

Murder Self and Live for God, Part 3

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All right, if you have your Bibles, turn to Luke 9, where we are going to look at part 3 of “Murder Self and Live for God.”

When the Reformation was happening in Germany and Switzerland, led by men like Martin Luther and John Calvin, it was also occurring in England. Henry VIII, the king of England, wanted to divorce his wife, Catherine of Argon, but the pope would not permit it. Henry’s solution? Fire the Roman Catholic Church, start his own church, and make himself head. But Henry wasn’t [really] equipped to create his own church, so he gathered around him men like Thomas Cranmer, whom he made Archbishop of Canterbury. Cranmer was being influenced by the Reformation, his beliefs slowly switching from Roman Catholic to Protestant. ([The] Protestants [were] those who protested the unbiblical views and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.) For Henry’s new church, Cranmer wrote *The Book of Common Prayer*, [a] book of English liturgy. “Liturgy” is a formal worship service. Unlike the Roman Catholic liturgy, [*The Book of Common Prayer*] was written in English so people could actually understand it instead of [it] being written in Latin, [which] people didn’t understand.

Cranmer also wrote the original doctrinal statement of the Church of England, or Anglican Church, or Episcopal Church, whatever you want to call it. After his death, [the statement was] refined into thirty-nine articles, which remain to this day, [and] most of which if you read you would

wholeheartedly agree with as biblical. Cranmer promoted biblical preaching [and] the education of all pastors in doctrine, theology, and the original languages. Before that time, you didn't have to know anything about the Bible to be a priest. He also required that copies of the English Bible be placed in every church so that anyone could go and read the Scriptures.

After Henry VIII died, his son, Edward VI became king. Edward was mentored by Cranmer and [became] a strong Protestant. [He] made sweeping religious reforms and tried to make England a Protestant country. But Edward died at a very young age. Before he died, he had requested that Lady Jane Grey be made queen, but that didn't happen. Through a series of events, his half-sister, Mary I, the daughter of Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, became queen instead. Mary hated Protestants and the Church of England. She knew that her father broke away from the Roman Catholic Church for the express purpose of being able to divorce her mother. The divorce was eventually granted by none other than Thomas Cranmer. Mary had to see her mother disgraced, and she herself was demoted from Princess Mary to lady-in-waiting, a servant of Lady Shelton, who, at the direction of her father, treated Mary very poorly.

Mary was not permitted to see her mother or even attend her mother's funeral. Her life was miserable because of what Protestants had done to her. This made Mary very bitter and angry toward the Anglican Church and Protestants in general. And she was now queen. During Mary's five-year reign, she made it her goal to destroy the Anglican Church, burning at the stake over 300 Protestant ministers [and] some women and children. Many of these ministers were great men of God who were faithful preachers of the Word. This earned her the infamous title of "Bloody Mary" because of all the people she had executed during her reign. Because Archbishop Cranmer was the one who granted permission for her father to divorce her mother and caused [Mary] so much grief, he became the target of her wrath. He was removed from office, tried, and imprisoned for treason and later for heresy. The Roman Catholics rejoiced to see him suffer. He was defrocked, degraded, had his head shaved, and was made to wear ragged, Protestant

clothes. In prison, he was cruelly treated by his Roman Catholic captors, and offered over and over again an opportunity to recant his faith, which he refused.

Then, the Roman Catholic bishops got together and, like Satan, they decided to take a different approach, [use] a different method. They removed [Cranmer] from prison, clothed him with fine clothing, and placed him in the house of the dean of Christchurch, where he was given every luxury. He was in his sixties, and compared to the prison he had been in, this was a great relief [to him]. His enemies promised him that he would be restored to his former position as Archbishop of Canterbury, receive the queen's pardon, and be free to live in peace and luxury *if* he would only recant his biblical beliefs. The thought of being restored to his former glory, having the queen's favor, riches, dignity, honor, respect, and the luxuries of this world began to draw him into thoughts of compromise. To help Cranmer recant, he was first asked to sign a very vague, ambiguous document, which he did with a clear conscience. Five other documents, though, were brought before him over the course of time, each one explaining in more detail what was ambiguous in the first. Finally, a full recantation was placed before him and, having formed the habit [by signing] all the other ones, he willingly signed it, too.

