

Sermon to the saints of God which are at Topeka – Sunday, July 15, 2018

Five times in the New Testament the Holy Spirit commands those who have each been given like precious faith - four times through our dear brother Paul's pen and once through our sweet brother Peter's - to "Greet one another with an holy kiss." Although the wording is not identical in each instance, the ideas are the same. Consider the scripture:

Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. – Ro. 16:16

All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss. - 1Co. 16:20

Greet one another with an holy kiss. - 2Co 13:12

Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. - 1Th 5:26

Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen. - 1Pe 5:14

Five times explicitly commanded, beloved. And many more times implicitly stated, as I hope you will see from what follows this morning. The exhortation to this behavior has long interested me, and I've never felt quite comfortable that we, as a body, have plumbed the depths of this to our collective satisfaction. Over the years, I've found myself returning to look at it again, studying, then trailing off and then returning to it again, and then again, having my mind and heart exercised by the Word and by the blessed working of the Holy Spirit. While in each instance the commandment is given near the end of the epistle, I am convinced that this exhortation, beloved, is not merely a parenthetical reminder near the end of an epistle – as when Paul asks Timothy near the end of 2Timothy to bring back the cloke that he left with Carpus at Troas (although I don't assume that there is little to nothing for us there, as the Holy Spirit penned every word – I just don't currently have anything for you there). I believe that it actually forms the basis for and frames up the proper perspective for us to have toward one another in perfection. It galvanizes all of what has been previously exhorted to in each epistle. Its correct construal, I maintain, helps to forge a more mature faith and perspective toward God. (Again, that word 'perfection' does not mean 'sin free,' as no man is – rather, it means a more settled, stablished and mature outlook toward God and a more consistent recognition of His sovereignty in our minute by minute, day to day lives – that He is the potter, and we are but the clay). Further, I believe that the setting of the stage, so to speak, that this commandment arranges in our hearts and minds (when properly understood) can be a great help in our study of His word. It can help us in rightly dividing the word of truth as it pertains to application of practical doctrine with one another, in overcoming this vile flesh, sowing to the spirit and striving

against sin in our dealings with one another. So, in what follows, I hope to parse out both the meaning and spiritual application of this exhortation, and then apply the rationale of it to a small cluster of verses that are amongst the most delightful to my mind currently, in terms of practical instruction, as well as my struggle to restrain my own baser self in service to God, and therefore this body. Please open your minds and hearts and bear with me.

If you go searching for good, detailed exposition on the exhortation to “*Greet one another with an holy kiss,*” you will probably feel less than sated on that diet. Many of the mainline expositors says some good things, and certainly don’t do violence in their rendering – but my searching has convinced me that the valuable depths of this blessed concept are not fully plumbed in any one place that I’ve seen. And to search the internet for help is laughable, as there are so many lukewarm pastors and perverters of His word, both liberal and conservative in their bents, who treat this exhortation in ways that continually oscillate between a Phariseean legalism and oh-so-astute cultural/historical analyses. *People in certain cultures, in certain ages, kissed as a salutation; in others, not so much. Others shake hands. If to kiss. How to kiss. Where to kiss. Is it a kiss? A kiss means you like someone, but not too sensual.* And these are the religious folks talking. So much blather. So little helpful, Bible meaning. We all know what the individual words of the exhortation mean. We know what ‘greet’ means. We know what ‘holy’ means. We know what ‘kiss’ means. But if there were ever a proper application of the saying “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” this is it. Much greater, I believe.

The Greek word that is translated into English as ‘greet’ is *aspazomai* (as-pad’-zom-ahee), and it has, in normal vernacular, several variations of meaning: to salute, greet, embrace, draw to one’s self, bid welcome, wish well to, to receive joyfully.

The Greek word that is translated into English as ‘holy’ is *hagios* (ha’-gee-os), and it also has several proposed meanings with subtle differences, yet all drawn together by the same, overarching notion: characteristic of God, separated to God, worthy of veneration.

