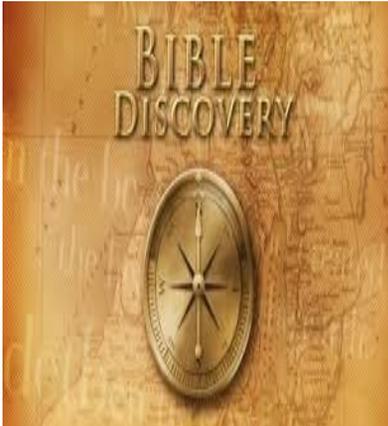


The Religion of Tolerance

Part 2 of 2



Such a life as we're called to in Christ comes with understanding we'll always be peculiar to this world in which we live – we'll be different; distinct from the world around us. As much as we learned from Paul last week in his message to Timothy to remain to our first love in Christ, remembering *"The goal of this command is love...which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"* [1 Timothy 1:5], recognizing, God continuously *"conforms us to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which He has entrusted to (us)"* [1 Timothy 1:11], Paul's brother in the faith Peter adds much in writing, *"as obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance"* [1 Peter 1:14] The KJV uses the phrase, *"not fashioning yourselves"* which I think is fitting to our world today which pursues the latest fashionable lifestyles and the latest tolerances of behaviour. And the New Century Version (NCV) explains, *"You did not understand, so you did the evil things you wanted"*. [vs. 14b] James, the half-brother of Jesus, who himself lived apart from faith until after Jesus' resurrection, boldly wrote, *"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?"* [James 4:4] So many of us today want to be friends with the world capitalizing on the numerous benefits to be realized by being of the world; we've bought into the great lie that leisure, wealth, power and glory are ours if we're just willing to play the game. But being of the world makes you the enemy of God. There's no middle ground here; failure to make a decision for Christ is making a decision against God. Lest we forget the cost, Jesus Himself, talked about the final judgment and the end of the age. With the end of the age, there's an eternity. Eternity brings either life eternal or everlasting punishment. We have an important choice. God reminds us through the Apostle Peter, *"All your hope should be for the gift of grace that will be yours when Jesus Christ is shown to you"*. [vs.13]

Which then do we choose? Do we pursue the gift of grace that's waiting us as we're with Jesus for all eternity? Or have we chosen to fall for the worldly trap and accept the religion of tolerance. Tolerance is evident in virtually every aspect of modern life. The gay lifestyle, once condemned, is now commonly accepted and even protected by law. Language that would once get your mouth washed out with soap is now common in open society and over the airwaves. Television portrays sexual acts and innuendo that before would be considered criminal. Fornication is no longer called illicit sex; it's considered love without the guilt. Expression of opinion based upon moral standards and religious belief is now classified as "hate speech" subjecting one to possible criminal prosecution. Tolerance is alive and well unless you profess the Christian faith. If you're pursuing Christ, you mustn't voice your opinions unless you're willing to accept the consequences. Such conditions are not as "modern" as we may be led to think. Look with me at verse 18, *"You know that in the past you were living in a worthless way, a way passed down from the people who lived before you."* The day of Peter had the same issues. The point to remember was that though the world, bound by sin, tells you to be free, enjoy life; don't let anybody tell you what you should do, we've been *"saved from that useless life"* bought not with silver or gold which at best is fleeting, but through the precious blood of God's Son, Jesus our Lord and Saviour.

Failure to make a decision for Christ is making a decision against God.

Tolerance isn't just happening in our society around us, tolerance is happening in our own homes. On September 26, 2014 Dr. Paul Kengor, professor of political science and executive director of The Center for Vision & Values at Grove City College in the U.S. noted, "A new survey by Pew Research finds that when it

comes to teaching children, a far higher priority is placed on teaching “tolerance” than teaching religion.” Not only is this *the* priority in our schools here in Ontario with a curricula which permeates every course of study, it’s happening in the homes of our children as well. Did you know our public schools have books for our youngest children depicting “politically correct” families? As parents we must be aware what the school’s putting into our children’s and grandchildren’s hands; and be ready to discuss what they’re confronted with! The Pew survey goes on to report, (*it’s referring to small letter liberal and conservative thinking here rather than political associations*) “Among those who have consistently conservative attitudes across a range of political values, 81% think it is especially important for children to be taught religious faith. Among those with consistently liberal views, just 26% rate the teaching of religious faith as especially important, and only 11% regard it as among the most important child-rearing qualities.” In the U.S. and I question whether Canada would be much different, the survey indicates “a staggering 88 percent of “consistently liberal” Americans list tolerance as their most important value in teaching their children.”

