

AL Muir - Tolerance

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Dear brethren, we'd like to invite your attention to an important subject in Christian experience which we call simply tolerance.

Tolerance is a disposition and is part of the grace of forbearance, which in turn is a part of a greater grace, meekness, and is one of the requirements of our calling, One of the lessons that is deeply embedded in the New Testament.

In our journeyings amongst the Lord's people, we have come to recognize the need for this course. We feel today that we should be somewhat as we were in the days around 1914 when we were earnestly desirous of the kingdom, and our entire thoughts were centered in the hopes that we had espoused. We feel today that God's people should have this same inspiring element, their Christian experience, and that they should be amongst those earnestly desiring the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. Our text you'll find in second Timothy, the second chapter at verse 24 and the servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be inoffensive unto all, apt to teach forbearing in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may awake out of the snares of the devil, who are taken alive by him at his will.

We have heard at this convention the necessity for walking in the ways of the Lord. Circumspectly lessons have been called to our attention in the need for the development of the graces of the Spirit. Among them is this quality of tolerance we need today amongst all of God's people, the spirit of understanding, the ability not only to discern for ourselves the will of the Lord, but to be able with one another to have that sense of membership in the same body, and the same hope, and the willingness to lend the helping hand along the way. The apostle has urged in this chapter before us that if we are God's people, we should keep along the lines of beneficial helpfulness, not breaking into one another's lives so much as rather lending a helping hand along the way. Just as in the incident of the cross, when the Lord was carrying his cross, he finally had to surrender it.

His physical weakness was such that he could not sustain it. None of the disciples were available. There was no one immediately there who could lend him a helping hand, and so another stranger, not at all willing to do the job, was compelled to carry his cross.

Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross, and I think you'll find in your experience and mine, as you look back that where brethren have failed to give a helping hand, strangers have been compelled by the circumstances of life to do that job. They have not intentionally or desired to do it particularly. But since we needed the help very much, as the Lord said to the disciples when they spoke about the reception the Lord was having in the city of Jerusalem, he said that if these did not do the work, the very stones would cry out because it had been prophesied, and in a similar sense, you and I in the Christian experience, who need help in the daily problems of life, find in one another ideally, those who can lend a helping hand.

Not, as the apostle speaks a little earlier, getting into wranglings over details, but rather in the broad issues of our calling. We each have our own trials and difficulties. We each are carrying a cross that means a great deal in our lives, and we never know that the friendly smile, the warm hand clasp, or the word of encouragement can mean so much to those with whom we meet, of whose troubles we know very little. Brother Russell remarked more than once that many a smiling face hides behind it a heavy cross. Each of us, with this spirit in mind, being a blessing one to the

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other, the means of grace if thereby we might recover any who are failing in this very obvious privilege and duty.

I want to suggest a few thoughts from the Scriptures on how we can manifest this part of the grace. In Colossians the first chapter, verses 9 and 10, we are told that consecration in itself does not bring with it in the beginning full knowledge. The apostle says, for this cause we also, since the day we heard, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye might be filled with the full discernment of his will in all wisdom and non carnal understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all, pleasing, being fertile in every good work, and increasing in the full discernment of God.

The full discernment of God doesn't come from the reading of books. The reading of books may be an education to the mind, but not necessarily to the heart. The benefit of reading is not simply reading the book, but it is the application of the lessons that are on the lines of the paragraphs that we read. Many people read the Bible from COVID to cover each year, but are no better Christians as a result, because our Christianity is not what we read but what we are as individuals. Just as when we reach the great White throne and judgment is pronounced upon us, it will not be upon the things we know or the things that we have done, but rather the condition of heart in which we are. As a result of what we know and have done, there are many people who make professions in the world today who would never pass the judgment of the Great White Throne.

And you and I, we know the truth. As Jesus said, the truth is the thing that sanctifies. To be in the truth is a very wonderful experience. But to have the truth in us is a growing and developing experience, so that the spirit of the things that we study should be made manifest in our lives. If, as John explains in his three Epistles, if we say that we love God and our actions are not in harmony therewith, then our statement is untrue.

Our love for God is not the profession in words, but it is the performance in deeds. We mentioned the other day to some of the friends in Chicago a book that we have been reading by a Swedish author dealing with the two Greek words, particularly eros and agape. He was not discussing the subject we have in mind, or for that matter, any biblical aspect, but merely the meaning, the technical meaning of the words, and he pointed out that the word eros is a selfish love because it's based upon acquisition of something, and agape, on the other hand, is a full expression of Jehovah, who gives to all men everywhere the necessities of life, whose love goes out to all creation not for the response, but merely as the expression of his own character.

