

Thomas Cranmer - Faithful Unto Death by Fire - Part 2

by Ian Paisley

Thomas Cranmer's life and martyrdom serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of standing firm on the gospel principles of Scripture, Christ's death, and salvation by faith alone.

Scripture: John 8:32, Romans 1:16, Hebrews 4:12, Hebrews 11:6, 1 Peter 4:14

Topics: "Reformation History", "Faith Alone"

Description

Ian Paisley preaches about the life and beliefs of Thomas Cranmer, highlighting his unwavering stand for truth against the forces of Rome, his pivotal role in the Reformation, and his ultimate sacrifice as the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury. Despite facing injustice, slander, and persecution, Cranmer's legacy continues to speak loudly in the battle against papacy and false doctrines. His commitment to the supremacy of Scripture, the sacrifice of Christ's death, and salvation by faith alone serves as a powerful example for believers today to stand firm in their faith and obedience to God's Word.

Transcript

Cranmer was not perfect but as Bishop J.C. Ryle was right when he said, "No man amidst the faith of an evil age kept himself so pure as Thomas Cranmer". What we want to do in this address is to let Thomas Cranmer, stand forth as his own witness and speak for himself and his beliefs.

Rome does not to hear ‑ but all the attempts to silence Cranmer when he lived and since he was martyred by Rome are in vain. Cranmer though dead yet speaketh and with what clarity and verity he does so.

Injustice and slander have been used against him but his word still rings loudly in the anti‑papacy battle with the Pope viewed by the Reformer as the antichrist.

Prof. McCullough's famous prize volume is a book that anyone who wants to read the book of our day about the Reformer should read it. Honesty silences Falsehood. Of course Cranmer was not born and bred as Protestant. Cranmer has suffered by the distortion of many unchallengeable facts ‑ This age of ours deserves to be acquainted with the facts. To refuse to listen to them exposes the hypocrisy and lying failures of Cranmer's detractors.

The real kernel of the controversy is the aim of Rome that she could by dishonesty so change the circumstances and consequences of the Reformation that the populous would come down on the side of the Pope.

This did not happen but rather the opposite and was seen by even the Popes own men who accepted the constitution foundations of the Reformation. The touch stone of Church was wrested from the control and domination of the Pope of Rome. That the great schism was clearly marked when the Constitution of our nation took upon itself to declare that the pope had no more authority in England than any other foreign bishops. Dr. Hooks' comment ought to be kept in mind. "The real work of the Reformation was the changing of the mass into a Communion and this involved the question of transubstantiation. This was the test of the two parties. It is not to be supposed that many could understand the merits of the case, so far as the dogma was itself concerned; but as men can fight and die for the flag which is carried in front of a regiment because it tells of the side to which they belong, so by asserting or denying the dogma, they proclaimed themselves Papists or Protestants. Henry VIII was dead before Cranmer renounced transubstantiation and until he did this, it is a mistake to speak of him as a Protestant Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury by Dr. W.F. Hook, Dean of Chichester Vol. 1 page 426.

Cranmer was a Cambridge man. He commenced to study there in 1503 he became a fellow Jesus College. He refused to go to Woolsey's New College, Oxford.

Cranmer married when he was about 34 years of age. In a years time Cranmer lost his wife and child at the child birth. He retired to his old college and became a fellow of the same once again.

Having expressed himself strongly on the subject of Henry's wife Katherine, who had been King Henry's own brother's wife he was sent for by the King. He soon found himself the champion of the Kings' cause.

Reginal Pole, Cardinal, wrote a book against Henry's position and Cranmer refuted the same.

Cranmer was employed by the King in many embassies. On the Continent of Europe he became acquainted with the famous reformer Osiander of Nurenberg. He married one of his kinswoman. He became acquainted with many prominent Reformation leaders.

Henry made him, 'Archbishop of Canterbury'. His second marriage was an obstacle to his position and his wife for a long time had to be concealed.

Cranmer was linked by the King in all his proceedings about Queen Katherine.

Cranmer eventually pronounced the royal divorce. He drew upon him fierce hatred from the Pope and the wrath of the papists of England.

Kathrine's daughter Mary took full revenge upon him when she came to the throne.

Meanwhile in parliament great disputes were held against the power of the Pope. Cranmer laboured for the reformation of the Church and let it be said in his favour led in the endeavours to save the lives of such Romanists as Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher.

The publishing of the English Bible was the work which delighted the heart of Cranmer. Cranmer's letters to Thomas Cromwell on this subject were most interesting. The Bible in the language of the English people. What a signal of divine blessing! The First New Testament was first printed and then burnt shortly

afterward.

