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# BIBLE TALK

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This week the question is: ***What does the Bible say about religious intolerance?***

Is it wrong to be intolerant concerning religious matters? Should Christians decide to tolerate each and every belief and practice that men may invent? What does the Bible say about this?

## **SOME MATTERS REQUIRE TOLERANCE**

### **FIRST: SOME religious matters require tolerance.**

There are ***some*** matters that God did not specifically address in the Bible and are matters of indifference.

#### **Romans 14:1-5**

- 1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.
- 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.
- 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.
- 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.
- 5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

The Bible clearly teaches that there are some religious matters that are neither right, nor wrong within themselves. These are matters of liberty. Two examples are given:

- Whether to eat meat, including pork, or whether to eat only vegetables is a matter of liberty and requires tolerance.
- Whether one person wants to "esteem one day above another" or not is likewise a matter of liberty and requires tolerance.

If you are interested, read the entire chapter of Romans 14 and you will see that certain matters involving the Christian's life are matters of liberty and require tolerance.

## **INTOLERANCE ON OTHER MATTERS**

**SECOND: Some matters are matters of faith and no tolerance can be exercised.**

It is foolish to think that every religious matter is of equal importance. Some matters are of greater importance and although we may show tolerance in some areas, there comes a point when tolerance can be given no longer!

To the scribes and Pharisees Jesus said:

### **Matthew 23:23**

23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted *the weightier matters of the law*, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Concerning "weightier matters" there can be no tolerance. When the Bible specifically says what to believe, or what to do, it is wrong to believe anything differently, or to do anything differently!

To illustrate:

### **Ephesians 4:4-6**

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;  
5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Listen to this passage carefully! There are some things that are so clearly taught that we cannot exercise toleration to the slightest degree.

This passage clearly teaches:

**(1) *There is only one God.*** There can be no tolerance on this point. Mormons and other religious people who teach a multiplicity of gods cannot be tolerated. Their doctrine must be challenged and refuted and shown to be the error that it is.

**(2) *There is only one Lord.*** There can be no tolerance here. Jesus is that one Lord, He is equal with His Father and together they form one God (Jn 10:30). "Jehovah's Witnesses" and others who deny the deity of Christ cannot be tolerated. Their doctrine must be exposed for what it really is -- the "doctrines and commandments of men" (Mt 15:9).

**(3) *There is only one Spirit.*** This is the Holy Spirit. He is a divine person who, together with the Father and Son, forms the form the One God. He can hear and speak (1 Tim 4:1). He it was that guided the apostles into all truth by what He taught them (Jn 14:26). There can be no tolerance on this point! "Jehovah's Witnesses" who deny the personality of the Holy Spirit cannot be tolerated.

**(4) *There is only one body.*** Now ... this begins to strike closer to home for a lot of people. The body is the church (Eph 1:22-23). This means there is only one church. The Lord did not build, nor authorize his people to build various denominations. When the Baptists, the Methodists, the Pentecostals, or any other denomination teaches that "one church is just as good as another" they are wrong and there can be absolutely no tolerance shown. There is only one church -- the Lord's church! If you are not a member of the Lord's one church, we would invite you at the end of this message to leave your name and number and we will be glad to study with you about His one church.

**(5) *There is only one baptism.*** We can show no more tolerance on this point than we can on the deity of Jesus, or the existence of only one God. There is only one baptism that is acceptable and there is only one baptism that is required for salvation. It is immersion in water (Jn 3:5) in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19) and it must be "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). When the Baptist church, or Methodist church, or any other church teaches that baptism is not necessary, this cannot be tolerated. When Pentecostal churches teach that Holy Spirit baptism is just as good, or more important than immersion in water for remission of sins, this cannot be tolerated either. It is a time to debate and refute these doctrines, not a time for toleration.

**(6) *There is only one faith.*** This refers to the revealed faith, or the revealed book of faith (the holy Scriptures) which was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). There can be no tolerance for any other religious books. The "Holy Quran" of the Moslems, the "Book of Mormon," the decrees of the Pope, nor any other so-called "holy oracles" can be tolerated. None of them were given by God. None of them can be accepted as authoritative, or as holy scripture -- only the sixty-six inspired books of the Holy Bible can be accepted as authoritative Scripture.

## SUMMARY

In summary, when God has clearly indicated that a matter is a *liberty* we must be tolerant with one another. We must be willing to allow men and women to freely practice that which God has given them the liberty to practice.

On the other hand, when God has clearly revealed there is only one way to believe, or practice something, there can be no tolerance given. When men, or women teach, or practice something different than what is clearly taught in the Holy Bible, it is a time for debate and refutation, not a time to show tolerance.