

Preach the Word

“And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead”

(Acts 10:42).

Vince Lombardi was a legendary football coach. He once encountered a losing streak with his team. What was his response? Did he throw up his hands, and quit? No! He called a team meeting. The players crowded into the room, settled down, anticipating a word of rebuke from their coach. Lombardi announced, “Today we are going back to the basics.”

He held high a football, and said, “Men, this is a football.”

Preachers, today we too go back to the basics. The book you hold in your hand when you preach is the Holy Bible; God’s written Word. We do not preach philosophies—our thoughts or theories for living—but the unchanging, Word of God. It is to be communicated to men and women throughout every generation.

We Preach God’s Word.

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2).

“But we preach Christ...the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

For over two thousand years people have heard from the Bible. They believe it is the message from God. It is God’s written Word designed to speak to all. Bible writers professed to speak or write for God; not merely their own words. This claim is made over 2,600 times throughout Scripture. The bottom line is: When the Bible speaks, God speaks.

History stands witness that Christian church leaders resisted the translation of the Bible into the everyday language of the people. Men suffered great pain to present God’s Word in a language common people could understand.

John Wycliffe

John Wycliffe, a professor of Divinity at Oxford, translated the first English Bible. He was fired from the school, and branded an instrument of the devil.

Wycliffe died before anyone had the chance to kill him. The ‘church’ of his day commented about him, “This pestilent wretch...the son of the old serpent the forerunner of Antichrist, who had completed his iniquity by inventing a new translation of the Scriptures.”

Forty-three years later church leaders dug up his corpse. They burned it, and dumped it into a river.

Wycliffe Bible Translators crisscross the world today interpreting Scripture.

William Tyndale

William Tyndale produced an improved, English version. What was his reward? He was tied to the stake, publicly strangled, and his body was burned.

Tyndale's dying words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

His prayer was answered. Within two years the King ordered that English Bibles be placed in every church.

Did this stop Tyndale's dream? No, Tyndale Publishers exists today.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther wished to make two contributions to society: a Bible people could understand, and a hymnal. He said, "Let them loose. The flame will spread on its own."

The flame has spread. Today, God's Word is translated, and printed in more than 2,200 languages. It remains the bestselling book of all times. Why? People are anxious to hear from God.

Voltaire said, "Another century and there will not be a Bible on earth." He died over two hundred years ago. His house and printing press were sold to the Geneva Bible Society.

"The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (Psalms 68:11).

Art Kohl in "The Bible: Did God Write It" explains the following rules, contained in the Talmud, for those that copied the Hebrew text:

- The parchment must be made of a skin of a clean animal, by a Jew.
- The ink must be black, made by a special recipe.
- No word or letter could be written from memory; the scribe must have a genuine copy before him.
- He had to read and pronounce each word aloud before writing it.
- Before writing the sacred name Jehovah, the scribe would wipe his pen and wash his entire body. He did it every time the sacred name was written.

- One mistake on the sheet condemned it. If three mistakes were found, the whole manuscript was condemned.
- Every word and letter was counted. If a letter was omitted or added or if two letters touched each other, the whole manuscript was condemned.
- Even if a king walked in, the scribe was to ignore him until he finished the page.

That is amazing and brings several questions to mind:

1. How careful are you when quoting a Bible verse?
2. Do you speak the name of the Lord with reverence or carelessly as part of your everyday informal vocabulary?
3. How vigilant are you in studying, preparing, and preaching God's holy Word?
4. Will you be more cautious in the future? How?

Keep God's Word Upfront.

In Bible times Jews tied little boxes called "phylacteries" to their foreheads, and left arms. This is still practiced today among some. These boxes contained portions of God's Word called the "Shema" (Hebrew for "Hear, O Israel.") The "Shema" was originally recited at least twice daily: sunrise, and sunset (and when a person is close to death). This is in keeping with "...when you are lying down and when you are getting up again" (Deuteronomy 6:7, *NLT*).

The Jews also attached containers called "mezuzah" or prayer boxes to the doorframes of their homes. Traditionally Jews touched the "mezuzah" and then kissed their fingers as they entered into their homes. This shows their love for God and for His Word.

"Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:9, *NLT*).

What principle can we learn from this?

- God's Word is to be kept upfront, and active in everyday life.

Preacher, "Preach the Word!" People will listen. It will accomplish God's purpose.

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

David Hume once said, "I see the twilight of Christianity and the Bible." Art Kohl adds, "He was confused, for he could not tell the sunset from the sunrise." Christianity is on the rise.

Kohl mentions a quote by Thomas Paine: "I have gone through the Bible as a man would go through a forest with an axe to fell trees. I have cut down tree after tree: here they lie. They will never grow again." Paine thought he could cut the Bible into pieces, and do what he wanted.

He died a drunkard. Many share his thinking; take what they like from the Bible, and cut out or ignore what they do not like.

Men have laid down their lives so we can have the Bible. They painfully and carefully translated it for us. Preachers, we need to take equal care in preaching it.

“And so the Word of the Lord [concerning eternal salvation through Christ] scattered and spread throughout the whole region” (Acts 13:49, AMP).

Study Questions

1. Who resisted the translation of the Bible into the everyday language of the people?

2. Why was John Wycliffe fired from his job? _____

3. What happened to Wycliffe's corpse after he was buried? _____

4. What were Tyndale's dying words? _____

5. How was his prayer answered? _____

6. What two contributions did Martin Luther make to society? _____

7. How many languages is the Bible translated into? _____

8. What principles can we learn from the “phylacteries” and “mezuzah”? _____

9. List three rules that the scribes followed as they copied the Hebrew text? _____

10. What did Voltaire say, as quoted in this lesson? What happened to his house and printing press? _____

Additional Notes

