

The Reformation in Biblical Perspective
The Reformers
“Lady Jane Grey—The Teenage Reformer and Queen”
Hebrews 12:1–2
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In this study I’m playing the part of the reformer Thomas Cranmer. I have served as archbishop under Henry the VIII. It may not be so many month from now after all the things that have happened around the one you have asked me to speak about, Lady Jane Grey that I may be feasting in the house of Zion come some months from now. Lady Jane Grey betrays which side of the political spectrum you may fall upon.

Who would have ever thought the first female, Queen of England, would be 17 years old. Who would have ever thought she would only reign for nine days. While many would declare that the one who had her put to death and putting many others to death it seems, while rumors swarm around the Tower of London she will soon bear the name ‘bloody Mary,’ it would not for me be comfortable to call her the first queen for Lady Jane Grey came to the office, not by seeking it herself, but was presented with the device of succession which was written by her cousin, Edward the VI. It is common knowledge that he could have been more than her cousin. Lady Jane Grey was being groomed to marry Edward the VI. His untimely illness as a young man would set that aside.

The grandmother of Lady Jane Grey was Mary Tudor who was queen of France and also the sister to Henry the VIII. Tudor had a daughter named Francis who is the mother of Lady Jane Grey. So as Edward the VI came to his demise there were eight candidates according to the device of succession that had been written by Henry the VIII that would be by right of blood next in line to the throne. Of those eight, all were women and no woman had ever sat upon the throne. Everyone had been praying that Edward the VI would live, marry Lady Jane Grey and then produce a male heir. His sickness interrupted those plans and thinking that a woman would take the throne, he, like his father, was not excited about that notion, but yet it was his father’s device that put that into play. Seven on those eight women who could take the throne could turn control back over to the Roman church with pope-ish direction and control.

John Dudley was an interesting man. He was the Duke of Northumberland and became a close confidant of Edward and kept reminding him of those things. Apart from me, although eventually I signed off on it, Dudley began to meet with Edward during his days of sickness in between the days of his delirium and they wrote out a new device of succession. This devise of succession said the throne would be given to the male heirs of Lady Jane Grey once she married. Little did Edward know that Dudley was already in the process of not allowing Lady Jane Grey to marry Edward as he was approaching his death for he was already working out an arranged marriage for her to marry Dudley’s son. So that if this happened it would put Dudley in even greater control if his son became king through this marriage.

None of us really knew that all this was happening behind the scenes for we were more concerned about the succession. So when we signed onto it the final copy would have Lady Jane Grey ascending to the throne and then to whomever she appointed that would succeed her. Lady Jane Grey had been groomed in the palace of Henry the VIII under his last wife for he had a series of wives. His last wife was an amazing Godly woman and I have had many conversations

with her. Her name was Catherine Parr. I'm fearful for her under Queen Mary for if Queen Mary moves as she has already moved toward Lady Jane Grey and what will happen to her.

Parr was given the charge to groom Lady Jane Grey to marry Edward the VI and what she did was lead her to Christ. Parr made sure that Grey was educated for all her education took place in Latin, Hebrew and Greek. Grey was well educated far beyond her years and far beyond her gender and everyone was fully aware of it. She had an unalterable commitment to Christ and denounced the ways of Rome. She stood clear on the crucial doctrines of our Reformation. So I gladly signed this new device of success that would put Lady Jane Grey in charge and none of the other seven women who would have brought England back under the control the Rome.

Then came the news that Edward the VI was dead. Then came the Privy Council under Edward the VI led by John Dudley to the very castle where Dudley found the newlyweds Gilford Dudley, his son, and Lady Jane Grey, his new wife. She was informed that she was queen. I wasn't there but I heard what she did. She immediately fell to the ground and the first words from her mouth as she heard she was queen were 'I do not want this.' The same persuasion that John Dudley used with Edward the VI he began to use with her. He said to her 'My lady, if you do not take the throne then the throne will go back into the hands of Rome. You must take it for King Edward the VI put your name in the device of succession directly and your heirs are the ones that are to receive it.' Although in the meantime Dudley's son had married her and he was there as this conversation took place.

She had collapsed to the floor and after almost 12 hours of prayer she came back and said 'If this is the duty that God has placed before me then I cast myself upon Him. May He give me the strength and the wisdom to serve Him.' She wrote letters to her mentors and one of her mentors was a Reformer in Switzerland named Heinrich Bullinger. As she exchanged letters with him she was somewhat encouraged in these matters but she had to move quickly for Princess Mary at the time was out saying that the throne was hers. So John Dudley gathered together Lady Jane Grey, his son Gilford her new husband and Grey's parents and took them down the Thymes River to the Tower of London for everything had been arranged for Lady Jane Grey and Gilford to live initially. When they arrived the processional was arranged with pomp and circumstance. Lady Jane Grey with her husband and few steps behind her walk to the Tower of London and perhaps that was the first step of her undoing for carrying her train was her mother Francis.

