

# Salute One Another

Romans 16:16-20



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**FOCAL Read Responsively** **Romans 16:16-20** Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. {17} **Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.** {18} For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. {19} **For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.** {20} **And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.**

God can – and does – do remarkable things with unified Churches. The local Church that works together in love to accomplish the Gospel mission laid before it is a bright and shining light in this dark world. Jesus said:

**Matthew 5:16** **Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father** which is in heaven.

The local Church at Rome had done just this. The Apostle said “**your obedience<sup>1</sup> is come abroad<sup>2</sup> unto all men**”. Literally this means “your attentive compliance

- 1 G5218, ὑπακοή, hupakoē, *hoop-ak-o-ay'*, From G5219; *attentive hearkening*, that is, (by implication) *compliance* or *submission*: - obedience, (make) obedient, obey (-ing).
- 2 G864, ἀφικνέομαι, aphikneomai, *af-ik-neh'-om-ahee*, From G575 and the base of G2425; to *go* (that is, *spread*) *forth* (by rumor): - come abroad.

and submission” to one another – and to God – has spread or been rumored abroad”. In short, *everyone was talking* about the Church at Rome - and what they were saying about the Roman believers was good. These believers were not only listening to the command of Christ: they were *doing it*. The Lord said:

**John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. {35} By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.**

It has been said that the *greatest proof for Christ* is the Christian, but the *greatest proof against Christ* is also the Christian. When the Church fights, backbites one another, or acts hateful toward its members, the world gleefully reports this. When the Church is selfish, the world sees that selfishness and turns away from our message. When the Church loves the way that Christ taught us, lifting one another up, bending over backwards to submit to one another *for Christ's sake*, the world marvels at this. The Church is the Greatest Blessing on earth when it loves, but circus-like, the "Greatest Show on Earth" when it does not love.

Do not convince yourselves that the world doesn't watch us, dear Christian, for it carefully weighs our words and our actions to see if they measure up. In olden days the unscrupulous butcher would put his thumb on the scales so he could get a few pennies more from the unwary

customer. The world watches you, dear Church. Do not let it see your thumb on the scales. If you profess love to God and to one another but fuss and fight over inconsequential temporal things the world will see your thumb, and they will mock your Christ. “See, I told you so. This Christ was no more than a charlatan, a liar and a deceiver. If He were true then His disciples would be true. There must be nothing here”. Jesus gave the world permission to do this when He commanded that we love one another. **"By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if ye have love one to another"**. Jesus could have made doctrinal precision, scribal efficiency toward the Bible, or defined a series of rituals to be our distinguishing trait. No, dear ones, no. Our brand, the mark of the Christian, is that **ye love one another**. The Bible repeats this truth over and over:

**Romans 12:9-10 Love must be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. {10} Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor.**<sup>HCSB</sup>

Do you want to have a contest that the Lord will bless? Don't be like the sons of Zebedee who came to Jesus asking **"that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory"** (Mark 10:37). You will never be honored of God until you practice sacrificial love. Try to **out do one another in showing honor and love**, and you will honor God - and God will honor you.

When I was in the military the first thing they taught me was how to stand at attention and *salute*. The proper way to salute is to stand at attention with your hands in line with the crease of your trousers. Keeping your right hand stiff and flat, you quickly raise your arm slightly and bend it sharply and smartly at the elbow as you move your hand to your brow. Once in place you hold the salute until it is returned by an officer. I remember our Drill Instructor telling us over and over again “Keep that hand straight. We're not the British Military, we're Americans! Tighten up. Look sharp now!” I was taught to salute all officers – from Lieutenant to General – unless we were in a war zone. Salute an officer in a war zone and an enemy sniper would shoot him! Otherwise we saluted - and held that salute until the officer returned it.

Why did we salute officers in the military? Why did lower ranking officers salute higher ranking officers? Was it because the officer was *smarter* than you were? No, that's not it. Many of the officers I worked for had no idea how a radar transmitter worked, nor did they understand concepts like "variable bandwidth quantizing". They weren't dumb – but that wasn't their area of expertise. Did I salute officers because they were more handsome than I was, or stronger, or quicker, or richer, or even a better person? No, not at all. Why did we salute officers? Because we were members of the military, because there was a chain of command, and that salute was a distinct military honor that we bestowed on one another. As a retired Air Force Sergeant I still salute the flag when I hear our National Anthem.