So John 3:16 is a magnificent statement. God so loved agape that he gave, and his gift was the expression of the love. This is John's argument. If we say that we love and do not, then we are denying the truth of the statement, and I wonder sometimes, as I listen to brethren and you find this in studies and testimony meetings, that they are looking for a reward.

They keep telling us they are running for a prize to gain something, which in this sense is eros. They are running the race to get something. Their boast is in the hook that they entertain that one day they will possess the promise. Whereas the agape love that we should be developing is the love that goes out to God and to all his people, irrespective of their standing, claims or position, and tries to see in them the corresponding qualities that the individual sees in God, and it's this love that brings to us and experience the full discernment of God, not the knowledge about him, but the knowledge of being his child, an heir and a joint heir with Jesus Christ, so that the Christian life from the time of our consecration is a walk with God that we might be fruitful or fertile.

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That was the story that Jesus gave in the parable of the sower and the sea, the four classes of ground. But the only ground that was valuable was the good ground, and even that didn't produce 100 full, but produced 30, 60 and a hundred, showing that even with the good ground, we will not all be equally alike, but our progress will demonstrate the application that we have made of the truth that we have received. The more fully we discern God, the more fully we display Him, and the power of the truth is not in the professions of faith, but in the practice of the precepts of Christ.

And as we walk in his steps, there is this growing non carnal understanding. There's a good deal of carnality in the world today. People are materialistic. It's impossible to reach in many instances the individual. You and I are to have the heart like the Lord, that can be reached by his words of counsel, admonition, exhortation, advice.

And then as these matters work in us, there is the growing understanding through this experience of the knowledge of God, and automatically we begin to display to those with whom we come into contact the characteristic traits of God, and people are drawn to us, not particularly because we are campaigning for something, but drawn to us in this materialistic day when they find individuals in whom there is something of the old fashioned Christianity, and it's through this testimony or witness of an individual life that we have the further privilege of an outward testimony for him, and those who seek the Lord are looking for those elements in character that they would like to possess, and they come to us to find out how this happens.

Hence we have the privilege of the witness, a witness that comes from our own experiences. The demonstration that the things we do believe have a revolutionary effect in our lives, causing us to be in the world, but not of it, leading us to a part where we are strengthened with the Divine power in all patience, long suffering and joyfulness.

The third lesson you'll find in Philippians the third chapter and verses 14 to 16.

Our consecration puts us on the way to receive these matters. If God has accepted us for this calling and this step is the apprehension of Christ, all right. I can't not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press down on the mark for the award of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The word mark is associated with a sentry on the watch.

And here the Christian life is not represented as a self satisfied one, but rather having been brought into this relationship we have to apprehend him, and the apprehension of him is his character. Thus the reading of his life, the reading of the lessons of the apostles as they expound to us. The meaning of his life should be to us an inspiration. So that looking upon these things, we forget the things that are behind.

And we reach eagerly forward to the hopes that lie before us. This is the transforming influence of God's Holy Spirit. The lifting us up from the narrowness and the sectarianism, shall we say, of our present life. We are living in a world today when people prize security. When individuals go for a job, they want to know what protection they have.

There used to be an old song many years ago, God will protect the working gal. He doesn't have to do it anymore. Social Security has taken his place. All the other forms of insurance. She doesn't need God anymore.

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And many people, they are in this attitude. They are materialistic, and there is a danger for us rubbing shoulders with the world in our daily affairs that this spirit might rub off on us and make us feel self satisfied and inclined to draw lines or circles and to view with suspicion those on the other side of the lines or circles. This is where toleration comes. I mean tolerance, not toleration.

This is where tolerance comes in that as you arise in the eminence of faith, you take a broader view of things around you. I noticed in driving in and through the Rocky Mountains that when you get in that area, you have a feeling of stretching out instead of being crammed in by the buildings. If you live in the big city, it's something like the radio announcer in New York. He hadn't been any further than New York City, and one day he was on a trip.

He got out into Michigan. When he got out of the airplane and walked towards the gate, he kept sniffing, and he said to his companion, what is it that smells? His companion said, well, that's fresh air.

I think sometimes we could do with a few sniffs and fresh air. Spiritually speaking. It's the tendency to be cramped in by things close to you. But when you get out, you feel the enlarging of yourself. You take a deep breath and life doesn't seem so complicated.

In the vastness of God's creation that Brother Hollister was speaking about, and you and I in the spiritual life. When we reach the heights of God and come to a grander knowledge and understanding of him. There is a breadth that comes in our hearts and minds, and through that we get God's point of view and we look around Us, we see these other things on every hand.

