

their onward course into the narrow seas, and at last into the wide ocean; and thus became the emblem of the truth, which should flow from the little country town over England and the world. That it shall extend "from the river to the ends of the earth," we know, for the word of God declares it.

In this simple tale we see through what struggles and dangers some have passed for the gospel's sake. The practical lesson we are taught is, to be at all times decided for the truth. By being decided, we do not mean to be noisy, or forward, or stubborn. One of the fruits of the Spirit is gentleness, which consists with the greatest firmness and decision in that which is right. We must in meekness instruct those that oppose the word of God. 2 Timothy 2:25. Whilst we are "valiant for the truth upon the earth," we are to speak that truth in love. Jeremiah 9:3; Ephesians 4:15. Be decided, then, for God's word in opposition to all error.

Let us be thankful for those whom God has raised up as examples of holy decision. They labored, and we enjoy the benefit of their labors. They planted a little sapling which took root, and has become a great tree, under whose boughs we now sit in peace. It was through God's grace working in them that we now possess a free and full Bible. Let us, then, give heed to the truths it contains, and yield our hearts to the gracious Saviour it makes known.



Copied by Stephen Ross for
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Christmas Quotes

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can!
--John Wesley

"Love and life
That's why He came, and what He offers,
Christmas isn't just for children.
It's for the world."
~ Anonymous

Each day of the holidays comes
bringing its own gifts.
Open your heart,
Untie the ribbons,
and enjoy the contents!



BIRTHDAYS & SPECIAL EVENTS IN:



NCO Kids Monthly News

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John Wycliffe

All books in those days were very scarce and costly, for the art of printing was not then known. Before the year 1300, the library of the University of Oxford consisted only of a few tracts, chained, or kept in chests, in the choir of St. Mary's church. Copies of all books were made in writing; and as this was a slow and careful work, it took several months for one person to write a complete Bible. How different is it now, when a printing machine will produce fifteen to twenty copies of the Bible every hour, and thousands every year!



And then as to the cost. Richard of Bury, Chancellor of England under Edward the Third, spared no expense in collecting a library; the first, perhaps, that any private man had formed. Yet so scarce were valuable books, that he gave an abbey fifty pounds weight of silver for between thirty and forty volumes! The Book of Psalms, with brief notes written in the margin, was valued at a sum equal to nearly forty dollars of our present money. A copy of the New Testament was sold for thirteen dollars, a sum equal to six months' income of a tradesman, for about twenty-five dollars were considered enough to keep a farmer or trader in those times, when so few of the comforts we now enjoy were known. But costly as was the purchase, it was cheerfully paid. And great as was the danger of those who dared to read the word of God, there were some who bravely met it.

Written copies of Wycliffe's Bible were eagerly sought after by those who could read. There, in a castle, some rich nobleman might have been seen with one of these written Bibles before him, "in fair characters on vellum." ... But though a nobleman might be found who could read the Bible, yet from the want of learning, as well as books being scarce and costly, there were only a small number of the people who could possess the word of God. Even some of the nobles and gentry could not write their names; and not many of the common people were able to read. Perhaps not more than one in a small town or village was learned enough to read and

write. We may, then, suppose what was the state of the land when the people had no gospel preached to them, and few possessed the Scriptures or could peruse any book likely to be the means of doing good to their souls. England, indeed, had been for ages without the light that cometh from heaven. Errors and foolish rites, like dark clouds, were spread over the land.

It was at such a time that Wycliffe arose as a light in the darkness; and, like the star that appeared over the fields of Bethlehem, he guided many souls to the Saviour. The numerous books he wrote were spread abroad in the same manner as his written Bible. He also prepared many sermons, about three hundred of which have been preserved to the present day. From these we learn what were the truths he taught the people.

The priests said that human merits and sufferings, penance and pilgrimages, would certainly entitle them to heaven; but Wycliffe taught that sinful man could not save himself, and that mercy was only to be found through faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. The priests asserted that images should be, honored, and that there were many mediators; but the bold reformer said that the worship of images was idolatry, and that saints and angels were not to be prayed to, for "there is but one Mediator between God and men." He maintained that the church of Rome is no more the head of the churches than any other church; and that the apostle Peter had no more power given him than any other apostle; and for all his doctrines

he referred to the word of God, maintaining that it was the only safe guide to a Christian man. In many other ways he opposed the doings and teachings of the priests of the Papal church.

Wycliffe did not quite receive all the great Bible truths in all their fullness: it is a wonder that he knew so much at a time when all the land was sunk in ignorance and error. But he understood enough of the word of God to know that many of the doctrines of the Romish church could not be found there. And he preached so many of the true doctrines of the Bible as well to entitle him to the honorable name, **THE MORNING STAR OF THE REFORMATION.**

The "good parson" was much beloved in his own parish; and many came from the villages around to his church, that they might hear the gospel from his lips [the carved oak pulpit and the velvet robe, which he wore, are still preserved in the vestry of Lutterworth Church]. He was often seen, with a portion of his written Bible under his arm, and staff in hand, visiting from house to house. The mansions of the gentry, the dwellings of the farmers, and the cottages of the field-laborers, were favored alike with his pastoral visits. He was the friend of all; he was ready to teach and comfort and pray for all at all times. Thus he lived, seeking the good of souls, his enemies opposing him even to the end of his days, though God did not permit them to cast him into prison, nor to bring him to a cruel death, as they desired.

Continued labor at length broke down his health. One day, when in church, he was seized with a fatal attack of disease, and

sunk to the ground. He was carried into his house, where he lay in a speechless state for two days, and then died. But though he was removed, he left behind him many disciples, who carried on the good work which he had so well begun.

Though Wycliffe never left his own land, to preach the truth across the seas, it was carried into almost every country of Europe by his writings. His tracts and sermons were read by many awakened minds, and were the means of preparing them for a full knowledge of the gospel.

As his enemies could not prevail against him while he lived, they showed their hatred of his name and doctrine after his death. When his remains had lain in the grave for forty one years, they were dug up and burned, and the ashes cast into the little river Swift, which flows near the town where he labored. Thence, as an old writer says, they passed into the great river Severn, then in

