

We Will... Welcome (Romans 15:1-7)

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[0 : 00] Well good morning fourth. This fine Thanksgiving weekend and it's December.

Just kind of take that in right? Well it is good to see you this morning and I trust you've had a good weekend. We see some faces folks visiting from out of town and seeing family and pray that you are blessed this morning by gathering to worship our worthy King Jesus. Amen? This morning we are going to be in Acts looking at final chapter Acts 28 looking at verses 1 through 16 to finish out our sermon series our membership covenant our we-wills and so that's where we will be this morning. So let me pray ask God's blessing on our study and then we will dive in together. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus you are the founder and the perfecter of our faith and it was for joy that you endured the cross and Lord this morning we consider it our joy.

Lord that it was in your heart and mind that we might experience your joy that you would share that with us and so Lord we are here today wanting to celebrate the gift of salvation that if anyone's in Christ there are new creation. Lord thank you for the gathering that's present here. Father we're very different people today because of the gospel and so we are thankful that you would call us sons and daughters as a result of your offering Jesus of your very life. So we worship you this morning we believe that you are the resurrected King that you hear our prayers that you hear our songs you're here our adoration and all of that is worship unto you and so Lord I pray that you would have our minds and our hearts as we consider your words that you have left for us to guide us in this life and for that we say thank you. So would you accomplish something good in each of us that we would look something more like Jesus because of our time together. It's in your name we pray Lord Jesus. Amen. So this is our final sermon for this series on the we-wills and this morning our final commitment as a church is that we will welcome new members in this local body committing to live together as a covenant community. So that is the commitment that we have to one another and it's really a commitment to hospitality to loving the stranger in that they would become family having eyes for others always looking to say there is room at the table for just one more and doing that over and over again and really more than anything church this is a heart posture of caring about people that we would be a welcoming community that we would care about people and then a willingness really for us to live outside of our comfort zones by inviting them into our lives and that's really the heart of God right that he would invite us into his family through the person of Christ. Now this commitment that we will welcome new members into this local body I made mentioned in a couple of sermons prior that we were tackling some of the more difficult commitments right that we would live generously we would give of our resources unto the Lord our time our talent our treasure difficult one or we will submit great word there right joyfully to the leadership and I said those were difficult but actually I think this final commitment welcoming people into our lives this commitment may be the hardest and actually the most costly of all and why do I say that because for us to be a welcoming people it actually requires us to become others oriented as people right it's a it's a new default setting for those in Christ we weren't born this way we were born thinking of others but it's something that the Lord is working in each of our lives as he sanctifies us as we begin to understand the gospel that he was a pursuing God of people that we are to be pursuers of others that we are to live right not to be served but to serve others the Philippians to mindset and this is to be our new default setting I'm thankful for Scott his friendship and

his leadership in our church I think he embodies this he's a very others oriented individual a little strange but he is others oriented I say strange because he actually came back in the office Wednesday he's like man Jay Costco is just packed you don't want to I mean you don't want to go there I'm like it's just really why are you at Costco on Wednesday before Thanksgiving and he's like oh but I loved it I'm like this little strange right I'm like why why he's like well man there's more people there there's a disconnect for normal people but Scott's like yeah Jay man there's like so many more opportunities for conversations at Costco and that's that's our pastor right but I think it embodies this others orientation it's a sanctifying work God's doing in each of us right daily dying to self trying to figure out how can I live for for the joy of someone else today and that's this commitment that we are actually going to live for the joy of others we're going to welcome others into this body and I think there's not a more strategic commitment we will commitment to finish our series on and so this morning let me give us a little context related to the passage that we will be in we're going to actually pick up the story of Paul who's our final we will this is our final observation of Paul traveling in his ministry and we're going to pick up the story where Paul has left

[6 : 57] Caesarea he's been incarcerated for a couple of years waiting to stand trial before Caesar he finally gets the nod to go to Rome from King Agrippa and the governor Festus at the time and he gets his day in court he's been incarcerated for two years and finally he's released to go stand before Caesar and to deal with some of these accusations that the Jews have waged against him and yet it's God's timing it's his providence Paul long to get to Rome he wanted to go for three years in fact you can note that in Romans 1 10 and 11 he mentions that he wanted to go he wants to encourage them he wants to build them up he wants to talk and preach the gospel and so God uses this difficult trial to further his gospel purposes and so Paul is loaded up on a ship there in Caesarea at sea for a couple months he encounters a violent storm we know that it's a violent storm because the sailors upon this vessel were where they were throwing everything overboard it says that in Acts 27 18 there's 276 men that are shipwrecked as they're traveling to Rome they're shipwrecked on an island of

Malta and every man actually makes it to shore they're all alive and that's where we pick up the story and I love this story because we're going to see multiple images of hospitality woven throughout this this final leg of Paul's ministry and it's this hospitality this kindness that fuels the courage for Paul to continue to serve another day and so let's look at it together here beginning in verses 1 through 6 and Luke writes after we were brought safely through we then learned that the island was called Malta the native people showed us unusual kindness for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all because it had begun to rain and was cold when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand when the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand they said to one another no doubt this man is a murderer though he has escaped from the sea justice has not allowed him to live he however shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm they were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead but when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him they changed their minds and said he was a god okay so

I've got a slide here little map for us to kind of see Paul's final leg this is after his third missionary journey he's been there in Caesarea for a couple of years and he's finally making his way and you can see the island of Malta there on the left side tiny little island right below Sicily there in Italy and this island is just 58 miles south of Sicily it's not a large island it's like 17 miles long not 17 miles long nine miles wide and the scene that we have here now on this island we have a bunch of tired wet sailors prisoners we don't know how many prisoners were part of this ship but certainly Paul and there are others we don't know the number but you see here just this remarkable image of hospitality on this island it comes from the least likely place from a group actually of unbelievers it says in verse 2 the native people showed us unusual kindness for they kindle a fire and welcomed us all because it had begun to rain and was cold so you've got this crisis the shipwreck these these wet soul sailors they're in crisis and there's some people that show up and they care for them and it's a wonderful image of of what we're talking about this morning of being that sort of body that we're a welcoming community and here you have this hospitality expressed from really the least likely of places I think sometimes the unbeliever puts us the shame church amen anybody ever noticed that sometimes it's the unbeliever that does a better job of welcoming of loving of showing kindness and I actually love that this scene is recorded in the Bible and it's really I think there to confront us wow unusual kindness from an unbeliever and it should provoke in us a little bit of discomfort that the non-Christian actually steals our ethic of kindness here and puts us to shame probably one of the kindest gestures I've ever experienced as a professional Uber driver was back in Seattle and I drove this couple a lesbian couple one was fairly inebriated the other was sober and picked him up got him home and the one gal was helping her partner to kind of get to the doorway and I got him to where their apartment was and dropped him off and and she was kind of helping this gal get to the door and I was about to pull away and then she put her down on the steps and she ran back to the car and knocked on the window and I was like a little startled because I'm

