***Jesus Christ Came to the Jews
RO183-02***

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Today, we begin a new section of Romans. Please turn to Romans 15:7-13. Our subject is "Accepting One Another," and this is segment number one.

**Strong and Weak Christians**

The apostle Paul has taught us that, in any congregation of Christians, some will be spiritually weak in terms of their spiritual maturity, while others will be quite strong in terms of their spiritual maturity. Paul realizes that this naturally causes an area of friction and potential conflict. So, he appeals to the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures to show that strong Christians must seek to help the weak ones rise to a place of maturity themselves. It is the doctrines of the Word of God that produce a spirit of perseverance and encouragement, actually, for the strong Christian to carry the week to maturity. Those who know doctrine are indeed able to maintain a spirit of Christian unity in Christ, and to glorify God, because they know His marvelous plan.

**Love vs. Like**

The Lord Jesus Christ is held up to us by the apostles as our role model in dealing with Christians whom we love, but whom we may not like. And remember that that is entirely possible, and it very often is the case. There are many people in life that you will meet for whom you have an affection. They are human beings. The Spirit of God, as part of the fruit of the Spirit, produces that mental goodwill attitude toward people so that we wish the best for them. We seek to assist them, and we have nothing but goodwill toward them. This is what the Bible means by love. But we may not, as a matter of fact, like these people personally.

We had a boy in camp last week. Every now and then we get one. And he was a prime example of a youngster that received our love and our concern for his goodwill. But we didn't like him. If you would line them up and say, pick the boys you want for your cabin, he's the last one you'd pick, because he was just unlikable. And yet, at the same time, he received an enormous amount of concern and love. This a very important principle for you to learn, especially those of you who aren't married. This is one of the places that this comes into play in a very important way – that you have to be sure that, concerning the person you are going to marry, you not only love that person, but that you also like that person. The problem is that you can get some very excited signals of affection and attraction and sexuality, and you can get that in a couple of weeks’ time. So, all of a sudden, you feel attractive, and you feel in love, and you are drawn to a person. But the problem is that, as you get to know that person (and it takes about a year to do this), you suddenly realize: "There are a lot of things about this person I don't like. I do love him, but boy, I just can't stand this. This is a drag." And the bigger the drag gets, the more miserable the life gets.

So, you have to make attachments in life over a long enough period of time such that you are aware of the fact that there is someone you like as well as someone that you love in your life. The Lord Jesus Christ made it very clear to us that, as Christians, we will have a spirit of love toward all believers, but we will not necessarily find all of them personally attractive for a variety of reasons. The principle of all human relationships is to get to know the people that you get close to, and that you get tied to in life.

**Acceptance**

In Romans 15:7, the apostle Paul begins with the example of Christ, and he speaks about the glory of God. In verse 7, he begins with the words "Wherefore, accept one another." The word "wherefore" introduces how we are to fulfill what was called upon us to do in verse 6; that is, unitedly glorifying God. Verse 7 is addressed to both weak and strong Christians. Verse 6 said that we, with one accord; with one voice; and, with one mouth, should glorify; should praise; should honor; and, should exalt the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 7 says, "Now here's how you proceed to do that." And the word "wherefore" interjects that idea. We are to "accept." The word "accept" looks like this in the great Bible. It's the word "proslambano." Actually, it is a word which is made up of two words. The first part "pros" here is a preposition which actually intensifies the meaning of this word "lambano." The word "lambano" means to receive. When you have this preposition, it intensifies the idea of receiving. It means to draw someone to close intimacy to yourself.

So, that puts a whole different picture of acceptance. You don't just say, "Yeah, OK, I'll tolerate you." It is drawing a person very close to you for one reason or another. It means to take to oneself, and this word actually looks back to what Paul said in Romans 14:1, where he said, "Now, accept the one who is weak in faith." The word "accept" there is this same Greek word. And it means, again, the same idea – bring that person close to you for the purpose of his personal benefit.

