

(Biographies) William Tyndale

by John Piper

John Piper's sermon on William Tyndale highlights his pivotal role in translating the Bible into English and the lasting impact of his work on Christianity and the English language.

Duration: 1:18:44

Scripture: Numbers 6:24-26, Matthew 5:4, Matthew 6:9, Matthew 26:41, Luke 22:62, John 1:1, Romans 3:28

Topics: "Justification By Faith", "Bible Translation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of justification by grace through faith alone, apart from works of the law. He emphasizes that this concept is at the heart of the Bible and a passion for Bible translation. The speaker highlights the influence of Tyndale, a translator, preacher, poet, dramatist, and journalist, who played a significant role in bringing the gospel to the common man through his translation of the Bible. The sermon also explores how Tyndale achieved this remarkable accomplishment by emphasizing the need for pastors to think and work hard to achieve spiritual goals.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.desiringgod.org. Before I pray, I want to highlight the biography from which almost everything I know about William Tyndale came. You should not be very impressed with these talks as though I'm some scholar about Tyndale.

I just do what you do. The summer before, I read a biography. So don't be impressed.

Just go do it. Do it for your church. And this was a riveting biography.

David Daniel, William Tyndale, a biographer. He's a professor of literature, formerly University of London, and I could hardly put it down, which says something about me because I was a lit major, and he loves Tyndale. And does not like Thomas More.

And you will find out why in this talk. So I think they have a bunch of these at the bookstore, so run out, and it's not expensive because it's just cheap paper. And I enjoyed this very much.

There are others, but if you're going to get one, I'd get this one. So before I pray and then go into it, I sat down over this manuscript this morning and I asked myself the question, what do I hope and expect that you will take away from? So on exit interviews, if somebody stuck a mic in your face and said, what do you

remember from that talk? I think these three things might be what you would say. I hope they would be what you would say.

One justification by grace through faith alone, apart from works of the law, is at the heart of the Bible and at the heart of a passion for Bible translation. Surprising, maybe that that would come out of the life of Tyndale, but I think you're going to just hear it over and over again. That's number one.

Number two, vague, doctrinally minimizing language common to some emergent church and new perspective writers is not postmodern, but premodern because it is perpetual. Number three, the Bible with justification by faith at the center of its gospel is worth suffering and dying for. I think that would be the third thing.

So let me pray and then we'll try to unload, unpack some of Tyndale's life, unload me and unpack him. Let's pray. Father in heaven, I pray now for help in being faithful to the providence of your exercise in the life of William Tyndale from 1494 to 1536 and the ripple effects that followed from it to this very moment.

I praise you for his life and what he achieved by your help. And I want with the book of Hebrews to honor the leaders who taught us the word of God, indeed gave us the word of God. And so help me, I pray, and you teach us now from the lessons of the life of William Tyndale, I ask in Jesus name.

Amen. Stephen Vaughn was an English merchant who was commissioned by Thomas Cromwell, who was the advisor to Henry VIII, the king of England, to go to the continent, find William Tyndale in exile and persuade him to come back to England. Vaughn wrote letters back to the king and in a June 19, 1531 lecture, Vaughn wrote this.

I find him always singing one note, which is why I chose that as the title for this talk. And the note was, will the king of England give his official endorsement to a vernacular Bible for all of his English subjects? If not, I will not come home. And if so, I will give myself up to him at any cost.

That was the passion, the one note that drove William Tyndale to see a Bible translated from the Greek and Hebrew into ordinary English available for every person. Henry VIII was very angry with William Tyndale because he was a strong reformer and exponent of Luther's views. Luther and he were contemporaries.

Whether they met, we don't know. And Tyndale had written one book in response to Thomas More, who was the chancellor under Henry VIII, very critical of More's criticism of him. And this made Henry VIII very angry.

And Thomas More and the king had written together a defense of the seven sacraments. Thomas More was radically anti-Lutheran, radically anti-Tyndale, and radically Roman Catholic. And Tyndale had come in for excoriating criticism from Thomas More.

Thomas More had, Danielle said, a near rabid hatred for William Tyndale. He wrote three quarters of a million words in three books attacking William Tyndale. So the relationship here was poor between these two.

In spite of all the hatred and all the anger in the king and in his chancellor, the king extended mercy to Tyndale through Stephen Vaughan, his emissary, to go get Tyndale and bring him home. And so he read to Tyndale, the king's royal majesty is inclined to mercy, pity, and compassion. Now Tyndale was easily

moved and he came to tears when he heard that.

Picture this now. He's been in exile for seven years. He left in 1524.

He was born in 1494. He's been outside of his own country because he was fearful of his life in caring about the translation of the Bible. And here his sovereign, his king, is extending what sounds like authentic mercy.

And he was brought to tears. And then he sounded his one note again. Will the king authorize a vernacular English Bible for the people from the original languages? This is what he said.

I assure you. If it would stand with the king's most gracious pleasure to grant only a bare text, he meant a text with no Lutheran notes attached to it, just a bare text to be put among the people like as is put forth among the subjects of the emperor in these parts and other Christian princes, I shall immediately make faithful promise never to write more. I think he was always using that word more in a double sense.

