

Heroes of Faith – The Church Age

Faith Marked By Reformation

Introduction:

1. It was becoming evident that the “ecclesiastical hierarchy” (Church Leadership – i.e. the Pope, Cardinals, Bishops etc.) faced some serious challenges due to their _____ from Scriptural foundations and practices.
 - The _____ of ecclesiastical authority was rampant throughout most of Western Christianity and resulted in a cry for _____.
 - Much of the preliminary work toward this reform had already begun by men such as **John Wycliffe** and **Jan Hus**.
2. By the 1500’s a few of significant things developed that moved these reforms of the Church to its critical point of change:
 - The invention of the _____ press which allowed for various publications by the reformers to be read.
 - The _____ of the Scripture into English (by **William Tyndale**) and German (by **Martin Luther**) which paved the way for the _____ person to understand the Living Word of God.
 - The **Peasants Revolt** (which did not produce completely positive results), led to further disenchantment of the common person toward the Church clergy due to their continued corruption and abuse of power.
3. All of this paved the way for reform and we’ll look at five men who made significant impact on what has been aptly called “**The Reformation Period**”.

Martin Luther (November 10, 1483 – February 18, 1546)

1. His early life

- He was baptized the day after he was born (Nov. 10, 1483)
- His father (Hans) worked in the copper mines and later operated the mines
- His father's intentions were for Luther to become a lawyer and set his education for that as his main pursuit.
- Martin Luther's account is that in 1505 during a serious thunderstorm he was compelled to give his life to the Lord and become a monk. He subsequently sold his books, left law school and entered the Augustinian monastery July 17, 1505.

2. His monastic life

- He became a zealot in his religious pursuits and devoted himself to fasting, long hours of prayer, various pilgrimages and constant confession of sins.
 - He is known for this statement; "If anyone could have gained heaven as a monk, then I would have indeed been among them"
 - He was ordained to the priesthood and proceeded to teach theology at the University of Wittenberg.
 - It was this pursuit of "**justification by faith**" (Romans 1:17) that will put him at odds with the Roman Catholic Church.
- 1) Luther came to believe that God's righteousness is something that He bestows as a **gift** (free gift) that is given or provided through Christ.
 - 2) This belief in justification by faith emerged into the doctrine of salvation by God's grace and God's grace alone, and without human merit (Eph. 2:8-9).
 - 3) This doctrine is nothing new for it is precisely what Jesus taught and the Apostles embraced and taught as well.

3. Luther's conflict with the Roman Catholic Church grows

- The conflict arose in the teaching of the Roman Church as to how one sought penance or payment for sins.
 - 1) The solution that the church provided for “**absolution**” of sins was through payment in the form of **indulgences**.
 - 2) Although these “**indulgences**” were initially granted or primarily given as a means of an easier life in “purgatory” (another false teaching), they eventually led to a means to gain one's own salvation.
- The church (more specifically the clergy) began to “sell” those indulgences as a means of absolving one's own individual sins or for the sins of a person already in purgatory.
 - 1) Those funds were used for the renovation of church buildings (i.e. St. Peter's Basilica in Rome), as well as lining the pockets of those in receipt of the funds and this of course led to the worst of corruption of the Roman Church.
 - 2) Luther is quoted as saying; “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs”.
- It was this abuse of the practice of selling indulgences that led to Martin Luther preaching against it.
 - 1) He preached three very strong sermons against indulgences
 - 2) He posted his famous 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg with the intention of entering into a formal debate/disputation against the practice of indulgences.
 - 3) In addition to the issue of selling indulgences, His 95 Theses were a bold declaration against the _____ and _____ within the Roman Church.
- All of this led to Luther being labeled as a _____ and his teaching created quite a controversy throughout Europe.

4. The breach or ultimate division between what Luther believed (salvation by faith) and the Roman Catholic Church taught/embraced (salvation by works) was becoming even more apparent each time Luther preached a sermon, wrote an article, a commentary, or book.
 - All of this led Luther to further divest himself from the Roman Catholic Church and even **boldly declared the Pope to be the Antichrist**.
 - In essence this was the beginning of what would later be called “**The Reformation**” or “The **Protestant Movement**”, for there was a series of **protests** or **reforms** that Luther declared needed to take place within the Roman Church:
 - 1) All ecclesiastical abuses (i.e. the exercise of indulgences) needed to cease
 - 2) Shrink the size or amount of hierarchal authority (cardinals, bishops, etc.)
 - 3) Abolition of the requirement of pilgrimages
 - 4) Eliminating the excessive number of “holy days”
 - 5) The suppression of nunneries
 - 6) Cease the requirement for clerical celibacy
 - 7) Reforming the universities
 - 8) Reunification with the Bohemians
 - 9) Basic reform of public morality
 - In spite of all that Luther attempted to do to reform the Church from within, it became necessary to make a formal break from the Church at Rome.