Here are some examples of how this word is used in the Bible, to show you what an intensified word this is of drawing people to yourself whom you love, but may not necessarily like. Matthew 8:32 says, "And He was stating the matter plainly;" that is, Jesus, in this context, was telling that the religious authorities of Israel that were going to reject him, and we're going to murder Him. And He was stating the matter plainly to His disciples: "Peter took Him aside." And there's the word: "proslambano." Peter confidentially took Him close to Himself, and said, "Jesus, come over here. I want to talk to you:" "And he rebuked Him." Peter did not like this kind of talk, and he rebuked Jesus, and in the process, here's an illustration of the use of this word. He brought Him over, and confidentially had a conversation. And Jesus, of course, said that Satan was speaking through Peter, in wanting him not to point out what the Jewish authorities were going to do. And that's the occasion when he told Peter: "Get thee behind Me Satan," because Peter was actually an agent of the devil on that occasion.

Acts 17:5 also illustrates this word: "But the Jews, becoming jealous, and taking along (and there is that same word 'proslambano' again – drawing confidentially to them) some wicked men from the marketplace, formed a mob, and set the city in an uproar. And coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people." Here is a riot of the Jews at Thessalonica, begun by the Jewish leaders, because they didn't like the gospel message of Paul, and they did it by getting some base type of men. And they threw them aside, and they said, "Now, here's what we want you to do. We want you to do this, and this, and this. And we're going to cause a riot, and break up this meeting and this testimony.

Acts 18:26 also illustrates this particular Greek word: "And he (a young evangelist named Apollos) began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila (associates of the apostle Paul – a husband and wife team who new doctrine) heard him, they took him (Apollos) aside, and explained to him the way of God more accurately." Apollos himself hadn't gotten past the baptism of John the Baptist. And Apollos was a powerful evangelist. He was moving crowds; he was speaking; and, he was gathering groups, and Priscilla and Aquila were sitting there listening, and they say, "This boy has not crossed over into the full gospel, and into the full counsel of the Word of God relative to the grace era of the church." So, they said, "We've got to straighten him out." How do they do that? They took him aside. They "proslambano" him in order to give him a confidential statement. This is sort of conveying the idea of taking a person under your wing. And when you do that, you have to be prepared for a lot of trouble in dealing with people, who may not want to be helped.

Acts 27:33 also illustrates this. These men here are trying to escape a shipwreck, and it looks bad for them. They've done everything they can, and the ship is now adrift: "And until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them to take some food, saying to them, 'Today's the 14th day that you've been constantly watching and going without eating, and having taken nothing.'" Here's the word "lambano." Here, what he's saying is: "You haven't put any food in your mouth. You're so upset. You're so scared. You're so frightened by the conditions. But I'm telling you, I am a spokesman of God. I have a direct line of communication because I am an apostle. God does give me direct information, and we're safe. The ship is going down, but no one will be lost at sea. All of you will be safely brought to shore. So, sit down, and have something to eat." And here you see how intimately is the practice of eating something. And this word describes that very thing.

In Acts 27:36: "All of them were encouraged, and they also took (and there you have the word again) food."

Acts 28:2 illustrate this word: "And the natives showed us extraordinary kindness." Now they are brought ashore. They are all safely ashore on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea. And the natives come up and see them: "And they showed them extraordinary kindness, for because of the rain that had set in, and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and received ('proslambano') us all." The natives extended great and gracious hospitality to the shipwrecked sailors, and Paul was one of them. And they extended hospitality, and thus the Scripture says, "They drew them close to themselves."

Let's look at one more in the book of Philemon. This is a splendid example. The apostle Paul is sending back the slave Onesimus, and he says to his friend Philemon, who is a slave master: "If then you regard me as a partner, accept him ('proslambano' him) as you would me." And Paul is saying, "Don't just say, 'OK, come on back. I'm going to put you back into service.'" But Paul is saying: "You receive him with the same warmth and loving consideration that you would receive me, if I were to come and visit you."

So, this word that Paul uses in Romans 15:7 ("accept one another") is a word that has deep emotional attachment involved with the word. It connotes receiving another believer warmly in love. It is in the present tense. That's the constant attitude that a Christian should have. It's in the middle voice, which means that there is a special interest for you as the receiver, if you act like this. And it is in the imperative mood, which therefore is a command to all Christians to embrace one another. And that's what he says. He uses this to extend to one another: "Wherefore, accept warmly in love one another;" that is, a mutual acceptance between strong and weak Christians. Glorifying God with a united voice requires that you accept other people who are in the body of Christ. The idea is accepting each other in Christian fellowship as members of God's royal family in the church.

