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# 1 Corinthians

**The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 1 Corinthians 16:19**

"Asia" here is the general area of Asia Minor. The churches that were in that region obviously communicated with one another often. In their communications, they remembered those in Corinth with fraternal thoughts. As Paul traveled, he certainly brought up the many areas he had visited in conversation, remembering their needs and speaking of their strengths.

Along with the churches, Aquila and Priscilla wanted to make sure those in Corinth knew they were still on their hearts and minds. They had previously been members of the church in Corinth and moved with Paul as he traveled. Together "with the church that is in their house" they sent on their hearty greetings.

Paul's final salutations are careful to include such heartfelt thoughts, knowing that such remembrances add a personal touch to the communication. In the case of this letter, it would help those in Corinth to assimilate all of his advice and instruction in a welcoming manner. The issues he has addressed were many and very sensitive in nature. For him to add these thoughts from other churches and people shows that they were held in a positive light during his conversations with them. It is a tactful way of closing out this important epistle.

Life application: Speaking well of others when they aren't around is always a favorable way of ensuring that they know they are loved. Such words of favor

inevitably will get back to the one being spoken of. Let our words about others always be salted with grace and charity.

**All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.**

1 Corinthians 16:20

Paul has completed his short list of those he singled out for personal greetings. Now, in the same thought in order to promote the general good of the congregation, as well as a deep-seated display of love, he tells them to "Greet one another with a holy kiss." This was, and still is, the custom in many parts of the world. The kiss is intended as a greeting just as western nations today shake hands or possibly hug, depending on familiarity. In the Far East, a deep and respectful bow is given in substitute of this.

Although Paul's letters are prescriptive, intent must always be considered. Is Paul mandating that all people in all churches meet one another "with a holy kiss?" The answer is "No." The reason why this is important is because there are small pockets of churches that mandate this even today and even in western societies. However, the intent of the kiss of greeting is cultural, not merely biblical. Proof of this follows from the first kiss noted in the Bible in Genesis 27:26 when Isaac blessed his son Jacob before he departed to Padan Aram.

From that point, the kiss is seen among the covenant people and among those who aren't yet in the covenant, thus demonstrating the cultural nature of the greeting. It is used in the same way we use a handshake. When Jacob met Rachel, without knowing her in any familiar way yet, he kissed her. In 2 Samuel 20, the following exchange begins with a kiss of greeting and ends in death -

"Then Joab said to Amasa, "Are you in health, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa did not notice the sword that *was* in Joab's hand. And he struck him with it in the stomach, and his entrails poured out on the ground; and he did not *strike* him again. Thus he died." 2 Samuel 20:9, 10

In 1 Samuel 20:41, David and Jonathan, close male friends, gave a fraternal kiss in accord with the culture before departing. And, Proverbs 27:6 notes the following -

"Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend,

But the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful." Proverbs 27:6

This demonstrates clearly that the kiss is cultural because even enemies will kiss rather than shake hands. This is seen in these parts of the world today when leaders who are at war with each other still greet with a kiss. Exchanging "kisses" with "shaking of hands" in this Proverb would hold exactly the same meaning and intent.

And as a premier example of this, read the following exchange between Jesus and Simon the Pharisee -

"And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged.' Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which *are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little.'" Luke 7:43-47

And of course, the most famous kiss in history is recorded concerning Judas' betrayal of Jesus and reflects the sentiments of Proverbs 27:6 (above) perfectly.

It is important then to understand the cultural nature of this admonition by Paul lest we get swept up into legalism over something which is actually not intended for all cultures and in all situations. If a person with an immune deficiency were to

use this verse in a prescriptive manner, he could soon be dead from receiving the germs of others.

Finally, the kisses in these and other verses throughout the Bible which are between men and men (such as David and Jonathan noted above) are not in any way intended to convey the perverse sin of homosexuality as modern liberals often imply. They are merely cultural and welcoming displays just as handshakes are today. To imply this in their writings shows a disregard for God's order in the natural world.

Life application: If you are in Rome, do as the Romans do. If you are in Japan, do as they do. It wouldn't be appropriate to go to church in the Far East and attempt to hug, kiss, or even shake the hands of another unless they first offered. If you are in a mid-eastern area, a fraternal kiss may accompany a greeting. In America, a hearty handshake and maybe a friendly hug is the custom. The intent of Paul's words is promoting warmth and harmony between believers, not causing offense.

### **The salutation with my own hand—Paul's. 1 Corinthians 16:21**

It is evident from Paul's letters that he used what is known as an amanuensis, a scribe, to write his letters for him. What seems likely is that he had extremely poor vision, possibly from his encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus. Because of this, a scribe would write as he dictated and then he would authenticate the epistle with his own greeting. That a scribe is used is seen, for example, in Romans 16:22 -

"I, Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, greet you in the Lord."

And so as in several other letters, a personal greeting from Paul is given. Other examples are found in 2 Thessalonians 3:17 and Colossians 4:18. Also, in Galatians 6:11, there is an added thought which is worthy of note -

"See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!"

Some take this to mean that he wrote all of Galatians; others that he simply signed the letter in this way. Whichever is the case, the "large letters" seems to indicate a person with weak eyes. It also gave him easily recognized writing which would authenticate his authorship. This is important because in 2 Thessalonians 2, it appears that Paul was worried that someone may try, or actually did try, to forge a letter as if from him -

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup> not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come." 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2

Life application: Paul bore "a thorn in the flesh" which he petitioned the Lord to remove from him. It is speculated that this is referring to his bad eyesight. The truth is that the Lord could have healed him anytime, but chose not to, stating the reason that "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." In this, there is also the truth that Paul's letters were easily identifiable and therefore forged letters would be shown as false. If you carry a perceived deficiency of some sort, the Lord can and will work with it to His glory. Rather than mourn over your deficiencies, exalt in them, knowing that they have placed you in a particular position for reasons that He is pleased to work through!

