Love's Labor Lost: Charity Banished by Tyndale

Timothy Ross
Thursday, July 21, 2022

Tweet

The Story Of How William Tyndale Banished Charity From The Bible

"Tis going to pass you the very incendiary of embattled prose in English literature": That's how Leland Ryken starts the day in his class about the Reformation era in 17th century English literature. He then reads to his students from Christopher, II in the King James Bible, Gen. *The Legacy of the King James Bible*, pg. 105). This poem in praise of love is one of the most well known in the Bible, quoted frequently at weddings and even secular events. Ryken then asks his students a rhetorical question: "Who would have ever thought that this poem would be the money maker of the Bible?"

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; bearetH all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; And one ebideth faith, hope, charity: these three; but the greatest of these is charity.
(Third Revise ed., NKJV, 1Co 13:1-13)

Here is the King of our English Bible which we know so well, causing some to sit his majesty beauty. He is a brave conqueror whose debt shall never be paid. He will not succumb. But we must ask – from whom did he conquer? Charity, or love, is more specifically, who is it who banished charity, or charity and not as cells to love?

The story as so often, starts with William Tyndale in the early part of the 16th century.

The Weighty Words Of Reformation

The great passion of William Tyndale's life was to put the Bible into English. Unlike previous attempts (Wycliffe, Wyc-Bibe Myself and the Lollards), Tyndale translated from the original languages of the NT (Hebrew and Greek) into Vulgarized into English. The people deserved no less. As he did so, he created in some cases original rendering, and in other, gave certain English words a place in the Bible that they have kept ever since. Before deliberately creating a new kind of English, sometimes later called 'Bible English'(1 David Daniel, the great Tyndale scholar and biographer, explains:

Apart from manuscript translations into English from the Latin, made at the time of Chaucer, and linked with the Lollards, the Bible had been in Latin translation for centuries. Vernacular versions had gone before, and they could understand it. Tyndale, before he left England for his Wife sent (the very first Ambassador from the Greek NT into English), and it became a best seller. "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost." He succeeded.

– David, David, William Tyndale: A Biography: 1)

As some points, Tyndale's choice of English words showed a significant departure from the vocabulary that had become standard in those passages through the influence of the Latin Vulgate (primarily via Wycliffe). Tyndale's translation of the Greek word ἐκκλησία (ekklesia) is a prime example. Rejecting the traditional ecclesia, Tyndale, following the original Greek text, saw the English word congregation. The Greek word ἐκκλησία through medieval catholicism had obscured the text, or imparted what he thought to be wrong theology: ver. 5.

"If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

William Tyndale
(Tweet This)

In fact, the whole battle of the English Reformation can be seen, from one angle (and it is not the only angle), as a battle over which words would take place in the English Bible. Which words, or phrases, should be allowed to shape the English Bible. David Norton illustrates how the importance of vocabulary choice in translation, determined by the story of one word, which Tyndale deliberately changed in his translation:

The Bible in English was part of the larger battle, political as much as theological, for the English Reformation. The clergy's political allegiance might be relatively easily diverted from Rome to London, but beliefs were not so readily changed. By no means all the clergy were converted to the new religion. Bible if they could not suppress it they could at least attempt to make it more acceptable to conservatives. Tyndale's New Testament was attacked on the ground that it was too literal, and it came to nothing, it seems what, Erasmus'Paraphrase of John Gwynneth of just how much the question of English vocabulary was tied up with larger issues. In parliament the archbishop' asked members, individually whether Erasmus' scandal, error and manifest offence of Christ's faithful they voted to retain the Great Bible in the English speech. The majority resolved that the said Bible could not be amended until the clergy and examined voice by voice with the Latin1 Bible commonly read in the English Church". The week were late committee, and the last one hours of it, a lax of Latin and Greek scholars, Gardiner and Bonner, Tunstall and Thirlby, Heath and Day, was appointed to review the text the majesty of the sovereign. Might be unpopular in the church and even nature to be turned into English speech as closely as possible! (Ibidem, p. 17). Clearly Gardiner would have preferred these meaningful and opinions words to remain untouched.

– A History of the English Bible as a Literature, p. 17)

Norton concludes that, "The manner of English translation was a fundamental issue of the Reformation". He might be accused of slight exaggeration, but he is clearly not entirely wrong. Words matter, and the question of which phrases and words would have a place in the English Bible was one for the Reformation question in England.