This mutual love is, of course, the fruit of the Spirit. And it causes us to be drawn to those who are in (what the Bible calls) "the beloved one;" namely, Jesus Christ: "Wherefore, since you are to speak with one accord to glorify God, accept, with deep emotional love and intense warmth, one another, as Christians, just as." And he makes a comparison now – an example for us to follow: "Just as Christ also accepted." And here again, you have the same word "proslambano:" "As Christ accepted, in the same concept, of drawing sinners to Himself." And this looks back to Romans 14:3, where it says, "Let not him who eats regard with contempt" (eating certain foods, or certain meats): "Let not him who eats those foods regard with contempt him who does not eat; and, let him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him" (the same Greek word).

So, the point is that God has accepted these Christians; and, we accept each other on the same basis. Now, you may have a different word there, depending on what translation you have in front of you today: "Just as Christ also accepted us" is one translation. But some of the better manuscripts actually have the word "you." And I think that the word "you" has better support, and is what the word really should say: "Just as Christ has accepted you." He is speaking to these Roman gentile Christians who have no claims upon God. And, specifically he wants to say, "You accept other Christians in the family of God just as God, who had no reason to accept you, a gentile, did so.

To reject a weak brother or a strong brother is contrary to the example of Christ, who has accepted both into salvation. The point that Paul is making is: who are you, therefore, to snub another Christian? Jesus Christ, in love, welcomed the worst sinner into His royal family. And this is expressed in the hymn "Christ Receiveth Sinful Men." Christians, in like manner then, are to welcome each other into their lives. For Jesus Christ to accept a believing sinner, of course, required a very agonizing death on the cross while bearing all of their moral guilt. It was no small thing to say, "Christ receiveth sinful men." We turn to that hymn, and we sing it heartily. But when you stop and think about what it cost Him to receive sinful men, it's something that most of us would have turned our back upon, and been glad to shuck off immediately. It cost Him a horrendous personal agony to receive sinful men. He had to leave His place of glory in heaven, and take on Himself the limitations of humanity forever. And no such sacrifice is ever required in asking Christians to accept one another.

What the "you" does, when you translate it with the word "you:" "Just as Christ accepted you" – it stresses that gentile Christians are to accept Jewish Christians, because Jesus accept the gentiles, who are aliens to all of the promises of God, and to the national promises to the Jews. The contrast between what it cost Jesus Christ and the believers is expressed in the two good hymns: "I Gave My Life for Thee;" and, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." The words of both of those things are significantly explanatory of what it really cost Him to accept sinners.

Now, it says that we do this to the glory of God; that is, for the praise and honor of God. The glory of God goes with the words "accept one another:" "Wherefore, accept one another to the glory of God, just as Christ also accepted you." The basis of this mutual acceptance is to glorify God for His kindness to us. Glorifying God the Father, of course, is the way that you can make those real injuries that you have between yourself and other Christians: that antipathy that someone may direct toward you; the difference of opinion; and, the immaturity that you experience dealing with other Christians. If you want to glorify God, you can tolerate a great deal, and you'll be willing to take a great deal. The ultimate divine purpose of all Christian activity is expressed in another hymn: "To God be the Glory."

So, God's glory, in all that we Christians do is what Paul is holding up for us, and he's going to talk about that a little more in verse 9. But it's the same principle that Paul has stated in 1 Corinthians 10:31, where he says, "Whether then you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." God's grace to us brings great glory to Him.

**A Servant**

In Romans 15:8, Paul speaks of the service of Christ: "For." And here again, it's introducing an explanation of what he has just said in verse 7: "For I say that Christ has become." The Lord Jesus Christ has, in the past, become something which He continues to be to this day, and what He has become, he identifies as "a servant." The Greek word is a familiar word: "diakonos." It's the word from which we get the word "deacon," which means "somebody who serves." What Paul is pointing out here is that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father as a servant, and that is significant. He is the servant of Jehovah God. He is the servant of "Yahweh." And He's presented as that in that form.

**The Circumcision**

And the service of Jesus Christ was directed to a specific part of the human race. And that is identified here as "the circumcision." This is the Greek word "peritome." This refers to the religious ritual performed on Jewish males to identify them as recipients of the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. The covenant which God made with Abraham was limited to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And to indicate that you were part of that blessing, this religious ritual was performed on an eight-day-old male child. Actually, the word "circumcision" here is a technical term that the Bible uses simply to refer to the Jewish people. You have that, for example, in Romans 3:1: "Then what advantage has the Jew, or what is the benefit of circumcision?" It is the Jew who has circumcision, and here he is specifically identified as "the circumcision." So, to use that term is simply to indicate somebody who is physically a Jew.

