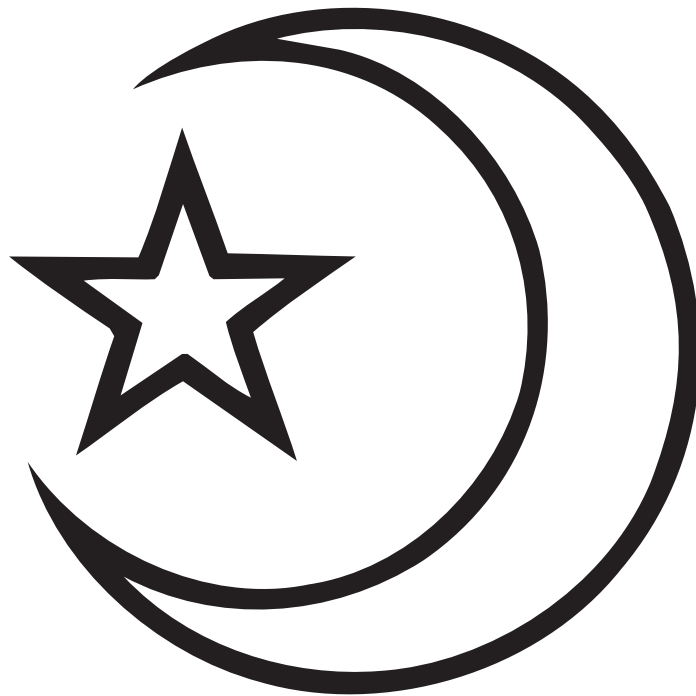


Tolerance Without Sacrificing Conviction



A lecture presented by
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at

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Tolerance Without Sacrificing Conviction

Introduction

- I. Let me begin expressing my profound gratitude for your gracious invitation to be with you today and to have this opportunity to help break down barriers.
- II. We all know the story of Abraham, the one whom God called out of the Ur of the Chaldees and revealed to him the truth of monotheism.
 - A. The depth of his faith was tested when God asked him to offer up his son.
 - B. We can all picture Abraham as he was tested and his faith sustained him.
 - C. His son's life was spared and ransomed by a ram.
 - D. As a result of his faith every Muslim, every Christian and every Jew in the world looks back to the great faith of the Prophet Abraham.
 - E. As you travel in the Middle East, you can hear Arab guides refer to Abraham as *Khalil Allah*, the "friend of God."
 - F. May I say in the very beginning of this lecture that if you are a friend of Abraham then you are my friend as well.
- III. We are going to discuss "Tolerance Without Sacrificing Conviction."
 - A. In American society the word "tolerance" is often abused and confused.
 1. The word "tolerance" is defined as, "The capacity for or the practice of recognizing and respecting the beliefs or practices of others."
 2. However, "tolerance" is often confused with "acceptance," a word which is synonymous with "approval."
 - B. Homosexuals in American society often plead for "tolerance."
 1. If they mean that they want people to treat them with civility and the common courtesy due all members of the human race, then I will gladly grant them their request.
 2. However, what they really want is "acceptance"—they want people of faith to give up their convictions and accept the homosexual agenda.
 - C. We have organizations like Planned Parenthood who claim they want "tolerance" from those of us who believe in the sanctity of human life.
 1. If they are simply asking that no one tries to bomb their clinics or throw blood on the employees, then I am willing to be tolerant—in fact, I would demand it from all who consider themselves to be the children of God.
 2. However, if they mean that I must close my eyes to the fact that a million unborn babies a year in America are ripped from their mother's womb and flushed down the sink or thrown into dumpsters—then I can not give them the "tolerance" they desire.
 3. I will be kind and courteous to them, but I can not "accept" the murder of unborn children.
- IV. Deciding what we should tolerate and what we should abstain from and even oppose has never been an easy task.
 - A. I want to be kind and friendly to every one, whether they be Muslim, Christian, Jew or even an atheist.
 - B. But there are certain things that I can not do or approve of without giving up the very principles by which I live.
 - C. So, how do I decide what to tolerate and what to oppose?

