

# John Hooper

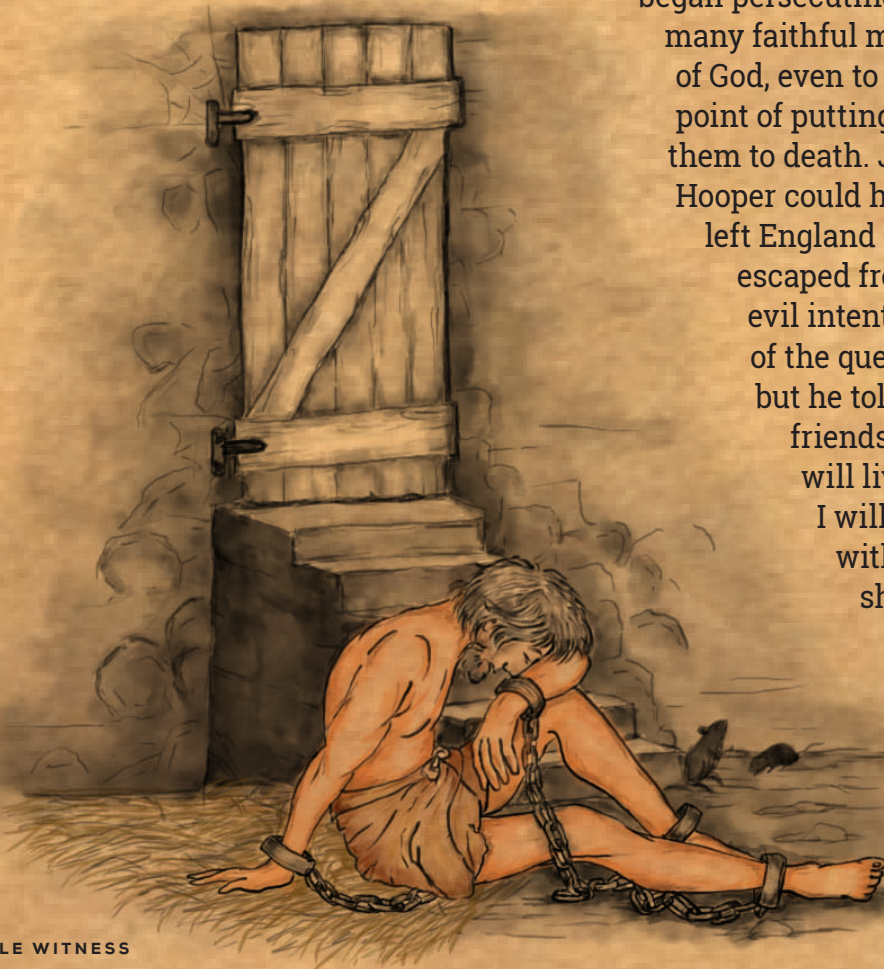
## – An Indomitable Reformer (Part II)

(Retold from 'The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs, written by John Foxe, rewritten & updated by Harold J Chadwick. Published by Bridge-Logos Publishers)

Retold by Jenny Lok

Illustrated by Linus Kok

**I**n 1553, after a short period of illness, King Edward VI died. His half-sister, Queen Mary I ascended the throne. Previously, the Church of England under King Edward supported the Protestant reforms but Queen Mary, being a Roman Catholic, wanted to re-establish Roman Catholicism in England. Thus, she began persecuting many faithful men of God, even to the point of putting them to death. John Hooper could have left England and escaped from the evil intentions of the queen, but he told his friends, 'I will live and I will die with my sheep.'



As expected, he was soon summoned to the presence of Queen Mary. Though his enemies hurled cruel and unkind words at him, Hooper did not flinch but remain steadfast in his Protestant beliefs. Besides clearly refuting the false belief that Christ's actual flesh was in the bread taken during Holy Communion, Hooper was also determined to remain married, unlike the Catholic priests who are not allowed to get married. So for these reasons, Hooper was not allowed to continue as bishop of Worchester. He was sent to Fleet Prison, a place for keeping the king's prisoners.

