

TOO MUCH TOLERANCE?

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. (This is not what Paul meant when he wrote, "Pray without ceasing" [1 The. 5:17].) Generally, the Bible teaches the virtue of tolerance. The Lord warned against harsh, hypocritical, and unmerciful judgment of others (Mat. 7:1–5). Paul enjoined us to be longsuffering (1 The. 5:14), and Peter set God forth as our example of same (2 Pet. 3:9). Beyond argument, God expects his children to be tolerant 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 far exceeds respect for righteousness and Truth in the world. 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 tolerate 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 Bible teaching that those who are sinful and disobedient must suffer the eternal wrath of God, although the Bible unceasingly teaches such. They have thus come to view God as **only** merciful, forgiving, and tolerant, completely ignoring His balancing traits of justice and severity. The level of tolerance is so high that many are

now defending and promoting even the crudest forms of immorality, including homosexuality, as mere “alternate life-styles.” Before long some will declare bestiality, incest, and pedophilia to be acceptable behavior. To some of these mushy super-tolerantists, the greatest sin one can commit nowadays is to expose a corrupt practice, a false doctrine, or a false teacher. Tolerance is urged for everyone except those whom the “tolerant” perceive to be “intolerant.”

Our Lord and His apostles could not be silent in the face of error or wickedness. 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). He commanded, “Beware of false prophets,” only shortly after He ordered, “Judge not” (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 is.

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