I. Matters Of Conscience In The Bible

- A. The prophet Daniel in king Nebuchadnezzar's court.
1. The Old Testament tells us of a Hebrew prophet named Daniel, who was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and carried into captivity.
 - a) Daniel and his friends were from the tribe of Judah, the royal tribe among the Jews.
 - b) "Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king." (Dan. 1:3-5).
 - c) "Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Beltshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego." (Dan. 1:6-7).
 - d) "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." (Dan. 1:8).
 2. God had spoken concerning idolatry and the eating of unclean foods, but He had not spoken about the names people might call you.
 - a) Therefore, accepting a new name was not a violation of conscience for there was no breach of the Law with Daniel.
 - b) Even in being tutored in the language and learning of the Chaldeans he saw no violation of the Law of God.
 - c) But, his convictions would cause him to firmly and politely refuse to partake of that which would involve him in recognizing any other deity than Jehovah.
 - d) You can not control what people call you, but you can control how you act and react to them.
 - e) People in America often refer to the people of Islam as Mohammedans, a name which I know you do not desire, but sometimes people do this out of ignorance and other times out of animosity.
 - f) But what people call you does not force you to violate your conscience or standard of morality.
 - g) Among those who claim to be Christians you will find a lot of men who love to have religious titles, their favorite being the word "Reverend," a word which means "deserving reverence."
 - h) I have never liked these titles, for the only One whom I regard as "deserving reverence" is God Himself.
 - i) Yet, I often pick up a newspaper and find that someone has put the title "reverend" in front of my name.

3. How did Daniel stand up for his convictions?
 - a) His manner was polite, calm and firm.
 - b) Many people would yield to the surrounding influences and become so relaxed in their new position that they would be as pliable as wax.
 - c) Daniel requested that the prince of the eunuchs not force him to violate his convictions.
 - d) Daniel did not want to pose as a martyr, nor did he take any pleasure in making noise.
 - e) Some people think that heroism is shown by rudeness—but such was not the attitude of Daniel.
 - f) As we read the rest of the account, God brought Daniel into tender favor with the chief of the eunuchs.
- B. Christians in the First Century.
1. Peter and John, two ambassadors of Jesus Christ, were arrested and put on trial before a Jewish court known as the Sanhedrin.
 - a) As they were questioned by the priests, the captain of the temple and Annas the High Priest, the Bible records that these men were amazed “when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).
 - b) For the moment Peter and John were released by their captors, but they were threatened not to speak any more about Jesus Christ.
 - c) The apostles immediately went back to their preaching and were arrested again and put in prison, where an angel of God released them and said, “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:20).
 - d) Early the next morning Peter and John were again found preaching and were again arrested and brought before the Jewish court.
 - e) The High Priest reminded them that they had been strictly commanded not to teach or preach the words of Jesus anymore.
 - f) Peter said, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).
 - g) Peter was respectful and courteous, but his convictions could not be silenced by the threat of violence.
 - h) The Jewish council wanted to kill Peter and John, but on the advice of a Pharisee named Gamaliel the apostles were beaten and released.
 - i) “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).
 2. Peter and John did not respond with violence, for Christianity is neither promoted nor defended by the edge of a sword!
 - a) We have all read of the many atrocities that were committed during what is commonly referred to as “The Crusades.”
 - b) I can not speak for anyone else, but let me plainly say that I firmly believe that any man who picked up a sword in defense of Christianity ceased being a Christian.
 - c) I believe Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, and His cause is not to be advanced by the threat of bloodshed.

