

500TH

ANNIVERSARY OF THE TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT

No book has shaped the language we speak and the history of English-speaking nations more than Tyndale's translation of the New Testament. Its original size was compact, much like the Bible you hold, yet its influence has been immeasurable. Tyndale's New Testament was in great demand as people longed to read the words of Scripture faithfully translated into English from the original, Biblical Greek for the first time. Before this, the Bible was only available in Latin, and Scripture translation was forbidden.

Tyndale fervently believed the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God' (Matthew 4.4). Tyndale was willing to risk his life so that those who knew English could read the Bible for themselves. He was executed before he completed translating the whole of the Old Testament. The Bible you hold has therefore come to you at a great cost. Tyndale's final words were, 'Lord, open the King of England's eyes'. This prayer for official approval of the circulation of Scripture in England was answered within two years when Henry VIII ordered Bibles to be placed in every parish church in England.

When Tyndale first published his New Testament, he exhorted readers to 'come with a pure mind, and ... with a single eye, unto the words of health and of eternal life, by the which (if we repent and believe them) we are born anew, created afresh, and enjoy the fruits of the blood of Christ'. This expresses the great motive behind Bible translation at the time of the Reformation: that people might understand and believe the truth about salvation and come to experience it for themselves.

Scripture circulation was a vital aspect of the Protestant Reformation—a mighty work of God that proclaimed that salvation is by faith alone, in Christ alone. In response to a fervent desire to read, understand, learn, preach, publish, and circulate the Holy Scriptures, translations began to roll off the printing presses of Europe. Together with Tyndale, they used the same Received Text of the Greek New Testament that had been preserved in the church and a faithful, literal approach to translation.

Coming at the climax of this Reformation work of translation, the translators of the Authorised (King James) Version left Tyndale's work almost untouched. They made the type of refinements to it that Tyndale already commenced in 1534. It is very fitting that we should mark this significant milestone by publishing this Commemorative Edition of the Authorised (King James) Version. Here is a book that has transformed the world and countless individual lives across the centuries; generations come and go, but its truth and power are unchanging.

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth:
but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Isaiah 40.8