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“To God’s Beloved: Paul’s Letter to the Romans”

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Session 8: Holy Hospitality

Welcome to Session 8 of our study. We’re drawing near a year-long investment in this wonderful letter of Paul to the Romans, and I’ll just bet that by now, you have more questions and more concerns than you had at the beginning. And that’s a good thing, because the more deeply we dig into Paul, the more we wonder, what did he mean, how did people hear it? Now, this is not irrelevant to this particular session because you will be hearing from Paul in these chapters yet again about holy hospitality. Why do we call it that?

Two reasons. One, that Paul understands that we are called to connect with each other hospitably to welcome one another as friends. You’ll have a chance to study a little bit about what friendship means in the ancient world as you do this study. It is a very profound human connection that Paul thinks is a good model for the ways that we are Christian together. And he talks about, in addition to sharing all things and having them in common as friends do, they share their goods, they share speech, they share concern for each other. But it is for mutual up-building. So Paul says, “Don’t welcome each other for quarrelling, but understand that each one has a conscience, and welcome one another with a responsibility for mutual up-building and accountability to each other for that.”

Paul takes it a step further, “It’s not only a good thing to do, but it is a holy thing to do.” “We do this,” Paul says in the middle of Chapter 15, “for the glory of God. God’s reputation, God’s glory, God’s honor is revealed by the way we treat one another.” Again, a powerful call to us from this ancient letter to the Romans.