So, where persecution had failed, indulgence triumphed. May this be a lesson to all of us. By signing the last document, [Cranmer] denounced his Protestant doctrines as unbiblical. He also affirmed the Roman Catholic doctrines he had formerly rejected. He recanted ever having opposed the pope. Cranmer's recantation was immediately printed and distributed all over England in an attempt to deliver a deathblow to the Protestant cause. When Bloody Mary heard [that] Cranmer had recanted, she was very pleased, and decided to burn him at the stake, ignoring the promises that were made to him. It was a sad day. For the pleasures of the world, for the pardon of the queen, for the approval of man, and the fear of death, Thomas Cranmer sold his soul to the devil, who then betrayed him. Cranmer was ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, you might be thinking to yourself, “Well, how could Cranmer do what he did? After all he knew, after all he had stood for, after all he had labored to accomplish, how in the world could he ever compromise the truth?” The answer: because Thomas Cranmer, like all of us, was a sinner. Peter did the same thing, didn’t he? Think about Peter. He’s called by the Lord, he hears Jesus teach, he sees Jesus do countless miracles, incredible miracles, [witnessed Jesus on] the Mount of Transfiguration. He is even given power to perform miracles and cast out demons. [He] experiences all of that, and then at the very end, when Jesus was being crucified, [Peter] denied Christ three times with cursing and oaths [see Matthew 26:69–75].

This morning, we return once again to Luke 9:23–27. Jesus, in the previous context, has affirmed to His disciples that He is indeed “the Christ, the Son of the living God” [Matthew 16:16]. He knows that if His followers go out and start proclaiming this message, it is going to be difficult on them. There is a hard road ahead for His followers. So, Jesus wants to explain what it means to be a *real* Christian. Not the kind of Christian you hear about today in the world, but a *real* Christian, a *real* follower of Jesus. So, first, Jesus begins by letting everyone in the crowd and His disciples [know] that the first thing that must happen is [they] must die to self. Secondly, He informs them that by trying to live a selfish life, they’re going to lose [their lives], and by giving their lives to Him, submitting to Him, and turning their lives over to Him, they’re going to save [them]. Then Jesus reasons with [them], saying, “How is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and yet forfeits his soul?” [see Luke 9:25]. The implied answer is, obviously, nothing. You lose all if you lose your soul.

And so, we return to Luke 9. Follow along as I read, starting in verse 23:

And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who

will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.” [Luke 9:23–27]

As we have learned already, Jesus presents four necessary truths that all Christians must know and experience in their lives if they are ever going to have the hope of being saved and getting to heaven. The third one, [which] we come to this morning, [is]: the fear you must reject. After being saved by grace, we are then called to obey by grace. That is, we are called to take all of the gracious resources God gives us as Christians and live for Christ. It’s pretty obvious: we quit living for self and Satan; we start following Jesus. The Scriptures describe the Christian life as “war” [see 1 Peter 2:11], “labor” [see Colossians 1:29], “striving” [see Hebrews 12:4] “fighting” [see 1 Timothy 6:12], “struggling” [see Ephesians 6:12], “working” [see James 2:22]. It is a life of discipline, of struggling against sin, and self, and Satan, and the world.

There is one thing, though, out of all the things that Christians are told to do, that is the pinnacle of difficulty. Reading your Bible faithfully and consistently is hard. Praying without ceasing is difficult. Serving and sacrificing to give to the Church, that’s hard. But there’s something at the top, the peak, the point, [which] is the most difficult thing. Look at [Luke] 9:26. Jesus tells us what it is: “For whoever is ashamed.” Just stop there. The word “ashamed” is “to be fearful of something that you possess,” or “embarrassed by something you own or own up to” so that you either do not speak of it, or you try to hide it from people who might discover it is true of you. Jesus says, “For whoever is ashamed,” and He mentions two things. First, “of me,” that is, [of] Jesus’ person, Jesus’ identity—Jesus the Son of God, born of a virgin, [lived a] perfect life, [was] buried, resurrected—

who He is. Second, “My words,” that is, Jesus’ teachings, and the Word of God in general. So, Jesus is speaking about those who are fearful, ashamed, embarrassed to let other people know that they are followers of Christ, that they believe the Word of God.