It was reprinted in 1530 and burnt again. It was published in a meeting at the Star Chamber. The New Testament was printed a third time and burnt yet again. The whole Bible was printed in 1537; The Matthew's Bible. In 1538 the Bible was printed in Paris. The printers fell into the hands of the Roman Inquisition for and were tortured and slaughtered. The largest Bible was published in 1540. The Bible was again suppressed in 1542;1543.

King Henry who had opposed the circulation of the Bible at last wrote, 'THE HOLY BIBLE SHOULD SET FORTH IN OUR TONGUE, TO THE END THAT ENGLAND MIGHT THE BETTER ATTAIN TO THE SINCERITY OF CHRIST'S DOCTRINE WHICH THEY MIGHT DRAW OUT OF THE CLEAR FOUNTAIN AND SPRING OF THE GOSPEL.

The Archbishop fell into many troubles. The remnants of the papal ascendancy rallied and prevailed. In 1546 Cranmer crowned young King Edward, Henry VIII's son to the throne.

In 1547 Cranmer published his children's catechism. He had in 1549 Bishop Bonner (Bloody Bonner as he was popularly named) deprived.

In 1549 he succeeded in getting the Book of Common Prayer ratified and confirmed. 'So there was in December 25, a general letter drawn up to call the bishops of England, and let them understand - 'That there was no intention of bringing in again Latin service, configured bread and water, nor any such abrogated ceremonies; and that the abolishing of these, and the setting forth of the Book of Common Prayer was done by the whole state of the realm. That the book was grounded upon the Holy Scripture, and was agreeable to the order of the primitive Church and much to the edifying of the subject; and therefore the changing of that for the old Latin service would be a preferring of ignorance to knowledge, darkness to light, and a preparation to bring in papistry and superstition again.'

Memorial of Thomas Cranmer by John Strype Vol. 1 page 279)

In 1550 Nicholas Ridley another of the yet to be martyred Bishops was made Bishop of London and yet another John Hooper was nominated for the bishopric of Gloucester, Hooper found it difficult to conform. He was put under Cranmer's custody and imprisoned in the Fleet prison. He conformed and took up his work in both his dioceses of Worcester and Gloucester.

In 1551 Cranmer published his exposure against the bitter Papist Gardiner. In all he wrote three books against Gardiner and his associate Smith.

The openness of Cranmer was demonstrated. He states boldly and unapologetically. 'This I confess of myself, that not long before I wrote the same catechism, I was in error of the real presence, as I was many years past in many other errors; as of transubstantiation, of the sacrifice propitiatory, of the priests in the mass, of pilgrimage of purgatory, etc, being brought up from my youth in them; for that which and other offences of my youth. I do daily pray unto God for mercy and pardon; but after it pleased God to show me by His Holy Word, a more perfect knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ; I put away my former ignorance. And as God gave me light, so through His grace I opened my eyes to receive it; and I trust in God's mercy for pardon and for my former errors.' (Strypes History Vol. 1.P33)

In 1553 the young King died.

It was well said of him, "His singular excellency in all kinds of princely towardliness to use the words of one who lived in those times was such, that no place, no time, no cause, no book, no person either in public audience or else in private company, made any mention of him but thought himself even of every conscience bound to powder the same with manifold praises on his incomparable virtues and gifts of grace."

The sunset brought in, by Edward's birth, the storm of the Bloody Mary.

In 1553 Queen Mary was soon recognised, and just as quickly the Archbishop Cramer was slandered and imprisoned. The year brought the beginning of Mary's Bloody Reign. Protestant Bishops and Clergy were cast into prison and deprived.

Protestants had to flee or be cast into the fire. The Parliament repealed Queen Katherine's divorce and Cranmer was blamed for the divorce. He was arraigned for treason. In 1554 he was condemned as a heritick. In prison in England Protestants were shamefully tortured and those exiled faced no better treatment. In 1555 Cranmer saw his fellow bishops go to their burning. For Cranmer, the Bloody Mary reserved a special death of ignominy, shame and torture.

Romanists keep repeating that Cranmer's was an English Trial, and English sentence and an English Martyr's Pyre. That is a lie, as false as hell itself. The King of Spain, Mary's husband and her Bloody Partner and Mary herself reserved the Archbishop Cranmer for official papal execution.

They had him cited to Rome. They had him ordered to appear before the Pope within 80 days to answer charges. Cranmer answered - "If your majesty give me leave I will appear there. And I trust that God shall put in my mouth to defend His truth there, as well as here."

The cruel blood‑thirsty queen and the equally cruel blood thirsty king never intended Cranmer to appear in Rome. His trial was delegated to Pope Paul IV's Inquisition Chief, James Brooks, who followed the martyred John Hooper in the Gloucester bishoprick.

