

**The One Anothers (Part 3)**  
**Selected Scriptures**  
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We have taken a brief break from our study of the Epistle of James to look together at our responsibility to each other within the church, within the body of Christ. We're looking at those expressions of our responsibility to one another in the New Testament. Today we come to the attitudes and mindset that we should have toward each other. You know, it really is amazing how important our attitudes are to the health of our relationships. The same two people, each with their own weaknesses, can have either a strong relationship or a troubled one based solely on the attitudes that they have for each other.

Sheila and I observed this early in our relationship and marriage. I have to freely admit to you, and Sheila would confirm, that I can be a certified grade A stubborn man. Sometimes it expresses itself in humorous ways -- "you know honey I know it'll only take me three more hours to get this piece of pipe to fit. I don't really need you to call a plumber; I think I can do this." Other times, the trait can show itself in ways that aren't quite so humorous. In fact, if Sheila allowed herself, she could easily develop a bad attitude and let that attitude grow into resentment toward me, significantly damaging our relationship over time. Instead, she decided years ago that she would choose to appreciate the positive side of that weakness in me; by the way, this doesn't mean that I'm not working on it. I hope Sheila would tell you that I've made some progress in this area. But she decided that she would choose to focus on the positive side of that weakness in my own life. She recognized that it was that same stubbornness that sometimes frustrated her that would also help to ensure that I would remain committed to her for time and eternity, whatever may come. She decided, instead, to focus on that positive side and to call it persistence. Sometimes she forgets and has to ask, "What is that positive word for stubborn?" But largely, she gets it. The key factor, what I want you to see is, the key factor was her own attitude.

In the same way, our attitudes, the attitudes that we develop toward each other in the church determine the strength of the relationships that we will have or their weakness. So it shouldn't surprise us that a number of the commands of the New Testament have to do with the attitudes that we should have toward each other and the Spirit's desire to see those relationships strengthened through the proper thinking. We're going to examine several of those attitudes that we should have this morning.

For those of you who may be visiting with us let me tell you we're studying those New Testament commands that lay out our duty to be or to do something to one another. They are

commonly called the “One Anothers.” Now we’ve organized the fifty or so of those commands into four categories and I’ve labeled those four categories as “motivation,” “occupation,” “orientation” and “conversation.” Two weeks ago we discovered that our motivation, that is what should lie behind every interaction we have with each other, should be love. Our motive must be love. That should undergird everything we do in serving and ministering to one another. That wonderful divine word “agape” that speaks of the love God has for us and the love that only He can shed abroad in our hearts and enable us to show to others.

Last week, we discovered that our primary occupation as we interact with each other is two-fold; we are to build one another up and we are to serve one another. We are to be occupied, the overarching responsibility of our interaction with each other is to build one another up. That is to promote one another’s spiritual growth and health. And secondly, to serve one another, the word “serve” originally, literally, referred to waiting tables. We are to take it on ourselves to, in a very real way, be a servant to others; to meet their real needs. To be more concerned about them than ourselves. And we looked at a variety of ways to do that.

Now today we come to the third category and our third word, “orientation.” A number of these one another commands teach us how we are to orient ourselves and our thinking toward each another. These commands describe the underlying attitudes that are to mark all of our interactions with fellow Christians. There are really four of them. Four recurring New Testament commands that provide us with a set of attitudes that we are to practice toward one another. If we’re going to have the kind of relationship in the church we’re supposed to have, then we have to promote and foster these four attitudes.

The first is unity, unity. A number of times in the New Testament, we are commanded to be of the same mind towards one another; to be of the same mind toward one another. Paul absolutely loves this concept; in fact, he uses the Greek word that’s translated “be of the same mind” 22 of the 26 times it occurs in the New Testament. For example in Romans 12:16, he says, “be of the same mind toward one another.” Second Corinthians 13:11, “finally brethren rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded.” But nowhere in Paul’s writings does he focus more on this concept of being unified of being of the same mind than in the letter to the Philippians. In fact 10 times he uses this expression in the letter to the church at Philippi. And the most insightful occurrence is in Philippians chapter 2 and that’s where I want us to begin as we examine this responsibility this morning. This attitude we’re to have of unity, Philippians chapter 2.

