

A LETTER FROM PRISON

This correspondence came from Tyndale sometime in the winter of 1535, as he was imprisoned in Vilvoorde Castle. It was addressed to the governor of the castle, the Marquis of Bergen. Note Tyndale's respectful tone and concern for the governor's spiritual well-being, and the centrality of his request for his Bible translating books.



"I believe, right worshipful, that you are not ignorant of what has been determined concerning me [by the Council of Brabant]; therefore I entreat your Lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here in Vilvoorde during the winter, you will request the Procurer to be kind enough to send me from my goods, which he has in his possession, a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold in the head, being afflicted with a perpetual catarrh, which is considerably increased in the cell.

A warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin; also a piece of cloth to patch my leggings: my overcoat has been worn out; my shirts are also worn out. He has a woolen shirt of mine, if he will be kind enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth for the putting on above; he also has warmer caps for wearing at night. I wish also his permission to have a candle in the evening, for it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark.

But above all, I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the Procurer that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study. And in return, may you obtain your dearest wish, provided always it be consistent with the salvation of your soul. But if any other resolutions have been come to concerning me, before the conclusion of the winter, I shall 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. Amen".

W. Tyndale

A FINAL PRAYER

Coming to the place of his execution William Tyndale prayed "Lord open the King of England's eyes". His prayer rising into the heavens Henry VIII once labeled "defender of the faith" by the pope threw off the shackles of popery. Setting the nation free he commanded a Bible to be placed in every parish church and raised upon a desk, so that all might be able to come and to read it.



WILLIAM TYNDALE and The English Bible

Comber Free Presbyterian Church

Little is known of William Tyndale's early life except he was born around 1494 near the Welsh borders. His father being a substantial landowner he was sent at a very early age to Oxford to study grammar and philosophy. There he mastered seven languages, including "Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English and French". In addition he was also familiar with German. At Oxford reading a Greek New Testament published by Erasmus he became fascinated by it. Delving deeper and deeper into it he like the Greek philosopher cried "I have found it, I have found the secret of life". Looking by faith to the finished atoning work of Christ he became a new creature.

Gaining his B.A. in 1512 and his M.A. in 1515 he then moved to Cambridge to continue his doctoral studies. Eventually taking up a position in the home of Sir John Walsh he often became embroiled in controversy with the local priests. To one such cleric he declared "if God spare my life I will, before many years have passed, cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than you do".

Beginning to translate the Scriptures he was forced to flee to Germany, never to see England again. Arriving in Hamburg he translated the gospels of Matthew and Mark. In 1525 copies of his completed New Testament began to roll of the

presses in Cologne.

In May of 1535 he was betrayed by a fellow Englishman named Henry Phillips. After a year and a half of confinement in the dungeons at Vilvoorde he was strangled, then burnt at the stake in Brussels on 6th October, 1536.



Tyndale's Bibles being burned

DID YOU KNOW...?

- William Tyndale translated and published the first ever mechanically printed New Testament in the English language.
- His translations were so fundamentally correct and smooth in word flow that more than 90% of his wording appears in the King James Version published nearly 100 years later.
- The accepted portrait of Tyndale is exactly identical to one of the reformer John Knox. The reason for this is that fugitives seldom sat for portraits.

Christian History A TIMELINE ON -

WILLIAM TYNDALE

THE FOUR DECADES OF TYNDALE'S LIFE, from the early 1490s to the mid-1530s, overlapped one of the most-notable periods of change in Western history, including: the ending of the Dark Ages, the beginnings of the Renaissance, the claiming of the New World, the Spanish Inquisition and the beginnings of the Reformation.

At the time Tyndale might have felt detached from it all, living the lonely and un-rooted life of a fugitive and exile. But in the long view he was actually integral to some of the most-significant moments and movements of the early 16th century-great societal upheavals, the aftershocks of which are still being felt in our modern world.



One of 20 surviving copies of the Gutenberg Bible

Tyndale's History

1492-95 - Tyndale is born.

1512 - Completes his B.A. at Oxford.

1508 - A young teenager, he enters Magdalen College at Oxford.

1514-15 - Completes his M.A. at Oxford and is ordained, but refuses to enter monastic orders.

Tyndale's History

1519 - Moves to Cambridge for doctoral studies, then quits.

1521-23 - Begins teaching at Little Sodbury, gets into disputes with priests.

1524 - Seeks patronage of Bishop Tunstall and is rebuffed; then, assisted by Monmouth, he travels to Germany and registers at the University of Wittenburg.

1525 - In Cologne, he prepares to print an English New Testament; but he is discovered and escapes with only a few printed portions.

1526 - He completes the printing in Worms, and smuggled copies of his New Testament are soon being circulated throughout England.

1527 - Bishop Tunstall orders the purchase and burning of all the testaments; but this serves only to finance Tyndale's second edition

1527-30 - English agent seeks to capture Tyndale on the Continent; he keeps moving, and writing.

1530 - His translation of the first five books of the Old Testament appears in England.

1531 - He meets Harry's agent Steven Vaughan, but declines the King's invitation to return to England. Sir Thomas More begins writing against Tyndale.

1533 - His good friend, John Firth, is burned at the stake in Smithfield.

1534 - He moves into Thomas Poyntz's English merchants' boarding house in Antwerp.

1535 - King's agent Henry Pbillips arrives in Antwerp and befriends Tyndale, then arranges to have him arrested while the Poyntzes are out of town; Tyndale is cast into Vilvoorde prison near Antwerp.

1536 - Fifteen months later at Vilvoorde, Tyndale is strangled to death and his body burned at the stake.



Castle of Vilvoorde where Tyndale spent his final months

