

Pluralism & Tolerance

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Introduction

During an interview with evangelical pastor Rick Warren that was broadcast on Christmas Eve, Piers Morgan, the controversial journalist and CNN television host, once again stroked the flames of controversy, asserting that both the Bible and the U.S. Constitution are “inherently flawed” and need new “amendments.”

Morgan declared, “Both the Bible and the Constitution were well intentioned but they are basically, inherently flawed. Hence, the need to amend it. My point of view about gay-rights, for example, [is that] it’s time for an amendment to the Bible. You should compile a new Bible.”

Warren responded, “Uh, no. Not a chance! What I believe is flawed is human opinion, because it constantly changes. In fact, we do it ever eight years in America. We have a change in opinion. What was hot is now not. I willingly admit that I base my world-view on the Bible, which I believe is true. My definition of truth is: if it’s new, it’s not true. If it was true a thousand years ago, it will be true a thousand years from today. Opinion changes, but truth doesn’t.” Morgan replied, “We are going to agree to disagree on that.”

[Source: “Now Piers Morgan tells Americans the Bible is ‘flawed’ (and he doesn’t think much of their US constitution either),” *Mail Online*, 27 December 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2253902/Now-Piers-Morgan-says-Bible-flawed.html>]

While Mr. Morgan’s comments are extreme and inflammatory, they are by no means unusual. Many accept his underlying premise. Political progressives view the Constitution as a living document, subject to the shibboleths of each successive generation. Religious liberals view Sacred Scripture in a similar light.

In one sense, Piers Morgan’s statement is more honest than some of his compatriots. He acknowledges that the Bible, as written and received, does not endorse gay marriage. Similarly, his comments about the Constitution acknowledge that current efforts to deny law-abiding citizens the right to bear arms is a violation of the Second Amendment. Thus, Mr. Morgan believes that both the Bible and the Constitution need to be amended, so that they will conform to the contemporary mindset.

This incident provides a useful occasion to examine the concepts of pluralism and tolerance. Is it true, as many assert, that all beliefs are equally valid, and that we should manifest a tolerance for

all beliefs? Is truth defined by each individual? Does it make any difference what we believe and practice?

What is meant by pluralism? While the word can have a variety of meanings, in this discussion, it refers to the philosophical “theory that there are more than one or more than two kinds of ultimate reality” (Webster) or “a theory or system that recognizes more than one ultimate principle” (Oxford). Citizens of the United States have long been blessed to live in a nation where diverse ethnic, racial, religious and social groups can peacefully coexist. While we enjoy freedom of religious thought and expression, this does not mean that all are equally valid, at least in the eyes of God, and according to the standard of divine revelation.

What is meant by tolerance? Again, the word has several meanings, but here it refers to “sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one’s own” (Webster) or “the ability, willingness, or capacity to tolerate something” (Oxford). Again, we are blessed with various freedoms (i.e., assembly, speech and religion). However, this does not mean that truth is relative or self-defined.

Relevant Definitions

English

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines pluralism as “(1) the holding of two or more offices or positions (as benefices) at the same time; (2) the quality or state of being plural; (3) theory that there are more than one or more than two kinds of ultimate reality; a theory that reality is composed of a plurality of entities; (4) a state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain an autonomous participation in and development of their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization; a concept, doctrine, or policy advocating this state.”

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines pluralism as “(1) a condition or system in which two or more states, groups, principles, etc. coexist; a political theory or system of power-sharing among a number of political parties; (2) Philosophy a theory or system that recognizes more than one ultimate principle; (3) the practice of holding more than one office or Church benefice at a time.”

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines tolerance as the “(1) capacity to endure pain or hardship: *endurance, fortitude, stamina*; (2) sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one’s own; the act of allowing something: *toleration*; (3) the allowable deviation from a standard; especially: the range of variation permitted in maintaining a specified dimension in machining a piece; (4) the capacity of the body to endure or become less responsive to a substance (as a drug) or a physiological insult with repeated use or exposure; relative capacity of an organism to grow or thrive when subjected to an unfavorable environmental factor; the maximum amount of a pesticide residue that may lawfully remain on or in food.”