It’s been a couple of years now since we’ve studied this passage but let me just remind you of the flow. In verse 1 of Philippians 2, Paul reminds us of the spiritual gifts that we have received. He says if Christ has been any encouragement to you, if you have been consoled by God’s love, if you have enjoyed the partnership that is granted you by the work of the Spirit. If you have

benefited from the affection and compassion of God; if all of those things are true. then here's what I want you to do, verse 2. "make my joy complete." Paul had already told the Philippians that they give him joy back in chapter 1 verse 4. But here he tells them they can make his joy complete. The verb "make complete" is used of filling something up, like water jugs all the way to the top. Paul is saying, you can fill me with joy up to the brim you can top off my life with joy. How Paul? Well notice how he continues in verse 2, "by being of the same mind..." Literally, the expression means "thinking the same thing." The best way to translate it I think is: set your minds on the same things; by having the same mindset, by having the same disposition. We're to think alike.

Now this doesn't mean that we're to be in lock step on every issue that comes into the life of the church. This doesn't mean that we're to agree on the interpretation of every passage. That's not what it means to be of the same mind. Instead, it is a mindset that is explained in the next three phrases. Notice that in verse 2, Paul says I want you to be of the same mind and then there are three phrases that follow and those three phrases define what it means to be of the same mind. The essence of one-mindedness, listen carefully, the essence of one-mindedness is to stay focused on what we have in common. Notice what we have in common, those three phrases tell us in verse 2.

First of all, we have a common commitment to love each other, "maintaining the same love." This points back to verse 1. If you have had any consolation of love, he saying listen; if you have been consoled in life's troubles by the knowledge of God's love for you then you're to have the same kind of love for each other. He says listen, be of the same mind and by that I mean remember that you have a common commitment to love each other. We also have a common connection in the Spirit.

Notice the second phrase, "united in spirit." This phrase translates one Greek word that's used only here in the New Testament, it literally means "together in soul." It means to think and act as one person. It's like in a good marriage where the spouses become so much a part of each that it's hard to tell where one leaves off and the other begins. We begin to feel the same way about things, we think similarly about many issues, we finish each other's sentences, we are together in soul or to use the contemporary expression, we are soul mates. Paul says, remember this, think about this that we are inseparably united to each other. If we are mature, spiritually-minded Christians we are not going to allow unimportant differences to divide us or to hinder our service because we share a common connection. The Spirit has put us together into one body. We are permanently united, bound to each other.

A third way that Paul defines the essence of one-mindedness; not only are we connected with a common commitment to love, and a common connection in the spirit, but a common cause in Christ. Notice he says at the end of verse 2, we are "intent on one purpose." This phrase speaks

of being directed toward a single goal, one aim on which we focus together. What is our common cause? Well I don't have time to take you back verse by verse but if you were to read the first chapter of Philippians it's clear what that common cause is. It's Christ and His gospel. That's what we're battling together for. That's what we live for. That's what we're united in. So we're to have the same mindset. We're to be of the same mind and that means to remind ourselves that we share a common commitment to love one another. That we have a common connection to each other and that we share a common cause.

Let me illustrate this for you so you understand what it means to be of the same mind. We can be extremely different and are, and yet still be of the same mind. We can disagree on specific issues and still be of the same mind. I've told you before that when I was in high school I played high school football. Our high school team was really nothing to write home about, we never showed up on ESPN, as some of the local teams do here; but we still enjoyed playing and it was a great joy and I have fond memories of those days. All of us who were on those teams through those four years that I played were very different. We were very different in our tastes, in our personalities. There were a lot of things about us that were very different, but for those three hours on Friday nights, we were committed to the team and to one purpose and that was working together to win.

That's what Paul is saying. He's saying "by being of the same mind," he's saying remember that you are in fact on the same team, that you're one team striving together for one goal. Be of the same mind means keep a team mindset. We're together. Now let me show you what happens if we are, in fact, being of the same mind, if we're truly united by our common love, by our common connection to the Spirit, by our common cause in Christ in the gospel. Let me show you how this protects the church. Turn over a couple of chapters to Philippians 4. In verse 2, Paul deals with a couple of women in the church, Euodia, and Syntyche; they are at odds with each other.

