

Tolerance – A Two Way Street!

By Wayne Vasilenko

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It was not that long ago, that I posted a similar version of this topic, but since we are at the beginning of a New Year, an “Election Year,” I feel it is important to once again review the subject of, “Tolerance and Intolerance.” Since the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, it seems that our nation has been teetering on the verge of another civil war. The political Left is digging in their heels as never before, making the term “Centralist” an obsolete term within their own party, perhaps this includes the Right as well! Meanwhile, the political Right, following Trump’s example, is also finally learning to stand up and fight for what they believe without cowering in fear of the media, or turning on members of their own party because of the reaction of radical political action groups. There has always been political talk of, “Reaching across the aisle,” especially in an election year, but seriously, how often does that really happen? Since the election of our current president, the political scene has been strictly a “Party Line Bias,” with little or no effort to negotiate with or in some cases even acknowledge the opposing party! This however is *not* the way it is supposed to be. The government of the United States of America was originally set up in such a way as to inspire crosstalk and compromise between political parties. The Founding Fathers of our nation purposely engineered the process so that it would be difficult to make, or change laws, thus eliminating constant shifting back and forth, as political parties on either side gain or lose control. Additionally, this gave all citizens (you & me) an opportunity have a say as to how it is we are to be governed, by giving people ample time to interface with their representatives during the process. Christians are familiar with this concept out of the following Bible passage, a passage that deals with stability.

Ephesians 4:14 (AMP)

¹⁴ So then, we may no longer be children, tossed [like ships] to and fro between chance gusts of teaching *and* wavering with every changing wind of doctrine, [the prey of] the cunning *and* cleverness of unscrupulous men, [gamblers engaged] in every shifting form of trickery in inventing errors to mislead.

Perhaps the reference here to easily manipulated “children” is a good reason for keeping the voting age as it is!

"If a book be false in its facts, disprove them; if false in its reasoning, refute it. But for God's sake, let us freely hear both sides if we choose."

- Thomas Jefferson

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The quote above says it all! Of course, this does not only apply to books but it also to concerns, opinions, and beliefs as well. Note the author of this quote, the same person who penned the Declaration of Independence! We hear so much concerning “Tolerance” these days as one of the two major political groups here in the U.S.A. is constantly telling people that we must have understanding and we must tolerate people that disagree with us, even people whose morality (or lack thereof) is opposed to what we believe, especially if we claim to be Christian. However, what we have been enduring, especially since the election of President Trump has very little actual evidence of “Tolerance,” especially by the political group referred to as the “Radical Left.” Let us begin by first defining the word tolerance:

Tolerance {From Dictionary.com}

Noun

- 1. a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins, etc., differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry.*
- 2. a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions, beliefs, and practices that differ from one's own.*
- 3. interest in and concern for ideas, opinions, practices, etc., foreign to one's own; a liberal, undogmatic viewpoint.*

I believe, based on these definitions, most people should agree that we indeed should be tolerant of others in order to be considered a “Civil Society,” after all there is an abundance of differing thoughts and opinions concerning just about everything one can imagine! We all have, and we all are entitled to our own opinions and beliefs; however, one thing that is most often overlooked is that true tolerance is a “**Two Way Street**” to coin an old phrase. If I tolerate you, then you should also tolerate me! That sounds fair does it not. While tolerance is preached far, and wide, both in the secular and religious realms, there nevertheless seems to be a looming problem... that being *intolerance*. Despite the hype concerning tolerance, most people remain *intolerant*, plain and simple!

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As previously stated; in the political realm there is what we call the political left, and the political right, terms that imply opposite or opposing forces or viewpoints as they relate to moral, social, and governmental issues. While it is not a “qualifier” so to speak, most Christians tend to be on the Political Right, while people that have a Non-Christian (or an Anti-Christ) slant, seem to gravitate towards the Political Left. All of the prevailing evidence indicates that people on the Right, for the most part favor traditional Judeo-Christian values and Capitalism, while most people on the Political Left tend to favor more “Progressive or Humanistic” (Non-Christian) values. Those on the left also tend to favor Socialism and in many cases Communism, both of which are by nature Atheistic. It is prudent to note now, that Socialism often leads to Communism. While personally favoring the right, I also strongly believe you have every right to favor the left should you so choose. However, I also believe that everyone should know the reason why they favor one side over the other based on knowledge, not propaganda. People should also carefully consider the long-term ramifications, including the ultimate cost of their choices as well. As I think on these things, a particular person comes to my mind, a former co-worker named Dave. From a political standpoint Dave and I were just about as opposite as we could be, and we would frequently engage in deep discussions, almost daily, concerning our differences, however, these discussions were always civil. Although we often disagreed, we remained friends and we respected each other’s right to have a different opinion. This is how it should be!