Prison life was most harsh. He was heavily chained and had to endure the stench of open sewers in the prison. He also had to make do with just some straw for his bedding, a rotting blanket for a cover, and a pillow consisting of only a few feathers. No one was allowed to visit or help him. As a result of the cruel treatment, Hooper suffered many illnesses. Time and again, he was subject to repeated questioning by the Catholic bishops, who tried to persuade him to give up his Protestant faith. If he were to return to the Catholic fold, they promised him the pope's blessings and the queen's pardon, which meant he would be a free man. But Hooper remained unmoved throughout and did not barge.

Nevertheless, Hooper's enemies refused to give up. They continued to spend hours talking to him, hoping that he would relent and submit to them. Hooper stood firm and finally, they handed him over to the sheriffs (officers who helped keep law and order in the country) of London. In the darkness of the night, they hoped to bring him to Newgate Prison without anyone's knowledge because they did not want to upset the local people who loved Hooper dearly. Despite that, the people got wind of it and went out to the streets with their lights. The local folks praised and thanked God for Hooper for having shown them how they should obey God and His Word.

Meanwhile, Hooper's enemies tried extremely hard to make him change his mind. They twisted the Scriptures, pretended to act in a gentle and friendly way towards him and even offered him wealth. Hooper, however, saw through their deception and remained firm in his beliefs. Having failed in their task to win Hooper's heart, they started to spread rumours about him, telling

everyone that he had given up on his Protestant teachings and would be joining the Catholic Church. When Hooper realised that some people were actually taken in by these lies, he wrote a letter, stating: "I have left all things of the world, and I have suffered great pains and imprisonment, but I thank God that I am as ready to suffer death as any mortal man may be. I have taught the truth with my tongue and with my pen up to now. Shortly hereafter, I shall confirm that same truth by God's grace with my blood." Hooper was more than ready to die for the Truth!

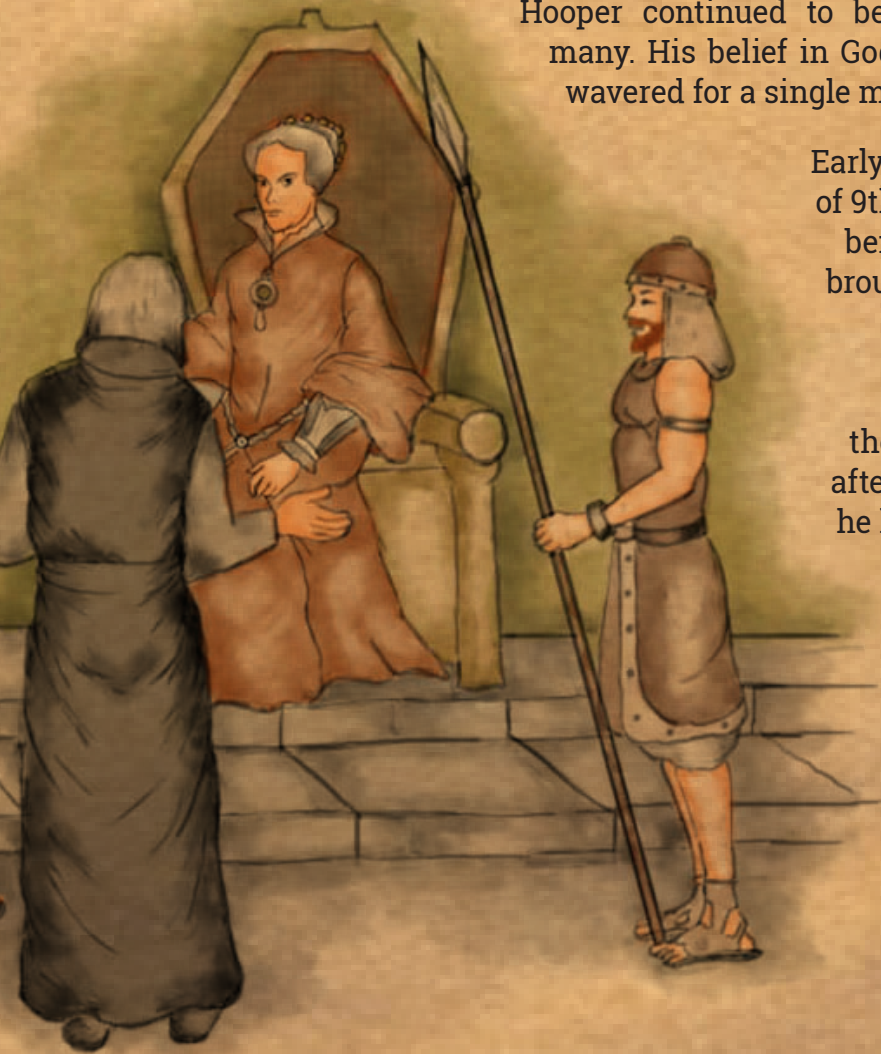
On 4th February 1555, Hooper received the news that he would be sent to Gloucester, where he was once a bishop. That was to be the place of death for him. Upon hearing this, Hooper was neither shocked nor fearful. Instead, he lifted his eyes and hands towards heaven and praised God. He was actually looking forward to seeing his flock in Gloucester. Never for a second did he doubt that God would strengthen him to suffer death. On the way to Gloucester, Hooper was allowed to stop over at places he once visited. At a certain place of rest, he met a certain woman who once hated the truth and spoke against him. To his pleasant surprise, she confessed her sin and was all friendly and kind towards him. As he travelled on, more and more people were waiting to see him. Their hearts were sorrowful to see him for the last time.

