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I want to do something completely, completely different tonight than anything that I have ever done in 25 years of ministry, and that's not an overstatement. I'm glad that you're here for what we are about to hear this evening.

Sanctification comes in part by seeing good examples, and the New Testament makes that point repeatedly. In Philippians 3:17, the Apostle Paul says, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." Over in 1 Corinthians 4:16 the apostle said this, he says, "Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me." And in chapter 11 of the same book, verse 1, he says, "Be imitators of Me just as I also am of Christ." And if you want to turn over to the book of Hebrews 6, a chapter that's famous for verses that come earlier, but in Hebrews 6:11 and 12 it says, "we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Of course, in chapter 11, there is the great Hall of Faith where many examples of faith are given, and then the writer of Hebrews in chapter 13, verse 7, says this, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." Scripture repeatedly commends worthy human examples to us as those that are worthy of emulation and those that we can follow and learn principles from in order to inform and sanctify our own Christian lives, and tonight we're going to do something along those lines.

John Knox is a famous name in church history. He lived from 1514 to 1572. He is the star of the Scottish Reformation, but when John Knox was only a youth, there was another young man who went before him who is going to be our topic of consideration for this evening. I have some Scottish blood in me and so this is near and dear to my heart. There was a young man named Patrick Hamilton who paid for the gospel with his own life. Patrick Hamilton was the first martyr of what is known as the Scottish Reformation. I think of Patrick Hamilton as the Scottish Flame. We, you and I here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have received the gospel in part because men like Patrick Hamilton in many places, across many centuries, for many different reasons, we have received the gospel because men like Patrick Hamilton loved Christ more than they loved their own lives.

We just sang, providentially, we just sang the hymn, "Be Thou My Vision." On of the lines in that, it wasn't planned this way, is, "Naught be all else to me, save that thou art."

Nothing else matters to me in comparison, O God, O Christ, that you are who you are and that you are. That is supreme in our affections. Well, as Christians, we have without question the greatest human heritage of any people group anywhere in the course of world history because there are noble men who have laid down their life and paid for the gospel with their own blood, showing that they loved something that went beyond this world. They were men of whom the world was not worthy and as we look and consider what they did, we find our aspirations fueled as well. And so I want to introduce you to Patrick Hamilton tonight on the assumption that many of you, if not most of you, have never heard of him, and what we will find is this, is that as we look at the life of Patrick Hamilton from church history, we will actually find someone who is pointing us to the supremacy of Christ and the supremacy of the gospel.

To help you kind of process this, I'm going to break tonight's theme into four different sections and start with the historical background. The historical background, and if perhaps you're skeptical about what I'm doing and why I'm doing it tonight, I only ask you to stay with me because it will prove worth it in the end. I actually prepared this message over nearly a year ago, it was about nine months ago that I finished it, and I've been waiting for the right slot to be able to bring it to you and here we are tonight.

Steve Lawson, who has kind of really paved the way on giving biographical sketches as messages in our day, he wrote this about Scotland in the time of Patrick Hamilton and the historical background is very important to all of this. He writes this, he says, "At the dawn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a thick spiritual darkness veiled the land of Scotland. The religious superstitions of Rome held the nation with an ironclad grip. The Bible was virtually a closed book. The gospel of grace had been eclipsed by a popish religion of works righteousness. The clergy groped about in spiritual ignorance as blind leaders of the blind. A famine of the hearing of the word of God had left the nation impoverished and spiritually emaciated."

Iain Murray in his book titled "A Scottish Christian Heritage," writes this. "The Roman Catholic Church was a church abundant in possessions, revenues and men. Amid a poor population, the Church owned the finest buildings in the land, but it was a Church far gone into moral and intellectual decay. While celibacy was professed by the clergy, living with concubines was commonplace among them." And that's true throughout all of Catholic history, by the way. "Archbishop David Beaton was known to have eight illegitimate children. The Bishop of Moray had 10. And the sons of such liaisons," continuing in quoting Iain Murray here, "the sons of such liaisons were given lucrative Church positions, and for the daughters there was the hope of marriage among the nobility. Some priests could scarcely say the alphabet and preaching from the Bible had long since disappeared, and anyone doing so was instantly suspected of being a Protestant. The Church could not have grown so fat and bloated had it not been for the money raised from her teaching on the sacraments, purgatory, indulgences and the like."