Its highest application is to God himself, in his purity, majesty and glory.

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. – Rev. 4:8

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. – Jo. 17:11

Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. – Mk. 1:24

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; - Rev. 3:7

It is also applied to things and places which have a claim to reverence as sacred to God:

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) – Mt. 24:15

It is applied to persons employed by him, as angels, prophets and apostles:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: - Mt. 25:31

As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: - Lu. 1:70

Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; - Eph. 3:5

It is applied to any persons as separated out unto God's service:

To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. – 1Thes. 3:13

It is applied in the moral sense of sharing God's purity, by and through His grace:

For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. – Mk. 6:20

We typically use the words 'sanctified' or 'separated' in synonymy with 'holy' as it pertains to God's people – these are good, sound Bible concepts, and in many ways helpful to understanding what that word means to us; but sometimes a word's synonyms being put as its definition can also keep us from going ever further, in the event that we don't fully grasp the depth of meaning of the synonyms used (especially for young people). Where our thoughts, motivations, actions and manner of lives is concerned, holiness can be spoken of as being ***dedicated or devoted to lives of service unto God.***

Finally, the Latin word (which is what most of Greek derived from) rendered as the English word 'kiss' is *philema* (fil'-ay-mah), and it means a kiss of approbation, or fraternal love (as opposed to sensual love).

So now back to 'greet', as it applies to the verse. Beloved, we are not talking about a mere polite, social salutation, although we will borrow some notions from such man-pleasing social customs to help us today. A greeting implies the beginning of an exchange or encounter. Right from the start. And the greeting usually carries with it an extension of *how* you view *who* you are greeting – a recognition, of sorts, of your regard for that person or those persons. Soldiers, in many cultures, literally 'salute' one another in some pre-arranged manner as a show of mutual respect or submission to and recognition of rank. Other cultural customs include curtsies or bowing, which are greetings that connote respect, submission to authority, etc. In some cultures and ages, people have kissed one another in greeting as a show of admiration, respect or fraternal bond. In some important ways (though many of these practices are vain and somewhat arbitrary, much of the time being either devoid of true meaning or relegated to rote custom), they set the tone for the exchange, whether performed properly or improperly, no matter how phony many of these customs either seem to be or are in fact. I believe that for us, the word 'greet' signifies that from the very start of the encounter, I am not only supposed to snap my mind into a perspective of who you are to me (not completely unlike how citizens of a monarchical culture might bow to royalty or a Japanese person might still today bow as a show of submission, respect and honor), from the very beginning of the encounter, but I must clearly communicate **to you** my perspective of who you are to me.

The word 'kiss' signifies an earnest affection, as true spiritual kinsman – and that kinship makes blood bonds pale in comparison. Consider the scripture:

But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. – Matt. 12:48-50

We cannot merely behold this concept in the abstract, and not have our minds and hearts exercised afresh with each encounter. The 'holiness' signifies what motivates the show of deep affection in me toward you. If I believe myself to be devoted or dedicated to a life of service unto God, I should be properly expressive in that notion – and I should recognize you, the instant that I come upon you, with regard for that same holiness, or devotion, in you. To greet one another with an holy kiss means that when I first see you, I must see you in the light that the

Lord sees you (Matt. 25:31-46), that you are His beloved, that you devote or dedicate yourselves to service unto God. A deep, tender regard should well up within me in that moment, and my affections toward you in light of that regard should not only come to and stay in the front of my mind from the first, but also be made manifest unto *you* from the first. Telling someone you love them, but not really acting like you love them, or that you are really glad to see them, doesn't ring true. True Christian love and holiness are inseparable. Greeting one another with an holy kiss is setting my spiritual affections on you properly and in the front of my own mind not just *at the first*, but *from the first*. It sets the stage, so to speak, for the remainder of the encounter.