Not abide two days in these parts with the same, but immediately to repair unto his realm and their most humbly submit myself at the feet of his royal majesty, offering my body to suffer what pain or torture, yea, what death, his disgrace, will his his grace, his grace will. So this translation be obtained until that time. I will abide the asperity of all chances whatsoever shall come and endure my life in as many pains as it is able to bear and suffer.

In other words, I will give myself up to the king under one condition, namely, will the king authorize an English Bible translated from Greek and Hebrew for the common man and the king refused and Tyndale never went home again. Instead, the king and the Roman Catholic Church would not provide the Bible. Tyndale would provide the Bible for the English speaking common man, even if it cost him his life, which it did five years later as he was strangled and then burned near Brussels in 1536.

When he was 28 years old, he died at 42. When he was 28 years old, 1522, he was serving as a tutor, kind of like a little governor in a home with two sons. The master of the house was named John Walsh in Gloucestershire, spending most of his time studying Erasmus Greek New Testament.

Now, that Greek New Testament was the first printed Greek New Testament in the history of the world six years earlier, 1516. And we should pause here to let the incendiary effect of that event, namely the publication of the Greek New Testament in print so that it could be distributed land on us. David Daniel describes the magnitude like this.

This was the first time that the Greek New Testament had been printed. It is no exaggeration to say that it set fire to Europe. Luther translated it into his famous German version 1522.

Four years before Tyndale did his in a few years, there appeared translations from the Greek into most European vernaculars. They were the true basis of the popular reformation. Every day in John Walsh's house as a young tutor, graduate of Oxford, he was reading and reading.

He was a ordained Catholic priest living, working as a tutor and reading Tyndale's, I mean, Erasmus Greek New Testament and becoming increasingly persuaded of his reformed views and making himself a colossal pain in this Catholic household. As scholars were coming to dinner at night and Tyndale would be sharing what he's seeing in the Greek Testament. And it sounded very un-Catholic to many of these men.

And his host was becoming nervous for his safety. One night, John Fox records this, a learned Catholic scholar at dinner became so exasperated with what Tyndale was saying that he responded, we were better to be without God's law than the Pope's. In response to that, Tyndale uttered probably his most famous sentence, maybe second most famous.

He said, I defy the Pope and all his laws, if God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the scriptures than thou dost. And four years later, Tyndale finished the English translation of the Greek New Testament in Worms, Germany, and began to smuggle it back, layered in bales of cloth. It was no, this is such a remarkable thing when you when you study history and you see the way that God takes the seemingly insignificant providences of our lives.

He grew up in Gloucestershire, which was the cloth working district of England. And therefore, all of his connections as he moved to the continent were worth the cloth makers. And therefore, he had a network by which to take these seven hundred interleaved pages of this pocket sized fifteen, twenty six first ever English translation from the Greek and Hebrew and layered in between the cloth, put it on boats and three thousand of them in the first edition were distributed in England, a most remarkable providence.

By October of fifteen, twenty six, after the release in March, it had become banned by Bishop Tunstall in London. Nevertheless, it was making its way into England with its revolutionary effect in fifteen, thirty four. He published a revision of it.

In the meantime, you've got to feel the wonder of this as well. In the meantime, between fifteen, twenty six and the first edition and fifteen, thirty four, the revision he had learned Hebrew. There were probably two men in all of England that knew the Hebrew language.

He learned it probably informs Germany. It was new. It was earth shaking that the Hebrew Old Testament could be read and translated into vernacular and that the Greek could be read and translated into the vernacular.

Tyndale, before he did his revision, wanted to know about all these Old Testament quotations. And so he he learned Hebrew and therefore his revision is more of a masterpiece. David Daniel says it was the glory of his life's work.

The fifteen thirty four revision of the Greek New Testament into vernacular English for the first time ever in history. The Greek New Testament was translated into English the first time ever it was translated in or in a printed form. Now, before Tyndale, you're wondering there was John Wycliffe.

John Wycliffe had no printing press to his expose at his disposal in 1580, 1388 and run up to the end of that century. But he did with the people around him who can be called Lollards. He did translate from the Vulgate, from the Latin, and so you could search out and find English big written out Bibles and be burned for reading them.

It's the most astonishing thing. So I'm not saying that Tyndale put the Bible into English first. He moved it from Greek and Hebrew into English for doing an Enron around the Latin Vulgate.

And first it was printed so that it could be run off quickly and distributed wisely. He also translated the Pentateuch from the Hebrew Joshua to Second Chronicles and Jonah. And that's as far as he got before he was cut down with martyrdom in 1536.

The wonder of his translation is that it became the basis of first the great Bible, Coverdale's Bible, 1539. It became the basis of the Geneva Bible. 1557, a million copies of the Geneva Bible were sold between 1560 and 1640 in England.

