *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1969), 545–546. Joseph's sermons doubled as King Follett's funeral address. This impromptu sermon combined many of Joseph's revelations and teachings from the previous decade.

15 Millet, *Acts to Revelation*, 119.

16 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), 3.21.5.

17 Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1980), 6:252–253: “The doctrine [of election] that the Presbyterians and Methodists have quarreled so much about—once in grace, always in grace, or falling away from grace, I will say a word about. They are both wrong. Truth takes a road between them both, for while the Presbyterian says ‘once in grace, you cannot fall;’ the Methodist says: ‘You can have grace today, fall from it tomorrow, next day have grace again; and so follow on, changing continually.’ But the doctrine of the Scriptures and the spirit of Elijah would show them both false, and take a road between them both; for, according to the Scripture, if men have received the good word of God, and tasted of the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again, seeing they have crucified the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame; so there is a possibility of falling away; you could not be renewed again, and the power of Elijah cannot seal against this sin, for this is a reserve made in the seals and power of the Priesthood.” For original spelling, see Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 334. See also Alm 13:13.

18 2 Ne 2:5–6; Alm 13:12; Moro 10:33.

19 *The Westminster Confession of Faith* 3.6 (finished in AD 147) reads, “As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto.” This idea is repeated in 10.1–2: “All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death. . . . This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit.”

20 “Discourse, 8 April 1843, as Reported by William Clayton—A,” p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-8-april-1843-as-reported-by-william-clayton-a/2?highlight=beasts%20in%20heaven>.

21 “History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842],” p. 1141, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/313>. The article continued: “‘Giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure’ (2 Peter 1:10); for this is that sealing power spoken of in Ephesians (1:13, 14)—‘in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth; the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, until the praise of His glory’ (2 Peter 1:11); ‘For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.’” Spelling silently modernized.

22 Millet, *Acts to Revelation*, 53.

23 Old Testament citations in Rom 1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10–18, 20; 4:3, 7–8, 17, 18, 22; 7:7; and 8:36.

24 “Discourse, 16 May 1841, as Published in Times and Seasons,” p. 430, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-16may-1841-as-published-in-times-and-seasons/2>.

25 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1993), 545.

26 D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, *New Testament Apostles Testify of Christ* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1998), 180.

27 “John Calvin’s doctrine of predestination, the unconditional election of the House of Israel to eternal life, was repulsive to Joseph Smith. Founded in the doctrine of human depravity, this notion asserted that God in his almighty wisdom had elected some men to eternal salvation and relegated others to eternal torment. Joseph Smith believed that the Saints might make their calling and election sure through the righteous use of free agency.” Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 94.

28 “Discourse, 16 May 1841, as Published in Times and Seasons,” p. 430, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-16may-1841-as-published-in-times-and-seasons/2?highlight=elect>.

29 See Ex 4:4, 17, 21; 7:3.

30 See Alm 10:19; 37:28; 45:16; Hel 13:14.

31 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 572

32 The Septuagint is the earliest Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures. It is estimated that the Torah was translated to Greek in the mid-third century BC and that the remaining texts were translated in the second century BC. It was so universal by the first century BC that very few Jews knew the Hebrew version.

33 “*Sabaóth*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/4519.htm>. All Greek and Hebrew translations in my commentaries come from this source.

34 In D&C 95:7, the Prophet Joseph’s scribes recorded the same spelling with a modified definition that fits more with the title Lord of the Sabbath. I presume that as Joseph dictated the revelation, it was either heard wrong or spelled incorrectly: “The Lord of Sabaoth . . . by interpretation, the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end” (D&C 95:7).

35 Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better.”

36 The JST reversed the order of phrases to help elucidate Paul’s meaning. “Wherefore they stumbled at that stumbling stone, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.”

37 Neal A. Maxwell, *Meek and Lowly* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 28.

38 Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2007), 173.

39 The Prophet Joseph Smith warned the newly organized Relief Society against the same tendency. In April 1842, Eliza R Snow recorded: “[He] commended them for their zeal but said sometimes their zeal was not according to knowledge.” “Discourse, 31 March 1842,” p. 22, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-31-march-1842/1>

40 2 Ne 11:4; see Mosi 3:15; 13:31; 16:4.

41 Deu 9:4; 30:11–14; Ps 71:20.

42 See, for example, Rom 6:18; 7:4, 10:16; 12:1–14:23.

43 Dallin H. Oaks, “Have You Been Saved?,” April 1998 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org. “Good Christian people sometimes attach different meanings to some key gospel terms like saved or salvation. If we answer according to what our questioner probably means in asking if we have been ‘saved,’ our answer must be

‘yes.’ If we answer according to the various meanings, we attach to the terms saved or salvation, our answer will be either ‘yes’ or ‘yes, but with conditions.’ . . . Every sincere Latter-day Saint is ‘saved’ according to this meaning.”

44 The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “Paul . . . knew . . . all the ordinances, and blessings [that] were in the Church.” Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 9–10, 42, 110, 210, 327–331. We have historical, archeological, and written evidence that baptisms for the dead, washings, anointings, prayer circles, and clothing endowments were performed in the Apostolic Church. The New Testament writings of Paul and Peter include modern temple practices. This is probably why Paul chose this temple verse from Joel.

45 “Discourse, between circa 26 June and circa 2 July 1839, as Reported by Willard Richards,” p. 15, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-between-circa-26-june-and-circa-2-july-1839-as-reported-by-willard-richards/1>; capitalization silently modernized.

46 As we look at the Book of Mormon, we find many parallels between Rom 11 and Jacob 4–5. For example, “The Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets . . . blindness came from looking beyond the mark . . . how is it possible that these, after having rejected the sure foundation, can ever build up it, that it may become the head of their corner?” (Jac 4:14, 17).

47 Millet, *Acts to Revelation*, 54.

48 Wilford M. Hess et al., “Botanical Aspects of Olive Culture Relevant to Jacob 5,” in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 524.

49 James E. Faulconer, “The Olive Tree and the Work of God: Jacob 5 and Romans 11,” in *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 363.

50 Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 173, 192.

51 In the scribal notes from Joseph’s Smith’s rendition of the book of Romans, we find only three clear changes in Rom 13: additions of “in the church” in verse 1, “punishment” in verse 2, and “gratify” in verse 14. Another word, “rod,” was possibly added in verse 4. See original papers at “New Testament Revision 2 (second numbering),” p. 126 (second numbering), The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/new-testament-revision-2/192>.

52 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 35.

53 Act 12:2–3, 5; 20:23; 21:27, 30–33; 23:3.

54 William Tyndale, one of the first translators of the Bible into English, noted the lack of responsibilities listed for the leaders in Rom 13. On October 2, 1528, he published a pamphlet to address this chapter known as *Obedience of the Christian Man*. In it, he spoke of the constraints on leaders and subjects and counseled kings, the ultimate ruling authority: “If kings would be Christian in deed and not only name, then let them give themselves altogether to the wealth of their realms, following the example of Christ. Let them remember that the people are God’s, and not theirs—indeed, they are Christ’s inheritance and possession, bought with his blood. The most despised person in his realm is still the king’s brother, a fellow-member with him, and equal with him in the kingdom of God and of Christ. Let him therefore not think himself too good to render service to his people, or seek anything other in them

than a father seeks in his children, indeed, than Christ sought in us. The king, in the temporal regiment, stands in the place of God, and represents God himself, and is better than his subjects, without compare. Yet let him put that off, and become a brother, doing and leaving undone all things with regard to the commonwealth, so that all men may see that he seeks nothing but the profit of his subjects.”

55 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 35.

56 See, for example, 1 Jn 2:5; 3:16; 4:7–18.

57 See 1 Cor 7:29; 1 Pet 4:7; 1 Jn 2:18.

58 These commandments are to walk honestly (in Middle English, *honestly* meant “honorably”), to avoid rioting or revelry, to avoid drunkenness, to avoid chambering and “wantonness” (meaning sexual immorality), to have no strife or contention, and to not envy.

59 Act 15:20. The parameters set by the Jerusalem Council were to abstain from idols, fornication, things strangled, and eating blood.

60 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 37.

61 Neal A. Maxwell, *Not My Will, But Thine* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2001), 12.

62 Maxwell, *Not My Will, But Thine*, 12. Also, “We do not now know precisely how God handles things in the spirit world so that life there is an extension of walking by faith. Death does not suddenly bestow upon the disbeliever full awareness of all reality, thereby obviating the need for any faith. Instead, what follows death is a continuum of the basic structure in mortality—until the Judgment Day, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ (see Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10; D&C 76:110). Until then, we ‘walk by faith, not by sight.’” Neal A. Maxwell, *That Ye May Believe* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1992), 94.

63 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1966), 593; Morm 8:36, 38.

64 Ulises Soares, “Followers of the Prince of Peace,” April 2023 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.

65 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 696.

66 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 696.

67 Hoyt W. Brewster Jr., *Isaiah Plain and Simple: The Message of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1995), 112–113.

68 Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 29.

69 Acts 18:2, 18, 26; 1 Cor 16:19.

70 Pro 18:8; 20:27; 22:18; Rom 16:18; Tit 1:12; Php 3:19.