As Christians, we’re called to be holy as our Heavenly Father is holy!

Yes, we’re to show love and compassion for those around us, to tolerate others when they have different beliefs about God. But I think we’re beginning to expect tolerance in return unlike where Jesus teaches at Luke 6:22 saying we’re blessed when others reject us because we follow Him. At Matthew 5:43-48 He says we’re to love our enemies and pray for them. Romans 12:20 says we’re to provide for them. ***We’re not called to play by the world’s rules.*** We’re not expected to respond to intolerance with fear and hate. Instead, we demonstrate the love of Christ dwelling within us because our faith and hope are in God, not in the world.

Many today have abandoned religion because it doesn’t fit their definition of what religion (or God) should be. In running from guilt that comes when in the presence of an Almighty God, they’ve jettisoned Christianity because it doesn’t accord to their worldview. In their pursuit of political correctness and tolerance, they’ve selectively chosen what can be tolerated – and what can’t be. They lock up their meager possessions like Fort Knox and waylay their souls for a mere pittance. When their selective tolerance doesn’t extend to you and your viewpoint, they tell *you* it’s you! You’re against tolerance; you’re against diversity - you “hate!” We shouldn’t fear this since our Lord Jesus prepared us, saying, “*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first*” [John 15:18]? But we shouldn’t expect less than this either. Though the world no longer acknowledges “tolerance” as our Lord has taught us, we can see the difficulties in their definitions because their type of tolerance precludes any personal opinion or belief. Unfortunately, we see this twisted logic making its way into the church leaving us with a kind of cafeteria Christianity, where it’s okay to pick and choose which elements of the faith we like and discarding those we don’t.

So where does that leave you and me?

The church today may seem to be at a crossroads. But Jesus is still the embodiment of love, mercy and grace. Nothing can change that His sacrifice on the cross at Calvary paid the price, once and for all, for our sins if we accept and receive His gift of grace. Jesus demonstrated He loved us while we were still sinners. He set us free from sin and its ugly power over us. In our quest to rationalize our behaviour, let us not forget we follow a risen Saviour who’s set the course for us to follow. As Peter encourages, “*be holy in all you do, just as God, the One who called you, is holy. It is written in the Scriptures: “You must be holy, because I am holy.”* [vs. 15-16] We’re to show love to the people we meet, we’re to long for them to know Jesus and receive forgiveness for their sins, we need not however love the sin in their lives. Did you catch that? Just as Jesus demonstrates, we’re to love the sinner but hate the sin. The Bible says, “*Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.*” [1 Corinthians 13:6]

It’s inevitable the world will call those who believe God and accept His Son Jesus intolerant, but we mitigate any damage by being “intolerant” following the way God tells us to go. First, we hold on to what we believe... “*In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give*

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the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” [1 Peter 3:15] Second, we need to know how to teach what we believe within that gentleness and respect. In doing so we'll “*prepare (our) minds for service and have self-control*” [vs. 13]. In the heat of the moment, faced with personal attack and rejection, it's easy to forget the reason we speak truth. It's not so that we'll be proved right and vindicated, but in the hope that the truth will set another lost soul free. Let us not lose sight that God's not tolerant when it comes to the final judgment but He is certainly patient. . God demonstrates love, mercy and grace throughout His Word and His interaction in our lives through His Spirit. Therefore, let us be prepared to accept those who reject God will reject us as well. Let us not endorse the modern mantra that all religions lead to God nor that truth is a personal construct with everyone's beliefs being equally valid. Jesus is the truth, the way and the life. If we lose that... we're lost indeed with nothing left to offer our dying world.

Blessings,
Pastor Dave

*God demonstrates His patience with
humankind desiring no one is left behind!*