

John Knox

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[0 : 0 0] well this evening we're looking at our fourth and final reformer in our historical study of the reformation and as you know we've been doing this study over the past few weeks in order to mark the 500th anniversary of the reformation and because of this great milestone we've been tracing the storyline of what happened during the reformation and as i've said before to trace the storyline of the reformation is to trace the lives of four particular men because i believe that if we know the story of these four men we will know for the most part the story of the reformation and we'll be able to see how god and his perfect providence how he used these men to reform the church of jesus christ and as you know the story of the reformation that goes from william tindale from martin luther to william tyndale to john calvin to john knox and as we've traced the steps of these men we're following the flow of the reformation as it went from the german reformation to the english reformation to the swiss reformation and then round to the scottish reformation and this movement as we've said before it took about 55 years it didn't happen overnight and it wasn't the result of one man but a lot of men a lot of men were involved in the reformation and already in our study of the reformation we've seen the story of the reformation begin in germany with martin luther then going to england with william tyndale and last week we were in geneva with john calvin but this evening we're coming home and we're coming home to scotland to consider how the reformation arrived under the influence of john knox and as you know by now the way in which i'd like us to meet the reformers is under five headings childhood conversion call congregation and contribution childhood conversion call congregation and contribution so first of all childhood john knox was born in 1514 in the beautiful little country town of haddington which is on the east side of edinburgh and knox he was born well 1514 just on the eve of the european reformation it was to begin in 1517 with luther's 95 theses but you know it wasn't until knox was about 10 that protestantism at first came to scotland and you know this is important because we need to understand what kind of nation john knox was growing up in because in the 1520s so knox was well eight nine ten in the 1520s so merchants began to bring into scotland luther's books and william tyndale's english new testament but the scottish government they soon got wind of all that was going on in the seaports and they passed this act prohibiting the import of lutheran books but of course this was going to cause division among the people as these things do and so the first protestant martyr that took well first protestant martyred in scotland was a man of the name patrick hamilton and on the 29th of february 1528 patrick hamilton he was arrested he was condemned he was tried and condemned for preaching preaching as they said heresy and he was burned at the stake at the age of only 24 years old and john knox he was 14 at the time but he comments that hamilton's patrick hamilton's execution it had this huge impact upon the nation he says almost within the whole realm there was none found who began not to inquire

why was master patrick hamilton burned now the death of this protestant martyr patrick hamilton it raised the profile of the scottish reformation and it made many people wonder what this new teaching really was and they all wondered why is it so dangerous and why is it that a man would die for it but all these inquiries that people made it was very very quickly quashed and it was all covered up because under the rule of king james v scotland was a blatantly roman catholic nation and there was no desire for james v for scotland to follow in the footsteps of their english neighbor and break ties with rome now you'll remember that england they they severed their ties with rome because henry v eighth his divorce it was refused by the roman catholic church but for james v scotland was not going to separate with rome in fact it said that scotland was so roman catholic that the roman catholic church had 18 times the wealth of the scottish government and so to be a protestant in scotland during the early 16th century it was to make yourself an enemy of the nation but at that point in his life john knox had no desire to be an enemy of the nation he went to saint andrews

university to be educated in the roman catholic priesthood and knox went to saint andrews not only because of well the university and it's well known but also because saint andrews was this epicenter of roman catholicism in scotland but when knox graduated and when he was ordained to the priesthood in 1536 1536 was the same year william tyndale was burned at the stake for translating the bible into english but when knox graduated he ended up serving as a lawyer and he served as a lawyer in the hometown his hometown of haddington because there were no posts available for him there were so many priests in scotland there was no posts left for him but the roman catholic church it had so much so much money and it owned so much land that it needed an army of lawyers to see over all their financial transactions and so this brings us to john knox's conversion childhood to conversion now from 1536 to 1543 john knox continued to serve as a lawyer to the roman catholic church and he served in his hometown of haddington and during that time the reformation started picking up speed over the border so we've always got to look at it in two ways because in 1538 the king of england henry the eighth he had completely severed his ties with the pope of rome and the church of england under the authority of henry the eighth they he sanctioned the publishing of the english bible and that every parish church in england would have an english bible and i mentioned what was going on in england at the time because within 70 years of this point england and scotland are going to be married together they're going to be united as great britain and that union would take place all because there would be a protestant king ruling over both nations but of course to get to that climactic point a lot of water had to go under the bridge first and john knox was going to be part of that great stream because in 1543 although he was an ordained catholic priest john knox was converted and he was converted through the preaching of this man called thomas gian and he was a chaplain to james hamilton the earl of aram and now all this is significant because the previous year 1542 james v died and when james v died he left the throne to an infant