The Church has its own salute. Look at our focal text:

**Focal** Romans 16:16 **Salute<sup>3</sup> one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute<sup>4</sup> you.**

The salute that the military uses involves the hand. The salute that the Church uses involves *the lips*. We give one another the salute of love. Now, I don't think that the Lord necessarily wants us to go around kissing one another in this day and age. That could lead to serious problems. Yet we need consider what the text says. **“Salute or greet one another with a holy, sanctified, set apart, or righteous kiss”**. It is clear that the Church is to have as its distinguishing mark *love and unity* among its members. This is particularly evident throughout this last chapter of Romans. The Greek word for **“salute”** is used *twenty one times* in sixteen verses. Paul tells the local Church of Rome over and over again: **“Salute Andronicus and Junia, salute Amplias, salute ...”** You get the picture. Paul saluted each of these members as they saluted one another and saluted him back. They saluted one another with love – preferring one another in love – because *this is what the Church does*. Our God is love (**1 John 4:7-8**), and He puts His love in our hearts (**Romans 5:5**). The Church firmly in the grip of God is distinguished by His love shining throughout it. We salute one another in love *for Christ's*

3 Aorist Middle Imperative of G782, ἀσπάζομαι, aspazomai, as-pad'-zom-ahē, From G1 (as a particle of union) and a presumed form of G4685; to *enfold* in the arms, that is, (by implication) to *salute*, (figuratively) to *welcome*: - embrace, greet, salute, take leave.

4 Present Middle Indicative of ἀσπάζομαι, aspazomai, as-pad'-zom-ahē

sake – not because those we salute are smarter or better than we are. **We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).** We love one another because *this is the order of the day for His Church.*

When we cease to love one another, we cease to be His Church. We dare not cease to be His Church, loved ones. **If the salt of the earth loses its saltiness, where shall salt be found (Matthew 5:13)? If the light of the world be extinguished, where will light be found? (Matthew 5:14).** Be light, be salt, show His love to one another for His sake.

I salute you.

### **What Is Not The Mark Of The Church**

**FOCAL** Romans 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark<sup>5</sup> them which cause divisions<sup>6</sup> and offenses<sup>7</sup> contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

As a pastor I have had to console families who have suffered under terrible diseases. One of the worst diseases of our age, *cancer*, is particularly terrible

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- 5 Present Active Infinitive of G4648, σκοπέω, skopeō, *skop-eh'-o*, From G4649; to take *aim* at (*spy*), that is, (figuratively) *regard*: - consider, take heed, look at (on), mark. Compare G3700.
- 6 G1370, διχοστασία, dichostasia, *dee-khos-tas-ee'-ah*, From a derivative of G1364 and G4714; *disunion*, that is, (figuratively) *dissension*: - division, sedition.
- 7 G4625, σκάνδαλον, skandalon, *skan'-dal-on*, A “scandal”; probably from a derivative of G2578; a *trap stick* (*bent sapling*), that is, *snares* (figuratively *cause* of displeasure or sin): - occasion to fall (of stumbling), offense, thing that offends, stumbling-block.

because of what it does to the human body. **Princeton University** defines “cancer” as **“any malignant growth or tumor caused by abnormal and uncontrolled cell division; it may spread to other parts of the body through the lymphatic system or the blood stream”<sup>8</sup>.**

Define Cancer. What things are cancerous in the Body of Christ?

Cancer is therefore a condition where one cell of the human body goes renegade and begins to not only destroy itself, but the rest of the body. The cancerous cell ceases to work with the body but begins to *do its own thing*. If left unchecked that cell will build a tumor, which in turn will infect the lymph nodes then the bloodstream. Once in the bloodstream – in most cases – your days are numbered. The body is on a pathway to physical death.

When a member of God's Church begins to “go rogue” the Bible tells us that steps have to be taken, lest the entire Body be destroyed. The Apostle said:

**“I beseech or beg you, my Brothers in Christ”.** The word **“beseech”** means **“to beg or implore”**. The Apostle begged the Roman believers **to present their bodies as a living sacrifice unto God (Romans 12:1)**. It is significant that we take heed of the *number in the words* of that text. **“Bodies”** is plural whereas **“living sacrifice”** is singular. Each member of the Church *avoids roguishness and sinfulness* while working

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8 <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=cancer>

together as one Church. Paul also begged the Romans as a local Church to **support him by prayer (Romans 15:30)**. Now he literally **begs the Church to carefully examine those who bring dissension and stumbling blocks** into its midst. The word for “**offenses**” is the Greek **skandalon**, from which we get our word “**scandal**”.