But you don't get a clear impression of the amazing achievement of this New Testament, Pentateuch, Joshua through Second Chronicles and Jonah that much of the Bible until you draw the comparison out with the authorized version 1611, which we all know is the King James Version 1611. The King James Version, when you do a statistical analysis, takes over roughly nine tenths of Tyndale's Bible in the parts that he translated. Let me give you a sampling.

And I think we just take this for granted. We don't realize the impact on the English language and on our spiritual vocabulary from a man who was willing to give his life to bring from the Greek and the Hebrew into vernacular, because English in those days was a rude and difficult language to handle. And he brought it over with such skill that Daniel says he is.

Tyndale is more often quoted today than Shakespeare. People just don't know it. But here are some of his words.

Let there be light now with each of these, you should just imagine if you know Hebrew and Greek, this could have been translated in another way. These words could have come out another way. And here we are, 500 years later, 450, and we're still using Tyndale's language.

Let there be light. Am I my brother's keeper? The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be merciful unto thee.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace, except for the word thee and the word merciful. I use those very words almost every Sunday, and I'm quoting Tyndale. It's just breathtaking to think about the impact over the centuries.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God, Tyndale verbatim. There were shepherds abiding in the field. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.

Our father, which art in heaven hallowed be thy name. The signs of the times, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went out and wept bitterly.

Now, you may think. Virtually every modern translation, except for the message, preserves wept bitterly. That's amazing.

It's exactly right. In fact, Danielle, who's a literature scholar, said those two words are still used by most modern versions. It has not been improved upon for 500 years, least of all by one recent translation, went out and cried hard until unlike that phrase, Danielle says, unlike that phrase, the rhythm of his two words carries the experience.

We just we those of us who are not given to language, we don't know how language works. We just benefit from people who do. And Tyndale was one a few more a law unto themselves.

In him, we live, move and have our being, though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, fight the good fight and on and on and on. Daniel says the list of such proverbial phrases is endless. Five hundred years after his great work, newspaper headlines still quote Tyndale, though unknowingly, and he has

reached more people than even Shakespeare.

Now, Luther is usually credited in his 1522 translation into German for having created a German language. Danielle claims the same for Tyndale in these words in his Bible translations, Tyndale, Tyndale's conscious use of everyday words without inversions in a neutral word order and his wonderful ear for rhythmic patterns gave to English not only a Bible language, but a new prose. England was blessed as a nation in that the language of its principal book, as the Bible in English rapidly became, was the fountain from which flowed the lucidity, suppleness and expressive range of the greatest prose thereafter.

His craftsmanship with the English language amounted to genius. He translated two thirds of the Bible so well that his translations endured until today. Now, that was not merely a literary phenomenon.

It was a spiritual explosion. Tyndale's Bible and writings were the kindling that set the Reformation ablaze in England. So now the question I want to pose is how did he do this? How did he achieve this remarkable? Accomplishment, and I have two things in mind by the accomplishment of one is the sheer beauty and glory and durable nature of the translation, and the other is the explosive spiritual effect of his life, his writings and the Bible on England.

I think the answer to how he did it. Can be given if we ask two ways that a pastor must die in the ministry. Number one, he must die to the notion that we do not have to think hard or work hard to achieve spiritual goals.

He must die to the notion that you don't have to think hard or work hard to accomplish spiritual goals. That notion must die. And secondly, he must die to the notion that our thinking and our working is decisive in achieving spiritual goals.

Now, if we take those two deaths, the death to the notion that you don't have to work and think to accomplish spiritual goals and the death to the notion that working and thinking are the key and decisive causes of spiritual goals. If we take those two things and lay them on the life of William Tyndale, I think we might get a clue to what was the key to this man's accomplishment. I'm basing this on Second Timothy two, seven, which goes like this.

Paul says to Timothy, think over what I say. For the Lord will give you understanding in everything. First, Timothy, think about what I'm saying.

Exercise your mind. Don't coast and glide through my words. Put on your thinking cap and think with me, Timothy, for the Lord will sovereignly and graciously in and through and sometimes in spite of your thinking, give you understanding that comes from God.

But you can't short circuit your brain. Now, there it is in the Bible, and I think the life of Tyndale works it out most remarkably. Now, the way these two truths come together in Tyndale, I think, can be best seen by drawing a comparison between William Tyndale and Erasmus.

This was for me perhaps the most illuminating new discovery for me. I knew something about the translation. I knew something about the martyrdom.

I knew virtually nothing about his relationship with Erasmus and how this worked itself out and how they were similar and dissimilar. So here's what I'm doing right now. I'm going to compare Erasmus and

Tyndale, how they were similar and how they were dissimilar.

And all the while I'm looking for how Erasmus accomplished what he did by dying to the notion you don't have to think and work and dying to the notion that God isn't the sovereign one who sometimes in spite of and in and through our thinking and working brings about spiritual effects. They were very, very similar in some regards. First of all, their time frame.

Erasmus was 28 years older than Tyndale. Both died in 1536. Tyndale, a martyr of the Catholic Church and Erasmus, a member in good standing in the church that put Tyndale to death.

Now, the similarities are remarkable. Erasmus was a Latin scholar. He was a university man, just like Tyndale was.

