

The Testimony of Jesus

Part 5

Let's have a word of prayer:

Lord, we are thankful for the sweet fellowship that we can have in You, and it does always come back to Your great love. We are so thankful that You are the One who first loved us. Lord, we are those who are so blessed upon this earth, and we are thankful that we can continue to call upon Your name. As we come to Your Word, we want to be encouraged in that too. We see Your love manifested through ones throughout history. We see Your life manifested, holding Your people and keeping them. As we look back at our great heritage, it would encourage us to continue to press on in the difficult challenging days we find ourselves in. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We have been sharing on the testimony of Jesus throughout church history, and we are using two verses as our theme. The first one is from Matthew 16:17-18: "And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.

This is a precious promise: "... upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it." That is a statement of faith not by sight because if you look around by sight, it will never get done. So we are thankful that by Him it will get done.

Also in Revelation 1 when the Lord was revealing Himself in a fuller and greater way to John the apostle, he says in Revelation 1:17-18: "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He laid His right hand on me, saying, Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

We have been using this verse to really summarize and encapsulate for us what we are talking about as the testimony of Jesus, and where it is and who He is. He is the all-inclusive One, the great I Am. That is what He is looking for to be manifest among His people. It speaks of His life, His very character and nature. That is what He wants to have lived out in His people. That is what He is looking for, a people who responds to His life, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, seen in a very living way. It speaks to us of what He has done, and what He is doing because He is the all-victorious One. He declared that His earthly work was finished, and one day His eternal work will be finished also. There will be that great capstone of grace upon grace.

Review

As we continue on today, the longer you go along in church history, you cannot do much review or else we would spend a whole hour reviewing. So just to quickly encapsulate, we know that the church was in God's heart from eternity past. Our Lord came, He was crucified, and on that great day of Pentecost the church on earth had a glorious birth, a real healthy beginning. We are thankful how the church has been entrusted with the testimony of Jesus, the vessel to hold and testify of Jesus and Him alone, and for that word to be spread throughout all the earth. As we have looked through history, tragically we have seen that through dissipation, corruption and persecution there has become a great distinction between Christendom and the testimony of Jesus. There is a lot of religious stuff out there, but there is only one Jesus and His life. That is what we are focused on, and that is what we want to consider.

We are thankful too, in spite of man's unfaithfulness, God has remained faithful. And He has maintained what we are calling that silver thread through the darkest of times when throughout the dark ages **there** was nothing that you could see outwardly. But praise God, there

was the remnant, those hidden ones that were there maintaining the testimony of Jesus.

Today, we are going to move forward into the prereformation, the time that led up to the Reformation. The Reformation is generally dated in 1517 AD when Martin Luther nailed those ninety-five theses to the door, but we will look at that the next time. This is leading up to it, and we want to look at the conditions that were going on in the world that really facilitated the Reformation. God was doing a great work, but He has always been doing a great work. It is interesting as you think about the Reformation that it did not just pop out of nowhere. God was orchestrating; God was in control. He was moving ones throughout the earth and causing certain events to occur in order for this great Reformation to come about.

Conditions Preceding Reformation

Some of the events that occurred were in 1453 AD. There was the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, the printing press was invented, and during this time there was an enlargement of men's minds and their activities versus the superstition of the past. Nationalism was increasing and countries were taking pride in themselves versus the empires of the past. There were significant socio-economic changes going on, and middle-class merchants were created. There was a general unrest and insecurity among the populace because of the black death in which thirty percent of Europe had been killed through the plague. There had been 100 years of war between England and France. So we can see there is nothing new under the sun.

How did they finance the war between England and France? They raised taxes on the people. So the people were really frustrated. Everybody was fighting, and the only thing they could see was their taxes going up and nothing getting settled. There was this general

unrest that was going on, and these things combined led to the Reformation.

The Capture of Constantinople by the Turks

The first thing we will touch on is this matter of the capture of Constantinople by the Turks. When we speak of the Turks, there used to be a dividing line between Constantinople and the Ottoman Empire, but the Ottoman Empire and the Turks, which are Muslims, crossed over and were starting to work their way toward their goal which was Europe. They stopped short of that, but this was a tremendous battle That took place. Actually they were in this area for another 200 years.

