



# Thinking About Welcome

By

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I love going places where I feel welcome. It might be someone's home or job or maybe meeting friends at a restaurant or movie theater. It might be the welcome you receive at your favorite card shop or garden center. How about your church? If you were to visit your church for the first time, would you feel welcome?

Being welcome is an important key to our relationship with Christ and other believers in the Body of Christ. Why? Because sin has made us all feel unwelcome in this world.

“Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’— therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” Genesis 3:22-24

Adam and Eve had experienced the great welcome of God into the world. The Lord created both of them with His own Hands and gave them everything their hearts could desire – until Satan led them to make a disastrous choice. The instant sin entered Adam and Eve they realized the welcome was over and they hid themselves from God.

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’ And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?’ Then the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’ And the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’” Genesis 3:6-13

Even as God was sending them from the Garden of Eden, He had already put into motion the spiritual actions necessary to redeem them and be able to righteously welcome them back as His children. God would send His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the Cross and pay the penalty for their sin against God. If you are a Christian, saved by the Blood Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, you have experienced the great Welcome of God. Listen to these words of welcome from our Lord.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

“But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’” Matthew 9:14

“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.” Matthew 18:11

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” Matthew 25:34

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” John 5:24

“For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” John 6:33

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” Revelation 3:20

Jesus came to make a Way for us to be welcome in God's Presence. One of the greatest portions of God's Word about how the Lord has welcomed us is in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesian Christians. Look for words that speak to welcoming someone.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the

redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1:3-23

Here are some of the words of great “welcome” that we see in this beautiful chapter of God’s Word:

- blessed
- spiritual blessing
- chose
- predestined
- adoption
- pleasure

- will
- grace
- accepted
- redemption
- forgiveness
- riches
- abound toward us
- wisdom
- prudence
- having made known
- mystery of His will
- His good pleasure
- purposed in Himself
- He might gather together
- in one all things in Christ
- in Him
- obtained an inheritance
- according to the purpose of Him
- works all things
- counsel of His will
- praise of His glory
- word of truth
- gospel of your salvation
- sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise
- guarantee of our inheritance
- redemption of the purchased possession

You and I are God's "purchased possession" and our destiny is to be to the "praise of His glory!" Salvation is very personal to God – He loves His children. We were in big trouble and He stepped in personally to take the burden of sin on Himself on the Cross. Look at the amazing list above and we see that God has placed great value on us. And what is God looking forward to doing in the near future? "... that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him." This is what God is going to do for you and every true believer. He's going to "gather" us together in Christ for eternity!

The words "gather together" are a translation of the Greek word *anakephalaioo* – "to bring back to and gather round the main point." The idea here is of a "gathering again," pointing back to a previous condition before there was a separation. When was that time? In the beginning, before sin entered and separated humans from God. This is our long-promised "restoration" with the God of Heaven. God is going to gather together all things into "one" in Christ. We will be as it was – in perfect unity and fellowship with God!

Can you feel God's Arms pulling you in very close right now? Do you feel His Welcome? Well, that's what the Lord wants us to do for others. God wants His children to open their arms wide – pull lost, hurting people close and love them with the special love that only God can give us. Love for others is the hallmark of being a follower of Christ. Look at what Jesus said about it.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.” John 15:12-17

Our Lord made it clear that expressing love to others was living out the greatest passion of His Heart. Jesus came to seek and save the lost because He loves people. He gave His Life for people. He wants us to share in that love. Jesus and His Apostles are examples to us of the welcome to be offered to all in Jesus’ Name.

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in

prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.” Romans 12:9-13

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” Romans 13:8-10

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Galatians 5:13

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:1-3

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.” 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:23-25

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.” 1 Peter 1:22-23

“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” 1 Peter 3:8-9

“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ 1 Peter 4:8

“For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another ... And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.” 1 John 3:11, 23

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God ... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” 1 John 4:7, 11-12

“I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.” 2 John 1:4-6

The evidence from God’s Word is overwhelming! The Lord wants us to welcome all people with open hearts – hearts that are filled with God’s Love for the lost and for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Who do you know who needs to hear the welcome message of God – the

Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? Who do you know who needs God's Love in their life today? Go to that person this week – invite them to experience God's Love – invite them to worship God with His people. Tell them – “you're welcome here!”

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