

10_William Tyndale and the English Bible, pt 2

How We Got the Bible (2016), Patrick Mead, Fourth Avenue

There we go.

We left our story in a very dangerous place.

I'm looking forward to getting back to the story.

Before I do, Miss Cammie is going to be passing about a sign-up sheet.

This is for the Franktown Open Heart Dinner.

You can read about it, sign up.

When it gets to somebody, please take it to the next one in line until we get it all the way over.

Last time we talked, two weeks ago, we left William Tyndale in Europe, hiding in the German city of Worms.

He had been supplied by funds, if you remember, by a merchant who had said, I'll buy every Bible you've got, because the Bishop of London had said, go buy all of the Bibles to burn them.

And he was double-crossing the Bishop by charging so much for the Bibles that he got and brought to the Bishop that he funneled money back to William Tyndale so Tyndale could keep translating and keep writing Scripture.

But we really need to spend one moment more talking about William Tyndale.

He was one man, just one man.

About 80 years after Tyndale made his translation, there would be a Scottish King, King James.

And he would be made, we'll talk more about this in a couple of weeks, he would be made King over England, Wales and Scotland and Ireland as well.

Right after that, he would bring in a team of 50, 47 in some records, but 50 of the world's greatest scholars to work full-time on translating the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures into English.

It would take them five years.

Tyndale's translation was done in one year, one scholar, while hiding with a price on his head, alone and in poverty.

Can you imagine the brain he had, the dedication he had and the effort that he poured into this?

He not only gave us the New Testament in our language, he created rules of grammar and spelling which are still in our language today.

How to divide words, what a syllable was, how to use a contraction when not to, how to break a sentence, all of that.

He created, until William Tyndale, English was looked upon as a hick backward language.

Even in England, you did no business of state in English.

English was the language for the poor, common, hick folk.

You used Latin or you used French in the courts, in laws.

You never used English.

It was never in legal papers, never in political debates.

Tyndale not only used it, he created metaphors and figures of speech that we still use, like the apple of my eye, that sort of thing.

All of those, he came up with those and put them into English.

He kept revising his translation to make it flow more easily off the tongue.

He was doing what Peterson had done in more recent years when he created the message.

Always, how do I make this flow more?

How do I make it more memorable?

He wanted the language to be so accessible that a common person could memorize Scripture.

Now that's really important because when we start talking about the King James, there are some folk that believe the King James is so high, and holy, they want to keep it today, but it's not our language anymore.

And to memorize it is very difficult for us.

The people who translated the King James and certainly William Tyndale would be appalled anybody was using it today, because they wanted it to be the modern tongue.

By the way, if you want to know more about the English language in a book about the history of the English language, that is actually fun, and you will laugh out loud sometimes.

You need to read one of my favorite writers of all times, Bill Bryson, B-R-Y-S-O-N.

He has two books on it.

Mother Tongue is one of the Goodlands.

You will find that George Washington would have sounded very English, because English accents were Hick accents at the time.

In fact, American Hick Southern slash Redneck accents are far closer to what Shakespeare sounded like than a modern English person.

That's because they came over, that accent got locked into those hills and hollers, and it didn't change.

And where they went, where those Anglos and Scots and Irish went, that accent continued.

They mainly went to the south.

So just anyway, after all this work, every edition of Tyndale's New Testament had this in its preface, an apology to the reader.

And that's how it was titled.

Count it as a thing not having its full shape, but as it were born for its time, even a thing begun rather than finished.

In time to come, if God has appointed us therein too, we will give it its full shape.

In other words, I'm sorry, it's not perfect yet.

I had dinner with a wonderful, wonderful couple this last week in Arkansas.

And I won't go into the subject, but there was a word in Scripture which we are wrestling with.

And she had some friends that said, well, it might mean this, it might mean that.

And she did what a lot of people do.

She said, if I can't understand this one word, then how can I understand anything in Scripture?

And I said, don't go there.

One word is not all of Scripture.

All we're saying is the more we learn, the more we want to be right before the Father.

So let's work on this work.

Tyndale believed that as he labored, however, the world grew even more dangerous.

Let's go back to England for a little bit and take a look at Thomas Bilney.

