

FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

Romans 15:7-13

As teenager, Helen attended church that considered it wrong to wear make up—no lipstick or anything like that. She walked to school with girl from church.

One day that girl showed up wearing lipstick. Helen stopped walking to school with her. She didn't want to be identified with "worldly" girl.

Girl withdrew from Helen & church—no longer wants anything to do with Christians.

You can't blame the church for her decision. Rejection of rules was symptom of what's inside. However, acceptance by a friend might've helped her consider where she was headed.

Similar stories could be told—of people who let our rules, *or* our liberty, get in the way of accepting—& enjoying one another!

What standards do we use to decide who we identify with?

Standards for facing debatable issues

14-15:13

Rom 15 urges US: *Follow Jesus' example*

He didn't seek His rights.

Paul urges: give up our rights for other people in Christ.

Christ accepted us as we were 7 *“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise God.”*

=> for God's glory!

Passage focuses on strong people

—people who are free

14:1 *“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.”*

Strong people should welcome weak people—
not to debate with them,
or to make fun of them over it.

We accept one another because we love one another,
as Christ loved us
—NOT because we always agree.

Concluding discussion, he returns to *same exhortation*.

Enlarges circle:

Whatever our position,
accept one another.

Jesus accepted us with our sin, prejudices & blind spots.

What does God want *us* to do as a result?

**We should accept one another
as Christ accepted us
so God may be
glorified through us**

Conflict affecting Romans derived from conflict between Jews &
Gentiles

—People raised as God's chosen people, identified with
Yahweh and His covenant,
& people raised as pagan Gentiles.

Jewish people held legalistic ideas about meat they eat.

Pagans who trust Christ don't understand those rules

—it's *all nonsense* to them!

We know that our walk with God doesn't depend on kind of food
we eat!

We're saved by trusting Christ!

This meat business is stupid!

**Christ left an example of what *OUR* attitude ought to be:
Christ made Himself servant to Jews & pagans**

Jesus—Lord of universe—made Himself servant of all!

He accepts both, Jews & pagans

–He came to die for *both*

–that we might receive life and experience God's blessing.

1st: Christ made Himself a servant to Jews 8 *“Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs”*

Jesus came to fulfill God's promises to Jews

Jews were already God's people

Jesus came to fulfill what they're waiting for:

–God's promises to the patriarchs –to His people.

2nd way Christ made Himself servant had to do with *Gentiles!*

–with those pagans, like us,

who were outsiders

–who had no part in those promises

God made to His people.

It doesn't surprise us He's willing to serve *Jews*,
but *pagans*?

Christ made Himself a servant of pagans 9-12

*“that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy. As it is written:
“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns
to your name.”* ¹⁰ *Again, it says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his*

people.”¹¹ And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; and sing praises to him, all you peoples.”¹² And again, Isaiah says, “The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.”

How did He become servant of Gentiles?

He extends God’s mercy to pagan Gentiles!

God receives glory because He transforms people who aren't looking for Him and don't *deserve* His mercy.

Jesus fulfills 4 O.T. PASSAGES:

Promised since prophets—centuries before

Includes words of 3 great spokesmen of Israel:

David, Moses, Isaiah.

All 3 divisions of O.T. books:

law, prophets, writings

Represents 3 epochs in Israel's history:

patriarchal, monarchy, divided kingdom

God's purpose to reach pagans is integral to His plan!

God wants to show mercy to pagans!

15:9 <= David Ps 18:49 “I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.”

Giving thanks for God’s protection, **David** makes vow:

Promises to acknowledge God publicly, in front of pagans

15:10 <= Moses Deut 32:43

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

Moses, in tribute to Yhwh, for all He did for Israel, indicates **pagans will take part, praising God with His people.**

15:11 <= **Ps 117:1** *"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, & sing praises to him, all you peoples."*

Exhorts pagans: praise Yahweh for mercy & faithfulness.

Implies they experience His love & faithfulness

15:12 <= **Is 11:10 (LXX)** *"The root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."*

When Messiah comes, **pagans submit to Him & trust him**

He becomes the hope of all peoples of the world

Progression shows pattern God's work among pagans follows:

Pagans experience God's mercy:

They hear testimony of 1 who enjoys God's blessings.

They join rejoicing of those who received blessings.

They praise this great God—for themselves!

They acknowledge His authority, submit & trust Him.

Reference to pagans' hope encourages Paul to pray for us.=>

As Christ made Himself a servant ↓

GOD WANTS TO MAKE US SERVANTS 13

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

God who gives hope to pagans is Source of joy & peace.

If we're seeking God's blessing, want to keep hope alive, & enjoy happiness & peace,

We won't find them by struggling to defend our rights,

but by life turned over to God
by faith & by the power of H.S.

What's point in final treatment of debatable things?

IMITATE CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

He accepted both Jews & Pagans

Neither deserve it!

We should ACCEPT one another

He made Himself a servant to BOTH

So we, Jew or pagan... whether we eat meat or not...

WE should serve one another

*More concerned about *serving* than "having it our way!"*

Result: We're filled with **joy & peace**;

overflow with **hope**

It's result of work of the Spirit among His people.

When Holy Spirit Works in Us...

We accept one another

We serve one another

=> We experience joy, peace & hope.

Conflicts affecting US not about Jew/Gentile issues!

But they're just as devastating to God's work!

We should accept one another as God's family

Even when others make different choices than we do!

God welcomes THEM as He welcomes US!

He has accepted us both!

=> We should accept them!

Until we do that, we'll never experience God's happiness & peace –neither in ourselves nor in our relationships

There's room in church for us

whether we wear lipstick or not!

whether we dance or not,

whether we drink or refrain,

or whatever issue we struggle over!

Father/son had been in conflict for years: In night, son had trouble sleeping, so he went to kitchen to fix sandwich. In kitchen he found father, who couldn't sleep either. They began to reminisce—about years in Little League, swimming together, fishing trips.

Healing began to occur. Son asked,

“Dad, remember the time we were out on the lake in that little green boat? Father responded, “The boat was blue son.” “No, it was green!” “Blue!” “Green!”

Son left the room, never to return.

Some of our issues are about that significant!!!

Some things just don't matter!!!

When we realize extent of God's mercy to us...

We'll accept one another.

We'll serve one another.

As Christ did for us!

Will WE let conflict over insignificant issues destroy God's work in us?