

Lessons From the Life of William Tyndale

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Recorded March 25, 2017

Many of you have heard the name of William Tyndale (or it is vaguely familiar), and many have heard of the Tyndale Bible, but most of us don't know anything about Tyndale's life. I sure didn't before I started this study of his life. And, either most of us don't know or don't appreciate the fact that William Tyndale influences the Church of God to this very day by his life.

In the sermon today, we want to do two things. We want to examine his life's history and, then, we want to see what lessons we can learn from that and how what William Tyndale did influences us today. It is obvious when you look at his life and what happened, that God had a hand in it, even though He wasn't converted the way we understand conversion. Tyndale didn't understand the Sabbath and some other things, but it is obvious God was using this man to further God's purposes on this earth, especially amongst English-speaking peoples. The title of the sermon is,

Lessons From the Life of William Tyndale

Let's look at Tyndale's history. We want to set the timeframe and I'm going to give you some dates as we walk through his history. These are dates of when things happened on the continent, particularly in England before and during his life.

We're going to start at 1456. Gutenberg in Germany produces the first printed Bible because of the movable type that he invented. That Bible, the first printed book, was a Latin Bible, a Bible translated into Latin.

Then a few years later in 1479, the Spanish Inquisition started. As I studied that Inquisition, I was shocked that the Inquisition lasted four hundred years. It wasn't stopped until 1820. The Inquisition was primarily and uniquely a Catholic institution founded for the express purpose of examining every human being in Europe to see who differed from Roman Catholic doctrine and practices and eliminate them if they didn't recant. Even if they recanted, in many cases the Romans would eliminate those holding other views. So, in 1479, the Inquisition started.

In 1494, William Tyndale was born in southwest England. He descended from an ancient Northumbrian family. Northumbria is in northern England and straddles northern England and southwest Scotland. That's where Tyndale's roots were.

Now listen to this. In 1505, at age eleven, Tyndale was accepted into Oxford University—age eleven. He grew up at the university. To start with, imagine this man's intellect, this young child's intellect if Oxford accepted him at eleven years old. Then in 1509, King Henry VIII became the King of England and this plays into the story of William Tyndale. In 1515, ten years after Tyndale enrolled in the university, he received

a Master's Degree from Oxford at age twenty-one. Right after that, Tyndale transferred to Cambridge and continued postgraduate studies in Cambridge. William Tyndale was no dummy.

He proved to be a gifted linguist. One of Tyndale's associates commented and I'm quoting now, "So skilled in eight languages that whichever he speaks, you might think it was his native tongue." William Tyndale was so skilled. The eight languages he could speak, translate, and write fluently were Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Spanish, French, Italian, English, and German. Think about that.

Now let's look at the time in which Tyndale grew up. In his time, the Catholic Church used the Latin Vulgate Bible. It was a translation made during the late 300s AD, and was commonly used in the Catholic Church beginning around 1300. By the time Tyndale started studying the Bible, the Latin Vulgate was 1300 years old—a very old translation. During Tyndale's life by the mid 1500s, the Catholic Church officially made the Latin Vulgate the only authorized translation allowed for use by Catholics, priests, etc.

At mass, using the Latin Vulgate, priests read the scripture, obviously, in Latin. The average person in the audience could not understand one word of it. It was interpreted by the priests, who could read Latin, because most of the lower echelon priests could not read. So, if you attended mass, you would hear the Bible read in Latin and, then, you depended upon a priest to translate it and explain it to you. Obviously, the average person was shut out of the scriptures. They had no Bible to read in their language. They had no Bible in the house and the only access the average person had to a Bible was a few minutes at mass read in a language the average person couldn't understand.

Let me quote from the English historian John Foxe, who was a contemporary of Tyndale. Foxe wrote Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Let me read from the 2001 edition, page 113:

He (referring to Tyndale) was certain that the chief cause of all the trouble in the church was because the word of God was kept hidden from the people; for so long a time the abominations and idolatries of the hypocritical and self-righteous clergy could not be seen.

This is because the people couldn't compare it to the Bible. Continuing:

For this reason, the clergy did all they could to keep the scriptures hidden so they could not be read at all.

The last thing the clergy wanted was for the people to read something in scripture, then look at the conduct of the clergy, and make a comparison. So, because of that, Tyndale began a translation of the Bible into an early form of English. I've read portions of that Bible and it is Old English. So, you have to look at words and think about what

the modern form of that word is. Tyndale began translating the Bible into the common English of the day.

Tyndale also used Greek manuscripts. He went back to original Greek manuscripts that were older and more authoritative than the manuscripts used by the translators of the Latin Vulgate. So, Tyndale's translation of the Bible was much more accurate than the Vulgate.

