

Title: Gospel Unity

Passage: Romans 14:1-12

Summary:

How to preserve Gospel unity

I. Genuine acceptance for one another (v.1-3)

II. Remember God is judge over all (v.4)

III. Be gracious with one another on non-essential issues (v.5-6)

IV. Remember each one of us is ultimately accountable to God. (v. 7-12)

Key Truths:

- There are many areas where there can be genuine differences of opinion.
- When find there is a difference, our flesh then turns to despise or judge the other.
- Instead: we must accept Christians genuinely. This is a command of God.
- Impossible in our flesh and left to ourselves. But through the Spirit, we can love others.

Application:

I. We must always love others in Christ and not look down on them.

II. It is not our God-given duty to enter into controversy with others

III. We must keep the main things the main things and not pass harsh judgements with those who differ with us on gray areas.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
- What responsibility do you have to be a good example to others?
- How can Christians share a spirit of unity despite having different views on certain practices or topics?
- When Scripture is not explicit on an issue, how should a person decide what is right or wrong?
- James 1:22 admonishes us to be “doers of the Word.” What next steps will you take in response to the truths you have been exposed to?

Introduction

Question: How do we preserve unity as a church?

- Jesus last prayer before the crucifixion:

John 17:20-21

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

- The proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is based on the unity of the church.
- But unity does not mean uniformity.
 - We are called to be one.
 - But we are also different.
 - Analogy: body with different parts
 - Today: we come with different perspectives and opinions yet co-exist with unity and harmony.
- Paul talks about unity through chapter 14 in Romans.
 - Shows how important it is.

Passage:

Romans 14:1-12

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God

EXPOSITION

Preliminary Points

- the first generation Christians struggled with unity as we do today.
 - So if they struggled with conflict, so we will as well today.
 - We are all sinners who come together.
 - Every book Paul writes points to the importance of preserving unity.
 - Romans: mix of Roman Jews and Gentiles.
 - Jewish Christians who were more strict while Gentile

Overview

How to preserve Gospel unity

- I. Genuine acceptance for one another (v.1-3)
- II. Remember God is judge over all (v.4)
- III. Be gracious with one another on non-essential issues (v.5-6)
- IV. Remember each one of us is ultimately accountable to God. (v. 7-12)

I. GENUINE ACCEPTANCE FOR ONE ANOTHER (v.1-3)

Romans 14:1-3

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

- People coming from background of Old Testament laws
 - Thought they would receive greater righteousness or grace if keep more of the law.

One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

- Some Christians thought to eat only vegetables because they were not sure how to make sure meat was clean or appropriate.
- "Weak person"
 - Jewish Christians who were strict about their diet.
 - Not issue of salvation
 - Weak in their assurance that their faith permits them to do certain things (ex: eating meat)
 - They had not fully worked out all the implications of the Gospel.
- "One person believes he may eat anything"
 - Gentile Christians who believe can eat anything.

Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats,

- Differences of understanding
 - Those who are weak in faith tend to judge the strong.
 - Those who are strong in faith tend to despise the weak.
- What to do?
 - Whole-hearted acceptance for one another.

Non-essential issues today that can cause conflict among Christians.

- Movies (watch only Christians movies vs. anything)
- Wearing make-up (wear it or only be natural)
- Alcohol (some prohibit vs. Bible forbids drunkenness but not alcohol altogether)
- Dancing (some view associated with sensuality vs. some view as a non-issue)
- Fashion (some view it as worldliness vs. nothing wrong as long as modest and appropriate)
- Bible translations
- Music (type)
- Material wealth

In summary, there are many areas where there can be genuine differences of opinion.

- When find there is a difference, our flesh then turns to despise or judge the other.
- Instead: we must accept Christians genuinely.
 - This is a command of God.
 - Impossible in our flesh.
 - But through the Spirit, we can love others.

for God has welcomed him.

- Why do we genuinely and whole-heartedly accept others?
 - Because God has accepted them through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - God has found them righteous in Christ.
- How can we reject someone whom God has accepted?
 - First determine God's attitude towards them.
 - It is safe to treat others as we would like to be treated. But it is safer to treat them as God does

II. GOD IS THE ONE WHO JUDGES THE HEART (v.4)

Romans 14:4

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

- God is the one who judges each one of us.

III. BE GRACIOUS WITH EACH OTHER ON NON-ESSENTIAL ISSUES. (v.5-6)

Romans 14:5-6

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike.

- Day
 - About the Sabbath?
 - Consider Scriptural context.
 - Paul was writing about unity among believers.
 - Not about the Lord's Day Sabbath
 - Refer to different Old Testament holidays and feasts
 - What to do?
 - Free to do so but one's salvation is not related to such observance.

Term: Non-essential theological issues.

- while many things are important, there are distinctions and categories behind the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:3

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,

Philippians 3:15

Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

Romans 14:1

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

Doctrines - Different Categories

Category 1 doctrines

- Doctrines that are essential for someone to become a Christian.
 - If don't have right understanding, then question whether really a Christian.
- Examples:
 - Salvation by grace alone through faith alone through Jesus Christ alone.
 - Jesus is fully God and fully man
 - Existence of the Trinity
 - Virgin birth of Jesus
 - Bible is infallible and inerrant
 - Anything that adds to Jesus as a requirement for salvation is a Category 1 level.
 - See church's Statement of Faith

Category 2 doctrines

- Doctrines where people reasonably differ
- Examples:
 - Baptism (infant vs. adult)
 - baptize infant under New Testament vs. baptize until ready.
 - But if view baptism that view it as a means of grace by which necessary for salvation, then this tempers to a Category 1 doctrine.
 - Jesus plus anything means nothing. Jesus minus anything means everything
 - Charismatic gifts
 - Speaking in tongues continue today vs. had ceased.
 - But if view that speaking of tongues is necessary to show evidence of salvation, then rises to a Category 1 doctrine
 - Sovereign election

Category 3 doctrines

- Doctrines where can be in church leadership but may agree to disagree agreeably
- Examples:
 - End Times (pre-millennial vs. post-millennial vs. others)
 - Age of the Earth
 - But if believe in evolution, then this touches upon Category 1.

Category 4 doctrines

- place of preferences / opinions
- Makeup / dancing / movies

Be wise on how we balance on our views.

III REMEMBER EACH ONE OF US IS ULTIMATELY ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD (v.7-12)

Romans 14:7-12

For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

- All Christian liberty is to be exercised under the lordship of Jesus Christ.
- Make sure your convictions are because we first want to honor God
 - Not because of past traditions or others do so.

- Not because we are prideful and cannot say we could be wrong or reasonable to believe otherwise.

Isaiah 45:23

By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.'

APPLICATIONS

I. We must always love others in Christ and not look down on them.

- We should be gracious with one another's preferences.

II. It is not our God-given duty to enter into controversy with others

- Be patient and gracious with those working through issues of conscience.

III. We must keep the main things the main things and not pass harsh judgements with those who differ with us on gray areas.