

# The Scottish Reformer John Knox

by Ian Paisley

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*John Knox was a fearless and faithful preacher of the gospel who stood against the forces of darkness and evil, ultimately leading to the establishment of a more Protestant Scotland.*

**Duration:** 31:09

**Scripture:** Daniel 7:24-25, Matthew 6:33, John 17:1-3, Romans 1:1-4

**Topics:** "Gospel Preaching", "Christian Persecution"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching the Gospel of Christ. He highlights that the Gospel is not about pointing man to an example or the highest form of human life, but rather about pointing man to God manifest in the flesh. The purpose of the Gospel is for obedience to the fear among all nations for His name. The preacher also shares the story of John Knox, a preacher who faced persecution and suffering for his faith, but remained steadfast in his belief in God. The sermon concludes by emphasizing that the Gospel is the Gospel of Christ's promise and the Gospel of the person of Christ.

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## Transcript

Young people, if you're going to really stand for God, the fires of slander, the fires of libel, and the fires of opposition will always burn against you. But I'd rather be in the fire with Jesus than be on the throne with a man of sin. Persecution often comes to the faithful saints of God, and the reformer John Knox knew much of that.

He was in prison for speaking against the heresies of the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century. Ironically, it was just over one year from preaching this sermon on John Knox that Dr. Paisley would also go to prison defending the faith. Here is Dr. Paisley now preaching on John Knox, the Scottish reformer.

If you have your Bible, I want to refer to the 17th chapter of John's Gospel, the first three verses. These words speak Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee.

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. The influence of John Knox has made a tremendous imprint upon the English-speaking peoples of the world.

We feel in Ulster his influence and the influence of Knox rested upon the founding fathers of this nation. Two famous martyrs preceded the ministry of John Knox in Scotland. And when he came to commence his ministry, the nation of Scotland had already had its baptism of blood.

I want to say something from this platform this evening. Let me really emphasize it, that Rome, the Church of Rome, is drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Let us never forget it.

And let me say, no matter what the ecumenists may say, no matter how many people may go up the stairs of the Vatican to slaver on the toes of the Pope, it will not make any difference to the fact that this priestly leopard has not changed its spots, and this diabolical Ethiopian has not changed its skin. Rome is just the same breath. Do not you listen to these people who tell us that the Church of Rome has changed.

She is still the same. She is still that mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of pirates and the abominations of the earth. And if she would have her way, this preacher would not be preaching to you tonight.

I have come a little way along the road and I know something about the power of Romanism and what Romanism would do to those that stand for Christ. So, Knox commenced his ministry upon holy ground. The Stephen of the Scottish Reformation was Patrick Hamilton.

At the age of twenty-four, under the orders of a Roman Catholic Cardinal called Beton, he was called by the Reformers the Bloody Beton. This young man of twenty-five years of age was burned to death because of Christ's gospel preaching and because he would not go amassing. In fact, the indictment brought against Hamilton was this, that he preached the gospel and that he taught that all men have the right to read the Word of God, especially the New Testament.

Why, what is wrong with that? And yet the Church of Rome burned this young man because of a stand for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And I would like to say that perhaps not as yet have the fires been set alight to burn those in our day who stand for God. But young people, if you are going to really stand for God, the fires of slander, the fires of libel and the fires of opposition will always burn against you.

But I would rather be in the fire with Jesus than be on the throne with the man of sin. May the Lord make us willing to go through the fire for Himself. Thank God there are as best of saints for the children of God.

Then we can damn them and walk through the fire unstarred and untouched. You know, I rejoice in that word that we read of the three Hebrew children. Why they call them children, I do not know, for they were really men.

And you remember when they walked through the fire, you remember that when they came out, they had not the smell of fire upon them. And praise God we can go through the fire and the devil can sniff at us if he likes, but there will not be the smell of fire upon us. This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in her eyes.

And so Hamilton prepared the way for Knox. After Hamilton came George Wishart. And George Wishart was also put to death by the Roman Catholic Church for teaching and expounding the epistle to the Romans.

My, what a book is the epistle to the Romans. You know, we have a story in Ulster and it goes like this, that this countryman went to a Bible reading. And it was the first time he was ever at a Bible reading.

And he was a good, strong Protestant. We call them prods in Ulster. And he sat in this Bible reading and he could not really make out what the preacher was saying.

