

I. Why Should We Study Church History?

- To glorify God and praise him for his wise providence.
 - To be encouraged by the faith of our spiritual family.
 - To learn from the past as we navigate the present.
 - To build a healthy church.
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II. Where Have We Been so Far?

1. Paul, Peter, and James—God is Worthy

- a. Christ is worthy of our whole lives because he is good. All the world is a faint reflection of the crescent moon compared to the unveiled, unapproachable brightness of the Son of God.
- b. Yet God does invite us to come to him so that we may enjoy the brightness of his grace. He comes down to us that our faces might shine like that of Moses.
- c. James, Peter, and John knew that knowing God was greater and sweeter than life itself. They knew that their suffering refined their faith and it carried them straight into the heart of God's love for them, not away from it.
- d. They clung to the gospel; they clung to their profession; most importantly, they clung to Christ.
 - i. How? They clung to Christ because they knew that he would never let them go (Rom 8:29-30; Phil 1:6; Jude 24-25).

2. Polycarp—God is Faithful

- a. Cast yourself upon the faithfulness of God
- b. God's Faithfulness is his "perfect loyalty and consistency in being true to his name, his character and his word."¹
 - i. Grasping the truth of God's faithfulness will keep us from worry.
When our daily situations seem so volatile, so full of grief, it is a help to reflect on the faithfulness of God. Pink writes, "He who cared for His child through all the years, will not forsake him in old age. He who has heard your prayers in the past, will not refuse to supply your need in the present emergency."²
 - ii. Grasping the truth of God's faithfulness will keep us from complaining.
God knows what is best for us. He is faithful to always seek our best interest. Has God ever done you wrong? In our present troubles and anxieties, he is likewise doing us no wrong (Rom 8:28-29). When we begin to grasp the truth of God's unswerving faithfulness to us, our complaints will be muted. God is glorified when, during our many trials, we set our mind on Christ and endeavor to persevere in obedience and

¹A.W. Pink, *The Nature of God* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 59.

²Pink, 63.

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remain steadfast in his love for us. *Truly, in every storm, in every night, he will hold us fast. He is faithful.*³

iii. *Grasping the truth of God's faithfulness will grow our confidence in him.*

"Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good" (1 Pet 4:19). "The sooner we trustfully resign ourselves, and all our affairs into God's hands, fully persuaded of His love and faithfulness, the sooner we will be satisfied with His providences and realize that 'he doeth all things well.'"⁴

3. Perpetua—God is Love

- a. God's love is "his determination to give himself to himself and to others, and it is his affection for himself and his people."⁵
- b. God's love is uninfluenced.
 - i. "By this we mean, there was nothing whatever in the objects of His love to call it into exercise, nothing in the creature to attract or prompt it. The love which one creature has for another is because of something in them; but the love of God is free, spontaneous, uncaused."⁶
 - ii. **"What was there in me to attract the heart of God? Absolutely nothing.** But, to the contrary, everything to repel Him, everything calculated to make Him loathe me—sinful, depraved, a mass of corruption, with 'no good thing' in me."⁷
- c. God's love is eternal, sovereign, infinite, immutable, holy, and gracious.
- d. *"Nothing so warms the heart of the saint as a spiritual contemplation of God's love. As he is occupied with it, he is lifted outside of and above his wretched self. A believing apprehension fills the renewed soul with holy satisfaction, and makes him as happy as it is possible for one to be this side of heaven."*⁸
- e. What will be our response to God's love? Will we persevere in it?

4. Constantine—God is Sovereign

- a. Definition: God's absolute rule and authority over all things.⁹
- b. Scriptural basis (Isa 46:10; Eph 1:11)¹⁰
- c. Scope:
 - i. Creation and preservation (Ps 135:6)
 1. He makes all things and keeps them.

³Pink, 63.

⁴Pink, 64.

⁵John MacArthur, ed., *Essential Christian Doctrine: A Handbook on Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 103.

⁶Pink, 92.

⁷Pink, 92.