Besides translating the Bible, Tyndale also held to—and therefore, published—views that were considered heretical by the Catholic Church, as well as by the Church of England later after it split off from the Catholic Church. We'll cover that as we chronologically go through Tyndale's life.

Tyndale expressed his dissatisfaction with the teachings of theology at the universities of his day. Now listen to this quote because we could say the same thing today about the theological seminaries around the world. Tyndale said:

In the universities they have ordained that no man shall look on the scripture until he be nozzled in heathen learning eight or nine years and armed with false principles with which he is clean shut out of the understanding of scripture.

This remains so true today—studying the Greek philosophers before studying scripture and incorporating Greek philosophy into the study of scripture. That happened in Tyndale's day and it is happening to this very day. So, in his Bible, Tyndale had notes and commentaries promoting his views. You can imagine how this went over with the Catholic Church.

When Tyndale was in the process of translating the Bible, he was living in England at the time. He went to the Bishop of London and Tyndale told the Bishop that he was making a translation into English. Tyndale had the Bishop read a few of the passages already translated. The Bishop immediately called Tyndale's text "heretical" and the Bishop refused permission to have it reproduced.

Then, Catholic officials, predominately Thomas More (spelled M-o-r-e; not to be confused with Thomas Moore who lived in the late 1700s)... If you have studied English History, you will remember the name of Thomas More. At the time, he was Lord Chancellor, a devout Catholic, and later titled "Saint More," having been made a saint by the Catholic Church. More charged that Tyndale purposely mistranslated the ancient texts to promote his anticlerical and heretical views. Now, Tyndale had the hierarchy of the church against him.

Reading from Foxe's Book of Martyrs, now on page 116:

Some of the clergy said it wasn't possible to translate the scripture into English. Some said it wasn't lawful for laypeople to have the New Testament in their common language. Some said it would make all of the laypeople heretics.

Absolutely, it would make the laypeople heretics according to the Catholic views. A clergyman, who was hopelessly entrenched in Catholic doctrine, at that time, wrote this about Tyndale.

We are better to be without God's laws than the Pope's.

"We are better to be without God's laws than [to be without] the Pope's [laws]." That reminds me of some people in the Worldwide Church of God a few decades ago.

So, because of all this, Tyndale had to flee England. He was fleeing for his life. He went to the continent and his linguistic gifts made it easy for him to integrate with the locals wherever he was because he could speak their language and he didn't appear to be a foreigner. So, his linguistic ability helped him with his flight.

Tyndale wound up in Worms, Germany. In 1528, in Worms, he completed his first edition of the New Testament. He completed translated the New Testament and had it typeset. Tyndale was the first person to take advantage of the Gutenberg movable typeset for the purpose of printing the scriptures in English. It had never happened before.

Once that happened and once word got back to England that Tyndale had translated the Bible and was in the process of having copies printed, Tyndale's translation was widely condemned and the people were warned not to get a translation and not to read the translation. They said it contained thousands of errors. The Catholic Church defrocked Tyndale in an elaborate public ceremony.

Then, the Bishop of London, afraid these copies would work their way into England, contrived to have a merchant in the Netherlands, Augustine Packington, buy all the copies of Tyndale's first printing. The Bishop told Packington to "Buy the Bibles at any price, but I want them all" because the Bishop intended to burn them, which he did. Packington did the Bishop's request. He bought all the first printing of Tyndale's New Testament and got his money from the Bishop of London. Before this transaction occurred, Packington went to Tyndale and told him what the Bishop of London wanted him to do. Tyndale said, "Go do it." Packington did it and, then, he brought the money back to Tyndale and gave him the entire amount to pay for the first printing. This allowed Tyndale to print three times as many Bibles as were in the first printing. And, Tyndale used the Pope's money to do that.

The fact is that the copies were burned as fast as they could be confiscated. The truth is that they were burned not because any errors were found in them, but Tyndale's English translation threatened the church's control of the scriptures. The church would not have that. Owning a copy or found with a copy of Tyndale's Bible sealed a person's fate--he was burned at the stake as a heretic. Imagine that! Your life would be at stake for reading a Bible in your native language.

Yet, copies trickled into England, very secretly. In fact, one translation was found in the bedroom of King Henry VIII. The more the King, the Bishop, and the Catholic hierarchy resisted its distribution the more fascinated the people at large became. There was great interest in this translation—secretly, obviously, because the people were hungry to read the scriptures for themselves in their own language.

