

What would you think if I started forgiving people of their sins against God? Mk 2:7. What would you think if I defended myself by saying Jesus did it and since I am supposed to be like Jesus I can do it too? Mk 2:5; Ep 5:1.

What you should think is that Jesus did some things we cannot do because He had authority and power we do not possess. Mk 2:8, 10-12.

I believe Jesus sometimes corrected people who opposed the truth in ways we cannot because He had authority and power we do not possess. Two examples. First, Jesus cleansed the temple because He was God. It was His temple and He could do with it as He pleased. Mt 21:12-14. Second, Jesus called certain people a brood of vipers because He knew their hearts. He knew by divine inspiration that the description was fair and best used on the occasion. Mt 12:22-25, 34.

So how does Jesus want us to correct people who oppose the truth? That is the question I want us to consider this morning by studying and applying 2 Ti 2:24-26.

“Bond-servant.” Slave.

“The Lord’s.” Ep 5:17; 2 Ti 3:16-17; 1 Th 5:21; Re 22:18-19.

“Must not be ... but be.”

“Quarrelsome.” *Machomai* is used “of those who engage in a war of words, to quarrel, wrangle, dispute.” A war of words is “an argument in which people or groups criticize and disagree with each other publicly and repeatedly for usually a long time.” To quarrel is “to have an angry argument or disagreement.” Synonyms include altercate, bicker, brawl, dispute, fall out, fight, hassle, jar, argue, quibble, row, scrap, spat, squabble, tiff, wrangle. To wrangle is “to argue angrily with someone.” To dispute is to “to engage in argument .. debate ... especially ... to argue irritably or with irritating persistence.”

But don’t we have to contend earnestly for the faith? Absolutely. But we must fight the good fight of faith in a righteous way. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

The difference between ungodly quarreling and honorable debate is clearly laid out in scripture. They have:

DIFFERENT GOALS:

1. An end unto itself, arguing just to argue vs. a means to an end.
2. To win vs. find truth.
3. To be heard and understood vs. to hear and understand. Both are important, but the latter is the first priority.

DIFFERENT MEANS:

1. Interrupting vs. listening.
2. Clamor vs. calm.
3. Deflection vs. substance.
4. Poor logic vs. good reasoning.
5. Public vs. private. There is certainly a time for airing differences before an unrestricted audience, but it usually comes after various degrees of private discussions have failed to resolve the conflict.
6. Whatever it takes vs. only what is just.

DIFFERENT ATTITUDES:

1. Close-minded (prejudiced) vs. open-minded (as we hear we judge).
2. Selfish vs. selfless.
3. Arrogant vs. humble. To correct we must be judgmental, but we must never be self-righteous. It’s not arrogant to think we are right, but it is arrogant to think we can’t be wrong.
4. Disrespect vs. honor.
5. Assumes the worst vs. the best possible.

DIFFERENT RESULTS:

1. Outbursts of wrath vs. patience.
2. Division vs. peace.
3. Unproductive or counterproductive vs. productive.
4. Sin vs. righteousness.

For time’s sake, I did not supply verses for each of the above differences but will gladly do so upon request.

“Kind.” *Epious*, “affable ... mild, gentle.” Affable means “friendly and easy to talk to.” Mild means “gentle in nature or behavior ... moderate in action or effect ... not sharp ... or bitter ... not severe.” Gentle means “having or showing a kind and quiet nature ... not harsh or violent ... not hard or forceful ... not strong or harsh in effect or quality.” The word is used elsewhere in 1 Th 2:7.

“To all.” Who does that exclude? Absolutely no one!

“Able to teach.” *Didaktikos*, “apt and skillful in teaching.” We must know the truth (2 Ti 2:15) and the most effective way to present it (Pr 15:2; Co 4:5-6).

