

What Does the Bible Teach About Intolerance?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction: Rom. 15:1-7

A. Originally titled: Intolerance and Sound Faith are not the Same Thing

1. Beginning in Romans 13, Paul wrote about how to relate to others around us; we are to love each other, accept each other, and serve each other.
2. The difficulty is in how much we are to tolerate differences between us, especially in matters dear to us. How can I be sound in the faith and be in fellowship others who differ from me?
3. How many ways can we differ from each other? How many people are there in this room?
 - a. Now, how many matters exist in which God has granted liberty?
 - b. Multiply the first number times the second to get the answer.
4. Our differences are a blessing.
 - a. It creates pressure to study and share our understanding (hothouse plants vs. hardened off plants).
 - b. It gives us opportunities to practice love and fellowship.
 - c. It makes life interesting; if everyone were the same, this would be a boring world. In an orchestra, there are many instruments making different sounds, but together create beautiful music.

B. Tolerance is in fashion today

1. If a person is openly homosexual, or promiscuous, or substance abuser, or outspoken atheist, then the rest of the world is supposed to honor them and encourage their lifestyle. This is what the world means by tolerance.
2. There are some things that can't be tolerated.
3. However, just as the Lord loves every soul and retains His righteousness, so as His children, we can love every soul and remain sound in the faith.

I. THE DUTY OF TOLERANCE

A. Rom. 15:1-2 - "Ought" introduces the condition of obligation.

1. Paul has been drawing a contrast between the believer who is mature in Jesus and understands his liberty in Christ and the believer who has not reached that level of maturity and does not feel free to live in liberty.

B. Live a crucified life - Rom. 15:1

1. "Bear" is the same word used in John 19:17, Jesus bearing His cross.
 - a. Gal. 6:2 - Bear the burdens of our brother.
 - b. Connotes self-denial and self-sacrifice. When Jesus went to the cross, He laid aside His rights for us.
2. The contemporary world and creeping into the Lord's church is that most people are self-oriented to an extreme to the extent that they cannot see the needs of others.

3. If you want to be a mature, faithful, and true Christian, you will accept that there will be times when you will voluntarily lay aside your personal rights and privileges, comfort and convenience for the sake of others weaker in the faith than you are. There will be times when you must deny self so that the church as a whole may prosper.
- C. Live a constructive life - Rom. 15:2
 1. Paul is not saying that we should live to please everybody. If you do that you will soon learn that it is just not possible to please anyone.
 2. He is not teaching that we should compromise our standards just to make someone happy.
 3. He is not advocating pleasing everyone at any cost.
 4. Paul is saying that we are to live the kind of lives that build others up.
 - a. Rom. 14:19; 1Cor. 10:23; 1Thes. 5:11

II. THE DEMONSTRATION OF TOLERANCE

- A. Rom. 15:3-4 - Jesus and others showed the way.
- B. What did Jesus do? - 1Peter 2:21
 1. He left Heaven - Phil. 2:5-8
 2. He suffered poverty - Matt. 8:20
 3. He was reproached, hated, and rejected by those He came to save - John 1:11
 4. Even His own family refused to believe in Him - John 7:5.
 5. Ultimately, He was nailed to a cross and died there for a people who hated Him, so that they might live.
 6. The question is: are we willing to manifest the spirit of Christ toward the lost and toward brethren who differ from us?
 7. It is either be like Christ or be lost in Hell; there are no other choices.
 8. John 4:34; John 8:29; Rom. 12:1; Heb. 12:2-4
- C. The encouragement of the scriptures
 1. When Jesus was tempted, He used the Word of God - Matt. 4:1-11.
 2. When He was on the cross, He quoted the Scriptures three times - Matt. 27:46; John 19:28; Luke 23:46.
 3. When difficult days come, and they will, you can go to the word of God and find help and strength to make it through.
 4. No one ever said that the Christian life was an easy life. However, it is not an impossible life.
 5. When you spend time with the word of God, it shows all over you.
 6. When you spend very little time with it, it shows all over you. You become critical, mean spirited, intolerant, and hard to get along with.

III. THE DELIGHT OF TOLERANCE

- A. In the closing verses, Paul uses a word four times: "one."
 1. A congregation is not great because of its buildings, the number of people that attend, or the amount of money in the offerings, or the beautiful singing or quality preaching.

2. What makes a congregation great in glorifying God is “unity.”
 - a. John 17:20-21
- B. Produces a unity of purpose - “likeminded.”
 1. One in purpose. Everything the early church did revolved around bringing men to faith in Jesus Christ.
 2. When the local church stops arguing over the color of the carpet, what kind of hymnal to use, who did or did not this or that, and get our focus back on the primary task of the church, that of winning souls, we will see the Lord bless the local church and the local church will glorify Him.
 3. If saving souls was why Jesus came to this world, then saving souls is our first and foremost work - Luke 19:10; John 18:37
- C. Produces a unity of praise
 1. Have you ever sung “I love To Tell The Story” while thinking, “There is no way that I am going to stick my neck out and be embarrassed.”
 2. I constantly try to think of ways to motivate Christians in the spiritual doldrums to go out and do the Lord’s work; yet, you have been saved and blessed by God to the extent that you should be on fire to share it with others; so much so, that I should be trying to calm you down enough to keep you from running out the door to find someone to teach.
 3. It is a great thing to come in here to worship, but it is equally great when we leave the assembly to serve.
- D. Produces a unity of practice
 1. When we love each other in spite of our Divinely approved differences, we will learn to look at one another as the Lord did when He saved us from our sins.
 2. When we came to Jesus in faith and obedience, He accepted us just as we were. “Just As I Am”
 3. It must be the same way in His church.

Conclusion:

A. The invitation of our Lord is offered to everyone. You can come to Christ if you are junior high or senior citizen, if you are skinny as a rail or round as a barrel, wearing a suit or bib overalls, long hair, short hair, black, brown, blonde, or even blue hair, skin pale pink or deep brown, every level of education, every level of income, any nation, speech, and custom, Democrat, Republican, Independent, socialist, communist, anarchist, religiously and morally adept, or entirely new to spiritual matters... none of this has any bearing on the invitation of our Lord.

B. Do you believe the word of God? Will you obey the Gospel? Those are the only factors the Lord considers.

C. Would to God that all of His professed people limited their considerations to those two factors as well.