

Romans 5.¹⁻¹¹ & 14.¹-15.⁷

Welcoming

Background

Paul starts his letter to the Romans by expounding, first, humanity's *lack* of any righteousness, and our consequent predicament, before a holy God (Rom.1.18-3.20); he then goes on to expound the *provision* of such a righteousness which God has made for us in Jesus, to be received by faith (Rom.3.21-4.25).

That 'righteousness' provided for us in Jesus is two-fold. He has satisfied the righteous requirements of the law, on the one hand, by living on our behalf a life of perfect and consistent obedience: and on the other, by bearing (and exhausting) the just condemnation of the holy God on our sin and sinfulness.

For those who are in Christ Jesus, therefore, it's now the *welcome*, rather than the *wrath*, of God which is our experience.

And it's this theme of 'welcome' (epitomized by the 'access' we now have – Rom.5.2) which the present study explores, first of all by considering the nature of that welcome extended to us by God in Jesus Christ His Son (5.1-11); and then by working through the implications of that for the way in which we engage with others (14.1-15.7): it is in the 'welcoming' approach to these relationships that we give a very real practical expression to the essence of the gospel.

'Welcome' is a recurring and prominent note which is sounded throughout the Bible as the gospel is proclaimed and taught – think, for instance, of the great accusation levelled against Jesus by the Pharisees and teachers of the law: "*This man welcomes sinners ..*" (Lk.15.2).

And 'welcome' (or the lack of) is very often the key initial exposure individuals have to the gospel: the *experience* of the gospel in the 'welcome' received is often crucial to a person's being open to the *exposition* of the gospel. What we have received from Christ we learn to give in our relationships with others: He forgives, we forgive: He's patient, we're patient: He's gentle and lowly, we're gentle and lowly. And thus, as He welcomes, so we welcome.

What will that look like in our lives and in our fellowship? That's what this study will help you to think through, hopefully. As ever the seven sets of questions may prove too many for your Community Group! I suggest you concentrate on **Days (2)** [to think through the way the Lord has welcomed us in Christ], **(4)** and **(7)**, in relation to each of which I've given an additional question which I hope will be stimulate helpful and healthy discussion.

Make sure that you don't end up "quarrelling over disputable matters"!

1) Monday 18th October – access

Read [Romans 5.1-5](#)

“.. through our Lord Jesus Christ .. we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand ..” (Rom.5.1-2)

Peace with God through Christ means that there’s nothing any longer creating a distance between Him and you: His arms are open to you in welcome and in Christ He delights in the access you now have to Him.

Do you view God as having open arms of welcome towards you in Christ, or do you think of Him as being ‘a hard man’ ([Lk.19.21](#))?

If ‘peace’ with God has secured for you ‘access’ to God, what does Paul say that ‘access’ to God affords you?

Prayer: *Blessed indeed, O Lord my God, are those You welcome for the sake of Your Son, those whom You choose to bring near to You to live in Your courts!* ([Ps.65.4](#))

2) Tuesday 19th October – reconciliation

Read [Romans 5.6-11](#)

“.. our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom.5.11)

How the Lord has dealt with us in Jesus Christ becomes the template for the way in which we relate to others. Neither our weakness, our sinfulness, nor our enmity towards Him kept the Lord from securing for us a restored relationship with Him.

In the famous story Jesus told ([Luke 15.11-32](#)), the father welcomed his prodigal son back by bringing him in to his banqueting table: how might you personally and we as a fellowship better display this ‘welcome’ in the ministry of hospitality?

How conscious are you of having been an object of God’s wrath?

How grateful are you for the price paid by Jesus which ensures you now experience God’s welcome?

Prayer: *Thank You, O my Father, for sending us Your Son, and leaving Your Spirit ‘til the work on earth is done.*

3) Wednesday 20th October – respect

Read [Romans 14.1-4](#)

“.. without quarrelling over disputable matters ..” (Rom.14.1)

'Welcome' lies so much at the heart of the gospel that we are to ensure that such 'welcome' characterizes the way we relate to one another – our attitudes towards, our conversations with, and our conduct towards one another. Avoid quarrelling!

What might be contemporary 'disputable matters' in relation to which believers may have differing (and strongly held!) views?

Instead of quarrelling over such matters what should be your approach, according to what Paul says here – and why?

Prayer: Forgive me, Lord, that I can be too quick to criticize and condemn on minor points, when You have been so patient and gracious in regard to my indisputable sin.

4) Thursday 21st October – conviction

Read [Romans 14.5-12](#)

".. each one should be fully convinced in his own mind .." (Rom.14.5)

The message of the gospel is clear enough. The challenge is in all the circumstances of your daily life to discern how those basic gospel truths are to be applied: you are to think all these issues through prayerfully and come to a clear mind on them.

Do you think through the implications of Scripture truth for you in relation to some of the major issues facing you today – vaccines, the environment, etc?

Why is it important, according to what Paul says here, to think such issues through to the point where we are 'fully convinced in our own mind'?

To what extent is the way you live your life defined by your culture and traditions rather than being the result of Biblical conviction?

Prayer: Teach me Your way, O Lord. There are often so many 'grey' areas where it isn't clear what I should do or think! Give me a discerning mind to know what I should do.

5) Friday 22nd October – perspective

Read [Romans 14.13-18](#)

".. the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit .." (Rom.14.17)

"There are many doctrines of a less essential nature with regard to which the most sincere children of God are and have been divided for many ages. In these, we may think and let think" (John Wesley). Concentrate on the 'primary' matters!

What in your living which might constitute a 'stumbling block' to others?

Do you tend to 'stand on your rights', rather than put yourself out for others?

Prayer: Keep me, Lord, from being so preoccupied with my own concerns today that I am careless of the needs and feelings of those around me.

6) Saturday 23rd October – edification

Read [Romans 14.19-23](#)

“.. make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification ..” (Rom.14.19)

Believers have a responsibility towards those who in Christ are their brothers and sisters: work hard at *building* up those brothers and sisters, and at the same time make sure you’re not *tripping* them up.

Why is ‘effort’ (v.19 – NIV) required to ensure both ‘peace’ and ‘mutual edification’ within Christ’s church?

What steps might you take today to build up another believer?

Prayer: *Forgive me, my Father, for that thoughtlessness and carelessness on my part, in word and deed, which all too often mars the beauty of the gospel.*

7) Sunday 24th October – welcome

Read [Romans 15.1-7](#)

“.. welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God ..” [ESV] (Rom.15.7)

This section (14.1-15.7) of the letter ends as it began, with the exhortation to *welcome* one another. The manner of that welcome is seen in the ministry of Jesus. The motive in such welcome is the glory of God.

What are the characteristics the ‘welcome’ Christ has extended to you which are now to be incorporated into your ‘welcome’ of those around you?

How will this affect the way you engage with fellow believers as you join them in worship today?

What will it mean for you as an individual, and for us as a church, to “please our neighbours for their good, to build them up”?

Prayer: *Grant us, Lord Jesus, the same attitude of mind towards one another that You have, so that with one mind and one voice today we may glorify our God and Father.*