He printed the first Greek Testament, the first printed Greek Testament. He taught at Oxford and in Cambridge when he came over to England for a season. We don't know whether they ever met.

At least I couldn't find any evidence one way or the other that they met. On the surface, there were a lot of similarities. Tyndale knew eight languages, Latin, Greek, German, French, Hebrew, Spanish, Italian, and English.

Both of them loved the natural power of language and both of them were a part of the rebirth of interest in the way language works in those Renaissance days. Here's an example. This one just blew me away.

This was so illuminating with where Shakespeare came from and where Tyndale and Erasmus came from. Erasmus wrote a book called *De Copia*. Now, *Copia*, you can hear our English word *copious* means fullness, overflowing.

De Copia was a book written to help students. And since he was a head of Tyndale, Tyndale was one of those students at Oxford, used *De Copia*. And so you need to get a mind here.

Where did this New Testament come from with such excellence? It didn't come out of the blue and it didn't fall from heaven without hard work and craftsmanship. Where did that come from? *De Copia* trained students to use the copiousness of language. It helped them discover the infinite possibilities of crafted language.

It was aimed at helping us, them in those days, not sink down into mere jargon and worn out slang and uncreative, unimaginative, prosaic, colorless, boring speech. And here was one of the lessons from that book. That is a lesson assigned to students.

Give 150 ways of saying, your letter has delighted me very much. You wonder where Shakespeare came from. He came from the 50 years leading up to his birth, 1564, in that kind of milieu.

I mean, what would you you sit down in school and they sign your sentence? Your letter has delighted me very much. And they make you write that 150 ways. Good night.

You're going to become a certain kind of translator, preacher, poet, dramatist, journalist. I mean, your mouth and your mind are just going to be so full of what language can do. And you won't stand up and do the offertory prayer, leading God and direct, lead God direct.

Where'd that come from? Lead God direct. I heard that every Sunday for 15 years in my Southern Baptist church. Good night.

God deliver us from pastors who don't prepare and therefore do not default to spontaneity, but default to rut. God help us. Tyndale died to the notion that translation isn't costly for his brain and his hard work.

Both Erasmus and Tyndale were educated in an atmosphere of conscious craftsmanship. That is, they both believed in hard work to say things clearly, creatively, compellingly in a way that spoke for Christ. And they both believed, surprisingly, maybe that the New Testament should be translated from the Greek into every language.

Listen to Erasmus. If you had shown me this quote before this, I would have said that's Tyndale's quote. Here's what Erasmus wrote.

Christ wishes his mysteries to be published as widely as possible. I would wish even all women to read the gospel and epistles of St. Paul, and I wish that they were translated into all languages of all Christian people, that they might be read and known and not merely by the Scots and Irish, but by the Turks and the Saracens. I wish that the husbandmen may sing parts of them at his plow and that the weaver may warble them at his shuttle, that the traveler may, with their narratives, beguile the weariness of the way.

That's Erasmus talking, and Tyndale couldn't have said it any better about his plowboy that he was going to translate for. They were concerned, both of them, with the corruption of the church. Erasmus and more mocked the monasteries.

They were so corrupt. So you have Catholics, good solid Catholics, who burned Protestants, mocking the abuses in the monasteries. So Erasmus was that far along the way.

Tyndale translated Erasmus's book, the Enchiridion, which is a handbook for Christian life, in which he unpacked what he called the Philosophia Christi, kind of the life, the philosophy of Christ. And that's where the similarities end. There was a massive difference between Erasmus and Tyndale.

And it has to do with the other half of the paradox. They would both agree on the first half, you must die to the notion that it doesn't cost work, it doesn't cost thinking in order to bring about spiritual ends or translate a Bible. They agreed on that.

But when it came over to only sovereign grace is the decisive cause in and through and often in spite of our hard work to awaken a human soul or bring about a European reformation, the ways parted. Erasmus clashed violently with Martin Luther over the freedom of the will. And you're aware of Luther's bondage of the will and Erasmus book, freedom of the will.

They were going at each other and Tyndale is decisively with Luther here. Listen to what he wrote. Our will is locked and knit faster under the will of the devil than could a hundred thousand chains bind a man to a post.

Because by nature we are evil, therefore we both think and do evil and are under vengeance under the law, convict to eternal damnation by the law and are contrary to the will of God in all of our will and all the things to which we consent. We are consenting to the will of the fiend. It is not possible for a natural man to consent to the law that it should be good or that God should be righteous, which maketh the law.

Now, that view of human bondage and human sinfulness set the stage for Tyndale to grasp the glory of God's sovereign grace in the gospel. Erasmus and Thomas More with him did not see this. They did not see the depth of the human condition, their own condition, and so did not see the glory of the explosive power of what the reformers saw in the gospel.

What the reformers like Tyndale and Luther saw was not the philosophy of Christ, but a massive work of God in the death and resurrection of Christ to save hopeless and slaved hell bound sinners. Erasmus just does not live in this realm. He doesn't live in the Pauline realm of horrible condition and gracious blood bought salvation.

