

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock...” Revelation 3:20

2017 is the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. This is interesting to me because five is the Biblical number for grace and recently I have come to realize that grace is to New Testament Christians as “the blessing” was to the Patriarchs of the Old Testament. Grace is the “gift of faith.” The Patriarchs...Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and so on, understood the meaning and value of God’s blessing...His grace, the gift of faith. By faith Abraham left his homeland and his family for the blessing...not knowing where he was going. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob. And by faith Jacob wrestled, literally fought, with God to receive “the blessing.” “Without faith it is impossible to please God” and “by grace you have been saved *through faith*, and that not of yourselves; it is the *gift of God*.” Grace, the blessing...the “gift of God!” His gift to His creation.

In 3 BC, the world sought reformation. God’s chosen people were looking for social, political and economic reform. God heard the cry for reform from His chosen ones and graced them with His “living Word,” Jesus in the flesh. Not what they expected.

In the Fifteenth century Martin Luther cried out for reformation nailing his “Ninety-five” thesis to the doors of Wittenberg Castle Church proclaiming “the just shall live by faith.” But God answered the call for reform once again in a way that was unexpected. Using His written and spoken Word to educate the common person, He graced them with opportunities that they never dreamed were possible through the development of a new language.

In 1769 Dr. Benjamin Blayney completed his revision of the King James Bible and using Dr. Samuel Johnson’s first edition 1755 printing of the Johnson Dictionary the English language “came of age.” Spelling, punctuation, and grammar became standardized making it possible to teach succeeding generations the fledgling languages’ establishment as a great spoken and written language in the world of communication, commerce and education.

What sets the English language apart from the languages of the rest of the world? The influence of the Bible is ingrained in the leadership and the rank and file of the English world’s people. As the English language proliferated and as the English speaking world expanded the character of governments was increasingly imitated.

The concept of democracy and republican government became a model to hold back dictators and tyrants from ruling people by tyranny. Philosophically speaking the English influence on the world stage brought parliamentary law with guaranteed rights for its citizens. At the heart of this were principles gleaned from the Scriptures to be applied to a system of justice for its citizens, beginning with the freedom of religion. The people wanted once again cried out for reform and God answered the cry with His Word.

The Bible is the standard bearer, the Bible’s teaching being the guide to how a diverse nation can live together in a civilized manner with the Bible’s principles becoming the very fiber and fabric of the nation.

It was the King James Bible which was freely consulted as a guide by the founding fathers. Portions of Scriptures, properly exegeted such as “Love your neighbor as yourself,” would elevate the spirit of the law to a priority position when justice was determined. And it would be the King James Bible that America’s presidents would lay their hand on to swear to uphold these laws of the United States.

It would be King James Bible Scripture from the book of Leviticus, chapter 25 vs 10 that would be forged on the Liberty Bell, America's symbol of freedom for all to see in perpetuity at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all inhabitants thereof."

May we never neglect or forget the sacrifices of those whose lives were taken for their zeal of Biblical freedom. In 1776 the nation declared by unanimous declaration its independence. It was the Constitution written 12 years later that struck a social contract with its citizens to form what has become the greatest nation on earth. It was the Bible, God's Word that was the heart and soul of our nation's leadership. Where else could freedom loving people find the blueprint to build a nation to continuously unite an ethnically diverse family of nations...to insure the God of the Bible would forever be in front of its citizens.

"In God We Trust" is stamped on our currency. Millions of copies of the 1611 King James Version of the Bible were distributed.

The 1782 printing of the Aitken Bible (named after one of the printers of the *Journal of Congress*) was published in defiance of the King who considered Robert Aitken's action an act of treason. If the Revolutionary War had failed and England would have won, the delegates to the convention and men like Robert Aitken, whose "conscience" was their guide, would have certainly been hanged for their crime. The "battle for the Bible" is a struggle whose rules for war vacillate between psychological warfare and armed conflict. The battle is still being waged in the struggle to educate, to "train up our children in the way they should go" with God's promise that when they mature they will "not depart" from godly instruction.

Robert Aitken risked his life to print the Bible in English. The Continental Congress endorsed the project and arranged for its funding. So much for the separation of church and state.

General George Washington's army was the grateful recipient of the Bibles and the General wrote a letter expressing his gratitude. The Aitken Bible was the 1611 King James Version using the 1769 revision of Benjamin Blayney of Oxford University. The revision of the 1611 King James Version by Dr. Blayney in 1769 is the text in common to the English Bible of our history.

Since the first printing of the English Bible (1611 King James Version) in America in 1782 in defiance of the English king who sought to deny it to the colonists, until today, 234 years later, the Bible is the symbolism of that which sets the United States apart from the rest of the world.

In 1893, Kathryn Lee Bates penned the poem that was eventually to become the famous song "America The Beautiful:"

"O beautiful for halcyon skies,

For amber waves of grain,

For purple mountain majesties

Above the enameled plain!

America! America!

God shed His **grace** on thee,

Till souls wax fair as earth and air

And music-hearted sea!”

We live in unsettled times. Once again the cry of the people is for social, political and economic reform. Throughout the centuries God has always been faithful to answer that cry with His Word! His living Word, His spoken Word and His printed Word. God has been faithful to “shed His grace on thee.” And I have to take Him at His Word and believe He will do it again...