3. The apostle Paul wrote to Christians in Rome and reminded them that they were to be obedient to the civil government (Romans 13:1–7).
 - a) These Christians were living the midst of a polytheistic society where the majority of the people were deprived of basic human rights.
 - b) But Christians were to be obedient to the government until that government required of them things which God had prohibited.
 - c) They were even required to pay their taxes to their government and even to pray for it.
 - d) “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim. 2:1–2).
 - e) In the process of time many of these early Christians were put to death by that same government—Nero dipped Christians in oil and set them afire in his garden as torches at night.
 - f) These early Christians were not told to participate in protest marches against the government, nor set up picket lines in front of government office buildings.
 - g) They were to humbly and meekly go about their task—but they were never to give in to violence, nor were they allowed to sacrifice their convictions in the process.

II. **John Alexander Dowie**

- A. I want to make it very plain that I am not here to bash John Dowie, nor to pass eternal judgment upon a man I have never met.
 1. At the same time, I am not here to apologize for Dr. Dowie either.
 2. I believe the sins a person commits can only be forgiven by God, and that during their lifetime.
- B. John Alexander Dowie was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1847.
 1. In 1860 Dowie immigrated to Australia with his uncle to sell shoes.
 2. In 1872 he became a Congregationalist minister in Australia, and in 1878 he became an independent evangelist.
 3. He tried without success to become a member of the Australian parliament, opened a church in Melbourne, fought a bitter struggle against the liquor companies, and was imprisoned for holding open air meetings without permission.
 4. All this only brought more publicity for his work, something for which he hungered throughout his life.
 5. He received an invitation to an international conference on divine healing, which was taking place in 1885 under the leadership of a Methodist preacher in London.
 6. Dowie did not attend, but he sent a letter and proclaimed to the world that within three years he would set out on a “world-wide mission.”

- C. In 1888 he left Australia, went through New Zealand, crossed the Pacific and passed through the Golden Gate at San Francisco, and finally arrived in Illinois in 1890.
1. In 1893 he built a small tabernacle near the World's Fair grounds in Chicago (across from the camp of Buffalo Bill).
 2. "In 1896 Dowie proclaimed: 'The Church must have a business fellowship, a fellowship in getting money, in saving money, and in spending money for Christ.' He had a vision of building an industrial city without any institutional links with sin, disease and poverty. In Zion, Ill., there should be neither liquor stores, theatres, pork abattoirs, doctors nor hospitals; the latter were in any case unnecessary in the holy city. Instead a vast temple for 25,000 people was built, together with an industrial area, particularly for lace making on a co-operative basis." (Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, p. 117).
 3. Dowie set about the task of buying up 6,600 acres of farmland for what would later be known as the City of Zion, Illinois.
 4. On January 1, 1900, Dowie held an all-night meeting in Chicago and unfurled a huge map showing the site that had been purchased.
- D. From 1901 on Dowie seems to have taken on delusions of grandeur.
1. He first of all tried to reintroduce into his church, the Christian Catholic Church, the rank of apostle.
 2. From 1902 he asserted that churches which did not join his Zion were without further hope.
 3. In 1903 he organized large meetings in Madison Square Garden.
 - a) The eight to ten special trains required to transport 3,000 people from Zion cost \$250,000.
 - b) He appeared dressed all in black, with a bodyguard of 1,000 men and a choir of hundreds of girls, all dressed in white.
 - c) But this demonstration in New York was a mistake from the point of view both of finance and propaganda.
 - d) The *New York World* had published unpleasant letters from Dowie to his father, in which Dowie questioned his relationship with his father and this led Dowie to misuse the meeting in New York to defend his own position.
- E. His self-adulation now knew no limits.
1. Nearly every objective historian you can find will say that Dowie's own ego was the major part of his fall.
 2. He is reported to have said, "John the Baptist was — I say in all humility — like me, not proud."
 3. "Dowie demonstrated that acceptance of a charismatic leader's claim to healing power is usually based on the ability of the would-be leader to convince the religious rank and file that he has been specifically and divinely selected to act as God's agent on earth. Dowie's remarkable career showed that the most important literature a faith healer can place in the hands of a potential follower is not a Gospel tract, but an account of his own life, filled with stories of his conversion, visions, miracles and messages from Heaven." (James Morris, *The Preachers*, p. 66).
 4. Dowie wildly exaggerated his healings, and stated in one of his witness meetings more healings were reported than in the whole Bible!

5. In 1901 he started referring to himself as “Elijah the Restorer.”
 6. On September 18, 1904, Dowie appeared on the platform of Shiloh Tabernacle dressed in an ornate robe of white combined with gold, scarlet, and purple to make a garment that might have rivaled that of an oriental potentate, or the Pope.
 7. His new garment required the work of forty women for several months.
 8. His liturgical headdress was of white, gold, and purple and was embroidered with scarlet oriental lilies of the valley and with pomegranates.
 9. On the platform, to one side of his chair, was a small altar, a replica of the altar of incense of the ancient Hebrew temple, and on the other side was a polished brass lectern surmounted by a brass eagle.
 10. It was in this beautiful robe that he was buried in 1907
 11. Dowie took on a new name: John Alexander, First Apostle of the Lord Jesus, the Christ, in the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion.
- F. Out of all the things Dowie is most noted for, I suspect that it was his intolerance which has angered the most people.
1. On June 2, 1901, before an audience of 7000 people at the Christian Catholic Church, Dowie said: “I have the right to stand here and say in Zion you have to do what I tell you! Oh! The whole church — Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Episcopal. It is the most daring thing I ever said. The time has come; I tell you the church universal everywhere, you have to do what I tell you. Do you hear? You have to do what I tell you, because I am the messenger of God’s covenant.”
 2. As most of you know, he wanted to “wipe out” the people of Islam and he grossly misrepresented the religion of Islam in general.
 3. I know that many of you have very strong emotions regarding Dowie’s statements, for without question his words would have to be regarded as blasphemy by any devout Muslim.
 4. However, I would like to remind you of a few things:
 - a) The people of Islam were not the only ones attacked by Dowie— he was just as unkind to Baptists, Methodists, and Catholics alike.
 - b) The truth of the matter is that Dowie would not have welcomed me into his town any more than he would have welcomed you!
 - c) No one who knew Dowie is alive today, and the people at what is now known as Christ Community Church wish you no harm.
 - d) I have many friends in Zion who attend that church, and I have not met an intolerant one among them.

III. Questions Of Tolerance Today

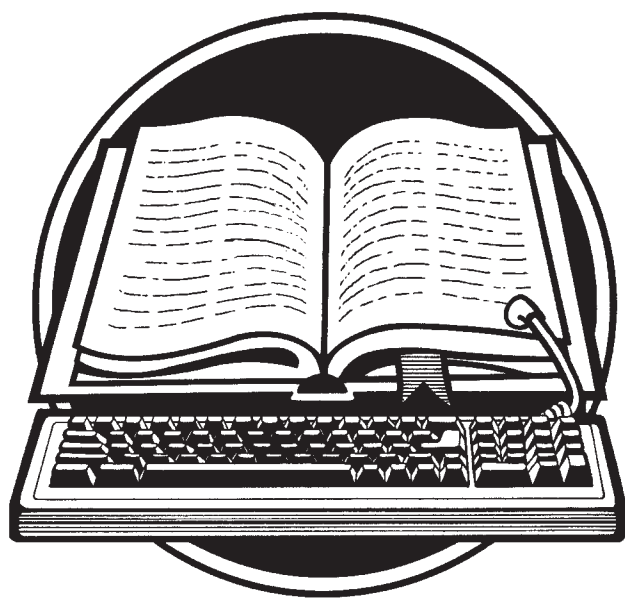
- A. How far does tolerance extend?
1. Reasonable people can disagree without violence.
 2. The meanest people I have ever met are religious people.
 3. More lives have been lost in the name of God than for any other cause in the history of the world.

