

Greeting With A Holy Kiss

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Rom. 16:3-16

In verses 3-15, Apostle Paul conveys his personal greetings to a number of Christians in the city of Rome. Now, in verse 16 he does two things; in the last part of the verse he conveys greetings from all the Churches of Christ, those that worship scripturally and personally I believe that Paul does this because of the unity or essential unity that exists between all the churches of Christ as our Lord also directed and because of our union with our Lord. *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sin; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among all whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desire of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others...”* (Eph.2:1-22). He conveys greetings on behalf of these churches because he has had direct contact with many of them as well as indirect contact. *“Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”* (2 Cor. 11:28). Just like when Ellis came in East Africa and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the great commission, he knows the churches he left here in Africa and some names of believers in those Churches. In addition to Paul’s involvement with all the churches as anyone may involve himself today with all the churches he was in the process of taking up collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, and each contributing church seems to have sent a personal representative along with Paul (1 Cor. 16:2-4).

The first thing we see in verse 16 is a command, to greet **one another with a holy kiss** I believe this is a personal greeting. All the churches send their greetings (verse 16b). The coworkers that were with Paul also had send their greetings (verse 21-23). And now he tells the Romans Christians to greet one another among themselves (verse 16a), and we must put in mind that a Christian greeting is the manifestation of Christian unity. Therefore, greetings must be within the church, as well as between the churches. Apostle Paul tells the church at Rome and everywhere not only to greet one another, but he tells us how this greetings should be expressed; **with a holy kiss**. For those who read and meditating up on the scriptures can understand that this command is not found only once in the Bible; but it is found five times in the New Testament. *“All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another*

with an holy kiss.” (1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26 and 1 Pet. 5:14.

- Every Christian should and must be willing to obey the scriptures, exactly as the command is given and that is why we are called Christians.
- In many instances; more than we might like to admit, this exactly what we should do without excuses or modification. However, simple obedience to God’s commands ought to be our desire and respond most often.
- And brethren we ought to remember that when there is a commands, there is a danger of stark literalism plus legalism which we must avoid because it’s dangerous. Obeying God is more than just keeping rules. Because we must also remember that righteousness requires keeping the rules, obeying God’s Law and human being’s laws but such obedience must be properly motivated. When we keep the rules we are not merely external but internal as well. Brethren, obedience must come from a pure heart and a clean conscience and when we do this His blessings fall upon us.

The sermon on the mountain was our Lord’s attack on the stark legalism or making rule and keeping rule of the Scribes and Pharisees. And He thoughtout His sermon, stressed that men must think beyond the rules to their reasons and must press beyond the precepts to the principles underlying them. Apostle Paul understood this very well and we ought to. One of the things he had understood was the command not to muzzle the ox it was based upon a principle with broad ramifications. *“For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that tradeth out the corn. Doth God take care of oxen? Or saith it altogether for the sakes? For our sakes no doubt, this is written that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.”*(1 Cor. 9:9-10). If one is going to obey the law in a way that pleases God, then this must be consistent with the principles underlying it. It will also mean that obedient to the principles may always require what looks like disregard for the rule. For example, Jesus was accused of violating the Sabbath, but He defended himself by reminding His accusers of an important principles; that Sabbath was made for man, and not man for Sabbath (Matt. 12:8-9). However, we must remember that Sabbath was instituted for man’s benefit and therefore, Jesus to heal or do anything on the Sabbath was legal, even though it was work. (Matt. 12:1-8). One person in the Old Testament, David ate the sacred

bread and gave it to his men, a thing which was not lawful to do according to the scriptures and the law of Moses denies it. But again a higher principle made this apparent disobedience right conduct. (Matt.12:1-2). The legalists could only see the rules, but our Lord taught His disciples as He teaches us today in His word to look for the reasons and to obey in the light of the reasons.