In 1530 (four years after Tyndale's translation appeared), in a decree, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V declared Tyndale a heretic. This was in Europe and in England. Remember they were all Catholic at that time. In 1534 (four years after that), King Henry VIII separated from Rome and founded what we know today as the Church of England, the Anglican Church. King Henry did so because the Pope would not annul his first marriage to Catherine of Aragon, a Spaniard lady. They could not have children and Henry wanted to marry Anne Boleyn. The Pope would not let Henry do that. So, England split with the Catholic Church and King VIII became the new "pope" in that regard over the Anglican Church.

In 1535, while Tyndale was hiding in Europe, he was betrayed by a friend. Just like Christ—betrayed by a friend. At the instigation of agents from King Henry VIII, the Anglican Church, and the Catholic Church, Tyndale was arrested and imprisoned. He was imprisoned in the dungeon of the Castle of Vilvoorde, about six miles northeast of Brussels Belgium. Tyndale stayed in that dungeon for five hundred days. We've all heard the stories of medieval dungeons and in this case, the stories are true. Horrible, horrible conditions existed in those dungeons.

After the five hundred days, in a rigged trial Tyndale was convicted of heresy and treason and turned over to the civil authorities in that area. On Friday October 6, 1536—and this account is well-documented by many sources—Tyndale at age forty-two years old was brought to a stake in the middle of the town square and was given a chance to recant his beliefs. Tyndale refused. The authorities gave him a moment to pray.

Then, Tyndale was bound to a stake with an iron chain around his waist and a rope around his neck. Stacked below him were brush and logs sprinkled with gunpowder. At a signal from a local authority, the executioner pulled the rope around Tyndale's neck and began to strangle him. Whether Tyndale was strangled to death or strangled near death at that time is not clear, but probably it was the latter that he was not quite dead. Then the local authorities signaled the executioner, who lit the pyre, which burned William Tyndale to death for his beliefs.

We, today, sometimes have a hard time relating to that, but life was very cheap back then. Life was very short back then. And, if you did not follow the teachings of the church, your life was at grave risk.

John Foxe, again in his Foxe's Book of Martyrs on page 120, said that Tyndale cried out as he was burning, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." It is ironic that three years later under King VIII what is called "The Great Bible" was published in English.

As a final testimony to Tyndale's Bible and his translation, in 1611, seventy-five years after his death, the fifty-four scholars appointed by King James translated what we know today as the King James Version of the Bible and that Bible drew significantly from Tyndale's translations. In fact, one estimate says that the New Testament in The King James Version is eighty-three percent Tyndale. The King James Bible Old Testament is estimated at seventy-six percent Tyndale. It is also estimated that one-third of the text of the King James is word for word from Tyndale—word for word. And, many of the popular phrases and Bible verses that people quote and have in their heads come from Tyndale and from the language that Tyndale used. For an example Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers," which is entirely Tyndale carried over into the King James Version.

Tyndale is frequently referred to as "the architect of the English language." Even more so than William Shakespeare because so many of the phrases that Tyndale translated in his Bible are still in our language today. It is amazing that in his short life of forty-two years what William Tyndale accomplished, still lives on today.

So, the question is: How did Tyndale's work and his Bible lead to our understanding of the truth today? We're going to cover four critical changes in his translation that revolutionized our understanding in four critical areas. We'll cover those in the rest of the sermon and how these affect our understanding today of God's word. These are lessons from the work of William Tyndale that we can take away.

1. The word "church" in the Vulgate, Tyndale translated as "congregation"—"church" to "congregation."

We know today that there was no Strong's Concordance back in those days, but if you look up the word "church" in Strong's, it is the Greek word *ekklesia*, as we know. It's Strong's #1577 and it means *a calling out, a popular meeting, especially of a religious congregation, an assembly.*

We know that it is an assembly called by God the Father. Tyndale translated *ekklesia* as "congregation" or an "assembly" (which are synonymous) rather than church as in the Vulgate. Sadly, the King James Version rejected "congregation" and still used the word "church," in part under pressure from King James. The Greek word *ekklesia* is used 115 times in the New Testament. Yet, in the King James Version, it is only translated "assembly" three times. Again, that's under political pressure from the King of England. The King James Version uses "church" for the rest.

We have to understand what the Catholic definition of "church" was at the time Tyndale translated these words because the Catholic definition of the church was that the organizational structure of the Catholic Church was the church. The Pope, the Cardinals, the Archbishops, then the Bishops, the Archdeacons and the Deacons—that was the "church" and, also, the gigantic cathedrals that were built were the "church"—the hierarchy and the buildings.

