

THE OAKWOOD ROAD

CONTENDER

"...exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith..."

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RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

The religious world today is crying out for tolerance. Wherever we turn we hear the pleas of denominational leaders for tolerance and consideration of others' views. This is a little peculiar in one sense and yet it makes a lot of sense in another way. We certainly need tolerance today, but sometimes the most intolerant are those who preach tolerance. If one does not choose to practice their brand of tolerance, they can become the most intolerant of all!

Tolerance means "allowance of that which is not wholly approved." If we take this to mean that we allow freedom of religion, we say this is fine and good. If we take this to mean that we must become involved in something which is contrary to Bible principles, we say this is evil and bad. Notice what Paul says about those who will change their preaching: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Galatians 1:8). Now, some would say that Paul was intolerant, but let us notice a few things about toleration in the following study.

Tolerance does not mean approval. Paul condemns those who approve of an ungodly practice, whether or not they themselves actually participate (Romans 1:32). This means we do not have to practice some ungodly act to be condemned; we might just "have pleasure in them that do them." We can be tolerant in religious matters, but that does not involve our approval of things that do not suit our Lord.

Tolerance does not involve an obligation of silence. When denominations do that which is not pleasing to the Lord, in order for us to be tolerant, some propose that we be silent. But tolerance does not call for such as that. Notice that Peter tells us to be ready to give an answer to every man that asks concerning the hope we have as Christians (1 Peter 3:15). Paul, when seeing Peter act unworthy, rebuked him to his face (Galatians 2:11). Jesus told us to go to our brother who had sinned against us, and tell it to him (Matthew 18:15-17). Paul told the elders at Ephesus that he had declared unto them the whole counsel of

God (Acts 20:27). Religious tolerance does not demand that we be silent. Some religious leaders would have it that way, but if we please Jesus, we sometimes are obligated to speak out against error.

Tolerance does not deny the right to object. Even in matters of judgment, we have the right to object. If something is being done in such way as to involve more expense, we have the right to voice an objection. We do not have the right to be objectionable, causing a fuss and furor to the point of division; but we can object kindly and lovingly, still exercising tolerance.

Tolerance does not demand our participation. One way to be tolerant is without taking part in that which would be against one's convictions. Tolerance does demand that we be loving (I Corinthians 16:14), gentle and meek (2 Timothy 2:23-25). We need more of

such among Christians today. We need folks who will not approve of ungodly and questionable practices, but who will rather go and voice a kind and loving objection in meekness and fear. If such folks choose not to hear our objections and heed them, we cannot force them to comply with our beliefs.

Let the denominational world take heed that sometimes they are the intolerant ones. They preach their own brand of tolerance, but just let some Christian disagree, and one will see almost unimaginable intolerance! Let us be careful to preach and practice tolerance pleasing to our Lord.

- Ray Lanier Jr.

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DAILY BIBLE READING

February 5	Leviticus 16-18
February 6	Leviticus 19-21
February 7	Leviticus 22-24
February 8	Leviticus 25-27
February 9	Numbers 1-3
February 10	Numbers 4-7
February 11	Numbers 8-10

NEWS AND NOTES

Next week we will finish our study of the book of Galatians. Read through the book again and see the gospel as it presented in the book. We will follow that up with "Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ."

Continue studying in Leviticus and begin looking at Numbers for our Wednesday Bible Study period.

Use the cards of the Big Picture of the Bible to initiate personal Bible studies.

Remember the website; be using it as a teaching tool. Mention it to your friends and family and have them listen to the lessons ore red the bulletins

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