

WRITINGS OF J BOYD

by J. Boyd

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by J. Boyd, compiled for study and devotional reading.

5 Chapters

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S. Adoption According to God's Counsels.

Adoption According to God's Counsels.

Rom 8:1-39.

Adoption in its fullest sense we await (Rom 8:29), and that will involve the redemption of the body. Then we shall be like the Son of God, and with Him in the place that belongs to sons — the Father's house. Divine love will never rest until it brings us there. But now we have the Spirit of adoption, which enables us to take our place as sons in the presence of God, and to feel at home there, knowing that the Father loves to have us there; that it is a greater joy to His heart to see us take up our place before His face than it is to ours to take the place, however great our joy may be. We must keep in mind that the place of sons was not given to us in answer to any desire in our hearts but it was His own eternal thought to have us as sons before His face. Even when we became exercised about our sins, and the judgment to which we were exposed on account of them, it did not occur to us that more than forgiveness would be extended to us, nor did we desire more. The position of a hired servant, a "lone place within His door" was the height of our expectation. It was not love to God that attracted us to Him. Had we not heard of His grace, we had never come; but we came because it would have been death to us to have remained away. But He first loved us. How hard it is for us to believe this. But the witness of it is the death of His Son. Though we may be long in learning it, we were in His thoughts before the world was, and that we should be sons with His Son was what he had in view for us. It was all to satisfy His own heart, for, as I have said, we had no wish for such a place, even when we turned to Him through the preaching of the Gospel. And even now that He has made known His mind toward us, we are very slow to enter into possession of this great privilege. Yet it is true that He thought of us individually before the earth's foundation — thought of you, my reader, if you have believed on His beloved Son, and in His counsels you had your place given to you along with that Son in heavenly glory. You may think yourself very unworthy, but you had better not think of yourself at all; think only of Him and of His unspeakable love.

J. Boyd.

S. Psa_84:7.

Psa 84:7.

Strength for the journey upward, To the realms of light and love;

God's strength, in the might of the Spirit, Is my privilege to prove. To leave the world and its shadows In the distance far behind; Where they grope in the blackness and darkness, Who are lame and halt and blind. To get nearer the home, where the music Is heard thro' eternal day; To get nearer the Father's presence, Where His love beams bright alway.

Thus pants my longing spirit; And Jesus shall bring me there; Nor swollen my feet with the journey, Nor my clothes the worse of the wear.

J. Boyd.

S. The Love of God.

The Love of God.

All the thoughts of God toward His people are thoughts of love. He has not, never had, nor ever will have, a thought toward any of His own than that of love. He may chasten them, scourge them, bring them through deep waters of tribulation and affliction, take them away out of this world by the death of the body, but every one of these ways of His with His own springs from the fountain of love, which, welling out of His own blessed heart, has stopped at no sacrifice for the recovery of its objects from distance, darkness, death, and the power of the devil, and for the establishing of their souls in holy, heavenly, and eternal relationships with Himself, in love's own dwelling-place.

It was love that thought of us before the world was, that planned redemption, that gave us our place in Christ, that determined to have us as sons before His face for ever, and that guards us throughout our whole pilgrim pathway, until we land at home in His glorious rest. It is love, infinite, unspeakable love, that occupies itself about us at this present moment, and that will stand by us, should every friend abandon us and become our enemy.

J. Boyd.

S. The Thoughts of God.

The Thoughts of God.

Psa 139:17-18.

We can say: How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great the sum of them! If I should count them they are more in number than the sand." How far all this is away from the thoughts of the natural man! What a scene of incorruptible and holy joy and delight we come into in the contemplation of the thoughts of God! Thoughts of infinite goodness, grace and love! Thoughts of Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Thoughts which dwelt in the mind of the Triune God before His works of old! Thoughts for our glory! Thoughts which can be spoken of as the depths of God! And these thoughts all set before us in Christ! Oh to think that the Almighty God, the Most High, the Creator of all things should set Himself before us in a Man, and that Man the eternal Son of the eternal Father; and that He should come down into the lower parts of the earth where we were to bear the judgment which lay upon us, and thus make known the love of God to us; and that He should take us up, and bring us to the Father, and set us in the same place before the Father as He is in Himself; and that He should give us to know that love in the Spirit's power in our hearts; this passes all our powers of comprehension! How great the sum of these thoughts! how deep! how high! how infinite!