Of course, when you translate "church" as "assembly," it's as if all of a sudden you've thrown a monkey wrench into the spokes of the Catholic Church. Tyndale's translation was seen as a challenge to this doctrine because Tyndale understood the church was the believers and not the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, not the buildings of the Catholic Church. In other words, the church was the congregation, the assembly of those that were called out. Tyndale understood that the church was wherever Christians meet together to worship God. It wasn't a building. And, that knowledge was just an earthquake to the Catholic Church.

When Tyndale decided that the Greek word *ekklesia* was more accurately translated congregation, he was undermining the entire authority and structure of the Catholic Church. They would not have that. This also applied to the Anglican Church after they split off from the Catholic Church.

Yet, today, because of Tyndale's translation and the work that he did, we understand—and obviously God opened our minds to it—we understand that the Church is the Body of Christ. It's made up of individual members. It is not a building and it is not a hierarchy. Tyndale led the way in that understanding. So, let's go to 1 Corinthians 12:12 as a reminder because Tyndale translated this very scripture into English for the people to read and the church would not have it, just wouldn't have it.

1 Corinthians 12:12. *For as the body is one, and [has] many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.
13) For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (KJV)*

Notice, Paul says "all," referring to himself too. Now, that will come up later in a different point. Verse 14:

14) For the body is not one member, but many. (KJV)

Verse 27:

27) Now [you] are the body of Christ, and members in particular. (KJV)

When the English people read this and looked at their church, be it Anglican or Catholic, they could see that something was not right. Many of the reform movements were started in Tyndale's day, not only in England but also on the continent. Those reformers believed in the authority of the scripture alone. To them, the scripture should dictate how the church is organized and how the church is administered. The reformers began to see that the Anglican Church in England and the Catholic Church on the continent were not in line with what the scripture said. By changing the translation from "church" to "congregation," Tyndale provided ammunition to the Reformers' beliefs during the

Protestant Reformation, as we know it today. This is what cost Tyndale his life, but it led to the people understanding what the church really is.

2. The word "priest" in the Vulgate, Tyndale correctly translated as "elder."

Tyndale translated the Greek word *presbuteros* not as "priest" but as "elder." By the time of Tyndale, the Catholic Church had evolved to the point that they had put a priest between a man and God as well as between a woman and God. The priest was there in between the two. The priests were called "the intercessors" between man and God.

The scripture clearly says that Christ is our intercessor, but the Catholic Church put a man between humans and God Almighty. Further, the Catholic Church promoted the belief that the priests were considered separate and above the average church member. If you've seen a picture of any Cathedral, whether Anglican or Catholic, where the mass was given, the priest was sometimes ten to twenty feet above the congregation, which added to this belief that the priests were separate and that they were above the congregation.

Now, this is prophesied and condemned by Jesus Christ. Let's go to Revelation 2 and start in verse 1.

Revelation 2:1. *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things [says] he that [holds] the seven stars in his right hand, who [walks] in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; (KJV)*

Verse 6:

6) But this [you have], that [you hate] the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. (KJV)

Then in verse 12:

12) And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things [says] he which [has] the sharp sword with two edges; (KJV)

Verse 15:

15) So [have you] also them that hold (to) the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. (KJV)

If you look it up under Strong's, the word "Nicolaitans" is Strong's #3531. It means *an adherent of Nicholas*, but it says this word comes from Strong's #3532, one digit away. What does that say? Strong's #3532 says *victorious over the people; Nicholas, a heretic*.

When you put a man between the people and God, guess what? You have control over the people. You have a human between God and the people He is calling. Therefore, you have control over them and you have victory over the people, which is one of the names of Nicholas.

When people begin to read the Bible, which occurred in Tyndale's time on the continent and particularly in England, because the Bible was now in English, people realize it is our individual responsibility before God—because what does the scripture say?

Philippians 2:12b. ... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
(KJV)

People began to read that and say, "I'm responsible. Not the priest. Not the Pope. Not the King of England. I'm responsible."

God's word, also in Tyndale's translation, reveals that there is an extremely strong penalty for a minister who puts himself above the congregation or puts himself first before the congregation. Let's go to Ezekiel 34:1 to read this in context of the Middle Ages, Tyndale's time, and the fact that the priests elevated themselves above the people and the priests put their interests above the people.

Ezekiel 34:1. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
2) Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, ... (KJV)

Let's stop there. I heard some years ago a Church of God minister say that this passage in Ezekiel doesn't apply to the Church of God today. That may be convenient but the fact is we are spiritual Israel. There is no question about that. Also, we know that ministers are to be shepherds. In view of those facts, this passage obviously applies to the church today as it applied to the church back in Tyndale's day.

2) ... prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus [says] the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! ... (KJV)

Meaning, in front of the brethren. Going on:

2b) ... should not the shepherds feed the flocks? (KJV)

Meaning, feed the flocks first and, then, take what's left. In the military, a good commander always ate last. He made sure his men were fed. Then, he would eat. He wouldn't be at the front of the line. Verse 3:

3) [You] eat the fat (you shepherds), and [you] clothe you with the wool, [you] kill them that are fed: ... (KJV)

We're going to see that and, Tyndale saw it routinely before he died.

3b) ... but [you] feed not the flock.

4) The diseased have [you] not strengthened, neither have [you] healed that which was sick, ... (KJV)

The shepherds don't care for the sheep. The shepherds haven't gone after them.

4b) ... neither have [you] bound up that which was broken, neither have [you] brought [them that were] driven away, ... (KJV)

I would dare say the vast majority of the people listening now, or that will watch or listen later, at some point were driven away. I talked to a lady this week, who was driven away. She and her husband were literally driven away. Going on:

4 continued) ... neither have [you] sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have [you] ruled them. (KJV)

We've seen that in our day.

5) And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: ... (KJV)

Are God's people scattered today? Yes!

5b) ... and they became [food] to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. (KJV)

Verse 9:

9) Therefore, O [you] shepherds, hear the word of the [Eternal];

10) Thus [says] the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves [anymore]; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be [food] for them. (KJV)

These shepherds use the flock for their own benefit. Verse 18:

18) [Seem] it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but [you] must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? ... (KJV)

Not only do you eat the pastures, the good food, but also you prevent the sheep from eating what's left. You don't even give them crumbs off your table.

18b) ... and to have drunk of the deep waters, but [you] must foul the residue with your feet?

19) And as for my flock, they eat that which [you] have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which [you] have fouled with your feet.

20) Therefore thus [says] the Lord God unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.

21) Because [you] have thrust with side and with shoulder, ... (KJV)

You've pushed people out of the way so you can have what you want.

21b) ... and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till [you] have scattered them abroad;

22) Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; ... (KJV)

The message is very clear. God is not happy and those priests, those shepherds, those ministers will have to answer for that. Christ set the perfect example for one who would be a minister. Let's go to Luke 22 and we'll begin in verse 25. This is what so rankled the Catholic Church when the word "priest" was not in the Bible, but they were "elders." Luke 22:25, Christ is talking to His disciples.

Luke 22:25. *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; ... (KJV)*

That's exactly what was happening in the Middle Ages, and, unfortunately, today among some of the Churches of God.

25b) ... and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

26) But [you] shall not be so: ... (KJV)

It can't be clearer!

26b) ... but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that [does] serve.

27) For whether is greater, he that [sits] at [a meal], or he that [serves]? is not he that [sits] at [a meal (the one being served)]? but I am among you as he that [serves].... (KJV)

Therefore, anybody reading the scriptures and taking them to heart would understand it's very clear that a minister is there not to be served but to serve. And, in our own experience in the Worldwide Church of God (those of us who came out of that), we saw that firsthand. The minister pulled up in his brand new car in front of the church. This whole squad of people went out and they grabbed kids and bags and rushed them into reserved seats. The minister and his family didn't have to do anything. And, that's the way it was.

Let's go to 2 Timothy 2, verse 24. Once the people got a copy of an English translation of the Bible, they began to read these verses and to shake their heads. Paul advises Timothy, "This is the way you need to be." 2 Timothy 2:24.

2 Timothy 2:24. *And the servant of the Lord ... (KJV)*

Timothy was a young servant of the Lord, a young elder.

24b) ... must not strive [argue, fight]; but be gentle unto all ... (KJV)

The word "men" was inserted in the King James.

24 continued) ... apt to teach, patient, (KJV)

Wow, being patient with people—what a concept.

25) In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; ... (KJV)

Christ wanted the elders to follow this model, but the priests were doing just the opposite. So, Tyndale led the way for our understanding of this vital concept of what an elder should be, what an elder really is. The Catholic Church turned these concepts around 180 degrees. That's the second lesson, the change from "priest" to "elder."

3. The Vulgate said, "Do penance." Tyndale translated it correctly as "Repent." Do penance versus repent.

To understand the magnitude of this one word change we have to understand the doctrine of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church taught that salvation was granted to those who lived according to what the Church told them. If you followed what the priest taught, what the Pope taught, you were guaranteed salvation. That was the core doctrine of the Catholic Church

Now, to be saved, a Catholic had to participate (and still does today) in the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. I'm going to read those to you because one is very important to this third point.