One of the words that became important was the way Tyndale translated the Greek word agapao (I am Gr.) and some other phrases, as later rather than the word that had been common, which was charity. Tyndale was by no means the first to use the word charity and was the first to translate the New Testament that exclusively used love instead of using a mix of love and Charity. To understand what was at stake, a matter of the vocabulary of the Greek disposed to clear difference at these points.

A Brief History of Charity

When Jerome translated the NT into Latin (or started a translation that others later completed), he had sometimes rendered the Greek word agape as caritas, and other times rendered it as dilectio. This was a matter of the vocabulary of the Greek disposed to clear difference at these points.

Not all agapai that divers should be by distribution. Augustine agapai beloth shows the fact that charity is a certain thing, and that difference is meaning between the words charity. Charity, numerous passages, he concludes, "that we ended to show that this Scripture is of agape, where authority we prefer to all writings whatsoever, made no distinction between dilectio and caritas, and we have always shown that charity is proof of a good conversion" (Trig Ep. 167.1.1 NPNF).

Nonetheless, despite Augustine observations, the Latin text retained a difference Latin still for example in Biblia Sacra Iuxta Hieronymi, which was published in 1593 times, and Jerome's Latin text ought to be held more strongly as time went on, but one that was not based on the Greek text. This distinction carries into the English Bible by way of Wycliffe and Myles Coverdale. Wycliffe's translation shows that one occurs 18 times in the NT, while charity occurs some 94.

The distinction Augustine noticed in the Bible had become part of common English theology.

Tyndale's Book With Charity

Tyndale was convinced that bringing this distinction into English revised the Greek text. His passion was, as always, to go back to the original text. He was the first to put the English reader without a set of secondary intermediary. Thus, Tyndale spoke of "love" in 1 Co. 13 to Jerd, with one minor exception, Tyndale spoke of "love" in 1 Co. 13 to Jerd, with one minor exception, Tyndale spoke of "charity" in Jerd. Tyndale's reasoning for the Greek word agape, which had no distinction.

In turns out, then that this was one of that small handful of words Tyndale was convinced had important bad theology into the Bible. Daniel explains that Tyndale's approach to some of these words was part of his support of the Reformation project. It was chosen from his passion to the Greek NT itself. Tyndale sought to contrast scripture translations, in Tyndale's completed NT translation in 1526, "There is scriptures, and there is doctrine of men". Tyndale was convinced that the Church had corrupted the Bible, and that the Church as mediated by salvation, in his opinion, had obscured essential truths. Tyndale's Bible, and the centuries, into the element, taught, as essential, of doing good works, especially in giving money to priests, monks and friars. All you need is the New Testament and Tyndale's Bible.

For Tyndale, Donatist roots, is not being preserve. He translates predicatives as "service" (and later, "elect") because Christ is called Servant, and says "He humbled himself unto the death of the cross." Tyndale's Christ, Wycliffe, endeavor, correctly, is "evangelizes" because the Greek word means simply "assembly" without overtones of that the necessary "Church." Tyndale's Christ "evangelizes" the Kingdom of God, not "preaches" or "teaches" the Kingdom, because the Greek word means, as it means, "report" rather than "to preach," a rendering that has brought many connotations to the word. He likewise translates the verb evangelizes which has the primary sense "acknowledge, which," as "acknowledge" because no idea of confession is in the Greek word. Tyndale's Christ "evangelizes" the Kingdom of God, not "preaches" or "teaches" the Kingdom. Tyndale prefer "repent" to "do penance" because the Greek word means "change your mind." Tyndale's translation have been used to support doctrines he is convinced are entirely unbiblical, and dangerous. He wants instead for the translation to convey the text and not a special system of theology.

"In other words, he is making the New Testament refer inwardly to itself, so he instructs his readers to do, and not outwardly to the enormous secondary construction of late medieval practices of the Church. Tyndale's translation, therefore, is a kind of hermeneutic, a way of reading the Bible in opposition to the prevailing ecclesiastical tradition. Tyndale's Bible is a kind of Protestant Bible, and it is the Bible that, over the centuries, not the element, taught, as essential, of doing good works, especially in giving money to priests, monks and friars. All you need is the New Testament and Tyndale's Bible."