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines tolerance as “(1) the ability, willingness, or capacity to tolerate something; (2) an allowable amount of variation of a specified quantity, especially in the dimensions of a machine or participle.”

Greek

The Greek word **anechō**, which is translated “show tolerance” or “tolerate,” means to either “to regard someone or something with tolerance,” i.e., *bear with*, *put up with*, *tolerate*, or “to undergo something onerous or troublesome without giving in, i.e., *endure*.”

- **Thomas** defines **anechō** as a compound of **ana** [as a prefix denotes up, again, back] and **echo** [to have, hold], meaning “to hold up, bear with” [430].
- **BDAG** say it means “(1) to regard with tolerance, endure, bear with, put up with; (a) someone; (b) something; (2) to undergo something onerous or troublesome without giving in, endure; (3) accept a complaint legal technical term.”

This word occurs 15x in the NT (Matt. 17:17; Mark 9:19; Luke 9:41; Acts 18:14; 1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 11:1 [2x], 4, 19, 20; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:4; 2 Tim. 4:3; Heb. 13:22).

*Matthew 17:17 (NASB95) — 17 And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I ***put up** with you? Bring him here to Me.”*

*Mark 9:19 (NASB95) — 19 And He answered them and said, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I ***put up** with you? Bring him to Me!”*

*Luke 9:41 (NASB95) — 41 And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and ***put up** with you? Bring your son here.”*

*Acts 18:14 (NASB95) — 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to ***put up** with you;*

*1 Corinthians 4:12 (NASB95) — 12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we ***endure**;*

*2 Corinthians 11:1 (NASB95) — 1 I wish that you would ***bear** with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are ***bearing** with me.*

*2 Corinthians 11:4 (NASB95) — 4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you ***bear** this beautifully.*

*2 Corinthians 11:19 (NASB95) — 19 For you, being so wise, ***tolerate** the foolish gladly.*

2 Corinthians 11:20 (NASB95) — 20 For you ***tolerate** it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.

Ephesians 4:2 (NASB95) — 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, ***showing *tolerance** for one another in love,

Colossians 3:13 (NASB95) — 13 ***bearing** with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

2 Thessalonians 1:4 (NASB95) — 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you ***endure**.

2 Timothy 4:3 (NASB95) — 3 For the time will come when they will not ***endure** sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

Hebrews 13:22 (NASB95) — 22 But I urge you, brethren, ***bear** with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.

Modern Tolerance

The modern concept of tolerance is incompatible with the teaching of Jehovah God, who declared “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exod. 20:3-6; Deut. 6:13-15; Isa. 44:6-8).

Exodus 20:3-6 (NASB95) — 3 “You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Deuteronomy 6:13-15 (NASB95) — 13 “You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. 14 “You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, 15 for the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the Lord your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

Isaiah 44:6-8 (NASB95) — 6 “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me. 7 ‘Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place. 8 ‘Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are

My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.'
“

The modern concept of tolerance is incompatible with the teaching of the Old Testament prophets, who called upon ancient Israel to choose between the Lord and false idols (Josh. 24:14-28; 1 Kings 18:20-40; Jer. 2:9-13).

Joshua 24:14-28 (NASB95) — 14 “Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 “If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” 16 The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; 17 for the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. 18 “The Lord drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.” 19 Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. 20 “If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you.” 21 The people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the Lord.” 22 Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” 23 “Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.” 24 The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey His voice.” 25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. 26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. 27 Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.” 28 Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.