⁸Pink, 156.

⁹John F. MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway, 2017), 937.

¹⁰MacArthur and Mayhue, 185-186. Information following is adapted from these pages.

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- ii. Election and reprobation (Rom 9:15-16, 18; Eph 1:11-12)
 - 1. He calls sinners to himself, making them alive by his mercy and grace; others he leaves in their sin and passes over.
- iii. Suffering of Christ (Lk 22:42; Acts 2:23, 4:27)
 - 1. Even the suffering of our Lord was within the scope of God's sovereign plan.
- iv. Regeneration (Jn 1:12-13)
 - 1. It is according to God's sovereign plan that we are born again.
- v. Sanctification (Phil 2:13)
 - 1. It is according to God's sovereign plan that we are sanctified.
- vi. Sufferings of believers (1 Pet 3:17)
 - 1. Our suffering, like Christ's, is under God's sovereign control.
- vii. Man's life and destiny (Isa 45:9; Jas 4:15)
 - 1. The details and events in our lives are all contained in God's sovereign will.
- viii. The smallest things (Mt 10:29)
 - 1. Even the tiniest things in our lives are under God's sovereign control.

5. Athanasius—God is Triune

- a. If there was a time when the Son was not:
 - i. There would be no Trinity;
 - ii. There would be no trinitarian love—just solitary, eternal coldness (Jn 17:4-5, 23-24);
 - iii. There would be no trinitarian shape to the gospel (Rom 5:1-5);
 - iv. Christ would not be able to save us (Heb 4:14-16).

6. Patrick—God is Merciful

- a. God's mercy "denotes the ready inclination of God to relieve the misery of fallen creatures. Thus, mercy presupposes sin."¹¹
- b. Patrick in his own words:
 - i. So I am first of all a simple country person, a refugee, and unlearned. I do not know how to provide for the future. But this I know for certain, that before I was brought low, I was like a stone lying deep in the mud. Then he who is powerful came and in his mercy pulled me out, and lifted me up and placed me on the very top of the wall. That is why I must shout aloud in return to the Lord for such great good deeds of his, here and now and forever, which the human mind cannot measure.¹²

7. Augustine—God is Gracious

¹¹Pink, 85.

¹²Patrick, *Confession*, Transl. Pádraig McCarthy (Wicklow, Ireland: Avoca, Co., 2003), 4-6.

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- a. "God's grace describes God as perfectly bestowing favor on those who cannot merit it because they have forsaken it and are under the sentence of divine condemnation. [Simply put,] Grace is God's unmerited favor..."¹³

8. Benedict of Nursia and the Church

- a. Definition: A monk is an ascetic: one who practices severe self-discipline and self-denial in matters of marriage and diet.¹⁴
- b. Do you desire to grow as a Christian?
 - i. Draw near to Christ through the Scripture (2 Tim 3:16).
 - ii. Draw near to Christ through prayer (1 Thes 5:16-18).
 - iii. Draw near to Christ's bride, the church (Heb 10:24-25).
 1. Seek humility.
 2. Be known—how can you practice the one-anothers otherwise?
 3. Submit to your leaders (1 Peter 5:6-7; Heb 13:17).
 - iv. Draw near to Christ through the ordinances (1 Cor 10:16; Col 2:12-15).

9. John of Damascus and Christ Crucified

- a. John responded to Islam.
- b. He asserted that it was absolutely essential that Jesus was the Christ and that he really had been crucified.
- c. At the cross:
 - i. Humanity's sinful nature was displayed
 - ii. God's mercy was poured out
 - iii. God the Son was slain
 - iv. Jesus said "it is finished."

10. Bede and Christian Hope

- a. Bede believed that God was active in history—Bede did providential history. He was not a secular historian in any sense.
- b. "Bede's greatest work was the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. It was undertaken at the request of King Ceolwulf, and no pains were spared by Bede to make it worthy of its subject."¹⁵
- c. Despite being most famously known for his *Ecclesiastical History*, the vast majority of his literary works were biblical commentaries. He loved studying and teaching about the Scripture.
- d. **Bede's Understanding of History.**
 - Believed that God is in control of history.
 - Believed that God had a purpose for the Anglo-Saxons.
 - Believed that God desired the nations to hear the Gospel and receive Christ.