I want to remind you that when we studied this passage, we learned that these two women were not on the periphery. These two women were not women on the edge of the church with bad reputations and wagging tongues. These women were, instead, part of the core of the church. Look at what this passage says about them. They were obviously members of the church in Philippi. They were genuine believers; verse 3 says their names are written in the book of life. They were active in ministry. Verse 3 also says, "they have shared my struggle," Paul says, "in the cause of the gospel." They have demonstrated that they are able to work and serve alongside others, because he mentions Clement there in verse 3 and "the rest of my fellow workers." So these were quality Christian women.

But now these two women have reached a point of disagreement over some issue that does not involve fundamental doctrine or sin. We don't know what the issue was, but Paul is now

addressing these two women or, in particular, he's addressing the elders there in Philippi and someone he calls in verse 3, "my true companion," possibly one of the elders there, possibly one of his coworkers that he left there. But notice verse 2, he says, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord." Let me tell you what he literally says. I'll translate it for you literally; in fact, you probably have this reading in the margin of your Bible. "I urge Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind, to have the same mindset." You see, this is why it's so important for us to be of the same mind to remember we're on the same team. Because it will ensure and preserve the true unity of the church, because when arguments come, when disagreements come, we can remind each other that while we may disagree on small individual issues, we can work together because we're on the same team.

Now how can we develop that kind of unity, that kind of one-mindedness? Look at Romans 15, Paul tells us there. Paul has just finished dealing with an issue in the Roman church that could have served as a great point of division; and that was issues of conscience. Disagreements about whether or not meat sacrificed to idols should be eaten, whether certain days should be observed above other days, these were hot points, flash points in the church in Rome. And Paul has just dealt with that issue and he gets to verse 5 and he says this in Romans chapter 15, "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement, may that God grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus..." You know what Paul says about how we develop that kind of team unity, that team spirit that says we're all in this together? We ask God to give it to us as a gift of His grace because we by nature are individualistic, selfish and given to divisiveness and so we say, God, may You grant us to be of the same mind with one another. Folks, we cannot forget to pray that for our church. It's so easy for us to find ourselves at odds with one another. May we join Paul in praying this for Countryside, may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another. By the way, what's the goal of this unity? Look at verse 6. God's glory; "so that" [if you enjoy this same mind] "so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." What's the practical result? Look at verse 7, "accepting each other." Paul ends where he began chapter 14 verse 1, "Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." Yes you have differences, one may eat and one may not eat; one may keep a certain day, another may not; but if you're of one mind, even with those disagreements, you can accept each other. You can dwell with each other in peace and harmony.

Let me ask you, do you work at being of the same mind as the believers of this church? Do you think like Paul is urging us to think, that this is a team? Do you share a common commitment of love to the people around you? Do you remember that you are connected to them in a real relationship placed there by the Spirit of God? Do you remind yourself that you are partners together with all of us in the common cause of Christ and the gospel? Do you work at developing that team attitude, that one-mindedness? The first attitude that we are to foster in our relationship with one another is unity.

A second attitude that the New Testament lays out for us is humility, humility. Turn to Romans chapter 12. This is one of several places we'll look at where Paul lays out this very basic command. Now in Romans chapter 12, you remember the first 11 chapters he laid out the great doctrine of justification by faith. He explains salvation and how it relates in chapters 9 to 11 to Israel, to God's choice of them and then when you come to chapter 12 of Romans, Paul turns to the practical implications of the gospel. And he begins in the first part of chapter 12 dealing with the issue of spiritual gifts. But in verse 9, Paul moves from the theme of spiritual gifts to the theme of spiritual virtues that he wants to see present in all believers. Look at verse 10, there's a sort of staccato fashion to his commands. But look at verse 10 the second half of the verse, "give preference to one another in honor." Now that is a very difficult Greek expression to translate. The literal translation would be this, "as to honor go before each other or set an example for each other." In essence, Paul is saying this: I want you to seek out, rejoice in, and honor the good in other believers more than and before you honor the good that may be in you. Now Paul is not, here, encouraging a false kind of humility. He's not saying if you have superior gifts, act like you don't. The issue is focus. What Paul is saying is we are to get the spotlight in our thinking off of ourselves and onto others. Be quick to think about how others ought to be honored instead of yourself, that's what he's saying.