The first is baptism. They believed in infant baptism. The second is communion. The official name in the Catholic Church is Eucharist. You had to participate in the Eucharist. The third is confirmation. When you became a young adult, you were confirmed into the Catholic Church. It was an anointing at the church of a consenting adult. So, having been baptized as an infant, now, as a consenting adult, you are anointed. The fourth—and this is the important one that Tyndale turned on its ear—is the concept of reconciliation. We're going to explain reconciliation in detail in a moment. The fifth is anointing of the sick. The sixth is marriage. And, the seventh is adherence to the holy orders. The holy orders are deacon, priest, bishop, and, of course, the Pope.

Let's look at this concept of reconciliation. Of these seven sacraments, reconciliation is right in the middle. The fourth sacrament of the Catholic Church in Catholic terms means the following. There are four parts to reconciliation:

1. When we sin, the first part is contrition. Meaning, we acknowledge the sin and we feel horrible about it. We're contrite.
2. The second is confession, which means you would go to the church, to the confessional and confess your sins to the priest. That's true in the Anglican Church as well as in the Catholic Church.
3. The third is absolution. Here is where everything jumps the rails. After you have been contrite, after confession, then the priest would forgive your sins. He would provide absolution. He would say, "Your sins are forgiven."
4. Then, the fourth required that you do penance.

Of these four, the Latin Vulgate translated the Greek word *metanoéo* (Strong's #3340) as "do penance," which is the fourth part of Catholic reconciliation.

However, Tyndale translated it as "repent." From the King James Version continuing to today, all the modern translators use the word "repent," not do penance—every one of them! What Tyndale's translation did was attack the Catholic sacrament of penance and the sale of indulgences, which were occurring at that time.

After absolution, when the priest said, "Your sins are forgiven, but I want you to do penance. Here is what I command you to do." The priest could have the repentant one say specified prayers, once or maybe multiple times. "Lapping the beads," we would say today. Alternatively, visiting a particular place, such as a shrine, to go there and pray. Or, the performance of specific good works, such as "You have to go do this or that." That is doing penance.

Coming out of that was an indulgence. This is allegedly Biblical according to the Catholic view. The fact is an indulgence was a monetary payment to the Catholic Church. By paying money, a person purchased an exemption from punishment in God's eyes or what the priest had told you to do (or a reduction in punishment for certain types of sins or crimes). Let me give you an example. Another doctrine of the Catholic Church is purgatory. I'll define that in a moment. An indulgence allowed you, for your loved ones after they died, to reduce their time of punishment in purgatory.

The doctrine of purgatory requires explanation. It will take just a minute or two. The doctrine of purgatory came into the Catholic Church from pagan beliefs—Plato, Cicero, and Virgil. What these Greek philosophers taught was that purgatory was an intermediary place where the souls of spirits spent time before moving to a higher level of existence through reincarnation. This purgatory was somewhere between the earth and the stars. The Greeks believed this. That idea migrated into the Catholic Church. Guess who was behind it? Of course, Satan our adversary.

Let me read from The New Catholic Encyclopedia on purgatory.

... where the souls of those who die in a state of grace ...

Meaning, their sins were forgiven.

... where the souls of those who die in a state of grace, but not yet free from all imperfection are purified before they enter heaven.

This purgatory is where they are purified. Going on—listen to this admission from The Catholic Encyclopedia.

Although the doctrine of purgatory is not explicitly stated in the Bible, belief in its existence is intimately related to the Biblical doctrines of divine judgment, the forgiveness of sins, the mercy of God, and the temporal punishment due to sin.

So, we see here in the Catholic understanding of purgatory and their understanding of do penance, it meant that you could pay for your dead relatives to have their punishment in purgatory reduced or eliminated and they would get a bump up to heaven. Guess who received the money? The Catholic Church. Wealthy people would pay vast sums to have their relatives not punished in purgatory. Of course, those vast sums helped build the gigantic cathedrals and the Vatican and added to all the wealth of the Catholic Church.

We're going to stop here to look at two scriptures the Catholic Church uses as proof that they can legitimately make people do penance and they can legitimately sell indulgences. Let's go to Matthew 18:18. If you want another reference that says the same thing, it's Matthew 16:18-19¹. We'll look at Matthew 18:18, which the Catholic Church uses to say, "We can do whatever we want to do because God is behind it." Christ says:

Matthew 18:18. *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever [you] shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever [you] shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (KJV)*

So, the Catholics claim this verse grants them authority to make decisions contrary to the teachings of the New Testament, and the old for that matter.

Let me read from Clarke's Commentary, which gets to the basis of this and knocks this in the head. We understand this, but let me just read from Clarke's Commentary.

