

INTRODUCTION

1. It is a great pleasure to be with you this morning.
2. It is also most humbling to bring the first message in this conference and to speak about, what some have called, “the Father of the English Bible, the English Reformation”, and the English language, William Tyndale.
3. My choice to speak about William Tyndale did not come because as a priest he was of the Hereford diocese or because he studied at Oxford at Magdalen Hall which later evolved into the present “Hertford College.”
4. It was because of his unwavering commitment to translate the Bible into the English language so that

even a plough boy could read it.

5. 90% of the King James version of the Bible and 75% of the Revised Standard Version are from William Tyndale's English translation.
6. The first English translation of the Bible was translated in the 14th century by John Wycliffe from the Latin Vulgate. It was the first translation before the printing press and the first translation that was handwritten.
7. As we begin our study this morning, we will first focus on the man and then on his message.
8. First let's learn about the man, William Tyndale.

LESSON

I. The Man

A. His Birth

He was Born in the Early 1490s Most Likely in 1494

B. His Family

He lived in western England in the Slymbridge area of (Gloss-ster-shere) Gloucestershire near the Welsh border and Severn River

C. His Parents

1. His parents were respectable farmers
2. They flourished in one of the most prosperous counties in England

D. His Brothers

1. He had two brothers: Edward and John
2. John was a successful land manager who oversaw their (Gloss-ster-shere) farm

3. Edward became a crown steward and received rent for the use of Berkeley land for the king

E. His Influence

1. After William translated the NT, his brother John was arrested and fined for possessing and distributing Bibles
2. Upon his death, Edward left a number of Reformed books in his last will and testament

F. His Education

1. In 1506, When William was 12, he entered Mag-da-len Hall located inside Magdalen College and part of Oxford University
2. He spent 10 years studying at Oxford (1506-1516)

3. His first two years was in Magdalen Hall
4. He studied grammar, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music theory, rhetoric, logic, and philosophy
5. Two years later he went to Oxford
6. He graduated from Oxford with a BA on July 4, 1512
7. He continued at Oxford on his Master's degree
8. After 8 or 9 years was he then allowed to study theology but only that by Aristotle and other Greek philosophers rather than the Bible
9. He said of this time that "In the universities, they have ordained that no man shall look on the Scripture until he be noselled (nursed) in heathen learning eight or nine years, and armed with false principles with

which he is clean shut out of the understanding of the Scripture...[T]he Scripture is locked up with...false expositions, and with false principles of natural philosophy.”

10. He graduated from Oxford in 1515 as a university-trained linguist
11. He mastered 7 languages (Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, Spanish, Italian) in addition to English and partial knowledge of others including Welsh
12. He spoke all these languages fluently and had the proper dialect making it completely unknown to the hearer that he was an englishman
13. According to John Foxe, after Oxford, he went to Cambridge
14. John Foxe said while at Cambridge “he read privately to some of the students and fellows

of Magdalen College, in divinity; instructing them in the knowledge and truths of the Scriptures; and all that knew him reputed him to be a man of most virtuous disposition, and of unspotted life (p.252).

15. Psalms 119:1-2 (NASB) How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. 2 How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart.
16. During his time at Cambridge he met Thomas Bilney and John Fryth. Together “they strengthened each other’s hands in the work of reading the New Testament and preaching the gospel of repentance to their fellow students” (History of the English Bible, 1881, p.96).
17. While at Cambridge. He was regarded as “Oxford’s foremost intellectual rival in England”

18. Scholars suggest he may have received a degree while there
19. In 1521 he felt it was time to step away from the academic atmosphere to give more time to study the Greek New Testament
20. He took a job in (Gloss-ster-shere) Gloucestershire working for Sir John Walsh as the primary tutor for the children, private chaplain for the family, and personal secretary to Sir John

Those are the things we know about Tyndale's life, now let's look at...

II. His Ministry

A. Of the Gospel

1. Tyndale was Gospel-driven
2. While at Cambridge he led John Fryth to Christ and many others

3. His purpose and passion to translate the Bible in English was so that England would be saved
4. Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-15 (NASB) You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the sacred *writings* which are able to give you the wisdom that *leads to salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

His Ministry for the Gospel drove his passion for his...