So we have this picture at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century of the land of Scotland being under a dark spiritual cloud which was the Roman Catholic Church, and the hypocrisy in leadership and the absence of the teaching of God's word left a complete spiritual famine

to them all, and it was into that dark time that our friend Patrick Hamilton was born. He lived only 25 years. He lived from 1503 to 1528, and the historians tell us that he came from a family of nobility, a family of political prominence, and it would have been his lot had he chosen to do so, to live in the privilege of that nobility into which he was born, but praise be to God that time would show that Patrick Hamilton preferred his soul over gaining the world that was at his fingertips.

As a youth, Patrick Hamilton studied at Paris University from 1515-1520. Those dates are significant. Think with me for a moment here, we've talked about it in the past from this pulpit. 1515-1520, do you know what's right in the middle of that? 1517. What happened in 1517, my friends? That was when Luther posted his 95 theses and launched the Reformation in Germany. Well, in the years that followed Luther's climactic actions, in 1525 and 1527, the Scottish Parliament outlawed the teaching of Luther. His voice was not to be heard, his works were not to be repeated in the boundaries of the nation of Scotland.

One historian, A. M. Renwick, says this, "The Parliament threatened imprisonment and forfeiture of goods against anyone who brought in the works of Luther. Notwithstanding this, the people were deeply stirred. The tide rose strongly against the abuses in the Catholic Church and a chorus of criticism resounded throughout the land." Now in the Church itself, within the Catholic Church, there were a few good-hearted priests and monks who gladly accepted the truth when it was presented to them, and the Reformation began among this class, and in that circle, that smaller circle of influence was Patrick Hamilton.

He came from royal blood. As I said, the world was his for the taking and he turned it down. He graduated with distinction from the University of Paris and he then became a faculty member of a university in Scotland called St. Andrews University in 1524. At the time, and these dates and ages are important for our sense of perspective, at the time of taking that faculty appointment, Patrick Hamilton was only 21 years old and his teaching soon brought him into controversy. Remember, he'd studied at Paris University and there became familiar with the teaching of Luther. That's the historical background.

Let's move, secondly, to the controversy. The controversy. His teaching soon brought him into controversy within his own land at the age of 21, I remind you. Patrick spoke freely of the new religious ideas that he had received in Europe. He circulated the New Testament and taught from it. Look, my friends here this evening, we take that for granted. We do that twice a week or not more often. Just having a Bible and opening it up and teaching from it, we take that for granted. We assume that. In Patrick Hamilton's day, that was a revolutionary act going against the direction that Parliament had set for the entire country. It's hard for us to step back five centuries and enter into the mindset, isn't it?

Well, the Catholic Archbishop Beaton accused Hamilton of heresy and at the time, Hamilton took the advice of his friends and he left for Europe, he left his home country, went to Europe because he was in danger because he had a bull's eye on him that was

placed there by the Catholic Church. Well, while he was in Europe teaching at Marburg University, he published a number of theological works and he taught these precious truths. I get emotional thinking about this. The guy was 21. I have multiple children that are older than that, in fact, all of my children except one are older than he was at the time that we're talking about here. What was it that he taught? What was it that was so controversial? What was it that the Scottish Parliament and the Catholic Church wanted to shut down and keep from reaching human ears? Well, he taught that Christ alone can save. He said that we must believe in the riches of the pardoning mercy of Jesus Christ, the efficacy of his atoning death, and the freeness of his grace. Hamilton taught that it was these things, Christ in his mercy, Christ in his death, Christ in his resurrection, that is what saves a man from sin, not legalism, not acts of penance or prayers to the saints, Mary or the martyrs. He got it. Within a few years of Luther, he understood the core of the gospel, believed it and was teaching and proclaiming it without what we have today, the benefit of five centuries of Reformed teaching to build upon and inform our instruction and our belief. And one historian says that Patrick Hamilton's writings were the earliest doctrinal production of the Scottish Reformation. I love it.