¹³MacArthur, 104.

¹⁴Ferguson, 228.

¹⁵G. F. Browne, Bede, *The Venerable Bede*, The Fathers for English Readers (London; New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; E. & J. B. Young & Co., 1897), 74.

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- His students formed schools and sent out missionaries to the continent—specifically to Holland and Germany.
- He desires that the “earth” would “leap for joy” at the everlasting reign of King Jesus.
- Believed that God was guiding history to a glorious conclusion

11. Atto of Vercelli and Sanctification

a. Who was he?

- i. Lombard cleric—He was viewed as a political and social “elite”, having descended from a Germanic people group, the Lombards, who had conquered Italy between the 6th and 8th centuries.
- ii. He received an exceptional education for the time—even learning Greek, which helped him understand the Bible.
- iii. At this time, it seems that the amount of confusion about the relationship between justification and sanctification was already significant—and it would only get more muddled as the centuries marched on.

12. Bernard of Clairvaux and Christ Alone

- a. Bernard reclaimed clarity in the gospel. Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone.
- b. He rightly divided the categories of Law and Gospel, praise be to God!

13. Anselm and the Atonement

- a. **Penal.** Christ bore the penalty for our sin when he died; he received the wrath of God for our sin.¹⁶
- b. **Substitutionary.** “His death was also a ‘substitution’ in that he was a substitute for us when he died.”¹⁷
- c. **Atonement.** Christ’s death was a payment for our sin. He paid it all so that we may go free.

14. Thomas Aquinas and Nature and Grace

- a. Thomas taught us that all things—both in the spiritual and natural spheres—are subject to God. Therefore, we can investigate them without fear.

15. John Wycliffe and the Dawn of the Reformation

- a. Faithful brother.
- b. Translated the Bible into English from Latin.
- c. Encouraged lay preaching.
- d. Was protected from persecution at Oxford University and also enjoyed the protection of John of Gaunt and the queen mother.
- e. His writings were carried away to Prague in Bohemia where they would be picked up a century later by Jan Hus.

¹⁶Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 579.

¹⁷Grudem, 579.

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16. Jan Hus and Christian Courage

a. Comparison to Polycarp.

- i. Both men were ministers of the gospel.
- ii. Both were apprehended for their faith in Jesus Christ alone to save from sin.
- iii. Both were accused of having heretical views of God.
- iv. Both were condemned to be burned at the stake.
- v. Both died victoriously in the faith, singing praises to God.
- vi. Both had the earth scooped up from beneath them.

vii. ***Both died at the hands of Roman authorities.***

- #### b. (Prophetic) Last Words.
- Prior to his execution Hus was heard to say, “‘You are now roasting a goose, but God will awaken a swan by whom you will not burn or roast’—a statement cited years later by the minister officiating at Martin Luther’s funeral.”¹⁸

17. Martin Luther and the Reformation

- #### a.
- Mention his lord Katy.

18. John Calvin and Dying to self

- #### a.
- The theme of Calvin’s life was dying to self. So often he did not end up doing what he wanted but what was needful for the church. He was a faithful man.

19. The English Reformation

20. The Puritans

III. Passages to reflect Upon

John 16:25–33 (ESV)

²⁵“I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.

²⁶In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf;

²⁷for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

²⁸I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

²⁹His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech!

³⁰Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.”

³¹Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?

¹⁸John D. Woodbridge and Frank A. James III, *Church History Volume Two: From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2013), 50.

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³²Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.

³³I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Psalm 119:68

“You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.”

- Jesus promised to be with us (Mt 28:19-20)
- Jesus promised that we would suffer with him (Rom 8)
- The Gates of hell will not prevail against us, Christ’s church (Mt 16:17-18)