Why would any Christian, though, be ashamed of their Savior and Lord? Why would a junior higher, for instance, be afraid to admit in class or to a group of friends that Jesus was his Savior and Lord? Why would a high school student, or a college student, when given a great opportunity in class to stand up for biblical truth, not say anything and just let the worldly, wrong, sinful, damning view go uncontested? Why would a housewife be unwilling to share the gospel and to speak about Christ to her friend, or neighbor, or acquaintance? [How could] a Christian businessman continue on for years and years and people at his workplace never know he is a Christian? I mean, what are we scared of? That someone might come to know the Lord? No, that’s not it. We want everybody to come to know the Lord. We want everybody to be saved, and everybody to be a Christian. No, the truth is [that] those people don’t speak because they’re ashamed of Christ.

This is an act of idolatry. It is an act of idolatry because we love ourselves, we love our comfort, we love our own ease so much that we’re unwilling to take up our cross, deny ourselves, and tell people, “I believe in Jesus. I believe in the Bible—all of it.” We put ourselves and our comfort on the throne, and let Christ sit at our feet. I know that we’ve all done this. It is idolatry. It is to deny Christ instead of yourself. It’s being deceived into thinking you’re a Christian when you’re not.

I know what some of you are thinking right now, “Jack, Jack, wait a second here. Are you telling me that if I don’t speak up for Jesus, if I don’t share the gospel, if I don’t proclaim the truth of God’s Word, that I’m *not saved*? Are you trying to tell me that salvation is by the works of doing certain things like proclaiming the gospel and standing up for biblical truth?” No. No to the first question because *I’m* not telling you you’re not a Christian if you’re ashamed of Christ, *Jesus* is going to tell you that in just a minute. Secondly, no, you’re not saved by proclaiming the gospel, and you

are not saved by standing up for biblical truth. You are saved by grace through faith *so* you can stand up for the truth and proclaim the gospel.

The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:10, right after he goes into five different reasons why we're saved by grace, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." Paul says to Titus in Titus 2:14, after [Paul talks] about being saved by grace, that Christ "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Paul, in Romans 6:4, after he has gone into extensive detail about salvation being by grace through faith, then says this: "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

In other words, we are saved by grace to obey by grace, which is not being ashamed of Christ or His words. It means sharing your faith and standing up for the truth: "Yes, I understand what you're saying, but the Bible says that that is wrong. That is a sin according to the Scriptures."

"Well, hey, listen, we don't believe in the Bible. We don't believe in the Scriptures."

You say, "But I do, and God does, and you will after you die. This is wrong."

There is this hellish notion that being a Christian is a part-time thing. It's kind of like brushing your teeth. Oh, yeah, you've got to brush your teeth, but your life isn't consumed by brushing your teeth—hopefully. It's like trimming your nails. Yeah, you [have] to do it, but life isn't nail trimming. It's something you [have] to do periodically because it's just a necessity. [As] a Christian, you have to go to church and put in your couple [of] hours a week. Then you can live for sin and self the rest of the time. That, people, is not Christianity. That is Satan-anity. Jesus wants you to spend and be spent for Him and His truth in this world, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week—not just on Sunday.

If you look at your life, if you look back at last month, last year, [the] last years, and you realize, “You know, I don’t tell anybody the gospel. I can’t even remember when I shared my faith with anybody. I don’t even remember standing up in front of a group of unbelievers and saying, ‘I believe the gospel, I believe Jesus rose from the dead, died on the cross for my sins, and that the Bible says this is wrong or that’s wrong, or this is right. I can’t even remember a time [when I did that].’” If this is you, by all means, doubt your salvation.

A great preacher, Henry Ironside, told this story [about what] happened to him shortly after being saved. He was only a boy, and he was street preaching. This is what he recounts:

When I was only a lad, at a Saturday-night meeting on the street corner, in which I was participating, along came some of my schoolmates, and they were dumbfounded at seeing me in this meeting, and they listened in amazement when I witnessed for Christ.

