
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 5:25-26

By: Brian A. Yeager

“Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss” (I Thessalonians 5:25-26). At the beginning of this epistle Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus wrote that they had been mentioning the saints in Thessalonica in their prayers as they remembered their work of faith, etc. (I Thessalonians 1:2-3). Now, at the conclusion of this letter, Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus are requesting prayers for themselves. It was a general request. Having said that, what would the saints have prayed for concerning Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus?

Since there are no specific details mentioned in this prayer request, all that we can do is look at possibilities. There are several possibilities, but there is one that fits into something previously written in this epistle. Consider what we read in chapter three: *“For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith? Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you”* (I Thessalonians 3:9-11). Writing is certainly a good way to teach, however it is inferior to seeing those you are teaching in person (II John 1:12 and III John 1:13-14). How does that relate to prayer?

Paul did not toss a coin into the air to figure out where to go next. God directed him where to go and where not to go. Notice: *“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily. Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them”* (Acts 16:1-10).

Is it too much to consider that this is what was behind the prayer request? Well, notice this specific request to the saints in Rome: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed”* (Romans 15:30-32). Paul made that request because he wanted to come to Rome, but had been hindered (Romans 15:18-24).

Brethren can pray for one another in situations of sin and the confession of such (James 5:16). That doesn't fit this request. Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus were not confessing any sins. If they were in sin, they had no right to teach in that state (Matthew 7:1-5 and Romans 2:1-29). Nor does it make sense that they were praying for miraculous healing (James 5:15). Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus had not stated anything about such in this letter. So, the likely request I mentioned above is all I can think of. Can you think of something else that fits the context of this first letter to the Thessalonians?

In addition to the prayer request that was made, there was the instruction for the holy kiss. Throughout the epistles we find the following statements about kisses in the sense of a greeting: *“Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you... All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss... Greet one another with an holy kiss... Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen”* (Romans 16:16, I Corinthians 16:20, II Corinthians 13:12, and I Peter 5:14).

So, what was the “holy kiss” or the “kiss of charity” as stated in the Scriptures above? The Greek word that is translated “holy” [ἅγιος] means: “Sacred (physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated): - (most) holy (one, thing), saint” (Strong's # 40). The Greek word that is translated “charity” [ἀγάπη] is defined as: “love, generosity, kindly concern, devotedness; pl. love-feasts” (Strong's # 26). Does that clear it up for you? I do not find much clarity from those definitions.

I can see, from the Scriptures we looked at about the holy kiss and kiss of charity that such was some form of a loving greeting. I can see that it was to be pure. So, this was not a kiss associated with carnal lust or anything of the sort. Of course, these brothers would not have given such an instruction if it was of lust or the like (I Thessalonians 4:1-5). Whatever this holy kiss was, these saints did not need a description. They knew what it was.

For us today, there is not a clear description of how or when to perform a holy kiss or a kiss of charity. The Scriptures do not give clarification on this. We do not know if it is a kiss on the cheek. We do not know if it is something kept among the same sex or not. If this was more than a customary greeting, God would have had instructions that would leave clarity for generations to come (II Timothy 3:16-17). We don't have the clarity to perform holy kisses.