And when he went home, his wife said to him, did you enjoy the meeting? He said, well, I did not catch all that the preacher said, but he was a good preacher for he took epistle to the Romans. And I really enjoyed that, he said. Well, the epistle to the Romans has done more to unseek poverty than any other epistle.

And I would like just to call your attention to the first verses of the epistle which introduce us to the great doctrines of that epistle. For these are the doctrines that the Reformers preach. Life-giving doctrines.

Soul-stirring doctrines. Devil-disturbing doctrines. Soul-sealing doctrines.

And if you look at the first verses, you will find that this epistle is an exposition of the gospel. Look at Romans chapter 1 and verse 1. Separated unto the gospel of God. We have the gospel of God expounded in this epistle.

There are all sorts of definitions given of the gospel. But here is the gospel according to God's precious revelation. And you will find that this gospel concerns Christ.

It is the gospel of Christ. And you will find three things standing out here at the introduction to this epistle. And I believe these are the key to the whole epistle.

What are they? First of all, it is the gospel of Christ's promise. Look at it. Which He had promised before by His prophets in the Holy Scripture.

And before the gospel has its reception in my heart, thank God it had its inception in the heart of God away in eternity. And I thank God when I open the Bible and I look into the Old Testament, I see that the gospel is the gospel of the promise Christ. The promise of Christ.

And you know, this epistle goes into the promise of Christ. If you go into it, you will find the comments of the Holy Ghost on the Old Testament Scripture. And then if you look again, you will find it is not only the gospel of the promise of Christ, but it is the gospel of the person of Christ.

And we read, This gospel is the gospel of the person of Christ. What a wonderful person He is. God manifests in the flesh.

We are not pointing man to an example. We are not pointing man to the highest form of human life. Thank God we are pointing man and are preaching to God manifest in flesh.

The eternal God enthroned in humanity. This is the message that the Reformers preach. And then you will notice, last of all, it is the gospel of the purpose of Christ.

What is the purpose of the gospel? Look at it for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name. And if you are really preaching the gospel, friend, things will happen. If you preach the gospel, friend, the work that you do will stand for God.

Even the Pope knows all about me. He had to have me arrested in a row to keep me quiet. Well, may the Lord help us to really preach a gospel that disturbs people.

I would not like to preach a soft, sissy gospel that would not disturb anybody. You know, in Ireland we have dandelions. In the summertime, these dandelions decay.

And the children pluck them and they blow them. And the top blows off them. You know, there are some preachers and they could not blow a dandelion cock.

There is no piff in them or power. But, my, I want to preach a gospel that will really disturb the powers of darkness. It is the sort of gospel Knox preached.

And this was the gospel that laid the foundation of Knox's ministry. Now, how was Knox, who was ordained a priest and followed on after these two martyrs, how did he come to Christ? It was through reading the Word of God. And I purposely read John 17.

And it was verse 3 of John 17 that brought John Knox out of the darkness of Roman Catholicism into the glorious light of God's gospel. This is life eternal. This is life eternal.

Thank God we are offering to man eternal life. Knox had sought peace and life in the ritual, in the superstition, in the darkness of Romanism. And he had not found it.

But this is eternal life. That they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. And we can only know the true God, not through the church or through the sacraments, but through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And you know, at 67, John Knox finished his fight on earth. And the last words that he said were these. Read me the verse where I first cast my anchor.

This was the verse that he cast his anchor on. John's Gospels 17 and 3. And I want to say his anchor held. Now, of course, immediately John Knox was brought to Christ.

The powers of Rome in every hand sought to silence him. And Cardinal Beton met his doom by the hands of certain conspirators who were enraged by his bloodshedding. And they were joined in St. Andrew's Castle by John Knox, the priest who had been converted.

And it was in the castle of St. Andrew's, when the garrison was besieged by the powers and the armies of Rome, that John Knox started his preaching ministry. There was a converted monk in that garrison called John Ruff. And John Ruff saw the tremendous power and blessing that rested upon John Knox.

And one day before the congregation, he commanded Knox no longer to delay but to go forward and open his mouth boldly and make known the mystery of the Gospel. And so one day, shortly after that, John Knox entered the pulpit. And the first sermon he preached was from Daniel chapter 7, verse 24 and verse 25.