Now, Paul develops this a little more over in Philippians chapter 2 again, turn back to Philippians 2. We left off in verse 2, but let's start with verse 3, he says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit..." don't do absolutely, do absolutely nothing with the motive of selfishness, or selfish ambition, as it's sometimes translated, or empty conceit. Selfishness seeks personal goals and agendas. Empty conceit seeks personal glory and he says don't do anything from those reasons, but "with humility of mind" and here he lays down this framework, this attitude that we're to have toward each other; with humility of mind. A related word to the word translated humility here is the word "lowly" and it occurs some 270 times in the Septuagint and that what informs Paul's usage of this word here. It literally means "lowly mindedness." It doesn't mean you grovel. It doesn't mean you take a sort of Eeyore approach as you've heard me describe before to yourself. That's not the point. It's not an attitude of self-abuse. Instead it's willingness to assume the position of a servant; lowly-mindedness to put yourself in the position of a servant. He goes on to illustrate with Christ. Look at what Christ did, He left heaven and He came willingly to be a servant.

Now notice how humility like this behaves. Look at verse 3 again, "with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves." This word "regard" describes carefully evaluating the evidence and coming to a verdict. Like with a jury, the jury considers the evidence and determines the verdict. He says that's what I want you to do. And what's the verdict we're to come to? That others are more important than we are. It means that we are to see everyone else as more deserving of honor and respect than we are.

You say well how can I develop that kind of attitude? Well, think for a moment. You don't know everyone else the way you know yourself. You know every wretched thing there is to know about you. But 1 Corinthians 13 tells us we're to believe the best about everybody else. So if you really take an honest look at yourself and you really believe the best about everyone else then it's not so difficult to believe they're more deserving of honor and respect than you are. That's what Paul is saying. Notice how else humility expresses itself in verse 4, "do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interest of others." It means to seek the welfare of others, the needs of others before I seek my own. Paul puts it a different way in 1 Corinthians 10:24, he says, "Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor." Wow. This is the mindset that you and I are to have toward each other. This humility that causes me to think of others as deserving of more honor and that puts their interests and needs ahead of my own.

You see this in a picture, a beautiful word picture in 1 Peter. Turn to 1 Peter chapter 5. Peter also addresses this issue of humility and how important it is in our interaction with each other. In 1 Peter 5:5 in the middle of the verse he says, "all of you" [everybody in the church that I'm writing to] "clothe yourselves with humility toward one another." All of you clothe yourself with humility toward one another. "Clothe yourselves" is a very rare Greek word. It is only here in the New Testament. It refers to tying on the white scarf or apron of a slave. It was used that way, literally, in secular Greek. You see, in the Greek culture, there was a white scarf or apron that every slave wore and that's what distinguished them from being a free man. As you walked down the street you could tell who was a slave and who wasn't. Peter says I want you to tie on the apron or scarf of a slave. What is Peter remembering? He's remembering that fateful night before our Lord's crucifixion when Jesus Himself took off His outer garment there in John 13, girded Himself with a towel and washed the disciples' feet. He's saying this is the mindset I want you to have. I want you to think of yourself as a slave to others. Willingly become the servant of others.

Do you honor the gifts and good of others before you honor your own? Do you see everyone else as deserving of more honor and respect than you do? Do you seek the welfare of others and their needs before you seek and meet your own? You see, as we learned last week, before we can truly build each other up and before we can serve one another, we must first develop the attitude of humility; because if we aren't humble, then we're never going to put others ahead of ourselves. We're never going to regard their needs and concerns before we regard our own. We're never going to honor them before we honor ourselves. And so this is absolutely foundational to our interaction with each other. In fact, let me put it to you this way: pride is the enemy of all relationships and good relationships, Godly relationships can only be built where there is humility.

