



When in Romans Do as the Righteous Do

Romans 16:1-24

"You May Kiss the Bride of Christ"

In many cultures a kiss is the common form of greeting and good-bye. Given upon the lips, cheek, brow, beard, hand, or clothing, a kiss expresses the affections of family, friendship, and fellowship.

You read of many such kisses in the Bible:

- The kiss of family is seen in many Bible families. When Jacob decided to take his family and flee from Laban, Laban expressed his anger by saying, "... you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in so doing... And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place." Brothers and sisters commonly kissed each other in greetings or in good-byes. When Jacob reunited with his brother Esau you read, "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept."
- The kiss of friendship is seen with Jonathan and David. "...David arose from a place toward the south, fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times. And they kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more so." The kiss among friends and even casual acquaintances was a social custom, not a sensual one. Our Lord Jesus practiced the kiss of friendship. On one occasion when He had been treated inhospitably by a host, Jesus said, "You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in."

- The kiss of fellowship among believers in the New Testament church was common. You read of its practice as a greeting and in good-byes in Romans 16:16, in 1 Corinthians 16:20, in 2 Corinthians 13:12, in 1 Thessalonians 5:26, and in 1 Peter 5:14. Such a kiss became a regular part of church services and it came to be called "the kiss of peace." An early church father writes "when we have ceased from our prayers, we greet one another with a kiss."

We are not going to officially reinstitute the kiss of peace anytime soon in our worship service. If we did, we'd do it the way it was eventually done in the early church - **men kissing men, and women kissing women!**

Some of you **do** kiss each other in these ways - in families, in friendship, and in fellowship. Others hug one another or simply shake hands. Still others are uncomfortable with all physical contact. Despite your feelings about particular expressions of affection, you must still greet and bid good-bye to one another.

You might take greetings and good-byes for granted. The Apostle Paul did not! As he concluded his letter to the Roman Christians he greeted some twenty-six persons, and he sent greetings from eight believers who were with him in Corinth.

Paul always had a sense of urgency about him. It came from his *trials* and from his *theology*.

- His trials created a sense of urgency in his greetings and good-byes because he was never sure when or even if he might see someone again. Often he was sure that he wouldn't.
- As for his theology, he believed and taught the imminent rapture of the church.

Paul greeted you as if he was never going to see you again on earth!

Romans 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,

Romans 16:2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

Phoebe was a sister in the Lord who was on her way to Rome. She was entrusted by Paul to carry his letter to the Christians at Rome.

She is a model for us of how we are to greet one another. Paul encourages and exhorts the Christians at Rome to greet her for three reasons: because of their common salvation, because of her consistent service, and because of her constant sacrifice.

- Paul calls Phoebe "our sister," referring to their common salvation. There should be, in their greeting, a remembrance of Jesus Christ's wonderful grace. Every time you greet a brother or a sister there should be a remembrance of Jesus Christ's grace - in their life and in yours.
- Paul calls Phoebe "a servant of the church in Cenchrea," referring to her as a servant of Jesus Christ. In their greeting there should be a recognition of Jesus' gifts in her life. Every time you greet a brother or a sister there should be a recognition of Jesus Christ's gifts - in their life and in yours.
- Paul says Phoebe "has been a helper of many and of myself also." By this he indicates she is constant in her sacrifice. In their greeting there was to be a regard for the growth of her relationship with Jesus. Everytime you greet a brother or a sister there should be a regard for the growth of their relationship with Jesus - and for your own growth.

When you greet a brother or a sister, you are greeting a saint who is or who should be serving the Lord in ever increasing sacrifice. Every greeting is an opportunity to either encourage or exhort them in these things.

Romans 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
Romans 16:4 who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Priscilla and Aquilla, who were in Rome, fit the same pattern as Phoebe, who was with Paul in Corinth. They were being greeted as saints who served with ever increasing sacrifice.

As Paul greets several others he mentions one or more of these three things - either their salvation, their service, or their sacrifice.

Romans 16:5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.