He has the appearance of reform in the Inca Iridium, but something is missing. To walk from Erasmus to Tyndale is to move to use the words of Mark Twain. To move from a lightning bug to a lightning bolt, you have to read the two to understand what I'm saying.

David Daniel puts it like this. Something in the Inca Iridium is missing. It is a masterpiece of humanist piety.

But the activity of Christ in the gospels, his special work of salvation so strongly detailed there and in the epistles of Paul, is largely missing. Christologically, where Luther thunders, Erasmus makes a sweet sound. What to Tyndale was an impregnable stronghold feels in the Inca Iridium like a summer pavilion.

That's the end of the quote from Daniel. Yeah. So where Luther and Tyndale were in blood earnest about the dreadfulness of our human condition and the glory of sovereign grace revealed through Christ and by the Holy Spirit, Erasmus and Thomas Moore joked and bantered.

Erasmus sent a copy of the 95 theses of Luther to Thomas Moore as soon as they appeared in 1517. And with it, he sent a letter along with, quote, jocular. It was a, quote, jocular letter, including the anti papal games and the witty satirical diatribes against abuses within the church, which both of them loved to make.

Now, I linger here over this difference between Tyndale and Erasmus because I'm trying to show how Tyndale accomplished what he accomplished. And it wasn't mere craftsmanship as important as that was. There was an explosion to the Reformation coming from his books and and the translation.

Erasmus didn't come close to unleashing a reformation. Thomas Moore burned reformers. They were elitist.

They were nuanced. Their language had layers of subtlety. They were entrapped in kinds of church tradition.

Erasmus and Thomas Moore. Satirized. The monasteries.

But. They were playing games. It had the ring of gamesmanship about it.

I am so familiar with this from conferences to which I have gone. Or academic societies where I have visited or lectures I have listened to on the Internet or sat under. And you get the distinct impression when this PhD is talking, is there any blood on his hands? Is there anything there? Does he realize what hell is? Can there be any reality between that tone, between that gamesmanship of language, that nuancing and layering and that lack of corners, that ambiguity, that fog today? There are notable Christian writers.

When you read them. Sound just like Erasmus. They write for the emergent church.

Some of them write for the new perspective. Let me read you the description by David Danielle of this reality.

That I so abominate. Not only is there no fully realized Christ or devil in Erasmus book. There's a touch of irony about it all with a feeling of the writer cultivating a faint touch of superior ambiguity.

As if to be dogmatic, for example, about the full theology of the work of Christ was to rather be distasteful below the best elite humanist heights. By contrast, Tyndale was ferociously single minded. The matter in hand, the immediate access of the soul to God without intermediary is far too important for hints of faint ironic superiority.

Tyndale is as four square as a carpenter's tool. But in Erasmus account of the origins of his book, there is a touch of the sort of layering of ironies found in the games with personae. End quote, that's what made this that's what made this book hard for me to put down.

This book was written without a clue that there is such a thing as the emergent church. With its slithering language. He just he didn't know what he was talking about.

It is ironic and sad today. That supposedly avant garde Christian writers can strike this cool, evasive, imprecise, artistic, superficially reformist pose of Erasmus and call it postmodern and capture a generation of unwitting, historically naive, emergent people who don't know that they are being duped by the same old verbal tactics of elitist humanist ambiguity that we saw last year in the Aryans at Nicaea and that we see this year in Erasmus. It is not postmodern.

It is premodern because it is perpetual and the only people who don't know that are people who don't know history. And so join in reading with me history so that you'll be free from the nonsense that captures so many people. So something new had arrived in this poetic, ambiguous, unsettled, no corners talk that sounds so free from what a few years ago, aping the Aryans and aping Erasmus and coming across as new to our poor, benighted 20 somethings who don't know there was anything that happened before 1975.

What drove Tyndale to sing one note all his life was the rock solid conviction that all humans are in bondage to sin, blind, dead, damned, helpless, and that God has acted, he's acted in Christ in order to bear that sin and provide our righteousness. This was what drove his passion for Bible translation. The Bible must be translated for the sake of the liberating, life-giving gospel.

There was only one hope from the condition that he saw of our hearts in the Bible, quote, neither can any creature loose the bonds, save the blood of Christ only. Another quote, by grace, we are plucked out of Adam, the ground of all evil and grafted into Christ, the root of all goodness in Christ. God loved us.

He's elect and chosen before the world began and reserved us unto the knowledge of his son and his holy gospel. And when the gospel is preached, this is why he had to he had to get this out of the Vulgate. It was in prison one thousand years robbing the people of God in the Latin Vulgate, which nobody in the common man's shoes could read in prison.

He had to get it free because when the gospel, this is Tyndale, when the gospel is preached to us, it openeth our hearts and giveth us grace to believe and put it the spirit of Christ in us. And we know him as our father, most merciful and consent to the law and love it inwardly in our heart and desire to fulfill it and

sorrow because we do not. This this massive bondage to sin and glorious blood bought deliverance is missing from Erasmus.