In 1650 there was a great battle in Vienna in which the Ottoman Empire ended up being defeated. But we begin to see the Arabs, the Muslims beginning to have more and more influence. It was growing and pressuring a lot of people. The impact of Constantinople being conquered was that it caused many scholarly Greeks to flee and move to the West. This brought about a great revival of the arts, classic literature, Greek writings, and what turned out to be called the Renaissance, the “New Birth” or the “New Living”. In many ways we could call the Renaissance a counterfeit to the Reformation. The Renaissance was of man, the Reformation was of God. Different people chose different things. We are thankful that by these scholars and the Greeks, it also led to this investigation of the Word of God. However, through the movement of this one event, there was a flood of scholarly, artistic and classical ones that were moving into Europe that had never been exposed there before. All of a sudden, during this time there were names that are very familiar to anybody. We think of some artists like Michelangelo, Raffaele, Da Vinci, Donatello; these names just go on and on, and we are familiar with ones like that.

When we consider literature, there is Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Cervantes—common names that we know. Even in Science you have Capricornus, Columbus, Magellan, who were explorers that were going out. The mind of man was beginning to expand and explore things. Many explored on the negative side, and it ended up with this worldly Renaissance. But praise God, many of these professors fled to these universities in Europe, and one in particular, John Collette was in England. He was very learned in Greek, and he was saved and then taught in Oxford. He greatly influenced Erasmus, and he was the chaplain to King Henry VIII. He was from a very influential family in London, and he began teaching more and more of the Greek literature. That enabled people to go back and look at the Word of God in its original language. Before that all they had was Latin, and even that was an adulterated Latin that they had in the Vulgate.

Colet actually translated it into English on his own, and in St. Paul's Church in London, he would read the Scriptures every day to people. At times there would be 20,000 people coming to listen to this man simply reading the Scriptures because people had always had a hunger for the Word of God and wanted to know the origin of the real Word of God. It is one of the things that we will begin to notice as a characteristic of this time is the significance of the Word of God, the love people had for the Word of God, and the impact that the Word of God had on lives.

Then there was Reuchlin who lived in Germany, and what Colet did with the Greek studies, Reuchlin did for the Hebrew studies. His nephew was Philip Melanchthon, and he also influenced Luther. He was able to expound the Old Testament in a way that ones were able to begin to get a grasp on it that they had never had before. He was actually called by some people the "Father of the Reformation", and that was some people's impression of him. You begin to see these seeds working, one person here, one person there. These are names that we are not very familiar with, but God used them in miraculous ways

because they were faithful with what they had seen. As they listened to Colet and Reuchlin, as they began to study the original Word of God, they were saved. And praise God, the Word transformed their lives, and then they were able to share it with others.

The Printing Press

Another thing that greatly impacted this time was the printing press. All of a sudden, Bibles could be printed in native tongues so people could read the Word of God in their own language, and this probably had the greatest impact upon the Reformation. There were various languages to which it was interpreted and translated in. A couple of the significant things was in 1516 AD when Erasmus printed the Greek New Testament with translation notes. There had never been before a reliable Greek New Testament, and Erasmus went back to the original and compiled the original Greek New Testament. He put translation notes in it so that professors throughout many universities and all the various studies were using them. They finally had a valid document that they could use to really understand the original language. Thank the Lord, Luther did it in German, and then William Tyndale published the New Testament in English. These new translations that were coming out after Erasmus were using his Greek New Testament, which was the original Greek, to make the updated translations. Before that they would translate from the Latin. You went from Greek to Latin to whatever other language. Many of you who know languages also know that when you move to another country with a different language, it can really get distorted. So we see this impact.

In 1535 Cloverdale published the first complete Bible in English. It is wonderful to see! When we begin to look at some of these men, we will find it was the Word of God and the impact that it had in very dark

days. This was one of the encouraging things to me in studying this section is that we are living in dark days, and we are seeing so many impossible situations. These ones were living during an impossible time. It seemed as if God had disappeared from the earth outwardly, and man was ruling in darkness. However, the Word of God started touching individual hearts. It had become living and real to people, and it brought about a great Reformation. We look around the world today and see no hope for this world. How can anything change? How can this happen? How can there be a great revival? We could ask this question at this point in time in history, but praise God, through His victory, through the Word of God and the working of His Spirit, He brought about a great Reformation. He was doing a great work, and He can continue to do a great work today if there are ones who will respond to Him like these dear ones.

