

The Trial of Jesus

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[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! I came into the living room to find my wife, Elizabeth, and my oldest son, Banner, cackling like a bunch of hyenas, looking at something on Elizabeth's phone.

And out of breaking their laughter, they motioned me to come over so I could watch with them. So the three of us watched as this teenage boy briefly explained to the camera the great feat he was about to accomplish.

What was the challenge? To chug a can of sparkling water as fast as he possibly could without burping. Pretty exciting stuff. That in itself was already pretty funny to me.

But what made the video go viral was the crisis moment right after he chugs the sparkling water. With bubbles building up inside of him, the boy panics and he cries out, Oh no, what do I do?

[1 : 13] And he turns and pivots to run spastically and smashes his face into a partially open garage door right behind him. While in mid burp and falls to the ground.

So yeah, this is the kind of cultured media that my house enjoys. So yeah, before you guys judge me too hard, let me just say you have to recognize we're not the only ones weird enough to watch this kind of stuff on repeat.

All right. So in fact, you think about entire industries are built around the premise of fails and bloopers. Growing up, we used to tune in with millions of others to America's funniest home videos. Watch cats fall off of countertops. Overweight dads crash on slip and slides. Kids getting chased by geese. All the greats. What about blooper reels at the end of movies?

You know, so many of us will sit there through the boring credits just to watch those people mess up at the end and laugh. Now, there's YouTube channels featuring endless supplies of fails that you can watch and stream to your heart's content.

[2 : 14] So my question is, why is it that we're so attracted to these types of things? What is it about failure in those pressure moments that grab our attention? Well, based on the popularity of such material, we have to admit that there is something resonant about those things.

And I'd suggest that maybe that even though we all long for triumph, every single one of us can relate to failure. And as you watch others in those kind of high-pressure situations, we can actually kind of see ourselves in those moments.

And we wonder, what would we do or what would we feel in the middle of a similar trial? Well, in a much greater way, our text this morning introduces us to a tale of two trials.

We'll watch as Jesus and Peter are both cornered and questioned. But the pressure in these trials is far more intense than sparkling water drinks. The stakes are as high as they come.

Life and death hang in the balance as the jury weighs what is said. Well, to an onlooking world, it may seem like both of these men are on the losing side. After all, Jesus is heading to the cross to die.

[3 : 25] And Peter is hiding in the shadows. However, Mark wants us to go beyond the externals to see what's going on inside the heart. Though they both look like failures from the world's perspective, Mark invites us to see the remarkable contrast between the two.

We're meant to see divine faithfulness held up against man's faithlessness. So let's read and consider what God has to say for us from this tale of two trials.

This is God's word. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest.

And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death.

But they found none. For many bore false witness against him. But their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands.

[4 : 41] And in three days I will build another not made with hands. Yet even about this, their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, Have you no answer to make?

What is it that these men testify against you? But he remained silent and made no answer. Again, the high priest asked him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

And Jesus said, I am. And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven. And the high priest tore his garments and said, What further witnesses do we need?

You've heard his blasphemy. What is your decision? And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, Prophecy.

And the guards received him with blows. And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, You also were with the Nazarene Jesus.

[5 : 56] But he denied it, saying, I neither know nor understand what you mean. And he went out into the gateway, and the rooster crowed.

And the servant girl saw him and began to say to the bystanders, This man is one of them. But again he denied it. And after a little while, the bystanders again said to Peter, Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.

But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know this man of whom you speak. And immediately the rooster crowed a second time.

And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times. And he broke down and wept.

May God bless the preaching of his word. Well, in this passage, Jesus displays his faithfulness under pressure, while Peter's faith falters.

[7 : 00] The two trials could not be more opposite. However, if you see the significance of what Jesus has said and done, you can have boldness to follow Christ into the heart of adversity, even if it means going to the cross.

And when your faith falters, like Peter, and you fail, you will understand how to move forward into the mercy that Jesus has for his followers.

I believe that the main point of this passage this morning is draw near to Jesus in every trial for boldness and for mercy. And we're going to break this into three points.

The first two follow the narrative. Number one, the confession of Jesus. Number two, the denial of Peter. And then we'll go into some application with the hope for failures.

