

to *welcome, receive*, and attempt to *draw to* ourselves all people in the name of Christ. This is not a matter of wishing them "joy" or "peace" in their rebellion to God. It is kindness and courtesy, like God shows to "**the just and the unjust.**" We, like God are to do good to others whether they have done good to us or not (cf. Matt. 5:48). But also like the Twelve, if those whom we have tried to influence reject God's word—or having received it do not "abide in the doctrine of Christ," we must never in any way express to them that they can "rejoice" or be at "peace" in such a condition. If we do that we become complicit in their rebellion—we share in their "**evil deeds.**" Instead, like the Twelve, we must let "our peace" return back to us. We want the best for them. We are not rude or unkind to them. We hope for their change of heart and some future opportunity to correct the error of their ways, but we must never allow them to think that we sanction, approve, and encourage them to remain in rebellion.

This is the distinction in the two commands. There is no contradiction. The Holy Spirit is addressing two different conditions and two responses brought on by these differences.

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Faithful Sayings



Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM
10:00 AM
11:00 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:
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Jeff Nunn

Deacons:
Steve Dixon
Ryan Ferguson
Arend Gressley
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
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Kyle Pope

Greet, but Don't Greet?

By Kyle Pope

It was recently pointed out to me that two commands found in the New Testament might easily be misunderstood as contradictory. Let's take a look at these and consider what the Holy Spirit is teaching in each passage.

The first, comes in the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus elaborates on His command to "love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44). As He urges His disciples to exemplify the Father's willingness to do good to both "the just and the unjust" (5:45), He asks parallel questions—"For if you love those who love



you, what reward have you?" (5:46a) and "if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others?" (5:47a). He explains that "even the tax collectors" (the personification of wickedness) do these things (5:46b, 47b). The clear charge here is that if one is a follower of Christ he must not merely "greet" his brethren, but even his enemies.

The second command comes in the brief second epistle of the apostle John. After warning that a failure to abide in the "doctrine of Christ" puts one in a position in which he or she does "not have God" (2 John 9), the apostle then addresses how the Christian must treat those who have transgressed the "doctrine of Christ." He commands,

> **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds** (10-11).

How is it that we must "greet" even our enemies, but we share in the "evil deeds" of another person if we "greet" the one who transgresses the "doctrine of Christ"?

To understand this we must first consider what is meant by the term "greet." Although most translations simply put this "greet**s him**" (NKJV, ESV) or "gives him a greeting" (NASB), there is a little more that can be gleaned from the Greek text. The Holy Spirit led John to use the Greek word *chairō* (χαίρω). Thayer defines it, "1) to rejoice, be glad; 2) to rejoice exceedingly; 3) to be well, thrive; 4) in salutations, hail!" The key concept is joy. 42 times the King James Version translates it "rejoice." So why is it translated "greet"? In ancient Greek it was quite common to use the imperative from of this word as an initial greeting or when saying goodbye to someone. It would be like saying, "rejoice!" New Testament writers show examples of this in both the beginnings (Jas. 1:1) and endings of epistles (2 Cor. 13:11).



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In 2 John there are actually three words that make up the phrase. The pronoun for "him," the verb meaning "to speak," and the word *chairō*. In verse 10 and 11 it literally describes "*saying to him 'rejoice.*'" John is not teaching that Christians are forbidden from saying "hello" to someone. He is teaching that we must never communicate to someone who has stepped outside of the teaching of Christ that they can "rejoice" in such a condition. Alexander Campbell in his *Living Oracles* translation put this "wishes him success" (LO).

We can compare this to the similar Hebrew custom that continues to the present. To say "hello" or "goodbye" one might say *shalōm* (שָׁלוֹם) that literally means "peace." Jesus likely alludes to this when He sends out the Twelve to spread the gospel. He tells them, "If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you" (Matt. 10:13). These Jewish disciples quite likely went out teaching with the greeting "*shalōm!*"—"peace!" If their message was received this appeal for the well-being of those who were taught would remain. If the people rejected it, Jesus says to "let your peace return to you"—in other words, do not wish them "peace" when they are not in a condition in which they can be at peace. That would actually encourage them in their rebellion to God's word. In the time of Jeremiah the Lord rebuked those who said to his rebellious people "'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14; 8:11).

This is the key to understanding how Jesus' command to "greet" even our enemies and John's command not to "greet" the transgressor of the "doctrine of Christ" harmonize. In the example of Jesus' instructions to the Twelve we just considered, just before this He said, "And when you go into a household, greet it" (Matt. 10:12). The word He uses here is not the samae word John used, but it is the same word used in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the Greek word *aspazomai* (ἀσπάζομαι), meaning, "1) to draw to one's self; 1a) to salute one, greet, bid welcome, wish well to; 1b) to receive joyfully, welcome" (Thayer). Oddly enough, the King James Version translates this word "salute" 42 times. This is what we *are* to do even to our enemies. Like the Twelve, Christians are