

Great One Another With a Holy Kiss 05-08-16 AM

We do not often consider the Holy Kiss commandment. However, it is mentioned several times in the New Testament:

Greet one another with a holy kiss. Rom. 16:16
Greet one another with a holy kiss. 1 Cor. 16:20
Greet one another with a holy kiss. 2 Cor. 13:12
Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. 1 Thes. 5:26
Greet one another with a kiss of love. 1 Pet. 5:14

What is the meaning of this commandment? One writer states that *"it was the widespread custom in the ancient western Mediterranean for men to greet each other with a kiss on the cheek."*¹ We might consider that this is a cultural commandment; these are commands that are a culturally defined variable. Examples might include subjective points such as kindness, nobility and honor; there are certain marriage customs that could describe characteristics such as submission (consider the western concept of taking a last name), but are not universal. How we display hospitality is culturally defined. Such is the Holy Kiss commandment. Like the commandment to wash feet (1 Timothy 5:10), we are meant to obey this command in its cultural meaning.

We note that this is not the only way to "greet" one another (the word "greet" in Greek refers to an embrace). But we must ask ourselves "what did this commanded practice reflect"? It could reflect affection through physical contact, close kinship, or the desire of peace between two parties.

But perhaps it also reflects something else. Let us consider for a moment a family relationship. A family should have lots of hugging and "I love you"; an acceptance of flaws among family. There is even a saying: "blood is thicker than water". Now let us consider a broken family relationship. Some might say that it would be a family where no one hugged or said "I love you"; there was no pleasure in being near family, and family was clearly last on a list of priorities.

Why are we considering the family relationship? Because that is a fundamental description of the local church. *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God* - Ephesians 2:19. The Holy Kiss is a means of expressing our affection for one another. To fulfill the commandment we need to achieve the appropriate level of hospitality and affection for each other (Hebrews 13:2). We need to offer an invitation into one another's lives. There needs to be an acceptance of some inconvenience for each other, and there needs to be an expectation of participation.

We need to understand that it is true that "blood is thicker than water"; but His blood is thickest (Matthew 12:49-50). The church is our spiritual family for eternity, one created to share adversity (Proverb 17:17). Thus the commandment of the Holy Kiss is about our close relationship with each other, a reminder of our common birth, and a reminder of our common goal.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiss_of_peace