The night before his death, he was visited by Sir Anthony Kingston, one of those who was ordered by Queen Mary to see to the arrangement for his execution. When he entered the room and saw Hooper praying, he felt sorry for him and pleaded in tears, "Life is sweet and death is bitter. Therefore, seeing that you may have life, desire to live, for life after this may do good." How Kingston wished that Hooper would choose life over death! In reply, Hooper said, "I have settled myself, through the strength of God's Holy Spirit, to pass patiently through the torments and extremities of the fire now prepared for me, rather than deny the truth of His Word..."



Kingston went away, but not before declaring that he was a lost soul of God. Though people around him seemed to be troubled by his coming death, Hooper remained calm and trusted God to see him through his final hours.

Following this, a young boy, who was also previously persecuted for his faith in God, begged the guard to let him see Hooper. The moment the boy stepped into the room, Hooper realised he was blind. With tears in his eyes, Hooper encouraged the little boy, "Ah, poor boy, God has taken your outward sight from you for reasons that are known only to Him. But He has given you another sight which is far more precious, for He has endued your soul with the eyes of knowledge and faith. God gives you the grace to pray continually to Him, so that you will never lose that sight, for then you would be blind both in body and in soul." Even in the face of death, Hooper continued to be a blessing to many. His belief in God's truths never wavered for a single moment.



Early in the morning of 9th February 1555, before Hooper was brought to his place of burning, he spent hours in quiet prayer. At the execution site, after a short prayer, he looked up to see a box placed on a stool in front of him. He was told it contained his pardon from the Queen. All he needed to do was to

deny God and His Word and he would be saved. Faced with this temptation even in his final hour, Hooper valiantly cried aloud twice, "If you love my soul, away with it!"

Next, he took three sacks of gunpowder from the guard and held onto them. Dried reeds for burning were placed around him and above them were added lots of green faggots. The burning was slow on that cold morning, and Hooper prayed loudly, "Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me!" Many bystanders were moved to tears as they prayed for him. Like a meek little lamb, Hooper went to the stake. He died a blessed martyr as God carried his soul safely to heaven!

Dear children, may God grant you the grace to remain faithful and hold fast to His precious truths. Like John Hooper, may you also be determined and courageous to always "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12).