Englishmen want things done in order. When they saw one who had a greater right to the throne than Lady Jane Grey, being that of her mother, in subservience carrying her train, the crowd was immediately muted. People began to critique what they saw. Little did they know Lady Jane Grey had not sought this, but she had been directed to do it. So she took up her reign on July 10, 1553, not knowing that she would never go back down that river or that the place she had made her palace would be soon become her prison.

The armies that were to subdue bloody Mary were outnumbered and outgunned. The Navy that was sent was to subdue the forces of bloody Mary all committed treason to Queen Jane Grey which is what I prefer to call her. They all went to the other side and almost all were appealing not for religious purposes but what would be the orderly thing to do that in fact Mary, the daughter of Henry the VIII, cousin to Grey, is now the rightful heir. If she is not the rightful heir then her half-sister Elizabeth would be the rightful heir. So while they had been willing for the one younger, Edward, to be the rightful heir, they were not willing to leave the immediate house of Tudor to this 17 year old cousin. They were told in Edward's device of succession that

it mattered not and it was not long for all the forces that had been sworn to defend Queen Jane Grey, had abandoned her and gone over to Mary.

Mary with her army marched into the Tower of London and Queen Jane Grey immediately knelt and said 'I'm so glad, may I go home?' But Queen Mary now would have no part of that. She put her, her husband and her husband's two brothers and me, Thomas Cranmer under arrest. Not many days hence the six of us were conducted to Gilford Hall. It is there that three of us were convicted of treason and three of high treason. All of us received the sentence of death. The original sentence of death to Lady Jane Grey was that she was to be burned at the stake but bloody Mary as she was soon to be called if these rumors persist, met with Grey and on the one hand was very stern and on the other hand recognized that she had not sought this but had been drawn into it. So she offered her clemency and let her live if she would only return to the church at Rome.

Perhaps one of the best ways for you to understand her answer is to read a letter from her that she wrote from the Tower of London. Grey heard that her chaplain, Thomas Harding, in order to save his life recanted of his reformation beliefs and had returned to Rome. So she decided to write him a letter and this is what she said to this one who had abandoned his Savior, simply to save his life. She writes:

Thomas, I cannot but marvel at thee and lament thy case that thou, which sometime were the lively member of Christ, but now you have become the deformed imp of the Devil. Sometimes you were the beautiful temple of God, but now the stinking and filthy kennel of Satan. Sometimes you were the unspotted spouse of Christ your Savior, but now the unshamedly paramour of the Antichrist. Sometimes you were my faithful brother, but now a stranger and apostate. Yes, sometimes you were a stout Christian soldier, but now a cowardly runaway. So oft as I consider the threatenings and promises of God, the Divine Justice, to all those that faithfully love him, I cannot but speak to thee, yet, rather cry out upon thee, "Thou seed of Satan, and not of Judah," whom the Devil hath deceived and the world hath beguiled, and your desire of life hath subverted and made thee a Christian infidel, a subversion to the truth of the God of glory. You have abandoned Him but I appeal to you to return and come to the Savior in repentance.

That letter revealed she had no inclination that she would abandon her Savior and she did not. Mary did not give up. Mary sent her chaplain, John Feckenhem, to try and get Lady Jane Grey to turn. I was not with her but I was quickly informed by those nearby who wrote down the conversation between the two. Cardinal Feckenhem said to her, 'If you but return to the Catholic faith you may avoid execution. The senate has been changed that you will be beheaded but you can avoid that if you return.' They dialogued. He said 'Is not a man right with God by justification and works?' Grey responded 'Nay, we are saved by faith alone. Our works only manifest our faith. They add nothing to our salvation.'

He said 'What are the authorities of the Christian, Lady Jane?' She said 'There is but one..' he broke in and said 'No! There are two – the church and the Bible.' She declared, 'Nye, there is only one that the Scripture alone is our rule of faith and practice.' He pressed on 'How many sacraments are there?' Lady Jane said 'Two – the one of the sacrament of baptism and the other the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.' Feckenhem said 'No my Lady! There are seven. 'By what Scripture do you find that?' she asked him. He said 'Well, we will talk of these things hereafter but tell me Lady Jane Grey what is signified by your two sacraments?' Jane replied, 'By the Sacrament of Baptism I am washed with water, and regenerated in the spirit, and that washing is a token to me that I am the child of God: the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is

offered unto me as a sure seal and testimony, that I am, by the blood of Christ which he shed for me on the cross, made partaker of the everlasting kingdom.'

Feckenhen pushed, 'Why, what do you receive in that bread: do you not receive the very body and blood of Christ?' She replied, 'No, surely, I do not believe so: I think at that supper I receive neither flesh nor blood, but only bread and wine; the which bread when it is broken, and the wine when it is drunk, putteth me in remembrance how that for my sins the body of Christ was broken, and his blood shed on the cross, and with that bread and wine I receive the benefits which came by breaking of his body, and by the shedding of his blood on the cross for my sins.' He said 'Why, but madam, doth not Christ speak these words: take eat, this is my body: can you require any plainer words: doth he not say, that the bread is his body?'