Why is it particularly dangerous to **scandalize** the Church? How are we to handle those who run about "carrying tales" in the Church of Christ?

Those who scandalize the Church, who put **Christ to an open shame (Hebrews 6:6)** are to be carefully scrutinized, marked, then **avoided** until they repent. That applies to *anyone* dear friends, anyone at all. The mark of the Church *must* be love. When the world speaks of the Church they should remark on the unity and the oneness of that Body.

**Adrian Rogers** said “**Anything without a head is dead, and anything with two heads is a freak.**”

The Church has One Head – Jesus Christ – and that Head mandates that we love one another and work together in unity to fulfill His calling. Look further at the qualifier of this text:

**FOCAL** Romans 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses **contrary to the doctrine which ye have**

**learned; and avoid them.**

Paul commends the Church to unity based on **the doctrine which they had learned**. The clear teachings of the Holy Scripture are to be the banner that we follow into battle. We have no right to fight and fuss over foolish things but ask ourselves “**what saith the Scripture?**” We follow God's Word without question and at all times.

What is the governing standard of the Church? What is the banner that we follow into battle?

I pray that you all have spiritual discernment over the things that you hear about the Scripture. I pray that you all are reading and prayerfully considering that Holy Word of God every single day of your lives.

Paul wanted the Roman Church to understand that *men would creep into the Church* and attempt to use it for their own purposes. Rather than focus on love and unity and reaching others for Christ,

**Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Those who creep into the Church bringing division are serving not God, *but their own bellies*.

The Body of Christ is always subject to attack. Satan, the author of confusion, will always seek to destroy or defame or scandalize the Church.

**Illustrate** Just the other day I received a letter in the mail from a heretic who wrote that “Jesus really isn't God – He's just a created Being”. Churches receive garbage like this all the time as Satan lobbies attacks against God's people. Most of it you as members of the Church never see, because your pastor throws it in the garbage where it belongs. But there are attacks – on television – and sometimes even from within the flock itself – that can destroy the ability of the Church to reach people for Christ. For this cause we **carefully consider troublemakers** and – if their dissension is contrary to the clear teachings of the Holy Scripture – we **avoid them**.

Paul told the Corinthian Church:

**1 Corinthians 1:10** Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that **ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions<sup>9</sup> among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

<sup>9</sup> G4978, σχίσμα, schisma, *skhis'-mah*, From G4977; a *split* or *gap* (“schism”), literally or figuratively: - division, rent, schism.

He begged the Corinthians to put away **schisms or divisions** within the flock. A divided Church is of no use to God. Just as a **double minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8)** a double minded Church is unstable.

We are called to harmony and oneness – but we must be one with the Holy Scripture.

C.H. Spurgeon said:

**"I cannot agree with those who say that they have 'new truth' to teach. The two words seem to me to contradict each other; that which is new is not true. It is the old that is true, for truth is as old as God Himself"**

The so called “**Emerging Church Movement**” tells us that there is no such thing as doctrine *or truth*. Like Post-Modernism the Emergents believe that “truth is fluid”. We will never have unity, dear ones, on that basis. Our unity must be with one another **based on the doctrine that we have learned**.

**FOCAL** Romans 16:18 **For they that are such serve<sup>10</sup> not our Lord Jesus Christ, but**

<sup>10</sup> Present Active Indicative of G1398, δουλεύω, douleuō, *dool-yoo'-o*, From G1401; to *be a slave* to (literally or figuratively, involuntarily or voluntarily): - be in bondage, (do) serve (-ice).

**their own belly; and by good words<sup>11</sup> and fair speeches<sup>12</sup> deceive the hearts of the simple.**

The people who bring divisions into the Body of Christ are not doing so because they love the Lord. They are introducing divisions because **they love their own belly**. The Bible literally says “**they keep on being slaves to their bellies**”. Are these people persuasive? Absolutely! The best salesmen Satan has on his staff are silver tongued and slick. The Apostle says that they use **plausible or fair speeches and elegant language**. They know how to persuade. And no wonder: for the devil is a **liar and the father of it**. Avoid the dividers, dearly Beloved. Avoid the troublemakers. Avoid those who serve their own bellies rather than serve the Lord.

