

One Another – Greet With Holy Kiss

Text : **Romans 16: 3-16**

INTRODUCTION :

- A. The relationship between Christians is unique, unlike any other on earth.**
1. Our series on the “**one another**” passages has taught us much about what what God wants the relationship between His children to be.
 2. We’ve found it to be much more involved than we had previously believed it to be.
- B. When one becomes a Christian, he becomes part of a different family.**
1. The Christians is “born again” into God’s eternal family. (*new name – Christian*)
 - a. All family members are united by the blood of Christ.
 - b. By reason of this common birth, we become siblings in God’s family.
 - c. All being siblings of Jesus the Christ, we are all siblings of each other.
 2. When one becomes a Christian, he is adopted into the family of God.
 - a. **Gal. 4: 4-7** **But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.**
 - b. We are all children of the same Father so we ARE brothers and sisters.
- C. Being siblings, we are expected to treat each other as brothers and sister.**
1. The principle of “leave and cleave” applies.
 - a. **Eph. 5: 31– For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.**
 - b. When one becomes part of a new family, there is a uniting in it, a new loyalty.
 2. One doesn’t learn to treat his fellow Christians AS IF they were sibling, he must treat them AS siblings because they are related both by blood and by adoption.
- D. Our studies have shown us that we must do many things to build, to reinforce and to maintain this special relationship.**
1. This warm family relationship with our spiritual siblings is not optional.
 2. We cannot maintain a relationship with our Lord Jesus the Christ without it.
 3. As well, we can’t maintain a relationship with Jesus without obeying His commands.
 4. Without a relationship with our Lord Jesus the Christ we cannot go to Heaven.

Thus, our study of the “one another” commands is not only a primer for teaching us how to live in the church, but also to teach necessities for our journey to Heaven.

This lesson adds one more of these commands :

Romans 16: 16 – Greet one another with a holy kiss.
All the churches of Christ greet you.

I. Is this really something the church should be doing today ?

A. This is a direct command, not a suggestion.

1. Greet is in the imperative mood which indicates a command.
2. To “*greet*” means : *To draw into one’s self, to receive joyfully, to welcome.*

B. This is not an insignificant command or obscure passage, it’s repeated 5 times.

1. **I Cor. 16: 20** – All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.
2. **II Cor. 13: 12-13** – Greet one another with a holy kiss. **13** All the saints greet you.
3. **I Thes. 5: 26** – Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.
4. **I Pet. 5: 14** – Greet one another with a kiss of love. ...

C. Since it’s clearly commanded by God to all the churches, why don’t we do it ?

1. Some object that it’s not part of our culture and just ignore the command.
 - a. Are we putting our culture above the commands of God ?
 - b. **Tit. 1: 12-13** ... The Cretans were commanded to change their culture.
2. Are we callously ignoring the will of God ... “*I don’t like it and I’m not going ...*”

II. The custom of greeting friends with a kiss goes back thousands of years.

A. It predates both Christianity and Judaism.

1. **Gen. 29: 13** ... Laban greeted Jacob with a kiss. (*Acceptance & welcome*)
2. **Gen. 33: 4** ... Esau kissed Jacob when they met.
3. **I Sam. 20: 41** ... David and Jonathan kissed when they parted.

* *Nothing sexual about the kiss, it was a greeting between those who were close.*

B. Jesus practiced the holy kiss.

1. **Luke 7: 45** ... Simon was thinking evil, Jesus rebuked him for not giving Him a kiss.
2. **Luke 22: 47-48** ... One of the most famous kisses in history was given to Jesus.

C. Because the kiss was a sign of friendship and acceptance, using it deceptively was considered particularly despicable.

1. **Prov. 27: 6** – Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.
2. **II Sam. 20: 9** (*and context*) ... Joab killed Amasa while greeting him with a kiss.
3. **Luke 22: 47-48** ... Judas betrayed our Lord with a kiss ... the sign of friendship.

III. The “holy kiss” was a part of Christian worship for centuries.

A. McClintock & Strong ... *Cyclopedia of Biblical Theology and Ecclesiastical Literature*

The practice (holy kiss) itself was kept up for centuries, especially in connection with the celebration of the supper. It was regarded as a special token of perfect reconciliation and concord among members of the church and was called simply “*The peace*” or “*The kiss of peace.*” (Vol. V, Pg. 112)

B. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible* affirms that there were other occasions when the church formally administered the “holy kiss.”

The latter had a place in the public worship ... (1) Neophytes were kissed at baptism; (2) Penitents, when they were reconciled; (3) Candidates for ordination; and even (4) The deceased. It was practiced most widely during the celebration of the Eucharist. (Vol. 3, Pg. 830)

C. Justin Martyr, an early Christian apologist, wrote “*Apology.*” (155 a.d.)

He describes Christian worship as reading from the scripture followed by an admonition to apply that which was read and then prayer. “*When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss.* Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren.”

D. Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandra and others referred to its practice.

E. It is the practice from which sprang many modern customs, for example :

1. This is the origin of the custom of Roman priests kissing objects while doing masses.
2. Couples kissing at the conclusion of their wedding comes from the holy kiss.

IV. Since it was part of Christian worship for so long, why don't we do it now ?

A. The “holy kiss” was only added because they misunderstood Paul’s intent.

1. Many religious practices have been added by brethren of limited knowledge.
 - a. They have a strong desire to please God, but legalism generates fear within them.
 - b. They find it easier to bind than to learn enough to mature into discernment.

2. They are sincere in their desire to do right so they cover all the bases.
3. Remember the Pharisees;
 - a. Jesus condemned them for adding/binding traditions to the Law.
 - b. His most strong condemnations went to those who added ... more than “sinners.”

