



MARTYRDOM & MISSION: Why Reformers Died In Their Day & How We Must Live In Ours

David Platt – Together for the Gospel 2016

If you have your Bible—and I hope you do—I invite you to open with me to Psalm 51. While you're turning there, let me just say how honored, humbled and overwhelmed I am just to be at this conference. As Mark mentioned, I was here ten years ago. I had just become a pastor for the first time. I sat in the hotel listening to Mark Dever preach from 1 Corinthians 4 on the weight of pastoral ministry, and I felt it. I listened to John MacArthur talk about 40 years of gospel ministry and I thought, "That's 14 years longer than I've been alive." I listened to John Piper preach a sermon on exposition and I thought, "I'm not sure if I've ever actually preached a biblical sermon. How am I going to pastor?" Needless to say, I never could have imagined the friendship that you brothers would invite me into, and I am deeply grateful and totally undeserving of your invitation.

My topic is "Martyrdom and Mission: Why Reformers Died In Their Day; How We Must Live In Ours." The year was 1555. It was nearly 40 years after Luther had nailed 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg, and nearly 20 years after Calvin had written his first edition of the Institutes in Latin. The church in England was under fire, literally, from a royal foe named Queen Mary, whom we've heard about. 1555. Over the next four years, 288 people would be burned at the stake for their Protestant faith. Men and women, church leaders and common laborers—even children.

J.C. Ryle wrote that the first to break the ice and cross the river as a martyr in Mary's reign was John Rogers. Rogers received his education at Cambridge and became a Catholic priest. But quickly he became disillusioned with the teachings of the Catholic church. In God's providence, he found himself in Holland where he just so happened to meet a man by the name of William Tyndale. Tyndale taught Rogers the Bible and the gospel, and Rogers would never be the same.

When Tyndale was arrested months after they met, he left his Old Testament manuscripts with Rogers, who, in the days to come, would compile them into a complete English Bible under the code name "Thomas Matthew." The Matthews Bible would become the first officially authorized version of the Bible in the English language. Rogers went on to pastor in Germany, but his heart was for the people

of England. So he returned to London in 1548 with his wife Arianna and their eight children at the time. There he preached and pastored safely under the reign of King Edward VI, until the day when Edward died. Soon thereafter Edward's half-sister Mary proclaimed herself queen.

Rogers knew where Mary stood on religion: steadfast for the church at Rome and against all Protestant teachings. She arrived in London on Thursday, August 3, 1553. Rogers was appointed to preach the following Sunday. This was his moment and he boldly proclaimed the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for God's glory alone, warning the church against "pestilent potpourri and all idolatry."

Commenting on Rogers' sermon that day, one biographer said, "There was never any position in the whole history of the Reformation, all things considered, where the responsibilities thrown upon one single man were greater and the results more important." The same historian went on to say of Rogers, "His conduct that day was more than noble—it was magnificent." Rogers' sermon that day would be his last.

A week later, he was placed under house arrest with his wife and now ten children, with another on the way. Six months later he was put into prison, where he lived in cruel conditions for the next year, which led to January 1555. He was then summarily examined on three occasions and subsequently condemned for two offenses: one, standing against the church of Rome, and two, saying that in the sacrament of the altar there is not substantially nor really the natural body and blood of Christ.

Rogers hadn't been able to communicate with his wife and family the entire time he had been in prison. He had not even met his youngest child. So he pleaded for an opportunity to see them, or at least to speak to his wife before he died. His request was refused and the next morning he was roused from his cell. He was led outside into the streets of the parish he once pastored, walking in the shadow of the church where he had preached. Thousands of spectators lined the way and in that sea of faces he saw his holding a baby, with ten other children standing beside her, looking at their daddy. It was the first time he'd ever seen his youngest child.

One writer said, "Their anxious faces were all fixed on him and their voices of pain reached his ears." Another remarked, "It's difficult even to imagine anything more tender and affecting than this parting scene, this last adieu, to a beloved wife and so numerous an offspring, all in tears. He stood the shock with the feelings of a father and husband, but with the unshaken confidence of a Christian marching to his death."

John Foxe, in his Book of Martyrs, tells us that he walked calmly to the stake, saying over and over again the 51st Psalm. When he arrived, the sheriff gave him one last opportunity to revoke his confession of faith, to which Rogers responded, "That which I have preached, I will seal with my blood." Within moments, the fire at Rogers' feet was set ablaze. His body slowly began to burn and as he lifted

his arms high in the air, Ryle said, “The enthusiasm of the crowd knew no bounds. They rent the air with thunders of applause.” J.C. Ryle goes on to say, “For up to that day, men could not tell how English reformers would behave in the face of death, and they could hardly believe that some would actually give their bodies to be burned for their religion.” And some it would be.

