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Life in Balance
Romans 14:1-12

INTRO: When a tire is out of balance or the front end of your car is out of line, the car is hard to steer, and the ride is rough. When a Christian gets out of line and out of balance in his relationship to others, life is hard for him and hard for those around him.

The Christian life is to be a balanced life, a life of conviction and compassion, a life of self-discipline and understanding. In our church life, there is to be unity but not necessarily uniformity.

On doctrinal issues, we cannot move; we cannot compromise. The Gospel is not for sale; salvation by grace is not to be mixed with works. But there are practical areas where Christians have many different ideas. In the local church, we have folks from many backgrounds with different careers, some are spiritually mature, some are not and may never be. Some people were raised in church; others were not. Some were raised religious but lost. There are those who come from what we call high church situations, others from small country churches.

Because of our different backgrounds, we see things from different points of view. We are not to condone sin, but we are to understand that people are different.

I. VS 1, WHAT WE ARE TO DO WITH THE WEAK

A. The weak are to be received. None of us entered into the Christian life full grown. We all have had to grow. I John speaks of several stages of Christian growth (I John 2:12-14). We all start as babes and must grow from there (I Peter 2:2).

1. Strong believers are to accept weak ones. The tendency is to form a clique of the strong and shun the weak. No! Accept the weak; help the weak.

a) "Him that is weak."

1.) "Is weak" is in the Greek present participle meaning the weakness is a temporary condition.

2.) Babes in Christ are not to stay that way; they are to grow. (See Pulpit Commentary Vol 19, pg 109).

b) "In the faith" is not talking about being weak in the great truths but weak in matters of conduct.

2. The Jewish believer brought a lot of baggage into their new found faith: Sabbath worship, not eating pork, observing certain days, etc. The Gentile believers had other problems. They had in the past worshiped idols, had made offerings to them. Some of the Jews who wouldn't eat pork would eat meat that had been offered to idols and then sold in the market. The Gentiles would eat pork but would not eat meat offered to

idols believing it was compromise.

3. On the mission field, missionaries must be mindful of the culture.

B. We need to try to understand and help each other.

1. We do not need to be judgmental. Some things are not spelled out in scripture.

a) I like the Scofield Reference Bible note on this verse: "The church has no authority to decide questions of personal liberty in things not expressly forbidden in scripture" (1228).

b) In our day, some women wear make up and jewelry; others believe it is wrong to do so. Some go to movies; others don't. Some mix bath; others don't.

2. Now there are things that are spelled out in scripture (13:13). We need to stand for right and stand strong. Yet, we are to help our weaker brother (Gal 6:1).

II. VSS 2-3, WE ARE ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED BY FAITH NOT DIET

A. Vs. 2, Under the New Covenant all things are clean as far as food goes (Acts 10:15-16).

1. One of the signs of the last days is vegetarianism (I Tim 4:1-3).

2. If you are vegetarian for health reasons and don't rail about it, O.K. But if you believe that not eating meat makes you better spiritually, you are wrong.

B. Vs 3, We are not to be judgmental. If you eat meat, good; I do too. If you will not eat meat, that's your privilege.

1. There are those who think they must abstain from meat to get to heaven. They are wrong.

2. We are not to try to straighten folks out on this. The doctor will tell you that eating bacon is not good for you; yet you can eat it by the grace of God; and you may get to heaven sooner by eating it!

a) "Judge" in this verse is the Greek verb *krino* meaning to separate or isolate. The strong brother considers the weak to be legalistic. The weak sees the strong as irresponsible.

b) God does not make an issue out of what we eat! We are accepted by God because we believe the Gospel! Not because we do not eat pork brains and eggs.

III. VS 4, THE BELIEVER STANDS BY THE GRACE OF GOD

A. Paul uses the illustration of a master and his slave to point out that the believer is answerable to His Master the Lord Jesus.

1. The eater of meat is not responsible to answer to the one who doesn't eat meat. PETA would disagree with this verse.

2. When it comes to the food we eat, no one has the right to condemn us (Rom 8:33-34, 38-39).

B. The folks who tie vegetarianism to salvation needs to read Colossians 2:14.

1. Friends, the most important thing is not what you eat, but whether or not you are saved by grace.
2. I am glad that Jesus is my Master. I will serve him in love and seek to treat my body as the temple of God. Yet, I am glad that raw oysters and catfish are not acceptable food.

IV. VSS 5-9, FROM THE DIET QUESTION TO THE DAY QUESTION

A. Vs 5, Weak Jews held onto diet and days associated with Judaism. The Gentile Christian wanted to distance himself from pagan holidays because of the idolatry and immorality associated with them.

1. Paul, in Colossians 2:16, tells those believers that they could make up their minds about these special days. But in Galatians 4:9-10, Paul strongly warns the Galatians not to get enslaved by day worship. Balance, what we need is balance.
2. To be “fully persuaded” means that we are to keep the right emphasis on what we do. Christmas and Easter – What will we do worship Santa and the Bunny or will we worship Christ year round? Think about this, why is there never an Easter Monday?

B. Vs 6, Let me make this simple. We are to regard everything as belonging to God whether it is the food we eat or whether it is the day we regard. It all belongs to Him.

1. Let us go by the good rule of I Cor 10:31.
2. There are some days that I cannot thank God for so I do not observe them.

C. Vs 7-9, We live and die to the Lord.

1. Vss 7-8, It is true that our lives affect others; and verse 7 has often been used to say that. But that is not what is being taught here. As believers, weak or strong, we live for the Lord and we die in the Lord. Our lives are to reflect our position in Christ (I Cor 6:20; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14).
2. Vs 9, This verse is a Gospel verse saying that Christ lived, died, and rose again.
 - a) Christ died and now lives that He might be the Lord of the living believer and the believer who has died.
 - b) Heb 7:25.

V. VSS 10-12, THE BELIEVER WILL BE JUDGED BY CHRIST

A. Vs 10, It is so easy to sit in the judgment seat!

1. Many have a critical spirit; that comes from being judgmental.
2. We had better be careful of our attitudes, and that is what Paul is talking about here.
 - a) If you are not careful, you’ll become what you hate.
 - b) Judgmental folks often get bitter in spirit.

B. Vss 11-12, Paul uses this quote from Isaiah 45:23.

- C. "Our responsibility is not to judge, to despise, to criticize, or in anyway to belittle our brothers and sisters in Christ. We will not be called on by our Lord to give an account of the sins and shortcomings of others, but rather each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (MacArthur 285).

CONCLUSION: We need to get the beam out of our own eye before we start worrying about the straw in our neighbor's eye.