Romans 3:30 does the same thing: "Since indeed God, who will justify the circumcised (the Jews) by faith, and the uncircumcised (the gentiles) through faith is one."

This is further elucidated for us in Galatians 2:7-9. This term "circumcision" as referring to the Jewish people. I take the time to do this because there is a lot of sloppy, careless use of words among Christians relative to what they read in the Bible. Because they begin with some wrong theological presuppositions, they find that some pieces of the Bible won't fit together. This is particularly true if you're an amillennialist. Then you have all kinds of pieces that simply cannot make sense in terms of what the word means. So, you have to switch the words around, and give them a spiritual meaning, in order to eliminate them, so that you can squeeze your human viewpoint opinions into your theological system. But I want you to notice that God's Word is very explicit. And this word "peritome," referring to the circumcision, makes it very explicitly clear that we are talking about Jews. We're not talking about Christians who became born again. We're talking about Jews, and nobody else, in this passage.

I think that Galatians 2:7-9 should clinch that for you. Paul says: "On the contrary, seeing that I have been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised." Who is that? The gentiles. Paul was the great apostle to the gentiles, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. Who was Peter the great apostle to? To the Jews: "For he who effectively worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised (that is, to the Jews), effectually worked for me also to the gentiles (the uncircumcised). And recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who are reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we might go to the gentiles, and they to the circumcised." Who does he mean? To the Jews.

So, there was a clear division among the apostles. They understood that Peter was the leader of the testimony to the Jewish people. Paul was the leader of the testimony to the gentile world. And they referred to them with these terms: "the circumcised," referring to Jews; and, "the uncircumcised," referring to gentiles. Now you cannot play with those words, and pretend that they mean something else, except that literal statement, else they don't make any sense at all.

Circumcision, you remember, was the special divine sign of the Abrahamic Covenant with its special promises to Abraham's descendants. Now we have established that the circumcised are those who physically are Jews. And remember, that to be a Jew, you have to be descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It's not enough to be descended from Abraham to be a Jew, because the Arabs are descended from Abraham, and they are not Jews. Only those descended through the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are Jews. But once you have that racial heritage, then you are of the circumcised, and then you are under a special covenant with God. No gentile has this. No Christian has this. It was never given to anybody but, specifically, the Jewish people.

I'm going to read an extensive passage from Genesis 17. Abraham has been called. He has left the sophisticated culture across the Euphrates River in Babylon, Ur of the Chaldees. He has followed God, and come to this strange land lying on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, the land of Canaan. And God has made many promises to him, among which was that he is going to have a descendant (a child) from whom there will flow an enormous nation of people who will be God's favorite people for all eternity. What God told Abraham was that the stream of humanity, as demonstrated by the pre-deluvian civilization before the flood – the stream of humanity had gone down, down, down. It was getting viler and worse all the time. They all had their religions, because everybody has to have a God. When they didn't know about the true God, or they didn't want to know about Him, they made up their own god.

So, along came God, and touched this man, and said, "Abraham, we're going to pull off a stream of people. And we're going to start with you, and we're going to go on back up again. And we're going to have a tributary of humanity, which will be the Jews who will be descended from you, that are going to have eternal, tremendous promises that I'll never take back. I'll never take them back, no matter what your descendants do. In the meantime, we're going to let the gentiles just go on their merry way, and continue on down to their own ultimate destruction. So, that's what the Abrahamic Covenant is all about.

**The Abrahamic Covenant**

Later on, here in Genesis 17, time has gone by, and God is ready to clarify a little more to this man, Abram, which is his name at this time. "Now when Abraham was 99 years old, and the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty. Walk before me and be blameless, and I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.' And Abraham fell on this face, and God talked with him, saying, 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you. And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham (Abraham means 'father of many nations'). For I will make you the Father of a multitude of nations. And I'll make you exceedingly faithful. And I'll make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you.'" Now remember that we're talking about the same people that exist in Israel today (the circumcision – the Jewish people). And this is the background of the Romans passage that we're reading. If you don't understand this, you don't understand what Paul is talking about back in Romans about the promises to the fathers.