Within days, others faced the same fate. Nicholas Ridley, who was a fellow prisoner with Rogers, wrote to other pastors who had been in prison saying, “I thank our Lord God and Heavenly Father, by Christ, that since I heard of our dear brother Rogers’ departing and stout confession of Christ and His truth—even to the death—since that time, I say, I have no longer felt any lumpish heaviness in my heart.”

John Leaf, a 19-year-old apprentice of John Rogers, was arrested and asked if he believed what Rogers had taught him. Leaf answered, not only did he believe every doctrine Rogers had taught him from God’s Word, but he was ready to meet the same death that Rogers had faced—and so he did. History said he was burned alive with a cheerfulness and an unshaken resolve that were remarkable for one so young and that would have pleased his teacher in the faith.

John Rogers, Nicholas Ridley, John Leaf—I could read 285 other names who followed in the fire of their footsteps across England under the reign of Queen Mary, in addition to all the saints who did the same across other countries during the Reformation.

So, brothers, as this conference closes, lift your eyes across this coliseum and look back one more time across history. See this day—500 years ago—when our brothers in the faith were emboldened to die for their belief. See the day when pastors explored theology, not merely as an academic exercise, but as a life-and-death endeavor. See this day when wives and children saw in their husbands and dads a willingness to sacrifice and suffer for the sake of what they studied. See in this day men who gladly embraced martyrdom for the sake of missions.

See them and let us be reminded by them that it is altogether right for us to give our lives to preserve this gospel in the church. And brothers, be reminded by them that it is ultimately required for us to give our lives proclaiming this gospel in the world.

My questions in this talk are twofold.

First, why did they die? What was the reason why these reformers died? What was the root motive behind Reformation martyrs?

Then my second question, flowing from the first, is how should we live? Is there anything we need to hear across the halls of history from these heroes of our faith? Should we die for the same things for which they died? What might these martyrs say to us, particularly in a day in which the church has been so complicit in the promotion of cultural Christianity? In our day in which the church has become so complacent through prioritizing material comfort?

Let us be honest. Brothers, pastors, a theology of martyrdom is not a prominent feature in contemporary Western Christian thought. A theology of danger that leads to death is not a primary topic of conversation in our churches. Now sure, we possess rightful disdain for theologies that prioritize prosperity in this world. Yet I fear that such theologies have invaded our homes and churches far more than we would like to admit. Surely we must confess that our views of safety and security in this room and in our churches are often far more American than they are biblical, far more concerned in the preservation of our lives in this country than they are with the exaltation of our Lord among the nations.

For this reason, I submit we have much to learn from the Reformation regarding how to live based on why they died. So let's take the two questions in order.

Why did they die?

As I've asked this question, I've come to an answer I didn't expect. More specifically, I've come to a text I didn't expect. I'm not sure if you noticed, but when John Foxe was recounting John Rogers' death, he remarked that as Rogers walked to his death, he kept repeating the 51st Psalm. As he walked past his wife and children—in addition to the throngs of people he loved and once led—these were the words that were on his lips.

As I read about Rogers' repetition of Psalm 51, I thought, "Why this Psalm?" Then I read about Rowland Taylor being thrown into prison, becoming the third martyr under Mary's reign. He had been a pastor who was betrayed by two of his parishioners. The night before he was put to death, he was allowed to have dinner with his wife and son. He gave his son a Latin book that contained notable sayings from old martyrs. In the back of the book he wrote these words:

I say to my wife and my children, "The Lord gave you unto me. The Lord has taken me from you and you from me. Blessed be the name of the Lord. God cares for the sparrows and for the hairs of our heads. I have ever found Him more faithful and favorable than is any father or husband. Trust ye therefore in Him. By the means of our dear Savior Christ's merits, believe, love, fear and obey Him. Count me not dead, for I shall certainly live and never die. I go before, and you shall follow after to our long home."

The next morning he was led to the place where he would burn. Foxe says that when he had prayed, he went to the stake, kissed it, set himself into a pitch barrel which they had for him to stand in. Then he stood with his back upright against the stake, his hands folded together, his eyes toward heaven, and from there he began to quote Scripture in English, the language of the people. As he did, he was struck on the face and told to only speak Scripture in Latin. Taylor didn't stop his English, though, and you'll never guess what Scripture he was quoting for all the people to hear. It was Psalm 51.

