

William Tyndale

“For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

As we sit in our nice comfortable homes, enjoying the central heat or the wood stoves as they labor to protect us from the elements, we often fail to remember the times when we were cold and unable to warm the body. Such it is with mankind: during the bad times, we fail to remember the good, and during the good, to forget the bad.

As we think about all the luxuries we enjoy, we fail to see the pain and death that went into providing them: the wars that have been fought on foreign soil; the bitter trials of those who spent years away from their families and friends that we might enjoy the blessing of peace we have today.

As it is with the blessings of our nation, so also it is with the word of God. We have our Bibles with which to read about all the good things God has done to bring salvation to mankind; we enjoy the freedom of being able to read the Bible at our leisure, and to carry it about in full view of government officials without any fear of reprisal. But such has not always been the case.

We recall such kings as Josiah who, having heard the words of the book of the law of Jehovah, “rent his clothes,” and commanded, saying, “Go ye, inquire of Jehovah for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us” (2 Kings 22:1-13). And, when we read of this, we like to think that we, too, would have responded in the same manner.

As we consider the more recent history of mankind, i.e., 1400’s—1800’s, we should be brought to a sense of soberness when we consider those of whom we may even account to be misguided, and the fruits of their labors that allow us the ability to freely read “the words of this book.”

In 1523, William Tyndale had determined to translate the New Testament into English, an act strictly forbidden. Thus, he set himself against the establishment of the Church in England. By 1525, the first Bibles to be written in the English language were being smuggled into England, his work forming the basis for all subsequent English translations.

As a result of Mister Tyndale's labors, he was forced to leave England, go into hiding, and charged with heresy by the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church. Mister Tyndale was eventually betrayed by his friend, Henry Phillips, arrested for heresy, and imprisoned for five-hundred days. On October 6th, 1536 he was tried for heresy and treason condemned to death by strangulation and burned at the stake.

The next time you "dust off your Bible," let the words of Josiah pervade your thinking: "for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."

Remember the words of the Hebrew writer, saying, "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; partly, being made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used" (Hebrews 10:32-33). Can you relate? ret