William Tyndale

When William Tyndale was a young boy, he did not have a Bible in his house like you and I do. His family had to go to church to hear the Bible read. But even then, they could not understand it as it was in Latin. Only very clever people could understand it.

As William grew up it became clear that he found learning languages easy. He learnt to read and write in Hebrew and Greek, the languages in which the Bible was originally written. Now he was able to read and understand the Bible for himself. Because he loved God, William wanted to use his gift to translate the Bible into English, so that ordinary people could read it and learn about the Lord Jesus Christ.

In those days, the church believed that only the pope and priests should be able to read God's word. The trouble was, they kept what it really said a secret from the people so that they could tell them lies. For example, the church told the people that they had to do good things and pay for their sins to get to heaven. William had now learnt that the Bible teaches us that salvation from our sin is a free gift for all who believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died in their place. William, being able to read the Bible himself had learnt

that the church was not teaching the truth. He wanted everyone to know the truth.

He asked the church authorities for permission to translate the Bible into English, but they said 'No'.

William now had a problem. He was not allowed to translate the Bible because if he did he would be killed as it was against the law. But if he didn't, how would the people learn about free salvation? What should he do? William knew there was only one answer. He must do what God told him to do, even if it was dangerous. One day, when talking to a priest he said: "I defy the Pope and all his laws; if God spares my life, I will cause a young farm boy to know more of the Scriptures than you do."

William knew he would have to leave England quickly. He travelled secretly to Germany, where he knew there were others that were standing up for the truth of God's word. There he changed his name. William set to work translating the Bible. It was not easy: he had to translate it so that the English version was as close to the original meaning as possible. He also wanted to make it easy to understand. All the time he was keeping a look out for English spies. Then he had to find a good printer who would not tell anyone what he had done.

After that, he had to try and get the Bibles back into England. He smuggled them in by hiding them in goods on ships. Once in England, people started to buy them. Although they were quite expensive, people were happy to save their money in order to buy one. As the Word of God spread through the land, little groups of people started to meet together to hear God's word in their own language.

Of course, the king and the church authorities were not pleased. They tried to burn as many of the Bibles as they could.

Eventually a spy did find William. A young man pretended to be

his friend and to help him with his translation work but he was a spy and tricked him into being caught. William lost his life for doing what God told him to do. As he was dying he prayed:

"God, please open the King of England's eyes."

God heard his prayer and answered it amazingly. Before a year had passed, the king gave permission for an English Bible to be published. Tyndale's Bible was used to help translate the new Bible.

We only have our English translation of the Bible today because of Tyndale's Bible.