I'm about to head out I rolled my window down and she just said thank you and she handed me a \$20 bill and that's not typical like as a new driver people aren't just throwing cash at me I know you think that's how it is but it's not and it was really during the time when you were encouraged not to tip and she was just so appreciative and it was like I still think about like this kindness that was given to me in a place I did not expect and it confronted me and I think this image this morning church should confront us these are unbelievers on this island and they're they're loving on on these people in in what probably felt to them like a very extravagant way church this has been the testimony of the church for centuries that we have set a mark in terms of showing hospitality of loving people God's people have been called to set the pace here in terms of humanity in terms of how we love people Christians have always entered into difficulty into suffering in some fashion often at the expense of their own lives you can read that throughout church history one occasion occurred in the 14th century the black death killed a third of the entire population between Iceland and and India and in 1527 the bubonic plague came to Wittenberg Germany Martin Luther at the time encouraged his students to head home get get out of the city leave but then he encouraged the ministers to stay he said hey this is time for us actually now to serve and I love that example like that would have been unusual kindness to that city to risk one's very life to love another selflessly and it really it sounds a lot like the gospel doesn't it yeah and it's a really a vision of life that transcends the immediate God you've placed me here for such a time as this to be your hands feet to be a people that welcome others in and it's a beautiful image well back to the scene here we have a fire and it's warming these tired cold men shipwrecked and I love Paul's example here he doesn't just sort of he's like okay now I get a break he actually is engaged in serving he's a prisoner and he doesn't sit back and let others do the work he actually engages he gathers wood for the fire so he's in the midst of serving and then what happens this is a bizarre scene I actually love the story because it's so unusual that it's like it's in the Bible it's it's recorded for us what in the world this snake bites him right attaches himself to Paul to his hand and you're just like what what in the world but but maybe theologically you sort of wonder like why God like why Paul's actually serving he's had a hard like past few years can he just get a break no I'm gonna stand on a snake chop like what in the world it's very strange but I think it's a reminder to us that none of us get a pass we live in a very broken world and even in the midst of ministry there is difficulty church there can be very hard things that occur probably one of them that I was thinking about this week and Scott will never share the story but he hired me so I will share it for him and I and and there's not a lot of

stories that bothered me this one bothered me because it was it was such a harsh thing and and you guys don't see a lot of these things but when you're in minute when you're in leadership leadership is about making decisions and and you're not gonna please everyone right you know if you're a leader you understand that it's just part of it and you strive to make decisions that honor the Lord and and and good for for for the church and ministry and Scott had made a decision and someone was not happy with they were they were affected by they they're not even part of our church but they were affected by it and there was a memorial service Scott was attending and then this individual came up to him and you're you're ministering you're trying to be there to serve and to love people and this person came out of just nowhere like a beeline to Scott and shared probably the harshest thing you could say to another human and this is in the context of like Scott being there to serve the memorial and and Scott's not usually like affected that deeply and this this shook him this was hard it was like some of the nastiest words you could speak to another person and it and it just it grieved me when he shared the story and I was glad that he could share it so that I could at least encourage and remind him that he's not alone but difficult things happen in ministry and we need one another this welcoming thing is not a small thing church to be a body it's everything it's life it's courage it's the ability to say I can serve one more day because I'm not doing it alone well Scott was very gracious by the way as the story goes don't ask him who it was he won't tell you and they don't attend here so just it's okay but he was very gracious and I appreciate that about him the Maltese the people here they look at Paul because you know he's bitten by the snake and what do they think verse 4 says hey this guy's a murderer right he escaped the sea but justice is not allowed him to live haha it's so interesting and I want us to catch this before we move on from the section but it's fascinating to me that that culture has a sense of morality and it's in its present here in this story like they don't know God but they have in their mind this idea that you know what bad things happen to bad people and so there's this we see morality it's just hardwired into man and it's so clear from this story right they're unbelievers hey even the atheists like they they speak in categories of good and evil and and what people ought to be doing and not to be doing all the while rejecting objective truth but but their speech it actually like reveals what they actually think and I think it's actually a wonderful way that you can engage with the unbeliever when they like to use these categories like how do you have categories of oddness without a God without a law giver he's written that code of ethics into man's heart and you see that Paul says in Romans 2 15 they show the work of the law is written on their hearts while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them and really what we're talking about here is the moral argument for God and if you want to do some more reading on that C.S. Lewis and his book mere Christianity the first 28 pages are all about the moral argument there's nothing better on the subject and it's a wonderful way to engage in conversation with somebody who's saying I don't believe in absolute truth I don't believe there is a God I love what Lewis writes he says the unbeliever is haunted by the idea of a sort of

