

The Kiss of Charity – I Peter 5:14

I. Introduction:

- A. What was the first thing you did when you came into the auditorium today?
1. For most of us it was a smile followed by a few handshakes.
 2. You used your right hand, not your left, didn't you?
 3. You may have modified your handshake depending on the people you greeted.
 - a. For some you offered a light hand, not squeezing very hard.
 - b. For others you not only gave a firm grip, but also might have pumped a little harder.
 - c. And for yet others you might have added a left hand over the top of the two rights.
 4. A hearty handshake is a customary greeting in our country.
- B. But are you aware that there are other greetings in other societies?
1. In **Japan** a bow is more appropriate than a handshake, and in **Zimbabwe** clapping hands a couple times is the normal greeting.
 2. In **Malaya** to put your hand over your heart is common, and in **Thailand** pressing hands together in front of your chest is a greeting.
 3. In some places a kiss on the cheek is common, and in other places it's not just one kiss but two or three, alternating cheeks.
 - a. Is there a customary side on which to start?
 - b. In many places that kiss on the cheek has evolved into an "air kiss," so there is no actual touching of lips to skin, but there might be some cheek bumping.
 4. Rubbing and bumping noses serves as a greeting in some cultures, as does bumping foreheads.
 5. In 9th century, a cruel **Tibetan king** named **Lang Darma** was known for having a black tongue, which could have been caused by things he chewed or by some sort of disease.
 - a. The monks in that country, believing in reincarnation, began greeting each other by sticking out their tongues to show that their's was not black.
 - b. I am told that yet today in that country sticking out your tongue is a perfectly good greeting.
 - c. But what if you tried that here? Isn't it a sign of disgust, not greeting?
- C. The world has a number of different customs when it comes to greeting one another.
1. But we are Christians, and as such we are not to live by the customs and dictates of the unsaved world.
 2. Peter tells us to "greet ye one another with a **KISS** of charity."
 3. So why don't **we** kiss one another as he exhorts us?
 4. There was not one "holy kiss" exchanged here this morning.
- D. Let's table that for a few minutes, while we examine exactly what he tells us.

II. "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity."

- A. Is it that we don't kiss one another due to hearing some Greek expert has told that this kiss is not really a kiss?
1. That is not the reason, because the word "kiss" means exactly what we all know it to be.
 2. Granted, there is a difference between a kiss on the lips and a kiss on the cheek or the hand.
 3. But still, the meaning the Greek word is exactly what you think. It involves the lips of the kisser.
 4. There isn't one Greek word for a kiss on the hand of a friend and another for a kiss on the lips of your spouse.
- B. Well then, do the words "of charity" change the nature of the kiss? In a way they do.
1. Of course the word "charity" is "agape," and it is often translated "love."
 2. Peter essentially says, "Greet one another with a kiss of love."
 3. But obviously, that does not refer to a passionate kiss, a fleshly sensual or sexual kiss.
 4. He is referring to greeting one another as brethren – with that special love which is shared in Christ.