1 Kings 18:20-40 (NASB95) — 20 So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people did not answer him a word. 22 Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men. 23 “Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. 24 “Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” And all the people said, “That is a good idea.” 25 So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.” 26 Then they took the

ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made. 27 It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened." 28 So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them. 29 When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention. 30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord which had been torn down. 31 Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." 32 So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed. 33 Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood. 34 And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. 35 The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water. 36 At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. 37 "Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again." 38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God." 40 Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Jeremiah 2:9-13 (NASB95) — 9 "Therefore I will yet contend with you," declares the Lord, "And with your sons' sons I will contend. 10 "For cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see, And send to Kedar and observe closely And see if there has been such a thing as this! 11 "Has a nation changed gods When they were not gods? But My people have changed their glory For that which does not profit. 12 "Be appalled, O heavens, at this, And shudder, be very desolate," declares the Lord. 13 "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.

The modern concept of tolerance is incompatible with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, who condemned unscriptural innovations, and affirmed, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (Matt. 7:21-23; 15:1-14; John 14:6).

Matthew 15:1-14 (NASB95) — 1 Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." 3 And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your

tradition? 4 “For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.’ 5 “But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,” 6 he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 “You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: 8 ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. 9 ‘But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ ” 10 After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, “Hear and understand. 11 “It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.” 12 Then the disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?” 13 But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. 14 “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

Matthew 7:21-23 (NASB95) — 21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

John 14:6 (NASB95) — 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

The modern concept of tolerance is incompatible with the teaching of the New Testament apostles and prophets, who denounced all who preach a different gospel, and exhorted Christians to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; Jude 3-4).

Galatians 1:6-9 (NASB95) — 6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

1 Timothy 1:3-7 (NASB95) — 3 As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, 4 nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. 5 But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 6 For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, 7 wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

Jude 3-4 (NASB95) — 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. 4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Biblical Tolerance

The Greek word **anēchō**, which is translated “show tolerance” or “tolerate” in the NASB, means either “to regard someone or something with tolerance,” i.e., *bear with, put up with, tolerate*, or “to undergo something onerous or troublesome without giving in, i.e., *endure*.” This word occurs 15 times in the New Testament, and may be grouped in the following categories.

Some things are tolerated because they fall within the purview of duty.

Regarding the complaint made by the Jews against Paul, Gallio the proconsul of Achaia said, “If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to ***put up** with you; but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters” (Acts 18:12-17, esp. vs. 14-15). It was Gallio’s duty to judge criminal wrongdoing; however, religious disputes fell outside his civil jurisdiction (Rom. 13:1-7).

*Acts 18:12-17 (NASB95) — 12 But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, 13 saying, “This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.” 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to ***put up** with you; 15 but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.” 16 And he drove them away from the judgment seat. 17 And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.*

Romans 13:1-7 (NASB95) — 1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. 5 Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 7 Render to all what is due

them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Additionally, faithful disciples willingly ***endure** persecutions and afflictions (1 Cor. 4:11-13, esp. vs. 12; 2 Thess. 1:3-5, esp. vs. 4). Facing such trials is part and parcel of Christian service (John 15:18-25).

*1 Corinthians 4:11-13 (NASB95) — 11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we ***endure**; 13 when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.*

*2 Thessalonians 1:3-5 (NASB95) — 3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you ***endure**. 5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.*

John 15:18-25 (NASB95) — 18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. 22 "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 "He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 25 "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

Some things are tolerated because they fall within the purview of love.

Regarding the faithless generation to which He ministered, Jesus said, "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I ***put up** with you?" (Matt. 17:14-18, esp. vs. 17; Mark 9:14-29, esp. vs. 19; Luke 9:37-45, esp. vs. 41). Recognizing our common frailty, we should be thankful that the Lord bears with our weakness; yet, let us also recognize the limits of divine patience (2 Pet. 3:8-13).

Matthew 17:14-18 (NASB95) — 14 When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, 15 "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16 "I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." 17 And Jesus answered and

said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I ***put up** with you? Bring him here to Me." 18 And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.