You say well how can I get there? All of us are proud. We're, by nature, captivated by ourselves and by our pride. How do we get from pride to humility? Peter tells us right here in 1 Peter 5. I don't have time to really go through this text with you but let me just real quickly point out three very practical steps on the path from pride to humility. There're three commands in verse 5 and verse 6. Three commands built around that proverb that's there in all caps in your Bible in verse 5. The proverb is the argument. Three commands around that proverb are the how to. You want to be humble? Here it is. Number one: submit to authority in your life. Notice what he says in verse 5, "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders;" the elders here is not talking about older people; it's talking about the leaders of the church. Notice the first four verses are all about the off the office of elder. Also, Peter uses this verb "be subject," six times. Every other time it's talking about authority and your response to authority. There are other reasons as well but, in the interest of time, I won't give them to you. This is exactly what Peter is saying. You want to be humble? Then start by submitting yourself to the duly constituted authorities God has put in your life. Whether it's parents, or a husband, or elders, or government, or an employer, or whatever it is. Start by responding properly, submitting your will to will of the authorities God has put into your life. Secondly, become a servant. We saw it in the middle of verse 5. All of you put on the apron of a slave. Serve other people. And thirdly, if you want to be humble, subject your will, voluntarily, to God's will. Look at verse 6, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." Those are the three steps on the path from pride to humility.

Now, if we can have the attitude of humility toward one another, it leads naturally to our third attitude and that is the attitude of patience, patience. If we're going to relate properly to each another, we need to have the attitude of unity, we need to have the attitude of humility, and we need to have the attitude of patience. Turn to Ephesians chapter 4. This is, again, one place where Paul addresses this issue. In Ephesians 4 verse 1, he's just finished the sort of doctrinal thrust of the epistle and now he comes in chapter 4 verse 1 to the implications of that doctrine in life and he begins verse 1 by saying, "Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." And notice that one way we can walk in a way in a manner worthy of the calling with which we've been called is in patience, verse 2, with patience. This word "patience" is the same word that's used to describe God's patience. In fact, in Exodus 34:6, that great self-revelation of God, when Moses watches God and hears God recite His name and God says, "I am slow to anger." In Hebrew, the expression is "I am long of nose"; it takes Me a long time to get hot, is what God is saying. When the Septuagint translators chose a Greek word, they chose this word "patient." Patience is the virtue that overlooks the weaknesses of others. That endures personal wrongs rather than immediately erupting in anger and seeking revenge and it's required of us. Look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, very clear that this is a responsibility we have to each other. First Thessalonians chapter 5 as Paul gives these sort of staccato commands at the end of chapter 5. He says in verse 14, "We urge you, brethren," and here he gives a number of categories of



troubled people in the church, as elders we often come to a verse like this to consider how it is we ought to respond to the person we are dealing with. Notice what he says, “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly,” [warn those who are out of step with the Scripture] “encourage the fainthearted,” [that is fainthearted are those who are who have are discouraged, who are down cast. Encourage them] “help the weak,” [the weak are those who are perpetually spiritually weak who need someone strong to help hold them up. And then he says, but I want you to] “be patient with everyone.” Without exception. This is required with of interaction with everyone.

Now turn to Colossians chapter 3 because here, Paul, sort of fills this whole idea out a little more thoroughly. What does it mean to be patient? Colossians 3:12. Colossians 3:12, “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved,” I want you to “put on a heart of compassion, of kindness, of humility, gentleness and patience...” Now notice here how the word patience is followed by two participles that further explain it or that give us practical expressions of patience. Verse 13, “bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” These two participles, “bearing with” and “forgiving,” are two practical expressions of this patience we’re to have. “Bearing with” literally means showing tolerance for, enduring, putting up with the weaknesses and failures of others. It’s not talking about excusing sin. Rather, it’s talking about exercising the same kind of patience toward others that God exercises toward us. Notice the second participle, “forgiving” and then we’re told how we’re to forgive in the same way that we have been forgiven by the Lord. We’re to have a forgiving spirit. Patience expresses itself like that.

Now let me ask you, what do you think are the primary ways that in the church we fail to be patient with each other? I really think there are two of them. I think one way we fail is by being slow to forgive the faults and sins and affronts of others. We are so naturally grudge holders, aren’t we? We’re so naturally prone to want to be slow to forgive. We just saw that we can’t do that here and in Colossians 3, back in Ephesians 4; we have to forgive. I think the other way, though, that we’re often not patient with the Christians around us is by not giving them room to grow. Not giving them room to grow.