The trial began on 12th September 1555 in the university Church of St. Mary the Virgin at Oxford.

Bishop Brooks representing the Pope, sat on a scaffold, ten feet high, in front of the high altar and below him were the two proctors of the King and Queen, Martin and Story, electors of the civil law.

Cranmer told them that his conscience would not allow him to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Pope, a foreigner.

He rejected the claim that all emperors and kings hold their crowns and regalia from the Pope and that he may dispose them when he list; which is high treason for any man to affirm and think being born within the King's dominion." Rome passed judgment upon Cramner, on 14th December 1556.

Fully dressed as an Archbishop, he was stripped by order of the Pope and then dressed with a poor yeoman's garment and a Townsman's Cap.

He was pressurised to recant and his recantations were published. Altogether he signed seven submissions. He was to read the last one before he burned.

He said "And now I come to the great thing that so troubleth my conscience, more than any other thing that I said or did in my life: and that is my setting abroad of writings contrary to the truth, which here now I

renounce and refuse." But to the consternation of his hearers, instead of making the expected reference to his Eucharistic publications, he continued: "As things written with my hand contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death, and to save my life if it might be; and that is all such bills which I have written or signed with mine own hand since my degradation; wherein I have written many things untrue. And forasmuch as my hand offended in writing contrary to my heart, it shall be first burned. And as for the Pope, I refuse him as Christ's enemy, and Antichrist, with all his false doctrine.

HIS BURNING

Foxe tells of Cranmer's great triumph in death. And then, Cranmer being pulled down from the stage, he was led to the fire, accompanied with those friars, vexing, troubling, and threatening him most cruelly. What madness, say they, 'hath brought thee again into this error, by which thou wilt draw innumerable souls with thee into hell? To whom he answered nothing, but directed all his talk to the people saving that to one troubling him in the way, he spake, and exhorted him to get him home to his study, and apply the book diligently, saving if he did diligently call upon God by reading more he should get knowledge.

But the other Spanish barker, raging and foaming, was almost out of his wits, always having this in his mouth,

"Didst thou it not?"

But when he came to the place where the holy bishops and martyrs of God, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, were burnt before him for the confession of the truth, kneeling down he prayed to God; and not long tarrying in his prayers, putting off his garments to his shirt, he prepared himself to death. His shirt was made long, down to his feet.

His feet were bare; likewise his head, when both his caps were off, was bare, that one hair could not be seen upon it. His beard was long and thick, covering his face with marvellous gravity. Such a countenance of gravity moved the hearts both of his friends and of his enemies.

"Then the Spanish friars, John and Richard, of whom mention was made before, began to exhort him, and play their parts with him afresh, but with vain and lost labour.

Cranmer, with stedfast purpose abiding in the profession of his doctrine, gave his hand to certain old men, and others that stood by, bidding them farewell.

"And when he had thought to have done so likewise to Ely the said Ely drew back his hand, and refused, saying it was not lawful to salute heretics, and specially such a one as falsely returned unto the opinions that he had foresworn.

And if he had know before that he would have done so, he would never have used his company so familiarly, and chided those sergeants and citizens which had not refused to give him their hands. This Ely was a priest lately made, a student in divinity, being then one of the fellows of Brasenose.

"Then was an iron chaim tied about Cranmer, whom when they perceived to be more steadfast than that he could be moved form his sentence, they commanded the fire to be set unto him.

"And when the wood was kindled and the fire began to burn near him, stretching out his arm he put his right hand into the flame, which he held so steadfast and immovable, saving that once with the same hand

he wiped his face, that all men might see his hand burned before his body was touched. His body did so abide the burning of the flame with such constancy and steadfastness that standing always in one place without moving his body, he seemed to move no more than the stake to which he was bound; his eyes were lifted up into heaven, and oftentimes he repeated 'his unworthy right hand,' so long as his voice would suffer him; and using often the words of Stephen, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' in the greatness of the flame he gave up the ghost."

So died the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, a veritable Samson slaying more in his death than in his life. In concluding this address I might well ask the question. Why was he burned?

He was burned by Rome because He contended for three great and vital gospel principles.

The supremacy of Scripture versus the Supremacy of the Pope.

The Sacrifice of Christ's Death versus the ever-repeated never final blasphemous Mass.

Salvation by Faith Alone versus Salvation by works.

These gospel principles are most important. Obedience to God's Word is essential to salvation. Have you obeyed this Word? Trust in Christ's death is essential to salvation. Have you placed yourself on Christ's obedience and blood only for eternity? Saving faith is essential to salvation. Have you believed to the saving of your soul?

It is the message that these martyrs, being dead, yet speak.

May you hear and your soul shall live.

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