

What Happens When We Fail to Warn

I heard a tragic story recently, some of the very bad fruit coming from Rob Bell's book *Love Wins*. (This was Bell's hell-denying book in which he effectively announced his apostasy from evangelical faith.) In light of a growing epidemic of deception in the church today, a deception that is making people deaf to divine warnings, it seemed that now was a good time to share the story.

Earlier this year, a university student was responding to my lecture on God's love for the LGBT community during a time of Q&A. He tried to undermine the authority of the Scriptures and accused me of using violent language. To him, any form of justice or judgment was inherently violent, and he would have none of it as a professed atheist.

I subsequently learned that, just a few years earlier, he was planning to go into the ministry. He was an avid reader of the Bible. Then he read *Love Wins*, and it was downhill ever since. (This was according to a report from his roommate at that time.)

It would have been far better (and far more biblically accurate) if Bell had written a book titled *Love Warns*. That would have been in greater harmony with the truth. (Click [here](#) for my 2015 article titled "Love Warns.")

But we don't want to hear warnings today. We only want positive words. Words that make us feel better about ourselves. Words that increase our self-esteem and enhance our self-image. Anything negative will be rejected out of hand.

Don't tell me I'm on the wrong path. Don't tell me there's danger ahead. By all means, do not warn!

Everybody has to win these days. There can be no losers.

Every path is valid, and every perception has truth.

Correction is a micro-aggression. Reproof is for our grandparents' generation. Rebuke is tantamount to assault.

Yes, that's the world we live in today. And I don't just mean in the secular, non-religious society. I mean in the church. Preachers, do not warn!

On a daily (sometimes hourly basis, sometimes by the minute), we receive angry comments to our video "Can You Be Gay and Christian?" (Apparently, it continues to circulate on LGBT social media outlets, getting new viewers all the time who are furious with the biblical content.)

One viewer wrote, "Reported this as a hate video," which is the expected response these days. Telling the truth, even with love and grace, is branded "hate." Truth has become toxic.

This reminds me of a quote from the Christian musician and singer Keith Green (who died in 1982). He said, "I'd rather have people hate me with the knowledge that I tried to save them." Do we have any excuse for not trying?

Others viewers of our video were outraged that I would have the temerity to state that the Bible was God's Word and that it was still relevant.

Still others were shocked to hear me say that there is a right way and a wrong way. That we were created and designed by God with specific, moral intent. How dare I speak such things!

But it's not just here, in this controversial area of LGBT issues, that we find resistance. For years now, right within the church, there's been a growing tide of no-judgment preaching.

We're only allowed to say nice things, to encourage. We're not

allowed to plead with tears, to warn of coming danger, to urge our listeners to flee from impending judgment, be it in this world or the world to come.

Not a chance. Such preaching is dubbed “Old Testament” (as if the New Testament wasn’t filled with warnings). Such preaching is called legalism and going back under the law (as if grace didn’t plead and admonish). Such preaching is deemed out of style, inappropriate for our enlightened age.

As a result of this growing trend, rather than the flock being awakened, the congregants go like fattened sheep to the slaughter. Who will sound the alarm?

By all means, we should encourage. By all means, we should lift up. We should preach with love, preach compassion, preach mercy, preach longsuffering.

But we should warn our hearers and viewers of the consequences of rejecting that love and compassion and mercy and longsuffering. We should, in Paul’s words, present (and consider) both the kindness and the severity of God (Rom. 11:22). Both are essential to our right understanding of the nature and character of our Lord.

Decades ago, George Orwell famously wrote, “In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”

Today, more than ever, we need to engage in this revolutionary act of telling the truth. If we who claim to know the Lord don’t do it, who will?