Discerning Between Absolutes, Convictions, and Preferences
Romans 14 & 15:1-7

Bethel Church
May 21, 2017
"My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart. For they will prolong your life many years, and bring you prosperity."

-Proverbs 3:1-2
5 pm service tonight

• Hymns
• Verse-by-verse message
Pastor Jim gone next 2 weeks

• Message on June 11 will be on Psalm 13- Dealing with Depression
Roman 14:1-15:7

Teaches us how believers can disagree in an agreeable way to the glory of God.
“Hear the Word of the Lord”

- Romans 14:1-11 - Patrick Kelly
- Romans 14:12-23 – Courtney Callender
- Romans 15:1-7 – Jim Dingman
The young man who was converted in prison in England

• A life sentence for a horrific crime
• Converted to Christ
• Completed college in prison
• Led Bible studies, etc.
• Completed seminary prison
• Became the unofficial prison chaplain
• After many years he was pardoned, ordained, and recommended to a church
• Controversy! (the result in 25 minutes)
We begin by understanding...

• **Absolutes**- those truths that are essential to salvation and Christian living

• **Convictions**- beliefs which are important to an individual

• **Preferences**- beliefs which come out of background and experience
Attributed to Augustine, the great Christian leader

“In essentials let there be unity, in non-essentials let there be liberty, in all things let there be charity.”
9 Summary Biblical Principles

1. WE ARE NOT TO JUDGE OTHERS ON DISPUTABLE MATTERS-

   “Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters.” -14:1

   “Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another...” -14:13
2. GOD ACCEPTS CHRISTIANS ON THE BASIS OF CHRIST

“...God has accepted them.” -14:3

“Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.” -14:4
3. WE ARE TO PREPARE OURSELVES TO STAND BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT

“You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.” -14:10

“So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.” -14:12
4. IN DEBATABLE THINGS WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ONE PERSON MAY BE WRONG FOR ANOTHER

“...if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean.” -14:14b

• Example of Dr. Victor Matthews and bowling alleys

• Question from Dr. Francis Schaffer- “Is it wrong to sit by a lake and drink tea?”

• See Romans 14:22-23
“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.” -14:13

“...it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.” -14:20b.

• See Romans 14:15, 20-21
6. WORK FOR PEACE AND BUILDING UP OTHER CHRISTIANS

“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.” – 14:19
7. WE ARE TO PLEASE OTHERS AND NOT OURSELVES

“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.” -15:1-2
8. Consider the example of Christ

“For even Christ did not please himself...”

-15:3a.
9. ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” -15:7
Paul is not speaking of tolerance of sinful or forbidden things.

He is speaking about our standing firm on the essentials of Christianity, and holding our convictions and preferences in love and in deference for others.
“I... urge you to contend for the faith”

This does not mean to contend for personal convictions or preferences but such foundational doctrines as....

• The inspiration of Scripture
• The deity of Christ
• His virgin birth and sinless life
• His substitutionary death
• His literal resurrection and His return
What would be the results of this in the local church?

• Talking about music styles, but not fighting
• Studying subjects such as marriage, divorce, and remarriage and helping people to obey the Scriptures
• Appreciating differing views on Sunday activities, levels of formality in services, use of pulpit furniture in the church, etc.
Conclusion

We must not position ourselves on our...
- emotions,
- traditions,
- background experiences,
- or personal comfort.

Our views should be based on the Word of God!
The “rest of the story”

• The newly ordained minister had the right to pastor a church, but he would not create controversy in the church and so he became a prison chaplain