**FOR EVERY IDLE WORD (#1)**

*Our Language’s Slippery Slope*

In the 1939 blockbuster movie *Gone With The Wind*, Rhett Butler (i.e. Clark Gable) forever changed the line-in-the-sand of Hollywood, and America, when he uttered his final words to Scarlett O’Hara (i.e. Vivian Leigh) as he walked out the door. Knowing he was leaving her for good, and clinging to the hope that she could yet win him back, she cried out, “Where shall I go? What shall I do?” To which he coarsely responds, “Frankly my dear, I don’t give a damn.” That use of the word strictly violated the 1930 Code of the Motion Picture Association, Section Five, which said,

**“Pointed profanity (this includes the words God, Lord, Jesus, Christ – unless used reverently – Hell, S.O.B., damn, Gawd) or every other profane or vulgar expression, however used, is expressly forbidden.”**

The edited script had Rhett slowly saying, “Frankly my dear, I – just – don’t – care!” David Selznick, the producer, wanted to use Margaret Mitchell’s line with the curse word in it for impact, but Will Hays, who created the Code, refused to allow it. Under intense pressure from Selznick to change the Code, Mr. Hays finally caved, with only a $5,000 penalty to Selznick for using it. Later that very year the Code was actually changed to allow for words like “hell” and “damn” to be used, but with this caveat:

**“They must be essential and required for portrayal, in proper historical context, of any scene or dialogue based upon historical fact or folklore … or a quotation from a literary work, provided that no such use shall be permitted which is intrinsically objectionable or offends good taste.”**

This softening of the rules opened the flood gate. It created a slippery slope from which our country has never recovered. The rest, as they say, is history. The Motion Picture Industry now has a meaningless Rating System that is a mockery to any Code of Decency. Movies today, even animated cartoons intended for children, find ways to insert words which “*offend good taste*.” Words used by sailors and prostitutes are now included in movies, television, radio and newsprint. Every one of you who read this knows for certain that the line of distinction between PG and R has faded to gray and cannot be known without searching deep into reviews to know what words, violent acts and sexual content will be found in them. I’ve even seen G-rated shows that just a few years ago would have been R-rated. You have too.

Our modern world has fallen into a language vortex that is spiraling downward at warp speed. It’s a rare thing indeed to find men, women and even children who do not use curse words, or at least euphemisms which imply curse words. If even Hollywood, in 1930, said they couldn’t use any “profane or vulgar expression” like hell or damn, and couldn’t even use the names of God in vain, just think of the filthy cesspool we have sunk into today.

No, I cannot give you a list of “dirty words” from the Bible because God knew that language would always change over time. A curse word of the first century and in a different culture would be meaningless today. Therefore God gave the world Biblical principles to guide our language throughout history. Those principles never change.

Words become “dirty” or “profane” based on their motive for saying them. For example the word “hell.” When Jesus said this word to a group of Jewish leaders we know He was not using foul language: *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of* ***hell*** *as yourselves”* (Matt. 23:15). When He spoke the great commission and said: “… *he that does not believe shall be* ***damned***” (Mk. 16:16), He was speaking as their ultimate Judge (John 12:48; Matt. 25:41,46). Even though spoken sternly He spoke them from a heart of love in hopes of saving their soul, for even on the cross He cried, “*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do*” (Lk. 23:34).

Here are God’s divine principles for our language in any age or culture:

1) Ephesians 4:29 “*Let* ***no*** *corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”*

2) Ephesians 5:3-6 “*But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it* ***not even be named*** *among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are* ***not fitting****, but rather giving of thanks.”*

3) Colossians 3:6-8 *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath,* ***malice****,* ***blasphemy****,* ***filthy language*** *out of your mouth.”*

It should be very obvious to anyone with even an ounce of common sense and spiritual insight that God hates all language which profanes His name or anyone He has created in His own image. Cursing has been on God’s “Thou Shalt Not” list since the dawn of time. His “*no corrupt speech*” and “*not even be named*” and “*not fitting*” and “*put off all these*” are principles He will use to judge us. He has zero tolerance for filthy talk.

When Rhett Butler brushed off Scarlett O’Hara’s plea with his curse word on the big silver screen it put a stamp of approval upon the coarse language of our nation and opened a Pandora’s Box that could not be recaptured and shut. Today we are reaping what we have sown. But to those of us who are God’s people we refuse to be swept up in this vortex and talk like the world.

Instead, we discipline our tongues with this reminder, “*For every idle word that men may speak, they will give account thereof in the day of Judgment*” (Matt. 12:36).

Speak well today. - Rick