Binding and loosing ... is generally restrained, by Christian interpreters, to matters of discipline and authority.

¹ **Matthew 16:18.** *And I say also unto [you], that [you are] Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell [will] not prevail against it.*

19) *And I will give unto [you] the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever [you will] bind on earth [will] be bound in heaven: and whatsoever [you will] loose on earth [will] be loosed in heaven. (KJV)*

Binding and loosing just covers discipline and authority within the church. Going on:

But it is as plain as the sun, ... that binding signified, and was commonly understood by the Jews at that time to be, a declaration that [a thing] was unlawful to be done; and loosing signified, on the contrary, a declaration that [a thing] may be lawfully done. Our Saviour spoke to his disciples in a language, which they understood, so that they were not in the least at a loss to comprehend his meaning;

The words, bind and loose, are used in both places in a declaratory sense, of things, not of persons.

So, the point is that the subject of this verse is making decisions within God's law, using God's law as a guideline making decisions about things that are okay to do and things that are not okay to do. This verse is not about changing God's law. The decisions are made within God's law and not changing God's law. Yet, the Catholic Church interpreted this that the Pope, who is the Vicar of Christ, who is speaking for God on earth, God will inspire the Pope to do whatever. And, that's what they have done.

The second verse they use is in John 20:23. This verse they use for the priest and the confessional to say that the priest can forgive sins.

John 20:23. *Whose soever sins [you] remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins [you] retain, they are retained. (KJV)*

Christ is talking to the disciples here. It looks like the disciples can forgive sins and they can retain sins. And, it's their prerogative to do that. Let me read again from Clarke's Commentary. This is obvious.

... It is certain God alone can forgive sins; and it would not only be blasphemous, but grossly absurd, to say that any creature could remit the guilt of a transgression which had been committed against the Creator....

Can the creation forgive sins that were committed against the Creator? Obviously not. This is a whole sermon in itself. We could use many scriptures, but let's just go to one, Psalm 103:2. If you want a New Testament reference, one is Matthew 9:2². Psalm 103:2 is what we're going read. It is very clear. There is scripture after scripture after scripture that cover this subject.

Psalm 103:2. *Bless the Lord (YHVH), O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:*

² **Matthew 9:2.** *And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; [your] sins be forgiven [you].*

3) *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man [blasphemes].*

4) *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think [you] evil in your hearts?*

5) *For whether is easier, to say, [your] sins be forgiven [you]; or to say, Arise, and walk?*

6) *But that [you] may know that the Son of man [has] power on earth to forgive sins, (then [says] he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up [your] bed, and go unto [your] house. (KJV)*

3) *Who [forgives] all [your] iniquities; ... (KJV)*

God forgives because the sin is against God. The sin isn't against a man, be he priest or elder or anybody else. The sin is not against a man but against God.

We find here in John 20:23 referring to sins being remitted and sins being retained can only be understood to mean that the Church has the responsibility and the authority to decide who fellowships and who does not. 1 Corinthians 5, remember the fellow who had an improper relationship with his stepmother. Paul wrote and he said, "I don't need to be there. I've heard what's going on. Get this guy out of the church." That is a sin that Paul retained in the sense that this man was guilty. "He sinned against God's law and was continuing to break God's law. Get him out of the fellowship."

Then in 2 Corinthians, Paul said to the congregation, "Look, he has repented and he is sorrowful. Some of you are not forgiving him. He needs to come back." So, now the individual had repented, Paul remitted the man's sins from the standpoint of ministerial authority. Paul determined this man was able to be back in the Body of Christ, to attend church, and to be considered a brother in good standing. Clearly, John 20 verse 23 can only be understood as far as the administration within God's law, not doing away with God's law.

And, Tyndale's translation challenged the Catholic doctrine of doing penance for one's sins. That challenged the authority of the priests, the authority of the bishops, and the authority of the Pope. Based on what Tyndale read in the New Testament, he believed, and he published notes from his personal Bible that all a believer had to do was repent with a sincere heart and God would forgive. God would forgive.

Christ said the same thing. Let's go to Luke 3:7. Here Christ is talking to the multitudes. You can only imagine what a Christian in Tyndale's time would think, who had a copy of the Bible, read these verses, and then looked at what he had to do in the church.

Luke 3:7. *Then said he [Christ] to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers (referring to the Pharisees, religious leaders), who [has] warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
8) Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, ... (KJV)*

Not worthy of "do penance" as the Vulgate translated it. Worthy of repentance, bring forth fruits that show you have repented. As elders, sometimes we have to make judgments about that whether we should allow somebody to attend. Do they have fruits that show they truly have gotten it, understood the depth of their sin, and repented of it? If they have, then fine. That's wonderful.

