

# Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)

## Part II

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For the next three years, Thomas Cranmer was treated most harshly by his Roman Catholic enemies. The more his enemies tortured and mistreated him, the more determined Cranmer was to hold fast to God's truths.

Seeing that Cranmer was not unduly affected by cruel treatment, his enemies cunningly devised a different way to deal

with him. They removed him from prison and put him in the house of a high-ranking priest, where he was free to enjoy every kind of pleasure

he desired. What a complete change of environment from his previous harsh imprisonment! Alas, he was thrown off his guard. Chains and threats could not bring Cranmer to bow to his enemies but this seemingly kind treatment made it so easy for him to forget himself and give in to temptations.





Certainly, Satan had a tight grip on Thomas Cranmer at such a time. Cranmer began to dream of being reinstated in his office as archbishop and enjoying once again his former grandeur. Needless to say, he was hoping that he could save his own life. All these would not be possible unless he recant, that is, to tell his enemies that he no longer believe in God's truths which he had held so dear. Slowly but surely, his enemies deceived him into signing a total of 6 documents, starting with a general one and progressively leading him on to deny God and the Bible truths. The moment Cranmer signed the last document, the Roman Catholics were jubilant but the Protestants wept in sorrow. Who could be happier than Queen Mary herself? It was said that "she would have Cranmer a Catholic or no Cranmer at all". Indeed, how bent on revenge she was!

As the days went by, Cranmer was seized with an increasingly guilty conscience. His guilt weighed upon him to the point that he could no longer bear it. Deep down, he knew his end was near.

As Cranmer had expected, the day of his burning came. In the early morning of 21 March, 1556, Cranmer was brought to St Mary's Church. The sight of him in torn and dirty clothes made many onlookers sorrowful indeed. Everyone present was waiting eagerly to hear Cranmer's reasons for leaving his Protestant faith. Amidst the jeering of the Roman Catholics and the loud sobs of the Protestants, Cranmer was led to a low, shabby stage placed opposite the pulpit. Thomas Cranmer knelt down, turned his face towards heaven and silently prayed in earnest to God. A sermon was preached by a certain Dr Pole. Then Cranmer was ordered to profess his Catholic faith to all who were present.

Before Cranmer spoke, he prayed with much anguish in his heart and pleaded for God's mercy. Memories of his awful sins – his love for glamour and power, and his subsequent denial of God's truths – pained him so terribly that Cranmer broke down and wept bitterly. With a heart full of repentance, he would repeatedly look upward

towards heaven, raising his hands and letting them fall heavily to his sides. A great sense of unworthiness filled his entire being. It was in this state of sorrow and shame that Cranmer spoke to the waiting crowd.

Contrary to what his enemies had expected, Cranmer delivered a most moving speech, affirming his faith in God and His Son Jesus Christ. Imagine his enemies' anger and disbelief! With this public confession of his faith in God and His Holy Word, Cranmer dealt a final blow to his enemies' deception. At the end, among other things, he had this to say:



"And inasmuch 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."

True to his words, when he was brought to the fire, Cranmer unflinchingly held out his right arm and let it burn until it became as black as coal. While his hand was burning, often he would exclaim, "This unworthy right hand!" This he repeated till the flames engulfed him, and he was gloriously received unto his eternal home in heaven.

Certainly, Thomas Cranmer had not died in vain, for in losing his life, he had gained everlasting joy in the wonderful presence of our loving Saviour Jesus Christ. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:25). Above all, God's Word was held high on that very day!

Like Thomas Cranmer, a great reformer, would you also love the Lord and His Word more than anything else in this world- even your very life? Remember, dear children, in obeying God, you will one day receive your glorious eternal reward in heaven.