

The Holy Kiss Romans 16:16

At the close of Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome he gives greeting to many people by name, and then exhorts the Christians at Rome to "*greet one another with a holy kiss.*" This is the first of five times a similar injunction is given by Paul (I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12; I Thes. 5:26; I Peter 5:14). Though greeting one another with a kiss was a cultural way of meeting in Paul's day, Paul gives new meaning to how a Christian should greet another Christian commanding a "holy" (special, set apart) kiss." What is important in this commandment is not the *method* of the greeting, but the *meaning* behind the greeting. Churches need to remember that methodology changes, but what we value never changes.

A "holy" kiss means we value *people in our church*.

I. To value people at Emmanuel involves an understanding of a covenant . . .

All great relationships involve a covenant. It may be an implied covenant (friendship) or it may involve an official covenant (marriage or the church). When you begin to understand the nature of a covenant, then those within the covenant are important.

(A). God's covenant with the church . . .

As we have seen in our study of Romans, God has taken upon Himself the responsibility of redeeming His Bride (the church). He chose His Bride, He gave them to His Son, He sent His Son to purchase their redemption, and the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father to transform God's Bride into the image of His Son. This covenant to redeem the Bride is mentioned in Ephesians 1:4.

*"The church is not a democracy in which we have chosen God,
but a theocracy in which He has chosen us"* **John Blanchard**

(B). Our covenant with the God's church . . .

Since God's Bride is called "holy" (set apart, a cut above), it is appropriate to greet one another with a "holy" kiss. We value Christians because God does.

*"We ought not to make any conditions of our brethren's acceptance with us but such
as God has made the conditions of their acceptance with Him"* **Matthew Henry**.

Faith in Christ and repentance of sin are those conditions.

II. To value people at Emmanuel involves an undertaking of a commitment . . .

For those who have placed their faith in Christ and are broken over their sins we are called to warmly embrace them. This requires a level of commitment on our part.

(A). Respect the strengths . . . don't be envious, don't be jealous, but in grace and humility respect the strengths of others around you.

(B). Accept the weaknesses . . . quit trying to change those around you. Those you are in a covenant relationship will not always be strong, and Peter says to us . . .

*"And above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love covers a
multitude of sins"* (I Peter 4:8). This kind of agape love accepts weaknesses.

(C). Enjoy the differences . . . There are some people who are very doctrinally minded, and others who really don't care much for doctrine, but they will surely go out of their way to care for someone in need. Our church is composed of all different kinds of people. To value these people is to be committed to the above.