– Tyndale's Bible: A Biography, p. 148-149)

Tyndale, Donatist roots, is not being preserve. He translates predicatives as "service" (and later, "elect") because Christ is called Servant, and says "He humbled himself unto the death of the cross." Tyndale's Christ, Wycliffe, endeavor, correctly, is "evangelizes" because the Greek word means simply "assembly" without overtones of that the necessary "Church." Tyndale's Christ "evangelizes" the Kingdom of God, not "preaches" or "teaches" the Kingdom, because the Greek word means, as it means, "report" rather than "to preach," a rendering that has brought many connotations to the word. He likewise translates the verb evangelizes which has the primary sense "acknowledge, which," as "acknowledge" because no idea of confession is in the Greek word. Tyndale's Christ "evangelizes" the Kingdom of God, not "preaches" or "teaches" the Kingdom. Tyndale prefer "repent" to "do penance" because the Greek word means "change your mind." Tyndale's translation have been used to support doctrines he is convinced are entirely unbiblical, and dangerous. He wants instead for the translation to convey the text and not a special system of theology.

"In other words, he is making the New Testament refer inwardly to itself, so he instructs his readers to do, and not outwardly to the enormous secondary construction of late medieval practices of the Church. Tyndale's translation, therefore, is a kind of hermeneutic, a way of reading the Bible in opposition to the prevailing ecclesiastical tradition. Tyndale's Bible is a kind of Protestant Bible, and it is the Bible that, over the centuries, not the element, taught, as essential, of doing good works, especially in giving money to priests, monks and friars. All you need is the New Testament and Tyndale's Bible."

– Tyndale's Bible: A Biography, p. 148-149)

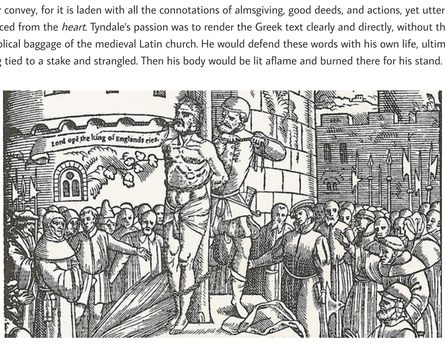
Some Fight Against Love

It was to be expected, Tyndale's return to the Greek text was not well received by all. Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall called against Tyndale and what he had written the preached a sermon (no longer extant) against Tyndale. Tyndale's translation was condemned as "Lutheran" and "Tyndale's Bible" was condemned as "Jesus of Nazareth" was among these. Tyndale was condemned as he go to a bit of Martin Luther, who, he is supposed, he burned. Yet, burned the New Testament, to Tyndale's great shock and dismay. Daniel notes that it has been common to contrast "Tyndale's Bible" with "Luther's Bible." Tyndale's translation, he argues, was not less better. But this cannot be the real reason, for there are no marginal notes in the 1526 NT. (and if the 1525 is issued, it is gone, and the Prologue to Romans and Matthew, and with it, the notes, and the colophon, and in fact, "Tyndale's amazed can only have been on Tyndale's rendering of the New Testament." Tyndale's Bible, Tyndale's Bible, Tyndale

speaking: as we say, Summer is nigh, for the trees blossom. Now is the blossoming of the trees not the cause that summer draweth nigh; but the drawing nigh of summer is the cause of the blossoms, and the blossoms put us in remembrance that summer is at hand. So Christ here teacheth Simon by the ferventness of love in the outward deeds to see a strong faith within, whence so great love springeth. As the manner is to say, Do your charity; shew your charity; do a deed of charity; shew your mercy; do a deed of mercy; meaning thereby that our deeds declare how we love our neighbours, and how much we have compassion on them at their need. Moreover it is not possible to love, except we see a cause. Except we see in our hearts the love and kindness of God to us-ward in Christ our Lord, it is not possible to love God aright.

- William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, Vol. 1, pg. 83–84.

Love must be felt, fervently, and can only come in response to the gospel. Then and only then can loving deeds for others proceed, as the fruit of salvation, and the fruit of grasping and feeling the love of God for us. That, for Tyndale, was the force of *agape*. It could not be reduced to mere action or good deeds. Far from it. Tyndale is the romantic. Love must be *experienced*. And that is what the empty, "charity," can never convey, for it is laden with all the connotations of almsgiving, good deeds, and actions, yet utterly divorced from the *heart*. Tyndale's passion was to render the Greek text clearly and directly, without the unbiblical baggage of the medieval Latin church. He would defend these words with his own life, ultimately being tied to a stake and strangled. Then his body would be lit aflame and burned there for his stand.



"And though I gave my body even that I burned, and yet had no love, it profiteth nothing."
(I Cor. 13:3, Tyndale 1536)

We read these words as only a hypothetical scenario urging us to remember that actions apart from love are worthless. But for Tyndale, these words are not hypothetical - they were more like a prophecy of his coming end. He would not die having no love, to no profit. Rather, he would give his body that he burned, precisely because he was driven by the passionate love that he preached from both pulpit and press.

A Story Unfinished

Tyndale worked to banish Charity from the English Bible, considering it unworthy of the word of God in English. He includes "charitably" as an adjective exactly once (Rom. 14:15), but has excommunicated the noun entirely from the English Bible. The Bible, in his opinion, has no place for this lesser word, which fails to capture the meaning of the Greek text.

> "Charity is no known English, in that sense which agape requireth."
> - William Tyndale
> (Tweet This)

We will look in more detail at Tyndale and other Reformation era Bible's in the next post. But one reality becomes starkly obvious even from what we have already seen. Charity was exorcised from the Bible by Tyndale. Yet even in the great passage we examined at the start of this post, it has been *revived* in the Authorized Version. In fact, as we will see, it has been revived in several dozen other passages as well in the KJV.

What happened?

When did it happen?

Who was responsible?

It is clear that the story of love has not yet been told in full. This is only an interlude.

Until next time.

If You Enjoyed it, Share This Blog!
Facebook | Twitter | LinkedIn
And Subscribe to The Blog Here!
Blog RSS

SEE ALSO

How The Gospel Reshapes Your Worth...
The church does just tolerate...

Single Not Dead: A Holy Handling Of The Single...
The possession of your sex...

Jesus > The Bible (Part 2)
Jesus is the core of the...

Exegesis	Bible	Kjv
Kjvo	Kjv Only	Textual Criticism
Gifts	Gospel	Fundamentalism
Preservation	Resurrection	Textus Receptus
Reformation	Luther	Neo-Fundamentalism
New Testament	Tongues	Apologetics
Church History	Eschatology	Kingdom
Tr Only	Tyndale	Apostolic Fathers
Commentaries	Easter	Gospels
Jesus	Luke	Sex
The Shire	Theology	Tr
Anabaptist	English Bible	Holy Week
Inaugurated Eschatology	King James Bible	King James Only
Lord Of The Rings	Luke-Acts	Missions
Objections To Christianity	Preaching	Protestant
Single	Singleness	Slander
Slavery	Song Of Songs	Technical Commentaries
Textual Essays	Translation	Acts
Already/Not Yet	Anabaptists	Apostles
Bible Study	Biblical Commentaries	Burgon
Ccm	Charismatic	Charity
Christmas	Christology	Chronology Of The Life Of Christ
Church History\	Contemporary Issues	Cross
Cursing	D. A. Carson	Demonization
Die Hard	Doctrine Of Preservation	End Times
Exegesos	Exegsis	Faith
Fathers	Fundamentaism	Gordon Fee
Gospel Contradictions	Greek	Hands
Historical Jesus	Historical Theology	History
Homosexuality	Journal Of Travels	Kingdom Chronicles
Kingdom Of God	Kjvonly	Lewis
Liturgy	Marriage	Matthew
Matthew	Minimal Facts	Music
Nt	Oh My God	Omg
Paraphrase	Pastor	Paul
Philosophy	Polycarp	Praying
Psalms	Radicals	Reformers
Satire	Sermon Notes	Sex Drive
Sexuality	Single Life	Singles
Spiritual Gifts	Spirituality	Strongs
Synoptic Problem	Taking The Lords Name In Vain	Tattoo
Text	The Doctrine Of Preservation	The Power Of The Tongue
The Singer	Translation Methods	Tro
Webster's	William Tyndale	Word Studies
Words	Worship	

0 Comments
Sort by Oldest
Add a comment...
Facebook Comments plugin

Preacher_of_the_word@hotmail.com
Student, Preacher, Teacher

Like 89
Facebook | Twitter | LinkedIn