Enlargement of Men's Minds and Nationalism

Another condition that came about was the enlargement of men's minds versus superstition. This was good because they were open to explore things, so it led people not only to explore natural things of the earth like Columbus and Copernicus, but men were now open to study the Word of God instead of just listening to the priests. They were actually studying the Word of God. I am very thankful for that.

Nationalism was increasing; they were rejecting the overall power of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) to control all the countries. Also, there were a lot of socio-economic changes going on. In 1381 AD there was a peasant's revolt in England; they were just getting tired of being taken advantage of. Also, there was the rise of the middle-class merchants. These were ones who had become self-supporting and were not having to live based on the noble who they were working for. There was no longer the two classes of nobility and serfdom. They were ones who were actually becoming more and more self-supporting. So these various factors were all leading in and laying the groundwork for God to

move in a very wonderful way at this point in time. Thank the Lord for these ones whom He touched and are called the forerunners to the Reformation.

As we look at these ones, even though their names are famous to us today, they were just ordinary brothers who were used in a mighty way. They were all within the Roman Catholic Church, and they were seeking reform, but they were never seeking to start something new. They were not saying, “Okay, we are going to revolt against this and do this or that. No, they were just seeking reform. But because they were contesting and questioning the things that the Roman Catholic Church had told them to do, most of them were thrown out, executed, and excommunicated. However, one of them stayed within the church, but he still had a great impact upon them.

All of this roughly started about 130-140 years before the Reformation. The Lord was beginning to touch different ones and move in other parts of the world with Wycliffe, Huss, Wesselus, Savonarola, Erasmus, Tyndale. We are familiar with many of these names, and we are thankful how faithful they were, that the Lord could find these ones and use them in a great way.

John Wycliffe

John Wycliffe has been entitled the “Morning Star of the Reformation”. Again, he was a scholar in Oxford, and as he was studying there he came to know the Word of God and was saved in a glorious way. And the more he saw what the original Word of God was saying, he began emphasizing the authority of the Bible. He said, “The Bible is the authority! The pope is not the authority!” He was beginning to get into trouble as he said, “The king is not the authority, and the pope is not the authority. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only source of true religion. It is not found in any other form or any other system out there. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only form.”

Thank the Lord, he was greatly used in England, and many people were beginning to come to the Lord, and they were becoming what we would call the “lay preachers.” They were not the ordained ones who in the past were the only ones that were allowed to preach. However, through Wycliffe many just ordinary people were coming to the Lord, and he started sending them out two by two to share the Word of God, to share the truth. They were called the Lollards. They did not call themselves that, and it is hard to find out what that word means. In general, it is a derogatory divisive word that means babbler or mumblor. So they were not complimenting them by calling them Lollards.

Many of them were faithful, and because of it they were imprisoned, but they looked upon these prisons as mission fields. The kings were greatly troubled because they would find out what they were doing, and they would arrest them. They would throw them into prison, and then the whole prison would get saved. That is when they began to martyr them, and there are some tragic stories of martyrdom during this time. These were ones who were precursors to the Reformation in England which came about 100 years later. It is precious. So we can see what Wycliffe said of the church, and again how the pope would be upset when he said, “The church is not an organization but the living body of Christ made up of all believers.”

When we read this, it sounds like what we believe today, but that was revolutionary back then. That was a discovering of something that was so far beyond what the vast number of people believed. It was revolutionary, and actually it was called heretical. He was branded a heretic for the truth. This is why they were branded as heretics because they preached the truth of God.

