

## ***93 What do we learn from history?***

The answer, apparently, is that we never learn anything from history. However, as the proud owner of a grade 9 at O level history, I will now endeavour to help us to learn something from history (including my own personal history).

Let's start with the Reformation. What was the problem? Wasn't it partly clericalism? The church leaders were the ones who translated the Bible and interpreted it and told the people what God wanted – and the people lived in fear because they knew that if they didn't do what the church leaders said, they would go to hell.

As Google tells me “William Tyndale was burned alive in a small town in Belgium in 1536. His crime was to have translated the Bible into English.” The church leaders were well-intentioned: Tyndale was a danger to the spiritual lives of the common people because if they read the Bible in English, they would misunderstand it, get the wrong idea and therefore might end up going to hell – so Tyndale had to die, to save the people from heresy.

I mentioned the JWs yesterday. Their leaders are really concerned that people should know the truth and that the truth should set them free, so they have their own translation, and they have very careful teaching sessions where they help their fellow JWs to understand what God requires, so that they can be among the 144,000 and not go to hell.

When I was in my sect, ‘Harry’ really loved us and cared for us all. But he would lead the Bible study and tell us what it meant – he was even gradually doing his own translation. But towards the end, before I pulled out, I well remember the fear that I felt, when my phone would ring. Harry would ring up, out of the blue, and say that there was going to be a Bible study that evening; I really felt I had to go or I would sense his disapproval.

How could an intelligent man like me be so stupid?! In my defence, he did have prophetic and healing gifts, of which I had first-hand experience. But as the group grew smaller, I still believed he had the right interpretation, and I really didn't want to lose my salvation.

And did you read the clip I found yesterday about sola fide? Here it is again (my emphasis):

Sola fide, which means ‘faith alone,’ is important because it is one of the distinguishing characteristics or key points that separate the **true biblical Gospel** from false gospels. **At stake is the very Gospel itself and it is therefore a matter of eternal life or death.** Getting the Gospel right is of such importance that the Apostle Paul would write in Galatians 1:9, ‘As we have already said, so now I say again: **If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!**’ Paul was addressing the same question that sola fide addresses—on what basis is man declared by God to be justified? Is it by faith alone or by faith combined with works? Paul makes it clear in Galatians and Romans that man is ‘justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law’ (Galatians 2:16), and the rest of the Bible concurs.

All the people I'm referring to here are, or were, well intentioned, and they can be wonderful loving people, but if they are causing us to live in fear of 'getting it wrong' then clearly we have not learned from history.

*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. (1 Jn 4:18,19)*

We do need to read the Bible for ourselves and not just accept what we've always been taught.

Paul Bev. 13.12.19