- C. **Paul** also speaks of greeting one another with a kiss, but he always identified that kiss with the word “*holy*.”
1. **Paul never** referred to greeting one another with a kiss without using the word “*holy*.”
 2. **Romans 16:16** – “*Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*”
 3. **I Corinthians 16:20, II Corinthians 13:12 and I Thessalonians 5:26** – “*Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.*”
 4. The word “*holy*” takes away any thought about sensuality.
 5. It refers to something separated from the world and sanctified to the Lord. It is godly.
 6. It is a kiss intended to be a blessing to the other person, not to the person doing the kissing.
 7. And as we’ll see in just a minute, it is designed to be uplifting.
 8. There was a ministry in this holy kiss.
- D. In nearly all of my research, comments were made that it was the men who greeted each other with this kiss.
1. Those articles in encyclopedia, lexicons and commentaries said that in greeting one another, women kissed only women, and men kissed men.
 2. That would certainly limit the sensuality aspect of the kiss.
 3. But I have to admit that while that might be true, I couldn’t find in the Bible any proof of those restrictions.
 4. Yes, we see Naomi kissing her daughters-in-law, and Joseph kissing his brothers – all relatives.
 5. There are at least a dozen other Old Testament examples of men kissing men.
 6. But we also see Jacob greeting Rachel with a kiss the first time they met.
 - a. It wasn’t necessarily passionate or fleshly.
 - b. It was just an expression of the abounding joy in Jacob’s heart for the revelation of the Lord’s will.
 - c. His kissing of Rachel was more like his kissing of the Lord himself, thanking Him for leading him to the woman God intended for him.
- E. Moving on, was Peter implying anything particularly special in using the word “*greet*”?
1. I referred to how we greeted each other when we came into the auditorium this morning.
 2. There was some handshaking.
 3. Now think back to when we last met, Wednesday or Sunday.
 4. When it was time to go to our respective homes, how many of us shook hands a second time?
 - a. Does that ever happen; handshaking when leaving each other?
 - b. It happens in the business world, but only rarely at church.
 5. But notice **where** Peter inserts this exhortation? It is at the end of his epistle.
 6. And the fact is every New Testament reference to this kiss of love is toward the end of an apostolic epistle – never at the beginning.
 7. That is because of the nature of the Greek word “*aspazomai*” (*as-pad’-zom-ah-ee*).
- F. The word “*greet*” is most often translated “*salute*.”
1. And it is used in the preceding verse, where we read “*the church that is at Babylon... saluteth you.*”
 2. My “*On-line Bible*” study program defines the word by saying, “*to draw to one’s self; to salute one, greet, bid welcome, wish well to; to receive joyfully, to welcome.*”
 3. So the word, and the kiss, can be used to either bid farewell or to bid welcome.
 4. It is sort of like “*aloha*,” in the Hawaiian language.
 5. In **Luke 1:40** when pregnant Mary visited pregnant Elizabeth, she entered the house and saluted her.
 6. And as Paul was on his last journey home to Jerusalem, his ship stopped at the city of Tyre, where he spent seven days in fellowship with the brethren, “*and when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship, and they returned home again.*”
 7. That “*taken our leave*,” is the same word “*aspazomai*” (*as-pad’-zom-ah-ee*).
 8. So, as I say, the word refers to either bidding farewell or welcome.

G. But let me add one more little wrinkle.

1. When **Paul** was in **Ephesus** on one of his visits, *“the whole city was filled with confusion”* – with riot.
2. Paul could have been killed in the mellay, but the Lord spared him.
3. **Acts 20:1** then says, *“And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them and depart for to go into Macedonia.”*
4. The word *“embraced”* again is *“aspazomai”* (*as-pad’-zom-ahee*), accurately expressing Strong’s definition of the word – *“to enfold in the arms, ie. to salute, to welcome; embrace, greet, salute and take leave.”*
5. In other words, *“greet”* could also include another way some Westerners meet one another – with a hug.
6. Each time I see my daughter and grand daughter, I give them a hug and usually a kiss as well.
7. I can see those two things going hand-in-hand, or *“arms-and-lips,”* so to speak – the hug and the kiss.
8. But I do that with only my closest relatives.

H. What am I trying to say thus far?

1. It is that you probably understand what Peter is saying.
2. There is nothing surprising here; there are no hidden meanings.

I. But then we need to ask:

III. Why was it necessary to exhort these people to greet one another like this?

A. In order to answer that question, we need to remind ourselves of the cultural situation of the day. It was similar but yet different from our own.

B. In the membership of our church we have a variety of people.

1. We have some adults with a high degree of education, some with not so much, and then we have children who are still in school.
2. We have business owners – employers – and we have people who have worked for others all their lives.
3. We have Americans and we have a Canadian.
4. Most of us are of European descent, but we rejoice to see our Native American friends and we fellowship with people from other races.
5. America has been called a melting pot of racial and cultural people, and we have gotten used to that.
6. But there still exists a wretched, sinful bias and prejudice – racial and cultural and prejudice even based on physical appearances.

C. But the differences in races and cultures, economic strata and personal freedoms was far more polarizing in the days of the New Testament than it is today.

1. Christianity was in the process of breaking down those barriers and differences, but it was still in its infancy
2. In other words, there may have been an underlying reluctance within some congregations to fully embrace one another.
3. Those churches, like many today, had cliques, which some people rarely violated.
4. For dozens of reasons there may have been a hesitancy to embrace or kiss some of the saints.
5. Were there any homeless saints, diseased saints, unclean and unkempt saints?
6. Some of the brethren may have refused to kiss other brethren for any number of reasons.
7. Thus throughout the Apostolic epistles there were these exhortations to properly greet one another.

D. Peter was telling the Philemons of Galatia to kiss the Onesimus who were, or had been, their slaves.

1. He was reminding the Jews among them that the Romans and heathen believers were now their brethren.
2. **Greet** each other **as equals** in Christ.
3. Some of those people had been called *“barbarians”* before they were called *“brethren.”*
4. As Paul wrote to the **Colossians**: since *“ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him... there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all”* – **Colossians 3:10-11**.

