

‘Breaking the Ice’ as a Prelude to Drowning

There’s an old movie (circa 1951, “The Man with a Cloak”) that had line in it that went something like “‘Breaking the ice’ with some people is nothing more than a prelude to drowning with them.” Though that may not be the quote verbatim, I agree with the sentiment. The proverbial writer put it this way. *“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm,”* Proverbs 13:20.

Yes, Jesus had discourse with *foolish* and *sinful* people, cf. Matt.9:10ff. But the purpose of His association with them was for the express purpose of helping them to become spiritually *“clean”* (cf. John 15:3) and *“wise”* (cf. Matt.7:24-27), not to demonstrate *“tolerance”* or endorse *“acceptance”* of their foolish thinking and unwise behavior, cf. Luke 19:10 (it wasn’t His intention or purpose to accept people *“in”* their sins, but to save them *“from”* them).

Likewise, there’s nothing wrong and a lot right with interacting with foolish and sinful people today, providing you share His intent and purpose. But we must recognize the inherent danger of being *“influenced by them”* into lies and sin instead of *“influencing them”* into truth and righteousness.

Though the context of Gal.6:1 requires that we understand Paul to be speaking of a one *“caught in any trespass”* as a fallen brother or sister in Christ, the admonition surely would be equally appropriate for our efforts toward a non-Christian similarly *“caught”* in a sinful life(style). Therefore, read carefully and heed well his caution, *“Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.”* Thus, such efforts should be undertaken” a) by the right *person*- *“spiritual”* refers to one strong in faith and firm in its practice; b) with the right *attitude*- *“gentleness”* refers to mildness of attitude and behavior; and, c) with the right *precaution*- understanding that all, even the *“spiritual,”* can be tempted and fall into and become entrapped within sin. How tragic indeed it is when one seeking to save another winds up instead perishing with them.

Be kind, compassionate, caring, and helpful toward others who have tripped into the thin ice of sinful thinking and broken through by the practice of iniquity. Save them, if you can, from the eternal depths of damnation. But *“be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness”* (2Pet.3:17) and drown therein with them. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)