



PRAYING BIBLICALLY

for your missionary.

ACCEPTANCE

By Alan Patterson

Our praying point for this article comes from Romans 15:30-31 and specifically the bolded section: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and **that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints.**”*

We will come to an explanation of this text, but first some background. Not too long ago my wife and I had the opportunity to visit one of the three main Nazi concentration camps in Poland. The camp has been somewhat rebuilt, and no doubt appears far cleaner and neater than it did in its sordid days. Nevertheless, the utter hatred and dehumanizing of the Jews by the Nazis is still on display. The Jews know better than any other people what it means to face prejudice. But we also know from Scripture that in Christ’s and Paul’s day the Jews themselves were hyper-prejudiced against the Gentiles. Paul confesses in his testimony, *“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them”* (Acts 26:9-10).

After Paul’s conversion, God’s power converted Paul’s hatred into a love for Christians, including Gentile Christians, but he did not forget the role of his own people and their religion in preparing the way for the Gospel. Paul was the “apostle of the Gentiles,” and he spent much of his life planting churches in mostly Gentile lands. As he won Gentiles to Christ, he also taught them that they owed a debt of gratitude to their converted Jewish brethren because the Gospel and the Savior had come from the Jewish race and religion.

In the context of the verse for this point about praying for acceptance, Paul explains that the Gentiles in Macedonia had taken a love offering for the suffering saints in Jerusalem, most of whom were converted Jews. His argument is *“if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things”* (Romans 15:27). But a potential and very real problem existed: those converted Jews might not want to receive aid from Gentiles, though they were brethren in Christ. Therefore, Paul implores the Romans to strive with him in prayer that this love offering, this “service,” would be well-received by the suffering Jewish Christians.

The application to missions is this: if believers might have so much prejudice as to reject the help of other believers, even in a time of extreme need, then how much more might unbelievers reject the message of people they hardly know and who are bringing a message that contradicts all they (and their ancestors) have ever known? We need to pray, therefore, that God would so work that the missionaries are able to commend themselves to their hearers. Without this breakdown of resistance, the gospel message itself will also be rejected. Pray that God would shatter this resistance. 🙏