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February 9, 2014

**Relationships between “Strong” and “Weak” Believers
(Part 4)
Accept One Another!
Romans 15:7-13**

Introduction:

As the **president** of **Wheaton College** for **17 years** (1965-1982), **Dr. Hudson Arm-er-ding** faced a particular issue of **personal preference** in the college that had the **potential** to cause a serious **financial crunch**. While many of the **heavy** financial contributors to the college had been **visiting** the campus they **observed** that a number of the Christian young men on campus had **long hair** and were wearing **beards**. Because of this, **some** of these **big donors** had **withdrawn** their support and **others** were **threatening** to do the same.

Since obviously there was no **school policy** on this matter at the time, the **administration** had to make a **decision**. At a **chapel** meeting for the student body, **Dr. Arm-er-ding** made an announcement that got everyone’s attention. As he **stood** on the **stage** and **scanned** the student body with his eyes he called by name **one young man** who had particularly **long hair** and a **beard**. He asked him to please **stand** and to **come forward** and **join him** on the platform, which the young man did with **reluctance**. Looking him straight in the eyes, **Dr. Arm-er-ding** said to him, “Young man, your **long hair** and **beard** represent the very thing that these **supporters** of the school are **against**. I want you to know that the **administration** of this school **does not** feel as they do. We

accept you and we **love you**. We believe you are here to **seek** and to **find** the **truth** as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

With that, the **president** reached out his arms, **drew** the young man to himself, and **publicly embraced** him. Immediately, the entire student body **jumped** to its feet and **gave** spontaneous applause to this brave president. The **point** I want to make from this **illustration** is not that it’s **wrong** if a Christian school chooses to set a **policy** on a certain hair length for men. But rather that this is a **good example** of the kind of **loving acceptance** that believers are to show each other concerning matters of **personal preference**, which are things not directly **commanded** or **forbidden** in Scripture. It is this **acceptance** of one another that we will be looking at this morning.

As we come to the **last paragraph** of our study of **Romans 14:1-15:13**, Paul now draws a **conclusion** to his teaching on **Christian relationships**. Turn in your Bible to **Romans 15**.

In Romans 15:7-13 we see three reasons why all true believers must accept one another in the family of God. This passage unfolds in a **similar way** as we saw in **vv. 1-6**.

The **first reason** is because:

I. The Prescription that Believers show mutual Acceptance

- A. Having just **prayed** in **vv. 5-6** that God would grant them **unity**, so that the entire church could **glorify God**, Paul now says to the church at Rome in **v. 7: Therefore, accept** one another... (Stop there)
 1. The word “**Therefore**” (dio) here functions as a **conclusion** to Paul’s discussion to the “**strong**” and “**weak**” concerning personal preferences, but it also contains a **summary** of some of

the **major themes** in the letter as a whole to **support** this final appeal to them.

2. Whereas in **14:1** Paul commanded the “**strong**” to “**accept** the one who is **weak in faith**,” here he **widens** his “**prescription**” or **command** to include **every believer** in the church, both the “**strong**” and “**weak**.” Everyone in the church is to “...**accept one another**,” regardless of their differing opinions.
3. The word “**accept**” (proslambanesthe), as we saw in **14:1**, literally means “to take **alongside** oneself.” It doesn’t simply refer to **warmly welcoming** new believers into the church family, which it certainly includes, but it means to wholeheartedly **receive** fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and **treat** them with the same **love** and **concern** you would a **dear** family member.
4. The **present tense** of the word indicates that this **mutual acceptance** of one another in the church is to be a **continuous** reality. **Christlike “agape” love** demands **no less!**
5. Now it is this **mutual acceptance** of one another in Christ’s church that is the **main point** of this paragraph. The **second reason** why all believers must accept one another is because:

II. The Pattern of Christ must be Followed

- A. Look again at v. 7: Therefore, **accept** one another, **just as** Christ also **accepted** us to the **glory** of God.
 1. Here Paul makes a **comparison** between **Christ’s acceptance** of **us** and **our acceptance** of **each other** with the words “**just as**.” Back in **14:3** Paul prohibited the “**weak**” from **judging** the “**strong**” on the grounds that “**God** has **accepted** him,” but

here he says that we are to **accept** one another because “**Christ** has **accepted** us.”

