

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

YOU ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS

Romans 15:7 "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

The Greek word translated with the English word "accept" can mean "take hold of," "bring along" "welcome" or "gather together." From this you can see that St. Paul is encouraging the members of the church at Rome as well as your congregation to openly receive all people with love, care, and concern. This is more than just having a greeter to welcome new people as they enter church. It is more than being a "friendly" church. This acceptance goes much deeper than the superficial Sunday morning welcoming that often occurs in a Christian congregation.

The key phrase here in verse 7 is "just as Christ accepted you." Think of the time when Jesus ministered to the woman at the well. She was an outcast. She had to come to the well when the rest of the women of the town would not be there. Or, there was the time that Jesus went to the home of Zaccheus who was a tax collector. The Pharisee's criticized Him for associating with such a terrible sinner. Jesus chose Saul of Tarsus, at that time his arch enemy, to be one of His Apostle's.

God, chose and adopted you to be His child, not because of who you were, but because of His grace and mercy. If He chose you with all of your imperfections, sins, and faults, St. Paul says, in the same way you should be ready to accept anyone and everyone into your Christian fellowship.

The church is a group of sinners that God, through His Son Jesus gathers together to pour out His undeserved love and dispense His forgiveness of sins. You and all your fellow members are drawn together by His Spirit through the Gospel equally blessed with this forgiveness and the promise of heaven for all eternity. St. Paul said it this way, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) Jesus says, "There is one flock and one Shepherd." (John 10:16) Jesus' prayer is that "all believers be one" even and He and His Father are one. (John 17:11)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, send the Holy Spirit to gather me and all people together as members of Your body, the church. Amen.

The Church's one foundation IS Jesus Christ, her Lord;

She is His new creation, By water and the Word.
From heav'n He came and sought her To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died.

Elect from ev'ry nation, Yet one o'er all the earth;
Her charter of salvation: One Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name she blesses, Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses With ev'ry grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder The world sees her oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder, By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping; Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping Shall be the morn of song.

Through toil and tribulation And tumult of her war
She waits the consummation Of peace forevermore
Till with the vision glorious Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious Shall be the Church at Rest.

Yet she on earth has union With God, the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion With those whose rest is won.
O blessed heav'nly chorus! Lord, save us by Your grace
That we, like saints before us, May see You face to face.
(LSB 644)