5. Luther made **three initial changes** that created conflict with the Roman Church:

- **The celebration Eucharist** (Communion or The Lord's Supper) **was returned to the "laity"** and the practice or dogma of **transubstantiation** was rejected.

1) He did promote the teaching that in observing the Lord's Supper that the recipient was affirming the Lord's presence but not in the extreme literal sense that was taught by the Roman Church.

2) He also rejected the teaching that by taking of the elements that a sacrifice was being offered to God.

- Luther taught that **Baptism in on no way brings salvation** by itself:

1) It remained an essential teaching by Luther that baptism followed salvation which was established by faith.

2) Luther never separated the two (salvation by faith & baptism) for in his mind they naturally went together for it is what the Apostles taught.

- Luther taught that **Penance (absolution of sin) was received by faith in Christ**

6. These teachings and practices caused Martin Luther to be **excommunicated** from the Church on June 15, 1520.

7. Luther was called to the General Assembly in the town of Worms known as the "**Diet of Worms**" to renounce his heresy and reaffirm the doctrines of the Holy Roman Church.

- Here was Luther's reply; "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me amen."

- The result was that Luther was declared by the Emperor himself (Charles V) to be an _____ and a _____. His literature was _____ from the Church.

8. Luther was subsequently _____ to Wartburg Castle and while there he worked tirelessly on translating the New Testament from Greek into German. In addition to this he made additional contributions to the advancement of Christianity:
- He wrote various _____ (summary of doctrine) and doctrinal statements
 - He wrote various collections of _____ (public forms of worship) and how to maintain _____ within the Church.
 - He helped to organize a well-balanced Church government structure
 - He helped to create an avenue for other “dissenters” who perhaps felt he didn’t go far enough with his reforms. This new found “freedom” in Christ would spawn other movements (i.e. Swiss reformers, Anabaptists, Brethren, and Calvinism etc.) that would create a means by which Truth would prevail and error exposed.
 - Although the Roman Catholic Church in many ways remains steeped in ritual, mysticism, and error, the fact is the reforms established by Luther have even had an impact on their traditions and practices.
 - Even though Luther found the need to separate from the Roman Church (as did many others), his legacy of reform towards a **genuine salvation by grace through faith in Christ**, has continued to impact even those who remain steeped in the ritual of the Catholic Church.
9. Luther died on February 18, 1546 from heart complications and he was buried underneath the pulpit in the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

Huldrych (Ulrich) Zwingli (January 1, 1484 – October 11, 1531)

1. Background information:

- He was born in Switzerland to a prominent middle class family, and was the seventh of eight sons.
- He became the leader of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland and the founder of the **Swiss Reformed Churches**.
 - 1) He would have been a contemporary of Martin Luther
 - 2) Zwingli renounced his position in the Catholic priesthood about 3 years after Luther
 - 3) The **Presbyterian** Church and **Church of Christ** would be the denominations that are connected to Zwingli's reforms
 - 4) It was Zwingli and his followers who abandoned the use of _____ during their worship services.

2. Zwingli's issues with the Roman Catholic Church

- He became a proponent in the Bible being our source of faith, not oral traditions
- Zwingli and his followers were very **anti-iconic** and felt obliged to remove all images and pictures from the church.

3. Zwingli and his followers were not very sympathetic to the Anabaptists and actually persecuted them.

- Although this may have been bad for the Anabaptists this continued persecution led to those separatists groups fleeing this oppression and drove them towards seeking a life and pursuit of religious liberty.
- It will be the Puritans, Quakers, Baptists (descendants of these Anabaptists) and others who will find such religious liberty in a new land called America!

John Calvin (July 10, 1509 – May 27, 1564)

1. Background information:

- He was a French Christian Theologian during the Protestant Reformation
- He was well known for his writings and considered the originator of the system of Christian Theology known as Calvinism:
 - 1) His approach to the Biblical text was in a more historical and grammatical manner as opposed to relying on the various commentators from the past.
 - 2) This rather detailed evaluation drove him to the Bible as our only source of truth. It seemed as though he determined that the educational facilities of his time lost sight of this and in need of reform.
 - 3) He was a strong advocate of the absolute sovereignty and holiness of God
- He is well known for the “**Five Points of Calvinism**” were a reflection of his thinking but not really a product of his writings (they actually came from the Synod of Dort).....but here they are anyway:
 - 1) **Total Depravity** – every person born into the world is enslaved to sin
 - 2) **Unconditional Election** – God has chosen those people whom He will bring to Himself
 - 3) **Limited Atonement** – only the sins of the elect were atoned for by the death of Jesus Christ.
 - 4) **Irresistible Grace** – the grace of God compels the “elect” sinner to cooperate, repent, and freely come to follow Christ.
 - 5) **Perseverance of the Saints** – God is sovereign and those whom He has called will persevere to the end. Those who fall away either did not have true faith or will return to God.