You know, I once had was having lunch with John MacArthur and we were, we were talking about several different things and I threw this question out at him that I thought was a pretty good question and that would at least require him a few minutes to think about. I said what do you think is the biggest mistake spiritual leaders make? Well he didn’t even hesitate, he didn’t pause he said well that’s easy, he said I can tell you it’s easy because I made it constantly early in my ministry and I see it all the time with guys that go out into ministry. And he said here’s what it is: it’s being impatient with people. You see, too often we fail to understand the time it

takes for people to be built up in their faith. The time and effort required for us to reach spiritual maturity.

I mean think about the Apostles, for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for 3 to 3 ½ years, the Son of God disciplined them and on the night before His crucifixion they're arguing about who's the greatest. And we expect to teach our kids or other Christians in the church something one time or for them to hear and for them to say well what's so hard I mean its chapter and verse right here. What's wrong with you? Again I'm not talking about excusing sin. I'm talking about acknowledging the reality that spiritual growth and maturity take time. It's not an accident that the image of physical growth is used to illustrate the image of spiritual growth.

You and I need to cultivate a spirit of patience toward other Christians and the chief way that we can do that, you want to be patient with others? Start by being honest about your own depravity. Be honest about your own heart. You know your sin you know your struggles. If you're like me, you know how slow you are to learn, how slow you are to obey. I'm convinced that those Christians who are the hardest on other people are those who do not fully comprehend their own sinfulness. In fact there's an interesting verse in Hebrews chapter 5, verses 1 and 2 where the writer of Hebrews is talking about the High Priest and he says "the High Priest is able to deal gently..." Why? Because "he himself is beset with weakness.". I think when we really grasp our own weaknesses and sins, the easier it is for us to be gracious and patient with others.

I think a second way we can cultivate this spirit of patience, not only by being honest about our own depravity but secondly by thinking often about God's patience and forgiveness of us. Just think about what God puts up with from you and it will make you a little more patient with the people around you. Our orientation, the proper alignment of our attitudes toward one another is to be one of unity, number one, number two – humility, number three – patience. And the fourth basic attitude we're to have toward one another is affection; affection.

Five separate times in the New Testament Paul and Peter command the Christians they write to "greet one another with a holy kiss." And some of you just got a little nervous, didn't you? We can't ignore these passages folks. Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, 1 Peter 5:14; in all of those places we're told to greet one another with a kiss or to greet one another with a holy kiss. What does that mean? You're hoping it doesn't mean what it sounds like it means.

You have to understand the culture in which these commands came. In the culture of the first century and even in the Jewish culture leading up to that, really all the way back, there were three common settings in which kisses occurred. First of all, as a courtesy to guests in your home, as a courtesy to guests. That was considered to be such an intimate thing; to invite someone into your home that as a courtesy you kissed them on the cheek as a as a way of

greeting them. And, in fact, in Luke chapter 7:45, Jesus rebuked Simon the Pharisee, you remember who invited Him into his home, He said when I came in you didn't give Me a kiss, you didn't greet Me in that way, you didn't appropriately and courteously respond to Me.

A second setting in which the kiss was common in that culture was to express deep affection for family members; to express deep affection for family members. Of course, we understand this with spouses both romantically and non-romantically there is a kiss with parents and children though it occurs as well. In fact, you remember Jesus tells us the parable in Luke 15 of the prodigal son, what happens when the prodigal son gets home? The father falls upon him and just keeps on kissing him welcoming him home. It even happens with brothers, back in Genesis 45:15 when Joseph finally is reunited with his brothers we're told he was kissing them.

A third setting in which the kiss occurred in that culture was as an expression of affection for close friends. The most graphic illustration of this is between David and Jonathan. When they know they're going to be parted in 1 Samuel 20:41, David and Jonathan kissed each other. By the way, this makes the kiss of Judas even more disgusting. It was the kiss of a close friend. It was a way of saying in Mark 14:45 when he kisses, comes up and kisses Jesus there in the garden of Gethsemane, I am one of your dearest and closest friends.