To be sure, a kiss is not an exclusive, earnestly affectionate greeting. You could kiss, hug, shake hands with, pat backs with or otherwise have some fair show toward someone in greeting them and not really give a tinker's damn about that person. The people of the world do it millions of times over each day, in the overwhelming number of greetings they extend to one another. From misguided affections, to insincerity, to utter contempt, the overwhelming phoniness of such exchanges is palpable. And the last thing that I am proposing to you is some sort of Phariseean greeting police. There are many ways to be faithful in expressing what those verses command. What I am suggesting is very sobering, and a vital component of our faith – that is, personally, inside our own minds and hearts, not as merely an outward, social gesture. In your flesh, when you meet up with someone who you are really glad to see, the gladness is in you, and you then manifest it to the other person. But it doesn't shut off after the initial greeting. Greeting one another with an holy kiss is a spiritual act – it is a sobering, spiritual framing for how my Master commands me to regard you (as holy, or dedicated/devoted to a life of service unto God), and how glad I am not only to be blessed with that divine guidance (rather than being woefully left to my own devices), but also how glad I am that you have been blessed with an unction *to* live a life dedicated to service unto our God. Do I see you as Christ sees you? When I come upon you, do I see you as a joint heir with Christ and (in my greatest and only real hope) with myself? Or do I see you as that person who keeps doing the same thing over and over and over again that really gets under my skin? Or some more harmless, seemingly benign, middle ground? And which of these notions then sets the stage for the remainder of our encounter?

I'm sure there are many practical, daily interactions in which you might think: brother Steve is going overboard, here. I just said 'hey' to brother Marc on my way to mow my part of the block. Just 'hey.' That's not the point. There's not some big show to make. But *how* are you regarding that brother in that moment? And *are* you regarding that brother in that moment? What is so gripping and intriguing to your mind in that moment that you have no real mindshare for one of

your fellow servants of God who is right in front of you? Think of someone in the world that you particularly admire – like some famous athlete or entertainer or political figure or some celebrity. Would the thrill of having a personal encounter with that famous athlete or entertainer or political figure that you admire produce an affectionate and thrilled greeting that might quite take over your mind for a moment? For most of us, the answer is: of course. Our initial, and continued, perspectives of one another should far outstrip such a vain, fleshly reaction. And I am convinced that this is something that we must do over and over, as often as we greet one another. We are not exhorted to ‘greet one another with an holy kiss’ the first time you greet a person, and then ‘settle down, weirdo.’ This is a sober, vital exhortation that informs every exchange we have with one another. If I greet you with an holy kiss, that is, express my spiritual affection for you and hold you in proper regard as a fellow servant of our King and Husband, and as a member of the same body to which I am a member (as Charles reminded us last week) – at the first, and then *keep* it in mind once I *have* it in mind, how might my practical application with regard to social doctrinal aspects of my obedience to Christ be helped?

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In light of what has been said so far, I would like to now take a look at a cluster of verses within Galatians 6, which has been on my mind and heart a lot lately. Galatians 6 is a very good teacher of how Christians are to relate to one another. I have been using the proper mindset that comes with ‘greeting one another with an holy kiss’ that I must have of each of you, upon and continuing after our heartfelt greeting (among other things), as an aid in parsing out some deeper meaning in these verses. This cluster of verses in Galatians 6, beloved, is not merely a litany of sound yet disconnected aphorisms, each intended to encapsulate a differing doctrinal exhortation. I believe that the internal logic contained within and woven amongst these ten verses form a tightly wound, profoundly interconnected argument concerning our outlooks toward one another and what we are about in this life.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not

deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. – Gal. 6:1-10

- 1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.**

He is a fellow servant of God. He is a dear, dear spiritual kinsman, who has run, but who has currently been overtaken, or outrun, ensnared and entangled, in some sin. I must help restore this dear child of my God and my true brother, gently resetting a broken bone or a joint out of place, knowing of both the pain and necessity of it. The priority is reconciliation. Moving toward making things right again - getting that person back to where they should be. Helping the one who has fallen to the side get back where they belong. Gentleness doesn't mean saying sin is okay. Gentleness doesn't mean being dismissive to spare a person's feelings. Gentleness means you are clear in your intent not to harm the person but to help. It means communicating in humility and tenderness. It means understanding enough about our own depravity to know that this person usually either feels guilt and shame already or is being deceived. My compassion for this soul in such a state is a matter of great shame and humility, knowing my own struggles with sin. What is more human than for a human being to fall, to be deceived and to err? How shameful and hypocritical it would be to wag a finger. How shameful it is that I have. Any man, who thinks that other people ought to be cast off because they have committed a fault, is so proud in his own heart that he only needs to be tempted, and he would fall, too. Thank God for His mercy toward us. The question always is and should be: What is the spiritual remedy? Let us cleave to that, and that alone.

- 2. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.**

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. – Matt. 22:36-40

Fulfilling the law of Christ is to love the Lord fully, and to love my neighbor as myself. This dear soul before me is my fellow servant in Christ and has a burden. How can I be of assistance? And how can I say I love this dear soul in Christ if I withhold my assistance, or turn my eyes in feigned ignorance at the notion that he needs help, or simply not act and steer clear of the whole matter – convincing myself that I have nothing to offer in the way of help? And how can I know of his

burdens if I don't talk often with him? Or watch for him? Not with a jaundiced gaze, or in envy or distrust. But the way I might inquire of the well-being of my dearest friend (which he is, if I am thinking right). Whether a burden of sin, or of exhaustion and therefore need for refreshment, or of temporal need, or of spiritual counsel, or of encouragement, or of proper exhortation, I must help this my dear friend.

3. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

We typically use this verse (as we do several others in this cluster) generically, and it applies in many ways to our lives. We can use it to help elsewhere, but here, it is part of a continued strand of interconnected, internally consistent contextual logic. The word 'For' there is a causal connector (if you asked Danny J, he would probably tell you that you could well substitute the word 'because' for it). It signifies the conclusion to a premise or establishes the causal connection between what is stated now (conclusion) with what was earlier stated (premise). Obviously, this is not stated to mean that only those who actually *are* something don't deceive themselves in thinking so. There is no ambiguity in its construction. This verse is connected to both verses above it, in terms of the proper outlook of spiritual meekness toward the overtaken brother, and the spirit with which he must be restored. Those who suppose themselves to excel all others in understanding, while they are harsh, censorious, and overbearing when a brother is overtaken in a fault prove that they have not the charity that thinketh no evil - and in the sight of God are only as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Poole has a good thing to say here: *Pride, and men's high opinions of themselves above what they ought, are the cause of their censoriousness and morosity in dealing with other offenders; which modesty would not suffer in them, if they apprehended themselves to be as weak, and as much exposed to temptations, as others are. It is pride and overweening opinions of ourselves, that make us despise or neglect others under their burdens, and so forget the law of Christ; the apostle therefore properly addeth this precept for humility and modesty to those former precepts.* It is in the context of the proper regard and deep affection for our fellow servants in Christ and that drives our proper help and restoration of him that this stark warning of verse 3 is given. How could we help build, keep and remind ourselves of that proper regard? (Hmm. I wonder.)

4. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

This is distinctly connected to the prior verse, and therefore implicitly the previous 2 verses as well. 'But' supplies the counterpoint to what was said prior. This is not methodism or works righteousness, here. It is tied, by way of counter point, to the warning of verse 3. Poole: *a man*

shall (if he findeth his work such as is agreeable to the will of God) have a cause to rejoice in himself; not in the merit or perfection of his works, but in his own works; not in others; that is, he shall rejoice in something which God hath wrought in and by him, and not in others. This the apostle wisely propounds, as a means to bring a man to know his own measures; it being a great error for men to measure themselves by the measures of other men, their perfections by others' imperfections. While we might shudder to think that we are vastly and wickedly prone to measure our perfections by the imperfections of others, let us not deceive ourselves as to that danger, for it is precisely what is being warned about in the verse. And if we are all similarly prone to such a weakness, how should I regard you, in relation to me? With great tenderness. With great sobriety. With great mercy. With great and earnest Christian love. Please reread and reread 1Cor 13 on this concept.