J. Boyd.

S. Toleration

Toleration

There is a great cry now-a-days against intolerance and bigotry, and a proportionate laudation of tolerance and liberality; and people are frightened by hard names and deceived by soft ones, and at last, from mere habit, believe what they assert or what others assert to them, and think that toleration must be the right thing. Progress in the search after what the world calls truth is said to be hindered by dogmatic opinions or teaching. In secular things, however, such as natural science, etc., dogmatism may be admitted. In spiritual things, and in those things which concern the truth of God and the salvation of men's souls, dogma is, they say, inadmissible. We are told that what men on these subjects think to be true to-day, may to-morrow be found susceptible of modification, or be proved altogether erroneous; that doctrines and practices, good and true in one age, are unfitted for a succeeding period of the world's history, and may be pronounced "obsolete." What would do very well in times past as the foundation of a man's hope for eternity, is, quite unsuited to this more advanced age; the doctrine of which to-day will in turn pass away, and be succeeded by others more advanced, and so on. In, the face of such a state of things, we are told that it is presumption for any man to express conviction in a settled opinion upon any religious question or doctrine. Many, indeed, are asking, "What is Truth?" and "Who will show us any good?" but very few wait for an answer.

Toleration, then, is the order of the present day; and men may hold what they please provided they will not interfere with their neighbors' opinions, and limit the suitability of their own opinions to themselves. But it was not always so, neither will it always continue, but it is the cry of the moment, and therefore is worthy of examination.

What, then, is toleration, and why and what are we to tolerate? The very word implies a state of imperfection. If all were of one mind, there would be no toleration needed; if good universally prevailed, there would be nothing to tolerate; if evil was universal it would certainly be intolerable, though for all that it must be endured (as it will be in the "place prepared for the devil and his angels"). Toleration, then, implies the co-existence of good and evil, in which evil is tolerated by (that which assumes to be) good, for toleration must necessarily be by the superior towards the inferior. That in a sense and in degree toleration is right none of course would deny, for God himself tolerates, exhibits patience and long-suffering. His own Word and every man's experience teaches this. But with God, toleration has a limit; and it must be so, for though in grace for a time He may "endure with much long-suffering," He could not always do so without a denial of His character. A Being who eternally tolerated evil would not be good, holy, or righteous; and a state in which toleration was eternally called for would not be a perfect one. Toleration, even on God's part, must therefore be defined and limited, both in its extent and its duration. But there is another side to the question. For though in patience and grace a being who is perfectly good may for a time, and for an object, tolerate evil, toleration, if exercised by beings in themselves not good, but evil, assumes another and very different aspect. If a being who is perfectly good tolerates evil, it

must be for a good end, or he would not be good; but if an imperfect being exercises toleration, we must suspect both the motive and the end. To speak of evil tolerating evil sounds paradoxical, yet as a matter of fact we meet it constantly in the world, and it is the spirit of that which people call "agreeing to differ."

Toleration, then, on the part of fallible or imperfect beings springs from two or three motives. Firstly, from such self-condemnation as to render the judgment of others in like doubtful circumstances impossible. Secondly, from inability to force their own views and opinions, owing to a balance of power in those opposed to them; or, thirdly, from lack of certainty, and conviction of the truth of what they do hold.

Now, whilst the first is true of man in his natural state (Rom 1:31; Rom 2:1), and the second undoubtedly underlies all forms of doctrinal error, whether infidel or superstitious, the third, we are assured, is the motive of much that is called religious toleration now-a-days. Men are uncertain in their opinions, have no solid foundation for their belief, no sure prospect for their hopes. In things which concern the soul's salvation (that which the world itself admits to be the most important of all subjects) men hold opinions as wide as the poles asunder, and none dare say in their hearts, much less with their lips, "I have found the truth."

One system of religion alone in Christendom has emphatically claimed infallibility. Whilst that system had the power, it not only asserted infallibility, but, consistently therewith, it exercised intolerance. Its power, however, is gradually waning, and everywhere is being questioned. Its assumptions no longer raise fear in men's hearts, but rather a smile on their lips. Another spirit and a superior power has been slowly developing. Man's reason is asserting its claim, and the charity and toleration of our day is mainly* the fruit of the co-existence and conflict of the spirits of superstition and infidelity. The world will yet experience again the intolerance of an over-bearing power of evil. As the influence of superstition still further wanes, and the present necessity of mutual toleration ceases (for toleration will always lessen as the balance of power tends more and more in one direction, and will cease when such power can assert itself), so will the tyranny and selfishness of man uncontrolled by religion, whether false or true, be developed in the Antichrist-the man of sin, the lawless, the wicked one, spoken of in the Scriptures (Dan 8:23; Dan 11:36; 2Th 2:1-17; Rev 13:1-18)

(* We say mainly, for we do not deny but that there is also a measure of true Christian forbearance also in exercise, and often in combination with less pure motives.)