2. Some of the reforms that John Calvin instituted:

- He instituted/organized what he considered a Biblical form of Church government
 - 1) **Doctors** – an office held by a person who had theological training/scholarship. This person was a teacher/trainer/equippier of the members in the church.
 - 2) **Pastors** – an office held by a person whose responsibility was to preach, administer the sacraments, exercise pastoral discipline, teaching and admonishing the people.
 - 3) **Deacons** – an office held by a person who oversaw the ministries of the church (specifically in the area of charity, hospital care, anti-poverty programs).
 - 4) **Elders** – 12 laymen whose role was to oversee more specifically in keeping people in line (sort of a moral police force) and maintaining moral purity within the church.
- He believed and taught that the punishment of men's infidelity should be as equal to the punishment that a woman faced.
- He developed a catechism/confession of faith which all citizens were to affirm
- He taught that spousal abuse should be abolished
- He promoted moral standards
- He taught against the practice of witchcraft

3. He is best known for his position on _____ and _____ which continues to be supported by those denominations that embrace the same.

William Tyndale (1494 – October 6, 1536)

1. He was more of a champion of the **English Reformation**
2. He championed the cause of translating the Bible into _____
 - He once said; “The Scripture should be available even to a boy that driveth the plough”
 - Ironically it was his works in translating the Scripture into English that caused him to be labeled as a heretic.
 - 1) Much of his work (about 90%) formed the basis for what will become known as the “Authorized Version”
 - 2) His translation is believed to be from the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts instead of the Vulgate (used by Martin Luther). The Vulgate was translated from the Septuagint which continues to fuel the debate over accuracy.
3. Sadly, William Tyndale was arrested and tried for _____ in 1536 because of his translation work and promotion of the Scriptures to be available to the common man.
 - Tyndale was strangled (they say it was mercifully done – not sure how you do that) and then burned at the stake on October 6, 1536.
 - Tyndale’s final words; “Oh Lord, open the King of England’s eyes”
4. Tyndale’s prayer was eventually answered; as several English Bibles will be translated, sponsored and promoted by the King of England (Henry VIII).
 - The first “*authorized version*” by Henry VIII was called the _____ Bible
 - This will eventually lay the groundwork for the King James Version of the Bible which was sponsored and authorized by King James I of England in 1611.

John Knox (1505, possibly 1513 or 1514 – 1572)

1. The actual year of his birth is unconfirmed – thus the three different dates
2. Background information:
 - He was of Catholic background and he is first mentioned as a priest in 1540
 - Ironically even though there is a College named after him....there is no confirmed evidence of his graduating from a College or University. We do know he was well schooled in Greek and Hebrew and often quoted Augustine and Jerome.
 - After his departure from the Catholic Church, he will become known as the Father of the Protestant Reformation in _____
3. He converted to the Protestant faith probably from the influence of his close friend George Wishart (a reformer who was eventually tried for heresy and burned at the stake in Saint Andrews), and as a result of this conversion he became an outspoken opponent to the Catholic Church.
 - Knox himself was arrested for heresy and forced to row on the French slave ships
 - While in custody he made this statement; “I see the steeple of that place where God first in public opened my mouth to glory; and I am fully persuaded, how weak so ever I now appear, that I shall not depart this life, til my tongue shall glorify his godly name in this same place” (referencing Scotland).
 - While in custody he was asked to renounce his Protestant beliefs, but he refused.
4. After his release (in 1549) he further submitted himself to voluntary exile as things in Scotland had really not improved.
 - While in exile he devoted himself to his ministerial duties and continued writings on reform.
 - In his writings it became apparent that he had a strong dislike for the “**episcopacy**” or hierarchal authority.

5. He returns to Scotland in May of 1556 but only to face more opposition so he returns to France and then finally back to Edinburgh, Scotland on May 2, 1559, where he will begin to organize the Church in Scotland.
- Civil war was on the horizon within Scotland
 - Knox became the champion of _____ in Scotland
 - 1) He set out to purge the churches of **heresy** and **immorality**
 - 2) He destroyed most if not all of the monasteries
 - There was immense pressure for religion and politics to remain intertwined:
 - 1) France wanted control of Scotland and Scotland wanted her freedom!
 - 2) To maintain freedom from the French required help from the English and along with that came the religious strings of the Church of England.
 - In the end Knox will win out (with a slight political compromise with England) allowing for Scotland to deal with their own ecclesiastical (religious) issues.
 - 1) The Roman Church _____ its primary influence; as all religious authority dealing with doctrine, worship and basic church government was now in the hands of the Church of Scotland.
 - 2) **Protestantism** became the recognized national religion of Scotland beginning in 1560 and they will adopt their own constitution of the new Church
 - 3) The church government and basic beliefs are similar in nature to the _____ Church. Priests were replaced with ministers and the parish was governed by elders.
6. **One interesting little factoid is that John Knox' gravesite at the Church of St. Giles has (along with others) been covered over by a visitors parking lot (car park). He is allegedly buried under parking space (car park number) 23.**