**An Everlasting Covenant**

Verse 7: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and your descendants after you, throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant." Now, concerning the word "everlasting," you will notice that when an amillennialist reads that, he goes purple, because it sticks in his throat, and chokes him like a broken chicken bone. The word "everlasting" is a word he must rub out of existence. He has to wipe it out of the Bible some way, because any smart person knows that everlasting is forever. And God has just said, "I'm going to make a deal with you. And I'm going to bring blessings upon you, and upon your people, and they're going to be forever. As long as I exist," God says, "this blessing will exist upon you and your descendants," which is God's way of saying, "I'm never going to say, 'OK, that's it. That's once too many. You've done it. Sit up on the bank for 20 minutes. You're out of the water." That's like we do in camp. God says, "I'm going to give you this privilege. I'm never going to jerk it away from you and give it to someone else." God does not do like we do in summer camp.

I explain to the campers in the first evening. We play a game called "Gotcha." And one boy made it real easy because he wore a T-shirt that had the word "Gotcha" across it the first night. And this is how we keep our campground clean. And it really works. As you know, the kids go to snack-shack twice a day, where they can buy candy bars and ice cream and drinks. They do this after lunch, and after the flag ceremony in the evening. And we explain to them that if anybody throws a wrapper on the ground, or throws a Coke can on the ground, and somebody sees them, all they have to do is pick up that item; touch the person; and, say "Gotcha." Then he reports that to the nurse, who keeps the records, and 10 cents off this guy's snack-shack money goes onto the account of the person who caught him. And some kids get very rich in summer camp by watching the slobs, and trailing them for things they throw around. But I was amazed how little trash, this year especially, I saw on the campground. The "Gotcha" system really worked. And the eagle-eyes – you could just see their greedy, glinty eyes once I announced this system. Everybody was watching from then on. And what you can do is lose your snack-shack money. And if you're if you're really careless, you can lose a lot, because we really do take the dime away from you.

However, that's not how God works. The amillennialists say, "This is how God works. God said, 'I'm going to give this to you." And then the Jews did behave themselves, so God put this hand on their shoulder and said, 'Gotcha. I'm taking this away, and I'm giving it to the Christians now – and you're out.'" You cannot escape these words. And it's important that you understand that God is still dealing with the Jewish people to this very day.

So, verse 7 says that this is an everlasting covenant (an everlasting agreement): "To be God to you and to your descendants after you."

Genesis 17:8: "And I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land of your sojournings, and all the land of Canaan, as an (oh, there it is again) everlasting possession." This time, the amillennialist's eyes go in opposite directions (the way that cartoons make Jiminy Cricket's eyes go in opposite directions), because here's that terrible word "everlasting." How are you going to get away from the fact that God says that He's going to give that strip of land on the Mediterranean Sea to the Jewish people forever, so that even after eternity begins, they're going to live as a regenerated people with sinless bodies (glorified bodies). And they're going to live in that wonderful land on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea – that crystal-clear water sea. What a terrific heritage – for all eternity. And God says, "You're going to be there forever." And then he adds, "And I'll be your God."

Verse 9: "And God said further to Abraham, 'Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant – you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep between Me and you, and your descendants after you. Every male among you shall be circumcised.'" And here's where the circumcision comes in as a special sign of this special covenant that goes only to the Jewish people: never to gentiles; and, never to Christians: "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin. And it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations – a servant who is born in the house, or who is bought with money from any foreigner who is not of your descendants. A servant who is born in your house, or who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. Thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." So, you could have proselytes. You could have non-Jews who could come into the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant forever by the ritual of circumcision, and thus becoming part of Judaism.

Verse 14: "But an uncircumcised male, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin – that person shall be cut off from his people. He has broken My covenant." You will not enter the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. This does not mean that you cannot be saved. You can be saved, and go to heaven without performing the ritual of circumcision. But you cannot be a Jew who enters the great blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant with all the detailed promises that that incorporates.

So, understand that we're not saying that you're saved through this ritual act, but it does bring you into possession of these particular blessings of which there were many in the Abrahamic Covenant.

"Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai, your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her, and indeed, I will give you a son." And the word 'Sarah' means princess, by the way. "'And I will bless her, and indeed, I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations. Kings of people shall come from her.' And Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Will a child be born to a man 100 years old? And will Sarah, who is 90 years old, bear a child now?'"

Now Abraham is faced with a real test of faith: "And Abraham said to God, 'O, that Ishmael might live before You.'" Immediately, Abraham makes a human viewpoint decision. Abraham, at this point, was an amillennialist. So, he kept spiritualizing the words. He kept making them mean something that needed to fit his theology. And his theology, at this point, said that: "He means that son Ishmael, that I had with the Egyptian serving girl that I married, at Sarah's advice, so that we could have an heir. He means that Ishmael (who now is 13 years old about this time) is going to be the one through whom these blessings will come."

However, God said, "Oh, no, amillennialist Abraham. No Abraham, you're wrong. I'm not talking about that. You're twisting My words. You're putting spiritual, symbolic meaning to exact things that I'm trying to tell you."

In verse 19, God said: "No, but Sarah, your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac, which means 'laughter.' And I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I will bless him. I'll make him exceedingly fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the Father of 12 princes, and I will make him a great nation." And from Ishmael came the variety of the Arab nations that have been a thorn in the flesh of the Jewish family ever since. Abraham had no business. I don't care how old he was. He should never have taken Sarah's advice, and decided to help God do what God had promised He was going to do. If God has promised you something, you can count on it. You don't often see exactly how it's going to come through, but once you start walking with God, I can assure you that you will be amazed how things fall into place, and just the little things that God brings together.

One night I showed a film to the boys called "Death in the West." It was a film made by a British company, and it was about the use of tobacco (cigarette smoking). And it was particularly directed at the Philip Morris Company, which makes the most popular brand of cigarette in the world: Marlboro. And as I previewed the film to get a slant on what the approach was, I realized the impact of this film, and why the company brought suit when it was shown in England, and they forced the film to be canceled, and no longer to be shown. However, someone got a hold of a copy, and the company hadn't been able to control it. And it was turned loose everywhere in the United States. And what you were listening to were dead men – cowboys from Wyoming and Montana out west. They were big, burly guys who had been smoking for most of their lives. One of them was quite a pathetic sight – riding on this horse with an oxygen bottle, and the tubes in his nose, as he's trying to survive the last few months of his life with emphysema now closing in on him. And at the end, they would flash on the screen the faces of these men who spoke to you with the date of their death. And their doctors were brought in, and said, "Yes, what I have found is clearly attributable to the use of tobacco (the smoking). And it gave a whole different picture.

However the horrible thing about this was that when they went to the vice president, way up in the upper echelons of the Philip Morris company, even our kids groaned with disbelief, as the film was shown, over the justifications of this man that there is nothing to prove that cigarette-smoking is harmful to you. He said, "I wouldn't let my wife and my children smoke if I thought there was anything wrong with it." And there are scientists who examine the effects of nicotine on the system, and the tar, and everything else. You couldn't believe the justification of his saying, "I just don't know that there's any proof for any of this."

However, the point of it was that I was trying to determine how I should approach this, to make an impact on young minds who are going to be drawn to this thing, and eventually trapped and addicted. And while I had come back to town, and I was checking on buying some supplies, I looked down at the candy counter. And there was a counter full of candy cigarettes. And there's the Marlboro package – just like the real thing. That was not an accident. I'm trying to think of how to approach a spiritual lesson that needs to be learned, to preserve great temporal and eternal destruction to human beings that we have here, whose minds are receptive to us. And this was the approach I needed. All I needed was Ken Boozer's cowboy hat, which he kept wearing. And I had him bring it in; I had it on the table; and, I had the pack of cigarettes. You know how cigarettes that square in your pocket if you're a real man. And I walked in, and I turned and put that hat on; I put my thumbs under my belt; and, I walked up and started talking about being a real man. And when I reached in and pulled those cigarettes out and held them up, the place was dead silent. Eyes were big. And I broke that package open; clicked them out there; and, put one of those in my mouth. I said, "You know what this is?" And one kid on the front row said, "That's bubble gum," and he gave away my secret.