And yet there is a way in which, by staying with God and living with him, we are able to reach others with the words of helpfulness and by our example, try to show, as the apostle suggests, that we are pressing on to know the Lord, that we are pressing down upon the mark, not trying to reach it, but having reached it early in Christian experience, we are pressing down lest the adversary push us off the mart.

The story has been told many times about the Bedouins in their tricks for stealing, that white men have been in the desert and at night have wrapped themselves in their blankets in their tents, only to wake up in the early hours of the morning almost freezing to death, the blanket missing. The Bedouins have got there, and they sat patiently, took a hold of the blanket and just a little tug at a time, and the sleeper rolled over, and another little tug and he keeps rolling over, and before he knows it, they've got the rug and they're gone. He only finds it out when he's cold, and I wonder if that was what Jesus might have in mind when he spoke of those who would get cold in Matthew, when he discussed the fact that this coldness come upon us would be the result of great trials. Because iniquity abounds, the love of the many shall wax cold.

And is it not your experience and mine that Satan has been active the same way? He doesn't steal the things from us that comfort our hearts, that give us warmth and appreciation. But just little by little, here a little and there a little by just slight tugs, we unconsciously help him by surrendering something that has been to us a comfort and a blessing. If we have lost anything, brethren, if our love has grown cold, it isn't that God has forsaken us. We have allowed the adversary to move us away from the mart, and in so doing, we suddenly find that things are very cold in life.

Then he goes on to give us an illustration.

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Let us, therefore, as many as be mature, be thus minded, and if in anything else ye be otherwise minded, God shall disclose this unto you.

There has been quite a good deal of discussion about truth. What is truth, who has it, and how do you keep it? Here is the apostle suggesting to us that those of us who are mature may arrive at some views, according to our faith, that may have a different import to someone else. There never has been a time when truth people have seen eye to eye.

I may mention that point. We have never seen eye to eye on any of the subjects of truth because we are all at different ages as new preachers. Our backgrounds are different, the use of our words are different. Although we have a vocabulary as truth people which we use, and we sometimes assume that when a minister on the radio uses the same words that he believes the same things that we do.

I had one sister tell me that one time that if I listen to this Presbyterian doctor, I would find out he had as much truth as we have, and I said, well, after I've listened to him, if you'll call him on the telephone and ask him if what he says is what we understand it to mean, he'll tell you that he does not understand it so.

But she wouldn't take me up on it. So a few months later she became a member of his church. If you and I are reaching a maturity of understanding, a maturity in Christian experience. If there's anything in which we may not be clear, God shall make this known to us. I believe this promise, as I believe all the promises of God.

That when the Lord, through the apostle, records this for us, he is telling us that there will be differences of ideas or comprehensions of Christ. But if we are God's children and brethren of Christ and we present ourselves at the throne of grace with His Word and ask him to give us an understanding of it, we may have to wait for a while. But if we keep before him and seek to know His Word and His will, God shall disclose this to you. He has in my own case. But the apostle says in the meantime, nevertheless, where too we have already anticipated, let us walk by the same standard.

Let us mind the same thing. What he's saying is that that basis of truth that we have followed. Let me cite just the simple understanding, the divine plan of the ages. This becomes our standard or rule. We have by government authority a rule of 12 inches.

This we use in measurements, and then further more intricate methods of measurement. But the basic thing, the government guarantees that this rule is 12 inches. Everything we have used regarding material is used by this 12 inch. If this rule is a basic one, then anything else that we may wish will all grow out of this basic length.

And we're going to further a more intricate measurements. So God has given to us the basic message. The divine plan of the ages. Within which all of God's purposes are circulating and developing the things that we may not understand in this or that portion of this rule or standard. God will be pleased to tell us if we and humility and and meekness ask of Him.

But until we gain this complete or fuller understanding, let Us walk by the same rule. Let us follow the same measuring rod that we know has been established and is supported by the authority of the Word of God, and when we follow that, we have a basis by which we can measure everything else. So I see many who have God's plan and their measurements seem to be in agreement. Then

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I see others with bulging spots where they've tried to add in something to explain what God evidently had not explained.

If we follow the same rule, then we shall attain this development of God likeness. Because this process of addition is not only the establishing of us in grace, but that power working through us has a transforming influence. The apostle writes that we all with unveiled face beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are transfigured into the same likeness. He uses the same word that it is used of the lord in Mark 9. When he was on the Mount of Transfiguration, his face shone, his raiment was glistening white while he was on the Mount of Transfiguration.