As Wycliffe continued, he published his book, “The Truth on the Holy Scriptures” because the Roman Catholic Church at that time had adulterated the truth so much. He said, “This is the truth,” and he published it. He spoke on the unconditional authority of the Word of

God. There was a great focus on personal piety, purity of life, and leading a holy life set apart. There was no teaching on holiness or piety or holy living at all. It was raucous living, and debauchery was common at that point in time not only among the people but among the clergy as well. We would think, why is it strange that somebody would be preaching about holy living and piety? It was a revolutionary thing, but we are thankful that he was so faithful. But because of this he got into trouble, and the pope condemned him. He ended up being forbidden to preach because he finally published that denial of transubstantiation which was related to the Lord's table. They believed that this actually becomes the body and blood of Christ every time. And he said, "That is absolutely wrong according to the Scriptures!"

He was brought to trial for this heresy, and in the middle of the trial before they could reach a conclusion, he was going to be found guilty. When you were brought to one of these trials, you were guilty beforehand, so it was just a formality. In the middle of the trial there was a huge earthquake in England, and the trial was suspended. At first they were afraid to start the trial again because they thought it was God's judgment. They had enough religion to sense something there. They did not bring him back, and a couple of years later he died of a stroke. But they hated him so much that about thirty years after his death, one council condemned him as a heretic. Thirteen years after that they actually dug his bones up, burned them and threw his ashes into the river. It is interesting that out of that little incident came a poem related to it. It is a very prophetic poem about Wycliffe's ashes being thrown into the Avon, which was a little river. If you are familiar with Shakespeare you are familiar with the Avon.

The Avon flows to the Severn runs,
The Severn to the sea,
And Wycliffe's dust shall spread abroad,

Wide as the waters be.

And praise God, it did. Man thought he had won a great victory, but the Lord did a greater work. He never saw the end of that, and many during his time never saw the effect of that. Throughout history saints have done many things, and we are here today entering into the good of what many have done before us. And if the Lord delays, may we do good that ones who follow us can enter into that blessing. Jerry was encouraging young families, and what a truth. I appreciated that word of encouragement to the young families. If the Lord delays, they will be the ones raised up to be used of God in the next generation.

Wycliffe was called the first forerunner to the Reformation, that Morning Star.

Jan Huss

Then we come to a fellow over in Bohemia named Jan Huss. In England it is John Hus, but the original is John Huss. He was born in Bohemia, which is not a term we use today, but it is the Czech Republic Moravia. After he was born, there was an alliance between England and Bohemia through a marriage. That enabled ones in Bohemia to be able to go to England and study at the major universities there.

There was a bishop out of Prague by the name of Jerome, and he went and studied under Wycliffe and was saved there. He was touched so much that he took the word of truth back to Prague and taught Jan Huss these things. Huss began to preach, and for most of his meetings there would be over 3,000 people coming to hear him. Again, he was focusing on personal piety, purity of life, and the truth of the Word of God, and allowing the Word of God to be given to the people in a wonderful way.

He was against much of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church even though he was within that system for a time. So he had the benefit of getting excommunicated three times. I do not understand that. If you

get excommunicated once, you will think that would be enough. Okay, we are going to excommunicate you again. If you do not get in, how do you get excommunicated again? He got excommunicated by the pope three times just to really seal the deal. But because of that there was a lot of public demonstrations by his followers. He went into exile and continued preaching and writing and encouraging the dear saints. He left the peace in Prague and went into exile, and he continued ministering but in a very hidden way.

They were going to bring him to trial, and he was promised safe passage by the authorities at that time. He ended up being betrayed, and he was arrested and burned at the stake in a very tragic way. But this had a great impact upon ones in Bohemia.

Now we use a common phrase today, and this is a trivia thing, "It cooked your goose." That is where that phrase came from. Huss in Bohemia is the word for goose. So he got his goose cooked when he was burned at the stake. That is where the phrase originated, and it is just a trivia little point. The next time you cook your goose just think about that.

There was a great awakening going on throughout Bohemia and Central Europe. The last time we talked about the Waldensians, and how they were persecuted. Many of them fled those mountains of Italy and France and went to Central Europe. They escaped through Bohemia, and they were still being faithful and loyal. So as more and more would come to the Lord through Jan Huss, they would gather together in a very dear and precious way. They gathered in simplicity, and they were emphasizing the authority of the Bible and believers' baptism, and everyone could take the cup and the loaf. There was a simplicity about these meetings that were so precious, and in many ways it is a picture of what we are doing even today. We see the simplicity in which we try to gather in, and they were gathering in a similar way.