For the first one, the confession of Jesus. Well, Jesus has already eaten the Last Supper with his disciples. He explained to them the necessity of his impending death.

[8 : 03] And after this meal, they went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. And it was there that Judas followed through with his betrayal of Jesus, turning him over to Jewish authorities. And in a moment of crisis, the disciples disbanded and fled.

Now it's the middle of the night and Jesus has been dragged to the home of the high priest, Caiaphas. And our text simply begins with this in verse 53.

Look on with me. And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. Now Jesus is on trial.

Well, even though it's the middle of the night, the Sanhedrin, these religious leaders, come flocking in from every corner of the city. And though the gathering had the appearance of a legal proceeding, it was really a kangaroo court.

According to their own rules, they were not supposed to be final judgments passed at nighttime, nor were they supposed to facilitate the trial outside the chambers of the temple, nor were they supposed to determine a capital offense during the Passover.

[9 : 14] But true justice was not their priority. Not at all. Verse 55 highlights their number one priority. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death.

So this has been their goal for a long time. If you look at the first two verses of this chapter, if you just look up, it says that they were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him. But they wanted to be strategic because they knew that it could cause an uproar if it was done openly during the Passover. So here in the middle of the night, the religious leaders are gathering in order to push their agenda forward.

They rally witnesses together to lob accusations of Jesus. Well, Jewish law demands at least two corroborating witnesses about a capital offense.

But in this hearing before Caiaphas, even their contrived testimonies do not agree. Why is that? Well, the reason Mark makes it clear is because they were false witnesses.

[10:21] They were bouncing all over the place. They're trying to lodge a coherent accusation that could move their plot forward. So a few of them stand up and in verse 58, it says, we heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands.

And in three days, I will build another not made with hands. Mark is the only gospel that includes this qualification about the temple being made with hands.

Well, this reference would have electrified Mark's original readers because they knew that this accusation actually carried more truth than the false witness could have possibly even imagined.

Though the false witness wanted to frame Jesus for insurrection and ill intentions towards the temple, the reality was that Jesus was on a mission to replace the already corrupted temple.

I think you might remember this. Earlier in chapter 11, Jesus judges the institution of the temple because it has been made a den of robbers. For Mark, Jesus has replaced the temple as the place where God meets his people.

[11:29] In 2 Samuel 7, 12 through 14, it was prophesied that David's son would build a temple to God's name. And this son receives God's promise.

This is what God says to him. I will be his father and he will be my son. So in other words, the builder of God's house will be God's son. So in a way, truer than his accusers could have imagined, Jesus fulfills 2 Samuel 7.

Because in just a few short moments, Jesus will confess himself before the high priest as God's son. Well then in verse 60, the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, have you no answer to make?

What is it that these men testify against you? But he remained silent and made no answer. Let's be clear, Jesus is not scrambling for a defense in this moment.

He's not stunned into silence here. No, the reality is that the conflicting testimony said it all. There was nothing to defend.

[12:39] Jesus was perfectly innocent. But his silence actually says even more than this. Not only was he innocent, he was being wrongly accused like the suffering servant in Isaiah 53.

And it says this, he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

Well the silence is maddening to the high priest. You can imagine the frenzy of emotion as he couldn't get his way with Jesus. So he blurts out this prompt in verse 61, are you the Christ, the son of the blessed?

Well in the original language the wording is put in the form of a statement and the question is just implied. So he was really saying, you are the Christ, the son of the blessed?

Ironically, even in the midst of his fury, the high priest's statement wonderfully captured the true identity of Jesus. God is forwarding his mission undeterred.

[13:51] So Jesus finally opens his mouth in verse 62. I am. And you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.

And the high priest tore his garments and said, what further witnesses do we need? You've heard his blasphemy. What is this all about? The tearing of clothes?

Is this like an incredible Hulk moment? This tearing of clothes was a sign of distressed astonishment. This statement was the straw that broke the camel's back for the high priest.

Blasphemy is a very serious charge. Blasphemy was not breaking a holy commandment or even profaning a holy place, but the audacity to ascribe God's honor to yourself, to equate yourself with God.

And the punishment for blasphemy? Death. So what was it in Jesus' answer that provoked such a shocking response? Well, when Jesus says that he is the son of man being seated at the right hand

of power and coming with the clouds of heaven, he's actually combining titles from Psalm 110 and Daniel 7 and the result is radical.