Hitherto we have been speaking of the character and spirit of the toleration now abroad in the world, but we also desire, if the Lord will, to say a few words for the help of those who, desiring to know and do the will of God, are yet in difficulty as to what to allow and what to refuse. On this subject, as on every other in which the professing people of God are concerned, we can go nowhere for instruction but to God and to His Word. His ways must be our example, His Word our precept. All will admit that if there be any revelation of God, there must also exist in connection with it a standard of right and of truth, if it be but apprehended. But- while this is admitted in a general way, there is the greatest hesitation on the part of men either to grasp this standard for themselves or to admit that others may have attained to it. All Christendom acknowledges Christianity as God's revelation, yet for the most part argues as if the arrival at a Divine certainty of God's truth were impossible-as if, in fact, God, who gave revelation, had not intended, or was

unable to bring it home to the hearts and understandings of those to whom it has been made. Hence dogmatism is deprecated, and strong convictions generally demurred to. Even the one system which in its own self-assertion dogmatizes unhesitatingly, ceases to be dogmatic, or even confident, directly it attempts to deal with the real and primary object of a Divine revelation-namely, the bringing together into acquaintance, confidence, and peace, the holy God and His sinful creatures-and denies that this end can be attained in this life, asserting, in direct opposition to the whole teaching of the New Testament revelation of grace and love, that " no man knoweth whether he be worthy of love or of hate." But for our own part we are confident that God has given an unerring and perfect revelation, wherein He himself may be infallibly known, and His truth infallibly grasped, all the diversity and uncertainty of men's opinions notwithstanding.

Before, then, we can venture to be tolerant or intolerant, the first point to be settled is the confidence and ground of the individual soul. Unless we know and are persuaded that we have the truth, it is certainly impossible for us with any decency or power to exhibit intolerance of the opinions of others.*

(* If, for instance, one knows not for himself salvation as a possession, one cannot honestly be intolerant of the views held by others on the subject. One may not approve them, but one must tolerate them. On the other hand, the soul that knows by Divine faith that it has salvation from God on the alone ground of the death and resurrection of Christ, has a positive confidence and a standard on this point, which renders him necessarily intolerant of every opinion which may be advanced against it. " I know whom I have believed," is the language of such. There are certain things in which theory will not stand against possession, and this is one. Theories about salvation may be as clear as the day, but the one that has the thing itself alone can judge their value.)

What, therefore, is needed is individual personal assurance, founded on Divine and therefore a perfect authority, and when this is possessed, what, and what not to tolerate may be soon arrived at. God's truth is the standard of doctrine, His ways, of practice. That Christian men may not, without terrible risk and responsibility, tolerate that which is contrary to God, His word distinctly teaches. Toleration of sin and of evil doctrine are denounced in many and many places, such as 1Co 5:1-13; 1Ti 5:22; 3 John; Rev 2:14-16; Rev 3:15-16. The warnings of Christ to the churches are solemn words in the present day, when men tolerate every form of evil under the common name of Christianity, and deprecate the judgment of opinions and teaching the most dishonoring to Christ and His work. How do the words of Mal 2:17 apply to such-- "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words; yet ye say Wherein have we wearied Him? When ye say that every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighteth in them." When professing Christians are asked to judge and separate from evil doctrine and practice, they reply, "How are we to judge that to be wrong which is conscientiously held;" or more often they retort, "Who are you, thus to judge others?" And why is this, but that men, calling themselves by the name of Christ, hold not in their own souls the power of Christianity as God's own revelation of Himself; and on this everything turns. If I hold doctrines as mere matters of opinion, how can I contend against contrary views held by others on the same ground and by the same right. But when the heart and mind are persuaded and pervaded by the truth of God, we do not speak of " my opinions ' or " my ideas," and we do not, and ought not to set up our opinions against those of others. It is not that "I think one thing and you another, and we shall never agree," but it is that I believe God, that I have submitted to. His Word, I have accepted and adopted His thoughts, He has answered every

