



"This notion that it does not make much difference what a man believes, this notion that doctrine is unimportant and that life comes first, is one of the most devilish errors that are to be found in the whole of Satan's arsenal."

—J. Gresham Machen

04-Sep-09

More on Tolerance

This morning, upon opening the inbox of my email account, I discovered an item declaring that the United States Postal Service has issued a stamp commemorating the Islamic holiday of Ramadan. My first thought was, "Why in [the world](#) have they done this?" The outrage of the person who initiated the email quickly became apparent. He could hardly contain himself, citing the attacks against the World Trade Center, the Marine barracks in Lebanon, the USS Cole, and several others by terrorist enemies, all of whom are faithful to Islam. He drew special attention to the large numbers of Americans killed and wounded in those attacks. These people are at war against us! He wondered how the American government could tolerate this enemy to such an extent that it would honor Islam with a commemorative stamp, yet that same government will not tolerate a monument listing the Ten Commandments on government properties!

The government can do this because many people in governmental positions perceive things far differently than we do. They are misguided by a multicultural value system that posits that all values, regardless of their

source, are equal. Among these elites, absolutism in terms of right and wrong is out, and a system of values that can mean almost anything and everything is in. Instruction from the Ten Commandments and the [Sermon on the Mount](#) is out, while Buddhism, Shintoism, Satan-worship, [witchcraft](#), etc., are considered to have equal or higher moral value.

"Tolerance" has many usages in our culture. It indicates the practice of recognizing and respecting the others' beliefs or practices. It also suggests leeway for variation from a standard, which often occurs in manufacturing when variables make it impossible to produce a part of exact dimensions every time. Thus, it can designate the permissible deviation from a specified dimension. In medicine, it indicates resistance to a poison or the capacity to absorb a medication continuously. It is also used of a person's ability to endure hardship or pain. Its synonyms, depending on the context, are "forbearing," "charitableness," "indulgence," and "lenience."

Tolerance involves some measure of permission, leniency, allowance, or acceptance of deviation from a standard. For example, one can be tolerant and make allowance for a child because he is too young or inexperienced to accomplish an act requiring great skill. We might also overlook the feeble output of an elderly person because he no longer has the strength and energy to work at a high capacity. We also might make generous allowance for an individual who expended a great deal of effort despite not having much to show for his labors.

When we look at belief systems, attitudes, and conduct, however, tolerance becomes a serious issue because it is [God](#) who sets the standards regarding morality. He, more than any human, knows that the wages of [sin](#) is death ([Romans 6:23](#)). Sin is a deviation from His standards ([I John 3:4](#)). How much tolerance does He permit? As recorded in Genesis 3, only one deviation from His standard caused the death penalty to fall on Adam and Eve; thus the Bible says, "There is none righteous, no not one" ([Romans 3:10](#)). All have deviated from God's standards.

At one time, the Protestant world would not tolerate practices having their source in paganism to infiltrate their worship of God. Among these were [Christmas](#) and [Easter](#), as they are so obviously pagan, yet other pagan practices were also not acceptable. These observances began to be tolerated

within their assemblies on a small scale, but today, Christmas and Easter are so respected that they are accepted without question and celebrated with as much enthusiasm as the pagans did in their day. So accepted are they that Christmas-keepers now have to learn to tolerate those who may reject those festivities!

How can something like the acceptance of outright paganism be foisted off on a nominally Christian world that claims to worship [Jesus Christ](#), even though biblical and secular evidence prove the claims are false? How can multiculturalism be foisted off on an entire nation that claims it was a Christian nation from its inception? The blame can be laid right at the feet of [Satan](#), who in turn has worked his deception through unbelieving, deceived men.

His attack on the Western world has taken some time, perhaps more than a century or so. However, his aim was always to blunt the seriousness of sin to human life gradually, while at the same time denigrating and undermining the existence of God and His importance to human well-being. Attacks were made in the churches themselves and schools, but the seeds of these movements were planted in seminaries and universities, the places that supplied the pastors and teachers of those attending churches and schools. Subtle pressure was always applied within the teachings to make those hearing more "tolerant."

Is God tolerant of sin? Does He believe it is right and good that we should be unconcerned whether we commit sin or not? If God is tolerant of sin, then why does He command us to [repent](#)? If God is tolerant of sin, why was it necessary for His Son to die an excruciating death to save us from sin's effects? If God were tolerant of sin, His grace would be unnecessary because He could simply reward us regardless of our behavior. If God were tolerant of our loyalty—so that we are free to give it or deny it at our whim—then why does He demand that we [love](#) Him more than father, mother, sister, brother, and ourselves as well?

This world's churches do not seem to realize they are dancing with the Devil when they make all sorts of worship accommodations to pagan beliefs, attitudes, and practices in order to attract attendance and increase income. "Tolerance" has been twisted to mean "love." In some narrow circumstances,

it indeed can be loving to be tolerant, but it can *never* be biblical love when sin is made to appear to be an acceptable deviation to God. The Christian cannot pursue the love of God and acceptance of the world at the same time. God and the world are moving in totally different directions!

God is intolerant of sin because it is in our best interest that He be so, and that *is* love. It is His will that sin be exposed, confessed by the sinner, and repented of so God can forgive it. It is not to be tolerated for the sake of [peace](#). That sort of "love" is really a form of hatred because it leads those given tolerance and others to their deaths! When [Jesus Christ returns](#), He will rule with a rod of iron. He will [make peace](#) by demanding that sinners either repent or suffer the consequences.

The apostle Paul warns us in [Colossians 2:8](#), "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according Christ." Today's multiculturalism has enveloped the world of morality within its fold and therefore the realm where God sets absolute standards. We cannot afford to permit this God-rejecting, nicey-nice approach to divert us to accepting its standards in regard to morality. That is a sure step into the world rather than escaping it clutches.

- John W. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Sin \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Human nature plays a leading role in the fatal attraction to sin. Though relatively neutral at its inception, human nature is subject to a deadly magnetic pull toward self-centeredness, deceit, and sin (Jeremiah 17:9). By the time God calls us, we are hopelessly ensnared and enslaved by sin. To counteract this deadly pull, we must imitate Christ's standard of active righteousness (going about doing good) as opposed to the Pharisee's more passive righteousness (a meticulous, reactive avoidance of evil). The sins of

omission (the majority of our sins), neglect, and ignorance have the tendency to dissolve when we practice Christ's standard of active righteousness.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Five Teachings of Grace](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The Protestant world presents grace as "free," but nothing could be more costly. It cost our Savior His life! While God bestows grace on those He chooses of His own volition, John Ritenbaugh shows from Scripture that God expects a great deal of effort - such things as continued repentance, spiritual growth, and godly fruit - from His people once they receive it.

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