Thomas Bilney was an approved licensed priest.

Therefore, he was allowed to preach, and he did.

He preached in the city of Norwich.

Norwich is an area, the Norfolk Fens of England, a very flat area of England to the east side.

He preached there, but unbeknownst to the congregation in secret, he was a member of the secret society and the law lords.

He was known to take a drink at the White Horse Inn.

Do you remember the White Horse Inn?

That's where Tyndale and the others would meet.

To get there from his church, he had to walk by a field known as the Burning Field, because in that field, between 1390 and 1550, over 300 law lords had been burned to death.

He knew the risk he was taking, but his faith compelled him to engage in smuggling Tyndale's scriptures to England, a licensed approved priest.

Torn by his conflicting duties to church and God, he felt he needed to confess what he was doing.

Confession, Booth, is supposed to be the safest place on the planet.

And let me stress here that 99.

999% of the time, it is.

It is unheard of for a priest to violate the confession.

But you can already tell it happened.

He chose one of the most famous, well-known priests of his day, one of the greatest scholars of the church, Hugh Latimer.

And he went into the confession booth, and he confessed what he was doing.

And Hugh Latimer immediately turned him in.

The sacred law of the confessional was thrown aside.

Billney was taken to the Tower of London, and he was tortured in horrific ways I will not go into, until literally a broken man, they forced him to burn New Testaments as a sign of his repentance.

He was shamed, defrocked in constant pain, disfigured, broken.

That's when they released him from prison.

He made his way back to Norwich and told his friends he was ready to go to Jerusalem, but they didn't understand what he meant.

They thought he meant he was actually going to travel to Jerusalem.

He meant he was ready to die.

The next day he was out preaching and teaching again in English, which was forbidden, and handing out Bibles and books in English and plain view of the authorities.

He was immediately arrested and sentenced him to death.

He was burned at the stake in the burning field at Norwich that he had walked by all of those years.

There is a plaque there now.

To Thomas Billney, Master of Arts, Doctor of Laws, Fellowship of Trinity Hall, burned to death close to this spot in the Lawlord's Pit, August 19th, 1531, for spreading the gospel of free salvation by faith in Christ.

Blessed martyr of God, spiritual father of the Reformation in England, and then tells who it is erected by.

Isn't it a crying shame that our kids don't know the name Thomas Billney?

But they know the Kardashians.

They know rap artists.

They know movie stars.

There's something wrong with that.

We need new heroes.

And go back and get the old ones to be our new ones.

By the way, here's very important.

As he died, they didn't allow him to have a Bible in his hand.

But he clutched a book, Tyndale's book, a treatise on religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

It's important you remember this book.

It was called The Obedience of a Christian Man.

While all this is going on, Tyndale was not only doing scripture, he was writing books and pamphlets and tracks on what he was finding in scripture.

He produced broadsides and books on previously unknown doctrines like justification by faith, not by works, not by alms, not by our fathers and Hail Mary's and acts of penance, but rather by the grace of God.

He also was the guy.

I read about Tyndale and I think, Patrick, you don't have a brain compared to this guy.

All while all this is going on, he's teaching himself Hebrew.

Now he had almost no access to Hebrew scriptures because all the Old Testaments that he had of would have been written in Latin or Greek.

But he believed that he needed to understand Hebrew to understand the pictures and background of the language.

He was 300 years ahead of his time when it came to understanding that to understand the people, you must know their language.

Linguistically, that was not understood until the late 1800s.

But Tyndale already knew it.

He also, as he worked, repeated a phrase he found in scripture which became almost a mantra to him.

You know it because he translated it.

The just will live by faith.

To a world under the yoke of a church that required countless works of obedience, the very idea of just living by faith was world changing.

He was warned, your life is in danger, you need to flee.

So fleeing verms, he slipped away into Marburg.

There he gained information from pilgrims that passed back and forth under the protection of the mighty Germanic Teutonic Knight, Prince Philip.

Tyndale found that he was in danger on two fronts.

The church, personified by Cardinal Wulsley, and the state, personified by Henry VIII.

Tyndale didn't understand why the state was against him.

