

A WORD WITH YOU - By Ron Hutchcraft
9108 – “When Differences Don’t Matter”
Philippians 1:27-28

December 8, 2021

Before September 11, before the World Trade Center, there was Oklahoma City! It’s hard for me to even hear those words without thinking of the devastation that occurred there on that April 19, 1995; the day that a terrorist’s bomb destroyed the Federal Building and 168 people who were in it. That day the very worst and the very best in people were displayed in Oklahoma City. It was an awful moment, but it united the community in a way like never before. There were so many people who just threw themselves into the rescue effort. There were doctors, nurses, police, firefighters, and everyday heroes, counselors, ministers, and food suppliers. That would be repeated some years later at the World Trade Center. Someone wisely pointed out that suddenly white didn’t matter, black didn’t matter, Methodist didn’t matter, Baptist didn’t matter, old, young. There was one compelling need that had incredible power to erase all the categories.

I’m Ron Hutchcraft and I want to have **A WORD WITH YOU** today about **“When Differences Don’t Matter.”**

Our word for today from the Word of God comes from Philippians chapter 1, verses 27 and 28. Do you know what will suddenly pull together people who usually stay separate? Well, look at this Oklahoma City example. It’s the realization that lives are at stake; that people will die if we don’t work together. Turf doesn’t matter when people are dying. Labels don’t matter. The eternal tragedy of people dying spiritually isn’t as easy to see as the devastation of a bomb blast, but it’s every bit as real and far more eternal. And the way to rescue spiritually dying people who surround us is obvious.

Here we go, Philippians 1:27, “Stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved, and that by God.” “I want you to fight the gospel battle (God is saying here) as one man and in one spirit.”

See, if we begin to see the people around us as Jesus sees them, we’ll know that they’re dying without a Savior. Now they’re dying inside, and then they will spend eternity without God unless we get to them in time. And then suddenly all those differences between us Christians? They don’t seem so important. All that matters is getting to the dying people.

There’s only one explanation for the competition and the categories between churches and organizations in your area. We must not really believe that getting to people for Jesus is life-or-death. The situation of lost people is too desperate for us to be worrying about denomination, or trivial issues, or who gets the credit, different views of the 10%

that Christians disagree on. If "lostness" is not an eternal emergency, then maybe we could afford to stay clustered in our little individual rescue units.

But a lost world just doesn't understand why we can't get together. I hear it all the time. And if we don't, we'll never get to enough people in time. So, let's start praying for the lost in groups that cross all the lines that have divided us. Let's plan together strategies to reach them out of a common broken heart for those who break the heart of Jesus.

Try an experiment. Hit yourself in the face with your five separate fingers and see how it feels. Now, pull those five fingers together in a fist. Now hit yourself in the face this time. I doubt you're going to do it. Tell me which is more powerful, separate fingers working separately or pulled together in a fist. God's people have been carrying out the work of God way too long as separate fingers. Isn't it time we pulled together and made a fist in Satan's face?

That awful day in Oklahoma City I can't imagine the rescuers focusing most of their attention on the people who were already safe and already well. Of course not! They focused everything on the dying people. I can't imagine them arguing over turf either. See, when lives are at stake—in this case for heaven and hell—the differences don't matter. Saving lives together, that's all that matters.

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