[21 : 06] behavior they ought to be practicing they're haunted by it because they know it's hard written upon them well Paul doesn't swell up like a sausage doesn't fall over on his back right he's he just shakes the snake off this is great chomp you know just shakes it off and kind of gets on with with the evening's events and and then the Maltese they now respond differently because at first you're thinking oh you're getting what you deserve karma right they have this this kind of notion in their mind and and yet all of a sudden then they say in verse 6 like Paul doesn't die they're like they changed their mind and said he's a God really well this is what they believe I know it seems wacky it's it's they go just it's a media switch it'd be like a co-worker who has it out for you who steals your ideas who's constantly like you know submarining you to the boss and then all of a sudden the next day they're like man you're my best friend and I'm gonna throw you a party and like let's go hang out you're like what in the world and that's what's going on here they just they immediately change their mind about Paul like you're a God you didn't die he went from murderer to God in the span of just moments fascinating what in the world but this was this was typical of that culture in that day there's an emphasis on the mystical these are unbelievers they're on an island it's you know it's animism there's good and evil spirits everywhere part of everything spirits in the animals and the trees and the stars and you offend one of these deities and then disaster is gonna befall your life and so in their mind God's were controllable and much of faith operated on these laws of cause and effect you do this you can leverage the deity to carry out your desires people even worried about potentially being cursed by somebody in this day who had a grievance against them and and actually archaeologists have discovered what they have termed cursed tablets in this area in Asia minor from this period right equivalent to our modern day I guess voodoo if you will so this is kind of the mindset of the day but you're sometimes evil touches those who love the Lord sometimes evil touches those who tremble before God in fact the psalmist says it in Psalm 119 161 says princes persecute me without cause but my heart stands in awe of your words I fear you I tremble before your words God and yet there are individuals who are persecuting me without cause and I think as evil touches our lives again this is why we have to be a welcoming community encouraging one another being present for one another what is Paul thinking at this point I'm a murderer oh no I'm a God what I no doubt this culture is lost this culture needs the gospel the view of reality is very skewed and no doubt

Paul could have been very discouraged I think we often get discouraged as we look around and see where culture is at it's very discouraging trying to represent Jesus in our day and age I get discouraged oftentimes it feels like this uphill battle oftentimes it feels as though our words are our futile which I think again was why we need to be a church that welcomes one another that provides encouragement for one another that offers real fellowship for one another we need that I've been given out books this this Christmas I just started to mean and have given out a few related to the gospel to my passengers is just something I do as a new driver you ride with me you get a present so if you want one you have to figure out how to get a ride with me and I was handing these out to different folks earlier in the week and I tried to give one to a gal a GU student and from China and we were having a great conversation and by the time the ride was over I just say hey do you have a church and do you celebrate Christmas and so we're kind of talking about Christmas said hey I have a book that explains Christmas I would love to give it to you and I grabbed I give them on my front seat and I offered it and she immediately like her hands went up she's like no I cannot accept that like oh it's free it's actually it's a gift she's no from China we can't I'm from China and I cannot accept that gift and I talked to Scott about this a little bit afterwards and he kind of explained some things as he's done many trips and ministry there in China and you know being associated with the Communist Party and you could lose your scholarship you could lose your family could lose their livelihood etc etc there's a lot there and that was helpful but in the moment I felt so rejected I actually left coin it was so visceral her response after we had such great rapport I had I felt like I did something wrong but I was trying to offer her the gospel and I really was discouraged and it was so helpful actually to have the conversation with Scott later and it was like oh that's the gift of the church encouragement and we need that culture is it's hard culture is hard I was thumbing through some of the top hip-hop music actually for research not because I wanted to listen to it and it's just there's so much there's so much just trash and you listen to this stuff it can't help but like inform you on what is normal in terms of how to relate to people romantically and otherwise and it's just it's sad probably my low moment as an Uber driver I drove a couple gals in Seattle and they wanted a particular station or artists have been a few years I don't recall but I had my pandora and I was like all right you know sure you know and popped it in and then the music came on and it was so foul that I just I could I couldn't do it I couldn't do it and I was like I can't do it sorry and by the time we got to the end of the ride they were just berating me upset we're not gonna give you a tip they weren't gonna tip me anyhow and and and yelling and then they just slam the doors on my car and it was like because I couldn't do it and then because I'm not as gracious as Scott I'm learning that's why I got put us together but I just had to share things and I was like man you guys obviously don't respect yourselves as women you know based upon the way that they're being objectified in the songs that you're listening to and I kind of I kind of shared that like I popped out of my because they were there and then they gave me like there's a choreography with their hand motions towards me and the whole thing it was not good but it was

