

# The Power of Heaven- Centred Faith

**Hebrews 11 (Selected Verses)**

# Hebrews 11

1 Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. 2 For our ancestors won God's approval by it.

3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by God's command, so that what is seen has been made from things that are not visible.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith.

# Hebrews 11

5 By faith Enoch was taken away so he did not experience death, and he was not to be found because God took him away. For prior to his removal he was approved, since he had pleased God. 6 Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.

# The Great Roll Call of Faith in Hebrews 11

- Noah
- Abraham
- Sarah
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Joseph
- Moses
- Joshua
- Rahab

# Hebrews 11

32 And what more can I say? Time is too short for me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, 33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the raging of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength after being weak, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight.

# Hebrews 11

35 Women received their dead—they were raised to life again. Some men were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a better resurrection, 36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. 38 The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and on mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

# Hebrews 11

39 All these were approved through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us.

The Roll Call of Faith's Heroes  
Will Be Continuous Until  
Christ Returns in Glory!  
Here Are Three from  
the Reformation.

# Church issues underlying the Reformation

## Begun October 31, 1517

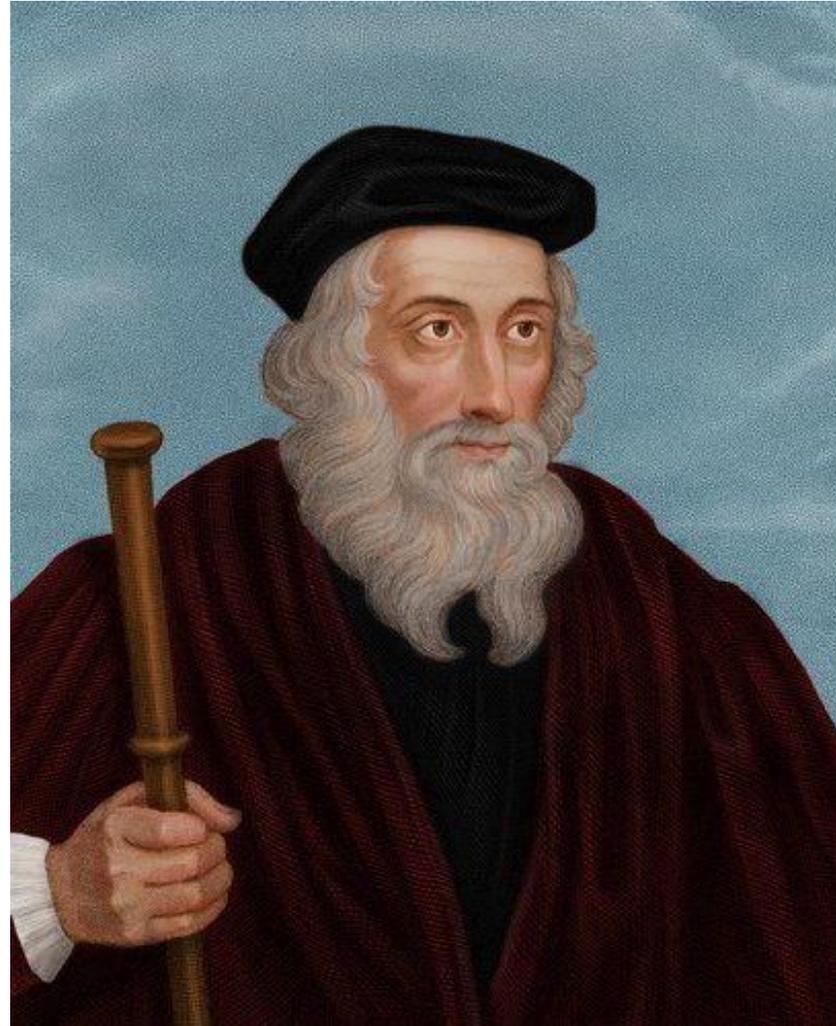
- **Simony** – the practice of selling positions within the church. A rich man could buy a Bishopric for himself, or for his eight-year-old son.
- **Nepotism** – giving of church positions to one's own family
- **Absenteeism** – too many bishops never even visited their churches
- The **wealth** of the church was offensive
- Church leaders **lived like lords**, raising armies, fighting for territory, throwing parties, etc.
- The invention of the **printing press**. It aided the spread of ideas, leading to both Reformation and Renaissance.