mary queen of scotland mary queen of scotland mary queen of scotland mary queen of scotland but unlike the infant woman catholic queen hamilton was devoutly protestant and in that same year 1542 hamilton he followed in the footsteps of henry the eighth he did what they were doing down in england and he sanctioned that the english bible be read in every single parish throughout scotland but in order for that reform to pick up speed hamilton also commissioned evangelists to travel the length and breadth of the country preaching the gospel and there was such a movement that the roman catholic cardinal of scotland he was a man called david beaton he was arrested in saint and during all this time this preaching that was going on knox was then converted under the preaching of this man called thomas gian but it was not only the man thomas gian's preaching that knox was drawn to he was also drawn to the preaching of one of these other evangelists by a man a man called george wishart now george wishart was given the remit of touring around the lothian areas and through fife he was fife he was going through all these different towns preaching the gospel and well one area included haddington knox's hometown and when knox heard wishart preach he was drawn to his preaching and he sought to accompany wishart everywhere he went just to hear him preach but as these evangelists moved throughout the nation as they moved and preached the gospel it was inevitable that they were going to come across opposition and it seemed that as time went by george wishart's preaching was becoming more and more dangerous it was so dangerous that knox took it upon himself to become wishart's bodyguard but as the revolt against protestantism continued the catholics finally caught up with george wishart and they had wishart surrounded and even when knox the bodyguard of george wishart knox is standing in front of him pulls out his broadsword about to swing it and chop off some heads wishart and chop off some heads wishart says to knox one sacrifice is enough meaning let them take my life you flee and so reluctantly john knox fled and in 1546 george wishart he was taken to saint andrews and the cardinal david beaton who by this time he had been released from prison but cardinal beaton he had george wishart taken in front of saint andrews castle he had him tied to the stake and burned to death and it said that just before wishart was hanged and then burned he said to the crowd that was looking on he said to them do not fear those who slay the body and afterwards have no power to slay the soul then he says i know surely that this night before six o'clock my soul shall sup with my savior for whom i suffer this and you know if you go on holiday to saint andrews and if you stand in front of the castle of saint andrews there's a gw inscribed on the pavement and it marks the spot where george wishart was burned to death but you know when the people who witnessed the death of george wishart when they witnessed this innocent man being put to death there was backlash as there always was because once the backlash came there was this small group of protestants and