He's playing at the philosophy of Christ. It's missing the massive Pauline theology is skipped justification by faith. Through grace, apart from works, was everything to William Tyndale and the center of the gospel, which was the center of the Bible.

And it was for this that he translated and for this that he was burned, quote, by faith, we are saved only in believing the promises. And though faith be never without love and good works, yet is our saving imputed neither to love nor unto good works, but unto faith only faith. The mother of all good works justifieth us before we can bring forth any good work as the husband marrieth his wife before he can have any lawful children by her.

That's what drove him. And that's why he was killed. So my answer to the question, how did William Tyndale accomplish what he accomplished in writing his books and in translating the New Testament is number one, he worked assiduously.

He never married. He just worked until they killed him to try to put the Bible into English. He worked assiduously as a skilled Oxford trained artist of language.

And secondly, he was deeply passionate, unlike Erasmus, for the gospel, for the doctrinal truths of sovereign grace. Man is lost, spiritually dead, condemned, hell bound. God is sovereign.

Christ is sufficient. Faith is all. And the Bible must be translated so that the average man can have his own exposure to this great truth.

Now, at this point, what takes my breath away. Is. Why? Is it not incomprehensible that the church so hated the translation of Scripture? What in the world does that mean? That the church, if this was not Muslims burning Christians who wanted to translate the Bible, it was the Church of Jesus Christ burning people because they wanted to translate the Bible.

That just I have to get inside that I've got to figure that out. In the late 1300s, it was beginning to happen. John Wycliffe and the supporters called Lollards was just a term of abuse that meant tongue waggars.

They began to translate the Bible by hand, distribute the copies around. So in 1401, the parliament passed day heretical comburendo on the burning of heretics to make heresy punishable by burning at the stake 1401. And they had one kind of person in view, Bible translators.

This is pre-Luther way pre-Luther 60 years earlier. Then 1408, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, created what were called the Constitutions of Oxford, which were still the law when Tyndale came along. And they said this is a quote from the Constitutions of Oxford.

It is a dangerous thing, as witnesses, blessed St. Jerome, to translate the text of the Holy Scripture out of one tongue into another. For in the translation, the same sense is not always easily kept. We therefore decree and ordain that no man hereafter by his own authority translate any text of scripture into English or any other tongue, and that no man can read any such book.

In part or in whole, you put the Oxford Constitutions together with de heretical comburendo, and you have one clear meaning. If you read this, we will burn you alive. And they did.

They did. John Bale, the dramatist who died in 1563, born in 1495, a year after Tyndale wrote that as a boy of 11, he watched the burning of a young man in Norwich for possessing the Lord's Prayer in English. John Fox records that seven Lollards were burned at Coventry in 1519 for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer in English.

The church burned seven men for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer in English. Tyndale hoped to escape this condemnation by going to London in 1524 and asking the bishop for permission, because that's what the Oxford Constitution says. If you get authority from the church, it's not against the law.

Then he hoped he could get it. Not only could he not get it, but he had to flee for his life when they found out he wanted to do it. And he left in 1524 and never came home again.

And you get a flavor of what happened in those years. Twelve years, he was in exile on the continent, the Netherlands and Germany, Belgium. He watched the rising tide of persecution and the pain he felt as he watched young men burned for being converted by his books.

For example, his closest friend, John Frith, F-R-I-T-H, was arrested in London, 28 years old, tried by Thomas More and burned alive July 4, 1531. Then came Richard Bayfield, another friend of Tyndale. Betrayed, he was the one who ran the ships back and forth with the printed leaves, which were then sewn together in England.

Thomas More wrote on December 4, 1531, Bayfield, the monk and apostate, was well and worthily burned in Smithfield. Three weeks later, John Tewksbury, converted by reading the parable of the wicked mammon written by William Tyndale, falling in love with the doctrine of justification, was arrested and tied to a tree in Thomas More's garden, had bands of leather wrapped around his head and tightened until blood came out of his eyes, was sent to the tower and put in the rack until he was lame and then burned alive. Thomas More wrote that he rejoiced that his victim was now in hell where Tyndale is, like to find him when they come together.

Don't get your biography from movies like a man for all seasons. Bainham was next. John Bainham, he abjured because of his wife the first time.

You know what abjure means? He denied Christ because his wife was being threatened. I mean, it's one thing to be threatened. Have your wife threatened.

His conscience plagued him so bad that he walked one Sunday morning into St. Augustine's Church in London and at a point in the service stood, signed his death warrant by lifting up a copy of Tyndale's New Testament and pleading with the people to die rather than deny the word of God. And so they burned him. There was Thomas Bilney, Thomas Duskate, John Bent, Thomas Harding, Andrew Hewitt, Elizabeth Barton and others burned alive for sharing Tyndale's view and loving his translation.

Why? Why so hostile to the Bible in English? Well, there were surface reasons and there were deeper reasons. It shocked, it just absolutely shocked Tyndale that Bishop Tunstall in 1526 burned the Bible. They collected the Bibles and burned the Bible.