On Monday when I came to school, they greeted me derisively, shouting “Hallelujah.” I said, “Praise the Lord.” Then they said, “Praise the Lord.” I replied, “Amen.” Some who were kind to me said, “Harry, what do you mean by turning religious? You are throwing your life away.” Why, that is just what I intended to do! And it came to me so clearly, and I am thanking God that He in His grace started me that way.

What do people see when they look at your life? Do they see what they saw in Henry Ironside’s life? “Man, you are throwing your life away to this religion thing. You’re wasting yourself on church, and the gospel, and living for this myth called ‘Jesus.’” That’s what you *want* them to say. Do they see you denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following after Jesus—and not just on Sunday for a couple of hours?

Be assured, even true believers at times are ashamed of Christ and His word. You know, I grieve those times in my own life when I'm so caught up in the things of the world. I'm very linear. I get these agendas, these plans, and I just kind of grind through them. I'm at the home improvement store, I'm standing in line, and some guy wants to talk to me. I [give him] a few quick words: "Yes, yes. I've got to get home and fix my toilet." So I get through the line and I'm driving away, and all of a sudden, the Holy Spirit is able to grind through my stubborn heart, and I realize, "Man! What am I doing? Isn't this guy's soul more important than my toilet?" I know the answer. "Well, I can't plead ignorance. I know the gospel. What's my problem?" I'm ashamed of Christ. [That's] the problem. Wrong priorities [are] the problem. So I have to confess my sins and ask Christ to help me to do better next time, to live my life for Him. So when I'm doing my thing, I make sure I'm thinking about His thing first.

But we still really haven't answered the question: Why? Why are even true believer at times ashamed of Christ? Mark's Gospel helps us because in the parallel text to our text, Mark adds a phrase [that Jesus said], which Luke leaves out. Mark 8, and I think it's . . . somebody said I got this wrong. Let me just go over there and make sure. I have lots of friends who come up after [the sermon] and say, "You quoted that wrong." Mark 8:32. Let's see. . . . It's not here. Help me out, people. Where is it? [Verse] 38. There it is! That's what you need, [verse] 38: "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words" and here's the phrase—thank you, bless you, children—"in this *adulterous and sinful generation*" [emphasis added]. That is the phrase that Luke leaves out. What's good about that phrase is [that] it gives us the reason why people are ashamed.

Jesus says the first reason [we are ashamed of Him and His words] is because we live in a "sinful generation," a world that is controlled by the architect of sin himself—Satan. Satan has been very successful at giving Jesus Christ a bad reputation. It's kind of like Russia during communism. People, [in all sincerity], were convinced that certain truths were lies and certain lies were true. Well, many in the world believe that those who boldly

share Christ and believe the Bible [are] monsters, they're narrow-minded bigots, and homophobes, and clinic bombers.

The Puritans are a classic case in point. What comes to your mind when you hear the word, or read about the word, “puritan” or “puritanical”? It's a slam! Yet, the Puritans, beyond all cavil, were the most godly, biblically literate, evangelically minded group of people that have ever lived. They were committed to living for Christ in every area of their lives and [to] have the word of Christ rule them in all they did all the time, not just on Sundays. Fathers trained their children and their wives, and loved their wives, and led their communities, abstained from sin, and they died for the truth they believed.

If you haven't noticed, “puritan” and “puritanical,” they're slams, they're put-downs, they're insults [today]. Most Christians don't even want to be called that. To the world, [Puritans] are the dregs of the earth. They are the people the world loves to vilify and hate. Why? Because they were not ashamed of Christ or His words, that's why. The world has portrayed them as prejudiced, fearful of pleasure, fearful of fun, fearful of life, people who burned witches and killed those who didn't agree with them. The worst examples [the world] could possibly find have been extracted from the Puritan era and held up as the norm for every [Puritan]. So now, the world believes that Puritans are the bad guys.