2. Paul has **no problem** saying “**God**” and then “**Christ**” because **Christ is God**. Now **how** did Jesus Christ **accept us**?
3. Despite the **infinite chasm** that existed between the **sinless God** and **sinful men**, He **lovingly accepted** us into God’s family just as we were. In His **mercy** and **grace** He **saved** us by **opening** our blinded eyes to the truth of the gospel, **drawing** us to Himself, and **giving** us saving faith in Him.
4. And He **continues** to **accept** us in Him and works to **conform** us more and more into His likeness, despite as **James** says in **3:2** that “we all **stumble** in **many ways**.”
5. **John MacArthur** rightly states, “If the **perfect, sinless Son of God** was willing to bring sinners into God’s family, **how much more** should forgiven believers be willing to **warmly embrace** and **accept** each other in spite of their disagreements over issues of conscience.” (Mac Study Bible pg. 1689)
6. We have **no excuse** to **not accept** one another. The **pattern of Christ** must be **followed**.
7. Jesus said in **Matthew 10:24-25**, “A **disciple** is not **above** his **teacher**, nor a **slave above** his **master**. It is **enough** for the **disciple** that he **become like** his **teacher**, and the **slave like** his **master**.”
8. And **Ephesians 5:1-2** states, “Therefore be **imitators** of God, as beloved children; and **walk in love**, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

9. And as **we accept** one another just as **Christ accepted** us, Paul says that we do so “...to the **glory of God.**” In other words, God gets all the **credit**, for He is the One who took the initiative through Christ to **reconcile** us to **Himself** and to **each other.**
- B. Paul then **applies** this obligation of **mutual acceptance** to the **ethnic differences** in the church by **explaining** how Christ **accepted** both **Jews** and **Gentiles** for the **glory** of God. Look at **vv. 8-9**: For **I say** (i.e. to **declare** or **proclaim**) that Christ **has become** a **servant** to the **circumcision** on behalf of the **truth of God** to **confirm** the **promises** given to the **fathers, and for** the **Gentiles** to **glorify God** for His **mercy**; (Stop there)
1. Thus far, we have seen that Paul’s **commands** to both the “**strong**” and “**weak**” believers in the church at Rome to **not judge** but **mutually accept** one another have focused on the **non-moral** issues of **diet, days, and drinking.** But here Paul reveals that another issue was taking place in the Roman church, which was one of **discrimination** ethnically between the Jews and Gentiles.
 2. Remember that the “**weak**” in the Roman church were **primarily Jewish Christians** but also included **some Gentiles**, and the “**strong**” were **primarily Gentile Christians** but also included **some Jews.** **Both** are **represented** in the **two groups.**
 3. As we come to **v. 8** Paul **declares** “...that Christ **has become** a **servant** to the **circumcision.**” The word “**servant**” (diakonon) speaks of the **lowly, humble** service or ministry of Jesus Christ.

4. Jesus said in **Mark 10:45**, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be **served**, but to **serve**, and to **give** His life a **ransom** for many.”
5. Now notice **who** Christ was a **servant** to—“...to the **circumcision**.” And the word “**circumcision**” (peritomes) here is a **synonym** for the **Jewish people**, who’s most distinctive **sign** of the Abrahamic covenant was **physical circumcision**.
6. **John 1:11** says about Jesus that “He **came** to His **own**, and those who were His **own** did not **receive** Him.” Jesus said in **Matthew 15:24**, “I was sent only to the **lost sheep** of the house of Israel.”
7. **C.E.B. Cranfield** accurately states, “He is the **servant** of the **Jewish people**, inasmuch as, **born** a Jew, of the **seed** of David according to the flesh, **living** almost all His life within the confines of Palestine, **limiting** His ministry of teaching and healing—apparently with the deliberate intention of obeying God’s will—almost **exclusively** to Jews, He both was in His earthly life and His atoning death, and also still is, as the exalted Lord, the **Messiah** of **Israel**.” (pg. 741)
8. The one Greek word translated “**has become**” is in the **perfect tense**, indicating a **permanent** state, one that **remains**. In other words, Christ’s **ministry** to Jews was not **confined** to His **earthly life** or **sacrificial death**, but **continues** even now as the **benefits** of His death are appropriated by both Jews and Gentiles.