Romans 16:6 Greet Mary, who labored much for us.

Romans 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Romans 16:8 Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord.

Romans 16:9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved.

Romans 16:10 Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.

Romans 16:11 Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

Romans 16:12 Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord.

Romans 16:13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

Romans 16:14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them.

Romans 16:15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

- Paul greets some as "saints," some as "beloved," some as "in Christ," some as "approved in Christ," and some as "chosen in the Lord." By this he reminds them of God's grace in saving them.
- Paul greets some as "laborers" and as "fellow workers." By this he recognizes their service.
- Paul greets some as "fellow prisoners" and as "laboring much in the Lord." By this he regards their sacrifice.

Ask yourself, "Do I greet my brothers and sisters in these ways?" Do you use words that encourage them in one of these areas?

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

The physical greeting should be appropriate to your culture, giving respect for those who are somewhat offended by certain customs. The *custom* is not as important as the *content*.

Romans 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

Just when things were going good there were some at Rome who should not be greeted by their brothers and sisters! Paul says to "avoid" those who "cause divisions and offenses."

There are in every church, from time to time, those who cause division and offenses. Divisions are "contrary to the doctrine which you learned." This can mean one of two things:

1. In context, these individuals taught false and heretical doctrines which then cause divisions and offenses. Judaizers and gnostics plagued the early church.
2. In a more limited, but currently more likely, sense, there are those who cause division over nonessential doctrines by elevating them to essential doctrines. Though not setting out to cause division, it results in division as they insist you adopt their theology on nonessentials.

Paul says to "note" them. You note them by following Titus 2:10-11, which says,

Titus 3:10 Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition,
Titus 3:11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

First, admonish; warn them they are causing division. If that fails there seems to be a public notation by the leadership of those who are causing division with instruction to avoid them.

Romans 16:18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Those who cause division are self-willed and are serving carnal appetites. It doesn't mean they are just trying to rip off the believers. The meaning is probably, "self-servers of any description, people who are slaves of their own ego." They love to hear themselves talk! They are filled with an exalted opinion of themselves.

Romans 16:19 For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.

The Roman Christians were making a difference in their world. Paul was grateful for their testimony but he realized that they were therefore becoming more and more the target of the devil. He exhorted them to watch out for the devil's schemes. God could grant them the wisdom to maintain good works and the simple conviction to avoid all manner of evil schemes devised against them.

Romans 16:20 And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

This is a really wonderful image and insight. In the Garden of Eden God promised us He would crush Satan. The Savior, Jesus, would crush Him as He was bruised on the Cross. Here Paul adds Satan will be crushed “under **your** feet.” That puts us in Christ, identifies us with Him, as crushing the serpent! We are a part of gaining ground against the devil until that glorious day when Jesus returns to finish His victory over Satan.

Romans 16:21 Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.

Romans 16:22 I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord.

Romans 16:23 Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.

Romans 16:24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

In these verses Paul's companions at Corinth send their greetings to the Christians at Rome. The mention of Gaius is interesting in that he apparently hosted the church in his home. In verse five, Priscilla and Aquilla also had a church meeting in their home. Paul mentions at least fifty Roman believers in this letter so we know the church had at least that many members plus their families. The church met, then, in private homes; at least, the church in Rome.

In Ephesus Paul rented a lecture hall to hold meetings as well as meeting in homes. The church, then, *met wherever they could!* It's currently

popular to dis church buildings or any meetings of believers that aren't in homes. It's just stupid!

We asked ourselves, "Do I greet others the way Paul suggests?" Now, as these eight men seek to bring greetings to the saints at Rome whom they have not met, you ask a different question. You ask, "Can my brothers and sisters encourage me in this way?" Don't ask if they do; **ask if they can.**

Is God's saving grace evident in your life? Are you serving? Are you sacrificing for the Lord?

Bottom line: What could someone honestly say in introducing you to another Christian?

Hopefully that you, too, are saved, serving & sacrificing in the Lord - kissable as the bride of Jesus.