Walking Life’s Gray Tightrope!

I. Slide#1 Intro:
   A. Last week we started the discussion about the *Gray Matter*’s of life.
   1. Not discussing *clearly stated sin areas*, but *doubtful things* vs.1 (disputable matters, opinions)
   2. They say, Judging one another, *according to our little lists*, is one of the *favorite sports* of Christians today!
      a) “Look as I look, Do as I do...Then, & only then, I’ll fellowship with you.”
   3. Let’s remember 3 things:
      1. *Genuine acceptance* of one another is the only option available to believers
      2. Individual Christians *can disagree* over customs & social habits & *both* be perfectly right with God
      3. We must *submit to the Lordship of Christ* & refrain from judging others, *because* we all will stand before the Bema-seat of Christ & give account of ourselves to Him.

B. Slide#2 Ever heard of a [fyoo·NAM·bu-list] Funambulist?
   1. Slide#3 Lt. *funis rope* + *ambulare to walk* [ambulant = able to walk; ambulance = walking hospital]
      a) Rope Walkers, *Tight Rope Walker*.

C. 4 types of Tight Rope Walkers:
   1. *Tight wire* - is the art of maintaining balance while walking along a tensioned wire between two points.
   2. *High wire* - is the same as tight wire *but* at much greater height.
   3. *Slacklining* - is when the rope is slightly *springy* and taut so that it can *launch* funabulists into the air to perform acrobatic tricks.
   5. *Skywalk wire* - akin to highwire, but generally defined by its length and height, often taking place outdoors at great heights, often between skyscrapers, gorges, mountains or other natural and man-made landscapes.

D. Slide#4 Just 3 *months ago*, on June 15, 2012, high wire artist *Nik Wallenda*, 7th *generation member of the famous Flying Wallendas*, became the 1st person ever to to cross *Horseshoe Falls*, 200 feet up and 1550 feet across on a 2” steel wire.
   1. *After battling wind swells and dangerously thick mist*, Wallenda completed his walk in just 25 minutes during which viewers could hear *his repetition of prayers*. :)

E. Slide#5 Back in 1974 *Philippe Petit* became world famous. For 45 minutes he crossed & re-crossed a cable stretched between the *Twin Towers* of The World Trade Center, 7 times.
1. Slide#6,7 He tried to describe why he took such a risk: “I feel I belong to the sky. It is the moment of purest happiness…I breathe very slowly & enjoy immensely the miracle of balance…I felt fear, & I fought it, & then laughed at it. I lay down on a wire w/my nose almost in the clouds & listened to the noises of the everyday world fall silent until I was surrounded by complete peace. I knew the rapture of the heights.”
   a) Let’s look at: The Miracle of Balance & The Rapture of the Heights.

II. Slide#8 THE MIRACLE OF BALANCE! (14-20)

A. (13) Let’s start back in vs.13, which sets up the rest of the chapter.
   1. Stumbling block = something carelessly left about, over which someone stumbles.
   2. Cause to fall/or obstacle = something deliberately left to ensnare another.
      a) Don’t be an obstruction wittingly or unwittingly.

B. Picture yourself walking a tight rope:
   1. The longer you’ve walked as a Christian, the higher the Tight Rope.
      a) Of course, the higher the Tight Rope…the longer the fall.
   2. When a Christian slips he doesn’t loose his salvation, but he may stumble other younger Christians looking on.
      a) Yet beneath awaits a safety net woven with cords of Grace & ropes of Forgiveness.

C. Slide#9 CONSIDER IT UNCLEAN! (14-16)

D. (14a) There is nothing unclean of itself - Nothing is intrinsically unclean.
   1. Intrinsic = by or in itself, rather than because of its associations or consequences.
      a) What about Tobacco? Nothing wrong with the plant. Just harmful when you light it on fire & inhale the fumes.
      b) What about Opium? It’s only Poppy seeds which makes wonderful cakes, & makes the important pain-killer Morphine & also Codeine for medicine.
         (1) Jesus said, Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. Mt.15:11
         (2) Regarding food Paul said, For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;

E. (14b) An activity may become unclean if it’s done the wrong way or w/the wrong motives.

F. (15) No longer walking in love – How fundamental.
   1. “Love lovingly limits all of its liberation & liberty!”
2. Our Concern for our weaker brothers & sisters will reign in the ways we express our freedom.

3. **Slide#10** The **balancing pole** used in Tight Rope walking may be up to **39’ long** and may weigh as much as **31 lbs**.
   
a) Usually there are even **weights** in the ends.

b) **Slide#11,12** Picture on the one end **Liberty**, on the other **Love**!

c) **On the one hand** you have some Christian friends who are **Freedom Suppressors**;
   
   Others, who are **Compromise Promoters**.
   
   Some shouting, **“Wear these handcuffs, I wear them!”**
   
   Others whispering, **“Everyone’s doin it!”**

4. **So**, **How far should we go in applying this?**
   
   a) If we fully apply what Paul says, will not our conduct be controlled by the **narrowest Christians** in the church?
   
   (1) It is indeed possible for **disordered personalities** to dominate the Church.

   (2) **Like** the believer who says we **shouldn’t smile** or **laugh** because the Scripture nowhere records **Jesus smiling** or **laughing**.
   
   (a) Of course, the absurdity of this **argument from silence** is seen if you make **lists** of other things the Scriptures never mention. (i.e. Like Jesus going to the bathroom)

   (3) We are obviously **not called to** an uncritical, indiscriminate limitation of our freedom.

   (4) Voluntary limiting of our freedom is **not meant** to subject us to the prejudices of Christians who are well **established in the faith** but persistent in **sub-Biblical legalism**.
   
   (a) Remember **in Rome** the believers were relatively **young** in the faith, & their scrupulous consciences had an **alleged** Biblical base.

G. (16) **Don’t let your good be spoken evil of** - Don’t give **freedom** a bad name! **Preserve** its good reputation! - And ultimately, **Enjoy it**!

   1. **How can good be spoken evil of?** – By **flaunting** it, **Or**, using it **insensitively**.

   2. **If we use our God-given freedoms discreetly**, no one can speak of it as **evil**.

H. **Slide#13 CONTEMPLATING THE KINGDOM!** (17-19)

I. (17) Ok Paul, so let me get this straight, It’s all about **what I think about** social drinking or smoking cigars, listening to secular music, or what kind of dancing is ok. **My view on** kissing before marriage, or if using **minor cuss words** is ok…Right?…No, there’s more! **Re-read vs17**

   1. Paul just **elevated** the entire discussion to **a higher level**. So we don’t get stuck in the **Pharisaical mode** of making mountains out of **mole hill externals**, he flips it on its ear to deal with **eternals**!
2. **God is not as concerned about our actions** as He is about... our **motives** that drive them; our **conscience** that allows or disallows them; & our **testimony** that springs forth from them.

3. John Whitmer said, “A concerned believer insists on right conduct, harmony, & joy, rather than forcing his own lifestyle on others.”

J. (18) Fulfilling verse 17 **pleases God & approves us before man**!

K. (19) Paul sums it up with **2 godly principles**:
   1. **Pursue peace & build up** one another!
   2. Back in the 70's **Volunteer Firefighters** in Genoa, Texas, were accused of deliberately setting more than 40 destructive fires. When caught, they stated, "We had nothing to do. We just wanted to get the red lights flashing and the bells clanging."
      a) The job of **firefighters** is to **put out** fires, not **start** them.
         The job of **Christians** is to **help resolve conflict** not **start** more of it.