- B. Over the past 20 years I have held several public religious debates.
1. The debates have been with people who considered themselves to be Christians, but with whom I had disagreements on matters of faith.
 2. The debates were usually held over a period of four nights, with each speaker being given three speeches of 20 minutes each per evening.
 3. If you watched the debates from afar you might wrongly assume that my opponent and I were mad at each other—but you would be wrong.
 4. When our voices are loud, it is not because we are mad or because we are ready to commit acts of violence upon each other.
 5. We are forceful in our presentations because we believe that matters of faith ultimately will determine how the Eternal One of heaven deals with us in the Final Day of Judgment.
 6. I have never questioned the honesty or integrity of my opponents, and I have never used unkind words to describe them personally or to belittle their doctrine.
- C. I have always believed that *truth* has nothing to fear from investigation.
1. If you are my friend, if you are truly concerned about my soul, give me the truth.
 2. Do not fear that the truth will offend me.
 3. Do not treasure our friendship above my soul.
 4. Do not think that by hiding my sins you can help me.
 5. However I might react to it, whatever my attitude may be toward you after you have done it, give me the truth.
 6. For only the truth can make men free from the shackles of sin and lead them into the joys of an eternal reward.
- D. What would happen if a Muslim moved next door to me in Zion?
1. I would greet you warmly, and offer to help you move in.
 - a) In the afternoon, my wife would probably bring some food over to your house and she also would welcome you into our neighborhood.
 - b) After you were settled in to your new home we would probably see each other from time to time working in the yard or shoveling snow.
 - c) I am sure than sometime along the way we would have a conversation in the yard about the weather, or politics, etc.
 - d) In all likelihood, our conversation would probably turn to religious matters—for in eternity, that is all that really matters.
 2. We could spend a lot of time talking about areas of agreement.
 - a) We both believe in the sanctity of human life and abhor the slaughter of the unborn.
 - b) We both believe in the importance and sanctity of the home, and of propriety in all human relationships.
 - c) We both believe that we are obligated by our Creator to pray and to remember the poor with our personal finances.
 - d) We both believe in racial equality and desire that we judge each other by the content of character, not the color of our skin.
 - e) We both believe that God grants to an individual freedom of choice, and through His word leads men to a way of holiness and happiness.
 - f) We both understand that our souls are not destroyed by death.
 - g) We both believe in an Eternal God who will dispense justice in accordance with His laws.
 - h) Our belief in life after death and in a day of judgment helps us to heed God's laws and avoid His prohibitions, fearing His wrath.
 - i) We could spend hours talking about matters we agree upon.

3. However, if we are truly friends, we would want to share our religious convictions, and *inevitably* we would have to talk about our differences.
 - a) We both operate under a set of religious convictions which demands that we teach other people about our God.
 - b) We would do it kindly and courteously, and with civility.
 - c) We would not hurl unkind names toward each other.
 - d) We would not question the honesty or integrity of the other.
 - e) We would not ask each other to give up our convictions merely for the sake of “getting along.”
4. What would we talk about?
 - a) We would have to discuss the nature of God’s revelation to man — is the Bible God’s final revelation to man or is the Koran?
 - b) We both believe in the virgin birth of Christ, but how did He die? Was He really crucified for the sins of mankind?
 - c) Did the Old Testament foretell the coming of the prophet Mohamed?
 - d) Does the gospel of John refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit to the apostles or to the coming of the prophet Mohamed?
 - e) These questions could be discussed in a public forum and would show to the world the Christians and Muslims can discuss their differences, maintain their convictions, exhibit tolerance and be friendly all at the same time!

Conclusion

- I. Let us not judge each other by extremists.
 - A. All too often people try to judge an entire race or group in society by a few misfits who like to see their names in the newspaper.
 - B. I do not seek to be represented by any other group of people—I would like you to examine what I teach in the light of Scripture.
- II. People of goodwill will truly have “Love for all and hatred toward none,” for love for our Creator must be shown by love for His creation!



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