# Causes Underlying the Reformation

- The Church's great wealth and power predisposed the nobility to support the religious reformers.
- The reduction of salvation to a financial transaction.
  - If the church was prepared to sell a bishopric to the highest bidder, it would sell anything
  - You paid to have your sins forgiven.
  - You paid to have a mass said for beloved souls in purgatory.
  - You paid to purchase an indulgence that could reduce time in purgatory or eliminate it altogether.

God's plan is always a man:  
Without Godly Men,  
there would have been  
no Reformation!

# John Wycliffe (1320-1384)



# John Wycliffe (1320-1384)

- Morningstar of the Reformation
- The son of a sheep farmer, but known as Oxford's greatest philosopher even before his graduation.
- His studies convinced him the Bible was God's Word and should be the only source of faith and the only guide for Christian living.
- Ordained as a priest he came to reject all major Catholic doctrines.
- He rejected the veneration of saints, the saving power of the sacraments, prayers and masses for the dead, transubstantiation, clerical celibacy, and the office of the pope.

# John Wycliffe (1320-1384)

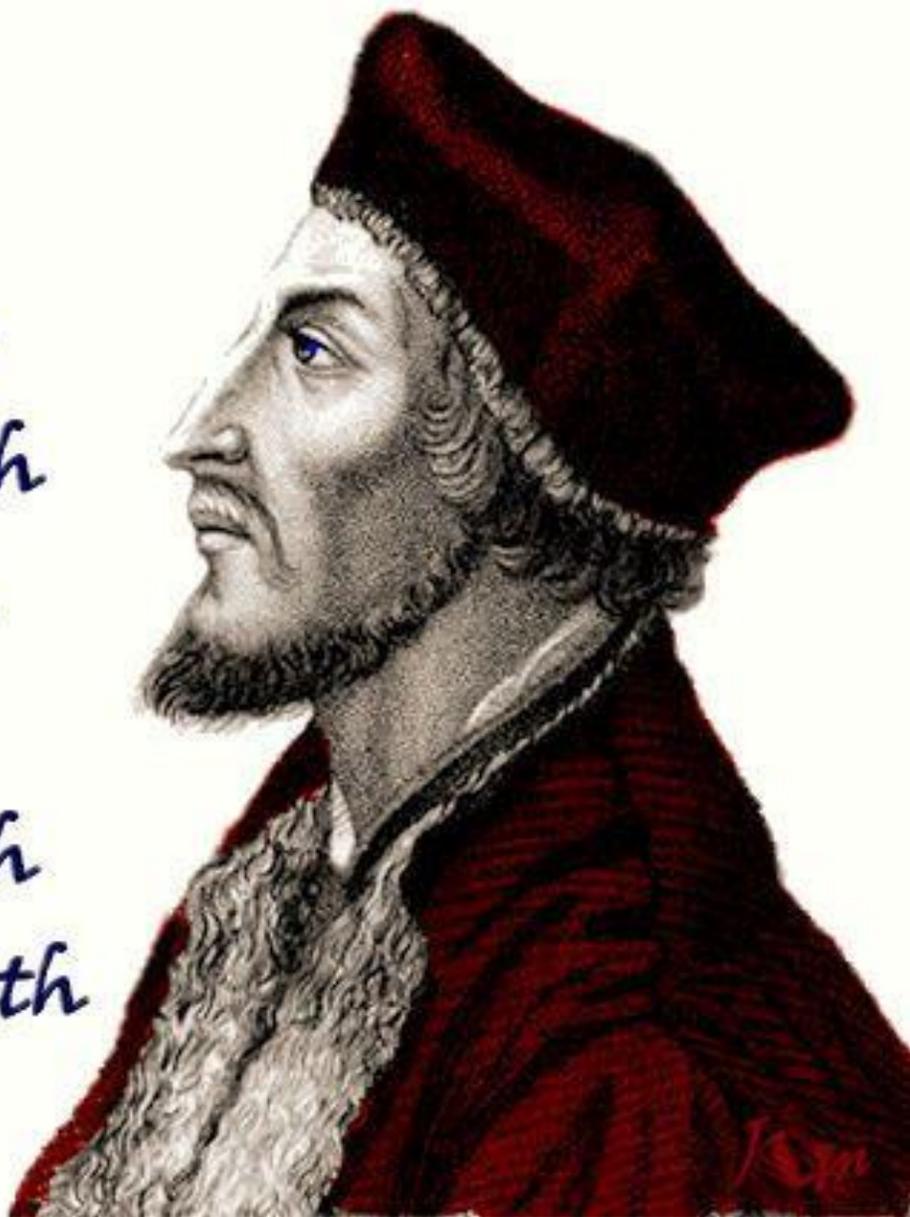
- Wycliffe believed the people should be allowed to read and hear Scripture in their own language.
- He led in the translation of the Bible into English.
- He trained young men to preach the Bible and sent them out.
- These men were called Lollards. They had a great effect upon England and continued their work until the Reformation.
- In 1415 he was declared a heretic by the RCC (Council of Constance). His books were ordered to be burned.
- In 1428 his bones were also dug up and burned.