**If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!**  
1 Corinthians 16:22

This seems like an unusually harsh sentiment for Paul to introduce as he concludes his letter, but the entire content of the letter has been of doctrine, correction, and reproof. In chapter 15, he clearly laid out the truth of Christ's ministry, from the gospel itself all the way through its implication for man. If man accepts the gospel, he moves from death to life. If not, he remains spiritually dead and he will be destroyed, just as Death and Hades will be destroyed.

As an indication of Paul's intent, the word for "love" here is *phileo* not *agape*. This is a warm sort of love spoken of rather than the deeper "godly" and "reverent" love which *agape* normally refers to. And so to understand Paul's intent, we can first go back to verse 20 which said, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." In that verse, the word for "kiss" is *philéma*, a word with the same root as *phileo*. Paul is probably tying the two words together in an emotional way.

The body of believers is to have the same heart for the Lord as they have for one another. It is not enough to be a tightly knit group of people who work well together, but to be one that is committed to the work and love of the Lord. If believers are willing to kiss one another and yet not kiss the Son, then their love is a misdirected love. In such an instance, Paul says "let him be accursed." The word from which this is translated is *anathema*. Properly, it means "a thing devoted to God." The implication then is something that is accursed. There is to be no association with such a person within the fellowship because he has no true part in the fellowship.

Finally, Paul closes the thought with, "O Lord, come!" It is translated from the Aramaic words *marana* and *tha*. Taken together, we say *maranatha*, meaning "Lord come!" Some translators use them in the past tense - "Our Lord has come!" Others in the future - "Our Lord is coming!" Others simply use the Aramaic to avoid choosing one over the other. The Lord has come and the Lord is coming again. Whichever Paul was thinking, he has proclaimed it after pronouncing his curse. Because of this, the Geneva Bible gives this thought -

"Let him be accursed even to the coming of the Lord, that is to say, to the day of his death, even for ever."

Life application: There are times where imprecations are appropriate. Far too many Christians fail to relay the truly serious nature of the gospel. There is one path to God and only one. Without Jesus Christ, there is only death and hell ahead. For those who understand this and yet fail to love the Lord, they are to be treated as outsiders in relation to the church. Unless they change their hearts towards Him, they are accursed.

## **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. 1 Corinthians 16:23**

As with all of his epistles, Paul adds into his closing salutation a blessing which is a petition for divine favor to be upon his audience. In the Greek, there is a definite article in front of "grace." Quite often English translations will insert "the" for clarity, but it may not be in the Greek. However, it is here.

"The grace" is different than saying something like, "May grace from the Lord Jesus be with you." Paul is asking for a divine impartation of this attribute of the Lord to rest upon those in Corinth (and thus us!) and to sustain them in their walk. It must be truly considered that those who are not obedient to the epistle are to be excluded from this petition.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 5 he wrote concerning a disobedient congregant, saying to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." It should be obvious that until this person is willing to adhere to the sound instruction of the epistle, this petition for divine grace is not intended for him.

And yet, at the same time, we all fall short of one precept or another. Therefore, it must be considered that it is for those who earnestly strive for adherence to it, even if they do fall short. Such is the nature of grace; undeserved merit. Paul, in one form or another, closes out every one of his epistles with such a note of request for this divine favor. And even the last words of the Bible are very closely aligned with his words here. There John writes -

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen."

Life application: The Bible, time and again, asks for an undeserved blessing to be bestowed upon those who pursue it, even if they fall short of what it states. Such is the nature of grace, and such is the nature of our gracious Lord. As you walk along life's highway, take time to contemplate the wondrous grace which has

been lavished upon you. And then thank the Lord and praise the Lord for that same grace.

**My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.** 1 Corinthians 16:24

After a short introduction, Paul's words in this first epistle to the Corinthians began with grace and peace -

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 1:3

Now his words end in love. This is a beautiful example of Paul's ability to take the most difficult of issues and weave them into a letter with painstaking care in order to ensure that they are neither misconstrued, nor taken in an ill light. During the letter, he has gone on a walk through the dark valley of discontent. He has gone over jagged rocks of disharmony, and over rough roads of bad-doctrine. He has traversed through a jungle of immorality. There in the midst of it, the sharp and painful thorns of misconduct caused the Corinthians to stray in their thinking.

He also traveled along a highway of introduced heresy. With each step, he confidently placed his feet where the snakes of wayward thinking could not strike out and ruin him. After all of this, and much more difficult terrain, he now arrives on the quiet and peaceful shore of a tranquil ending to the epistle with words of comfort and love. Such is the nature of Paul's heart for the Corinthians. He was willing to take himself and his doctrine through all of this in order to bring them to that contented place with him. May we so conduct ourselves in such matters as well!

Life application: It is time-consuming and difficult to mentor people who are caught in spiritual confusion. It is so much easier to simply say, "They had it coming." But to take the time to correct others in faulty doctrine is no less



important than bringing a person to Christ. The reason for this is that those with faulty doctrine may be a witness of their beliefs to another at some point. If they teach an incorrect gospel, then the hearer of their words will never come to a saving knowledge of the Lord. Therefore, correction of doctrine is as important as the saving of souls.