[15:11] So traditionally, the reference from Psalm 110 was understood to be the Messiah or sometimes he'd say Christ in Greek. It's the same concept, the Christ. And this one, this Christ, would rule with God's power.

So this kingship was not usually thought of as being on the same plane of power as God himself. However, Jesus has already been pushing the people beyond their traditions to consider the true nature of this Christ.

So in chapter 12, while in the temple confrontations, he actually already quoted Psalm 110 to pose this question. How could the Christ be David's son if David called him my Lord?

Well, his point here was that the Christ could not simply be an earthly great, great, great, great grandson of David if David was referring to Christ as his superior during his lifetime.

The implication was that the Christ is more than a man with borrowed authority. The Christ is something more than an earthly ruler. And now Jesus pushes that idea even more to the forefront when he combines that title from Psalm 110 with a reference to Daniel 7, 13, coming on the clouds of heaven.

[16:32] So in the vision of Daniel 7, it takes place in the clouds of heaven on God's level saying, verse 13 and 14, I saw in the night visions and behold with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. So in this context, the son of man and Daniel is coming on the clouds.

He's not just coming as a political liberator for Israel as many people thought the Christ was supposed to do. This individual in Daniel was coming to exercise the power and authority of God himself over all of God's creation.

All peoples, all nations, languages would be subjected to him forever. So in other words, Jesus combines the son of David title from Psalm 110 to show that he is the Christ and the son of man title from Daniel 7 to show that he is much more.

He is divine. So Jesus is saying that not only is he the Christ but he is also claiming the divine right of judgment at the end time and those who have him on trial right now will one day see it.

[18:06] Jesus was standing there, bound and seemingly under the complete control of his accusers. Can you imagine the audacity of this kind of a claim?

Jesus is saying to those who clearly have every earthly advantage at their disposal to destroy him. This is what Jesus is saying to these people, you're judging me but I will judge you with the power of God.

These were his only words to the leadership of Israel and they were terrified. This is why Caiaphas tears his clothes and shouts out, blasphemy! Because in their estimation, Jesus could not be so weak and insignificant to hold the title of Christ.

but it is even more unthinkable that he would claim divinity. This was blasphemy! Unless, of course, it's true.

Well, perhaps you're not a Christian and you're trying to figure out what you think about all this.

Well, let me just say that we are glad that you are here. There were a million other places that you could be and for some reason you made it into the YMCA this morning.

[19:21] And I believe it's not by accident. It's because God brought you here to hear this. The people sitting around you are not better than you. I am not better than you.

The reason that we're all here is because our sins separated us from God. He is the creator and he has a right over his creation.

But all of our lives were lived in rebellion. the one against him. We insisted that we could do a better job than he could at running our lives. But running our lives only ran us into the ground.

You'd be welcome to talk to any Christian sitting around you about what their life was like before. You'll hear things about being empty, being broken, being ashamed, afraid, and you better believe it, self-righteous too.

But because God is perfect, he can't let rebels back into fellowship with him as if it's all good. He can't just sweep it under the rug. No, he's righteous and he's just.

[20 : 34] If he swept sin under the rug, he would not be good and he would not be God. He would be crooked and a corrupt judge. That's what he'd be. God's wrath against all rebellion is coming.

That's why Jesus says he's coming back in judgment. All those who are unrighteous, who have rebelled against God cannot enter into his presence and will spend eternity separated from him forever in hell.

And this includes every person. Romans 3 makes it very clear that all have sinned and fall short, not of the standard of one another, but of the glory of God himself. This is a great dilemma. I mean, how can God be just without destroying sinners? Well, God is not only just, he is also gracious.

He sent his perfect son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for our sin and to give us all of his righteousness. Only those who trust in him rather than themselves can be forgiven by God.

[21 : 40] Well, this is the claim that Jesus is making. Judgment is coming, but there's a way of escape. Jesus has his eyes set on the cross.

He's not under the thumb of the religious rulers. Jesus predicted this again and again. Mark 8, 31 says, and he began to teach them that the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.

So don't be deceived by outward appearances here, friends. Jesus is not failing. Jesus is not ultimately the one that's even on trial. It's the world that stands condemned before God.