they disguised themselves and they broke into saint andrews castle and they murdered cardinal beaton it's a brutal brutal things were going on and by murdering cardinal beaton they actually hanged him outside the window tied a rope around his neck and threw him out the window and then they proceeded to take the castle over and for the next year saint andrews castle it became this retreat for scottish protestants including john knox and so this brings us to john knox's childhood conversion call in 1547 which was the following year after the martyrdom of george wishart that was the year when john knox was divinely called into the ministry now to put the context of what was going on in england the same year 1547 henry the eighth died and he left his throne to his nine-year-old son edward the sixth and like mary queen of scots she was young like her edward the sixth had his uncle edward seymour he had to rule in his name and he along with the english reformer thomas crammer they sent about to bring about the work of protestant reform in england and in the name of edward the sixth many of the laws of henry the eighth they were all overturned the clergy were now allowed to get married communion was no longer it no longer consisted of the mass with the wafer but both the bread and the wine were used in the communion purgatory was denied images of the saints were destroyed and the book of common prayer was produced in order to ensure that all the services were in english and that they were all evangelical and the changes in england they were so vast that entering the holy ministry it was no longer about performing the mass it was all about preaching the gospel but back in scotland in saint andrews castle john knox was about to enter that holy ministry and like most men of his generation knox didn't take the call to the ministry as something trivial in contrast to maybe today there are many people who are in the ministry who have never been called into the ministry they don't have this divine call from the lord to be a minister but they enter the ministry because they think that it's a good career choice with great perks but like knox and many others a minister has to know that he is sovereignly called by the lord because you know when difficulties come in the ministry sometimes it's your call it's only your call that prevents you from giving up and walking away and john knox he was first called into the ministry when he was in saint andrews castle with many other protestants because at the castle in saint andrews nox began to teach the word of god and he taught to young men they were only teenagers and he went through the gospel of john he just sat with them and and preached through john's gospel and these young men who were sitting there listening to him they recognized the giftedness of of nox and they said to him you're called to minister but nox ignores their statements and he just continued to teach them but you know the story is told that on one particular occasion they were holding a service in the castle in saint andrews and during the service a man called john rowe he was one of the earl of aaron's evangelists john rowe was preaching and in the middle of his sermon in front of the entire church that was gathered there he stops and he points to john knox and he says to him john knox you are called to preach and then he carried on and in that moment john knox he was this strong man fiery man guy who had this great persona he melts and he bursts into tears and he runs out of the service weeping john knox wept because he understood the weightiness of what a divine call upon his life meant and knox he goes to his room and he locks the door and he goes into this deep soul searching until he's convinced that the lord is directing him into the ministry and you know can you imagine that can you imagine sitting in church and me just pointing at you saying you are called to preach that would terrify me but you know that's how john knox was called into the ministry and about this divine call upon his life knox said i consider myself called of my god to instruct the ignorant comfort the sorrowful confirm the weak and rebuke the proud and i will do it by tongue and lively voice in these corrupt days rather than to compose books now knox mentioned the rather than to compose books because he knew that his calling was not to sit and write books his calling was to stand before an open bible and preach the word of god but you know it wasn't into it wasn't long until knox's call into the ministry was going to be tested to its limit the following year in 1548 the castle at saint andrews it was overthrown by french turks they were probably sent by mary queen of scots but many of these protestant clergymen who had gathered in the castle they including knox they were condemned to be galley slaves aboard french ships and they were chained to benches upon these ships and they were commanded to just row the boat throughout the day and they were they were to keep rowing under the threat of the whip and the roman catholic captors they often tried to force these protestant slaves to worship in the roman way they threatened them with torture if they didn't show reverence to the mass or to an image of the virgin mary and it's said that when knox refused they put the virgin mary the the well they put the image of the virgin mary right in his face and told him to kiss it and he grabs it throws it overboard

