

Introduction for July 25, 2010

John Frith, a close friend and co-laborer in the gospel with William Tyndale, was martyred in 1533 for preaching the gospel and working with Tyndale to distribute the English New Testament. It was through Tyndale's influence that Frith, "received into his heart the seed of the gospel and sincere godliness." Listen to his words to Sir Thomas More, "I assure you I neither will nor can cease to speak, for the Word of God boileth in my body like a fervent fire and will needs have an issue." Oh, the power and might of the Word of God!

The fires of reformation that burned in England in the 16th century were kindled by the publishing of Tyndale's New Testament. Attending the publishing of his English New Testament were articles and treatises that were instrumental in lighting this sacred fire. What a privilege to have the Scriptures in one's own language, what a most precious gift and astounding thing it is to have the Bible in English!

However, it seems in our day that we have lost the wonder and majesty of this great treasure. The Bible has been marketed like any other product and has been subjected to the whims and desire of the consumer. Bibles are now produced and printed to meet specific cultural and demographic tastes and likes. Can you imagine after the completion of the Canon that Bibles would have been produced for profit - that there would be an Apostle's Bible, a Disciples' Bible, a Gladiator's Bible, a Carpenter's Bible, a Pharisee's Bible, a Lawyer's Bible? Though it sounds ridiculous, yet it is a reality today. The Bible is the very Word of God that is to be studied in the corporate setting of the church, interpreted within the community of faith and proclaimed by those whom God has set forth to announce the gospel. It was not designed in order to enhance one's self-affirmation or personal self-study and thus lead away from the church and the corporate gathering of worship to hear, to reckon with, and to apply the Word of God.

The Bible has been reduced to a felt-needs book to make one feel better about himself, or, to encourage her to have a better marriage, more friends, be more popular, have more money, better kids, a better job, better sex, etc., etc. Publishers now take sacred texts and design them to fit one's cultural bias and demographic special interests. Whatever happened to the Bible?

No matter the façade wrapped around it, the pretext or presupposition brought to its study, the Word of God stands as invincible, everlasting, immoveable, absolute and authoritative for every generation and age. It must be read within the context of the church, preached in the community of faith gathered for worship, and applied to every member of that community for his or her growth in grace and truth. This is God's Word, it is not man's word, and therefore it must be proclaimed, treasured, lived and obeyed, not in isolation from the church, but within the gathered church. We need the checks and balances of exegesis, exposition and worship in Christian orthodoxy to protect us from ourselves, our culture and our times. Look at your bulletin. What is most prominent about it? The Word of God. What is preached? The Word of God. What is taught? The Word of God. It is the centerpiece of our lives and worship. It is the foundation upon which we stand. It is the authority for life and practice. It is the bedrock and foundation of the founding of this nation. It is the foundation for all academic disciplines. It is the absolute, infallible, inerrant Word that proceeds from God and is from everlasting to everlasting.

Psalm 19:7-11 (NASB): "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward."