

Speak the Same Thing

Jonathan Banning

At the Tower of Babel, God confused the language of man. Before, every man and woman spoke the same language using the same words to communicate the same ideas. Due to rebellion in Babel, God confused their language, upsetting the building process and scattering the people (Genesis 11:1-9). This story serves as a prime example of the confusion and destruction that comes when language is misunderstood. When you and I don't agree on what a word means, you and I will have trouble making any progress together.

This principle extends to the Bible. Paul writes in I Corinthians 1:10 to tell us to "speak the same thing." I believe that message has many implications, but one of them is this; as students of the word we must exercise caution in how we use Bible words. We must strive to understand the true meaning of Bible words and work to ensure that when we use Bible words we mean the same thing. When words are misunderstood, confusion, even danger, follows close behind. Let's make sure we speak the same thing when we use the word...

Fellowship

Acts teaches us that disciples should devote themselves to fellowship (Acts 2:42). To their credit, most churches seek fellowship. Although I fear they seek it according to a poor definition. To the larger religious world, fellowship involves eating, drinking and entertainment. It is movie night at a friend's house who is a Christian. It is sharing a meal with Christians after services. It is being in the same location and enjoying one another's company. Their definition of this word leads them to claim the Bible gives them authority to use the church's money for movie nights and entertainment and meals after services. That's why the hall of eating and entertainment at these churches is dubbed the "Fellowship Hall." Is that what fellowship means?

The Bible would give us a different definition. The word fellowship actually means association or joint participation. It is a sameness of purpose. To put it simply, fellowship is something you have, not something you do. When told to be devoted to fellowship we are being told to be devoted to the same purpose. That's why John would urge us to have fellowship with God, Jesus and the Spirit (I John 1:3,6-7). That is not to eat a meal with the Divine, but to work for what they are working for. Fellowship; let's speak the same thing.

Miracle

Society at large has gotten awfully loose with the word "miracle". We need not look further than the Hudson River for proof. It was called "The Miracle on the Hudson" when a pilot successfully performed an emergency water landing on the river. Incredible, no

doubt, but a miracle? Is that what miracle means? The Bible word means a wondrous work of God, an event that required supernatural power. Calming a storm with a word. Raising the dead. Healing the sick. Those are what the Bible calls miracles. Yet, we have co-opted this word and used it for our own purposes. It seems at this point, we feel a miracle is anything good in my life. Not only is that wrong, it is dangerous.

Now, we have the Christian rock band claiming their musical talent is a miracle from God. We have teachers of false doctrine claiming the existence of their church is a miracle and women preachers claiming their knowledge of the Gospel is a miracle. This becomes man's attempt to stamp their own decisions with God's divine approval. After all, how can anyone tell me what I'm doing is wrong if what I'm doing is a miracle!? Miracles are signs indicating God's approval, but only may be called miracle if they are indeed the supernatural operation of God. Miracle; let's speak the same thing.

Faith

What is faith? To many, faith is characterized as a shot in the dark, hoping against hope. Faith is believing with our fingers crossed and eyes closed while we throw out any evidence that contradicts. When a child asks their parents how we know God is real, how we know Jesus died or how we know the Bible is inspired, too many parents respond with, "you just have to have faith." Is that what faith is?

"Faith is... the evidence of things not seen..." (Hebrews 11:1). That's the Biblical definition. Faith is a belief in what we can't see based on the evidence that we can see. When our children ask the hard questions we should not tell them to have faith, we should help them procure faith. When we misuse this word we create an environment that incubates doubt. An environment that does not champion thought or evidence and punishes sincere queries. Faith; let's speak the same thing.

Let us always be careful in the way we use words. When we do not speak the same thing we become confused, unproductive, and spiritual discourse becomes useless babble.