The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise, and another shall rise after them. They shall be diverse from the first, and they shall subdue three kings. They shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws.

They shall be given unto His hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time. And Knox took this verse and he applied it to the church of Rome. He said the church of Rome spoke great words against the Most High.

And so she does. The church of Rome wears out the saints of the Most High. And so she does.

The church of Rome thinks to change times and laws. And he really set about the Roman Catholic Church with such unction and fire and zeal that his congregation said, All the other preachers cut off the branches, but this preacher lays the axe to the root of the tree. And that is the way to preach, to lay the axe to the root of the tree, to really attack the powers of darkness and the forces of evil.

And here is John Knox. And the castle is besieged. And alone he stands and fearlessly and faithfully declares the truth of Christ against all the idolatry and idolatry of the Roman Catholic system.

What a man was Knox. But you know, if you take a stand for Christ, you will suffer for it. If you are going to stand out for Jesus Christ, you will pay the price and suffer it.

The French soldiers came. They destroyed the guards that were set on the castle of St. Andrews. They attacked the castle, conquered it.

John Knox, the preacher, was soon a prisoner. And when they got him as a prisoner, they made him a galley slave. They used the whip upon his body.

And they did everything to humble this mighty man of God. But there was a spirit within him that could not be humble. Think of him one day preaching fearlessly and thundering against the powers of darkness.

And the next day, stripped to the waist with the lash of the galleyman over his back. And there he is tugging at the oars of the galley night and day. But you know, if you have real faith in God, you will stand firm even in the dark places.

You will prove the Lord in times of trouble. And I can say personally in my ministry, when I have gone down into the valley, and when the day has been dark and it seems that the sun was never going to rise again, nor the stars even to be seen amidst the blackness of the night of persecution, it is then that I have really and truly and gloriously proved the Lord. So don't be afraid of the dark valley, friend.

You will hear the heartbeat of Jesus in the dark valley. And in the silence of the bitter night of sorrow, Jesus will be there. Standing somewhere in the shadows, you will find Jesus.

He is the only one who cares and understands. Standing somewhere in the shadows, you will find Him. And you will know Him by the nail print in His hands.

But you know, Knox's spirit was not broken. And one day a Roman priest came aboard the galley and he had a painted doll in his hands, supposed to represent the Virgin Mary. And he made all the galley slaves kiss this wooden doll.

And then he brought it to Knox. And Knox pretended to be converted. And he said to the priest, Could I see her lady? And the priest was all pleased, and he put the doll into Knox's hands.

And Knox laughed. He said, I'll let her swim. And he threw it overboard.

He said, She's light enough. Let her swim for it, if she's a saint. And as she has such power.

Needless to say, they never put the painted doll into his hand again. See, the spirit of this great man was unbroken. The waters of judgment and persecution could not break the spirit of this man of God.

And I believe that we have the Spirit of Christ that will stand in the darkest hour. And when everyone is against us, we will be prepared to stand for Christ. You know, it's very easy to stand for Christ when the crowd's with you.

And when everybody's patting you on the shoulders and saying, Yes, you're doing a good job. But it's hard to stand when everybody's against you and every voice is against you. And everything seems dark against you.

That's the time to stand. Thank God we can be given grace in such a day to really stand. I'd like to say that when he was a prisoner, he learned the power of prayer.

And could I read to you from one of his great books? And if you want a book by John Knox, the book you want to get is a declaration of the true nature and objective of prayer. He learned it the hard way. This is what he says, Trouble and fear are very spurs to prayer.

For when man complest about with demonent calamities, and vexed with continual solicitude, having by help of man no hope of deliverance, with sore, oppressed, unpunished heart, hearing also greater punishment to follow from the deep pit of tribulation, doth call to God for comfort and help. Such prayer ascendeth to God's presence, and returneth not in vain. There's no situation, and there's no circumstance, and there's no pit that circumstances might hurl you into that's so deep that the voice of effective prayer can't reach from its depths to the heights of heaven and bring the answer from the God who truly answers prayer.

Oh, that we might learn to pray in the darkness, and then the light will come. But, of course, the day came when his prayers were answered, and he was released after nineteen months as a slave in the French galleys. Knox got his liberty.

He came to England. Henry VIII had died. Young Edward Tudor had occupied the throne.

