

**Tolerance and Intolerance Part 1**  
**Critical Spirit or Message from God**  
**By Wayne Vasilenko**

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*"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**

The quote above says it all! Of course this doesn't only apply to books but also opinions and beliefs as well. We hear a lot about "Tolerance" these days; 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. Let me begin by 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, everyone should agree that we indeed should be tolerant of others, after all there is an abundance of thoughts and opinions concerning just about everything in the world. However, one thing that is often overlooked is that true tolerance is a "Two Way Street" to coin an old phrase. If I tolerate you, then you must tolerate me! That sounds fair to me... how about you? While tolerance is preached far and wide both in the secular and religious realms, there seems to be a problem... intolerance! In the political realm, there is what we call the political left and the political right. They are, as the terms imply, opposites in most cases as they relate to moral, social, and governmental issues. While it is not a "qualifier" so to speak, most Christians are considered to be on the political right while more non-Christian people seem to gravitate towards the political left. People on the right for the most part favor traditional Judeo-Christian values and Capitalism, while most people on the left tend to favor more Progressive or Humanistic values, they also tend to favor Socialism and in some cases Communism, which is by nature Atheistic. While I personally favor the right, I also 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. As I think about this, 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 however, we would have in depth discussions almost daily concerning our differences, and those discussions were always civil. Although we almost always disagreed, we remained friends and respected each other's right to have a different opinion.

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This is how it should be! We agreed to disagree *in the true spirit of tolerance*. Despite the constant call for tolerance in modern society, currently the people of the U.S. are experiencing the opposite, **intolerance** as I previously mentioned, and they are experiencing it to the extreme. In fact intolerance is becoming so prevalent and extreme that it is even finding its way into the Church and most people don't even realize it! You might be wondering how intolerance is finding its way into the church so let me explain.

But first I want to tell you of one of the most unforgettable things that I have ever 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: "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 risk, I just wanted to say I always respected you for that." You see, I was known to be what another supervisor once called me... "A loose cannon." It's not that I was a trouble maker, 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." 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 themselves to anyone, concerning anything... It is a right supported by law. *Note: There are some limits concerning "Freedom of Speech" and also in situations where one pledges to follow lawful orders without question such as in the military.* But 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 are even being physically assaulted when it comes to political 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. Censorship... in the name of Tolerance!

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

**Pastors and Church Leaders... Pay Attention... Listen up!**

Over the past 5 or 8 years, I sat in two separate church services and was shocked as two different Pastors told their congregations, "If you don't like what we do 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 someone who calls themselves Christian. Contrary to popular beliefs, Christians are in fact the most tolerant religious group in the world! 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. But I submit that there are some people that have legitimate concerns, and are simply trying to point out some things that may have an adverse

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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” is indeed set in their ways, and many are indeed Dogmatic or Legalistic, but there are some other things to consider. First of all, is it possible that the Holy Spirit inspired that person to bring out or question something that might be harming others in the congregation? Perhaps God sent that person to that particular church to help with a need or shortcoming! For example, a church may be struggling to inspire fellowship and God sent someone there with 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 is kicked out the door! In the verse below we are instructed to “Pursue Peace.” In other words, show tolerance and 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 think about! (*Selah*)

**Hebrews 12:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> 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 them to take a hike and find another church? Was it ever considered that maybe the music is too loud? When you see people 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 done, it just might be... a little too loud! My wife and I visited one church 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 a sermon, perhaps one they “needed to hear” because they too couldn’t stand the volume level in the room? 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 any of the congregation but a place of 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*) 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!

### Another example of one-sided tolerance

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 now being labeled in many 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?

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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)**

<sup>9</sup> *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. In too many churches, congregations are taught to 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 are labeled as Troublemakers! Do any of you sense something wrong here? To those reading this who may have been afraid to say something about any of the 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. 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**