

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, January 24, 2021

**Greet One Another with an Holy Kiss**  
**Unity of the Spirit vs Unity of the Flesh**

One of our dear friends recently expressed a desire to hear some words about the scriptural instruction to “greet one another with an holy kiss”. It seemed timely to me, especially given the circumstances that our God has appointed, wherein our ability to see each other is severely restricted. Paul gives this instruction in four of his writings; he is pressing us toward the unity of the Spirit of God that dwells within each of us. My friends, we must either seek unity in the Spirit of God, which will produce the fruit of the Spirit, or else we are seeking unity in our flesh, which will produce the deeds of the flesh. We will take a brief look at both sides of that coin today.

**Unity of the Spirit:**

***Galatians 5:13-18; 22-26*** “13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. 16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. ... 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Paul’s instruction to “greet one another with an holy kiss” can be found in the closing of his letter to the church at Rome, Thessalonica, and both letters to the church at Corinth.

***Romans 16:16*** “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.”

***1Corinthians 16:19,20*** “19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.”

***2Corinthians 13:11-14*** “11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. 12 Greet one

*another with an holy kiss. 13 All the saints salute you. 14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."*

**1Thessalonians 5:23-26** *"23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. 25 Brethren, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss."*

**Matthew Henry:** *"Lastly, He concludes with the recommendation of them to the love and embraces one of another: Salute one another with a holy kiss. Mutual salutations, as they express love, so they increase and strengthen love, and endear Christians one to another: therefore Paul here encourages the use of them, and only directs that they may be holy — a chaste kiss, in opposition to that which is wanton and lascivious; a sincere kiss, in opposition to that which is treacherous and dissembling, as Judas's, when he betrayed Christ with a kiss. This is one way of maintaining the communion of saints."*

**Gill:** *"Christian salutation is a wishing all temporal, spiritual, and eternal happiness, to one another; and which, as it should be mutual, should be also hearty and sincere, and this is meant by the "holy kiss"; the allusion is to a common custom in most nations, used by friends at meeting or parting, to kiss each other, in token of their hearty love, and sincere affection and friendship for each other; and is called "holy," to distinguish it from an unchaste and lascivious one; and from an hypocritical and deceitful one, such an one as Joab gave to Amasa, when, inquiring of his health, he took him by the beard to kiss him, and stabbed him under the fifth rib; and as Judas, who cried, hail master, to Christ, and kissed him, and betrayed him into the hands of his enemies. I say, it is an allusion to this custom, for it is only an allusion; the apostle did not mean that any outward action should be made use of, only that their Christian salutations should not be mere complaisance, or expressed by bare words, and outward gestures and actions, either of the hand or mouth; but that they should spring from real love and true friendship, and be without dissimulation, hearty and sincere."*

A few additional thoughts:

- This kiss of love is **holy** – it must begin with a mindset of holiness; it is separated to God and His service. Every interaction that we have with the people of the world is based upon the flesh, because we have no other common bond with them; but the interaction that we have with one another is rooted in the Holy Spirit who dwells richly in each of our hearts. We are called into the family of faith, bound together by the blood of Christ, and covered with the beautiful, priceless garments of His righteousness. We are His bride, and are heirs together of eternal life with Him. It is hard for our flesh to maintain this appropriate view of **ourselves**, much

less of others. Every day – in our thoughts, and in our prayers – we must battle through our proud and hateful flesh, so that we look upon one another with spiritual eyes. In order to do this with sincerity, we have to put down our grinding malice and resentment because of past offenses. In order to do this, we must put down our pride, wherein we believe ourselves to have obtained greater wisdom and piety than our friends of faith.