So Patrick Hamilton has an academic career that is rising, and just the privilege and the blessing that the Lord had given him in a natural sense, being born into nobility and he walked away from that for the sake of the gospel. He has this academic career rising in his 20s, beloved. As you study his life, you learn this, that while his academic career was on a great upward trajectory, the heart of Patrick Hamilton was set on something else. His heart burned to return to his homeland, to go back to Scotland. He wanted to teach these things to his people, and he resolved in his heart to preach the gospel even if it cost him his life.

So he went back to Scotland and started to teach, and his determination and his teaching soon brought him into conflict with the Catholic authorities. And again, it's hard for us, especially as Americans, to understand this because you and I, we're used to the concept of the separation of church and state. There was no such distinction back then. The separation of church and state were unknown. The Catholics were in charge not only of religion but in charge of the government, and so they had the authority of law and the authority to bring charges and execute people. It was in their blood-stained hands to do that.

And what did they do? Well, the previously mentioned Archbishop Beaton, he of the eight illegitimate children, tricked Patrick Hamilton into a discussion. The idea that he tricked him into was for Patrick to leave his home city and travel to a city some distance away called Fife, and the pretext of this arrangement was that Patrick Hamilton would have the opportunity to have a friendly conference with Church leaders to tell them about his theological views and the viewpoints that he was adopting and teaching. But it was all a scam. They told him that he could talk freely of reform to men who Patrick was led to believe would be his friends. But it was a trick, it was a dirty despicable trick. Patrick Hamilton went, and understand that when he left his home city, he was leaving behind the city where he had influential friends and people who would have protected him. He went to this city called Fife not realizing that he had stepped into a premeditated trap for

his own murder. They had to dislocate him from his home city so that they would remove him from the protection of his relatives and be able to carry out their wicked plot without interference from those that had political power in, you know, in his hometown.

So this was the controversy and this is what led to our third section here tonight, the trial and the execution. The trial and the execution. So Patrick Hamilton had this meeting, he made known his views, and notes were taken by the Catholic authorities. And on a human level, sadly speaking, he was arrested on February 28, 1528 at the age of 24-25. The very next day, the Catholic authorities tried him on 13 counts of heresy. The first charge against him at his trial was that he said this, "The corruption of sin remains in a child after baptism." That's a direct contradiction of Roman Catholic teaching. Another charge against Patrick Hamilton was that he taught a man is not justified by works but by faith alone.

Now listen, friends, you and I here gathered in a church that is committed to Reformed biblical teaching, we should have great sympathy in our hearts for Patrick Hamilton because he was teaching the very things that we love and we believe and we stand for, and that hopefully we, ourselves, would have the courage to die for if it came to that. He was a man of like spirit. He was a man of like faith as ours because we believe that infant baptism cannot take away the sin of a child. That's all that he was teaching. We teach along with the New Testament that a man cannot be saved by his works but through faith alone, in Christ alone. This is what he stood for. This was a spiritual ancestor of ours, to put it in those kinds of terms, and he was on charge for the things that we hold dear to our hearts, and I just enter into the sympathy of all of that. Patrick Hamilton had said Jesus Christ bore our sins on his back and bought us with his blood. That's what the Catholic Church charged him with. This was the violation of law in that Catholic dominated country.

Now let's step back for a moment and look at it from the Catholic perspective, the Catholic leaders at the time. Why would they be so opposed to that kind of teaching? Beloved, it's the same thing today, where the truth of the gospel prevails, Catholicism would collapse. Catholicism cannot stand under a teaching that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone because it takes away and it shows how empty all of the teaching on purgatory and indulgences and all of those things that they make money off of, and hold people in bondage over, all of their spiritual authority is emptied by the truth of the gospel. And so their response to that existential threat of the teaching of the gospel was to silence it, and to silence it they had to silence the man who was proclaiming it within their land. Catholicism and the Catholic leaders realized that what Patrick Hamilton was teaching was a threat to their cushy existence. If that teaching took root, people would leave Catholicism in droves.

So they put him on trial and they convicted him, and that same day, the same day, showing that they had no regard for due process or justice, that same day they led Patrick Hamilton to the stake. It happened so quickly that his influential friends back home did not have time to intervene and save him. And beloved, let me just remind you, these are just facts of history that I'm telling you. This is just historical, well-attested historical

information that I'm giving to you here today. But it happened so quickly that he had been removed from his place of protection and so he had no one there to defend him. They had tricked him and lured him out into the trap, and now they sprung the trap.

