**The Book of Romans**

Part Five: God’s righteousness is revealed in His Loving Demands Upon His People. (Romans 12--15:13)

***When Christians Disagree. . .They need not be disagreeable. Romans 14:19–15:13***

Many years ago one little girl’s Sunday School prayer was, “Lord, make all the bad people good, and all the good people nice.” That prayer still is relevant. Why can’t Christians get along? Why is there so much bickering in churches? Why so much church shopping and church hopping? Why do we throw up our hands and give up on relationships, cooperation, and serving? Paul cuts to the heart of the matter in today’s passage, which continues from the beginning of the chapter 14. Last week he gave four principles on handling our differences: Acceptance (Lighten up!), Conscience (Live and let live!), Accountability (Mind yourself!), and Love (Stop judging others!). Here he gives four more. . .

***The Principle of Mutuality*** (Think big picture!) 14:19-21

Paul warns not to cause stumbling for the sake of a minor thing like food choices. Instead of receiving someone else and his not-like-me ideas, appearance, or behavior, I withdraw and/or insist on my own way. But if I desire his growth in Christ and peace between us, I can and will back off and choose the better way. Matthew 18:1-14

***The Principle of Faith*** (Take it personally!) 14:22, 23

Convictions of conscience are personal, theirs as well as yours. Faith is not theoretical, but rather intensely practical. If we can’t trace our actions to our response to God’s commands and promises, we are not walking by faith. Faith also trusts God’s work in others. 2 Cor. 5:7

***The Principle of Jesus’ Example*** (Follow Him!) 15:1-7

Paul sees Jesus as the foundation for how we treat one another. For Him, it was about fulfilling God’s mission to draw weak sinners to Himself, not personal comfort. Our obligation is to bear with others, not please ourselves. We can do this if we trust “the God of endurance and encouragement” and follow the Bible’s examples. 1 Cor. 10:6, 11

***The Principle of God’s Glory*** (Praise Him!) 15:8-13

The greatest barrier of all, that between Jew and Gentile, has been broken down by God’s promise to bless all nations. Why? So that all nations may praise Him. If that principle works for nations, it works for individuals and their relationships as well. 1 Corinthians 10:13–11:1

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*While kosher food may not be a burning issue today, the principles here are just as applicable across a wide range of issues. Satan does not care WHAT divides us as long as we are divided. When conflict threatens, we should ask. . .*

***1. Is this issue about truth or preferences?***

It’s easy to let our ego steer us off track. If we can clear our heads (and hearts) to follow God’s Word

rather than our feelings, we can truly minister to others. James 3:5-12

***2. Is the conflict worth it?***

Christians divide more often about little things than major doctrines. Can we major on the majors?

James 4:1-3

***3. Am I granting others the freedom I enjoy?***

Do you like someone telling you what to do? Well. . .

***4. Is this issue about my way or God’s glory?***

God is on a mission which was promised in the TANAKH (our Old Testament), revealed in Jesus Christ,

and now is to be carried out by the Church. How are we doing? Mark 2:15-17