9. In these **two verses** Paul shows **two divine purposes** for Christ becoming a **servant** of the Jewish people: The **first purpose** is for the **Jews** as Paul says that Christ **has become a servant to the Jews “...on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers.”**
 10. The word “**truth**” (aletheias) here means fidelity, reliability, faithfulness. And the word “**confirm**” (bebaiosai) means to make good or fulfill.
 11. Here we see that **God the Son** became **incarnate** as a **Jew** to bring **God’s truth** to the Jews, to show that **God is faithful** to His Word and can **always** be **trusted**, and to **fulfill** the **covenant promises** God had given to the **fathers**. These are the **saving promises** that God made to **Abraham** (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:7; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4), **Isaac** (Gen. 26:24), and **Jacob** (Gen. 28:13-15; 32:28; 46:2-4).
 12. Although Jesus Christ came to bring a **New Covenant**, **Matthew 5:17** says He did not come “to **abolish** the **Law** or the **Prophets**” but “to **fulfill**” them. **John MacArthur** says about this, “He **fulfilled the law** by upholding its sacredness and reestablishing its truth. He **fulfilled the law** by keeping it perfectly. He **fulfilled the law** in every other possible way, and **Paul’s point** here is that Christ came to **verify** the whole revealed truth of God. He came to **save** sinful man and to bring **glory** to His Father by **fulfilling** His Father’s promises in both ‘the **Law** [and] the **Prophets**.’” (pg. 323)
- C. But God’s **purpose** in Christ was not **exclusively** for the nation of Israel. The **second purpose** is for the **Gentiles** as Paul goes on to

say in v. 9 why Christ **has become a servant** to the **Jews** “...and **for the Gentiles to glorify God** for His **mercy.**”

1. Although God made **covenants** with **Israel** and gave them **privileges** (3:1-2; 9:4-5) that He **never did** with the **Gentiles** (Eph. 2:12), it was always His **intention** that the Jews bring God’s **message of salvation** to the **Gentiles**. In His very first covenant with **Abraham**, God said in **Genesis 12:3**, “And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you **all the families** of the earth will be **blessed.**”
2. Speaking about Abraham, God said in **Genesis 18:18**, “...in him **all the nations** of the earth will be **blessed.**” It was **always within** the “**promises** given to the **fathers**” that believing Gentiles would be **saved**, for Abraham is the **spiritual father** of both Jew and Gentile believers (Rom. 4:9-17).
3. According to God’s **redemptive plan**, the **Jews** were given the **first opportunity** to receive their **Messiah**. To the woman at the well, Jesus said in **John 4:22**, “...for **salvation** is from the **Jews.**”
4. Paul said in **Romans 1:16**, “For I am not **ashamed** of the **gospel**, for it is the **power** of God for **salvation** to **everyone** who **believes**, to the **Jew first** and also to the **Greek.**”
5. However, when the Jews **rejected** their Messiah and His gospel they were temporarily **set aside** (Rom. 11:1-31) and the gospel then went to the **Gentiles** (Acts 13:46; 18:5-6; 19:8-9; 28:25-28). Now the **church** is being formed from both Jew and Gentile believers into **one new man** in Christ (Eph. 2:11-22).

6. It is by God's inexplicable "**mercy**" (eleous), His **loyal love** and **compassion** that has brought **salvation** to the Gentiles. And because of His **saving mercy** the Gentiles "**glorify God.**"
7. But **remember** that **salvation** is always because of the **sovereign mercy** and **grace** of God for **both** Jews and Gentiles (11:30-32).

D. Now to **support** that **Gentile believers** are also the **beneficiaries** of God's salvation and will **worship** Him, Paul quotes **four** Old Testament passages (primarily from the Septuagint—LXX) in **vv. 9-12**.

1. Before we read them it is **important** to understand that **each** of these quotations contain the word "**Gentile,**" and are taken from the **three major divisions** of the Old Testament: **one** from the **Law** (v. 10), **two** from the **Psalms** (vv. 9b, 11), and **one** from the **Prophets** (v. 12).
2. Now as we read these passages some scholars see a **progression** in these four quotations. Look at the **first passage** in the second part of **v. 9** where Paul quotes **Psalm 18:49** (2 Samuel 22:50): **as it is written, "THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME."**
 - Here we see where King David is giving **praise** to God and **singing** to His name "**among the Gentiles.**" God's people are **worshipping** God and the **Gentiles** are **observing** them but not yet **participating**.

3. The **second passage** is in **v. 10** where Paul quotes **Deuteronomy 32:43**: Again **he** says, “**REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE.**”
- The word “**he**” can refer to **Scripture**, to **Moses**, or to **God**. It makes **no difference** since what **Scripture** or **Moses** says is really what **God** says.
 - From God’s people praising Him “**among** the Gentiles,” here the Gentiles are said to “**rejoice**” in God along “**with** His people,” **Israel**. Because of God’s **mercy** to them in the gospel, the **Gentiles** are able to **join** the remnant of Israel in praising the Lord.
4. The **third passage** is in **v. 11** where Paul quotes **Psalms 117:1**: And again, “**PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM.**”
- From **joining** Israel in praise to God, here the psalmist calls the Gentiles to praise the LORD on their own **independent** of Israel.
5. The **fourth passage** is in **v. 12** where Paul quotes **Isaiah 11:10**: Again **Isaiah** says, “**THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE.**”
- The “**root of Jesse**” is a **messianic designation**. It is a way of referring to the **Messiah**, Jesus Christ, as the **descendant** of **David**, and thus of David’s father **Jesse**. (Isa. 11:10)
 - In **1 Samuel 16:1** we read: Now the Lord said to **Samuel**, “How long will you **grieve** over **Saul**, since I have **rejected**

him from being **king** over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to **Jesse** the **Bethlehemite**, for I have selected a **king** for Myself among his sons.”

- Here we see that the Gentiles will not only **worship** and **praise** God, but also will **live** under the **rule** of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ, and **in Him** they will **hope**.
6. Therefore, in light of God’s **merciful** and **gracious** plan of salvation in Christ, neither **Jewish** nor **Gentile believers** can hold a **grudge** against the other. The **Jews** can’t because their **calling** was to **reach** Gentiles for the glory of God; and the **Gentiles** can’t because it was **through** the Jews that God **brought** them **salvation**.
 7. Therefore, both **Jew** and **Gentile believers**, both the “**weak**” and the “**strong**” must **follow** Jesus’ **pattern** of **acceptance**. **Douglas Moo** said it like this, “Thus Paul implicitly reminds the ‘**weak**,’ mainly Jewish Christians, that the ‘**strong**,’ mainly Gentile Christians, are **full members** of the **people of God: they**, ‘wild olive shoots,’ have been ‘grafted in’ (11:17). At the same time, however, he reminds the ‘**strong**’ that the status they enjoy rests on a **Jewish foundation**: ‘the root supports you’ (11:18).” (pg. 877)
 8. The **third reason** why all believers must accept one another is because:

III. The Prayer to God for His Enablement

- A. Paul launches into another **prayer-wish** as we come to **v. 13**: Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all **joy** and **peace** in **believing**,

so that you will **abound** in **hope** by the **power** of the **Holy Spirit**.