And what did Patrick Hamilton do? Well, he followed a Lord who went courageously to his own stake to suffer and die for his people. Patrick Hamilton followed in those same footsteps. He carried his Bible to the stake where he was to be burned, and as he arrived at the place of his execution, he handed some of his personal belongings to a servant of his. One writer puts his words in modern English in this way at that great moment. Patrick Hamilton, these words are attributed to him. As he handed over his belongings to a servant, he said this, he said, "These will be of little use to me in the fire but they will be of use to you. After this, I have nothing to leave you except the example of my death. Bear it in mind, I ask you, for though it is bitter to the flesh and terrible in men's eyes, yet it is the entry into everlasting life which none can inherit who deny Christ Jesus."

So he was to be burned and in keeping with the whole situation there, the arrangements for his burning were incompetent. The kindling for the fire was damp and so it was slow to light, and so for six hours he suffered torments as they tried to burn him to death. They were incompetent in teaching and they were incompetent in burning who they perceived to be a heretic at the stake. An eye-witness wrote this about the matter. "Said the martyr," meaning Patrick Hamilton, "the martyr never gave one sign of impatience or anger. He never called to heaven for vengeance on his persecutors, so great was his faith, so strong his confidence in God."

Fox's Book of Martyrs records the scene at length and I quote at length from Fox's Book of Martyrs. "Hamilton was led to the place appointed for the horrid tragedy. The event was attended by a prodigious number of spectators. The greatest part of the multitude did not believe it was intended that he should be put to death, they thought it was only being done to frighten him, and through the fear bring him over to embrace the principles of the Romish religion. But they soon found themselves mistaken. When Patrick arrived at the stake, he kneeled down, and, for some time prayed with great fervency. After this he was fastened to the stake, and the wood was placed round him. A quantity of gunpowder was placed under his arms, it was first set on fire. It scorched his left hand and one side of his face, but did no material injury to him, and neither did it spread to the wood, to light the wood that was supposed to burn him to death. So in consequence of this, they brought more gunpowder, more combustible material which when being set on fire took effect, and when the wood was finally kindled, he called out, with an audible voice: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! How long shall darkness overwhelm this realm? And how long will You allow the tyranny of these men?' The fire burning slow put him to great torment; but he bore it with Christian magnanimity. What gave him the greatest pain was, the clamor of some wicked men who frequently cried, 'Turn, you heretic; call upon Mary.' To whom Patrick replied, 'Depart from me, and trouble me not, you messengers of Satan.' Eventually, being prevented from further speech by the violence of the smoke, and the spread of the flames, he gave his soul into the hands of him who first gave it to him."

Now the effect of Patrick Hamilton's death was immense. Many felt that this treatment of a blameless young man was outrageous, especially when so many of the clergy were not punished for their vicious and sinful lives. And so what happened as a result of his death, the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation? It prompted a nation, it prompted Scotland to consider the Reformation and the truths which Patrick had been teaching, and people came to embrace truths that they had previously rejected as a result of his courageous death.

One of Archbishop Beaton's advisors, the Catholic Archbishop, was told this by one of his advisors, a certain level of irony and almost humor in it, he said, "My Lord, if you burn any more, unless you follow my counsel, you will destroy yourselves. If you burn them, let them be burnt in cellars where no one can see because the smoke of Master Patrick Hamilton has infected as many as it blew upon," meaning that when the report of Patrick Hamilton's death was spread about throughout the nation, it affected everybody in a profound spiritual way and drew them to biblical truth and caused them to see the Catholic Church in a different perspective. So his death was a key that turned the door and opened the prison door to so many hearts to hear truth that they previously would not have received.

There was a flame in February of 1528, there was a flame in Scotland but, friends, it was not that temporary fire that took Patrick's life away, the flame was Patrick himself. He lit a fire that Catholicism could not put out. Iain Murray tells us that over the next 30 years, some 20 men and at least one woman were to endure similar deaths for holding to the doctrines of Patrick Hamilton but, my friends, they did not die in vain. Thirty-two years after his death, Scotland cast off the Roman Church and became a Protestant country and had a profound, the Christian leaders that developed in the time after that had a profound effect on the entire world.

