

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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THE INTOLERANCE OF THE TOLERANT

by Barry O'Dell

In any discussion, a definition of terms is absolutely necessary. Not only is a definition of terms necessary, but also of world views. What determines how an individual sees things in this world? It could be the case that a person's family and/or friends is the strongest influence on how that person views the world in which he lives (2 Tim. 1:5). It might also be the case that one's physical environment or location could impact certain definitions and views (Jn. 4:20). For the child of God, family and location do not determine truth. God's word is the source of truth in the world (Jn. 17:17). A child of God can live in any location, under any circumstance, and still know the will of the Lord. God's truth is universal and absolute. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

That being said, what is intolerance? Dictionary.com says it is an, "unwillingness or refusal to tolerate or respect opinions or beliefs contrary to one's own." The definition of tolerance, from the same website, is interesting: "a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins differ from one's own;

freedom from bigotry." It is important to be fair and objective. We are commanded to judge righteously (Jn. 7:24) and to show no partiality (Jas. 2:1, 9). However, what about the word "permissive" in the above definition? About what are we told to be permissive? The world says we should tolerate (be permissive) of the following: abortion (now known as "reproductive rights"), gay marriage (because love knows no gender), Islam (because it is a "religion of peace"), drinking, premarital sex, rioting in the streets, etc., etc. How is the child of God to think in such a permissive, non-judgmental society?

The problem is that many children of God are being conformed to this world. Period. Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2). There are several words that must be understood in this passage in order for the Christian to think correctly.

Holy. We are commanded to be holy, even as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). We are called with a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9). The word in the Greek language means, "set apart, sanctified, chaste, pure." The child of God is set apart from the world (Gal. 1:4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17). We are not to think or act like the world thinks and acts. We are not to define terms or have a world view that is fostered by the world.

Acceptable. No one wants to feel left out or unimportant or unloved. However, our greatest concern must be whether or not we are acceptable to God. The English word *acceptable* used by Paul is a compound word in the Greek meaning, "well pleasing." We must be concerned with what is well pleasing to the Lord (Eph. 5:10). The standard of judgment that all of humanity will face is the word of God (Jn. 12:48). At what point in time has God ever *approved* of the shedding of innocent blood? At what point in time has God ever *approved* of homosexuality? At what point in time has God ever *approved* of changing His pattern for worship?

Conformed. This word in the Greek language literally means, "to be fashioned together with, to

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fashion alike, to conform to the same pattern.” God’s child is not to look like the world. God’s child is not to think like the world. However, in our society, if you buck the current trends you are labeled as a “hater” or a “bigot.” You are considered “behind the times” if you stand against any of the sinful activities listed above. The world is constantly trying to squeeze us into a mold it has made.

Transform. We get our English word *metamorphosis* from the Greek word found here. It is defined, “to transfigure, to change one’s form.” This same word is used of Jesus when He was transfigured as recorded in Matthew 17:2. How does the Christian make this metamorphosis? Paul wrote, “. . . by the renewing of your mind . . .” (Rom.

12:2). As stated in the beginning of this article, one’s thinking can be fashioned by many different factors and the child of God understands this. Even Jesus warned the apostles of this by saying, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matt. 16:6). He was telling them not to be influenced by the teachings of those two groups. The child of God today must beware of the leaven of the world.

The Supreme Court of the United States began hearing arguments concerning homosexual marriage on Tuesday, April 28, 2015. A ruling on their hearings should be made sometime later this year. Statistics show that most of the Millennial Generation supports same-sex marriage (62%). Two of the current Justices, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Elena Kagan, have already performed same-sex marriages. Justice Sonia Sotomayor has already stated that people should be allowed to marry whoever they want to marry. There are even “Christian” groups who are pushing this agenda. One of the most vocal groups on the internet is Gay Christian Network. Sadly, there are those who are members of the Lord’s church who are attempting to advance the cause of the homosexual community. We are all inundated with the “fact” that things are changing and that the world is different than it used to be. What is the child of God to do?

Know the revealed will of God. God has spoken to us through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). If we do not

know what God’s word says we will be susceptible to many false claims. We have access to “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). We must stand fast on the word of God (Eph. 6:13).

