

# The Sin of Tolerance

*by Bryan Gibson*

Tolerance is often seen as a good thing, but it's NOT—if we're talking about tolerance of sin. It's impossible to hate something (sin) and be tolerant of it at the same time (Hebrews 1:9; Psalms 119:104). The truth be told, it is a sin to tolerate sin—to put up with it, to not do anything about it, to become comfortable with it, to not speak out against it. To tolerate sin is to insult the very purpose for which Jesus died (1 John 3:4-8; Titus 2:11-14).

Divorce (without Scriptural cause—Matthew 19:9), adultery, sex before marriage, homosexuality, gambling, wickedness in places of authority, false religions, profanity, covetousness, lukewarmness, selfishness, dishonesty, immodesty, etc. Have we become tolerant of these things? Perhaps their prevalence has made us sort of numb to these things, and when that happens, we begin to tolerate them in others, and before too long, we tolerate them in ourselves. What we should be instead is intolerant—of all these things, because they are all sin.

## **What Intolerance Does NOT Mean**

It does NOT mean the spirit of James and John, when they wanted to command fire to come down from heaven and consume the Samaritans (Luke 9:53-56). Love, mercy, compassion, longsuffering—we don't throw these virtues out the window just because we're intolerant. We don't want anyone to perish; we want them to repent (2 Peter 3:9).

It does NOT mean we resort to carnal tactics—"the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God..." (2 Corinthians 10:4). And that mighty weapon is the gospel, "the power of God to salvation" (Romans 1:16), so let's get busy teaching it—patiently, and in all its fullness.

It does NOT mean we forget our own sins. Remember, intolerance of sin also applies to us, and remember, too, that it's hypocritical to point out others' sins, while ignoring our own. "Showing all humility to all men" (Titus 3:3)—it's much easier to do that when we remember that we've got some repenting to do, too.

## **What Intolerance Does Mean**

It means being more careful what we allow into our minds (Proverbs 4:23), because a steady diet of these things is often what leads to tolerance.

It means working diligently to keep sin out of our own lives (Hebrews 12:4). How could we do otherwise, if we truly hate it, if we understand that Jesus came to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8)?

It means speaking out against sin, like the Old Testament prophets, like John the Baptist (Mark 6:17-18; Luke 3:7-20), like Jesus, and like all the New Testament apostles and prophets, who spoke with the authority of Jesus, both in their preaching and writing. Read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and then read the letters of Jesus to the seven churches of Asia (Revelation

2-3). See if you think Jesus was the least bit tolerant of sin. He spoke out against hypocrisy (Matthew 23), deceit (Mark 7:22); covetousness (Luke 12:15), lukewarmness (Revelation 3:16), lewdness (Mark 7:22), adultery (Matthew 5:27-32), divorce (Matthew 19:3-12), pride (Luke 18:9-14), false teaching (Matthew 16:12; Revelation 2:14-15), and everything else that is opposed to the will of God (Matthew 7:23).

Jesus doesn't tolerate sin, and neither should His disciples.