I read about John Rogers, Rowland Taylor, and then I read another historian who said that Psalm 51 was traditionally recited by English Reformers at their executions. So I asked, why? Why Psalm 51. This is not a text I think of when I think of martyrdom. It's a glorious song, to be sure. It's one of the most well-known and beloved psalms in all the Bible. Spurgeon commented on the challenge of preaching it, saying, "Such a psalm may be wept over, absorbed into the soul, exhaled again in devotion—but commented on? Ah, where is he, who having attempted it, can do other than blush at his defeat?"

So I'm set up for defeat! There's so much here. But that's just it. What is it here that's made this Psalm so precious to Reformation martyrs in their final moments? I invite you to think about this with me. Let's read this Psalm. I'm confident you've heard it before, but let me invite you, right now, to hear it differently. Hear these words spoken from the mouths of men who were walking past their wives and children to their death. Hear these words shouted from the mouths of martyrs whose bodies are being set ablaze as they cry:

- ¹ *Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.*
- ² *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!*
- ³ *For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.*
- ⁴ *Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.*
- ⁵ *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.*
- ⁶ *Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*
- ⁷ *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*
- ⁸ *Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.*
- ⁹ *Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.*
- ¹⁰ *Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.*
- ¹¹ *Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.*

- ¹² *Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.*
- ¹³ *Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.*
- ¹⁴ *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.*
- ¹⁵ *O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.*
- ¹⁶ *For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.*
- ¹⁷ *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*
- ¹⁸ *Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;*
- ¹⁹ *then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

What truths does this Psalm contain that compelled martyrs toward their death and comforted martyrs in their deaths? As I've tried to answer that question, at least three truths have come to the surface from this text. Three truths that these men who were martyred believed. Three truths that drove them as they died.

1. They believed their depravity was deserving of damnation.

See how this Psalm describes sin in different ways over and over and over again:

- Verse one, *"Blot out my transgressions."*
- Verse two, *"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!"*
- Verse three, *"I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me."*
- Verse four, *"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight."*
- Verse five, *"I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."*
- Verse nine, *"Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities."*

Sin. Iniquity. Transgression. Evil. These are different words that come together to show the depth of David's depravity.

We know this Psalm was written in response to his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, but David knows sin is not an isolated incident for him. As Philip Jensen noted on the first day of this conference, sin was not just an isolated incident for David—it utterly inundated him. As John Piper pointed out last night, it bound him.

“Behold,” verse five says, *“I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”* Obviously this is not a reference to an immoral relationship David’s mother had or the specific circumstances surrounding his birth, but a reference to a reality that affects every single one of us in this room. From the moment we were born into this world, we were born into sin. We’ve been in debt ever since, dominated by depravity and destined to defy God.

Verse four, *“Against you, you only, have I sinned.”* This Psalm is a reminder that while our sin undoubtedly affects the people around us, the worst consequence of sin is the reality that you and I have defied the infinitely holy God of the universe, and as a result we deserve death. In the words of David, *“My bones are crushed. My joy is gone. I’m guilty of shedding blood.”* This Psalm reminds us of the infinite seriousness of sin before a holy God. In defying God, we have destroyed ourselves. It’s the story of all Scripture.

Thabiti referred to the one sin in Genesis 3. They ate a piece of fruit. One sin. And from that one sin, death and condemnation came to all men. From one sin came all the effects of sin across history and around the world. Natural evil: hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis. Moral evil: world wars, ethnic genocide, murder, rape, the kidnapping of eight-year-old girls in Nigeria who are being trained to be suicide bombers. All of that goes back to one sin. And we in this room have committed millions of them.

See the severity of sin in all of Scripture and the depth of depravity in all of our hearts. The Reformers saw it. Isn’t it interesting, even somewhat striking, to hear these men in what history would call their most climactic moment as Christian heroes? They’re dying for their faith as they stand for the truth, yet we don’t hear these men in any way nodding to the nobility of their actions. Instead, in quoting Psalm 51, they’re drawing attention to the depth of their transgressions. Even as they died for Christ, they believed—they knew—that they were sinners to the core.

This is a significant historical note. Even as John Piper shared on the panel the other night, I am, and we should be, under no illusion that these men were perfectly worthy of our emulation or imitation. Much like the author of this Psalm—the tragic hero of the Old Testament—as wonderful as these men were, they were also weak and wicked. When standing before a holy Sovereign, they were no less sinners than anyone else—including the adversaries who arrested them, the cardinals who condemned them, even the very queen who enjoined their execution. They were all guilty before God and they knew that death was ultimately their due.