E. *“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity.”*

1. With your greeting, you are telling your personal servant that you are delighted he has put his faith in Christ, just as you have. You are telling him that he is now your brother in Christ.
2. You former Pharisees are reminding that illiterate, former idol worshiper that you are now one in Christ
3. Mr. Roman soldier, you may be a spiritual babe in the family of God, but even the most mature among us love you and accept you. *“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity.”*
4. Make sure that no one is excluded, no matter what other superficial differences there are between you.
5. And make sure that your greeting is real – genuine.

F. I use this only as an illustration, but **II Samuel 20** describes one man’s kiss of greeting.

1. *“And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother?
a. And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.
b. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab’s (left) hand;
c. so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground...”*
2. If I might put it this way, there is a vulnerability involved in properly greeting someone.
3. We have to get off our high horse to properly shake hands. We have to get close.
4. And we are putting ourselves at risk to catch the virus that is in that other person’s hand or on his lips, not to mention the sword he may be carrying.
5. The Lord Jesus knew full well that when Judas came up to kiss him, there was betrayal in that greeting.
6. When Philemon kissed his former runaway slave as a brother in Christ, he was admitting that they had become equals in the sight of God.
7. And Paul had to write a short letter reminding his friend of that fact, because he knew there would be some hesitancy in that Christian man.
8. The kiss of charity was an act of humility & acceptance which was probably really important in that society.

G. Furthermore, there was not a single saint of the Lord, who was not in need of encouragement in that world.

1. Persecution came from many directions, and many saints had become destitute upon their faith in Christ.
2. They needed constant uplifting and support – pumping up, you might say.
3. And there still isn’t anyone who doesn’t need a virtual hug now and then.
4. Not just now and then, but every time we meet.
5. The exhortation – a **needy** exhortation is – *“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity.”*

H. But admittedly we don’t use that form of greeting. We don’t kiss each other.

IV. How can we justify our disobedience to the exhortation?

A. As lame as it sounds, I think that kiss was a **cultural expression**, for which we have an **equivalent greeting**.

1. Our handshake in this country is the same thing as clapping our hands in greeting someone in Zimbabwe or putting our hands over our hearts in Malaya.
2. Our handshake can be as sincere – or as insincere – just as kisses were in the days of Peter or Joab.
3. In this case – again I know that this sounds pathetically weak, but – our method of greeting is not really any different from the holy kiss of charity.
4. In this case, the **intention** is the important thing, not the actual physical act.
5. I know that this is a dangerous statement and it must be diligently guarded in its application:
6. But sometimes the letter of the law can be altered while maintaining the spirit of that law.

B. Let me use an example.

1. Let’s say that Peter was here in our service this morning. Perhaps he was the first one into the building.
 - a. He came to personally deliver his epistle to us, and he had plans to publically read it.
 - b. With the eyes of the Holy Spirit, he knows all our foibles, sins and neglected areas of Christian living.
 - c. He knows whether or not we are consistent in *“greeting one another with a kiss of charity.”*
 - d. And he has the authority to correct us.

2. Then I came into the auditorium to find him standing in the doorway.
 3. As you know I have had a head cold all week, and I don't want Peter or anyone else to blame me if someone ends up with a cold next week, so I didn't proffer my hand to anyone for shaking.
 4. Not even to the Apostle Peter.
 5. I didn't kiss anyone or hug anyone, because I don't want to put anyone in danger of this virus, and you don't have my sturdy constitution.
 6. As far as I know, not one of you was offended by my lack of decorum, even though I broke the rules of modern protocol.
 7. Do you think the Apostle Peter would rebuke me if he was here, and I didn't greet him with a kiss under these circumstances? I don't think so.
- C. I'm trying to point out that this kiss is something which is open to use within a particular cultural environment.
1. Shaking each other's hand should be just as sincere a greeting as kissing on the cheek.
 2. And in fact, by not shaking hands with you, I was also expressing of my love for you, because I didn't want to cause you any harm.
 3. The same would have been true if we were in the habit of kissing each other.
 4. But kissing is not our custom and it is not our habit.
 5. We can mean exactly the same thing with our handshake as was meant in the New Testament with a kiss.
 6. And even when we don't greet one another with a holy handshake, if the proper intent is present, I don't think Peter, Paul or the Lord Jesus Christ would be upset with us.
- D. In summary, I have no problem telling you to greet each other with a handshake of love.
1. I will exhort you to do so, and ordinarily I will give you an example, by doing it myself.
 2. I don't believe we have in any way disobeyed the precept Peter is laying down here, by shaking hands rather than kissing each other's cheeks.