

## 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** funambulists into the air to perform acrobatic tricks.
  4. **Slack wire** - Where the rope **hangs slightly loose**. **Popular for clowning & juggling**.
  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.**”<sup>1</sup>

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 *lose 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!”**

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Reader’s Digest, April 1975, pg.226,7.

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 8 **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.**<sup>2</sup>
- 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!**

<sup>2</sup> Kent Hughes, Romans, pg.272.

- a) **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 thats 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.