1. As he did in **vv. 5-6**, Paul **characterizes** God in his **prayer-wish** with a **concept** drawn from the **immediate context**. As Gentile believers have now come to “**hope**” in **Messiah Jesus**, the “**root of Jesse**” in **v. 12**, so Paul prays to the “**God of hope**.”
2. **Beloved, never forget** that **God alone** is the **Origin** of **hope** and the **Object** of **hope**. This is why our **hope** should never be in our **talents** and **abilities**, our **financial security**, our **possessions**, our **relationships**, or anything else!
3. **All** of these things are **temporal** and can be **lost** in an **instant!** Our **eternal souls** can find **true** and **lasting hope** in **nothing** and **no one** other than the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. **No wonder** Paul prays to the “**God of hope**.” And his **wish** or **desire** for the entire church at Rome is that **God** will “...**fill you** (i.e. will make every believer **completely full**) with **all joy** and **peace** in **believing**.”
5. Paul **desires** every believer to be **filled with joy**. The word “**joy**” (charas) refers to **joy** in the Lord (Gal. 5:22; Phil. 4:4; 1 Jn. 1:4).
6. He also **desires** every believer to be **filled with peace**. The word “**peace**” (eirenes) refers not to **peace with God** but the **peace of God**, which is an inner tranquility of soul, calmness, restfulness and contentment, regardless of the difficult circumstances in your life.

7. Speaking about this **supernatural inner peace**, Paul says in **Philippians 4:7**, “...the **peace of God**, which **surpasses all comprehension**, will **guard** your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
 8. Now both **joy** and **peace** are the “**fruit**” of the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:22) and refer back to **14:17** where these along with “**righteousness**” characterize the “**kingdom of God.**”
 9. What an **encouragement** to **know** that as believers in Jesus Christ we can **experience** the **fullness** of “all **joy** and **peace**” in our **daily** Christian lives. But how often do we **forfeit** these because we fail to do what is required?
 10. Notice that they are experienced in our lives only “**in believing**” (pisteueo) or as the NIV translates, “as you **trust** in Him.” Our **faith** in God is the **means** by which the **fruit** of **joy** and **peace** are manifested in our lives.
 11. **Hebrews 11:6** says, “And **without faith** it is **impossible** to **please Him**, for he who comes to God must **believe** that He is and that He is a **rewarder** of those who seek Him.”
- B. Paul then states the **ultimate reason** for experiencing God’s **joy** and **peace** by **faith** in our lives, “...**so that** you will **abound** in **hope.**”
1. The word “**abound**” (perisseuein) means to **overflow**, to have in **abundance**. It refers to an **exceeding measure**, something **far above** the **ordinary**.
 2. Since **God alone** is the **Source** of all **hope**, He wants us to **overflow** with **hope** in Him and His Word (v. 4). Again the word “**hope**” (elpida) doesn’t mean that we are **uncertain** about

- something and **hope** it will happen; it is the **confident expectation** that **what** God has promised **will happen** and so we **wait patiently** and **trust Him** for its **certain** fulfillment.
3. When we truly **trust in Jesus Christ** for “**life for our soul**,” our **hope** is in **Him alone**. It is only then that we can be internally **freed up** from **fear, anxiety, anger**, and **depression** and experience His **supernatural joy** and **peace** in our lives.
 4. And as a **result** of such **belief** or **trust** in Him, we **overflow** with **hope in Him** that **Hebrews 6:19** says is “...an **anchor** of the soul, a **hope** both **sure** and **steadfast**.” Are you **experiencing** these **internal realities** that the Lord Jesus has made **available** to you?
 5. If not, you can! But notice that these come only “...by the **power** of the **Holy Spirit**.” Since it is the Holy Spirit who **indwells** and **empowers** every believer, it is only as we **depend** on Him and **allow** Him to **control** us that these realities are **manifested** in our lives.
 6. And when we **experience** such **joy, peace, faith**, and hope in our lives by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, we will have no problem **accepting** one another as Christ has **accepted** us.

Conclusion:

In closing, since we live in a **world** that is **utterly absent** of such **internal realities**, may we all **exhibit** these by the **power** of the Holy Spirit. May our **unity** and **mutual acceptance** of one another in the midst of our **differing opinions** on matters of personal preference bring

glory to God and **point a lost and dying world** to the Lord Jesus Christ who alone makes these realities possible.