And you know what? It's happening to the word “Christian” today. Christians start wars, persecute Jews, promote slavery, bomb clinics, [and] promote intolerance. To the world, the only good Christian is a Christian who is ashamed of the gospel and Jesus Christ—[someone] who won't speak up. You take a bold, verbal stand for Jesus Christ and His Word, you say you believe Jesus is the Son of God, that He lived a perfect life, that He was born of a virgin, died and rose again, you are a religious fanatic. You're like an Islamic extremist, [a] terrorist. The world is a sinful, God-hating place, and this is why many are ashamed of Jesus and His words.

Second, [we're ashamed of Christ and His words] because we live in an “adulterous,” or immoral, generation. Would you say that sins of im-

morality, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, pornography, and lust are rare, fairly common, really common, or epidemic? Yeah, [the] correct answer [is]: epidemic. People love darkness rather than light [see John 3:19]. You come along, proclaiming Jesus, “the Light of the world” [John 8:12], sharing the light of the gospel, standing up for the lamp of God [see Revelation 21:23], which shines in the darkness, and it exposes their sin. It makes them angry and makes them fearful of judgment, so they switch subjects, run away, or get angry at you.

Does this remind you of anything? John 15:18–20, where Jesus said:

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, “A slave is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Accept it: the world hates the truth, the world hates Christ, and the world hates anybody who loves Christ and speaks His word.

But think about this: what do you have when you take Jesus and the Bible out of Christianity? Paganism, a hollow husk of manmade religion. There’s nothing left. People wonder sometimes, they go, “Jack, you’re always getting a little bit freaked out about the church growth movement [and] the seeker-sensitive movement. I mean, what’s the big deal?” The big deal is that those “Christian churches” refuse to preach against sin, refuse to preach about the wrath and judgment of God, refuse to perform church discipline, [and] refuse to tell people about sin and hell because they are ashamed of Christ and His words. It is an attempt to make unbelievers comfortable with manmade religion, but not [with] biblical Christianity.

What good is a cheerleader if she refuses to cheer? What good is a basketball player if he refuses to play basketball? What good is an employee

who won't show up and work for his company? What good is a Christian who won't speak up for Jesus and His words? The one thing that Christians can do here and now, which they can't do better in heaven, is tell unbelievers about Jesus and to stand up for the truth of God's Word in a sinful generation. Everything else you can do better in heaven, but this one thing, and this one thing only, is the thing that Christ asks us to do and most people won't do it.

But what if someone just doesn't feel comfortable sharing his faith and talking about the Bible? "Can't I just pray for it and give money to the person who is willing [to share his faith]?" No. Do that, but you [share your faith], too. Jesus tells us the consequences if you aren't willing to speak up for Him and His truth. Look at [Luke 9]:26 in the middle of the verse. Jesus says, "Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him."

You're on a softball team. It's the beginning of the year, [and] it's your first practice—you haven't even played a game yet. All of the people gather and there you are with a bunch of other team members, and you practice. But one of the guys who practices with you that first practice never shows up again. As a matter of fact, you find out he's practicing with another team. Then the season starts, and you find out he's playing with [that] other team. Over the course of the season, you do really well, and you win the championship. There you are, you and your team members are all called to stand on the field and receive the trophy and to receive honor for winning. As you're walking to the center of the field, there's that guy, that guy who practiced with you one time. Now, do you say, "Hey! You're on our team. You showed up for our first practice, come on out here and receive the honors"? Is that what you tell him? [No.] You say, "No, too bad you're on the *losing team*! Too bad you sided with the wrong guys."

This, Jesus says, is what will happen to those who are ashamed of Him and His words. He will be ashamed of them. It doesn't matter how religious you are. It doesn't matter how well you know the Bible, how often you go to church, how many good deeds you've done, how much money you've

given, how morally upright [you are], and how many mountains of good intentions you have. If you are going to be a Christian, you must follow Christ, which is a life of saying “no” to self and speaking up for Jesus and His words. Paul had it right in Romans 1:16, right before he shared his huge gospel, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” I mean, think about it, are we scared that someone’s going to get saved?

Jesus says He will be ashamed of you if you are ashamed of Him. His words in this life need to control what we do. Now, you may be thinking to yourself, “Well, Pastor Jack, OK. All right. You’re scaring me. Jesus is going to be ashamed of me, and I admit it. I’ve blown it and there [have] been times when I haven’t done what Jesus has wanted me to do. I feel terrible about that, but I still get to go to heaven, right? I mean, you know, I’m not going to end up in hell because I’m ashamed of Jesus, am I?”