He couldn't understand why Henry VIII didn't like him because he didn't know what was going on in Henry's life.

You see, Henry wanted to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon, so that he could marry Anne Boleyn.

Catherine had been unable to deliver an heir to the throne, so he considered her unfaithful.

Let's distribute.

Henry VIII was a despicable human being.

I say that with all the love in my heart.

Facts are facts.

You can love a person and still say, that's a waste of oxygen right there.

And he was.

Two, at that time medical science believed with all of its heart that women were nothing but incubators, that it was the man who placed his precious wonderful seed inside of her and if she failed to produce a baby, it was her failure.

Third, Henry produced a few babies that died, but couldn't produce a male heir.

We now know it's the man who decides, it's in his seed that decides if it's going to be male, not the woman.

And let's go to another one.

Henry was so riddled with sexually transmitted diseases, he couldn't produce an heir, period.

It wasn't going to happen.

With all that said, he wanted to divorce her.

So like all those before her, she was going to be tossed aside.

Here's where I have to apologize.

Of the four big players in this next drama, three of them are named Thomas.

I didn't make that up.

It's kind of like in this church.

If you say John, Mark, half the church leaves.

All right, here we go.

On one side, ding, ding, ding.

On one side was Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell.

Choose Thomas C's if that helps.

Cranmer and Cromwell.

They were backing Henry.

They were giants in academia.

They decided to help him in his struggle against the church.

On this side, Cardinal Wolsey and Sir Thomas Moore, who many of you may have heard of in history.

God makes an appearance here in the form of a servant girl whose name is not certain.

There are some theories.

She was one of Anne Boleyn's servant girls.

And Anne Boleyn, remember, that's who he wants to marry.

He considers her a hottie.

I mean, there you are.

And he wants to marry her.

Anne Boleyn likes to read.

She's a reader, a woman who can read in 1530 something.

But when the servant girl said, I have a book I really enjoyed, I think you might enjoy it.

She handed it to her and it was The Obedience of a Christian Man by William Tyndale.

Here's where some chills ought to start hitting you.

Well, Boleyn had been burned to death reading this book a year before, but Anne didn't know that.

She's reading it.

When a bishop comes in, sees what she is reading and goes berserk.

Rails at her, preaches at her, grabs the book and confiscates it, calls her all kinds of awful words which I cannot use from the pulpit.

For rules, I don't quite understand.

Because you know them, but all of these words, he called the future Queen of England, not knowing that she was actually going to be the Queen, confiscated it and stomped off.

Well, Anne was very upset with this, so she went to Henry to complain.

Guys will do a lot for a woman, especially if they're smitten.

So he sent a squad of soldiers after the bishop to get his book back and got it back.

But instead of giving it to Anne, he wondered, what is it about a book?

See, books were not treasured by most people.

It's like, why are you wasting your time on a book?

He's going, what is it about a book that would get a bishop so upset?

So he read it.

Henry VIII read a book that a priest was burned to death for owning a year earlier.

That's got to be God.

Because as he read it, it blew him away.

And he asked for more.

He declared it publicly, the King of England, the greatest book ever written by the hand of man.

Just forget for the fact that he might have only read three.

It was still the top one to him.

So Henry sent word to Tyndale.

He'd like to read more.

So Tyndale sent him his copy, his translation rather, of Luther's book, Justification by Faith.

Henry absorbed it, loved it.

Oh, Sir Thomas Moore swings into action at this stage.

A champion of the church and a vowed enemy of Tyndale, an enemy of all who would debase the scripture by allowing the common redneck, heck English person to have it.

And he challenged Tyndale to a debate.

But Tyndale was not stupid.

He knew if they came into contact, he'd be kidnapped and killed.

So they did it by correspondence.

Took place over a period of a couple of years.

We still have some of that.

But here's the thing.

While he carried on that debate and translated books on faith and theology, he also finished his translation for the first time in English ever of the first five books of the Old Testament.

Nobody had been able to read the Old Testament in their own language unless they were Greek or even Latin was a dead language at this time.

Nobody until the 1500s when he finished it.

It took him two years to do it.

To go have it printed, he had to go to Hamburg.

So he climbs on a ship and the absolute worst thing that could have happened did.