Well, what can we make of all of this? That brings us to our fourth section here, a biblical perspective, we could say. We've seen the historical background of the domination of the Catholic Church in the time of Patrick Hamilton. We saw the controversy that his teaching engendered. We saw the trial and execution of our brother in Christ. And now I'll give a brief and feeble biblical perspective for us to think through and to have it appropriate this example for our own spiritual good because, you see, I haven't told you this simply to tell you an interesting story from church history, or even to generate sympathy for Patrick Hamilton, although we hopefully accomplished some of that in this brief time together. You and I need to kind of think through and process what all of this means in our day and age, what it means to us personally, even, and how it shapes our own affections and convictions and commitments. You see, my friends, Patrick Hamilton, as I said earlier, he died for truth that we take for granted, and in our day and age, and it's remarkable to realize that in our day and age as I read things online and I see the way that Christians are responding to things like the imprisonment of James Coates and the teaching of John MacArthur and all of that, people in the name of Christ are aligning themselves against these men who stand for the truth and are personal friends of ours. John MacArthur has spoken from this pulpit multiple times and in the name of Christ we have people that are speaking against them and, you know, show no sympathy

for a brother that's been imprisoned simply because he wanted to keep his church open. It's stunning to me. The perversity of mind that has taken root in the name of professing Christians is just astonishing to me. People prefer the government and masks to their own Christian brothers. That makes absolutely no sense, and so it's urgent for us to reprocess these things in our own mind.

So what can we say? What was it that Patrick Hamilton died for? He died for the truth that we believe, that only Jesus Christ can save. The Catholic Church cannot save anyone. Iain Murray says this, "What made the Protestant witnesses so obnoxious to the Catholic clergy was the recognition that if their message prevailed, then the absolute authority of the Catholic Church over the souls of men would be at an end." And he says this in typical great insight of Iain Murray. You should read as many books by Iain Murray as you possibly can. He said this, "The modern idea is that the religious division of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the Reformation was little more than a difference over terminology, and that both sides have equal entitlement to be regarded as Christians." You're a Catholic, you can be called a Christian. You're a Protestant, you can be called a Christian. Let's not fuss over the doctrinal details. Murray goes on to say this, "To say that is to remain ignorant of the power of darkness which prevailed in Scotland before the Reformation. The gospel itself was not known. It was because the Protestant martyrs knew from what they had been delivered that they did not regard the difference with their persecutors as a matter of opinion. The issue was the way of salvation, and to recognize this is to see that the Reformation," this is so crucial, beloved, this is everything right here, this is everything, to recognize why Patrick Hamilton was willing to die is to see and understand that, "the Reformation was no mere disagreement between two groups of men. With the Bible open before them, the Reformers knew that there was an enemy whose great aim was to silence the voice of the gospel."

There are many modern writers in our day that are saying the Reformation was unnecessary, people suggesting that maybe there's a possible reconciliation with Rome that can take place. That's not true. We've taught on Catholicism. You can listen and look up all of those messages and see why that's utterly impossible. Men like Patrick Hamilton lay down their lives in the cause of a greater spiritual war. They were human casualties in a spiritual battle that is being played out in the heavenly places.

Look over at Ephesians 6. When you see men in our day being imprisoned because of a desire to be faithful to their pastoral charge, when you hear of a man like Patrick Hamilton being executed and countless other martyrs throughout the ages, you need to understand and remember this, what Paul said in Ephesians 6:12, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." Look, false teachers and false systems of religion are agents of demonic forces which are designed to blind men to the truth.

Look over at 2 Corinthians 4. It's so important for us to see this. 2 Corinthians 4. I'll start in verse 1. The Apostle Paul says, "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame,

not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." So Paul is the preacher par excellence of the gospel of Christ, and he's talking about his own ministry and his own proclamation of truth, his own proclamation of the gospel. And he says this, he goes on to say in chapter 4, verse 3, he says, "even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake." Paul says when there is opposition to the true gospel of Christ, understand that there is a satanic component at work blinding the eyes of men so that they cannot see it. Well, beloved, when men are executed for teaching the truth of Scripture, when men are in prison for faithfulness to pastoral ministry, we must see beyond the outward circumstances of it and realize that there is a spiritual, unseen, demonic dimension to that kind of resistance to the truth. To view it in any other perspective is to deny the entire testimony of the New Testament.