On top of that, they knew that the fires they would endure were nowhere near what they actually deserved. Your perspective of earthly embers changes when you’ve been saved from an eternal inferno. This was certainly true for John Rogers. We have very little from what he wrote in his prison cell, but one of Rogers’ sons, when given access to his father’s room after he died, found writings hidden away

that contained his final reflection. Among other things, John Rogers wrote shortly before his death, “We, in and of ourselves, are polluted with many filthy sins, which if the measureless, unspeakable mercy and love of God in Christ did not put away, by not imputing them to us, would have brought us to everlasting damnation and death perpetual.” John Rogers and the other Reformation martyrs knew their depravity was deserving of damnation—a reality that set the stage for the second truth so clearly communicated in Psalm 51.

2. They believed their salvation was found solely in God’s mercy, separate from their merit.

Just as this Psalm uses a myriad of words to describe man’s sin, the same Psalm uses a mosaic of terms to describe God’s grace. Verse one: *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.”* Mercy. Abundant mercy. Steadfast love. Think about what David is asking God to do. *“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin”*? He’s asking God to “un-sin” him, to remove all iniquity from him. Talk about a bold request! Ask the holy God, Whom you have defied, to act as if you have not defied Him?

Here’s the deal. David knows there’s no basis in himself for this. He’s committed two sins for which the law of Moses provided no forgiveness: adultery and murder. The penalty for both of these sins, according to God’s law, was death. David had nothing in himself to which he could appeal. So what did he do? He cried out for God to do what only God can do. Hear his requests:

- Verse two, *“Wash me. Cleanse me.”*
- Verse seven, *“Purge me. Wash me.”*
- Verse nine, *“Hide your face from my sins. Blot out all my iniquities.”*
- Verse ten, *“Create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit within me.”*
- Verse 12, *“Restore to me. Uphold me.”*
- Verse 14, *“Deliver me.”*
- Verse 15, *“O Lord, open my lips.”*

Do you see it? He’s asking God to do all these things, because he knows he can’t make these things happen. He even says it in verse 16: “I’d give You a sacrifice if I could, but I can’t. There’s nothing I can do, O God. Only You can do these things. Only You can save me.”

We’ve heard it all week long—this was the cry of the Reformers in their day. Salvation is found solely in God’s mercy, separate from our merit. We’ve heard it over and over and over again. But do we realize how precious this really is? Do we realize what these men were dying for? J.C. Ryle wrote a paper entitled, “The Burning of Our English Reformers.” And the reason why they were burned so struck me, because in his paper he wrote:

Great indeed would be our mistake if we supposed that these martyrs suffered for the vague charge of refusing submission to the pope or desiring to maintain the independence of the Church of England. Nothing of the kind. The principal reason why they were burned was because they refused one of the peculiar doctrines of the Roman church. On that doctrine, in almost every case, hinged their life or death. If they admitted it, they might live. If they refused it, they must die. The doctrine in question was the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

Did they or did they not believe that the body and blood of Christ were corporally, literally, locally and materially present under the forms of bread and wine after the words of consecration were pronounced? Did they or did they not? That was the simple question. If they did not believe and admit it, they were burned.

John Rogers recounted his interrogation by the church, saying:

I was asked whether I believed the sacrament to be the very body and blood of our Savior Christ, Who was born of the virgin Mary and hanged on the cross, really and substantially? I answered, "I think it to be false." I cannot understand "really and substantially" to signify otherwise than corporally. But corporally Christ is only in heaven, so Christ cannot be corporally in your sacrament.

The same statement was made by subsequent men and women—church leaders, common laborers. Rawlins White was a fisherman. He couldn't read so he had his son taught to read, so that every night his family could gather around the table after dinner and the boy would read the New English Bible to the family. In the course of doing so, he came to believe in salvation through faith in God's mercy. When his belief became public, he was condemned to die.

History tells us he came to the place where his poor wife and children stood weeping. The sight of them so pierced his heart that tears trickled down his face. When everything was ready, they set White on the stake, erected a stand upon which a priest stepped up and began speaking about the Catholic doctrine of the sacraments. White, this fisherman expositor, cried out to the priest, "You wicked hypocrite. Do you presume to prove your false doctrine by Scripture? Look at the text! Look at the text. Did not Christ say, 'Do this in remembrance of Me'?" That didn't go over well. Immediately they lit the fire. Foxe says his legs were so quickly consumed by the flame that his body "briskly fell over and burned."