That shocked him more than burning people. He said, if they will burn the word of Christ, they would burn. The surface reasons went something like this.

You can collect them by reading any of the histories. One, the English language is rude and unworthy of the exalted language of the Bible. Two, when one translates, errors creep in and it's safer for the soul not to translate.

Three, if the Bible is in English, each man will become his own interpreter and many will be led astray into heresy and be condemned for their soul's sake. We shouldn't allow that to happen. Four, only priests are given the divine unction and grace to understand the scriptures.

Five, there is a special sacramental value to the Latin service that people do not understand. That's very key. Grace is mediated through the priestly ministry of Latin that does not work through the brain of the listener.

There were deeper reasons. One was doctrinal and one was ecclesiastical. Thomas Moore and others knew that for some centuries, the church had begun to teach and practice things that could not be found in the Bible.

And that if the Bible were unleashed to enough people, this could become known and the power and the control over people's lives would collapse, which is exactly what happened. The priesthood, purgatory, penance would come down. Thomas Moore's criticism and nobody criticized with more words and more violently and with more hatred the translation of the Bible into English than Thomas Moore did.

And there were five basic words that he hated. The way Tyndale translated number one, Tyndale translated presbyter Ross as elder, not priest. Number two, Ecclesia Tyndale translated as congregation, not church.

Three, Tyndale translated metano as repent and not do penance. And example, a ghetto Tyndale translated as acknowledge or admit, not confess. And he translated agape as love, not charity.

Almost all of the three quarters of a million words that were poured out by Moore were in response to those five issues. And David Danielle comments like this. Tyndale cannot possibly have been unaware that those words in particular undercut the entire sacramental structure of the thousand year church throughout Europe, Asia and North Africa.

It was the Greek New Testament that was undoing and under cutting. So there it came, the Reformation. England would not be a Catholic nation.

The reformed faith would very soon flourish in due time. Let me move toward an end with this question. So Tyndale, what did it cost you? To do this.

What did it cost you to write your books and to translate all the New Testament so well with such passion and craftsmanship that we quote it in our Bible? My guess is if somebody did a study, the ESV today would be 70 percent Tyndale. That would be my guess. Maybe a little more.

What did it cost you to do this, Tyndale? He fled his homeland in 1524. The reason I'm not telling you more about his life because we don't know more about his life in detail. He was killed in 1536.

So for 12 years he was a fugitive, needed to stay in hiding, have friends around him who would protect him in Antwerp or Worms or Hamburg. Stephen Vaughn, in that letter I referred to earlier, gives a glimpse in Tyndale's own words of his condition during those years. He refers to my pains, my poverty, my exile out

of my natural country, my bitter absence from my friends, my hunger, my thirst, my cold, the great danger wherewith I am everywhere encompassed, and finally innumerable other hard and sharp fightings which I endure.

And those sufferings, 12 years long, came to a climax, May 21, 1535, in the midst of Tyndale's great Old Testament labors. Oh, that we had psalms in Tyndale. We think that the King James did a beautiful job.

Would that we had Tyndale on the Psalms, but we don't because on May 21, as David Daniel gives us just in this one sentence, the ugliness of what happened, malice, self-pity, villainy, deceit were about to destroy everything. These evils came to the English house in Antwerp, wholly uninvited, in the form of an egregious Englishman, Henry Phillips. Phillips had won Tyndale's trust by long visits and fawning and lying and deceit and false support and financial help and sharing meals.

And John Fox tells what happened on May 21. I'll read it to you. So, when it was dinnertime, Master Tyndale went forth with Phillips, and at the going forth of Poyntz's house was a long, narrow entry so that two could not go in a front.

Mr. Tyndale would have put Phillips before him, but Phillips would in no wise, but put Master Tyndale before, for that he pretended to show great humanity. So Master Tyndale, being a man of no great stature, went before, and Phillips, a tall, comely man, followed behind him, who had set officers on either side of the door upon two seats, who being there, might see who came in the entry, and coming through the same entry, Phillips pointed his finger over Master Tyndale's head down to him, that the officers who sat at the door might see that it was he whom they should take. Then they took him and brought him to the emperor's attorney or procurer general, where he dined.

Then came the procurer general to the house of Poyntz and sent away all that was there of Master Tyndale's, as well as his books, as other things, and from thence Tyndale was had to the castle of Filford, 18 English miles from Antwerp, and there he remained until he was put to death 18 months later. Now, that castle is located about six miles north of Brussels, about the same distance from Louvain, and he was there for 18 months. What was the charge? The charge was heresy for not agreeing with the Holy Roman Emperor, in a nutshell, being a Lutheran, which in a nutshell meant justification by faith.

Latomus was one of the four charged to prove he was a heretic. So four professors or clergymen from Louvain, highly intelligent, mostly respectful, sat with him in jail for months grilling him. Latomus wrote three books in response to what he heard from Tyndale.

Tyndale, he said, wrote a book, it's a long essay, in prison, entitled, *Sola Fides Justificat Apudeum*, Faith Alone Justifies Before God. This was the key issue for why the Bible had to be translated and why he was burned. They were not easy months.