We agreed to disagree; this is the true spirit of tolerance.

Nevertheless, despite the constant call for tolerance in modern society, there are some circumstances where tolerance is *not* an option. For example, we have laws that govern societal behavior. This includes punishment for those who disobey, or break these laws! After all, without law, there can only be chaos. The majority of people on all sides of the political and/or religious spectrum respect the laws of man, and without question in most cases. However, why is it that there is such dwindling respect for the laws of the Bible, (AKA, God’s Law) dwindling respect even within the Church itself? The Bible, which just so happens to be the focal point of most religions in the world, surprisingly is also at the root of the majority of man's secular laws! Most people, especially of the “millennial generation” do not have a clue this is so, as result of the manipulation of historical facts within our educational system.

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The history books I knew as a child (in the 60's and 70's) have been butchered and re-assembled into nothing more than Radical Political Statements that favor Radical Political Groups that openly espouse a hatred for the U.S.A. So the question is, "Where is the breakdown occurring in our society and in our churches, and why is it occurring?" The breakdown is traceable to the extensive use of a relatively new term in society, "**Political Correctness.**" Currently the people of the U.S.A. are experiencing **Political Correctness** and **Intolerance in the guise of tolerance**, to the extreme! In fact, it is becoming so prevalent and extreme as to include the Church to an unprecedented degree, and most professing Christians do not even realize it is happening as they confuse "Christian Love" with the condoning of principles and beliefs that are *anything but Christian!* This is mainly due to a lack of Spiritual or Biblical knowledge. The reason is that people, even those professing Christianity, seem to find time for everything except God, and the reading of His Word!

You might be wondering how this is happening so allow me to explain. First, I want to tell you of one of the most unforgettable things that I have ever personally experienced. I was working for a large company that was in the process of moving most of its manufacturing operation to Mexico and China. Finally, the day of "The Big Layoff" which we were all expecting came, and I was among those who were now without a job. As I was walking out the door for the last time, one of my former supervisors ran up to me and said the following. He said, "I just wanted to shake your hand... you always stood up for what you believed, and you never backed down for anyone or anything, no matter the personal risk, I just wanted to say I always respected you for that." You see, I was known to be what another supervisor once referred to me as, "A Loose Cannon." It is not that I was a troublemaker, but if I disagreed with someone or something, most people knew that I would always speak my mind. This didn't always go so well with some of my superiors who were used to be surrounded with "Yes men." Nevertheless, I always felt that if you could express your idea or opinion... so could I. I never broke the rules of subordination once a decision was made, but I did make my opinions known, sometimes at great risk to my employment status. There are many stories I can tell, but the point I want to make is that **I stood up for my beliefs and opinions, and so should you!** No one should ever be afraid to express himself or herself to anyone, concerning anything... It is a right supported by law. *Note: There are some limits concerning "Freedom of Speech," also in situations where one pledges to follow lawful orders without question such as in the military.*

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However, the way it is now, especially here in the U.S.A., people are afraid to say what they feel about many things, especially concerning moral and social issues. The reason for this is that some people are being intimidated into capitulating to others that disagree with them. Some people are actually being physically assaulted concerning political and/or religious issues! As I am writing this a new report came up concerning a popular “Social Media” outlet losing many customers and Billions in Net Worth as many people are fed up with being censored because of their feelings or beliefs. Here we have censorship... *in the name of Tolerance!* The truth is, censorship and tolerance are not readily compatible.

So how is intolerance really finding its way into the church?

Pastors and Church Leaders... Pay Attention... Listen up... It May Be Your Fault!

Over the past 8 years or so, I sat in three separate church services and was shocked as different Pastors told their congregations, “If you don’t like what we do or the way we do things in our church, leave... there are plenty of churches down the road.” Their exact words may have varied but the message was the same... if you’re going to complain about anything, or if you have a problem with the way we do things... Get Out – Go somewhere else! I don’t know about you, but I find this attitude a little hard to swallow coming from someone preaching the love and grace of God, especially from those who call themselves Christian claiming that they wish to draw people towards the Lord and into their fellowship. Contrary to popular beliefs, Christians are in fact the most tolerant religious group in the world in most cases! Now I realize that there are some people that are in effect doing Satan’s bidding causing strife and discord within the church, I am not referring to those. However, I submit that there are some people that have legitimate concerns, and are simply trying to point out some things that may be having an adverse effect on their Church or Christianity as a whole. It is obvious to me that any Pastor that would tell a member of his or her congregation to “Take a Hike” without addressing their concerns, is indeed set in their ways to say the least, and indeed Dogmatic or Legalistic, and anything besides tolerant! Regardless, here are some other things to consider.