- I don't believe that the focus here is on the mode of a "kiss". While kissing happened to be the type of greeting that was common in Paul's day, the focus is on the spirit of the greeting, not the type of greeting. In other words, it could be a holy handshake, hug, or high-five; the importance is that 1) it is rooted in the Holy Spirit, and 2) we DO IT. It is a great duty and privilege to "greet" one another; we cannot expect that the Lord will bless us if we willfully avoid this duty.
- Indeed, we must put on a holy perspective toward one another, but then that love must produce sincere actions.
  - Think about the four passages that we just looked at. Paul is praying for the people in those various churches, and sending his (and other people's greetings). That type of distant greeting is encouraging and comforting, and yet he goes on to provoke the people assembled together in each church to a more continual, personal, and intimate communion. That close communion is unique to the members of a local church, because they are the only people who have time and place opportunity to participate in such a thing. It is a blessing that we cannot take for granted.
  - What does Paul mean by the word "greet"? Assuming that we are doing the continual work to prepare our hearts with a godly perspective toward each other, how do we then put that into action?
    - Passive greeting: Certainly, we should greet one another when we happen to encounter each other. We do that when we encounter the people of the world, so how much more so should we do it – with sincere desire – when we see each other? Most of the time this is easy, and comes naturally. Sometimes, our hearts are in a bad way, so we avoid speaking to each other. Resist that urge, my friends.
    - Active greeting: Beyond greeting one another by happenstance, we have to prioritize the work that it takes to consider and reach out to each other. We all have full and busy days, and yet it is our privilege to commune with one another. To be clear, I'm not talking about ritualizing time together with specific people, or monopolizing people's time. I'm talking about reaching out with sincerity, inquiring, encouraging, comforting, provoking to love and to good works. I'm not going to offer a list of ways to do this, because I'm not pretending like I have all of the answers, particularly at this moment in history where

our options are limited due to the pestilence that God has unleashed on the world. The approaches to this work can be varied and unique – the key is to **do it!** Don't pass up opportunities. Don't make excuses. Satan wants to keep us from this work by helping the momentum of our bad habits, and our sinful hearts. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.

- What is the practical use of this instruction?
  - We exercise and discipline our own spirit by sowing to the Spirit of God - putting aside our fleshly habits and desires, and greeting one another like we ought to. He comes among us, and refreshes us through the doing of this work. We are encouraged in our individual pilgrimage, and we grow together in faith as a body. (See Ephesians 4 below)
  - As the adopted children of the Great King, we are the only people who can truly understand the circumstances, worries, fears, trials, dangers, etc. of one of God's sheep as they make this perilous journey. We are uniquely qualified to bring forth spiritual remedies to help and encourage one another. If we are doing this work faithfully, then we know how each other is doing, and can thereby more effectually render aide, and frame up our prayers for one another.
- This is not a cudgel to police each other. Apply this to yourself first and foremost. When you recognize that you are failing at it, be honest with yourself, and then get back after it. There's no need, or ability, to make up for lost time - just do it **today** with a whole heart.

**Ephesians 4** “1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,  
 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;  
 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.  
 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;  
 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.  
 7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.  
 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.  
 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?  
 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

12 *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

13 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

14 *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

15 *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

16 *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

17 *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,*

18 *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:*

19 *Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

20 *But ye have not so learned Christ;*

21 *If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:*

22 *That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;*

23 *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;*

24 *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

25 *Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*

26 *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*

27 *Neither give place to the devil.*

28 *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

29 *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

30 *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

31 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

*32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

## **Unity of the Flesh**

Again, we must either seek unity in the Spirit of God, which will produce the fruit of the Spirit, or else we are seeking unity in our flesh, which will produce the deeds of the flesh.