Look over at 2 Timothy 2. Paul in his own swansong, this is the last letter he wrote before his own execution, he gave up his neck to the Roman government. Why is it that so much persecution and so much bad stuff emanates from Rome, I ask you? 2 Timothy 2:24, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance," we talked about that on Sunday, didn't we? "Grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and," here's our point for tonight, "they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." Scripture describes men not only as being disobedient and sinful and guilty on their own account, it also describes them in this horrible condition of spiritual bondage by which they have been blinded by a force greater than them so that they cannot see, and when men under that demonic blindness act against the people of God and act against the truth of God, you and I have to understand this spiritual dimension that is going on.

And I don't know about you, but there's a certain sobering effect that that has. There is a fearsome, somewhat fearsome recognition when you realize that the ministry of the gospel is being conducted in a realm that goes beyond the human, let's say, and that we are engaged as ambassadors of Christ in a cause that is greater than us, that is more important than our individual lives, and is arrayed against the very spiritual forces of darkness that we cannot see. There is this great conflict taking place as the Spirit of God works through the proclamation of his word in the hearts of the lost, in the hearts of his people that is designed to break down and to overcome demonic and satanic supernatural opposition. I mean, I view this as simple biblical truth. These are the things that are revealed to us.

So sometimes it is not surprising, then, that Satan, who was a murderer from the beginning Scripture tells us, he is the father of lies and wherever there is a lying system of religion, ultimately Satan himself is ultimately behind it. It should not surprise us that the father of lies and a murderer like that would work to slay those who are fighting the

battle of light in the name of Christ. And beloved, because of that truth, we cannot say that the Reformation was unnecessary because the Reformation was over the gospel, and what you and I need to understand as we look back at this, is not to interpret the events of the Reformation from the misguided spirit of tolerance of our own age and saying, "Well, none of this stuff really matters. Can't we just all get along?" As if Rodney King and the LA riots was their patron saint of truth. "Can't we all just get along?" No, we can't, not when the gospel's at stake.

My point here in saying that tonight is this: the men of their times understood what was at stake. I detest the Catholic Church and what it did and what it does, but I'll give them credit for this in the days of Patrick Hamilton, they understood what was at stake. They realized that the teaching that Patrick Hamilton was making from the Bible was an existential threat to their entire system, and so it had to be silenced. It wasn't something to be tolerated or accommodated. And so they killed him in order to protect their system, that's because they understood what was at stake. From Patrick Hamilton and men of like noble character, they understood what was at stake also. This was bigger than life and death. Patrick Hamilton and the martyrs like him, they preferred death over the call to recant their teaching. Patrick Hamilton preferred to stay on that stake for six hours while a slow burning flame roasted him to his human death. He preferred staying to the stake rather than immediately releasing himself from the physical suffering simply by saying, "Okay, you guys win. I'll call on Mary."

Why did he do that? Why such courage? Why such abandonment of earthly priorities? Why preferring death over life? It's because he knew that the gospel – get this, beloved – he knew that the gospel of Jesus Christ is worth dying for. It's more important than life itself. Jesus Christ is worth dying for, so much so that given the choice between living and renouncing Christ and dying in faithfulness to his name, the true believer understands that there's no option there. A true church understands that there's no option there. And what I hope by the Spirit of God has been impressed on your mind tonight is a sense of clarity about the priority of Christ and the gospel in your life and in ministry, and to realize that because there is this real spiritual battle that is going on, to understand that compromise with the world, softening the edges of truth for the sake of harmony with unbelieving people is not an option. You can't do that. Let me just say that one more time: you can't do that. That is how great the claim of Christ is on our conscience and on our affections and on our convictions. The truth matters. The Bible matters. Christ matters. The gospel matters. And we can't let the world pull the blinds of darkness over our testimony for the sake of a false peace with them. There's not peace between Satan and Christ. There's not peace between light and darkness and so it's a fool's errand to try to find it.