like it's hard representing Christ can be hard when you're out there it's it's so good for us to be out there church to be scattered during the week amen but it can be discouraging which is why we have to be a welcoming community all right let's continue Paul actually makes really good use of his time on Malta let's look at that versus seven to ten says now in the neighborhood of that place where lands belonging to the chief man of the island named Publius who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days it happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery and Paul visited him and prayed and putting his hands on him healed him and when this had taken place the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured they also honored us greatly and when we were about to sail they put on board whatever we needed just beautiful this this kindness this hospitality this this is that welcoming spirit church Paul he he serves as this governor this Roman governor of the island Publius and heals his father and then many of those on the island they bring their sick to Paul heals them and then they respond with gratitude welcoming Paul as though he's like part of their family and sets up you know the the sailors with supplies this is an unusual kindness church there's no record of conversion on Malta Bible silent on that we don't know if some trusted in in Christ for salvation perhaps there was some some some conversion but but man there's such a beautiful picture of of hospitality from the least likely place this is the unbeliever the leading man of the island welcomes Paul cares for him for three days he was a stranger to

Paul before this and he and he welcomed him in for three days and there was refreshment and it came from the least likely place and again church this is good in front us this should inspire us as we consider how we are actually taking time to refresh one another when we gather every week are we are we coming here with the mindset of how can I bless how can I serve how can I refresh someone else I am actually thankful that we have a number of folks that set a really good pace here at church here at 4th I think we have a number of folks that do this so well when we were here for the first time and then we had our kind of our inaugural visit of like okay that was for us we got a phone call Nancy Chapel she's called us she's like in fact I talked to her this morning I said Nancy I might mention you she's like you better not but sorry Nancy but I told her I was like Nancy we need to get you back on that like she's so good and and we were at one of our neighborhood group classes a couple weeks ago and

John and Pat Baren do a great job hospitality loving their neighbors and and then I think one of my daughters leaned over to pass like hey did Nancy call you yep sure did so it's like this is good we have people that set a great pace here of like man welcome people in let's treat them like family and I'm thankful for that at 4th that we have that well we're here final leg of the journey and I'm gonna read these verses but I want to put that map back up actually so we can see from from Malta as it kind of sails up Syracuse Righgium Ptole you can see kind of these really great names that I'm probably not pronouncing correctly but let me read verses 14 or 11 to 14 says after three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered on the island a ship of Alexandria with the twin gods as figureheads so you have on the front of this ship now there's these effugees on the bow the ship heavenly twins right sons of Zeus castor Pollux these false gods of navigation so you know age of magic we believe in these different deities to protect and I know it's interesting that it's mentioned there this kind of out of the out of the ordinary but verse 12 putting in at Syracuse now you can see where they are okay we stayed there for three days and from there we made a circuit and arrived at

[33 : 26] Righium maps accurate thus far and after one day a south wind sprang up and on the second day we came to Ptole it's not how you pronounce it ask Dr. Rylan afterward they'll explain there we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days and so we came to Rome again this there's hospitality woven throughout this narrative you see it in the unbeliever now you see it from the Christians no doubt Paul was experiencing some degree of anxiety at this point right he's getting closer and closer to his destination to face the most powerful man probably on the planet Caesar at the time and no doubt there's probably some stress he's feeling you can imagine that like a like a doctor's appointment that you have looming before you to get an update perhaps on your treatment or maybe you have an appointment you're working out some there's some conflict in and you have to have a conversation to work something out with an individual and you kind of begin to feel a little stress a little anxious so Paul arrives here at Ptole and and and this is Rome's chief seaport even though it's about 150 miles away from the city and what does God provide for Paul in this port city after this grueling journey after a bizarre experience on Malta getting bit by a snake and then everybody thinks you're a