Sadly, in 1416 AD Jerome ended up being burned at the stake. As he was getting ready to be burned he had a testimony which I have always liked. He said, "Place the fire before me. If I had dreaded it I would have escaped."

But he knew he had to be faithful and love not his life unto death. Praise God! What a testimony!

During this time was the origin of the Unitas Fratrum or United Brethren. This is a group that you will hear about because it is actually the modern-day Moravians. When we look at their history and their title of Moravians, they are the Unitas Fratrum. This group continues on, and it is really beautiful because it is speaking of how brothers are dwelling together in unity, and how precious that is. They were deprived of their rights, but at several different times over 40,000 of them would gather for the Lord's table in the mountains. They would go out of the city, leaving different places to find the areas in the mountain where the gatherings would be, and one of these times there was a gathering of 40,000. It is precious! When man is trying to destroy this, the Lord is able to sustain and hold up ones through it.

Early Days of the United Brethren

During these early days of the United Brethren, Bohemia was divided into two—political and religious parties. One of the sad things about the followers of Huss was that they became political and formed their own political party. The Utraquist were loyal to Rome, and the Taborites were loyal to Huss. Rome, being so powerful, sent out four crusades against the Taborites. Finally, they defeated the Taborites, and Bohemia again came under the control of Rome. Even the ones who were still loyal to the Lord and followers of Huss continued meeting underground to hide, and they continued to be very faithful.

Persecution is an interesting thing. Persecution in itself is neutral. You cannot say that persecution is good or bad; it is going to have an

effect on you. It can be good or it can be bad. During times of persecution there are those who faint and fall away. During times of persecution there are ones who are strengthened and call upon the Lord. Persecution can affect you one way or the other, but it will have an effect upon you. You are not going to stay neutral, for it will impact you. We pray much for the saints under persecution in the various countries throughout Africa and China and others. Sometimes we say persecution will strengthen the church. There is an aspect of that which is true, but in persecution there are also ones who fall away from the church. We need to see that persecution can have an effect one way or the other. And throughout history, thank the Lord, there are ones who have been strengthened through it, and sadly there are ones who have fallen through it.

Through this persecution there were many who were remaining faithful. There was one brother who was used greatly in this time, Peter Cheltschizki. He wrote, "The Net of Faith". He was talking about the glorious gospel that we have in this "Net of Faith" that is under girding us and holding us up and sustaining us through whatever we are going through. Whatever particular aspect of faith you need, whether it be financial, economic, physical or feeling weak, there is a net of faith under us that holds us, keeps us and sustains us.

But tragically, the persecution continued to intensify, and many of them fled over to the area of Moravia. They continued to meet, and the United Brethren eventually became the seed to the Moravians. So there is a direct line that we see. We are thankful for the impact Huss had upon Bohemia and Central Europe. I have one of his quotes here. I like to look at what people say because it gives me a little more insight into them. He said,

"Seek the truth,

Listen to the truth,

Teach the truth,
Love the truth,
Abide by the truth,
And defend the truth unto death.”

That is what he literally did; that was his life’s motto. We are thankful for that.

John Wesselus

Then we come into the Netherlands, and we find John Wesselus. This is a man most of us have never heard of. He was not one of the leading guys, but he was educated by the Brethren of the Common Life that we spoke of. As he was studying Hebrew and Greek at the universities, he came into justification by faith. He started writing about justification by faith, not by works, not by the outward things that you do but justification by faith. Because of his writings on justification by faith, many called him the forerunner to Martin Luther. Actually, when Martin Luther was being accused by the Roman Catholic Church, they said, “You are simply doing the teaching of Wesselus.” It is interesting that Luther had never heard of him, and finally he began to read about him. In 1522 AD Luther wrote a testimony of Wesselus. He said,

“All along I supposed myself to stand alone.” And we can appreciate that because during the Reformation Luther really felt alone. “But I rejoice to see now that there has been a secret remnant.” Praise God for that! It is very plain that he was taught by God through Wesselus and not by man as Isaiah prophesied that all Christians should be. “I derive great pleasure, strength and courage from him, knowing my thoughts are not wrong.” What a comfort that must have been in a very real way to Martin Luther in the midst of everything he was doing. Everybody was questioning everything he did. They were saying he was a heretic; but of course it was lies. Nevertheless, he found one as his

comfort. Do you ever do that when you are studying a portion of Scripture, and you have a thought? Then maybe you pick up a commentary or something by say G. Campbell Morgan or F. B. Myer, and when you read it, you realize that you are not crazy. That is right. Praise God! And this was such an encouragement to Luther. Sometimes we think these great men do not need encouragement. Then he ends with this little phrase: "I am surprised that such a great Christian should be so little known."