Expose the darkness with the light of God’s word (Eph. 5:11). It is not enough to know what sin is. We must also expose it for what it is. Sin will separate people from their Creator for all eternity! Are we to “tolerate” sin because we love people and don’t want them to feel rejected? Is it better to allow people to live in and be lost in sin?

Understand the nature and origin of temptation and sin. James is very clear on this issue. God does not tempt us to sin. Temptation comes from our own lusts when we are drawn away or bated. When we give in to temptation, sin is the result (Jas. 1:13-15). Do not misunderstand the nature and origin of temptation and sin (Jas. 1:16).

Treat all people with love and concern. We are to speak the truth in love (Eph.4:15). Loving someone does not mean not offending them. Jesus’ message about sacrifice and priorities caused the rich young ruler to walk away (Mk. 10:22), even though Jesus loved him (Mk. 10:21). His love for this wealthy young man did not prevent Jesus from speaking the truth. Our love for souls will not tolerate sin in our lives or in the lives of others. Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (Jn. 10:10).

JESUS WAS INTOLERANT

by Johnny O. Trail

It has become cliché to say that “The only modern virtue is complete tolerance.” This is a sad but true saying in our age. Most of the liberals in religion would argue that “God is love, and since He loves everyone, He wants people to accept all behaviors.” The blanket of God’s love as acceptance gets thrown onto too many discussions that contain moral absolutes.

The fact of Scripture is that God is intolerant of certain things. One should hasten to admit that God is love (1 Jn. 4:8). Without His grace and mercy, no person could expect to have eternal life. Paul wrote, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12). That being the case, there are things that God, in His holiness, cannot tolerate.

God does not tolerate sin. Ezekiel 18:4 says, “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” One crucial aspect of humankind’s salvation is the fact that Jesus died for our transgressions. 1 Corinthians 15:3 reads, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” This should convict a

person of the horrible nature of sin. All of the pain that He endured at Calvary was for the redemption of lost humankind. Our sins nailed Him to the cross, and His love kept Him there until the opportunity for the salvation of man was made available.

God is intolerant of the impenitent. Jesus demanded the repentance of lost humanity. Repentance is the antithesis of tolerance. Jesus commanded, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish . . . I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3, 5). God expects all people to repent (Acts 17:30). Some aspects of repentance might be more difficult than others, but God still expects the repentance of those who would be truly converted to Christ.

Jesus was intolerant of religious hypocrisy. A loving Christ was very harsh regarding the behavior of the Pharisees of His age. Jesus calls the religious leaders of His age “hypocrites” some seven times in Matthew 23 (vs. 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, and 29). From this, one might believe that Jesus was a *Pharisee-phobe*. No, He loved these people, but He told the truth about their ungodly ways!

Jesus was intolerant of those who made sinful gains in the name of religious service. When Jesus cleansed the temple, He

expelled people who made dishonest gain in the name of providing monetary exchanges so worshippers could provide animals for sacrifice. John recorded, “And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise” (Jn. 2:14-16).

Jesus was intolerant of religious error. When He contacted the Samaritan woman, He engaged her in a discussion about a religious controversy that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. He asserted the truth regarding the appropriate place of worship, and He provided the standard that God expects among those who draw near to Him. Jesus said, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such

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to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:21-24). We should seek to worship God according to the acceptable pattern and standard.

Christ was intolerant of the disobedient. It is a difficult thing for many to accept, but those who proclaim religion in Jesus’ name, but are otherwise disobedient to His commands, are among those who are lost. Our Lord said, “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I

profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:21-23). Many religious people are going to be surprised on the Day of Judgment.

The same God who is intolerant of sin still loves sinful people. If we are to be servants of the Master, we need to have the same orientation towards sin. It is possible to disagree with a person and still love them. A man might disagree with his own children daily and still have the deepest type of love imaginable for them. People must move past the infantile thinking of many in our society. Being intolerant of a person’s sinful behaviors is not the same thing as hating them.

Johnny Trail preaches for the Sycamore Chapel church of Christ in Ashland City, TN.

**GOD’S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP
– COLOSSIANS 3:17 –**

1. **LORD’S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-24; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7, I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God’s word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men’s doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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