First, is it possible that the **Holy Spirit** inspired that person to bring out or question something that might be harming others in the congregation or turning people away, not only from your church but perhaps from God Himself?

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*Perhaps God sent that person, that “complaining person,” to your particular church to help with such a need or shortcoming! For example, a church may be struggling to inspire fellowship and God sent someone there with experience, knowledge, and wisdom to help! If nobody is willing to listen to different ideas with the attitude of “My Way or the Highway” in essence, *God’s answer to a need, possibly a prayer could have just been kicked out the door!* In the verse below, we are being instructed to “Pursue Peace.” In other words, show tolerance, also to strive to remain holy. It goes on to say that if we do not do these things, “no one will see the Lord!” That is something to ponder. (*Selah*)*

Hebrews 12:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord...

So... if someone complains that the music is too loud do we tell that person to take a hike and find another church? Has anyone considered that maybe the music is too loud? When people are wearing earplugs or covering their child’s ears to protect them... that should tell you something! When people go out into the foyer until the music is over, missing out on, Praise and Worship, it just might be... a little too loud! Me and my wife visited a church a few years ago where the music was so loud you could actually feel your internal organs vibrating! We lasted about 5 minutes before we had to leave and we never went back! How many other people, like us left before hearing the sermon, perhaps one they “needed to hear” because they too couldn’t stand the volume level in the room? Some people simply cannot tolerate these volume levels. It may even be painful for them! I am bringing this up because I have talked to many people about this from various churches and they too feel that this is a problem, but they are afraid to say anything... I am not.

Church should not be a torture chamber for anyone in the congregation but a place of Fellowship, Praise, Worship, and Learning (and tolerance). I personally don’t mind loud music... I used to be a Lead Singer in a Rock Group in my younger days! (*I have hearing loss as a result*) however loud is one thing, but when the volume exceeds the level of a jet liner at full takeoff power... that my friends is not only ridiculous but dangerous! Many churches, if required to adhere to industrial regulations, would have to issue and require all in the congregation to wear hearing protection!

The unfortunate thing is that more and more churches are cranking up the volume and like many other people, from now on if I see a bowl of earplugs in the foyer, I am not going to waste my time. There is absolutely no reason for this!

Another example of one-sided tolerance

Once again, Churches teach us to be “Tolerant,” they tell us to welcome in the Homosexuals and Cross-Dressers, yet in many cases they teach us not to confront them with God’s Word, but to be “Politically Correct!” The Word of God is being referred to in many recent cases as “Hate Speech” both in Social Media and in the News Media... sometimes even within the Church itself! So, are we now all expected to agree to marry Gay couples in our churches, do we allow men to dress as women or women as men and have them sit next to our children on Sunday morning to show tolerance? Everywhere Jesus went He confronted people with the truth of the Word of God... he did it gently in most cases, but sometimes he did it with a whip as he overturned tables!

Romans 12:9 (NKJV)

⁹ *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*

We cannot show love towards anyone if we are unwilling or afraid to confront them with the truth. No - we don’t drive these people out from among us with a whip. But we do have to tell them the truth, and we are ***not*** obligated to allow them to blatantly sin in front of us or our children in the process of practicing our religion or expressing our faith. In too many churches, congregations simply do what it takes to fill the pews... ***But*** on the other hand, if anyone complains that the music is too loud as I mentioned (Even when it is), or if someone questions a teaching or doctrine that is obviously opposed to the Word of God, they are told “Get Out... Go find another church.” They, labeled as Troublemakers, they are, expelled from fellowship! Do any of you sense something wrong here? To those reading this who may have been afraid to say something about any of these issues I have mentioned or perhaps other issues, you can thank me later for saying what you are afraid to say, or perhaps you’ve been inspired to voice your own opinions or concerns.

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Churches are enduring the same situation we see in the secular world... one side has to do all the tolerating being told to shut up or leave, while the other side (which is really causing more harm than good) gets their way. Step one is to know why you believe what you believe. This is something that too many people neglect these days... too many people simply go along with the crowd without truly knowing what the crowd is really saying or where it is headed. Too many people are becoming afraid to even question what they are told for fear of ridicule or rejection. It is time to stand up to the things which may be harming the message of the Gospel, it is time for the Church to once again stand up for the truth. All said and done, the Church must be as tolerant towards its members concerns... at least as much as it is towards being tolerant, or politically correct to those outside of the church. Take another look at the definitions of Tolerance... are your attitudes and reactions reflected in those definitions? *Selah*