

On the Intolerance of Tolerance

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It is possible to become so extreme in the practice of a virtue that it becomes a vice. It is good to pray, but if one spent every moment in prayer, he could not do many other things the Lord requires of us. (Incidentally, this is not what Paul meant when he wrote, “Pray without ceasing” [1 The. 5:17].) Generally, the Bible teaches the virtues of tolerance and forbearance. The Lord warned against harsh, hypocritical, hypercritical, and unmerciful attitudes that use a double standard in our judgment of others (Mat. 7:1-5). Paul enjoined us to be longsuffering (1 The. 5:14), and Peter set forth God as the ultimate example of same (2 Pet. 3:9). Beyond argument, God expects his children to be tolerant, forbearing, and longsuffering.

However, it is apparent that the spirit of tolerance has become so strong and so universal in our world that it has run far beyond what God either expects or permits. Tolerance of evil and error now far exceeds respect for righteousness and Truth. Many people have allowed an undue spirit of this trait to obscure their discernment between good and evil, Truth and error. In all that God says on the need for us to be longsuffering, there is never a faint hint that this is an excuse to be tolerant of that which is wrong, whether within or without the church. Never does the Bible suggest that we are patiently to endure a false teacher, without rebuke and attempted correction. Never are we to allow hyper-tolerance to silence our outcry against the fleshly sins of ungodly men.

Too much tolerance has affected the way men view God. Most men have recoiled from the Biblical teaching that those who are sinful and disobedient must suffer the eternal wrath of God, although the Bible unceasingly teaches such (Mat. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 25:46; 2 The. 1:8- 9; Rev. 20:15; et al.). They have thus come to view God as **only** merciful, forgiving, forbearing, and tolerant, completely ignoring His balancing traits of justice, severity, and vengeance. God was longsuffering with the antediluvians, even in their exceeding wickedness, but His tolerance was not infinite, as the flood explicitly testifies (1 Pet. 3:20-21). The level of tolerance is so extreme that many in places of wealth, power, and prominence now defend, promote, and support the sin for which God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. To them it is but an innocent “alternate life-style” whose practitioners should have the right to “marry” their illicit partners. This sort of tolerance is bound to lead next to tolerance of incest, pedophilia, and bestiality as “normal” and “acceptable” behavior. To some of these mushy super-tolerantists, the greatest sin one can commit nowadays is to expose an abomination, a corrupt practice, a false doctrine, or a false

teacher. Tolerance is demanded for everyone except those whom the “tolerant” perceive to be “intolerant.” It is political correctness run amok.

Our Lord and His apostles could not be silent in the face of wickedness and error. Time after time, the Lord called the wicked Pharisees “hypocrites” (Mat. 23:13–36). He once told the hard-hearted Jews that they were of their father, the devil (John 8:44). Paul provided two lengthy lists of behaviors that, unforgiven, will cause one to be lost eternally. These included fornication, adultery, homosexuality, idolatry, covetousness, theft, drunkenness, and others (1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:19–21). Jesus commanded, “Beware of false prophets” (Mat. 7:15). Perversions of Truth were never allowed to pass as mere innocent “partial understandings” or “personal interpretations,” but were denounced as “damnable heresies” (2 Pet. 2:1). May we never be more tolerant than our Lord and His inspired men were.

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