It's his divine court. While Jesus, he himself is moving mercifully towards the cross for our sin. So all who place their hope and trust in him might have their sins forgiven and receive Christ's righteousness.

It's all going according to plan. So even in the midst of persecution, Jesus' faithfulness is on full display here. He is walking in perfect dependence and perfect obedience to his father, even while he's walking alone.

[22 : 59] Where are his followers? Where are those who said emphatically, back in verse 31, even if we must die with you, we will not deny you. Where are they?

Point to the denial of Peter. The trial scene opens with Peter in verse 54. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest, and he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire.

Well, the description is telling because Peter has managed to do just enough to follow Jesus without giving himself away. Well, the usually bold Peter is quietly slinking in the background right now.

Maybe he wanted to maintain just enough proximity to Jesus so that he could technically say that he's still following him. However, he followed Jesus at a distance.

What's more, he attempted to blend in and enjoy the comforts of the fire with the very ones carrying out the plot against his master. Peter had forsaken a discipleship of costly following for one of safe observation.

[24 : 16] Though the story is about Peter's failure, we're meant to ask ourselves what will we do in his shoes? Are you following Jesus at a safe distance?

do the people you interact with each day know that you're a Christian? I don't mean that you're always flaunting Christian t-shirts and blasting J103 from your desk.

I'm not talking like that. I simply mean, do they know where your allegiances lie? If they don't, could you be keeping a safe distance from your Savior?

Do you find yourself getting comfortable next to the fires of this world? What I mean is do the people you are most eager to be with and to be like, do those people reflect your Savior?

What are you most excited to do? What are you most eager to buy? Does following Jesus even factor into any of these decisions?

[25 : 18] If not, you may be getting comfortable next to the fires of this world. See, Peter did not begin with denial. He began with a comfortable distance from Jesus.

As you fast forward to verse 66, the story reengages Peter. It says, and as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, you also were with the Nazarene Jesus.

Well, as Jesus' trial was occurring upstairs, Peter's trial was just getting started downstairs. Rather than official rulers of the religious elite, the main officer in his trial was a servant girl who had no status, no power, and no authority.

Peter's plan to enjoy the comforts of the fire were now causing a backfire, because the glow of the flame was giving away his identity. So in a moment of panic, Peter denies the accusation saying, I neither know nor understand what you mean.

Well, then tragically, Peter's impulse is to move out into the gateway, distance himself even further, even more from Jesus, and then the first rooster crows.

[26 : 43] It's a picture of a compromised heart. He's gripped by fear, and he's moving further and further away. As one commentator said, a change of place is no substitute for a change of heart.

Well, Peter's prosecutor, the lowly servant girl, she continues to push the trial onward, and this time she brings in a jury of bystanders saying to them, this man is one of them. Well, now there's mounting pressure.

More witnesses! have been brought in to lay their eyes on Peter here, and what would they think? What would they do if they knew he was associated with Jesus? And again, Peter denies it.

Well, then in a final moment, the suspicion about Peter has spread throughout the group of bystanders, and they call him out in verse 70. Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean. Supposedly, it was his Galilean twang that gave him away.

The bystanders are trying to figure out, why is this country boy from Galilee in the courtyard, of the high priest in Jerusalem? What's going on here? There can only be one reason that he's a follower of Jesus.

[27 : 55] So with all eyes watching, and all ears listening, Peter explodes into verbal tragedy. The verse says, he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know this man of whom you speak.

To invoke a curse carried this weight of denying Jesus under oath and begging to be damned if it was otherwise.

So Peter pushes the claim even further by denying that he even knows Jesus' name. Notice he opts instead to pretend he does not know this man. So not only has Peter distanced himself from Jesus by where he stands, he has distanced himself by his words.

this is the same Peter who replied to Jesus' question in Mark 8 29, who do you say that I am? And Peter answered him, you are the Christ.

This is the same Peter who saw, witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus, saw his glory. This is the same Peter who said, I will never deny you even if I have to die. And now he stands in the shadows of denial, attempting to appease a small group of really unimpressed bystanders.

[29 : 17] So now he's burned the bridge with Jesus and he's distant, he's isolated, he's hopeless. Then the rooster crows a second time and he remembers Jesus' words.