question of my heart, and He alone can answer truly any question of any heart. What may be advanced to the contrary is not against the believer's opinions merely, but against the Word of God in whom he has believed; and thus false doctrine or opinions contrary to such an one's faith cannot be tolerated, or admitted as having any weight or claim whatever. In dealing with them, grace and wisdom are, however, needed, and the believer has to judge, and has the ability also to judge (1Co 2:11-15) the spirit in which they may be advanced. He will make a difference between the teacher of evil doctrine and those taught and deceived thereby. Whilst after admonition he will reject the former, and tolerate neither the teacher nor the teaching, he will have compassion on the latter—the one who is ignorant and deceived; and while refusing and correcting the error, will in no wise reject the person. The believer will "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;" he will lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for the feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed. In meekness also he will endeavor to instruct those that oppose themselves. Here, however, there is danger of failure. Often we lack patience with those whose hearts are truly upright, but who are unskillful in the word of righteousness, or have been deceived by false teaching. Or, again, in tolerating the person who is ignorant we go too far, and tolerate, or appear to tolerate, his opinions and ways, and thus are unfaithful to the person, and to God and His Word. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity;" and if the believer sees one in ignorance, even linked with that which in any degree is contrary to the mind and truth of Christ, he must not touch the evil which he knows to be evil out of any consideration of love for the other. For instance, one dear to us may be linked with a false system of religious doctrine, which we know to be contrary to God. Are we to say that he believes it, and therefore we must acknowledge his right to practice it, and aid him in doing so? Surely not! We must no more acknowledge for another the right to believe and practice error than for ourselves. We may not be able to persuade, or even to interfere on the subject, but we can no more aid and abet in it than we could in facilitating the suicide of a friend who assured us on his word that he was weary of life. But we are well assured of this, that the more our own souls are imbued and satisfied with the truth of God as it is revealed in Christ, the less tolerant shall we be of all that is contrary to it, and yet the more able are we to exhibit the patience and grace of Christ himself towards the persons who may be involved in error. For while in a sense there is nothing so intolerant as truth, yet the one who has truth knows that both "Grace and Truth came I by Jesus Christ," and he does not therefore separate what God has thus joined together in the revelation of Himself.* To be persuaded in our own souls that so far as we have attained (for we only know in part—1Co 13:9; Php 3:12-13), we hold the truth of God himself, gives us an immeasurable superiority in dealing with the souls of others, and enables us, while unsparing towards error, to manifest the toleration and long suffering of God towards those who are deceived thereby. Compassed ourselves with infirmity, having nothing but the grace of God to boast in, we have not to assert ourselves, but simply that which is due to Him who has left us here to be witnesses for His truth.

(* On the other hand, error knows not grace, and cannot show it. When unchecked by a conflicting power, error propagates itself by force, fraud, and cruelty. So was Romanism in the darker ages; so will be Infidelity in the latter days. {1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3; Rev. 15:14, 15.}) With regard to toleration of the religious opinions of others, which is so strongly advocated now-a-days, we would observe that nothing is more resented by the majority of professing Christians than to have their profession judged. They claim for themselves the liberty which they profess to accord to others. Their position

is, however, untenable if judged by God's Word. However great the confusion may have become, there is in Scripture a distinct recognition of a "without" and a "within." In Christendom no doubt the line is all but obliterated; but, nevertheless, all who take Christ's name and call themselves Christians, unquestionably take the inside place, and are therefore liable to be judged by their fellows. "Do ye not also judge them that are within?"* Every professing Christian is, therefore, open to judgment, and all that such can require is that they may be judged by the Word of God, and not by the measure of another's, or even of their own, conscience. If we can bear that test, we can say with the Apostle that with us it is a very, small thing to be judged of man's judgment. We fear, however, that much of the tenderness we find abroad on ' this point arises from inability to bear the test.

(* The Christian is not called on to judge the world. "Them that-are without God judgeth;" but we are often in difficulties now-a-days from finding those who call themselves Christians, and claim to be "within," so linked with the outside world that it is impossible to know how to class them. All we can say is, that while they make very bad Christians, they are a very good imitation of what is commonly called the World.)

Finally, we ask our readers to examine their own position and practice as to toleration, and to ascertain whether their own hearts are persuaded and satisfied with God's revelation (we do not say with man's interpretation of it, but with the revelation itself)--Christ, the Son of the living God--He who has the words of eternal life, God manifest in flesh, crucified in weakness, declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead, and now by the right hand of God exalted? Is He so the ground of their peace and confidence? Has the Word which reveals Him so laid hold of their souls that they can say, "Let God be true, though (if need be) every man a liar?" Do they believe God rather than man, and know and recognize the immeasurable claim which He has, not only on our love, but on our obedience and life? Luke warmness is a hateful thing in the sight of One who has spared nothing for the benefit and blessing of those He loves. Where love in one is "stronger than death," how hateful to find Its objects careless and indifferent. To such Christ says, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." But even this is not His last word to them; for He adds, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he will with me.... He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."H. B.

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