Well, let’s see what the text says. First we can surmise from [Luke 9:]26 that this is no light matter, because the shame that is received is a Trinitarian shame. Notice they receive their shame—look at the end of verse 26 —“When [Jesus] comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” Now, just picture in your mind here [that] it’s the day of Christ’s return to earth to set up His everlasting kingdom. With him are myriads upon myriads and 10,000s times 10,000s of radiant, holy angels. The sky is rent in two, and God’s Shekinah glory is blasting down upon the earth. With Christ are the faithful saints of all the ages, those John describes in Revelation 12:11 [who] “overcame. . . because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.” So all of those people—the angels, the believers, and Jesus Christ the Lord of Glory—have shown up.

And there you are. You know that all Christians—true believers—because they place their faith in Christ, receive absolute and total forgiveness, that there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” [Romans 8:1], that they are washed clean and made to stand “blameless with great joy before Him” [see Jude 1:24]. And Jesus is ashamed of you. [Do] you

think you're going to heaven? [In] Matthew 10:33, Jesus says, "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." That's pretty clear. Turn over to Luke 12, a couple chapters over. Jesus is going to say the same thing in verses 8–9 of Luke 12: "And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God."

We've already stated that believers at times, like Peter, deny the Lord in moments of weakness, in moments of selfishness, for pleasure, in order to avoid persecution, in order to have a good reputation. Whatever the reason, yes, Christians deny the Lord. But listen, if it's the normal pattern of your life, if months go by and you never speak of Jesus, do not think that you know the Lord. Do not think that you will get to heaven. I fear for those who have gone for years without sharing the gospel, without telling other people they're Christians, or standing up for the truth of God's Word. Jesus says He will deny them on judgment day. So don't try to save your life for yourself, and for your sin, and for your comfort, and for Satan. Waste it on Jesus.

Jesus commended the church of Pergamum in Revelation 2:13, saying, "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells." In other words, they stood up for Jesus, they proclaimed the truth, even though people were dying for being Christians.

At the beginning of this sermon, I told you about Archbishop Cranmer who, after spending much of his life advancing the cause of Christ, at the end of his life totally caved in and recanted his biblical beliefs. But I need to tell you the rest of the story. News was out [that] the general of the English Reformation had recanted his Protestant beliefs and put his signature to it. Bloody Mary planned to put him to death, yet Cranmer did not know this. He thought he was going to be pardoned and then restored. The queen was quick to write to one of her Roman Catholic advocates, Dr. Pole, in-

structing him to secretly prepare a funeral sermon for Cranmer, which was to be preached to him in front of all in Saint Mary's Church in Oxford immediately before [Cranmer] was to be burned at the stake.

Other high-ranking officials and noblemen were instructed by the queen to attend. It was kind of like when Nebuchadnezzar had all of his nobles and important dignitaries all assemble to see the revealing of the golden statue so everybody could worship it [see Daniel 3:2]. The night before the execution, Cranmer was visited in prison by Dr. Pole, who asked him if his faith in Roman Catholic doctrine still held. Cranmer affirmed that it did and that he would, by God's grace, be daily more settled in it. About 9 a.m. the next morning, Bishop Bonner, who participated in mocking and degrading Cranmer publicly, led [Cranmer] in great procession from Bocardo Prison to St. Mary's, as if Cranmer were some sort of captured king and [Bonner] was a great military general parading him through in victory triumph.

Many Protestants stood along the way, grieving and wondering how Cranmer could deny the faith. When [Bonner and Cranmer] arrived at St. Mary's, the church was packed with grief-stricken Protestants and rejoicing and jeering Roman Catholics, who eagerly desired to hear Cranmer recant his Protestant beliefs in front of all. Cranmer was placed [at the] front of the church on a crude, makeshift platform, where he knelt and prayed. Dr. Pole began to preach Cranmer's funeral service, praising God Almighty who had brought Cranmer back to the true faith even though he had committed such atrocious crimes against the Church, against the pope, and against the people of England.

At the very end of his sermon, Dr. Pole exhorted Cranmer to take his death well. Cranmer realized for the first time [that] he was going to be burned at the stake. Dr. Pole then said, "Brethren, lest anyone should doubt this man's earnest conversion, you shall hear him speak before you." Then he turned to Cranmer, and said, "Master Cranmer, openly express the true profession of your faith that all may understand that you are Catholic indeed." Cranmer agreed and started by confessing that during his life he had committed many sins that he was very sorry for committing, but that there

was one sin that weighed heavily upon his soul. He then exhorted all of the people there not to follow the world and to believe that every bit of the Bible was true and the very word of God.

And then he said this:

And now I come to the great thing that so much troubles my conscience, more than anything that I have ever done or said in my whole life, and that is the distribution of writing that is contrary to the truth, which I now here renounce and refuse. These things were written with my hand contrary to the truth that I believe in my heart, and written for fear of death and to save my life, if it might be. That includes all such bills or papers that I have written or signed with my hand since my degradation, in which I have written many untrue things.

And in as much as my hand has offended and written contrary to my heart, my hand shall first be punished—for when I come to the fire it shall first be burned.

Then with great boldness, he spoke his last words [to the crowd], “As for the Pope, I refuse him as Christ’s enemy, and antichrist, with all his false doctrine.” To the gasps of all the Catholics, and to the praises and cheering of all the Protestants, [Cranmer] was jerked from his crude pedestal, [dragged] out of the church, chained to the stake, [and] wood was packed around him and was lit on fire. When the flames started to rise up around him, he stretched forth his right arm, put his right hand into the flame, and held it there until it was completely burned off, saying the whole time, “This unworthy hand.” And then he died.

Historian Harold Chadwick said, “The pope’s followers were completely frustrated in their attempt to use the archbishop to destroy the faith and steadfastness of the true Christians. Like Samson, Cranmer destroyed more of his enemy with his death than he did in his life.”¹

¹The above account was summarized from *The New Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* by Harold Chadwick.

People, we need to leave here today committed to [not being] ashamed of the gospel or of Christ or the truth of the Bible. We sing songs saying that we believe it. When we're here and it's comfortable, we say we believe it. We need to go out into the world, and live it, and say we believe it because it's what the world needs. May we as a local church unashamedly preach the truth, proclaim the truth with boldness and steadfastness, remembering Jesus' words: "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" [Luke 9:26]. If your life is characterized by being ashamed of Christ, listen to the Word of the Lord: "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" [Romans 10:9–10].

We as a church need to break away from the trend that is telling us—the trend of the world, the trend of Satan—that the only good Christian is a Christian who is ashamed of Christ and His words. We need to say, "I'm a Christian. I believe in Jesus, and you know what? You can be a Christian if you repent and believe," and tell them the gospel. The only way we're going to help the world and save souls is if we speak the truth. So may God give us the grace and boldness to fear Him more than men, and may He be glorified and may souls be saved because of it. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Jesus' solemn words here, these hard but true words. We are in a battle and You have called us to fear You more than men, to speak Your truth, to tell people about Jesus, to not cave in for pleasures and comforts. Father, I pray that if there is someone here who has never repented of his or her sins and placed his or her faith in Jesus Christ, [that] he or she would do it this morning. That Your Holy Spirit would come upon him or her with such might that he or she would be broken and crumbled unto salvation. That he or she would lay his or her life on the altar of sacrifice to Your Son. And for the rest of us, who have failed you many times and in many ways, for the rest of us who know You and know Your

truth—we sing about it, we talk about it, we read it—Father, may we not be Sunday Christians only. May we speak up with grace and kindness yet with great boldness that Jesus is Lord, the Savior of men, who is coming back in judgment to judge the living and the dead [see Acts 10:42]. And, Father, that we believe in Your Word, that it is Your inspired truth, that it is living, that it is active, it is piercing, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of men’s hearts [see Hebrews 4:12], and is the power of Your Holy Spirit to bring men to repentance. Father, help us to be this way, that You might receive all the glory, honor, and praise. We pray this in Christ’s name, Amen.

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