Jane replied 'I grant he saith so; and so he saith likewise in other places, I am the vine, I am the door, it being only but a figurative speech: doth not St. Paul say that he calleth those things which are not as though they were? God forbid, that I should say that I eat the very natural body and blood of Christ: for then either I should pluck away my redemption, or confess there were two bodies, or two Christ's: two bodies, the one body was tormented on the cross, and then if they did eat another body, how absurd: again, if his body was eaten really, then it was not broken upon the cross (as it is doubtless) then it was not eaten of his disciples. When he gave that supper how could he have two bodies, one to be eaten there and then one to go to the cross?'

Feckenhem said 'Why, is it not as possible that Christ by his power could make his body both to be eaten and broken, as to be born of a woman without the seed of man, and as to walk on the sea having a body, and other such like miracles, which he wrought by his power only?' Her response was 'Yes, verily, if God would have done at his last supper a miracle, he might have done so: but I say he minded nor intended no work or miracle, but only to break his body, and shed his blood on the cross for our sins: but I beseech you answer me to this one question; where was Christ when he said, take, eat, this is my body: was not he at the table? when he said so he was at that time alive, and suffered not till the next day; well, what took he but bread? and what broke he but bread? and what gave he but bread? look what he took he brake, and look what he brake he gave, and look what he gave that did they eat, and yet all this while himself was at supper before his disciples, or else they were deceived.'

He then finishes and says 'I will be with you to the end but I think I will see you no more.' Lady Jane said 'Thank you for your mercy to be with me. May God requite thee and I agree, unless our Lord turns your heart and grants you repentance, we shall see each other no more.' It was not many hours after that she, conducted by her two attendants and John Feckenhem went to the scaffold. Queen Mary at least very graciously allowed that she would not be like her husband just hours before made a public spectacle, but within the walls of the Tower of London she would meet her end and the scaffold was built for her there.

Lady Jane mounted the scaffold with great dignity. Her attendants pulled back her collar. I, in a cell in that same tower, am aware of all that happened. She went up to Mr. Feckenhem and thanked him for his kindness. She gave her prayer book and journal to one of her attendants to be given to others in order to be read. It's available and I believe it will be available for perpetuity. She then went up to the executioner who said to her 'Will you forgive me my Lady?' She placed her hand upon him and said 'Willingly' and then took hold of the railing of the scaffold. She declared she was guilty of transgressing the true line of succession but that she had not done so knowingly, only under invitation and direction. She called upon the Lord to forgive her of her sins. She began to quote Psalm 51 with those opening words 'Have mercy upon me O Lord.'

She then put the blindfold on after asking the executioner ‘will you strike before I am prepared?’ The answer was given to her ‘no, my Lady, I will not strike until you are properly prepared.’ Having given her gloves and her cloak to her attendants and her prayer book to Thomas Bridges, the brother of the jailer who had kept her for those months in prison she then on that moment knelt on the straw by the invitation of the executioner. I could hear the words ‘Would you kneel upon the straw my Lady?’ She said ‘Gladly’ and knelt blindfolded some distance so she could not find the block to lay her head upon it. Tradition is that you don’t help but Feckenhem who had been so moved with her kindness, clarity and boldness, broke such traditions and moved forward to help her find the block. She found it and laid her head upon it. She nodded for the executioner and then said ‘Into Thy hands I commend my spirit, Lord Jesus.’

Thus the teenage Queen, Reformer, became our martyr. I may soon follow her. I am grateful that I have learned from her faithfulness to Christ unto the end, unto His glory. I am reminded of many things she would say and I will give you these in closing.

She said from the scaffold, ‘Good people, I am come hither to die, and by a law I am condemned to the same. The fact against the queen’s Highness was unlawful, and the consenting thereunto by me: but, touching the procurement and desire thereof by me, or on my behalf, I do wash my hands thereof in innocency before God, and the face of you, good Christian people, this day. I pray you all, good Christian people, to bear me witness that I die a true Christian woman, and that I do look to be saved by no other mean, but only by the mercy of God, in the blood of his only Son Jesus Christ: and I confess, that when I did know the word of God, I neglected the same, loved myself and the world; and therefore this plague and punishment is happily and worthily happened unto me for my sins; and yet I thank God, that of his goodness he hath thus given me a time and respite to repent. I am His and He is mine. And now, good people, while I am alive, I pray you assist me with your prayers for I need not your prayers when I die. Pray for me now that I will be faithful, then to the block and then Lord, I commend to you my Spirit, and then to the axe and then to glory.’ Let’s pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You so much for this one, even in her defense of the Lord’s Supper it now brings us to this Supper with only one confession for all who partake – Lord Jesus we have no just deserves but only punishment for our sins yet we stand forgiven by the blood of Jesus on the cross. Therefore we now come to drink of the cup and eat of the bread spiritually feasting upon all His benefits, in Jesus Name, Amen.