So, anyhow, I pulled that off, and that was our intro to the film. Unfortunately, I didn't know till later (the kids came and explained to me) that if I puffed real hard on those, it actually blows out powder. And I went back and tried it, and it does. You can sit there and blow on those thing, and blow powder out the end. And they glow red. So, I said, "Now, why, boys, would anybody make something like this at the candy counter?" And these are sharp kids. All the Bible teacher say, "We have a kid who's in the academy and Berean youth clubs, and when you talk about spiritual things, he's got the discernment. He's right in there to make the connections."

One boy said, "Well, that is to get used to cigarettes when you're a kid. So, when you get older, and somebody hits you up, and you're not strong enough to say, 'No, I know when I'm well off. I don't need that,' then you'll find it easier to go with it." Exactly!

Now, this is the whole picture that the world presents that is something terrible. And we had a message to give. And I think that God just put the pieces together. Ken Boozer didn't have to bring that straw cowboy hat. He wore it all the time. He was teaching skiing class. He's out there on his jacket in the water with his cowboy hat on, getting kids up on skis. I didn't happen to just walk in there and see that very little package. It was the divine bringing together. When God makes a promise to carry you through in the mission He gives you He will execute. When they got through seeing that film, they'll never forget it. It was all very technical in terms of its scientific accuracy. And as one scientist said, "Of all the things we've ever proven in the world of science, smoking is the kiss of death." But you go up on our highway, and that big sign of the Marlboro Man. He's the real man with a cowboy hat, and the boots, and the lungs that are gradually being eaten away by cancer.

I told the boys that I recently had a friend that looks across the table at me at lunch, and tells me that he's got cancer. He doesn't smoke. I said, "When somebody tells you that, you have the uncomfortable feeling that you have heard a message of death – that you have heard a verdict of death, and, at that point, it's no fun. And the people who smoked, clearly, on that film, none of them thought that they've had any fun smoking, as they knew that their time was now limited. And they're young guys, and the potential of their lives is to be snuffed out. God brings things together for us to make the message, and to execute the things to which He has called us.

So, here Abraham gets in to try to help God, and created a terrible problem when he brought Ishmael into the picture. But God says, "I'm going to respect your wishes. And I will do something great for Ishmael. He, too, will indeed become a great nation. But Genesis 17:21 finishes up with God's statement: "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year. One year from now, you better have the crib ready, because a baby is on the way.

So, the apostle Paul here is speaking against this as the background of what he is talking about when he talks about God acting in terms (and we'll look at more detail of Christ acting in terms) of these promises to the Jewish people. We need to compare one other passage here in Romans 4:11-12, where Paul has referred to this Abrahamic Covenant, where he says, "And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them; and, the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father, Abraham, which he had while uncircumcised." The apostle Paul says, "Indeed, the Jewish people are the circumcised, but you don't go to heaven because you're circumcised. You go to heaven if you have the faith of salvation that Abraham had before he had performed this religious ritual himself, and the ritual testifies to the terrible way of the sin nature of the flesh through the regeneration that God is providing through this Savior.

**God's Veracity**

So, Paul says in Romans 15: "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision." And then he tells us the specific reason that he has done this. He has done this: "On behalf of the truth." And his purpose is: "Becoming a servant to the circumcised (to the Jews – to the Jewish nation) as their Savior. He has come in behalf of the truth of God, to confirm." And here, this word "confirm: is the Greek word "bebaioo." And "bebaioo" means "to connote a fulfillment." It indicates a fulfillment of something. Jesus Christ was sent by God the Father to the Jews to, in some way, confirm to them the fact that God is truthful – to confirm the veracity of God to the Jewish people. And He sent Christ. This was His purpose at one point in time.

God's veracity in connection with what? In connection with the promises ("epaggelia"). This refers to the things that God has said that He would someday do for the Jews. The Jews had some definite and very legitimate claims on God, in contrast to the gentiles who simply had no claim on God. This is pointed out to us, for example, in Matthew 15:24. The Jews had claims upon God because of the Abrahamic Covenant promises: "But He answered (Jesus) and said, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Now what kind of a statement is that for Lord to make? "I came only to the Jews. I didn't come here to the gentiles." What did He mean by that? He meant with Paul is explaining here – that He came to confirm that God was not just whistling Dixie when He made those promises to Abraham. God really meant to execute.