The boat was caught in a storm and sunk.

The manuscript lost.

I want to step aside for a minute here.

Jesus goes to cast out demons and storms both times as he crosses the Galilean sea, almost capsizing.

The Old Testament storms are used, earthquakes and storms.

Do you remember in the Old Testament there was a God that constantly fights against the true God?

A demon, Paul says, that masquerades as a God.

His name was Baal.

Baal was the God of storms.

Do you remember the devil caused the storms that killed Job's children?

There were, I'm sorry, because of politics and Hollywood, most of you don't know this, but this weekend there were massive earthquakes and a giant tsunami in New Zealand.

A lot of people are hurt today.

Some people will say, why would God let?

I don't know all of the answers, but I do know in Scripture, demons work through storms and God is the one that calms the storms.

I'm just going to set that there and let it aside, but I find it odd that this ship went down.

Tyndale survived.

Two other heroes meet him in Hamburg.

Miles Coverdale, not a handsome man by any stretch, and a guy named John Rogers.

I have no picture that is reliable of John Rogers.

I have looked for years.

There are so many John Rogers that I can't figure out which one really is him, so you're sticking with Miles.

They were also hiding in Germany from the church.

They pledged to give their lives to help Tyndale reconstruct his manuscript, so two years later, 1531, the first English translation of the first five books of the Bible was printed in Antwerp.

Later that year, he translated the book of Jonah and dedicated it to the bishops of England comparing them to Nineveh, saying, read this because you have only a certain amount of days before you fall.

He wasn't too shy.

Back in England, the church was dividing along battle lines.

Many priests and bishops were moving over to Henry VIII.

Some of them because they were tired of Rome rule.

Some of them because they thought theology would move them that way, but a lot of them was because Henry killed people that disagreed with him.

So, yay, Henry, big foam thinkers, whatever.

They moved that way.

Others moved toward Cardinal Wolsey and Sir Thomas Moore because Rome had an empire, the Holy Roman Empire.

They could bring France against them and Spain against them and Belgium against them and the Netherlands against them.

Well, Tyndale wouldn't support either side and that got him in trouble with both sides.

You see, Tyndale had been appalled at Henry's first divorce and had written a broadside attacking him, saying, that's an attack on the institution of marriage.

You are an adulterer and you are a murderer.

Now, Tyndale was an enemy of both church and state.

His time was limited.

Caution to slow down and get some rest.

Tyndale replied, quote, the word myself is not in the gospel.

Wow.

He did take two days off a week from his work, but he didn't not work.

What he did was go down alleyways during those two days to find the poor so he could give them food and what coins he had every single week.

The end was coming for Tyndale though.

He had too many enemies to survive.

Tyndale's friends were as brave and tireless as he.

One of them was John Frith.

John Frith, interesting character.

He was not afraid of controversy or as we'd say it in English, controversy.

I don't know why you put the emphasis on the wrong syllable.

He would often write Sir Thomas Moore.

This common guy, a commoner, John Frith, would write Sir Thomas Moore, warning him, the English people will have the scripture in their own homes and if it means over your dead body, so be it, so help us God.

And he was right out there.

He was once personally escorting a huge shipment of Bibles into England.

It's a great story, but he was arrested.

Not for smuggling, they never caught the Bibles.

It was because he'd been working so hard, he had a rough, ragged appearance.

He was heavily bearded, I guess it was Movember, heavily bearded, wore patched, worn out clothes because he didn't look after himself.

He was all about getting these Bibles there.

So he was arrested as a vagrant.

Back during the days, people, we often think that the British came out of the womb like Downton Abbey, no.

We were as savage, as ignorant, as any tribe is today.

First of all, the law was, if you didn't have a job, we'd put you in prison because you weren't somebody we wanted.

But then during the day, we would trot you out, put you in the stocks, and a educated people, moneyed people, this was their TV.

This was their sports center.

They would come out and make fun of the people in the stocks, and they'd pour waste on them, or throw things at them, or they'd punch them, or they would.

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worse.

I'm not going to go in there.

Because they could get away with it.

These were not real people.

They were vagrants.

John Frith is in the stocks at Reading Jail.