B. Of Translation

1. John Foxe tells us that Tyndale was “singularly addicted to the study of the Scriptures.”
2. He yearned to see the Scriptures translated into English directly from the original Hebrew and Greek; to see the English Bible printed

and made available to the common man. He knew that this was the only spiritual hope for England

3. By 1516, the Greek NT had been printed. It was translated and printed in German by Martin Luther in 1522 but there was no English translation available other than Wycliffe's. But his was translated from the Latin Vulgate.
4. Tyndale was the first to translate it from Hebrew and Greek to English. This was at a time when the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures were not so readily available.
5. This is why he is referred to as the Father of the English Bible.
6. In 1523, Tyndale traveled to London to seek official authorization for a sanctioned translation and publication of the English Bible

7. He met with the bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, who had worked with Erasmus on his Greek NT
8. Tyndale assumed because of Tunstall's work with Erasmus that he would be open to his translation project but he was rejected
9. This rejection only deepened his convictions that England desperately needed a Bible that the common man could read
10. While in London, Tyndale preached numerous times at St. Dunstan's Church
11. This is where he met a wealthy cotton merchant named Humphrey Monmouth who had decided to underwrite Tyndale's expenses
12. Tyndale left England in the spring of 1525 at the age of 30

13. He sailed to the European Continent to launch his translation endeavor
14. He would do so without the king of England's consent which was a clear breach of the established law
15. As a result, every biblical text he translated was translated illegally
16. This would also cause him to live in exile the remainder of his life never to return to his homeland of England
17. For 12 years he would live on foreign soil as a fugitive and outlaw of the English crown
18. Paul told the Philippians in Philippians 1:29-30 (NASB) For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

19. In 1524 he arrived in Hamburg, Germany and journeyed to Wittenberg to sit under the great German Reformer Martin Luther
20. While in Wittenberg, he began the work of translating the New Testament from Greek into English
21. It appears he took a major portion of this work from May to July 1525
22. By 1526 his work was complete and ready for delivery
23. Tyndale's NT was the first to be translated from the original Greek into English
24. It was also the first to be mechanically printed
25. The first printing produced some 3000 copies

26. Over the next 8 years, two additional revised editions would follow
27. In the spring of 1526 Tyndale shipped his Bibles hidden in bales of cotton along the international trade routes to England
28. German Lutheran cloth merchants in England received the disguised shipment ready for distribution
29. The secret Protestant society, the Christian Brethren, took them throughout England to various cities, universities, and monasteries
30. They were sold to Englishmen---merchants, students, tailors, weavers, bricklayers, and peasants alike---all were hungry to read and grow in the knowledge of God's Word
31. Each NT cost 3 shillings and 2 pence which was a weeks wages for a skilled laborer

32. By the summer of 1526, church officials in England had discovered this underground circulation
33. Enraged, the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London confiscated every Tyndale Bible they could find
34. Church officials immediately declared the purchase, sale, distribution, or possession of this Bible a serious crime that would result in severe punishment
35. Tyndale spent 12 years as a fugitive
36. When he was finally caught, he was imprisoned six miles north of Brussels in the castle of Vilvoorde
37. He waited more than a year for his trial
38. During his 500 day confinement, he wrote a treatise called "Faith Alone Justifies Before

God.”

39. During his harsh winter of 1535, he wrote a final letter: “I suffer greatly from cold in the head, and am afflicted by a perpetual catarrh (discharge), which is much increase in this cell...My overcoat is worn out; my shirts are also worn out.” He requested “a lamp in the evening; it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark. But most of all I beg and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the commissary...permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that “I may pass the time in that study.”

40. John Foxe wrote that Tyndale sat in prison, he “was affecting his very...enemies” as “he converted his keeper, the keeper’s daughter, and others of his household.”

41. Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son

and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

42. In August 1536, Tyndale stood trial before his accusers, who leveled a long list of charges against him
43. Among his offenses, Tyndale asserted that justification by faith alone, human traditions cannot bind the conscience, the human will is bound by sin, there is no purgatory, neither Mary nor the saints offer prayers for us, and we are not to pray to them.
44. All this made Tyndale an enemy of both church and state. He was condemned as a heretic
45. During a public service, Tyndale would have been excommunicated and stripped of his priesthood.

46. According to the custom for such ceremonies, Tyndale emerged before a large gathering wearing his priestly robes. He was forced to kneel, as his hands would be scraped with a knife or sharp glass, symbolizing the loss of all privileges of the priesthood
47. The bread and wine of the Mass would be placed into his hands and then removed
48. He would be stripped of his vestments and reclothed as a layman
49. He then would be delivered over to the civil authorities for the inevitable sentence to death
50. Forced back into his dungeon cell, a steady stream of priests and monks came to harass him to seek a recanting
51. On October 6, 1536, Tyndale emerged from the castle and was paraded to the southern

