

Sloppy Tolerance

I heard a lady say, "I believe in all religions, and whatever works for you is fine with me. That sounds very tolerant, but it is sloppy at best. If you carry that idea to its logical conclusion then you will have to admit that the Bible and its teachings stand on an even plane with everything in Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Communism, etc. They are all equally true. There is nothing to choose between them. They are all of equal value. If that be the case then none of them is of any value. It means that we can know nothing about religion.

Where would we be in science or politics, or any other field, if we followed such sloppy reasoning? You know the answer to that as well as I. One idea is as good as another? Don't make me laugh...or cry!

I know one thing. Jesus did not believe in that kind of tolerance. If He had, He would never have attacked the religious leaders of his day.

There is as much difference between truth and falsehood as there is between daylight and dark. And saying that they are one and the same does not make it so.

Jesus Christ declared that God's Word is the truth (John 17:17), and that He is the truth (John 14:6). He promised His disciples that when the Spirit came they would be guided into all truth (John 16:13). He further stated that in knowing the truth we would be made free (John 8:32). It is that truth which I am interested in, and not "your" truth or "my" truth.

I keep remembering that one of these days God "will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth" (Ps.96:13).

- by John Gibson

You Can Understand the Bible for Yourself

One of the greatest misconceptions about the Bible is that it is a locked book. The average person is believed to be shut out from comprehending its message. It is thought to be too mysterious, too difficult for the common man or woman to understand.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The apostle Paul was one of the individuals who was chosen to write down the message of Christ for the New Testament. The word of Christ was revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit. The gospel had been hidden for years like a mystery, but it was now being unveiled for all to see and know. Speaking of the gospel, Paul wrote, "how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in a few words, by which when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)," (Ephesians 3:3-4).

The Bible was not written to stump man or frustrate him in any way. Certainly there are sections of it that are challenging and even parts that leave most of us at a loss as to what it is about. Yet, the vast majority of what is found in the Bible is understandable for anyone.

God's supreme intelligence makes the Bible understandable. He knows how we reason and communicate and He has constructed it in such a way that we can comprehend it. It is filled with narrative, illustrations, and colorful language that makes it easier for us to relate to what is being said. Though He is so far above us, God has always been able to connect with man if man was willing to listen.

You don't have to have some special teacher to unlock the secrets of the Bible for you. You may benefit from another's assistance, but you can read the Bible for yourself. You do, however, have to make an effort and invest some time into studying the Bible in order to understand it. Like learning anything new, you will struggle at first. Yet, if you are committed and stick to it, you will soon begin to see it come together. You will discover that the Bible is fascinating and enlightening. You will find that it is understandable and that it is the word of eternal life (John 6:63).

- by Phillip Mullins

Religious Pragmatism

Occasionally, especially when discussing politics, we'll hear someone described as a "pragmatist." What this means is that the fellow's main operating rule is "do whatever it takes." His standard for judging whether a thing is good or not is: "Does it work?" All that matters to him is

getting the desired result - it doesn't matter how he gets it. If he gets re-elected, if his campaign contributions keep coming in, then everything is "good." Never mind that promises have been broken, questionable tactics employed, even laws violated. The pragmatist isn't concerned with such details and technicalities.

There is clearly a growing trend toward pragmatism in religion. It is that philosophy which says "the end justifies the means." All around us we see the signs of it. Many denominations have been following this approach for decades. Now, even among churches of Christ we see it. Some of our brethren have become completely consumed in the quest for "results."

We all want to see the church grow. We long to see lost souls converted. How can we achieve these goals? The pragmatist says "do whatever it takes." If this means changing the scripturally authorized work and worship of the church, he is willing to do so. Go ahead, add instrumental music - people like it, and even expect it, so let's have it. Let women take a leading role in preaching and conducting the services -- after all, this is the trend in the world, and we've got to adjust to it if we want to "keep up." And, we need to add recreation and entertainment to draw the young people; social services to entice people with special "needs," etc., etc.

There's no stopping place for the religious pragmatist. As he continues his work we will see the church go farther and farther away from the truth taught in God's word. Instead of pragmatism, we need to demand a "thus saith the Lord" for all we do and teach (Col. 3:17).

- by Greg Gwin