- I believe there are reasons which may require us to obey Paul's command which are Lord's command in different ways than actually going about kissing one another. We do what Paul tells us to do because he received it from the Lord. And the higher principle that the Bible talks about is avoiding every form of evil. (1 Thess. 5:22). In our African cultures, kissing may mean something quite different from which it meant in the days of first century Christians. If kissing one another would cause someone to stumble or cause unnecessary offence to the gospel, then it may not be the right thing to do.
- When a certain command or practice seems to violate the principle on which it was founded, then we should seek to obey in the best way possible and in the best way that fulfills the principle.
- The fundamental truth underlying our text and Lord's command is that of Christian unity. The command to greet one another with a holy kiss is given to assure that unity is demonstrated in the church. The opposite of this is to refuse to receive others, especially those who differ with us in the matter of conviction. (Rom. 14:1; 15:7). In Paul's day and in his culture, "greeting one another with a holy kiss" caused Christians to do that which was unnatural and even culturally unacceptable. Again, we must remember that "a holy kiss" is a token of unity and oneness.

In our African culture especially when people contest for election, they even don't shake hands or greet one another because there is hatred and animosity. But the greeting that the book of Romans 16:16 tells us is for unity and Agape love.

Paul had worked very hard to demonstrate unity which exists between all Christians, whatever their race, or economic status. The command to greet one another with a holy kiss is an exhortation to demonstrate this unity in tangible way and in a way that is naturally repulsive and detestable. We know the saints whom Paul greeted in Rome were male and female, Jews and Gentiles, and maybe slave and free. For people who were so different and I believe they exist in Lord's churches today are so

inclined toward animosity against their counterparts. This command was a real test for obedience. Now I know that there are those countries that their people are greeting others by kiss or Arab Christian greeting a Jewish Christian with a holy kiss and Paul is calling for nothing than this. In Tanzania, when a lady greets a man or her fellow they kneel. And in other parts of the country when a man greets his fellow they kneel.

In our culture, Christian unity may not be best demonstrated by a kiss or there may not be a way for us to greet others with a kiss which is truly holy. If not, then we have to find some way in which we can demonstrate our unity. I believe that one way of doing it perfect is to open our homes to those believers who would not normally be invited into the intimacy of our restricted privacy and fellowship. Culturally, this would be shocking to those who wish to preserve and promote our differences. For Christians, it would be an excellent way to demonstrate the greater unity we have in Christ in the midst of our differences. Some outside the faith who would claim us as part of their culture or group, I doubt that they will be angered. We abide in His teachings when we follow His teachings and do them. Therefore, Christian unity must be something not only we declare in concept but we demonstrate in our conducts.

Conclusion

Greet, is a main theme of our passage and every Christian must greet one another in one way or the other, our brothers and sisters must be shown that we accept them and receive them into our fellowship because we are one in Christ. Our greetings are one of our unity. But, there are various expression.

This can be done to the visitors to our congregation and it's not just a courtesy or a polite gesture which we perform. But is an essential expression of whom we are in Christ and of our unity with all others who are in Christ. Brethren, this reminds me when Ellis came to Africa his first visit, he was shaking hands with everyone in the church as a sign of greeting, despite of some white people claiming that Africans are dirty, but he was of that kind. To exclude fellow believers, except in the cases of church discipline is sinful disobedience. When we fail to warmly welcome we come to a situation which is more social acceptable form of the same sin, we must take matter more seriously. We should not leave it to others but it is our personal obligation. By this I believe that Paul devoted so much time and effort to these final greetings in Romans based upon his teaching and practices in his other epistles to other churches. People are to be our priority; we are to love and serve God

above everything and everyone else. But it has to work itself in serving and loving others, putting their interest above our own as we please them and not ourselves and by doing so we are pleasing God.

People who came to know God and serve him faithfully are the joy of Christian and reward. They were for Paul as he was telling them; as he cherished them and his relationship to them. He eagerly longed to be with them and experienced sorrow in separation from them. And I recall when Ellis was departing and returning back to the U.S, he was sorrowful that he was leaving us. *“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. I beseech Eudias, and beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord.”* (Phil. 4:1-2).

“So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia , but also in every place your faith to God – ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything..” (1 Thess. 1:7-20).

I hope and pray that the church which the Lord died for and which I and fellow brethren belong to may be known for our love for God and that we be careful to the word of God in all that we believe and practice. But in addition to this, I hope and pray that we are a church marked out by our love for one another as we demonstrate that we are disciples of our Lord.

May the good Lord help us in all that we do for the sake of His Kingdom.

Your brother in Christ,
Alex Sadat