gate of the town, where his execution stake awaited

52. A large crowd assembled behind a barricade

53. In the middle of a circular space, two great beams were raised in the familiar form of a cross

54. Hanging from the top of the central beam was a strong iron chain

55. Brushwood, straw, and logs were bundled and piled at its base

56. Amid pomp and pharisaical splendor, the procurer-general and the great doctors took their seats as spectators

57. The massive crowd parted, allowing the guards to bring Tyndale closer to his execution

58. Tyndale proceeded to the cross
59. The guards bound his feet to the bottom of the cross as the chain was fastened around his neck, pulling him tightly to the beam of wood
60. The wood was arranged around the prisoner to encase him in combustible material
61. Gunpowder was sprinkled thoroughly on the brush
62. The executioner stood behind the cross, awaiting the signal from the procurer-general to carry out the sentence
63. Most likely at this moment, Tyndale said “Lord, open the king of England’s eyes.”
64. The procurer-general gave the signal and the executioner tightened the iron noose, strangling Tyndale

65. The crowd watched Tyndale gasp for air as he suffocated and died
66. The procurer-general grabbed a lighted wax torch and handed it to the executioner, who threw it on the straw and brushwood
67. The blazing fire caused the gunpowder to explode, blowing up the corpse
68. What remained, of the limply, hanging, burnt body of Tyndale fell into the raging fire
69. Revelation 14:13 (NASB) And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."
70. God ultimately answered Tyndale's dying prayer

71. In 1536, the year he was martyred, a complete English Bible was already circulating in England, unknown to Tyndale
72. This work was predominantly drawn from Tyndale's own translation
73. The first of these Bibles was the Coverdale Bible, printed in 1535
74. A second English translation of the entire Bible would come as a result of the efforts of John Rogers in 1537
75. This version was known as the Matthew Bible
76. In September 1538, the king issued a decree that a copy of the Bible in English and Latin should be placed in every church in England

77. The permissible copies of the Bible were the Coverdale Bible and the Matthew Bible

78. In 1539 Coverdale issued a revised version of his translation called the Great Bible (so named for its size) which received popular acclaim and the official approval of the king

As I have read and meditated on Tyndale's life, I've asked myself what is...

III. His Message

A. The Bible is the Word of God

1. You can take the very doctrines of Scripture and see the beliefs Tyndale held because he translated them for everyone to read (here are a few)
 - a) The Trinity (Gen.1:1)
 - b) Six 24 hour day creation (Gen.1-2)
 - c) The fall of man (Gen.3)
 - d) Sin (Gen.3-5)

- e) The global flood (Gen.6-9)
- f) Jesus as Messiah and God (Mat.1:23)
- g) The virgin birth (Luke 2)
- h) The miracles of Jesus (all 4 gospels)
- i) The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (all 4 gospels)
- j) The return of Jesus (1 Thess.4:13-18)
- k) The rise of Antichrist (2 Thess.2)
- l) The Great Tribulation (Mat.24)
- m) The rapture (1 Thess.4:13-18)
- n) The Millennium (Rev.21)
- o) The Eternal state (Rev.22)

2. His passion to translate the Bible in the language of the people revealed his belief in the Bible being the Word of God
3. He said in 2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, (lit. God breathed - ESV) and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

B. God is Sovereign

1. He was convinced that the power of God alone could change the hearts of kings and plowboys alike
2. Divine sovereignty was the underlying framework that held his life and theology together
3. Psalms 99:1-2 (NASB) The Lord *reigns*, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned *above* the cherubim, let the earth shake! ² The Lord is great in Zion, and *He is exalted above all the peoples*.

C. Man is Sinful

1. Tyndale taught that at the moment of conception, all people inherit a radically sin-corrupted nature
2. He wrote, “By nature, through the fall of Adam, are we the children of wrath, heirs of

the vengeance of God by birth, yea, and from our conception. And we have our fellowship with damned devils, under the power of darkness and rule of Satan, while we are yet in our mother's wombs; and though we do not show the fruits of sin [as soon as we are born], yet we are full of the natural poison, whereof all sinful deeds spring, and cannot but sin outwards, (but we never so young,) [as soon as we are able to work] if occasion be given: for our nature is to do sin, as is the nature of serpent to sting."

3. Psalms 51:5 (NKJV) Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

D. Man Needs Salvation

1. If he didn't believe this then why translate the Bible in the language of the people - leave it in Latin so no one can read and understand it

2. Why risk your life and spend 12 years as a fugitive if you didn't believe that man is a sinner in need of a Savior
3. Probably the most familiar verse in the Bible that he translated was John 3:16

CONCLUSION

1. There is so much we can learn from this man
2. Commitment, perseverance, trust, faith, courage, purpose
3. 2 Timothy 2:1-13
4. Nothing deterred him from his commitment to translate the Bible into English
5. What has God put on your heart for the salvation of His people?

6. Have you given up because you've had some opposition to it?

7. Let's pray