

February 1, 2015

Let Your Speech Be Seasoned With Salt

By Pat Cowden

Although Paul had never visited Colossae (1:4, 7, 8; 2:21) he loved the brethren dearly. While imprisoned (4:3, 10, 18) he wrote to them when he discovered that a heretical teaching had infected the church. This heresy consisted of a mixture of pagan, Jewish, and Christian teachings and practices. Toward the end of his admonition to return to faithfulness, Paul wrote the following:

"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." (4:5-6)

Paul is urging them to behave wisely concerning those who are not in Christ. He urges them to see each opportunity to speak to someone who is not a Christian as a treasured opportunity to reach the lost (we would say he was "urgently soul conscious." Why would he be so concerned about the time element? Because he knew, as he wrote in Ephesians 5:16 that time is a precious commodity and must not be wasted.

In addition to taking full advantage of the opportunities presented to us (Ephesians 2:10), Paul exhorts the Colossian brethren to be careful with their speech. In Paul's mind, the way we speak can be a positive or a negative force in winning people to the Lord. If we are careful, we can have a positive impact and influence and stand a chance to win them for Christ. If we are not careful, "Oh, I didn't mean anything by it..." or "She shouldn't be so thin-skinned!", then we lose a golden opportunity to show Christ through our words.

If our speech is gracious (meaning we treat them like Jesus would treat them with love and compassion and forgiveness) even when they do not deserve it (the meaning of grace), we increase the possibility of them being receptive to the gospel. If we do not, if we are mean spirited, if we find ourselves starting conversations like this, "Well, I don't mean to be negative..." then we lose that treasured moment for all time. May none of us ever be guilty of that... If we feel the need to be negative, we should pray that God would help us find a better way to let our thoughts known. If it is so important that something negative needs to

be said, doesn't it make sense that it would require serious consideration and prayer before we say it?

I have found it much easier and more effective to slow down, reflect, pray, and then proceed. James puts it this way, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath..." (James 1:19) Do I do this perfectly? No, but I know the servings of crow have decreased in portion size and frequency just because it I have this firmly implanted in the back of my mind.

Paul concludes the thought with the idea that having this pre-determined mindset is integral in being prepared to answer those we speak with. In other words, if we have accepted the fact that we may never have another opportunity to speak to this person, we will approach each interaction with their best interest in mind.

This manifestation of "agape" will not only help us win souls, but will also allow us to foster relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Why? Because the same concepts are true whether you are speaking to a Christian or a non-Christian. Seasoning our words with flavorful and preserving words (salt adds flavor and preserves what it comes in contact with) will make all of our relationships better. Solomon puts it this way, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly..." (Proverbs 18:24)

God bless,
Pat