So, he said, "The promises." Which ones? "Those that were given to the fathers." And here, of course, he's referring to the patriarchs: Abraham; Isaac; and, Jacob. Jesus came to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant promises, and thus to confirm God's veracity. What do those promises tell us? We shall look next time more in detail at those. But you remember that the Abrahamic Covenant promises in Genesis 12:1-3 said that: "I'm going to give you a blessing, and that blessing would be extended to all the gentiles." And the Word of God elsewhere tells us that that blessing, Paul tells us, that He was referring to, was the blessing of the atonement for sin – the blessing of personal salvation.

The gentiles were to be peripheral beneficiaries of the blessings of the promise to Abraham to bring a basis through the Messiah for the covering of the sins of the world. These covenant promises were never given to gentiles, nor have they ever been canceled for the Jews.

Now, what happened? Well, the Jews rejected Jesus Christ as God's Messiah, and that postponed the fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs. John 1:11, says, "Jesus came to His own (the Jewish people) and they didn't receive Him." The Jews as a nation can never permanently be rejected by God because of the eternal promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. And I stress that because the theological world has recently seen a great revival of the idea once more that the Jewish people have no future with God; that as a nation, they are through; and, that they have none of the promises relative to the land and so on any more in force, but that the church has taken everything over, and that now Christians are going to take over society and reconstruct the world according to the pattern that could have been for the Jews. That is not true. The only person that is going to reconstruct the world is Jesus Christ when He comes to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

So, through the fulfillment by Jesus Christ of the promises to the Jews concerning atonement for salvation, the sins of mankind were also covered. And the result is that the gentiles themselves were blessed by this act of Jesus Christ, which was not for the gentiles, but for the Jews, to show them that God was keeping His word. In other words, Jesus came into the world, as His mother Mary was told, to set up the kingdom that had been promised to the Jewish people. He came to set up the millennium. He was born to set up the millennium. And when He presented Himself in that role, the Jewish leaders rejected Him. It is in John 4:22 that we have the statement: "Salvation is from the Jews."

So, Paul's point is that the gentiles, who had no claim on Jesus Christ for salvation, are still lovingly treated by the Lord in covering their sins, and bringing salvation to them too.

Now Jesus, who came to serve the Jews, and yet would be that kind to gentiles toward whom He had no obligation relative to promises to them – if He would do that for them, why can't you as Christians be nice enough to one another, who are in the same royal family of God? And that's why he's bringing this illustration: that Christ came into the world to specifically fulfill the promises to the Jewish people, and to show that God is truth in what he says, and that He can be trusted. And in the process, He even took care of the gentiles that Paul, in Ephesians 2 says: "Had no claims. They were aliens. They were out in the field. You had nothing." And yet He brought you in. Why can't Christians, even if you don't like a person, because of the Spirit of God's capacity of love that He gives you for that person, treat them with kindness, so that both weak and strong can act as members of the same family of God?

Christians are then to act in love to our fellow believers who are weak, legalistic, and unpleasant. Jesus Christ, in His capacity as God's servant to the circumcision, has fulfilled God's purpose that he announced centuries ago through the prophet Isaiah of worldwide redemption. Isaiah 42:1 declares that promise: "Behold My servant (referring to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ) whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom My soul delights, I have put My spirit upon Him. He will bring forth justice to the nations." The Justice of God will be satisfied by Jesus Christ, who will, in the process of coming to fulfill the promise to Abraham, be rejected by His people, be murdered on the cross as the Lamb of God, who at that instant will have upon him all the sins of mankind, and thereby will provide the base of atonement for both Jew and gentile. But that does not mean that God has reneged in any way on His eternal promises to the Jewish people.

The Abrahamic Covenant and its reinforcement by the Palestinian Covenant; the Davidic Covenant; and, the New Covenant, which followed to reinforce details of the Abrahamic Covenant, are all are going to be fulfilled. Furthermore, they are being fulfilled before our very eyes this day. The things that are happening in Israel this very day in our time have never happened before. The Jew is on the verge of looking for someone to support him; to protect him; and, to enable him to survive against the mounting wrath of the whole Arab world. And who do you think that's going to be? Not the United States. It's going to be the great man of Europe – the antichrist. He is on the horizon, and he is soon, I think, to appear. You and I will not be here to see him, for we shall have been caught up long before that to meet the Lord in the air. But the Word of God says, "Christians treat each other with the decency that is appropriate to members of the royal family of God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)