

A WORD WITH YOU - By Ron Hutchcraft

10273 – “Lost In Our Language”

Colossians 4:3-4

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I was teaching at a national seminar on how to communicate an unchanging Christ in our rapidly changing culture. Well, at the end of a session, a pastor from Kentucky came up to tell me his story he thought really illustrated some of what I had been saying. He said, “When I was a young man, we used to have some big tent revivals in my community. Each night an invitation was given for folks to come forward if they wanted to be, well as this country preacher would always say, ‘borned again.’” The pastor went on to describe how some of the deacons would actually go out into the audience and go row-to-row, and shall we say they were “encouraging” folks to make that choice. Near the back, one of the deacons came to a young man who gave him an honest and memorable response. The deacon said, “Son, do you want to be borned again?” To which the boy said, “No.” The deacon pressed the point, “Why don’t you want to be borned again?” The young man answered in all seriousness, “Cause I’m afraid this time I’d come out as a girl!”

I’m Ron Hutchcraft and I want to have **A WORD WITH YOU** today about **“Lost In Our Language.”**

Okay, first we can laugh at what that boy said. Then, when we’re done laughing, let’s think about what we can learn from a response like that. The preacher used words that the preacher understood, but apparently not everyone who was listening understood. It’s a classic example of the problem with a language called “Christianese.” It’s the language we church folks speak without even thinking, and the language that folks who desperately need our message don’t begin to understand.

Many of our “Christianese” words are good Bible words, but words that a lot of lost people around us just don’t know. For just a moment, try to “think lost.” Think to think like a lost person. Think what a person without the context of a Christian environment hears when we say words like “accept” or “receive Christ as your personal Savior.” We receive packages today, not people, and when we accept someone, we treat them right. When you try to hear what a lost person hears, words like “salvation” and “saved” and “become a Christian” are either not understood or they’re vastly misunderstood. Oh, and “born again.”

In a world without absolutes, the word “sin” has become a word without meaning to many people, as much as the word “believe.” Most people would probably say “yes” if you asked them if they believe in Jesus. And you’ll know that they don’t mean what the Bible means when it says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Even the word “Savior” is not one that people use much today. They’re great words, but the people who need Jesus the most have no idea what they mean or have the wrong idea. That’s what makes our word for today from the Word of God such a mission critical prayer for any of us who

know people that we want to take to heaven with us. In Colossians 4:3-4, listen to Paul, "Pray for us that God may open a door for our message...Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should."

It's not enough to just transmit the Good News about Jesus. No, like good missionaries, we need to ask God to help us translate it into non-religious words that lost people can understand. If a man came running into the room you're in, shouting in say Swahili, "The room is on fire! Evacuate immediately!" you'd probably go, "Well, he sounds sincere; I think he has something important to say." But you'd have no idea what he was saying, because it wasn't in words you could understand. It's not in your language, and you might die as a result. And that's no matter how important the message and no matter how sincere the messenger.

The spiritually dying people around us hear us Christians announcing our all-important life-or-death message, often in words they don't understand. Yes, the gospel's life-or-death information that literally eternities depend on. So, we can't afford for them to get lost in our language, or they might be lost forever.

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