Let's go to Acts 3:19. This is a basic understanding of God's Church today made possible by the translation of William Tyndale. The very first word, it says—not "do penance." It says:

Acts 3:19. *Repent [you] therefore, and be (baptized), ... (KJV)*

Now this goes against two doctrines of the Catholic Church. How can you be baptized as an infant if you can't repent? Repent. Not do penance.

19) Repent [you] therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; (KJV)

It doesn't say, "Your sins shall be blotted out by the priest on the other side of the confessional." It doesn't say that at all. After the people read or heard Tyndale's translation, the priests found it very difficult to continue selling indulgences. Refusing to buy indulgences was one of the huge revolts the people had against the pressure to pay money to the Catholic Church. Again, this cost Tyndale his life, but it led to the understanding of what repentance truly is.

4. The word "charity" in the Vulgate, Tyndale translated as "love."

In Tyndale's time, the word "charity" generally referred to giving to the poor. That was the meaning of the word "charity" in his day. Giving to the poor was done through giving to the Catholic Church. To give alms to the poor, you would give those alms to the priest. Then the priest allegedly would give those alms to the poor as needed. And, as we know, often those alms went in the pockets of the priests to buy a bottle of wine or to buy a nice cut of beef, or something like that. The Latin Vulgate translated the Greek word *agape* as charity.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary doesn't take us all the way back to the King James and certainly not to Tyndale's translation, but it gets us a couple of hundred years closer. Let me read from Webster's 1828 Dictionary under "charity." There are four definitions but it's interesting that three of the four definitions apply to giving to the poor.

1. In a general sense, love, benevolence, good will that inclines men to think favorable of their fellow man and to do them good. (That's what charity meant.)
2. Liberality to the poor consisting in alms giving.
3. Alms, whatever is bestowed gratuitously on the poor for their relief.

Yet, Tyndale translated this not as charity in the sense that people understood then of giving to the poor, but of love. Again, this threatened the church's money flow. It got across the idea that we should have love first to God and, then, love for our fellow man. It's sad to say that the King James translators chose to use the word "charity." This was likely under the pressure from King James because, remember, the Anglican Church wanted the money as badly as the Catholic Church. Yet, every modern translation

follows Tyndale's example—every single one. So, Tyndale helped us to understand what *agape* love really means. It is far more than just giving a few pennies to the poor.

Now, let's conclude and as we conclude, let's look at the overview and the importance of Tyndale's life and work as it applies to us today.

What was William Tyndale's greatest contribution to the Church of God when you think about all that we've covered today? It's giving us, the common people, a way to read the Bible. What a contribution to have God's word sitting in our lap in our home in a language we can understand! What a huge difference from the situation Tyndale grew up in when most of the common people couldn't read to now, today when people can read and they can have a Bible in their laps and understand God's word. What a contribution! Sometimes we don't—I didn't appreciate it until I started studying this subject about what this man did and gave his life for it.

Prior to the Bible, the people relied on the Catholic Church for access to the scriptures. And, because of the practices of the Catholic Church, in reality the people had no access to the scriptures. Tyndale's Bible was not translated into High English. It was translated into the English of the common person of his day (made available to them by the Gutenberg Press) to read for themselves assuming they were literate.

Tyndale sought to undermine the Catholic Church's grip—and later the Anglican Church's grip—on both the access and the interpretation of scripture. The average person, when the Bible was read in Latin, not only didn't have access to the scripture, but he had to rely on a man to interpret the scripture for him. So, the priests could pick and choose what scripture they read and leave out the verses that contradicted what was going on in the Church at the time. Then the priests also could interpret the scripture for the individual, which effectively cut the individual out of the process entirely.

Tyndale's purpose in creating his translation is this—and I'm quoting from one of William Tyndale's writings, which, thankfully, is available to this very day. William Tyndale says this, "I defy the Pope and all his laws." Now that, for a person who faced death, is a very gutsy declaration.

I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause the boy that drives the plow to know more of the scriptures than the Pope does.

And, hurray for William Tyndale for making that happen! I believe—and I think it's obvious—God used William Tyndale to provide an accurate and truthful Bible in English for the English-speaking people that God was going to call down the road through time after Tyndale's death.

So, with that knowledge, all of us, every one of us, God's people wherever they should happen to be, should be thankful to God for this man who worked so diligently and was so accurate, and so thorough in translating the Bible into English so that we can have a personal Bible in a language we can understand.