This young man was a spiritual young man. He appointed spiritual men as his chaplains, and he gave a royal chaplaincy to John Knox. In the north of England, the power of Rome was great.

And so the king sent Knox into the north of England to preach the gospel. And Knox preached with such power, with such liberty, that the garrison town of Berwick was changed from being a town of profanity, a place of drunkenness, a place of evil doing, until it was a town known throughout the north of England as a place where holiness ruled and where the word of God held sway. Could I say again that the farmers were all mighty evangelists? They were men with a loving heart, and they were men with tender compassion for the souls of man.

If there was one man who laid the foundations of the nation, it was John Knox. Of course, Edward Tudor died. The bloody Mary came to the throne.

Knox had to leave England for the continent. Then eventually he returned for a short period to Scotland. When he arrived in Scotland, he found that the situation was very grim, that the reformed faith was

discontented, that the church of Rome held tremendous sway.

And when he arrived, he had this to say of the situation, His friends advised him to go back to the continent. But instead of that, he started an evangelistic crusade right through the kingdom. He went from town to town and from city to city, declaring the gospel of Christ justification by faith alone, denouncing the idolatry, the priestcraft and the superstitions of Roman Catholicism.

The emissaries of Rome planned to take him. He was wonderfully warned by a friend. He eluded them and once again found refuge in the city of Kelvin in Geneva.

Shortly after that, he returned again to Scotland to remain as Scotland's great reformer. And it was then that his greatest work was done. In 1561, Mary Stuart arrived in Scotland to take the throne.

Mary Stuart, the fair and the fine. The hope of Romanism and the church of Rome felt that if she secured Scotland and held Scotland for Rome, that she would also eventually secure England as she was in succession to the British throne. But there was one man in England who was valuable for Mary, Queen of Scots.

And I want to tell you something. When you go out to battle for God, you will meet the devil in many shapes. But the worst devil to meet is the devil in skirts.

And that is exactly what Knox met in Mary, Queen of Scots. And my, she really intended to go for him. But John Knox was an able preacher.

One day he denounced her proposed marriage to the Roman Catholic King of Spain. My, if you want to get a woman really going, denounce her marriage and you will really get it. Or her proposed marriage.

Some of them do not mind you denouncing the marriage after it has taken place. For maybe they have second thoughts anyway themselves. But she certainly went for him.

Summoned him to the palace. Brought him in. Who are you, she said, to interfere in my life? I am the Queen of this realm.

He said, Your Majesty, I am God certain. And as long as I feel I should speak out for my God, I will speak out. She said, Go into the empty room and stand there until you hear what I have decided should be done with you.

John Knox walked out into the empty room. And all her ladies-in-waiting were there. And they all started to titter at the preacher.

And they were all laughing at him. But old Knox was still fearless and he looked at them. He said to them, Would not you all like to stay here forever? But there is a knee of cold death.

And he is going to come to you all someday and call you away from the Queen's presence into the presence of the King of Kings. And you will give an account for yourself there. And you know she had them tried for treason.

But she failed. She sowed discord and murder and war in the realm. And eventually her dynasty toppled over by the power of the preaching of Knox.

And the land was well rid of her hideous tyranny. Oh, the power of a faithful preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There was one thing about Knox, and it was this, that he was absolutely fearless.

When he died, the regent of the kingdom said, There lies he who never feared the face of man. This fearless preacher. There lies he who never feared the face of man.

Is there a message from Knox to this congregation tonight, to every preacher, to every man and woman that is called to do the work of God? I think there is. The message is this. Be right with God.

Have God's smile. Have God's approval. And then fear nobody.

But preach the word of God as God gives it to you. And if that is how you work for the Lord, God will bless you. And He will make you a blessing.

You know His grave is unknown. Somewhere outside St. Giles Cathedral He lies. But the spot cannot now be located.

The same with John Calvin. His grave, his resting place is unknown. But, friend, his work reverberates down the corridors of time, because it was a work that honored Christ, that honored the God of heaven, and honored the gospel of sovereign saving grace.

I trust when the call comes for me to pass to higher service, whatever the circumstances of that call may be, it will be said of me that I was faithful to God irrespective of the consequences. May the Lord help us to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. And may we never be entangled again with any yoke of bondage, especially the bondage of the harlot system of Roman Catholicism.

May God bless us truth for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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