John Holyer was taken to the stake bound with a chain and placed in a pitch barrel. Fire was applied to the reeds of the wood. As he began to burn, people started throwing books in the fire to be burned with him. One of the books was on the communion service. It was a book that countered Catholic teaching on the Lord's Supper and taught salvation through faith alone. So Holyer caught the book, held it high above the flames, opened it and read it joyfully, out loud, until the fire and smoke

deprived him of sight. Then he pressed the book to his heart, thanking God for giving him this precious gift in his last moments.

It wasn't just men. Agnes Snoth. Anne Wright. Joan Soale. Joan Catmer. Four women, alongside one man, John Lomas, were questioned concerning transubstantiation and sentenced to burn together on two stakes in one fire, where Foxe says, "They sang hosannas together until the breath of life was extinguished."

Are we hearing this? Why did these Reformers die? Don't miss this. They died for the Lord's Supper. They died because they knew that Rome's doctrine of real presence undercut gospel grace. If receiving communion involves receiving Christ, if eating the communion feast is necessary to experience Christ's forgiveness, then man's merit becomes the means of obtaining Christ's mercy—and the Reformers would have nothing to do with it.

Doctrine like this was decisive for them. Truth like this was not trivial for them. A pastor looks into the eyes of his wife and eleven children, one of whom he's never even held. A fisherman looks into the eyes of his wife and children, including the little boy who first read the gospel to him. And together they say, "Salvation by God's mercy, separate from our merit, is worth our lives. Salvation is all of His mercy, kids. My bride, salvation is all of His mercy. If we lose that, we lose everything. We have hope—not in our merit, but only in His mercy. It's not in our merit—it's in His merit."

One Protestant man was sentenced to beheading. History says he went cheerfully to his place of execution. When he arrived at the blocks, he was surrounded by friars, one of whom bent down and whispered in his ear, "I know you have great reluctance publicly to abjure your faith. So just whisper your confession in my ear and I will absolve your sin." The Protestant man loudly replied back to him, "Trouble me not, friar, for I have confessed my sins to God and obtained absolution through the merits of Jesus Christ." Then he turned to his executioner and said, "Let me not be pestered with these men. Perform your duty." At which point his head was struck off at a single blow.

Mark Dever began this week with a great word: imputation—the righteousness of Christ credited to our account. Out of the sheer mercy of God, He showers righteousness on sinners just like we're His Son.

I remember when my wife and I were engaged. The year before we were married, we were living totally different lives. I was finishing college, living on little income. Actually, no income. No cash flow. Scraping by during my last semester, eating Ramen noodles for most of my meals.

Meanwhile, Heather had graduated from college and was teaching in an elementary school—which meant she had some cash flow, so she didn't have to eat Ramen noodles. After 12 months of waiting to be married, we finally stood in front of our friends and family, ready to commit our lives to

each other. On that day, I received so many wonderful things, the most important of which was a beautiful, godly wife.

But do you know what else I received that day? Cash flow. It was glorious. At one moment, I stood there with nothing in my bank account. I said two words, “I do,” and all of a sudden, my bank account was full. I didn’t have to do anything to earn it. I didn’t have to go to her school or teach her five-year-old kids. I didn’t have to get a job anywhere else, for that matter. Simply because my life was now united with hers, everything that belonged to her became mine. Praise God!

Ah, brothers and sisters, in a much, much greater way, when we come to Jesus, when we put our faith in Him and trust Him, at that moment everything that belongs to Him becomes ours. Praise God! It’s not because of any work we have ever done or will ever do. It’s solely because of the work He’s done for you and me. Praise God, salvation is found solely in God’s mercy, separate from our merit. Jesus has lived the life we could not live. He has died the death we deserved to die. Jesus has conquered the enemy we could not conquer. He has risen from the dead. And simply, solely by faith in His love for us, we can be cleansed of all our heinous sin and reconciled to a holy God, to know and enjoy Him forever and ever. This is the greatest news in all the world!

3. They believed love like this was worth losing their lives to proclaim.

This leads to the third truth here in Psalm 51. These Reformers believed that love like this was worth losing their lives to proclaim. Beginning in verse 12:

- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.*
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.*
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.*
- ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.*

See how washing by God inevitably leads to worship of God, and then see how washing from God inevitably leads to witness for God. “I’m going to teach this to transgressors and sinners.” That makes sense. Possession of this good news compels proclamation of this good news—and this is where we must be careful not to miss the point. Please listen closely. These martyrs did not die just because they believed the gospel; they died because they broadcast the gospel. They didn’t die just because they studied the gospel; they died because they spoke it.

Persecution only rises when proclamation resounds. If you stay silent about your faith, you stay safe from persecution. It's when you speak about your faith that you step into persecution—and that's what these Reformers were doing. They were sharing it in their homes; they were teaching it in their churches; they were proclaiming it in their towns. And it cost them everything they had.

John Rogers had a choice that Sunday after Mary came to London. He could preach a good sermon from a random text, thus he could keep his life. He could keep his pastorate. He could continue being dad and husband. Or he could preach a gospel sermon filled with Reformation truth and lose his life. John Rogers chose the latter. Why? Because he couldn't keep this good news to himself. He didn't just love the gospel—he loved people who needed the gospel. He was willing to give his life so they might know it. And right before he died, that's exactly what he did. He exhorted everyone watching his execution to embrace the doctrines of gospel grace. Foxe concludes:

By his death, he demonstrated the reality, the ancient observation, that the blood of the saints was the seed of the church. For instead of being intimidated by the severity of his sufferings, multitudes were encouraged by his magnanimous example, and many who had no religion were led to inquire into the cause for which pious, learned and benevolent men were so content to lay down their lives, and thus they were changed from atheists or Catholics by the grace of God to the profession of the gospel.

Apparently when you know the depth of God's love for sinners, you'll lose your life for their salvation. They believed that their depravity was deserving of damnation. They believed that salvation was found solely in God's mercy, not in their merit. And they believed that love like this was worth losing their lives to proclaim.

So, how shall we live in light of the examples of these Reformers? Far more importantly, based on the exposition of the text, how shall we live? I offer three exhortations as we close this conference.

A. Let us prioritize theological precision among God's people.

Kevin and John both used this word yesterday and I want to bring it back today. I trust that it's clear after these last three days that doctrine matters. Theology matters. How we understand God's Word matters. How we carry out God's worship matters. The Lord's Supper matters.

We know that we live in a day when doctrine like we're discussing is diluted and pragmatism is prized in its place. It's the deceptive danger of just doing what works, regardless of God's Word—the subtle snare, the slippery slope—that inevitably surfaces when we disconnect methodology from theology. It's the tantalizing temptation to twist God's truth in an attempt to make sermons more palatable or strategies more successful.

I lead a missions organization focused on planting churches around the world. I see the plague of pragmatism everywhere I turn. From insider movements to man-centered methodologies, so much of contemporary missiology starts with the world instead of starting with God's Word.. It asks, "What's working where?" Missionaries begin devising mission strategies based on pragmatic observation instead of biblical foundation. Sure, we go to Scripture to back up what we're doing. But there's a critical difference between looking to Scripture for permission to do what we think is best and looking to Scripture for direction according to what God has said is best. But the pressure is there to produce statistics. After all, how are we going to boost morale in the field? How are we going to raise money back home?

I received a flier from a missions organization in my mail saying, "For \$20 a month, you can plant a church among _____ in said country." We want to talk about the low cost of pastors and the return rates in their reports. Thousands and thousands of conversions reported. Churches planted across said country. This is not an outlier organization. I didn't know whether to weep in sadness or wail in anger.

Brothers, do we realize what's at stake here? Do we realize what we're doing around the world? In diluting the doctrines of conversion and the church, we're not just belittling the bride for whom Christ spilled His blood, we're devaluing His Word in favor of our work. We're defaming His reputation for our renown. Practices like this prostitute the nations for the sake of our numbers and we must repent.

But here's the deal—it's not just overseas. It's here. Missionaries are doing there what they've seen modeled here in the churches that have sent them and the pastors who've trained them. You say, "Well, I'm not training missionaries. The seminary and the missions organizations are doing that." No, you're doing that. The people who will plant churches around the world are learning the church from you, pastor. So train them well. Train them to love God's Word. Train them to love God's gospel. Train them to love, value and esteem the church. Train them to love the Lord's Supper.

Just in case that's not communicating in the positive, let me put it in the negative. Stop sending missionaries who have a low view of God's Word. Stop sending missionaries who have an uncertain, unclear, minimalistic, man-centered understandings of God's gospel. Stop sending missionaries who don't know how to define and direct and defend the church with doctrinal precision. Stop sending missionaries who don't love the Lord's Supper and all that it stands for and all that it means. Nominal Christianity is not what the nations need. Lazy approaches to theology and lethargic attitudes to truth won't cut it across the anti-Christian cultures of the world.

So, brothers, be men—and train and send missionaries—for whom precise attention to the doctrines of Scripture, salvation, the church, even the Lord's Supper, is more precious to you than life itself. Let us prioritize theological precision among God's people.

B. Let us mobilize for sacrificial mission among all peoples.

As we have seen, the need is great for salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to be preached here, in our culture and across all cultures. Most of us live and pastor here in North America. This conference is aimed at equipping us to live and pastor faithfully in North America. But I'm convinced we would be remiss if we didn't intentionally lift our eyes for just a moment to look beyond where most of us live and most of us pastor.

Surely the Reformers beckon us to at least lift our eyes to Europe, to the countries where they died for the sake of the gospel. In the United Kingdom, where Rogers and so many of these martyrs lost their lives, I'm told that if you're in your 20s, not only do you not go to church and not only are you not a follower of Christ, but there's a 97% chance you don't even know a follower of Christ. In Luther's Germany, a mere 2% of the population believes the gospel of God's grace. Germany is practically unreached. There are about twice as many Muslims in Germany as there are Christians.

Keep traveling westward to Europe's intersection with Asia and you come to Turkey's eighty million people. Do you know how many of these Turks are followers of Christ? About 5,000. There are twice as many Christians in this room than there are among 80 million Turks—almost 80 million people who are completely unreached. This doesn't just mean lost. There's a difference between lost and unreached. People are just as lost in Turkey as they are in Tennessee. People who are apart from Christ are lost.

Here's the difference. There are a few churches in Tennessee and there are Christians in Tennessee. There are not a lot of churches in Turkey. There are not a lot of Christians there. They don't have access to the gospel. They don't know a Christian. They don't have a church where they can see the gospel visibly portrayed and hear the gospel verbally proclaimed. They're unreached by the gospel. That's what it means to be unreached—they don't have access to the gospel.

It's why we don't say in our churches, "I don't know why we talk about unreached people all around the world; there are unreached people in my office or neighborhood." Don't say that. Those people aren't unreached. You say, "Well, how do you know?" Because they're in your office. They're in your neighborhood. They have access to the gospel. "How do you know?" You're it.

We're talking about people who don't have access to this good news. They've never heard it. And if something doesn't change, they're going to die without ever even hearing it. Based on Psalm 51 and the testimony of all Scripture, they're going to go to hell without ever hearing about how they could have gone to heaven. It's not right. This cannot be tolerable for us. What will it take for the concept of unreached peoples to become totally intolerable to us in the church?

I sat there last night listening to John Piper's sermon, just overwhelmed by God's grace to me. I was born into a place in the world where I heard the gospel ever since the day I was born. I sat there thinking about the fact that I had nothing to do with where I was born. Why was I born here and not in Turkey, or Saudi Arabia, or Somalia? I don't have an answer to that question, apart from God's sovereign grace.

But here's what I do know. I didn't receive this sovereign grace so that I could sit back and say, "God ordained for me to be reached and God ordained for them to be unreached. That's just the way it is." No. No, God ordained for them to be reached. Revelation 5:9 says Jesus shed His blood to ransom—to purchase—people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. He ransomed them for a reason. Jesus ransomed them so they might be reached by Him. You know what? He's ordained His church to reach them—you and me, sinners saved by this gospel.

Just think about what we heard last night. We know the primary problem for every person in the entire world—they're all in bondage. Everybody. All 7.2 billion people in the world are in bondage. It says in 1 Corinthians 4:4, "*The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.*" So what do they need? We saw last night that they need God "*to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

But here's the question: how is He going to do it? How is that going to happen? How is God going to shine light (2 Corinthians 4:6) into blind minds (2 Corinthians 4:4)? The answer is right in the middle there—2 Corinthians 4:5. We preach Christ. See it. Feel it. Realize it. We know the problem for every person in the world and we have the answer for every person in the world. So preach it. Proclaim it. Brothers, there is an eternal cancer that's killing the nations and we have the cure—the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. They need to hear it.

Keep traveling across Asia to India, where right now a hundred million Hindus are coming together for a Hindu festival called Kumbh Mela. It's the largest religious gathering in the world. We think 10,000 is a lot of people—and it is. But think about a hundred million who have come together, stripped down to nothing, covering themselves with ashes, then bathing in a contaminated river that they believe will cleanse them from all their sins. A hundred million of them. Somebody has got to tell them, "Only Jesus can cleanse you from your sins." Brothers, we've got to tell them, "Only Jesus can cleanse you from your sins."

Or go to Iran with 1.5 million Luri people. There are no churches—zero churches. No Scriptures. They don't have the Bible. The good news of the gospel is not in their language. I've just got to ask at the close of this conference on the Reformation, in light of Reformers like William Tyndale and John Rogers who died so that people could read the Bible, "Who's going to die so that the Northern

Luri can read the Bible? Who's going to die so that Hindus in India can be cleansed and freed from bondage rather than bathing in a contaminated river? Who's going to die so they can live?"

You might think saying "die" sounds dramatic here, but it's the right word, because the Northern Luri people aren't going to read their Bible in their language without someone giving his or her life in order to get it in their language. A hundred million Hindus celebrating Kumbh Mela aren't going to hear the gospel without thousands of Christians leaving behind the pursuits, pleasures, possessions and plaudits of this world to get it to them. So brothers, pastors across this room, let us die to our desire for a nice comfortable Christian spin on the American dream, then let us shepherd the members of our churches to do the same. Let us mobilize for sacrificial mission among all peoples.

C. Let's live, lead and long for the day when reformation will be consummation.

So let's prioritize theological precision among God's people. Let's mobilize for sacrificial mission among all peoples. And third, let's live, lead and long for the day when reformation will be consummation. We heard in the very first message in this conference that the Reformation is not over. Five hundred years ago men and women were proclaiming the gospel of God's grace and they were being burned alive for it. It was not just then—it's happening today. We have brothers and sisters right now who are imprisoned in North Korea. We have brothers and sisters in Pakistan whose church buildings are being charred. We have a few brothers and sisters in Somalia who, if they share the truth of salvation with their family, will have their throats slit. All over the world, people are dying today for the gospel of God's grace. The Reformation is indeed not over.

But don't you long for the day when it will be over? Don't you long for the day when our waiting will conclude, when the days of sanctification will finally give way to the day of glorification? As John MacArthur was preaching from Revelation, I was reminded of what John writes just a few chapters later, in Revelation 6:9-11:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

John realizes the number of martyrs is not complete, so the line of men and women slain for the sovereign Lord lives on in our day. But praise be to God, we have a promise here that one day these figurative "fires of martyrdom" are going to be finished, the Kingdom of God is going to come and the

will of God is going to be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's a day worth living for, leading for, longing for. The Reformers were fixed on that day.

The French ambassador who was there at John Rogers' death wrote home and this is how he described the scene: "It was as if this man was walking to his wedding." Rowland Taylor, whom I mentioned earlier, was about two miles from the place where he would die. The sheriff asked him how he felt. His reply? "God be praised, master sheriff, never better, for now I'm almost at home. I lack but two stiles to go over, then I am t my Father's house." John Bradford, who was burned with the 19-year-old John Leaf that I mentioned earlier, kissed the stake, turned to the 19-year-old, and said, "Be of good comfort, brother, for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night."

Helen Stark, a mom with a newborn child, was sentenced to be put in a sack and drowned. Her husband was also sentenced to die first, but separate from her. So she followed him to his execution, gave him a kiss and said, "Husband, rejoice, for we have lived together many joyful days, but this day in which we must die ought to be most joyful unto us both, because we must have joy forever. Therefore, I will not bid you good night, for we shall suddenly meet with joy in the Kingdom of heaven." After watching her husband die, she was taken to the place where she was to be drowned. She entrusted her newborn child and her other children to the neighbors' care, then was plunged to her death.

All these men and women knew this world was not their home. They were living, leading and longing for another world. They were looking forward to a wedding feast and a marriage supper. Brothers, sisters, one day we're going to join them there. That's the day worth living, leading and longing for. We in this conference deserve damnation, but we have been delivered from never-ending death based on nothing we have done. Not one of us is in this room are redeemed by our own merit. We're only here by His mercy.

God loves us so much and love like this is worth losing our lives to proclaim with theological precision among people, for sacrificial, safety-surrendering, world-forsaking, life-giving, death-defying mission among all peoples, until the day when we gather with every tribe, tongue, people and nation—and we won't be talking about Reformation anymore. Instead, we'll be experiencing the consummation of our King in His Kingdom. May God bless the pastors and churches in this room to hasten the coming of that day!

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