God and then two years of waiting to stand before the highest human authority in Rome what does God provide he God provides for Paul what every Christian of every age requires in order to not lose heart in the mission this relevant for us church yes very I mean I would say so considering the mission field in which we represent Christ this is a very indifferent culture growing in hostility year by year towards the things of God what does God provide for Paul he provides a welcoming community offering their friendship offering their encouragement this is our commitment church that we're gonna be that that we're gonna be that welcoming community to one another and while Paul is there he he runs into these Christians and they provide fellowship koinoni a partnership family they provide this for seven days they welcome

Paul in he never met them before they say you're part of us come come no doubt there was refreshment that he experienced as a result of that encouragement that he experienced as a result of that church this is what we ought to be doing every time we gather for one another looking for ways to refresh one another before we scatter back into the world during the week and I think that's what it means for every member to be a minister it's not ministry from one or from a few it's ministry from all to all I think the prayer that we should pray before we gather every Sunday Lord give me one person that I can see and that I can serve just give me one person that I can do that for and it changes the way that we enter into our gathering then and it moves us out of that posture you know that you can get into of like I'm gonna test you are you gonna approach me are you gonna see me it gets out of that I'm here not to test anyone I want to be here as a minister Lord let me serve someone let me see someone I don't know what their week has been I don't know what trial they've just encountered I don't know why how they're discouraged let me minister to just one person that's a welcoming community so we ought to look like when we gather and that's gathering of believers they could have easily said well this guy's here for a short period and what could have they done I'm not gonna invest I'm not gonna invest in this guy he's a short timer they gave their best and then they sent him off well and we want to be that type of body as well that doesn't just welcome in but we send you off well we don't want anybody to just sort of like dissolve into the ether and like we don't know where you went we want to send you off because we actually believe that we're all ambassadors for

Christ living on mission representing Christ wherever we live work play whatever we do we're representing Christ we're all life is ministry and so when you leave we're trying to send you love that we got to send the the Gresh family Elijah and Katie and and he was coaching up at Whitworth and then he got a job in Iowa at another small school coaching basketball well he's like a missionary we sent them and we made sure I sent him a text God gave him a phone call we're like hey we see you we love you we want you to have great ministry where God has called you next but you're not just leaving without us saying something and I love that we actually have a number of folks in here that actually when you don't see someone you take it upon yourself to reach out I love that Scott loves that we because that's the body be in the body but we want to be a church that welcomes but also sends off well and actually Luke he adds some color to this others oriented welcoming spirit that Paul receives before he arrives in

Rome and he and he adds color in the last couple verses of this passage verses 15 and 16 listen to this it says and the brothers there so the brothers from Rome when they heard about us they came as far as the forum of apias and three taverns to meet us on seeing them Paul thank God and took courage and when we came into Rome Paul was allowed to stay by himself with the soldiers who guarded him so check this Paul is now walking the last 140 miles towards Rome from the port town of Patoli okay and then something surprisingly wonderful occurs 43 miles outside of Rome and 43 miles from Rome is a two-day journey if you're in Rome you're walking two days now to get to where you're at I think we have the map again maybe there it is so he's there in Patoli he's not in Rome and then 43 miles a bunch of folks from Rome come out to the forum of apias and they greet Paul and then 33 miles maybe a day and a half journey from Rome another group of Christians come out to the three taverns to welcome Paul these