Jail, if you want to look up Reading Jail, you have to spell jail the British way.

It is G-A-O-L, pronounced jail.

I didn't say it made sense.

One scholar from Eaton was there, very high academic, joining in the fun of making fun of John Frith.

When John Frith turned to him and spoke to him in classical Greek, the Greek of the Iliad, and the scholar from Eaton realized, I went to school with that guy.

And they stood there all day, conversing on theology of the day in classical Greek of the Iliad.

Kind of blew the crowd away.

He got the authorities to release Frith.

But spies were there.

And they got the word to Sir Thomas Moore, somebody is here, a stranger who knows ancient languages.

Knowledge is dangerous.

It has to be reported that you know things.

Sir Thomas Moore immediately sent out spies to hunt him.

Who are you?

Who is he, rather?

Why is he in England?

Frith was captured in London, taken to the Tower of London.

Here's several things happen at once.

Let's look at the positives.

The Newark Bishop, Thomas Cranmer, remember still, he's more on the side of King Henry.

But he's part of the church.

He didn't want this young scholar to die.

So he sent word, just moderate your tone.

Just be less offensive.

If you have to lie to the judges, lie to the judges.

We want you to get out of here.

And he said, but if you refuse to lie, I'm going to do everything I can to get you out of England alive anyway.

Second thing to happen.

King Henry VIII got fed up with Sir Thomas Moore, the enemy, and dismissed him as Chancellor.

Boom, a great enemy of the Reformation, a great enemy of Scripture in our language, a great enemy of the secret society, gone.

He is from then on a non-player in history, stripped of his power.

But that's the only good things I can tell you.

There's also a couple bad things.

The worships, Long Lynn and Stokesley, had risen up in Sir Thomas Moore's place to become champions of the church and hunters, the inquisitors of the translators.

They went to the Tower of London and personally harassed and questioned Friff.

They started actually thinking, this is not a bad guy.

They were warming to him until they asked him about the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Okay, the Catholics didn't always believe this, but it developed into one of the cornerstones of Catholic faith, is that the bread and the wine, when the priests praised for them, become the actual body and blood of Christ.

But inside that bread and wine now is Jesus Christ, that you can only receive Jesus Christ as a sacrament by the hands of the priest, and this is their doctrine.

That's why in Scotland, for example, in the village of Sanker, I've walked the field many times, people were burned to death for taking the communion without authorization, because it's not the body of Christ.

It's until the priests praised for it.

And by the way, if you prayed for it and then you touched it without permission, you were also killed.

The bishops blew up.

They were not going to accept this.

By the way, among the reformers, this was an issue.

Tyndale refused to address it.

He said, this is too divisive an issue.

I'm too busy.

But Luther, most of you know Luther.

You may not know as major and important a player was known as Zwingli.

For some reason, in the English-speaking language, rather world, we don't know much about him.

He was actually a lot closer to us than Luther when it comes to religion.

They disagreed with it so much that their followers formed armies and fought each other in continental Europe.

It's as if don't you have a big enough enemy with the Holy Roman Empire?

But they fought each other.

Does that make sense?

No, but we still do it today.

The devil rears his ugly head all over the world and what do Christians do?

Attack each other.

Gotta stop.

It has got to stop.

Anyway, Friff, unfortunately, had written a book attacking the doctrine of transubstantiation.

He said, he was ready.

Archbishop Cramner again tried, just moderate your tone.

He refused.

So they would beat him, beat him down, and he would stand up.

And they would beat him down and he would stand up and they couldn't keep him from standing up.

One of the bishops even came and said, let us make a way of escape for you.

And he quoted Nehemiah in chapter 6, Will a man like me run?

It's one of my favorite passages in all of Scripture.

I love that.

We don't run.

So on a morning in 1532, he was led to the stake and burned to death.

Tyndale went into mourning for his son of the faith.

While all this is going on, Henry VIII made a decree that it was now legal to own a Bible in England, in the English language, but only in a church, not in your house, in a church.

We'll talk more about that next week.

Archbishop Cramner, another ally, Thomas Cromwell, we mentioned him, put into church laws provisions that blunted the bishops' ability to go around attacking and harassing people.