It was a long dying. We get one glimpse and only one from his letters, and I want to read you this beautiful, beautiful word. It just shows almost everything I've tried to say, as well as a remarkably sweet spirit, though he could be very brutal with his criticism at times.

I don't want to misstate it. Here's what he wrote in a letter to the overseer of the castle in September, arrested in May, September, it's starting to get cold in the cell. I beg your lordship and that of the Lord Jesus that if I am to remain here through the winter, you will request the commissary to have the kindness to send me from the goods of mine, which he has a warmer cap.

For I suffer greatly from cold in the head and am afflicted by a perpetual Qatar infection of the respiratory system, which is much increased in this cell, a warmer coat also for this, which I have is very thin, a piece of cloth to patch my leggings. My overcoat is worn out. My shirt is also worn out.

He has a woolen shirt if he will be good enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of a thicker cloth to put on above. He has also warmer nightcaps and I asked to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening.

It is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark. But most of all. Take that very seriously after what he just said.

But most of all, I beg and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the commissary that he will kindly permit me to have a Hebrew Bible. A Hebrew grammar and a Hebrew dictionary that I may pass the time in that study in return. May you is peonies writing to probably who ran the thing in return.

May you obtain what you most desire so that only it be for your salvation. But if any other decision has been taken concerning me to be carried out before winter, I will be patient, abiding the will of God to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, whose spirit I pray may ever direct your heart. I'm in W. Tindallus.

We don't know if any of those requests were ever granted. He did stay through the winter. August of the next year, he was formally condemned as a heretic, degraded from the priesthood.

They put oil, the anointing oil on your hands and then they scrape it off. They put the chalice in your hand and then they take it out and they strip the the cloak from you. That happened before.

Then comes October. Traditionally, October 6, the Anglican Church still celebrates his day on October 6. He was tied to a stake and because he was formerly a priest, he enjoyed the privilege of being strangled. By the executioner and then afterwards can do consumed and probably his most famous sentence was his last one.

Lord, open the king of England's eyes. Is it not tragic that three years later, both Henry VIII and Bishop Arundel signed off on Coverdale Bible in England? They were playing games. They didn't oppose it.

It was just politically expedient during Tyndale's lifetime not to have a Bible. As soon as it became politically expedient, the ones who were burning Bibles and burning people put the Bible out. What's his closing word to us in this conference? How must a pastor die? I'll quote in closing first an excerpt from the obedience of the Christian man, which he wrote.

If God promise riches, this is, I believe, Tyndale's word to you and me. If God promise riches. The way there to his poverty.

Whom he loveth, he chastened, whom he exalted, he casteth down, whom he saveth, he dameth first. He bringeth no man to heaven except he send him to hell first. If he promised life, he slayeth it first.

When he buildeth, he casteth all down first. He is no patcher. He cannot build on another man's foundation.

He will not work until all be past remedy and brought into such a case that men may see how that his hand, his power, his mercy, his goodness and truth hath wrought altogether. He will let no man be partaker with him of his praise and his glory. Let us therefore look diligently where unto we are called that

we may deceive not ourselves.

We are called not to dispute as the Pope's disciples do, but to die with Christ, that we may live with him and to suffer with him, that we may reign with him. For if God be on our side, what matter maketh it who be against us, be they bishops, cardinals, popes or whatsoever name they will. Now, let me give you one last quote and this one appropriately, I think, from his last letter to his best friend, John Frith, just before John Frith was burned alive for loving Tyndale's New Testament.

Your cause is Christ gospel, a light that must be fed with the blood of faith. If when we be buffeted for well-doing, we suffer patiently and endure, that is thankful with God. For to that end, we are called for Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps who did no sin.

Hereby, we have perceived love, that he laid down his life for us, and therefore we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Let not your body faint. If the pain be above your strength, remember.

Whatsoever you shall ask in my name, I will give it to you and pray to your father in that name, and he will ease your pain or shorten it. Amen. Father, we here with more Bibles in our houses than we have light bulbs sometimes.

Can scarcely imagine. Having six of our friends burned for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer in English or being hated by all the powers that be because we want the plow boy to read the Bible in something he can understand. So, Lord, fill us, I pray, with a profound conviction that we, too, would burn people given the right circumstances and give us a profound sense of gratitude that grace has been shown to us.

In bringing us a Bible. A Greek Testament, a Hebrew Old Testament, an English in so many versions and so many forms. Oh, God, I plead with you, make us faithful expositors of this glorious word and grant that we would be willing to bear whatever pains, whatever hardships, whatever conflicts it takes to make the Bible the central piece of our ministry.

May we be ministers of the word saturated with prayer. May we be spared from pragmatism and may we not be enamored by the vague fog of poetic pretense. May we be four square like Tyndale.

I pray the world is in such great need of creative craftsmen who have died and are alive to Christ and who have passion and who have a purpose to make it understood by every generation. Lord, work this, I pray, in this conference, in these friends, and in their churches, and for the sake of the nations, I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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