I believe that when we get with the Lord in His presence, that is going to be the testimony of many. We will all say, "Wow! I am surprised that such a great Christian could be so little known."

There are many throughout the Scriptures that are very little known, but their great lives and great testimonies are known to the Lord. Would that be our testimony! We are not looking to be well known by man but known by God, and to be faithful unto Him. That encouraged me.

Girolamo Savonarola

Another one of these who led up to the Reformation lived in Italy by the name of Savonarola. He was born to a prominent Italian family, and he lived in Florence. Now Florence was run by the Medici family, and the pope at this time was Pope Alexander VI of the Borgia family. If you were to pick two evil names during this time, you could combine the Medici family, who were evil in all of their desires, and the Borgia family. There was even a television series about the Borgias to show how bad they were. All of it speaks of immorality and corruption. This was the influence that Savonarola was under in Florence which was one of the cultural flowery cities of the Renaissance. I lived in Italy three years and we would often go to Florence. We would walk around looking at all the work of Da Vinci and Michelangelo. There were all kinds of statues and grandiose buildings. That was the cultural that was

there and the pride of man. It was an epitome of Renaissance. You could call Florence one of the cities of the Renaissance. There were several throughout Europe, and this was one that epitomized everything. And within that there was no place for the Lord at all.

When Savonarola went to Florence, he had been saved, and he started preaching for Christian revival and renewal. He was against all the secular art and culture. He was denouncing the clerical corruption of the pope and the despotic rule of the Medici who were exploiting the poor. Because the rule was so heavy he actually had a great impact upon Florence at first, and thousands were coming to hear him. The lines were impacted again by his call to a pure, simple, holy life, and his exhortation to not find all their pleasures in the world, but to listen to God's calling for them, and thousands were saved.

At one time they had the "Bonfire of Vanities" in Florence. It was a great celebration, and many went throughout the city searching for little trinkets, cosmetics, luxury items, obscene books, and all the other stuff they said they did not need anymore. They brought it all to the square and built this huge bonfire, sixty feet high and forty feet wide. It reminds us of Acts 19 in Ephesus where they burned all their magic books. With the burning of this stuff, there was a reviving there. However, this was not going to be long lived. The Medici and the pope started plotting and planning, and through bribery and various other things, there was a group of people within Florence who were raised up against Savonarola, and he was burned at the stake along with two other people who were burned with him.

This is why I try to be careful when I speak of the Roman Catholic Church. I am not speaking of the people within; I am speaking of the system because Savonarola was in the Roman Catholic Church. But even in that God was able to penetrate through all of that darkness into the heart of one like Savonarola, and he was able to stand and proclaim the Word of God, and it had an impact upon lives. It cost him his life, but he

was very direct. This is a sample of one of his preachings. You can see why the priests and the church did not like him.

He said, “In these days the priests are chained to the earth by the love of earthly things. The care of souls is no longer their concern. They are content with the receipt of revenue, and they preach to please the princes. They have not only destroyed the church of God but have built a new church after their own pattern. Go to Rome and see!!”

As he was proclaiming that, you can see why ones would be a little upset with him. But he was faithful in proclaiming God’s Word, thankful for those ones coming back to the reality of Christ and knowing Him in a very simple way.

(During the message the microphone malfunctioned, and part of the message was not recorded. I am rerecording it from my notes which will not be verbatim with what you would see on the audio. When we left off we were speaking about Erasmus.)