L. **Slide#14 CRUSHING THE KINGDOM!** (20)

M. Unfortunately instead of building up we’re often tearing down/destroying (also vs.15).
   1. Which is more important to you…the spiritual health of a fellow Christian, or in enjoying your freedoms in front of one who may be stumbling?
      a) You may have the liberty to enjoy a **glass of wine with dinner**, but you don’t need to on church trips!
      b) A person who grew up in a culture where a glass was common with the evening meal…Is different than…A person that felt they had to show their liberty in front of you. Or, a person that have non-alcoholic wine in wine glasses so you can appear as drinkers. Not sure what that is?

III. **Slide#15 THE RAPTURE OF THE HEIGHTS!** (21-23)

A. **Slide#16 BE CONSIDERATE OF YOUR CONVICTIONS!** (21)

   B. Try this, replace **good** for its root meaning “**beautiful**”. “**It is beautiful not to eat...**”
      1. It’s beautiful because it shows there is **love** among the brethren;
         It’s beautiful because **arrogance** is gone;
         It’s beautiful because it is **unselfish**;
         It’s beautiful because it means one has a finely tuned sense of spiritual proportion;
         It’s beautiful because it puts **others first**.
   
   C. Adopt an **attitude of concern** for others & a **sensitivity** to their needs.
      1. Here is the basic concept of **Theological Thoughtfulness 101**!
      2. Being considerate **isn’t** just having **nice manners**!

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2 Kent Hughes, Romans, pg.272.
It’s learning the sensitivities of your friends around you. It’s observing what makes them uncomfortable. And, It’s avoiding those things in their presence.

D. Look at the Tail Spin of being Inconsiderate to these things: Grieving(15); Stumbling(21a); Offending(21b); Weakening(21c); & possibly even Destroying(15,20).

1. Is destroying another just to have your own way, worth it? (www)

E. Slide#17 During WWII the Allied Convoys would cross the Atlantic at the speed of the slowest ship.

1. Maybe that’s what Paul had in mind here.
   a) The shepherd must pace the flock to accommodate the weakest lamb.
   b) The Christian must regulate his freedom to take into account the feeble conscience of a weaker brother or sister.

F. Slide#18 BE CONFIDENTIAL WITH YOUR CONVICTIONS! (22a)

G. Keep your convictions between you & God.

1. These convictions are those things agreed on between you & God.
2. As I grow as a pastor I am learning more & more to reverse the question of Gray Matters back to the individual asking, rather than automatically giving my personal conviction! (Oh I’ll give mine if that is what’s asked)

H. Slide#19 BE CONDEMNATION-FREE OF YOUR CONVICTIONS! (22b)

I. Wow, how freeing, how happy we can be, when we are convinced by God of our convictions.

1. Note though: it is very clear here that everyone must have a standard for his own conduct in the Gray areas.

J. Slide#20 BE CONVINCED OF YOUR CONVICTIONS! (23)

K. When in doubt, don’t!

L. Have confidence in your convictions.

1. The weak saint might sometimes do something because everyone else is doing it.
2. He might do it because he does not wish to stand in the minority of one.
3. He might do it because he does not wish to be different.
4. He might do it because he does not wish to get ridiculer or suffer unpopularity.

M. Slide#21 We need to have confidence in our Christian Tight Rope Walk!

1. Be sure about it…or leave it alone!
2. Don’t do anything to which you need to ask questions about it.
3. If you don’t have the confidence you’re doing the right thing… you’re not!
4. The deed might be right for others, but if you doubt yourself, it is evil to you.
5. Any doubt about the rightness of an action removes it from the category of what is acceptable.

N. Slide#22 Don’t risk your spiritual life like Maria Spelterini who wore wooden buckets on her feet while crossing the Niagara River Gorge on a rope in 1876.
   1. Slide#23 Use the proper sticky shoes to keep you to the rope & balanced.
   2. Slide#24,25 Christians, as you walk life's tight rope grip your balancing pole and maintain your balance with the 2 weights of: Loving others & Enjoy your Liberty’s

O. Prayer: The Miracle of Balance & The Rapture of the Heights.