You will deny me three times before the rooster crows twice. Well, overcome by the reality of his failure, Peter breaks down and begins to weep. So what are we to make of this passage that seems to end with such a miserable failure?

Earlier we talked about the humor of failure, but this failure is no laughing matter. But the reason this story can be so painful is because we can see ourselves in Peter.

We all have and will have failure in the Christian life. How should we guard against it? And what should we do when we fail?

Point number three, the hope for failures. what we! What we've just seen is a tale of two trials. And as I said at the start, they could not be more opposite.

[30 : 39] Kevin DeYoung helpfully contrasted these two trials saying, Jesus is confronted by false witnesses and gives a true confession. Peter is approached by true witnesses and makes a false confession.

Peter is confronted, Jesus is confronted by some of the most powerful people in Jerusalem and stands his ground, while Peter is confronted by some of the least powerful people in Jerusalem and he is a coward.

For Jesus everything happens just as he predicted. For Peter everything happens contrary to his prediction. Jesus ends up looking like a defeated Messiah through no fault of his own, while Peter ends up looking like a defeated disciple through nobody's fault but his own.

Well, we can certainly learn from both example and non-example here. For a moment, let's just think in terms of Jesus versus Peter. Peter was the kind of guy who always did his own thing.

When he became a follower of Christ he carried that self-confident style right in with him. He had the strength and the willpower to just push through. At the root of his failure here was a

self-confident pride.

[31 : 49] His denial began with distance and independence from Jesus. The further away he pushed the more devastatingly self-reliant he became.

See pride is really an insistence to act apart from God. That's what it boils down to. It's a return to that thought that I mentioned earlier. I think I can do a better job alone.

You contrast that posture with Jesus. How did Jesus remain unmoved? Kent Hughes helpfully suggest the answer is Jesus stood rock like before the Sanhedrin then Pilate and then the cross because he did not rely on his flesh but on God the Father.

You see Jesus lives in complete dependence upon the Father and remains steadfast under the trial. At the root of his faithfulness was a humble reliance on God.

It's very provoking to think that Jesus a perfect human without any flaw demonstrated! upon the Father. This means that dependence depending on God for strength wisdom boldness that's not a sign of weakness.

[33 : 06] Rather we can see that we are designed to be dependent on the God who made us in every circumstance. So if you want to live out your life in a hostile culture then you must follow the example of Jesus depend on the Lord cry out to him but another point of contrast between Jesus and Peter the Jesus versus Peter is this clarity of their allegiance.

So in this account Peter feared man more than he feared God because he lacked clarity on how far he'd be willing to follow Jesus. He became consumed with the fear of what people might think of him or do to him.

Pastor J.C. Ryle once wisely said let it never surprise true Christians if they are slandered and misrepresented in this world. They must not expect to fare better than their Lord.

Lies and false reports are among Satan's choicest weapons. Let us bear it patiently and not count it a strange thing. The words of the Lord Jesus should often come to our minds.

Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you. Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.

[34 : 33] So in contrast to Peter Jesus remained resolutely committed to carrying out God's mission for his life even though it meant an unjust trial mockery beatings and ultimately the cross.

even though our passage concludes with Peter weeping it was only the beginning of his repentance. Ultimately Peter received mercy and was restored and amazingly Peter later demonstrated great boldness in the midst of another trial in which he was threatened by these same religious leaders.

His resolve to follow the Lord here diminished his fear of man and he said this whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God you must judge for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

There's clarity on his allegiances. So we must choose if we will be self-reliant or God dependent. We must choose if we will be captive to the will of man or to the will of God. You need to decide now what kind of witness you'll be. Don't wait until you're in the moment.

[35 : 52] How will you live when you go to school this week or the family gathering? What kind of witness do you want to be in the workplace? Who will you be when you're around your non-Christian friends?

Have you ever seen those rooster weather vanes that kind of pivot in the wind? A lot of times they're on barns. Well originally that rooster symbol was placed on top of churches.

Eventually because it was in a high place it was kind of adapted for weather and it started to be used more broadly but it was originally used as a symbol to remind Christians of this story.

It was meant to stir them as they walked into the church and out of the church to be true to their Lord. And as they left to be a reminder to live it out in their community to always confess Christ to never deny Christ.