Mark 9:14-29 (NASB95) — 14 When they came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. 15 Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Him, they were amazed and began running up to greet Him. 16 And He asked them, "What are you discussing with them?" 17 And one of the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; 18 and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it." 19 And He answered them and said, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I ***put up** with you? Bring him to Me!" 20 They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. 21 And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 "It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" 23 And Jesus said to him, " 'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes." 24 Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." 25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." 26 After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. 28 When He came into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, "Why could we not drive it out?" 29 And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

Luke 9:37-45 (NASB95) — 37 On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him. 38 And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy, 39 and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves. 40 "I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not." 41 And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and ***put up** with you? Bring your son here." 42 While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, 44 "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." 45 But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

2 Peter 3:8-13 (NASB95) — 8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward

you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Christians must also show ***tolerance** toward one another in love (Eph. 4:1-3, esp. vs. 2), ***bearing** with one another, and forgiving each other, if a brother has a complaint against another (Col. 3:12-14, esp. vs. 13). This “new commandment” was enjoined by Christ Himself: We should love one another, as we collectively strive to walk according to His commandments (John 13:34-35; 2 John 4-6).

*Ephesians 4:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, ***showing *tolerance** for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

*Colossians 3:12-14 (NASB95) — 12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 ***bearing** with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*

John 13:34-35 (NASB95) — 34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

2 John 4-6 (NASB95) — 4 I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father. 5 Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. 6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

Some things must not be tolerated because they fall outside the purview of truth.

Paul used the Greek term for tolerance to jokingly describe the Corinthians attitude toward himself: “I wish that you would ***bear** with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are ***bearing** with me” (2 Cor. 11:1-3, esp. vs. 1). More seriously, Paul used this term in describing the Corinthian church’s unfortunate toleration of false teachers and their damnable doctrines (2 Cor. 11:4, 16-21, esp. vs. 19-20; cf. also 2 Pet. 2:1-3).

2 Corinthians 11:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 I wish that you would ***bear** with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are ***bearing** with me. 2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. 3 But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:4 (NASB95) — 4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you ***bear** this beautifully.

2 Corinthians 11:16-21 (NASB95) — 16 Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if you do, receive me even as foolish, so that I also may boast a little. 17 What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting. 18 Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also. 19 For you, being so wise, ***tolerate** the foolish gladly. 20 For you ***tolerate** it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face. 21 To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison. But in whatever respect anyone else is bold—I speak in foolishness—I am just as bold myself.

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

In like-manner, the resurrected Christ criticized the church in Thyatira for tolerating evil within their midst: “But 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” (Rev. 2:18-25, esp. vs. 20). Although a different Greek word is used (i.e., **aphiēmi** rather than **anechō**), the meaning is the same.

Revelation 2:18-25 (NASB95) — 18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: 19 ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. 20 ‘But 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. 21 ‘I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22 ‘Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23 ‘And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 24 ‘But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. 25 ‘Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.

Conclusion

Disciples should be tolerant of one another, as we struggle with weakness, but strive to live faithfully to the Lord. Nevertheless, we must not tolerate sinful behavior or false doctrine, in the sense that we accept and endorse the same.

It all connects with our attitude toward the truth. While human opinions are in a state of constant flux, divine truth never changes (Psa. 119:89, 160; Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:22-25).

Psalm 119:89 (NASB95) — 89 Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.

Psalm 119:160 (NASB95) — 160 The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

Isaiah 40:6-8 (NASB95) — 6 A voice says, “Call out.” Then he answered, “What shall I call out?” All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

1 Peter 1:22-25 (NASB95) — 22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, “All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word which was preached to you.

Apostates will not endure sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-5, esp. vs. 3), but believers bear with the inspired message of exhortation (Heb. 13:22).

*2 Timothy 4:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not ***endure** sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

*Hebrews 13:22 (NASB95) — 22 But I urge you, brethren, ***bear** with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.*

While disciples are obligated to show tolerance for one another in love, we must respect the doctrinal distinctives of the Gospel (Eph. 4:1-16).

Ephesians 4:1-16 (NASB95) — 1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3

being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.