“Patient when wronged.” *Anexikakos* is a compound word formed by combining *anechomai* and *kakos*. *Anechomai* means “to hold up ... to hold one’s self erect and firm (against any person or thing), to sustain, to bear (with equanimity), to bear with, endure.” *Kakos* means “a bad nature; not such as it ought to be.” *Anexikakos*, therefore, means “patient of ills and wrongs, forbearing.” Practically it means when people we are correcting do us wrong we don’t blow up, complain, get even, or give up. Knowing these things are not best, we remain calm, find and focus on the good in the bad, overcome evil with good, and hope all things.

“With gentleness.” Notice the apparent redundancy with kindness. It’s almost as if the Holy Spirit is saying, “Just in case you did not get it the first time ...” While the words are very closely related I think in this context kindness is what motivates us to correct people who oppose the truth—our hearts are open to them. With gentleness is the way we go about correcting them.

The praus family of words used in secular Greek "of persons or things which have in them a certain soothing quality, the power to calm, to tranquilize. They are used of gentleness of conduct, especially in the case and on the part of people who had it in their power to act far otherwise. These words describe the right attitude and atmosphere which should prevail in any argument where questions are being posed and answers demanded and given. Socrates thanked Thrasymachus in the Republic for having left off scolding and having become gentle. The words are used of taking remarks in the best possible way and of discussing things without losing one’s temper” (Barclay adapted). “When we have prautes ... we treat all men with perfect courtesy, ... rebuke without rancour, ... argue without intolerance, ... face the truth without resentment, ... can be angry and yet sin not, ... can be gentle and yet not weak” (Barclay).

“Correction can be given in a way which entirely discourages a man and which drives him to depression and to despair; and correction can be given in a way which sets a man upon his feet with the determination to and the hope of doing better. Prautes is the spirit which makes correction a stimulant and not a depressant, a means to hope and not a cause of despair” (Barclay slightly adapted). “Real Christian witness has always a gracious gentleness about it which is far more effective than the discourteous kind of witness which tries to ram its opinions down other people’s throats” (Barclay).

“Correcting those who are in opposition.” We absolutely must correct those who are in opposition to the truth. 2 Ti 4:2; Ti 2:15. We must not be quarrelsome but kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, and gentle for the express purpose of correcting those who are in opposition to the truth in the most effective way possible.

Sadly, though, some brethren think it is sometimes permissible for them correct in ways that are contrary to what our text demands and they typically use the Lord to defend their behavior, i.e. since He did not always correct in these ways they don’t have to either!

I sincerely believe this is one of those instances where we cannot always do what Jesus did. Instead of presuming claim to His divine prerogatives, Jesus plainly tells us to be kind to all!

Lest you think I am perverting the truth of this matter to justify being weak on sin, consider Ga 6:1; Ti 3:1-2; Ja 3:13, 17-18; 1 Pe 3:15.

There are two types of liberals. Left wing liberals twist the meaning of love to compromise truth. Right wing liberals are equally loose they just come at it from the other direction. They twist the meaning of truth to compromise love. The old path remains what it’s always been—not truth or love, but truth in love.

“If perhaps God may grant them repentance.” This is the goal of correction, namely that those who are fighting against the truth will do a 180 degree turn and start fighting for the truth. Nor must we ever take for granted in our correction that God grants us the repentance that leads to life (Ac 11:18). There is nothing in our choosing to repent that merits our salvation. We are merely taking God up on His gracious offer of salvation that Jesus made possible by His death on the cross. He requires us to repent because it is best for us, not because it does anything for Him.

There are at least three reasons why we want people to genuinely repent.

“Leading to the knowledge of the truth.” John 8:31B-32.

“And they may come to their senses.” Lu 15:17-20A.

“And escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”

How does Jesus want us to correct people who oppose the truth? In the best way we are capable of doing it.

Why does Jesus want us to correct people who oppose the truth in the best way we are capable of doing it? There is no more important or rewarding work in the world. Mt 16:26; Ja 5:19-20.

What is the best way we are capable of correcting people who oppose the truth? Not necessarily always the way Jesus corrected people who opposed the truth, but always the way Jesus tells us to correct people who oppose the truth.