and after that the captors well they just gave up they gave up with him and after 19 months as a galley slave knox is finally released and when knox is released in 1549 he goes to england and he's appointed as a preacher to king enward the sick he becomes a royal chaplain and as a royal chaplain he's appointed by the king to just tour england tour england like an itinerant evangelist and knox was to preach the message of salvation and spread the gospel as far and as wide as he possibly could knox viewed himself as a trumpet he viewed himself as the lord's trumpet and that his calling was to blast the good news of jesus christ towards the spiritually deaf and the spiritually blind and you know knox enjoyed his time in england because reformation was taking the country by storm and he even assisted thomas cranmer in 1552 in revising the book of common prayer everything was going so well in england but then as one historian put it the runaway train of evangelical reform came to a bone crunching halt with the death of edward the sixth in 1553 aged 15 it was the reformers worst nightmare because the death of the protestant king edward meant that the throne of england was now left to edward's half-sister and she was one of the staunchest and strictest of roman catholic queens mary the first known to most of us as bloody mary [20:30] and queen mary she didn't waste any time and because well she sought to overturn everything that her father had done and you know she was called bloody mary not because the amount of battles that she won she was called bloody mary because of the number of protestants she'd burned and her desire was to undo everything that had been done over the past 20 years she literally wanted to turn the clock back to before the time when henry the eighth was on the throne because as soon as she took the throne bibles were removed from the churches clergy were commanded to separate from their wives and all the protestant ministers were removed from their holy office but even though it may have seemed like one step back under mary's rule the reformation had already taken two steps forward and you know it was going to be impossible to wipe out 20 years of reform and it was simply too late to act as if no one had ever read the bible or ever heard a sermon preached in english but as bloody mary tried desperately to reform the reformation many of the protestants they fled they fled the country many sought refuge in geneva with john calvin but those who remained remained they met in underground churches and as many as 300 protestants were caught and burned for their faith in jesus christ but john knox he was one who chose to flee and he fled to geneva seeking the counsel and wisdom of john calvin and you know when you look at knox's life it's fascinating to think that the history of john knox it's similar to the history of joseph we see in the bible because even though bloody mary meant evil against the church the lord meant it for good and we'll see that as we keep going that brings us because it brings us fourthly to knox's congregation childhood conversion call congregation in 1554 john knox came to geneva and for a few years she pastored this english speaking church in geneva but it was in geneva that knox was taught and trained under the wisdom of john calvin and it got knox dreaming about what scotland could look like if reformation could come there in power because for knox geneva was paradise he said that calvin's college in geneva was the best school of christ that ever was on earth since the apostles and it was in geneva that knox increased in his biblical knowledge he adopted all the theology of john calvin he trained men to be missionaries and he developed his preaching skill by preaching sequentially through books of the bible knox also had a part in the geneva bible that was a project that was going at the time they were translating the bible into english and along with it they were producing food notes to the geneva bible but during his time in geneva knox managed to slip back to scotland very very briefly where he was warm warmly received by a number of protestants there and for the most part knox he just well he waited waited patiently in geneva watching with mounting fury as he saw events unfolding in britain but in 1558 knox's anger had finally boiled over he was a fiery character and his anger boiled over and he wrote this treatise called the first blast of the trumpet against the monstrous regiment of women and by the regiment of women knox was referring to the the reigns of the two roman

catholic queens mary queen of scots and bloody mary in england and the treatise it was chiefly aimed at bloody mary whom knox referred to he called her the horrible monster jezebel of england it wasn't the nicest man because well to knox's mind he said that the root of all the monstrous horrors of catholicism that was been unleashed upon the nations was because women were ruling but the writing of knox's treatise was badly timed because by the time the first blast of the trumpet against the monstrous regiment of women by the time it reached the shores of britain in 1558 bloody mary had died and she had been replaced by the protestant queen elizabeth the first and as you'd expect well when the new queen receives such a letter she didn't like knox and she took a dislike to him

straight away and although it was never written that treatise was never written with her in mind elizabeth she never forgave knox for such an insult but when the news of bloody mary's death when it reached elizabeth in november 1558 you know she responded with the words of psalm 118 this is the doing of the lord and wonderful in our eyes elizabeth of course she was a christian she was a convinced protestant at the opening of our first parliament elizabeth ordered a protestant to preach and she also provided for protestants who were living abroad in europe and with the news of bloody mary's death rippling out into europe many of those who were abroad seeking refuge they finally returned to england with more passion than ever to try and purify the roman catholic church but knox had scotland in his sights and in may 1559 he came home he returned home to scotland knox arrived in leith then he went north to perth and there he preached with such power and such force that a riot broke out with the people smashing all the structures of the virgin mary and then from there knox went further north to saint andrews and there was this army positioned outside saint andrews trying to stop him but knox said as long as i am in the will of god i will be preserved by god and knox he kept going on towards saint andrews and he preaches the word of god there powerfully and he preached on the passage of jesus cleansing the temple and in a similar way that's what knox did he cleaned house because even the priests there they were converted under his preaching and in the space of only a few weeks of arriving in scotland knox was hitting scotland like a hurricane and the tide of roman catholicism was finally turning of course knox he was straight away he was declared as an outlaw by the state but he was he had this band that gathered together this band of protestant nobles and they were prepared to defend knox and fight for their protestantism and you know although she wasn't a personal fan of knox this move of reform in scotland it was music to the ears of queen elizabeth she wanted her next door neighbor to be a protestant nation and so elizabeth she sends troops north to help out and to help the protestants win the day and you know just the very presence of the english army crossing the border it was enough to swing it all for the protestants because in august 1560 the scottish parliament they decreed that no pope had any authority in scotland anymore and said all the doctrine and all the practice of the church it had

