

When Tolerance Is Sin

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of godly intolerance in standing against evil and false teachings, and warns against the dangers of ungodly tolerance that condones deceit and unrighteousness.

Scripture: Matthew 23:1

Topics: "Godly Intolerance", "Confronting Falsehood"

Description

William MacDonald emphasizes that while tolerance can be a virtue, it becomes sinful when it leads to silence in the face of blasphemy and dishonor towards God. He critiques the modern church for its complacency and willingness to accept false teachings, highlighting the need for godly intolerance against evil and heresy. MacDonald references biblical figures like Jesus, Paul, and John, who were unafraid to confront falsehood and call out sin by name. He warns against the dangers of prioritizing popularity over truth, urging believers to contend earnestly for their faith. Ultimately, he calls for a return to a bold stance against moral compromise in the church.

Transcript

Tolerance can be a virtue, but it can also betray an inexcusable weakness of character. We admire the person who tolerates differences where no great issue is at stake. He allows for a variety of preferences, methods and unimportant viewpoints. He would rather be killed for a sheep than for a lamb.

But there is another tolerance that is despicable. This is the willingness to remain silent when God's name is blasphemed or when Christ is dishonoured. It is the treachery of silence when truth is on the scaffold. It is the unwillingness to speak out against evil. Tolerance that condones deceit and unrighteousness is sin.

Those who think that Jesus was always tolerant should read Matthew 23, a denunciation of hypocrisy. This passage proves forever that our Lord was capable of scathing indignation at the pretence of religious leaders. Or they should read Revelation 2:20 where He condemned the church in Thyatira for tolerating a woman teacher named Jezebel.

Paul too was intolerant of evil. He even mentioned names, something that is considered unacceptable in evangelical circles today. He delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme (1 Timothy 1:20). He didn't hesitate to single out Hymenaeus and Philetus as false teachers (2 Timothy 2:17) and he denounced Alexander the coppersmith by name for his evil behaviour (2 Timothy 4:14).

John also had the courage to name Diotrephes as one who loved to have the pre-eminence (3 John 9).

It seems that the church today has lost its capacity for godly intolerance. As Robert G Lee said 'We live in a world of invertebrate theology, jellyfish morality, seesaw religion, India rubber convictions, somersault philosophy that tells us what we already know in words which we do not understand'.

The writings of William Barclay are another case in point. Barclay denies the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the miracles of Jesus and His substitutionary atonement. He believes in the eventual salvation of all mankind. Yet his books are sold in the majority of Christian bookstores. He is widely quoted by prominent evangelical leaders. And multitudes of Christians study his books on the specious excuse that 'they contain such valuable background information'. The fact that he is a heretic, a blasphemer and a deceiver is not important. Neither, apparently, is the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A missionary to India was right on target when he wrote 'Toleration has become so tolerant that evil is included in that tolerance. We are in danger of becoming "moral cows in our plump comfortableness".'

It is an ungodly tolerance that has allowed so many pulpits in America to be filled with "false apostles and deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ". Detecting a resemblance to conditions in Elijah's day, J Sidlow Baxter writes 'Such are the people who today, with sickly kindness, will tolerate teachers of errors in our pulpits because they are such smooth-mannered and amiable gentlemen. They would rather allow error to be preached and souls to be deceived than hurt the preacher's feelings. Let Baal be worshipped rather than drought come! Let the cancer kill its victim rather than the cruel surgeon use the knife!...The best thing that could happen to some so-called Christian ministers of today is that they should be denounced in God's name by their hearers'.

It is a sinful tolerance [1] that refuses to castigate a false church system that leads millions to eternal destruction with its perverted gospel. [2] That honours its head as a great evangelist at the same time that he is condemning evangelicals as wolves. [3] That labels God's prophets as divisive when they denounce its idolatry, its mariolatry and its other heresies. [4] That sends converts back into its deadening clutches.

What has happened to the church of the martyrs?

We have an enormous craving for popularity. This is the stuff of which false prophets are made. We have a desire to avoid unpleasantness at all cost. A desire like this keeps us from confronting, from intervening when we should.

We have a distaste for being different. We find it easier to move along with the crowd, to drift with the tide. It is all too easy to remain silent when we are in an adverse theological climate. We are 'slaves who dare not to be right with two or three'.

We have lost the capacity for being angry. We are not easily enough disturbed. We are in the sorry state of having no capacity for indignation. We are experts at putting off decisiveness simply because we don't want to act.

Sometimes we are too blinded by friendship to stand against wrong. When a Christian spoke out against E J Carnell's book 'The Case For Orthodoxy' because it argued against the inspiration of the Scriptures, a friend of the author said 'Well you do not know him personally as I do. He is a gracious gentleman, a godly man'.

Jay Adams was right when he said 'In some circles, the fear of controversy is so great that preachers and congregations following after them will settle for peace at any cost - even the cost of the truth - God's truth. The idea is that peace is all- important. Peace is a biblical ideal...but so is purity. The peace of the church may never be bought at the price of the purity of the church. The price is too dear'.

Ecumenism and catholicity are two great buzzwords today. Let's all get together. Don't do or say anything to rock the boat. Doctrine divides, they say. What we need is unity.

What we really need is to contend earnestly for the faith in a day when it is being attacked, diluted and denied. We will be tolerant in matters of indifference but intolerant of departure from the truth of God. With Luther, 'Here we stand. We can do no other'.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/when-tolerance-is-sin/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net