Tyndale thought, these are such good signs.

Maybe I can come back to England.

But he was in Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium, and that's a problem.

This is going to sound really weird to us.

So just get your head wrapped around this.

In the Holy Roman Empire, which was most of Europe at the time, there were rules, there were laws that sound strange to us, but they were very common at that time.

The Pope's rule held sway topping all national laws, except in little areas like where Prince Philip, the Teutonic Knight, one of the knights, protected them.

Pope's law holds sway everywhere, except in your house.

It was known as the Law of the Streets.

In the house, a man's home was his castle.

He was free to do as he wished.

Step outside.

You belong to the church.

You belong to the state.

Where Tyndale was staying was not his house, but it was still protected.

It was the house of Thomas Pointes, P-O-Y-N-T-Z, if you want to look him up later.

There are no reliable pictures of him, either.

Thomas Pointes was sheltering Tyndale.

Visitors would come to speak with Tyndale, and one visitor in particular was named Henry Phillips.

Pointes did not trust Phillips, but for some reason Tyndale did.

So he would come frequently, speak with him, needing to study more of Tyndale's writings.

Henry Phillips was really an agent of Rome, looking for an opportunity.

One day, Pointes was out.

Phillips made his move.

He knocked on the door when Tyndale came to it.

He said, I'm in need of money.

Because he knew Tyndale gave everything he had.

So I'm in need of money.

I'm in need of help.

And he began to wander around in the front yard, what we would call the front garden, worrying.

Tyndale stepped out to comfort him, and the soldiers rushed.

He's in their territory now.

They took him to the castle of Ville Vorde, a copy of the Bastille in Paris.

He would never leave.

For 500 days, they kept him in a cold, windowless cell.

We have very little information from this period in his life.

He was disappeared.

He did write letters, but we only have one of them that survived, a letter to the warden asking, begging for a blanket, a coat, a candle.

Remember, there's no light in this room, and some books.

It is thought, by most scholars, all of that was denied him.

So he sat in that room, eating moldy food in his own waste for 500 days.

He, by the way, points, tried to get Tyndale out, but he was arrested for trying.

Points escaped, but he wasn't able to help him in any way.

Need to know this about prisons in most of the world, even today.

Most of the world today, when you're put in prison, you're not fed.

Your relatives or friends have to bring you food or clothes, or you don't have any.

If you're thinking, that's only in these far-off countries, Cammy and I have seen them lined outside of the prison in Panama, very close to the American Exclusion Zone there, the Canal Zone, not American anymore, but you know what I mean.

But the prison there, and you see more people outside the prison than in the prison, ask them why.

They'll say, those are the families waiting for their turn to be able to bring them food, or bring them a blanket, or bring them.

Tyndale got nothing.

Miserable and weak, sick.

On October the 6th, 1536, Tyndale was led into the courtyard of his prison, tied to a stake, strangled and burned.

His last words were, Lord, open the King of England's eyes.

Gone was the man who saved the Bible for us.

Gone was the man who really created our language.

He has thought to have done more to establish English as a separate and understandable language than Shakespeare, Chaucer and Dunn combined.

He stood in front of all the powerful bishops of his day and said this, I think I've got the quote up here.

Not all of it.

Let me read all of it.

If God spare my.

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I defy the Pope and all his laws, and if God spare my life, I will make it possible for the boy who drives the plow to know more scriptures than you.

And he did.

After 1500 years, the Bible was back in the hands of the people, and God was not yet done.

The next week, the next movement, the great Bible, and the collapse of kingdoms that led to the King James Version.

I hope you're enjoying this.

These to me are better than movies.

These stories are better heroes than we see on the silver screen.

We need to teach our kids about John Freff, Thomas Belny.

We need to teach them about Tyndale, Miles Coverdale.

By the plaque of Coverdale's house as well in Yorkshire.

Cami has two.

I don't know if she remembers that.

These are heroes, and we need to talk about them more.

We need to teach our teens about these men.

I wish I could tell you, rather I wish I could say, we need to teach them about the women.

Women played an amazing place in this, but historians were so sexist, they didn't record the names.

We don't have the names.

Not till later.

But that's a story for another son.