to conform to a new confession of faith the scots confession and you know mary queen of scot she might not have liked it but she had to accept it because scotland was now a calvinist country and you know it was it was a remarkable turnaround because at the beginning of 1558 scotland and england were catholic nations by the end of 1560 both nations were protestant and that turnaround especially in scotland it came because of the contribution of john knox and that's what i want us to consider lastly childhood conversion call congregation and contribution knox's contribution to the scottish reformation was incredible not only through his preaching as the minister of saint giles cathedral on the royal mile in edinburgh but his influence also came through his writing now he was a man who said that he didn't want to write but he did write in december 1560 knox helped to write the first book of discipline now the first book of discipline it was basically knox's program for reform the program of reform through a presbyterian church government two years later in 1562 he wrote a book called the book of common order more commonly known as knox's liturgy and it set out to the form and style of protestant worship and you know we can't miss the fact that both of these documents the first book of discipline and the book of common order they were the direct influence of john calvin when john knox was in geneva but one document which changed the face of scotland was the scott's confession as we said in august 1560 the scottish parliament they decreed that the pope no longer had authority in scotland and that all doctrine and practice it had to conform to the scott's confession their new confession of faith and what's remarkable about the scott's confession is that it was drawn up in a in you could say it was drawn up at very short notice and it was drawn up by a committee of six church men called the six johns the six johns were john knox john willock john winram john spotters root john rowe and john douglas and the six johns they wrote the scott's confession in four days and they presented it to the scottish parliament on the 17th of august 1560 and it was passed and you know what's remarkable about the scott's confession and how quick it was produced it's this was remarkable because the westminster confession of faith it took four years and over 400 men to write it but time was short for the scots they had to act fast because with mary queen of scotts still in france everything had to be signed and sealed before she came home and even on her return in august a year later in 1561 after the death of her husband mary queen of scotts she still refused to give her royal approval of such a document and it's safe to say that knox and mary queen of scotts they weren't the best of friends they insult each other quite a lot when you read up about them and even before returning to scotland mary queen of scotts she

called Knox the most dangerous man in the country which and she said it's not big enough to hold the both of them but the downfall of Mary Queen of Scots wasn't brought about by Knox it was brought about by her own actions she had a string of relationships that undermined her position as the queen and it led Mary Queen of Scots to abdicating the throne to abdicating the first of Scots and Mary Queen of Scots to abdicate the third centuries she fled to England to seek refuge from Elizabeth the first and Mary left the throne to her young son James the Sixth you know what's amazing is that John Knox preached at the coronation of King James the Sixth and until his death in 1572 Knox continued to serve the Lord and his people by preaching the word that was his desire to preach the word he knew that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God but you know when we think about the ministry of John Knox he didn't consider himself to be an academic theologian or this political leader he always believed that his divine calling in life was not to be a writer but a preacher a preacher of the word Knox even said that his main duty in life was to blow my master's trumpet and you know it's not our duty in our day to blow the trumpet or to blow our master's trumpet and herald the good news to the people of our day and our generation