And Paul must have had this idea that as you and I view God through the standard and other associated truths, there's a revelation of God that marks itself on us. Just as Moses alone was gone for 40 days and nights, when he came down from the mount, he unconsciously displayed the proofs of his meeting with God. His face shone, but he didn't know it. The elders had to tell him that unless he made a veil and put it round his face, the people would say, God has come down amongst us. That's what we call blessed unconscious consciousness.

That's an individual with God that when he comes down the mount, doesn't realize the reflection of God's glory. This is the lesson of the New Testament. As we use the standard and reach upward toward God as we come down the mount in everyday experience, there should come with us this unconscious display of the transforming power of God's spirit. But the reverse is shown in the case of Samson, who allowed Delilah to bob his hair one day, and then she called to him, samson, the Philistines be upon thee.

And he arose and shook himself and said he would go out and do as he had done at other times. But he wist not that God had departed from him. Moses wished not that God's glory was reflected in his person. Samson wist not the tragedy of it that God had departed from him. These are two lessons we must bear in mind.

There may be in the lives of some the tragedy that while they go out to do as they have done in the past, they are not able to God is not with them.

So this lesson of growing in apprehension of Christ is the working within the transforming influence of God, and the truth becomes precious to us not because we can answer every question, but because our lives are bringing us an understanding of what the truth is means, and then we find brethren with whom we associate who need the helping hand, and we're glad to share with them the blessings that God has been to us. This is the spirit of tolerance, not the agreement with error, but the sympathizing with those who are seeking to know the Lord better.

And since we have learned to increasingly appreciate him, then we are able to lend them a helping hand to a closer walk with God.

Just another thought in Galatians, the second chapter, verse 11. This was the story of Peter and the Jews and St. Paul.

Peter @ this time was willing to eat with the Gentiles. But when some Jews came down from Jerusalem, he separated from the Gentiles and he was afraid of them of the circumcision. Now this is the lesson to bear in mind. Here was Peter willing to allow the fear of the circumcision to cause them to fail to take the firm stand. This is a form of deceit, insomuch that Barnabas was carried away with their deceit.

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And Paul says, when I saw that they walked not straight footedly instead of uprightly, when they walked not straight footedly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before all, if thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? This was the confusion he was in. The point of this lesson is that deception is in the mind. The mind and the heart in the Christian are two different functions. With the mind we believe, with the heart we perform righteousness.

The mind is the apparatus that sees truth. The heart is the result of its application, the growth coming from the knowledge. I've had some talk about knowledge and they quote the apostle, Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up. But how can you have love building up in ignorance? I don't know of any New Testament scripture that says we can make our calling and election.

Sure, being ignorant, knowledge in itself can cause pride. But if the knowledge is transmuted into the frame of character, then love becomes the expression of the individual, and his decisions are not mental, but from the heart, and we are back to the point with which we began, that is getting the heart of God, the love of God in our own hearts and lives and as we increase in the knowledge of him, there must come a transforming power within us, that our affections are set on things above. Our whole life is determined not on the present limited association, but in this eternal relationship begun even now.

And we are looking forward and reaching eagerly forward to its fulfillment. Are you and I in the same frame of mind, reaching eagerly forward? Are we looking out upon the earth today with all this commotion and confusion and materialism, with the earth shaking events that have taken place and the things that will yet take place? Are you and I afraid? Or do we look forward eagerly, pressing forward because these things betoken the kingdom?

And are we striving with all our power, supplemented by the grace of God, to make straight paths for our feet to walk straight footedly?

Driving across the country, I've watched the furrows that the farmer has made today. They're very straight because of the mechanical machines. But on years gone by, I've seen the farmer with the mules, and when he for some reason had to look behind him, that furrow was crooked, and I used to think how true that is in Christian experience.

So many of us have a crooked furrow. Paul says, walk straight footedly, no crooked work. Keep your eyes in front, don't look behind, forgetting the things that are behind. Keep looking forward and pressing onward, eagerly seeking to gain that to which the Lord has invited us. Here is a statement of principle that when we see brethren not walking uprightly, then we have to show either by word of mouth or by our own example what the Lord would want done.

We are living in a time when it's unpopular to criticize people, even the school children. Teachers are passing children in school who ought to be flunked on the subject. But now the theory is we mustn't do anything to cause the children to feel inferior. So they do the best and they pass them. By the time they get out of high school, they're not fit to go to college.

Some can't even write that you can read. But today things are so different. There are no hobos, no tramps. Today, everybody's taken care of, and so we have so much of contradiction.

When a man is fired from a job under the government, you're not to ask him about being fired. He will tell you that he has been temporarily separated from his occupation. You've got to keep his

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inferiority complex down. Don't make him feel that he's a misfit. He's like the schoolboy that came home with his card with U's all over it.

And he talked real fast, made his mother believe that the U stood for unexcelled, and that's what we have today. We have to watch that the same spirit doesn't creep in among us and that we pass people simply because we don't want to hurt their feelings. We don't want to hurt anybody's feelings. But isn't it better that someone in kindness would call our attention to a failure for our good?

Is it not still true? Faithful are the wounds of a friend? It surely is true, and as the apostle James and others urged us to pray for those who are spiritually sick and to try to guide and help them out of the benefits that God has given to us. So our Christian life is not an easy life.

It's a great deal more than simply on the outside. Our Christian life is the growth and development of the new man. Renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, renewed in the manifestation of that in the daily life, showing the love of God, that powerful implement in our lives that can change a great many things. Some of the friends have mottos on the wall which say prayer changes things. I don't think it does hasn't to me.

But prayer changes my view of these things. I still have the things. These things are needed as tests of character. But prayer changes them or my approach to them. So instead of seeing them as stumbling stones, they become to me stepping stones to higher claims of grace and truth.

And you and I are laboring in these days to be faithful to the Lord.

I'd like to mention one or two points, and then I'm through. In first John, chapter three, verse 22.

Whatsoever things we ask of him, because we keep his prescriptions and do those things pleasing in his sight, and this is his prescription that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us prescription, and he that keepeth his prescription dwelleth in him, and he in Him, and hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which He have given us. A prescription is something you get from the doctor.

You have ailments of one kind or another, and this prescription he gives you, and it contains probably a poison, because there's a poison in your system, and one poison fights the other. But if he gave you the poison, only you might die as a result. So he takes that poison and mixes it with a few other things, and so when you go to the druggist, he takes down these various bottles and pours so much out.

Then he puts this in a bottle, puts a label on it and tells you, take it three times a day before meals. This you do for a week and you find wonderful. You say, the good doctor, you've got rid of your ailment because Romans 8:28 all things work together for good. The shadow and the sunshine, the cloud and the rain, the storm, the windstorm, and so forth. If we only had one thing to endure, we were in the sunshine altogether, we'd dry up.

But because we have the sunshine and the shadow, the drought and the rain, the calm and the windstorm, all these things proportionately together in God's providence makes things work together for good. This is the prescription summed up in the expression love one another, and I will close by calling your attention to the fact that Jesus Christ, Christ, our founder and leader, laid down as a foundation truth the commandment of love. John the 13th chapter by this shall all know

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that ye are my disciples, if ye have love. One for another.

The Lord loved us to give his life for us. Do we love one another sufficiently to lay down our lives for the brethren, or do we just do what will bring us the temporary reward? Are we thinking, the brethren, in the eternal sense, that we are striving to be made ready for this place with Christ and with our Father? And if this be our viewpoint, let us grasp the bigness of God, the blessing of God. He opens his hand and satisfies the need of every living creature.

Our Lord remarked that God caused his sun to shine on the evil and the good, his rain to fall on the just and the unjust. He doesn't look for those who are going to return appreciation. His goodness extends to them all, because it's his very being. You and I have that love, even in a measure in our hearts, that we will do good unto all men, but especially those of the household of faith. What grand characters.

We could be getting away from this mental argument that it's this or that or these or those, getting away from these materialistic divisions of truth and coming down to the real thing, that the truth is to us what we are personally and leave to God the day when our poor minds that cannot understand all things now, we shall know then, even as we are now known. There are so many things we'd like to know, we shall know beyond avail. Let us therefore be more like him in character, that our lives may be filled with sunshine to the glory of God, and in these days of great trial we can be a great comfort to one another in the spirit of sympathy, understanding, and appreciation of this relationship. So this is the tolerance that I understand of the New Testament.

It's a tolerance connected with the glory to which we've been called and a great willingness to be helpful one to one another and to try to understand one another, our hopes, our fears, our trials, our difficulties, and then to be willing to help to the extent of our ability, and if these matters are in the hands of God, we're so anxious to be like Him. He will bless us. He will find in us mediums of his blessing to others.

And how wonderful. As Brother Hollister quoted in Malachi, they who spake often were the Lord, and the Lord hearkened, and I like the word in the original. The Lord pricked up his ears.

This is something out of the ordinary. All the clamor and commotion in the world today. He hears it. It doesn't make sense to anybody. But when God's people get together and talk and think upon his name, this is precious to Him.

And he has a guest book, and in the guest book he writes a name, a communication, and I'm looking forward to the grand day in that convention beyond when we may be privileged to look at this guest book and think of the many times we were together and spoke together, of his name, thought upon his name. What a blessing to be together and to see and hear these wonderful things. Thank you.

The Lord earns blessings.