

"WHAT ABOUT THE HOLY KISS?"

1 Thessalonians 5:26-28

Theme: The hallmarks of Christianity are a love for Christ and for other believers.

Introduction ...

I. THE DEMONSTRATION OF AFFECTION - v. 26

A. The Sign of Acceptance

1. As Paul brings his epistle to a close, God's Spirit prompts the exhortation that believers be engaged in expressing an affinity with one another.
2. He states: *"Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss."*
3. *"Greet"* [ἀσπάζομαι] - to "recognize one another hospitably" - conveying the physical expression of welcome.
4. The emphasis here is that *"all the brethren"* were to be informed of not only Paul's affections, but the acceptance of one another within the church.

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

1 Corinthians 16:20 - *"All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss."*

2 Corinthians 13:12 - *"Greet one another with a holy kiss."*

1 Peter 5:14 - *"Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ."*

5. In this sense, the universal acceptance of all believers was to be physically demonstrated - the sign of acceptance being the kiss upon the cheek.
6. This cultural norm is what made Judas' betrayal of Christ so heinous:

Luke 22:47-48 - *"While He was still speaking, behold, a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said to him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?'"*

B. The Sanctity of Affection

1. Paul refers to this sign of affection as *"a holy kiss"* [ἅγιος] - describing something "dedicated or consecrated to the service of God."
2. It carries within it a sense of purity - this is as non-"romantic" as something

can be.

3. This is something that was done primarily between the isolated genders - men with men and women with women,
4. However, it became somewhat controversial when after several centuries, it began to cross over between genders and strict guidelines had to be placed upon the practice to avoid accusations of impropriety.
5. As cultures became increasingly sexualized, this practice was replaced with the extending of one's hand as the gesture of warmth, hospitality and safety.

II. THE DEFERENCE TO AUTHORITY - v. 27

A. The Provision of Authority:

1. Paul recognizes the authority that God's Word possesses in the life of the church.
2. His writings were considered Scripture immediately upon their receipt by the church:

2 Peter 3:15-16 – ***"... and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."***

3. The priority of Paul was that the Christians in Thessalonica pay attention to God's Word as it had been provided through him as an Apostle – and insure that ***"all of the brethren"*** be able to hear God's Word.
4. ***"... to have this letter read ..."*** - This is in accord with the admonition given to Timothy that he read God's Word publicly:

1 Timothy 4:13 – ***"Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching."***

B. The Perspective on Authority:

1. This is essential to establishing the spiritual accountability of the saints to what God had revealed.
2. For this reason, Paul assigns dire consequences should the spiritual leadership in any way fail to expose ***"all of the brethren"*** to the truths contained in God's Word – ***"I adjure you by the Lord ..."***
3. ***"adjure"*** [ἐννοκίζω] – [used only here in the NT] to put someone under oath; to treat someone as if they had violated obligation to an oath.
4. The sacred responsibility of elders in the church is to make sure that God's people are pointed to the authority of God's Word in the church.

III. THE DEPENDENCE UPON ASSISTANCE - v. 28

A. The Favor of Our Lord

1. **“Grace”** [χάρις] – refers to that state of being in which we receive the favor of God without any merit or deserving.
2. It describes the essence of the Christian experience wherein we are reconciled to God, conformed to Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit through divine energy:

Romans 3:24 – ***“... being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus”***

3. Paul opened this epistle with the aspiration that God’s grace would be extended to them, and he now concludes with the same aspiration.

B. The Focus on Our Lord

1. Indeed, this **“grace”** is something that is available to us only through **“our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
2. As long as one is looking to Christ, they are assured that this **“grace”** will **“... be with you.”**
3. Of course, our conviction of the perseverance of the saints assures us that once we have known the **“grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”** it will remain **“with you.”**

The hallmarks of Christianity are a love for Christ and for other believers.