Knox died on the 24th of November 1572 he was buried in the grounds of St. Giles Cathedral and if you went to Edinburgh today to try and find his grave you'd probably find it under a car because his grave was well a car park was built over his grave and you know that's how much our nation has lost sight of the Reformation and its importance and you know it should make us realise that we need another Reformation we need a revival we need to blow our master's trumpet and make known to those in our day and generation of this beautiful Saviour but just in closing I want us to conclude the history of the Reformation because when Mary Queen of Scots abdicated the throne in 1567 she crossed the border into Protestant England and of course many disgruntled Catholics they saw it as an opportunity to make Mary

[34 : 47] Mary Queen of the English and as a result one Roman Catholic plot after another was formed and they tried to topple Elizabeth to get her off the throne tried to kill her but in 1587 when Elizabeth finally found out that Mary was involved in her assassination plot Elizabeth had her executed immediately and with Mary gone Mary Queen of Scots and the young King James VI being raised in a safe Calvinist house back in Scotland Elizabeth knew that if she were to die the crown would immediately pass to Protestant James and all would be well the Protestant future of the crown was safe and Reformation in Britain would be complete and you know when we look at history we see how it all fits together because when Elizabeth I when she died in 1603 after a long reign the Union of Great Britain took place in 1604 under James VI Scotland or the First of England and only a few years later in 1611

King James he authorises the publication of the English Bible known to us as the King James Version and you know when you look at this history when you look at the history from Martin Luther's nail in the door of the church in Wittenberg that took place in 1517 when you look at that to all the way over to the authorisation of the English Bible in Great Britain in 1611 it all took place in less than 100 years but it all took place because as the Apostle Peter reminds us all flesh is as grass and all its glory like the flower of the grass the grass withers the flower fails but the word of the Lord remains forever that's the beauty of it these men they stood not upon themselves but they stood upon the word of God and as Peter says this word is the good news that was preached unto you we have a wonderful history we have a great heritage let us never forget it but we have to make history in our day and in our generation by continuing to present this word to lost souls in our homes and our families and our communities may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray together O Lord our gracious God we marvel that we can see thine hand on every stage in history and we give thanks Lord that it is all a working of thine own providence that thou art the God who works all things together for good and ultimately for thine own glory and help us Lord we pray to see that hand of providence even in our own lives to see the Lord working that although we may not see it although we may not understand why things are there or why things have been taken from us but we bless thee and we praise thee that we are able to trust the God who knows the God who knows the way that we take and that when he has tried us we shall come forth as gold help us then we pray to keep standing as these men of the past stood that they stood upon the word of God that that was their sure foundation that they looked to the rock which was Christ and Lord help us then as thy people in our day and in our generation to keep looking to this rock knowing that he is the rock of our salvation knowing that he is able to save to the uttermost oh Lord bless us then we pray bless

our time together and we pray that everything that is said and done that it will be to thy glory to the furtherance of thy kingdom and to lift up the name of Jesus cleanse us we ask for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake

Amen we're going to conclude by singing Psalm 118 Psalm 118 this was Martin Luther's favourite psalm but it was also the words that Queen Elizabeth quoted when she heard that Bloody Mary had died the words of verse 23 we're singing from verse 22 down to the end of the psalm that stone is made head cornerstone which builders did despise this is the doing of the Lord and wondrous in our eyes this is the day God made in it will joy triumphantly save now I pray thee Lord I pray send now prosperity down to the end of the psalm of Psalm 118 to God's praise verse 23 verse 23 verse 23 verse 23 as though his dated cornerstone which builders did despise this is the doing of the Lord and wondrous and wondrous in our eyes this is the day

God made in it will joy triumphantly save now save now I pray thee Lord I pray send now prosperity blessed blessed blessed it is me in God's great name that coverth us to save we from the hearts which to the Lord hurt hurt things you blessed love God is the

[41 : 50] Lord true unto us admit like to our eyes find he unto thee to the altar's horns with course the sacrifice thou art my God I'll thee exalt my God I will thee praise give thanks to God for he is good his mercy lasts always the grace of the Lord

Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen