

Thank you for joining us as we continue our sermon series, Fighting For as we discuss the various doctrines for which Christians throughout the ages have fought and died. In a somewhat out of order move, we are finishing the first half of our sermon series a week late. We are rounding out the last part of Revelation 7:9 **“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,”**

Tonight, we are looking at the Church of all languages, or tongues. The Christian whose life we are examining is William Tyndale who wrote one of the first English translations of the Bible. **CHRISTIANS LIKE TYNDALE BRING CHRIST TO ALL TONGUES.**

First, I. Apart from translation, the Bible is a closed book. In our Old Testament reading, **“And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, “Read this,” he says, “I cannot, for it is sealed.” And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, “Read this,” he says, “I cannot read.”**” The people in Isaiah’s day did not understand God’s Word. They were incapable of following God’s Word if they couldn’t understand it.

We know this started at the Tower of Babel in the book of Genesis. At that time the people were of one language and had the same words. Instead of using this unity to glorify God, they used it to glorify themselves. In order to save them from their own self destruction, the Lord changed their languages and spread them throughout the face of the Earth. We need to acknowledge that the many languages are a sign of God’s judgment.

But the Lord had a plan to save us. **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** Jesus came to this earth as the Word of the Father. He interpreted the Bible with authority so that God’s people could understand. **“And they were astonished at [Jesus’] teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.”** He brought salvation to the world through His life, death, and resurrection which tore down the dividing wall between us and God.

On the cross hung a sign, and it was a kind of Rosetta Stone, Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Jesus is the King for Jews, Gentiles, and all People.

At Pentecost the Tower of Babel was reversed through the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples to speak the Gospel in each person’s own language. **“And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native**

language?” Many people throughout the Mediterranean came to faith by the powerful message of the Gospel preached in Jerusalem that day by the apostles.

Thus, the task of the Christian is to translate the Bible. In some cases, it means specialists translating the Bible into a new language, but in many cases, it means lay Christians in everyday settings explaining the Bible to those who do not yet know Christ.

Therefore, II. God sends Christians to share the message of the Gospel. For much of the Church’s history, the services were conducted in Latin. In the fourth century, Latin was the language of the land in the Roman Empire. However, after the fall of the Roman empire, Latin stopped being spoken, and entire swaths of the Christian Church attended services in a language they couldn’t understand. In fact, some scholars surmise the magic phrase hocus pocus is actually from a misunderstanding of the Latin phrase *hoc est corpus meum* which is Latin for this is my body. There was this little understanding of what was going on in the service.

The Bible was in Latin, which meant that even people who couldn’t read couldn’t understand the Bible as it was read out loud in service. Scholars sought to change that. One such example is Martin Luther who translated the Bible into German for the people to understand. He not only translated the Bible, but the service into German so the church attendees could learn in Church.

One such contemporary of Luther was William Tyndale. Tyndale was born in England in the late 1400s. He was a gifted linguist and became fluent in French, Greek, Hebrew, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish. He was a bold fighter for the truths of the Gospel. John Foxe, a church historian recounts an exchange Tyndale had with someone who allegedly said, “We had better be without God’s laws than the Pope’s” to which Tyndale responded: "I defy the Pope and all his laws; and if God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost!" Tyndale sought to teach the Scriptures so even the simplest person could learn and believe.

He went to continental Europe, and he may have even studied at the University of Wittenberg under Luther in 1524. By 1525, he started translating the Bible into English. He translated the entire New Testament and a significant portion of the Old Testament into English. With the advent of the printing press, this was able to be distributed across Europe, and especially England. We believe that the translators of the King James Version relied heavily on Tyndale’s translation.

He was martyred in Belgium in 1536 for the charge of being a Lutheran. His last words were purportedly “Lord! Open the King of England's eyes.” Although we don’t know the extent of Tyndale’s interactions with Luther himself, we know that he was influenced by his ideas, and the Gospel of being saved apart from

anything we've done is something that affected Tyndale and changed his life. He was able to die in peace having this hope of the resurrection.

Bible translators continue to serve. Organizations such as Lutheran Bible Translators work to translate the Bible into more and more languages, so that all people can hear and understand the saving message of the Gospel. **“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!””** We continue in the legacy of Luther, Tyndale, and other Bible translators by sharing that good news with others.

III. God sends you to share the message of the Gospel. The Church is the Church of all tongues, and heaven will be filled with Christians who speak every language and are from every background. And we honor Tyndale's legacy as we read the Bible in our own language. Never before have we had such an easy access to the Bible in any language we choose at our fingertips through the Internet, but we often would rather spend time watching the news or scrolling through Facebook.

There's an abundance of opportunities to read and learn the Bible in a language we understand. Not only is the Bible in English, but there are also countless books, commentaries, Bible studies which can help us read, mark, and inwardly digest God's saving Word. Join a Bible study or borrow a book from the Church Library.

You don't have to be a pastor to be able to share this good news with others. In some ways, you may be the best equipped to translate the Bible into a language someone can understand, not because you know the Bible better than me, but because you know your friends, family, and coworkers better than me. You know their lives and you can explain stories with illustrations that will translate better into each person's story. If you take a friend to church, you can be their pew buddy, and lead them through the various parts of the service. You have gained the trust of others to let them into your life.

At the Tower of Babel God divided the one language of the world into a multitude of languages. Yet at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit reunited the world through a one-time miracle of speaking in different languages. The Holy Spirit is still working through us, giving us the ability to learn new languages, and to speak to the hearts of those around us. **CHRISTIANS LIKE TYNDALE BRING CHRIST TO ALL TONGUES.** Let us go out with courage, just as Tyndale did, to share this good news of Jesus to those around us translating it into terms they can understand.