B. In order to understand this command, we must understand a basic principle of interpretation :

1. A distinction must be made between the *essence* of a command and its *circumstances*
 - a. The essence is the principle God wants for man to understand and apply in life.
 - b. The circumstance is like a vessel in which the principle is conveyed.
2. The essence of a command is binding :
 - a. Upon all men,
 - b. In all places,
 - c. For all time.
3. The circumstances are not necessarily binding :
 - a. Upon anyone at any time,
 - b. but may be binding up some people under certain conditions. (*Women .. I Cor. 11*)
 - c. Circumstances do not apply equally in all places and at all times. (*Hands - I Tm. 2:8*)

C. John 13: 1-20 is an example of this principle :

1. Jesus washed the feet of all the Apostles.
 - a. They were observing the feast of the Passover. (**last supper**)
 - b. All of the Apostles were there, but no one had had his feet washed.
2. He insisted that ALL of the Apostles allow him to wash their feet. (**Vs. 6-11**)
3. **Vs. 15 – For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.**
 - a. Jesus instructed His disciples to wash each other’s feet.
 - b. Have you ever had one of your leaders wash your feet ?
4. **WHY NOT ??** Some churches have foot-washing ceremonies.
5. This is a clear command; should we not obey it ?
 - a. Have we put our culture above the command of God ?

**** Some object, *We bath, wear shoes, and drive cars we don’t need to wash feet.***
 - b. Are the other churches more faithfully following the word ?
6. We understand that the “essence” of the command was not about washing feet.
 - a. Jesus was instructing the disciples to humble themselves before each other.

- b. The command was to humbly serve one another. (*visible, practice ... not ceremony*)
- c. Washing feet was simply the circumstance in which the command was conveyed.

*** This is the difference between knowing and understanding, between knowledge and discernment.**

D. Likewise, we don't bind or even practice the "holy kiss" because we understand the essence of the command. ... GREET ONE ANOTHER

1. The Apostle's intent was not to institute a new ordinance in the church.
2. He gave a command, told how to carry it out and the way in which it was to be done.
 - a. His command : **Greet one another** (*Essence*)
 - b. Instrument of implementation : **Kiss** (*Circumstance*) *Appropriate to their culture*
 - c. Way command is to be carried out : **Holy** (*Character*)
3. It is only the immature who get hung up on the exact replication of physical acts.

V. Let us not get so bogged down in the legalistic application of the mere external circumstances of commands, that we don't seek their essence.

A. What was it that the Lord's Apostle wanted to accomplish by this command ?

1. He wanted every Christian to acknowledge a relationship with every other Christian.
2. The imperative is for all Christians to express a greeting to all their brethren.
 - a. In practical terms, what does this command to greet mean for us ?
 - b. I like this definition that I picked up from an older preacher :

To consciously recognize another person with both verbal and physical signals so as to convey an attitude of goodwill toward that person and a love for that person which is clear and unmistakable.

B. Sometimes we've gotten so hung up on the kissing that we've missed the intent of the command.

1. The clear command is that ALL Christians must greet one another.
 - a. Just in our text (Rom. 16) it is given as a command 16 times. (*imperative case*)
 - b. These 16 greetings include at least 25 individuals and 4 groups.
 - c. N.T. 8 times we're commands to greet brethren in general or told to greet groups.
2. THUS, .. this is something God places a significant emphasis upon.
3. Since it is that important to God, it should be important to us.

C. The Christian greeting must be :

1. A sincere expression of our love for a brother or sister. (*above greeting to others*)
 - a. We can't sincerely greet those we don't care about.
 - b. We must develop an interest in our spiritual family.
2. Our greeting must be one that successfully conveys our love to them.
 - a. More than a wave. **I Pet. 1: 22** ... *Christian love must be communicated.*
 - b. More than a lifeless handshake. (*Greeting takes time .. cf .. Luke 10:4*)
3. In bygone era they kissed all those with whom they had a relationship.
It we are to replace the kiss, it must be with a culturally appropriate equivalent.
 - a. It must be a greeting that is appropriate between family members.
 - b. The greeting must be befitting the relationship, **not** like you would greet strangers.
4. Christians greet each other by name. (*Personal ... Not a wave and "Hey" to group*)
 - a. **III John 15** – **Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.**
 - b. Do we even know all the names of the brethren?
5. Obviously the emphasis is in the building of ever closer interpersonal relationships.

D. Every Christian must greet every other Christian. (*Thus, we must assemble.*)

1. **I Thes. 5: 26** – **Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.**
2. **Phil. 4: 21**– **Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.**
3. The greeting process is to be a great unifier of God's people. **LEAVE NONE OUT**
 - a. Imagine the Jewish Christian kissing a gentile Christian.
 - b. Picture the proud Roman master kissing a stinky Hebrew slave.
4. Other congregations must be greeted : **Rom. 16: 5, 23** ; **Col. 4: 18**, etc.

CONCLUSION :

- A. Look around you and see who you haven't greeted today and do it before leaving
To consciously recognize another person with both verbal and physical signals so as to convey an attitude of goodwill toward that person and a love for that person which is clear and unmistakable.
- B. Have you entered God's family ?
 1. He is like the father of the prodigal son. *Ran to meet his son and kept kissing him.*
 2. He eagerly awaits to greet you with open arms. *God is eager to welcome home.*

Lesson Text :**Romans 16: 3-16**

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, **4** who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; **5** also *greet* the church that is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. **6** Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. **7** Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. **8** Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. **9** Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. **10** Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the *household* of Aristobulus. **11** Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the *household* of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. **12** Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. **13** Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. **14** Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. **15** Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. **16** *Greet one another with a holy kiss.* All the churches of Christ greet you.