5. For every man shall bear his own burden.

This is again causally related to the previous verses, most closely to verses 4 and 5. There are burdens of care and sorrow which we can and are vitally obligated to help others to bear; the burdens of care, and sorrow, and trouble, we can help take from other men's shoulders; but the great burden of responsibility before God, each man must himself carry. The man who steers clear of this service, aloof from or callous to the burdens that we must bear toward one another in ministerial service, including the proper, meekly performed restoration of a soul, sees not his own weakness and proneness to sin. The load of service for the Master must be carried personally; and let us be glad to shoulder it, as Christ has done *so much* for us. And how else can we express gratitude but by serving Him, and therefore serving Him by serving one another with a deeply-felt, tender regard? There is, after all, a burden which we cannot carry for others, and which we cannot shift upon others. It is the burden of our personal responsibility and obligation to God, when no one else is around to convince, or flatter, or favor, or make a showing to. It is the circumstance of finding ourselves upon our own bed, with only God and the self. It is only in that time that the stark stock of ourselves and the exercising of our faith is taken.

6. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

This is related specifically to ministering in bestowing liberality to those who provide spiritual help, which is many people. If someone give you spirituals, do not suffer him to lack for temporals. The 'him that is taught' is someone who learns 'the word' from 'him that teacheth'. The word 'communicate' means to bestow liberality upon. The 'in all good things' does not refer to what has been taught. If someone is 'taught in the word,' then all of those things are good,

by definition. The 'in all good things' there refers to the types of liberality that are to be bestowed, or communicated: money, food, labor, specific skill, medical or physical easement, etc. This is continuing the strand of thought in terms of our proper, tender, merciful regard for one another that begins at verse one. The obvious, primary application is the pastors, but there are many within the body who are teachers of good things, and therefore this concept applies in all such instances.

7. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

We have also used this verse generically, to underscore such notions as that people cannot fool God with their sinful practices, and that whatever scoffing or mocking they do as to their blatant, notorious sin does not ultimately go unpunished. I believe the application is sound. Once again, however, I believe that this verse, in context, is a specific continuation of the interconnected, internal logic of the cluster of verses that runs through verse 10. This verse, as well as verse 8, is specifically being applied in connection with the previous verse (6). It is speaking to a sparse, or lacking, in communication of all good things mentioned above, in connection to the duty of 'him that is taught' toward 'him that teacheth'. Men who, like Ananias and Sapphira, seek to obtain credit for liberality, while keeping back that which is due to the Church and cause of God, may impose on their fellow men, and may fancy that they can impose upon God. But they are themselves the victims of self-deception. They treat God with contempt in doing so. Yet He is not deceived and will not relax in their favor the universal law of His moral government, that as is the sowing, so also will be the reaping. And if you think this is strictly about money, and therefore you are off the hook from all of this if you don't have a lot of it (conveniently crediting God in his sovereignty for not making you rich), then you are barking up the wrong tree. God is not mocked. This thought is further amplified and brought into focus by the next verse.

8. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

This is another verse that can be applied more generically, as the twin concepts of sowing and reaping form an elegant Bible metaphor that is pregnant with meaning and runs a current through the scripture. But again, here it is tied to what was said before (ask Danny J). Verse 7 is connected to verse 6, and therefore verse 8 (note the 'For' at the beginning of the verse). If you sow sparingly, in relation to verse 6, then you are sowing to your flesh. By saving your money, time, labor or skill for yourself, you sow to the flesh. If you sow liberally, in relation to verse 6 (specifically because of your love of and obedience to God, and not because you have a bunch

of extra money and seek to make a fair shew in the flesh and get certain people to like you and think well of you because you are merely catering to *their* flesh with your money), then you are sowing to the Spirit. These are things that can be seen, not that they should be done *to* be seen. He that follows the Spirit's guidance in his dispositions, words, and actions, and, under the influences thereof, employs his abilities of body and mind, his time, talents, and possessions, to promote true religion in himself and minister to those about him; *shall of the Spirit* — By his continued assistance and grace, and as the fruit of what is thus sown; *reap life everlasting*.

9. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Of course, 'and' is the connector, here. This is speaking an encouragement to those who, in the main, do not sow sparingly (or to their flesh) in connection to both verse 6 AND verses 1 and 2 (the beginning of this interconnected doctrinal treatise), and therefore may look forward to what their sowing would yield. We are all very apt to tire in duty, particularly in doing good. We tend toward being whiny complainers in our circumstances. This we should carefully watch and guard against. Only to perseverance in well-doing is the reward promised. Here is an exhortation to all to 'well-do' in their places. We should take care to do good in our life-time, and make this the utter business of our lives, not just a part of them. And the well doing in this verse is in connection to verses 1, 2, 4 5 and 8. (and I would ask you to please, please look at this cluster of verses for yourselves – that is, Galatians 6:1-10 especially. Afresh. Soon – perhaps very close on the heels of this sermon).

10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

The 'therefore' in this verse provides the connective tissue to the ideas expressed just before. This verse is still related to the 9 verses before it, in its logic, in exhortation, in forging a clear path of spiritual thought, or reasoning. In the main, this extends to our duty unto all other people alive – and the primary way that we can 'do good' unto those who are without is to tell them the truth – and not just when asked. The words of life and truth that our Father has given us is one main way that we find opportunity to do good unto all men, but it's not the only way. If we come upon someone with a real need for help, we are to do what we can – that again is the 'having opportunity' to do good. This does not, however, mean that we engage in maudlin, self-serving notions of doing good, where the definition of 'good' is not scriptural. Satan would love to accuse us in this regard, should we not decide to spend all our time working in soup kitchens or heading up local chapters of Habitats for Humanity. The words 'opportunity' and 'especially' jump out at me as it relates to this local, called out assembly that is part of the overall

body of Christ. Opportunity is not limited to doing something that someone comes and requests of you. Opportunity requires an active seeking (as some of you young people have heard me exhorting you to for some time now):

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. – Ec. 9:10

Christ's people must always ready themselves, ***not only to do what is asked, but to ask what to do***. Being disconnected from the body for any real stretch of time, or as a matter of schedule, is never a good thing for either the individual or the rest of the body. And you cannot wait to minister, or avoid ministering, in a Biblically-hearty manner:

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. – Col. 3:23

The scripturally vital concepts outlined in this cluster of verses in Galatians 6 constitute much of what 'doing good...especially unto them who are of the household of faith' is. To restore and entreat in meekness; to bear one another's burdens; to war against harboring a censorious or haughty spirit with one another; to teach and learn from one another; to bestow liberality (communicate) in that regard (whether that be capital or human resources, be it spiritual or temporal in nature) – not sowing sparingly as a measure of safeguarding our time and other resources for ourselves; to encourage one another in that liberal sowing (or well-doing); and to seek every opportunity to do good unto all men, especially unto those of the body, are all connected concepts within that tightly wound little cluster of verses. I maintain they forge a proper basis for our treatment and outlook toward one another. But how can we do any of that work fully, if we cannot come upon one another and immediately recognize within our own hearts and clearly convey to the other a deep and tender spiritual regard that is based on mutual love of our fellow servants in Christ? We must strive to make that honorable distinction clear to ourselves and to one another, at first sight of one another, as greeting one another with an holy kiss. That must be the earnest leaping off place for the rest of that specific encounter and then throughout our lives as we sojourn here together in hopeful anticipation of our unmerited reward,

Be(ing) kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; - Ro. 12:10

My fervent hope is that something here has been helpful. I love you all.