***Galatians 5:19-21*** "19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

My friends, we are living in a time of gross, thick, palpable darkness. Our souls are vexed day by day as we watch our neighbors aggressively sow to their flesh – hating God, and hating one another. Every man does that which is right in his own eyes, and rages against any who would oppose him; God only ever enters the equation as a forensic tool – a powerless puppet used as weaponry! The hateful, selfish, hypocritical leaders of this nation are a mere reflection of the people. It was almost more than I could take to watch that grotesque circus called an inauguration on Wednesday. Everything about it was calculated to tempt and enrage God. Lady Gaga strutted and preened while old phony preachers spoke the name of God as a cloak for sin, and President Biden waxed eloquent while placing his hand upon an ancient looking prop labeled "Holy Bible". His thesis: We must have unity! What unity does he seek? The unity of God? NO! He wants the unity of the flesh, which demands that we should accept – and worship - any and every form of perversion, and call that holiness. Case in point: his answer to COVID – that raging pestilence that has already killed 400,000 Americans – is to appoint a transgender Jew to be the HHS Secretary. He could not have tempted God more, if he had forged a giant golden calf, placed it in the corn fields of Nebraska and ordered the nation to flock to it and worship. You expect God to bless your efforts when you tempt Him so sorely? God has cursed you, sir! If you have any love for this nation, then you will forsake this path of proud sin and rebellion. The only thing worse than that whole scene is the phony Christians of America, who are raging in support of Donald Trump, having put their faith in the lie that is America, her flag, and her fraudulent freedoms. If we didn't have promises from our God, this scene would be terrifying and hopeless. But we DO have promises; our hope is NOT in nations, and human governments; our hope is NOT in our fleshly comforts, or even in our own life - the short vapor that it is. My friends, our citizenship is in heavenly places – our eternal dwelling place with Christ our Lord. Corruption has no power over us in that place. We must await that inheritance with

patience and faith. Back to the unity of the flesh that President Biden preaches – unity gained by agreeing that God’s precepts are garbage, and that man is indeed the arbiter of good and evil. This nation will reap the reward of such a dedicated path of wickedness, just like old Israel did. Consider the words of the prophet Hosea, at the time when the Northern Kingdom of Israel approached the day of her brutal and sudden destruction.

**Hosea 4** “1 ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.

5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

6 ¶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

7 As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame.

8 They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.

9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.

10 For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.

11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

12 ¶ My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall.

15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.

16 *For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.*

17 *Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.*

18 *Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye.*

19 *The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.”*

President Biden speaks of peace and unity, when God has promised that there can be no peace for the wicked. (**Isaiah 57:21**) Biden promises a bright future for America, and her godless citizenry, when God has promised that though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished. (**Proverbs 16:5**) Indeed, God has promised a wicked people that when they cry peace and safety, then their destruction will come suddenly, as travail upon a woman with child. (**1Thessalonians 5:3**) This is what awaits America, and this wicked world, as we draw ever closer to the day of our Lord, when Christ will collect up His people, take His throne, and make every crooked thing straight. Consider these words from our Lord when He talked to His disciples about His second coming.

**Matthew 24:** “1 ¶ *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.*

2 *And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

3 *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

4 ¶ *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.*

5 *For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

6 *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

7 *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*

8 *All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

9 *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.*

10 *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*

11 *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*

12 *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*

13 *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

*14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."*

Iniquity shall abound. Sin – in all of its forms – will be aggressively pursued, violently defended, deceitfully normalized, and glorified as holy. Beyond that, there is a consequence for sin. Sin brought death and corruption into this world; sin is the cause of every pain and distress that we experience in our flesh. Ever increasing sin must bring ever increasing judgment and punishment from a righteous God, such that the entire creation is groaning and travailing under the burden of it. (**Romans 8:22**) Beloved, we are not immune to that pain and travail. The sin around us and within us is vexing to our soul. The resulting corruption and pain is vexing to our body and soul. All of which will most assuredly test and prove our faith. Each of us, individually must be tried in that way. When we find ourselves distressed because iniquity is abounding, what will we do? Will we give in to temptation to join it? Will we buckle in despair beneath its weight? Will our love indeed wax cold? We have only one help – one remedy – Christ! Flee to Christ for refuge! With that in mind, let us return to the beginning of this sermon. We have been afforded precious remedies that help us to sow to the Spirit of God, and to seek His grace to bear us up. We must lean upon those remedies like our souls depend upon them! One of those remedies is to lean into the people of God who have that same Spirit of God dwelling in them – consider one another – love one another – offer kindness and help in that way that only we can. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

***Psalms 133:1*** *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"*

I love you all. Amen.