# John Hus

1369 - July 6, 1415

*“Seek the truth  
Listen to the truth  
Teach the truth  
Love the truth  
Abide by the truth  
And defend the truth  
unto death.”*



# Jan Hus (1369 – 1415)

- Czech priest and philosopher, pastor and professor
- Hus was influenced by Wycliffe; he translated one of Wycliffe's books into Czech.
- Called the First Reformer because his teachings influenced Luther, predating him by 100 years.
- Like Wycliffe, Hus placed ultimate spiritual authority in Scripture. He also rejected most Catholic distinctives.
- He came to believe that God alone could forgive sins.
- His preaching was heard and believed by the people. In fact they delighted to hear him.

# Jan Hus (1369 – 1415)



- 100 years later 90% of Czechs were still Hussites.
- Invited to defend his teaching at the Council of Constance in 1415.
- Went under a promise of safe conduct.
- Demanded any condemnation of his teaching be Scripture-based.
- Condemned and burned at the stake.

# Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)



- Born into a middle-class home
- Ambitious father wanted him to train for the law
- Luther was desperate to know that God loved him. He knew himself to be a sinner and feared the wrath of God
- A lightning bolt convinced him to become an Augustinian monk
- Spiritual exercises left him even more desperate for relief

# Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- Luther tried to satisfy God in his own strength
  - Long fasts
  - Hours in prayer
  - Even more hours in the confessional
  - Not even a pilgrimage to Rome made a difference
- God was seen as a harsh judge before Whom he would never measure up

"I lost touch with Christ the Savior and Comforter, and made of him the jailer and hangman of my poor soul."

# Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

- Luther earned a doctorate in Theology and began to teach at the University of Wittenberg
- Assigned to teach the Bible, chose to lecture on Romans. Got stuck on Romans 1:17, “The just shall live by faith.”

“Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that ‘the just shall live by his faith.’ Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.”

# Indulgences: the straw that broke the church's back

- Albert of Brandenburg wished to buy a third bishopric
- Pope Leo X wished to finish building St. Peter's Cathedral
- The Pope demanded 12,000 ducats for the 12 Apostles
- Albert offered 7,000 ducats for the seven deadly sins
- They settled on 10,000 ducats and Albert borrowed the money from the House of Fugger
- The Pope then allowed Albert to sell a plenary (total) indulgence for eight years
- Half the money went to the Pope, half to the bank

# Tetzel sells indulgences



# Luther lights the fire of the Reformation

- Luther knew salvation could be found in Christ alone, not in an indulgence.
- He wrote out 95 theses (points for discussion) to challenge what the Pope was doing.
- On October 31, 1517 he nailed them to the church door in Wittenberg and invited scholars and students to respond.

“Luther’s Theses differed from the ordinary propositions for debate because they were forged in anger. The ninety-five affirmations are crisp, bold, unqualified.” Bainton

# Selected Theses

- (1) When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said “Repent,” He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
- (27) There is no divine authority for preaching that the soul flies out of purgatory immediately the money clinks in the bottom of the chest.
- (36) Any Christian whatsoever, who is truly repentant, enjoys plenary remission from penalty and guilt and this is given him without letters of indulgence.
- (62) The true treasure of the church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God.

**I DON'T ALWAYS NAIL THINGS TO  
CHURCH DOORS**

**BUT WHEN I DO, STUFF  
STARTS TO HAPPEN.**

# The Diet of Worms

- Interrogator John Eck: “Do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors they contain?”
- Luther: “Unless I am convicted 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 I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”