### **A Unified Church Is Given An Awesome Promise**

**FOCAL** Romans 16:19-20 For your obedience<sup>13</sup> is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise<sup>14</sup> unto that

11 G5542, *χρηστολογία*, chrēstologia, *khrase-tol-og-ee'-ah*, From a compound of G5543 and G3004; *fair speech*, that is, *plausibility*: - good words.

12 G2129, *εὐλογία*, eulogia, *yoo-log-ee'-ah*, From the same as G2127; *fine speaking*, that is, *elegance of language*; *commendation* (“eulogy”), that is, (reverentially) *adoration*; religiously, *benediction*; by implication *consecration*; by extension *benefit* or *largess*: - blessing (a matter of) bounty (X -tifully), fair speech.

13 G5218, *ὑπακοή*, hupakoē, *hoop-ak-o-ay'*, From G5219; *attentive hearkening*, that is, (by implication) *compliance* or *submission*: - obedience, (make) obedient, obey (-ing).

14 G4680, *σοφός*, sophos, *sof-os'*, Akin to *σαφής* saphēs (*clear*); *wise* (in a

which is good, and simple<sup>15</sup> concerning evil. {20} And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

The Apostle ends this letter by commending the Romans for their **attentive compliance to the command of Christ**. Then he makes an interesting statement. He asks that the Roman believers “**be wise toward the good, harmless or simple toward the evil**”. We who believe are called by God to be **harmless or simpleminded** toward things that are evil. We are not called to be manipulative toward other believers. Yet some who profess to be Christ's run to and fro in the Church, sowing seeds of discord wherever they go. This was true in the early Church, and it is true today. God calls His Sheep to BE Sheep. A Sheep is not calculating toward evil A Sheep follows its Shepherd. Follow your Shepherd, dear Ones, follow your Shepherd. If you will remain unified in love toward God and toward one another the Lord promises:

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

Think about that for just a moment: “**The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under YOUR feet shortly**”. Where

most general application): - wise. Compare G5429.

15 G185, *ἀκέραιος*, akeraios, *ak-er'-ah-yos*, From G1 (as a negative particle) and a presumed derivative of G2767; *unmixed*, that is, (figuratively) *innocent*: - harmless, simple.

is the first promise given in Scripture concerning the bruising of Satan? Do you remember the Fall of Adam? Right after God punished the Serpent (Satan) for his role in the Fall He said:

**Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.**

God promised that old Devil that the Seed of the woman (the Coming Savior Jesus Christ) would "bruise thy Head, Satan". This is called the Protoevangelion, the First Preaching of the Gospel of Christ. Jesus would come and destroy the works of Satan "bruising his head". How did the Lord do this? The Bible says:

**Isaiah 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.**

that God bruised Jesus on that Cross for us. Jesus Christ died on Calvary to, by the shedding of His Blood, to provide a covering for the Fall of Adam. Whosoever believeth in Him has passed from death and into life (John 5:24). Jesus was bruised to set at liberty those who were bruised by sin and death:

**Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,**

We who are saved have been set at liberty from the bruising of sin so that we - as the Body of Christ - can bruise the head of Satan.

You are called to bruise Satan while loving God. You are called to - in one accord - crush Satan's head while loving one another.

Think of those who were the foundation of the early Church. You have several fishermen, each in competition one with another. Look, there is the Zealot, a guerrilla fighter who hates the Roman Government. Side by side with him we see Matthew the Tax Collector, a man who's job supported the government the Zealot hated. These men would not ever naturally associate with one another. They were natural enemies. Yet the Lord threw them together and said "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men". These men should have hated one another. Yet the Lord said "By this will all men know you are My disciples, that you love one another".

This is the Church. Blood bought because of love, Spirit filled because of love, you must not forget the salute of love. "What if someone doesn't love me back?" you might ask. Do you remember the illustration I began

with, the illustration of the "salute"? Do you remember my saying "**You hold the salute until it is returned**"?

If none love you back, love them anyway. Hold the salute until it is returned. If they'll not return the salute then **Christ Who is our Life** will.

Do it for Jesus. Do it because He saved you. **And He will bruise Satan under your feet shortly.**

I salute you!

