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“GOD ACCEPTS ME AS I AM” (*The Defense Series – Part 1*)

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[Welcome to *The Defense Series*. The aim of this series is to help Christians more effectively “make a defense” (1 Pet. 3:15) to those who challenge the teachings and values of New Testament Christianity. Don’t be fooled by the title; this article is a *response* to the above quote. My prayer is that the following words will help and embolden you as you stand for Truth.]

I heard it again just the other day. A well-intentioned lady told me, “*It doesn’t matter what church you attend or what you believe – God just accepts us as we are.*”

She isn’t the first person to have said something like this. The sentiment that “God accepts you as you are” is a common belief among many in the Christian community. But, in the voice of Inigo Montoya, *I’m not sure that phrase means what they think it means.*

“God accepts me as I am” sounds really good in an off-handed comment – especially in our pluralistic society. But what does it mean in reality? **If God accepts *you* as you are, does He accept *me* as I am?** What about the compulsive liar, the adulterer, the practicing homosexual, or the gossiper? Does God accept these people? What about the serial murderer, the rapist, or the thief? Does He accept those people? **What are the parameters this statement? Under what conditions does God accept one person “as he is,” and deny another “as he is”?**

The problem with the “God accepts me as I am” mentality is that it turns God into something He is not. Yes, God is love (1 John 4:8). He is *love* just as He is *holy* (Jer. 17:10; Psa. 11:7), *sovereign* (Psa. 93:1; Jer. 23:20), and *just* (Deut. 32:4; Psa. 18:30). God is all of these aspects – plus more – in their purest form. However, no single attribute represents Him exclusively; one quality cannot be separated from the others. His *omniscience* (all-knowledge) cannot be separated from His *fairness*; His *love* cannot be separated from His *holiness*.

Unfortunately, much of the world has taken “God is love” as the whole of His character. A God who is exclusively love would never punish or deny anyone. He would accept everyone as they are, demanding nothing in return and rewarding everyone (unless they’re *really, super* bad according to our standards). In the mind of one who believes “God accepts me as I am” there is no objective standard of behavior that God expects because He is exclusively love and nothing else.

God doesn’t “accept you as you are” because if He did, He wouldn’t actually love you.

Those who espouse “God accepts me as I am” theology do not recognize a difference between the words “love” and “acceptance.” The God who is unconditionally accepting cannot hate sin because He necessarily tolerates it. **If He “accepts me as I am,” He also must accept my sin. But the Bible clearly teaches that God hates sin** (cf. Psa. 5:4, 92:15; Isa. 6:4, 59:2; Rev. 6:8; 1 John 1:5-6).

One of the reasons God hates sin is because it hurts the people He loves. God loves sinners (Rom. 5:8), but He hates their sin because of what it does to them (Rom. 6:23; Prov. 13:15), along with its effect on the innocent (Prov. 6:16-17). Sin has eternal consequences as well as temporal consequences on earth.