

EVANGEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

2040 N. WESTRIDGE, WICHITA, KS 67203

(316) 942-5882

E-Mail Address: church@evangelpca.org

Web Page: Http://www.evangelpca.org

Sunday Worship 8:30 AM and 11:00 AM

Senior Pastor: Donald W. Rackley

Associate Pastor: Tim Rackley

July/August

2008

Volume 20 No.7/8

The Limits Of Toleration

Toleration is a virtue applauded not only in the Church but in secular society as well. It is by toleration that society is made possible. When people enter into a relationship it is inevitable that different values, priorities, opinions, tastes and viewpoints will come into conflict.

This is why scripture warns against the contentious spirit and the intolerant mind-set. A contentious spirit is a product of pride and selfishness according to scripture. It is linked to the behavior pattern of the fool and causes much destruction. The Apostle Paul admonishes, "Avoid foolish contentions for they are unprofitable." (Titus 3:9)

The Bible also speaks of tolerance as reflecting the character of God. Components of tolerance are patience, long-suffering and forbearance. Far from being contentious about minor things Christians are to have a spirit of charity which "Covers a multitude of sins."

God clearly calls us to the virtue of tolerance. But it is clear that in certain circumstances tolerance can be sin. The Bible balances its call to tolerance with weighty warnings against ill-advised toleration.

There was confusion in the Church at Corinth regarding tolerance. Paul severely rebuked the Church for tolerating the incestuous man in their midst and insisted that the man be disciplined. The Church had tolerated an intolerable sin. Then when the man repented Paul had to rebuke the Church for refusing to tolerate the repentant sinner. Often Christians behave the same way today, tolerating the sin we shouldn't and refusing to tolerate the repentant sinner when we should.

Jesus rebuked the Church of Pergamum for tolerating the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which Jesus said He hated. This sin was apparently unrestrained indulgence. They were Antinomians.

These incidents indicate that at times tolerance can be sin, serious sin, involving the betrayal of Christ. Toleration has limits. The proverbs warn against the contentious spirit and then declares, "He that justifies the wicked, and he that condemns the just, even they are an abomination to the Lord." (Proverbs 17:15) Toleration does not mean the vindication of evil, nor the oppression of righteousness. But if Christians are to contend, and at times we must or betray Christ, let it be not over trifles lest pride and foolishness prevail.

When Christ is betrayed or denied in His Church the Christian must contend with all his might. Toleration at that point would be treason to our King.

Peace, unity and cooperation are vital ingredients to any happy society. They are precious and are greatly to be sought. But we must never pursue peace at any price. No amount of peace, unity or cooperation is worth the loss of Christ. Let us pray for wisdom to discern the tolerable from that which we must never tolerate. "I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads my bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." (Revelation 2:20) Paul wrote, "Examine everything carefully, hold fast that which is good." (I Thessalonians 5:21)