

# A LIFE OF WELCOME

Romans 15:7-33  
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## WELCOMING ONE ANOTHER (15:7-13)

Paul closes out the theological teaching of Romans by reminding and encouraging the believers to welcome and accept one another. Much of this letter has dealt with the differences between Gentiles and Jews, and he has just spent a considerable amount of time dealing with differences in convictions between “weaker and stronger” brothers. Because he recognizes the many differences that there are in the family of God, Paul takes time at the very end of this letter, to exhort the believers to welcome one another, just as they had all been welcomed by Christ (v7). It is the example of Christ that Paul uses to teach this truth. Christ became a servant to the Jews, to show God’s truthfulness which resulted in two key outcomes that Paul identifies here. First, the servant life of Christ confirmed the promises to the patriarchs. God fulfilled many of His promises to the Jewish people in the life, death and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. There can be no claim made against God that He has forgotten or been unfaithful to His promises to the Jews. Secondly, in the servant life of Christ the Gentiles have clearly seen the mercy of God on full display! Mercy first toward the Jewish people, then secondly directed toward them. They have been “grafted in” (11:17) and are now welcomed into the family of God, made up of Jews and Gentiles, “weak” and “strong” alike. And as a result of their receiving the mercy of God, the Gentiles glorify God. Paul quotes four Old Testament passages that predict the worship now given to God by the Gentiles. Paul quotes these passages for at least two reasons. First, to show that God has fulfilled His prophetic words in relation to the Gentiles. And secondly to remind the church that this has been God’s plan from the very beginning! God’s desire since creation has been to reveal His grace and mercy to people from all tongues and nations! This is not a new plan and it is seen perfectly in the life and service of Christ, who came first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. As we all experience the welcoming love of Christ, we ought to share that same love with our brothers and sisters in our church family. In so doing our church family will be filled with *“all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope”*.

## WELCOMING GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES (15:14-33)

This last section of chapter 15 is Paul writing about his past and future ministry. Paul’s life had been radically reformed by the grace of God, and in verses 14-21 Paul makes it clear that he had embraced God’s plan for his life. Paul had been called to bring the gospel into the Gentile world, specifically into places that had never heard the Good News. In verse 16 Paul uses powerful language to describe his role in sharing the gospel. He has served a priestly service in taking the gospel to the gentiles, and then bringing the “offering of the Gentiles” as an acceptable sacrifice. We remember this same type of sacrifice language in 12:1-3. What a beautiful and powerful picture Paul paints as he describes the conversion and sanctification of the Gentiles as an offering he has the joy of presenting to God, because of the work God has done through Paul’s obedience. Paul is quick to dispel any accusation of arrogance or self-worship, as he rejoices in the fact that it is the work of Christ that has been accomplished through him and his obedience to God’s plan for his life. Paul had a very specific mission, taking the gospel to the gentiles in places it had never gone. He was not interested in “building on someone else’s foundation” and preaching where the gospel had already been preached. Because of this, he had been hindered from getting to Rome, though he strongly desired to visit the church in Rome (see 1:8-15) It is here in verse 24 that Paul moves from looking back on God’s plan for him, to looking forward to what he hopes God’s plan for him is. In verses 22-29 Paul describes what he is hoping and planning on doing, but we see at the end of this chapter that Paul is very aware that his plans may not be God’s plans. His plan is to head toward Spain, stopping in Rome for a while, after he goes to Jerusalem to take money he has collected from the Gentiles, to the believers in Jerusalem. But we can see in his plea for the Roman believers to pray for

him, that Paul knows he is going to be heading into some places that are dangerous for him, and that God's plan may be very different from his (30-32). Indeed, God's plan for Paul did turn out to be very different. Read Acts 21-28 to see Paul's journey into Jerusalem and what happened after. He does make it to Rome but under very different circumstances than he intended.

There is much to learn through this section of Romans. First we are given the command to welcome each other. This welcome is far more than just a wave of hello and a handshake. This welcome that Paul is talking about is defined by an attitude of loving service toward one another. This is the attitude that Christ has toward us, and that He calls us to have toward one another. For this to take place in our lives we need to be in relationships where we are hearing of, and acting upon, different opportunities to serve one another. As we invest into each other's lives this will happen more and more. Another thing that stands out is Paul's confidence in what God has called him to do. He has a clear vision and mission for his life defined by what God has called him to do. He thinks about it, plans for it, and takes pride in what God has done, is doing, and will do through him. How many of us could articulate clearly what God's plan for our life is? Could we explain our plans and prayers for how we hope to accomplish it in our homes, workplaces and community? Paul appeals to the Roman believers to join him in praying for his hopes and plans. He knows what he desires to do and how he hopes to do it, while also clearly recognizing that there will be some serious challenges along the way. May we be a church family that takes some time to prayerfully develop our strategies for bringing the gospel to the unreached and making disciples here and abroad. Lastly, Paul uses very strong language when "appealing" to the believers "to strive together" with him in prayers. Most of these believers would be unknown to him, yet it doesn't stop him from this strong appeal. His request for prayer could be summed up in three different types: (1) personal safety from opposition, (2) successful ministry efforts, (3) successful future ministry plans. These three types are not unique to Paul's ministry, but are applicable to our brothers and sisters around the world seeking to follow God's call for their lives. Whether it is our supported missionaries, VOM brothers and sisters, or our local church family, we should let our service toward our family be founded and supported at all times with regular and fervent prayer.