Look at Matthew 5. Because these things that we have said tonight in interpreting what happened to Patrick Hamilton, because the biblical interpretation of these things is clear and obvious, it has consequences for us in our own individual lives as we face opposition from family or friends or in the workplace and how we respond with convictions of truth and what our expectations are. The world is never going to be the friend of Christians, and especially as this God-forsaken false sense of tolerance takes deeper and deeper root,

men and women of conviction are going to increasingly become the targets of opposition, and you and I have to be prepared to accept that, trusting God and accepting it joyfully, knowing that this is a path that has been tread by greater, more worthy souls than ours, and that it is our privilege and our opportunity and our responsibility to imitate them.

Matthew 5:10, 11 and 12 says this, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Over in the gospel of John 15, as you're turning there, I'm reminded of the passage in 2 Timothy, I believe it's 3:12 that says, "All those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." The gospel of John 15, beginning in verse 18 Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me." And he goes on and he promises the help of the Holy Spirit in verse 26, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning."

Well, my friends, it was easier to say this a few years ago, what I'm about to say. You have to hear it a little bit differently in our day and age in the direction that things are going. But still it's true, I believe, that you and I likely will not die for the gospel. We have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood as Hebrews says but, my friends, we are left with a question as we make life choices and the priorities that we're going to live for, you young people, you know, in your 20s and 30s, your late teens, setting the course for life and what you're going to give your life over to, people with means, people with how we're going to handle the things, what we're going to do with our educations, those of us that are old fogies like me, what are we going to do with the brief window of time that we have left before we depart and leave and meet our Maker, you know, we do, you do have to deal with the question of what am I going to give my time and my life to? What will I give my resources for? Who will find me to be their intimate supportive friend? Will it be the people of the world or will it be the people of Christ that will find me on their side? We have to ask that question and answer it and answer it well.

And what I ask of Truth Community Church corporately, I ask each of you individually: when at some future time people look back on our lives just as we, tonight, have looked back on the life of Patrick Hamilton, I ask you whether those future believers will find in our testimony this courageous faith in Christ left behind. I beg you young people, there are a lot of young people in here so this isn't directed at any one person, but I beg you young people, I plead with you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and on the authority of his word, I beg you to contemplate what it is that you're living for and where you are directing your passions and your talents and your energies and the life goals that you are

setting up. I beg you to consider whether Christ is at the center of it or not. Do the things that you love and do the things that you do from an objective observer's standpoint, does it actually testify to a love for Christ or not? You can't be born again and just have an utter absence of a life testimony showing forth that Christ is Lord and Christ is precious to you. And if your life and conversation looks just like all of your unsaved friends, there may be a good reason for that.

So beloved, I need to bring this time to a conclusion. Let us pray for one another, young and old, boy and girl, man and woman, parent and child alike, that somehow the same eternal spiritual flame that lit in Patrick Hamilton's heart would burn brightly in us as well.

Let's pray.

*Dear God, dear, dear God, thank You for the men who went before us with such courage and set a lamp on a hill that could never be put out. Thank You that we stand on the shoulders of men like John Knox and Patrick Hamilton and John Calvin and Zwingli and others, of Charles Spurgeon and Martyn Lloyd-Jones. What a great heritage has been given to us, all flowing from the fountain of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Father, grant to this church, grant to each one here that we would never depart from that stream of faithfulness but that we would build a testimony in our own lives that others could stand on in the future, so that a generation yet to be born could have learned from us to testify to the sweet name of the crucified and risen Lord.*

*Father whether our days, our remaining days are short or long, whether they bring poverty or prosperity, whether they bring pain and sorrow or joy and outward success in ministry, help us to be found faithful, strengthen us to that end. And where feet in this room have strayed from the path of truth and faithfulness, Father, would You as the hound of heaven chase them back to faithfulness. Work in their hearts, Father. Shine in their innermost man the light of Christ that they might bring forth the kind of fruit that we see from our brother Patrick Hamilton from so many centuries ago. We don't need to have our name remembered in the future, Father, we just ask for You to spread the gospel through us while You give us breath. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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