May we be a people that confesses Christ when we leave this place. So this whole thought of Jesus versus Peter this may be helpful to guard against failure but what should we do when the inevitable happens?

[37 : 08] What should we do when we fail? When we looked at the contrast between the two trials we saw Jesus versus Peter but we also need to see that Jesus is for Peter.

Jesus is not only an example but he is also the hope for the non-example. You see while Peter was below denying Jesus Jesus was above working all things together for the good of Peter.

In the story Jesus is not just doing the right things while Peter is doing the wrong things no Jesus is making his true confession for the sake of Peter's denial. Peter thought that he would die for Jesus but what he really needed was for Jesus to die for him.

Peter invoked a curse on himself in order to distance himself from Jesus but Jesus invoked a curse upon himself in order to bring sinners like Peter near.

In the midst of Peter's sin Jesus was lovingly walking to the cross to take on the isolation the guilt the brokenness the shame from that sin and every other sin in the whole world that would threaten to distance his followers from God.

[38 : 21] God he went to the cross saying that denier I do know this man he's mine bring him near see the great love of God for you while we were still deniers Christ died for us while we were still cowards Christ died for us while we were still full of fear Christ died for us while we were still sinners Christ died for us he came to give his life as a ransom for us so that we can draw near we no longer have to carry the weight of our failure we no longer have to pay for our sin and remain distant Jesus invites us in we can confess it and cling to Christ we can draw near to Jesus in every trial for boldness and for mercy the rooster reminds us of our need to be faithful witnesses but there's another symbol that typically sits on top of churches we must also remember that there is a cross for every time the rooster crows in our lives every time you fail and the enemy accuses you don't move farther away run to him draw near every time the rooster crows there is a cross so draw near tomorrow marks 466 years since the archbishop of canterbury thomas cranmer was burned as a heretic to roman catholics and as a martyr to protestants i want to conclude briefly with this article thomas cranmer was a pastor who slowly and patiently brought reform to the church of england through sermons and letters cranmer the most important figure for the english reformation of the 16th century paved the way for the puritan movement of the 17th century but when mary the first also known by her name bloody mary took the throne cranmer's influence and reforms were immediately halted cranmer was soon arrested by the roman catholic authorities at first his resolve was strong but after many months in prison under daily pressure from his captors and the imminent threat of being burned at the stake the reformers faith faltered his enemies eventually coerced him to sign several documents renouncing his protestant faith in a moment of weakness in order to prolong his life cranmer denied the truths he had defended throughout his ministry the very principles upon which the reformation itself was based bloody mary viewed cranmer's retractions as a mighty trophy in her violent campaign against the protestant cause but cranmer's enemies wanted more than just a written recantation they wanted him to declare it publicly and so on march 21st 1556 thomas cranmer was taken from prison and brought to university church dressed in tattered clothing the weary broken and degraded reformer took his place at the pulpit a script of his public recantation had already been approved!

and his enemies sat expectantly in the audience eager to hear his clear denunciation of the evangelical faith but then the unexpected happened in the middle of his speech thomas cranmer deviated from his script to the shock and dismay of his enemies he refused to recant the true gospel and instead he bravely recanted his recantations finding the courage he had lacked over those previous months the emboldened reformer announced to the crowd of shocked onlookers I come to the great thing that troubles my conscience more than any other thing I have ever said or did in my life and that is the setting abroad of writings contrary to the truth which here I now renounce and refuse as things written by my hand which were contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart being written for fear of death and to save my life

Cranmer went on to say that if he should be burned at the stake his right hand would be the first to be destroyed since it had signed those recantations and moments later Cranmer was seized marched outside and burned at the stake and true to his word he thrust his right hand into the flame with the words of Stephen on his lips Lord Jesus receive my spirit I see the heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God he died for sinners so they can draw near Trinity Grace Church let's live in the good of this gospel let's draw near to Christ in every trial for boldness and for mercy Lord Jesus thank you for your kindness to us and though we are weak and we are frail you didn't make a loan to us so you could demand for us to pay it back you extended a gift of grace of mercy not just to save us once but to save us for a lifetime so that we can come with our sin we can come with our failure and cast them to and who gave himself for us so Lord now we praise you with all of our hearts not because we need to earn something but because you have earned everything for us we pray this in Jesus name amen!

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