

How do we relate to those in error?

You are walking down the street with a friend when you notice that there is smoke coming out from under the eaves of someone's house. You notice someone standing in an upstairs window. You don't want to upset them so you tactfully call out to them that you think their house may be on fire. They respond, "No way! I designed and built this house myself and made sure that that could never happen. I followed the codebook to the letter. So don't tell me that there is a problem with my house!" So you tell them that you're sorry for questioning them and offending them and that they surely must be right, after all. You then wish them the best and tell them to have a good day. As you turn to go you see flames erupt from the eaves and you call over your shoulder, "If you discover that you were wrong after all, let us know if you were able to get out before it was too late"... and you continue your walk down the street.

This is an illustration of the way some would have us believe we are to act when we discover that someone believes error when it comes to spiritual things. These don't want us to say anything that would cause the one in error to feel we are judging them, nothing that would hurt their feelings or get them agitated. They also insist it is wrong to be intense and excited when we realize their precarious condition, fearing that we may offend them. We're to allow them to believe that there is really no problem at all because, if they think we are questioning their beliefs, it might hurt their feelings and offend them. They make it far more important to protect feelings than to alert others who need urgent warning.

What do mountain climbers do when out mountain climbing and one of their companions freezes in fear? They get up to him and slap him hard on the face, right? Why? Because it will shock and possibly anger him. His shock and anger at being slapped will overcome his fear and he will later thank his companion for saving his life. Soft, peaceful talk wakes no one but only lulls them into a deeper sleep. So, if you want to awaken someone, you make a commotion to make sure you shock them awake. Life and death matters call for action. They will thank you in the end, even if they became angry at first.

Yes, we need to be loving and kind, but sometimes the loving and kind things are not always perceived as being loving and kind until long after the fact. We need to remember that Jesus was the epitome of love and kindness but He made a lot of people very angry and they ended up killing Him for what He said and did. In the end, many realized that what He said and did was the right thing to do and thanked Him for it.

Let's look at what the Bible has to say about this. Ezekiel 3:17-21 says, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; **but his blood will I require at thine hand**. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; **but thou hast delivered thy soul**. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but **his blood will I require at thine hand**. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also **thou hast delivered thy soul**."

It is clear that we are God's watchmen. If we do not warn the wicked, God will hold us responsible for them being lost. But if we warn them and they don't take the warning, we have done our duty and we will not be held responsible for their loss. We need to remember that when we warn them we need to do it in a loving way and do our best not to turn them off. But even our best may still turn them off. Even Jesus turned people off and His methods were perfect.

In John 6:59-69 we read: "These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the

beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

So, we need not feel responsible if we have done our best.

Matthew 26:3-4 “Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him.”

Luke 20:19, 20 “And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.” Luke 22:2 “And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him.”

John 5:5-20 “And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.”

Mark 2:4 “And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.”

Matthew 23:13-39 “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple

that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Do you think Jesus wondered whether the scribes and Pharisees would appreciate what He said and what the outcome of saying these things would be? No, Jesus did all these things while knowing what the end result would be, and He did them anyway. Was He just asking for trouble? Obviously, He knew what the end result would be, yet did it all regardless and it was not wrong of Him! It is our duty to warn those who we see in error, in the right spirit, even if it brings down the wrath of others on us. We will not be judged if we follow Christ's example. In fact, God may judge us as doing wrong if we hold back a needed warning. Others may judge us as wrong but God will not. Being right with God is far more important than being right with and pleasing man.