[41 : 14] Christians are welcoming Paul this is do you see the scene like this is not a notch a lot oh yeah Paul's here he's coming I don't know when he'll arrive they're like no we're gonna go out to see him we're gonna be a community that welcomes him he's written us he's encouraged us we're gonna go bless him and they took time they took two days some of them out of their schedule well been four days maybe a week to go welcome him church there the scene that you have here again all the illustrations are Christmas because that's this time of year right this is it's a wonderful life isn't it it's George Bailey at the end of the film and you have this entire town they're coming out to him we're here for you we're here for you that's the scene church we're coming to see you Paul we're coming to encourage you we're coming to bless you I mean how much life did that pour into Paul tired anxious this weary soldier church this life of standing for Jesus can be lonely amen it can be very lonely to be an ambassador it actually means that we're never actually gonna feel completely like we are home even when we're home to be rejected who among us will take it upon themselves to walk 43 miles to encourage another and it's just it's a beautiful scene it's a beautiful scene the believers went out of their way to care for Paul in this moment what does it mean for us as we consider this call church to welcome one another into a real family even if just for a season even if just for a season maybe it means that we're gonna take the time to see the individual that's in the hospital to encourage them to remind them they're not alone in that difficult season John Calvin he actually taught the pastors that he was training to visit the sick as a primary duty of what it meant to be a pastor that guy was a he was a brain he was a theologian unequalled and yet he's like you know what you want to be a pastor you go and you visit the sick in the hospital and he actually explained he said hey the greatest need which a man ever has of the spiritual doctrine of our Lord is when his hand visits him with affliction whether of disease or other evils and specifically at the hour of death let's be the church let's see those who are shut-ins who are there in hospitals it means that we're a body that welcomes it somebody has a need and maybe they're in firm for we we make meals you don't want me cooking but I have people that I know that will do a good job you provide those sorts of things that's a welcoming community the note penned to someone maybe even on real paper on occasion the text is good but man that can bring significant encouragement it's seeing a new face on a Sunday and inviting them having the courage to approach them and say hey I love a conversation you want to go out for a meal you want to come over for me there's lots of ways to do this church but it's being reminded of like we may experience the blessing we talked about this in our neighborhood groups this morning the blessing of community but we need to give that we need to not forget that we longed for

that at one point and offer it to another and I and I love this the final question for us what did this welcoming spirit provide Paul with what did he experience as a result of of these believers being welcoming to him it says actually in verse 15 it says on seeing them Paul thank God and check this and took courage that's what it provided it's the ministry of encouragement it's profound he took courage I can keep fighting I can keep doing this I'm not alone it's it's powerful you know I was reminded of just the profound ministry this can have to individuals when we actually we did when we served at the UGM I think it was a couple weeks weekends ago and talking with I was at the women's shelter and and one of the gals I was having a conversation with said hey I discovered I've been using drugs as a way to feel normal and I I don't feel so alone now with these other women around me to fight this battle and it was profound that's it you're not alone take heart church how might we share courage with a brother a sister as we welcome one another into our lives even this week let's be that church amen a welcoming body father thank you for this section of Paul's life the way that we're confronted by the unbelievers the way that we're confronted by the church folks and the believers that were there in Rome loving on Paul seeking after him father thank you for for many in this church that quietly serve you in ways that are profound by seeing the person on the fringe by seeing the person that others look past loving them serving them reaching out caring about them father that is just the beautiful picture of the body of Christ and so we don't want to be a an auditorium where we come and observe we want to be your people that have ministry in the lives of one another thank you that you have set the pace Jesus that you came not to be served we're so thankful that you're asking something of us that you also were willing to carry out and so Lord I pray that we would grow in our other orientation as a body Lord we want to be a people that walk in greater courage to live outside our comfort zone to approach people to see people to find ways to bless people because Lord we may be the vehicle you use that allow somebody to continue to press on to battle against sin to to fight for their marriage to walk courageously in their mission field we may be the instrument that you choose to use actually to advance your kingdom in a very simple ministry of being a people that welcome one another we love you

Jesus in your name we pray amen