

—Sermon Notes for September 26, 2021 —

Ken Gennicks preaching

“THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL:

‘Harmony in Handling Differences’”

(Romans 14-15; I Corinthians 8)

INTRODUCTION

Our 2021 Bible study is *The Gospel According to Paul*, from *Acts 8-28* and Paul’s letters: *Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, and maybe *Hebrews*. Today’s Bible study surfaces God’s commands for *Harmony in Handling Differences* in Christ’s kingdom:

- I. Stand firm on truth (14:1)
- II. Refuse to condemn other believers (14:10, 12-13)
- III. Respect your own conscience (14:14)
- IV. Be aware of your influence (14:13-15)
- V. Work hard for harmony (14:19; Jn. 17:20-21)
- VI. Keep quiet if need be (14:22; I Thess. 4:11-12)
- VII. Have fellowship with those who disagree with you
(15:7)

CONCLUSION

We value relationships! Watch out for obstacles to harmony:

1. Comparing ourselves to others (John 20:21-22)
2. Controlling others (Rom. 14:4; Mt. 7:3-5)

And let these biblical guidelines magnify grace:

1. Accept others (14:1-4)
2. Let others decide for themselves (14:5-8)
3. Refuse to judge others (14:9-12)
4. Express your liberty wisely (14:13-18; 15:1-2)

—Applying Today's Sermon to Your Life—

1. Our 2021 Bible study is *The Gospel According to Paul*, from the life and letters of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. Our *Verse-of-the-Week* today is Romans 15:7, *Accept one another, then, just as the Lord accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.* Commit this verse to memory, discuss it with a friend, and ask God to help you live it out well!
2. Read Romans 14-15 and I Corinthians 8. What is the ultimate issue Paul was addressing in these chapters, and how do these commands apply to Christians and our relationships today?
3. After today's Bible study answer the following as True or False:
 - T F I have my own opinions but I keep them to myself for harmony's sake.
 - T F Differing opinions are not a test of fellowship for me.
 - T F In differences of opinion, my preferences should prevail.
 - T F I have strong opinions and everyone should hear them.
 - T F For the sake of Christ I'm happy to keep my opinions private.
 - T F When people disagree with me I talk over them.
 - T F I work hard at making peace and keeping harmony.
 - T F I refuse to put a stumbling block in my brother's way.
 - T F I accept others without passing judgement on disputable matters.
4. Differences of opinion are a normal part of the Christian life in this world, so the Bible is clear on how we handle it all. How important is this teaching? Why?
5. List some issues of opinion and disputable matters (Rom. 14:1) that could interrupt a church's harmony today:
 - A. D.
 - B. E.
 - C. F.
6. When you've felt freedom in Christ to participate in debatable matters, how have you responded to those with a more restricted conscience? What disputable matters are you willing to forgo on their behalf?
7. Is your awareness of conflict more likely to inflame or diffuse it? How? Ask a friend's honest input to find a clearer answer. Have you ever made matters of opinion a test of Fellowship? What does that say about you? Read today's Bible texts again and ask God to give you discernment, wisdom and grace.
8. Imagine living today without faith, without knowing Jesus, without knowing how to pray, and without a supportive church family. Now think about your neighbors, your coworkers, your relatives, your classmates, your friends, and people in your circle of acquaintance. Who needs your faith, your Jesus, your prayers, your church family? Will you ask Jesus to make His appeal to them through you?
9. I will put today's Bible study into action now by: