**Truth Currents** **8-21-20**

I want to talk to you today about a follow up to what we talked about last week. Last week we talked about a Biblical view of history. Today, I want to talk about a Biblical perspective on language.

I saw a tweet in the last few days that suggested that the English Department at Rutgers University was planing to de-emphasize English grammar because as they put it, “*Standard guidelines of grammar are a means to exert white supremacy and keep students of color from succeeding academically*.”

I thought, “*That can’t be right. Grammar now is racist?*” So, I did some checking. I went to Routers and Routers said they said, “*No that’s false*.” And I went to Snopes and Snopes said, “*No that’s false*.”

But I just thought I should check it out. So, I went and did a little more research. And what I found out is that it’s actually correct. The English Department at Rutgers University has decided to de-emphasize grammatical rules in their Masters level writing classes.

They say in a document that is entitled, Department Actions in Solidarity with Black Lives Matters, they said,

“They wanted to encourage students to develop a critical awareness of the variety of choices available to them with regard to micro-level issues in order to empower them and equip them to push against bias’s based on written accents.”

Now that sounds like typical academic language but let me tell you what it means. It means that the rules for grammar have a disproportionate impact on people who don’t know how to read and write and speak. But instead of educating people who have come out of poor educational backgrounds, instead of teaching them how to read and write and speak, Rutgers University, at the university level, the Masters level, has decided to throw out all standards so that whatever work you produce is considered sufficient.

I did a little more research and found a professor from Arizona State, who is the Dean of the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts. His name is Asao Inoue.He is a professor who has argued for a number of years that students should not be graded on correct grammar and writing style. But instead, grading should be upon the amount of effort that a student puts into an assignment. He says this,

“Grading is great way to protect the white property of literacy in schools and maintain the white supremacist’s status quo without ever being white supremacist or mentioning race.”

In other words, speaking the English language in a proper way is now considered racist and white supremacist even if you don’t realize you’re doing it.

His solution? He advocates that students should be graded based on the labor they put into their work not quality of the finished work. He calls for students to consider the language that they use and view it as a way to describe their experience. Get this sentence… “*In society’s long standing inherited structured normalized eugenic and white supremacist project*.”

Folks, this is not new even though I’m just now discovering it. It goes back to a 2018 documentary entitled, Talking Black in America, a documentary that studies the role of white supremacy and oppression in deciding what is proper grammar. They go on to say that

“slang and improper grammar are part of a vernacular that should not be frowned upon but exactually appreciated as just another dialect among the black community.”

Well how do we think Biblically about this? How do we process this kind of information? Let me see if I can give you some analysis.

First of all, holding students of color to lower academic standards is the real racism here. In 1865, Fredrick Douglas gave a speech entitled, What the Black Man Wants. It was in the period of reconstruction following the Civil War. Fredrick Douglas was an activist for the integration into society of slaves that were now freed and needed to take those steps into full standing as American citizens. In his speech, What the Black Man Wants, this is what he said. And I think this is valuable because a hundred and fifty years later this kind of voice, that comes from Fredrick Douglas, this is nowhere to be heard in our generation. Fredrick Douglas said this:

The American people have always been anxious to know what they should do with us. General Banks was distressed with solicitude as to what he should do with the negro. Everybody has asked the question and they learn to ask it early of the abolitionists, “*What shall we do with the negro?* ” I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us! Your doing with us has already played the mischief with us. Do nothing with us! … All I ask is, give the black man a chance to stand on his own legs! Let him alone! If you see him on his way to school, let him alone, --- don’t disturb him! If you see him going to the dinner table at a hotel, let him go! If you see him going to the ballot box, let him alone, don’t disturb him! If you see him going into to workshop, just let him alone, your interference is doing him a positive injury.

Wow. One of the leading black voices during the Reconstruction Era says, if you’ll just open the opportunity, the black man will rise. He works hard. He’s smart. He has all the characteristics of every other human being. And yet, one hundred and fifty years later what we find is that we have graduate level students of color who are being told, “*You don’t have to learn to speak and write to be a success. You just do the best you can out of your poor background and we’ll cover over all the short falls. And we’ll take care of you for the rest of your life*.”

Seems to me that that’s the real racism in 2020. We don’t ask Chinese foreign exchange students to write papers in their native language. We don’t ask European students or students from South America to just do the best they can in their own language and then just give them credit for trying hard. We ask them to learn English well enough to write paper and meet academic standards. Singling out certain groups for easier standards guarantees that we limit those students to when they go out into the market place for the rest of their lives.

Here’s the Biblical view of language. Language is necessary for thought and progress for human beings. To refuse to teach grammar, to minimize language skills is to short-circuit a human being’s ability to think deeply and to shape complex issues. To weaken language is to weaken community. And **that** is the real agenda here.

In **Genesis 11:1-9** we have the story of the Tower of Babel. Maybe you remember the story. Mankind had a single language in his earliest days. And his spiritual rebellion produced a kind of ambition to be like God. And so, man came together and in community, because of their ability to communicate, they set their minds on building a tower to the heavens. They were going to exert themselves to show that they were god-like in themselves. The Bible said that in order to frustrate their ambition, which were unholy, that God Himself “confused” their languages and scattered them across the earth as different peoples.

The key to that separation was to confuse language. It eliminated their ability to work together. Now God did that with pure motives in that time and it was in the best interest of mankind. But from that day forward God has constantly been overcoming that barrier of language separation in order to bring the human community back together. In fact, by the time we get to the good news of the Gospel in the New Testament what we have is that God has structured the flow of human history so that in the era when the New Testament was written and circulated there was the closest thing to a universal language that we’ve ever had since before Genesis 11 and the Tower of Babel. That language was called Greek. The New Testament was written in Greek. And people groups across the Roman Empire were able to understand the good news of the Gospel because the language allowed, despite their cultural differences, the language allowed them to come together as human beings with a common experience that we call the human condition.

On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came and gave birth to the Church, the sign of God’s intention was He gave those first followers of Jesus the ability to share their faith in their language was spoke was heard by each listener in his own language. God reversed the curse of Babel.

You see, the original separation by language was to keep men from their spiritual rebellion. But ever since then, God has been arranging for language to bring us back together because that is the thing that not only distinguishes us as human beings but it is the thing that allows us to have community, to experience the human condition together. Only now in 2020, we find that there are those who don’t want humanity to come together in community. They want us to be isolated. They want us to be separated. They want us to be enemies of each other.

So, what is their strategy? It is the separation of language.

Here’s the bottom line. These previvors of modern language confusion are promoting a cultural separation to secure their own political power by creating a society of people who don’t have the ability to come together in the human experience as a single people. They want us to not be able to think and to shape and to contemplate the deepest issues of the human experience.

Literacy and language are vital tools in human progress. A Biblical worldview takes language seriously so that men may aspire to knowledge and understanding and greatness. When you declare that language itself is now racist you eliminate the very thing that brings us together as human beings.

Frankly, it’s stupid to suggest that students and people of color cannot achieve intellectual greatness. And it is racist to treat them in a way that guarantees their isolation and failure.

Grammar is not racist in America.

The Biblical perspective says language, grammar, syntax, those are the very things that make us human. And the best chance we have to bridge the gaps of separation between us in our current generation is the ability to communicate. We don’t need less language development. We need more.

In fact, God put His Word in language and collected it in a book that we call the Bible. Why? Because it is the way we can think deeply about being human. It is the way we can contemplate the issues that come from knowing God. It is the essence of being human.

Don’t let anybody tell you that this is a minor issue. We will see in these last days a language, much like Greek was two thousand years ago, a language that is spoken across the earth, not so that we can be separated and divided and enemies of one another, but so that what God is planning to do in the days and weeks and months and years ahead can be accomplished because we share the essence of humanity – our ability to think and to speak and to be friends.

This is Truth Currents.