Now it's in these last two categories, the affection for family and the affection for the closest of friends into which these New Testament commands to greet one another with a holy kiss fall. And, of course, as you probably know, they actually became, literally, kisses became part of the culture of the church. The tradition of the kiss between Christians continued for a long time in the early church. Again some of you are getting a little uneasy, you can relax, it's okay. Justin Martyr, for example, said, "After prayers we salute one another with a holy kiss." Tertullian writing about 150 A.D. mentions the practice that was commonly occurring in the churches. Origen, who lived from 185 A.D. to about 253 A.D. said, "The custom was delivered to the churches that after prayers the brothers should salute one another with a kiss." It actually became a part of the order of service. So that after prayer and especially before the Lord's Table, kisses were shared but as you might imagine there were abuses and excesses and so correctives began to be put into place. One of the earliest is from a document called the "Apostolic Constitutions" which says then let the men apart and the women apart salute each other with a kiss in the Lord. Clement of Alexandria writing about 150 A.D. says there are some, "who make the churches resound with kissing. The shameless use of a kiss occasions foul suspicions and evil reports." So, eventually, the practice was completely abandoned. And that's okay because it was culturally conditioned.

But here's the question: what is the enduring spiritual lesson for us from, "greet each other with a holy kiss"? This is different by the way than love. We're commanded to love our enemies but we're not commanded to kiss our enemies. We're to think of each other, what this command

means is that we're to think of each other as the closest of friends or even as family. We are to hold each other in such affection that we automatically display appropriate physical expression of affection. You say, well what's appropriate? Well, that's culturally condition. Let me ask you this, how do you greet close friends or family? Is it a handshake, a hug, a sideways squeeze, a kiss on the cheek? Whatever is culturally appropriate, we are to express our affection. We are to have, first and foremost, and to express our affection for each other.

I have an Italian Christian friend whom I'll see here in a couple of weeks over in Italy who always gives me a hug and a kiss when he sees me, that's him; that's who he is. In the past, you can be thankful that you don't live in Russia. In the past, Russian Christians and still in some remote areas there, the men greeted each other with a kiss on the mouth. But notice there's a crucial caveat that's added to this command often when it occurs it says it's to be a "holy kiss." Here's the point, whatever the form of greeting, whether it's a handshake, a hug, or a kiss, it's always to be holy and pure. We're never to use this command as a cover for pursuing some impure interest. But here's the deal. It's not so much the form of the greeting that matters. The Scriptures point is much deeper. Here's the point: we are to think of each other with an attitude of genuine affection. Romans 12:10, "be devoted to one other in brotherly love." We are to have an affection for each other that is usually reserved for family members and closest of friends and we're to show that in appropriate ways. So our basic attitudes as we interact with each are to be unity, humility, patience, and affection.

Now why are those four attitudes so important? It's not just so we get along better. No, all of those attitudes are found in perfection in our Lord Jesus Christ and when we exercise them, when we hold them, we reflect our Lord to others. We are to be of the same mind because we all have the mind of Christ or as Jesus says in John 15:15, "you're no longer slaves but friends because I've told you what's on My mind." We are to be humble because our Lord was lowly and humble in heart and He humbled Himself to be a servant for us. We are to be patient because Christ is daily patient with us. You remember how He was described as One who wouldn't break a bruised reed and One who wouldn't snuff out a dimly burning wick. It's patience. We are to have and to show genuine family affection for each other because we enjoy what Paul calls the affection of Jesus Christ.

You see these four attitudes are nothing less than the mindset of Jesus Christ Himself and you and I are to have them as we interact with each other in the church to the glory of the Head of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your Word and how it convicts and confronts us. Lord, we are by nature selfish. We are by nature proud. Father, we are by nature given to pursue our own agenda rather than to serve others. Father, we are by nature private and slow to show our interests in others and our affection for others and we are so impatient. Lord, I pray that You would help us to put

on these attitudes so that as we interact with each other we may truly build each other up and serve each other. Lord, my prayer is that each of us individually and this church as a whole would be a place where these commands are practiced faithfully for the glory of the Lord of the church, in whose name we pray, amen.