Erasmus

Erasmus was another one from the Netherlands, and he was educated by the Brethren of Common Life. Erasmus was one who said everything negative about the Roman Catholic Church. He was a great satirist, and he wrote this one satyr called the “Praise of Folly” which was about all the failings of the Roman Catholic Church, the failings of the priests, and the failings of the pope.

One of the things that he was very unhappy about was the music as it was being portrayed through the churches, particularly through the Roman Catholic Church of which he was part of. He loved to have satyr and mock the church greatly. This is one of his quotes:

“Modern church music is so constructed that the congregation cannot hear one distinct word. How do they fancy they can please God by gurgling in their throats?”

They would do a lot of the Gregorian chants back then that nobody could understand, and the music would also be in Latin so nobody knew what was being said. He had a burden that it would be brought back to the people themselves so everyone could understand and enter in. One of the greatest works he did was to publish the Greek New Testament with a lot of translation notes. It had a great impact, and among many of those who were involved in the prereformation and Reformation this publication of his Greek New Testament was really used. It was used by all the reformers and universities to study the original language. It gave ones an insight into the language that they had never had before, the way the original Greek was written. It was extremely helpful.

Erasmus always sought reform within the Roman Catholic Church, and he never stepped out with the reformers. He always stayed within; he wanted to reform within. Actually during the Reformation time he ended up being a very vocal opponent of Luther, telling Luther he needed to sit down and be quiet. Erasmus disagreed with ones that were outside of the Roman Catholic Church. It is sad how this one who was used so greatly in the publishing of the Greek New Testament, and it had a tremendous impact upon the Reformation. Yet at the same time, he was trying to resist the Reformation of what the Lord was doing. It was a mixed bag for him.

William Tyndale

William Tyndale was greatly used particularly as it impacts us because he translated the Bible into English. He was educated at Oxford and Cambridge, and he was using Erasmus' Greek New Testament. As he studied it, he discovered justification by faith and the priesthood of all believers, and he came into a genuine salvation experience. He had a desire for every person in England to be able to read the Bible in their own language. He went to Bishop Tunstall and asked permission, or they called it patronage in those days, to translate the Bible, but he refused. Tyndale had a sensing of Tunstall's intent to stop him from

doing it, so he fled England and lived in exile in Germany for many years.

During that time he translated the New Testament into English, and through some of his associates he was able to smuggle it back into England. It had a great impact among the ordinary people and the Lollards, who were brought into Christianity through Wycliffe. These ones and their descendants were still there, but they were not so happy with the overall church condition. Nevertheless, they knew the Lord, and they were staying faithful to Him. So these Bibles had a great impact and encouragement for them, and they continued to spread them.

As these Bibles were being spread all over, Bishop Tunstall wanted to get rid of them, so he had this brilliant idea. He was going to buy up all the copies, and he did. He bought up every copy he could find and destroyed them all. All this did was to serve in the refinancing of Tyndale's second edition, and he actually published more.

Sadly, Tyndale was caught in Brussels. He was betrayed by a friend whom he had trusted. He was caught, tortured and martyred. The infamous prayer of Tyndale was, "Oh Lord, open the eyes of the King of England." And we do see that prayer answered.

If you look at a couple of Tyndale's quotes, you can really see his desire for everyone to know the Word of God. This is one of his quotes: "I will cause a boy who drives a plow to know more of the Scriptures than the pope."

He had such a heart that all would have access to the Scriptures. He also wrote: "I perceived that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth unless the Scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue." How precious it was that he had this burden, and he laid down his life in order for ones to be enabled to do

that. As he was doing that, this prayer came forth. He said, “Open the King of England’s eyes.”

He was martyred by being strangled and then burned. In those days, quite often, depending upon the particular area you lived in, they were merciful to you and strangled you before they burned you. Some people were literally burned at the stake alive, and others were burned after being choked to death while they were standing there.

In 1536 Tyndale was martyred, and his last words were, “Open the eyes of the King of England.” And in 1538 King Henry VIII of England ordered a copy of the Bible in English to be placed in every parish church. Henry did not have a spiritual revival or anything like that, but this was simply a political move on his part because he had a disagreement with the pope. He separated England from the popery and created the Church of England of which he was the head. So this was a very political move on his part and not a spiritual move at all.

(This concludes the section that was recorded after the message.)