

Church History Series - Part 4

by Mike Attwood

This sermon explores the significant events and figures in church history from 300 to 500 AD, highlighting doctrinal controversies and the emergence of monasticism as a response to corruption.

Duration: 47:01

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 Timothy 2:4-6, 1 Timothy 4:10, Revelation 2:20-21

Topics: "Church History", "Church Corruption", "Historical Responses to Doctrinal Controversy"

Description

Mike Attwood discusses the period of church history from 300 to 500 AD, highlighting the doctrinal controversies and corruption within the Church as it became intertwined with the Roman Empire. He emphasizes the responses from groups like the Donatists and Augustine's controversial teachings, which led to a mixed church and the persecution of dissenters. Attwood also notes the rise of monasticism as a reaction to church corruption and the significant contributions of figures like Jerome and Nestorius. He warns against the dangers of compromising the gospel and the importance of returning to the simplicity of Scripture amidst historical complexities.

Transcript

Okay, I want you to turn to 1 Timothy 2. We're looking at this period between 300 to 500. So we've still got a long way to go in the history of the Church, but we'll make progress. When we get into the Dark Ages, we've got a thousand years, but that will seem like one day when we do that one, because it's pretty dark, there's not much to see there.

But for now, in this 300 to 500 era, there was doctrinal controversy going on. The Church, because it was married, thoroughly married to the world, became exceedingly corrupt very quickly. And there were those that responded against this corruption, like the Donatists in North Africa.

They dissented, basically, and they believed in a lot of things that we would believe in. They believed in the autonomy of the Church, they believed in baptism by immersion, they believed in the new birth. They were solid believers in many ways, and yet because there was this seeming division now, the threat, of course, because the Church is now tied in with the Empire and married to Constantine the Emperor, he's concerned about unity, and so he basically has these people persecuted.

And then we talked about our friend Augustine, and he wrote against the Donatists. Now we'll look at what he said, and how he abused Scripture in dealing with them. We'll think about that in a minute, but before

we do that, I want to read from 1 Timothy 2, just for a second.

And I want to just read a few verses, and as I read them, I just want you to keep in mind, I think one of the simplest ways to look at the Word of God, if the plain sense makes common sense, choose no other sense, or else it will be nonsense. Just keep that in mind. So as we read this, don't try and make it complicated.

Verse 4, Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth? That's the will of God, our Saviour. Now, does that seem simple enough to you? I think that seems pretty clear, right? He will have all men. The will of God is for all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Okay, look further down in the passage. And verse 6, speaking of the Lord Jesus. Verse 5, For there is one God, one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.

So who did Christ die for? That's clear, isn't it? Plain sense makes common sense, choose no other sense. Look at chapter 4 now. 1 Timothy 4, verse 10.

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. Okay? In other words, as one person put it, Christ's death is sufficient for all, but only efficient in those that believe. Right? Now that, to me, now I'm a simple guy, but that makes real sense to me.

Right? I mean, right? It's not complicated, is it? It's pretty clear. Until Augustine comes along and muddies the waters. Now, we'll start with his dealing with Adonitus.

You see, Adonitus wanted a pure church. They saw the corruption of the church and they said, We've got to separate from this. We want a pure believer's church.

I like that idea, don't you? You see, we're calling it church history, but a lot of these people are not in the church at all. The only way you're in the church is by the new birth. And by this stage, a lot of these people are not born again at all.

Right? So, Adonitus put it in a pure church. Augustine, in answering them, in his response to Adonitus, he used the parable of the wheat and the tares to describe the church. And he said, Let them both grow together.

So, instead of a believer's church, we have a church that now is a mixed multitude because he used the kingdom parables and applied them to the church. Right? If he just had a bit of dispensational nous about him, he wouldn't have said that. Now, it's easy for us to say it down the pipe.

But that's how he answered that. He also, for groups like Adonitus and anybody that was kind of outside the camp deliberately, he used Luke 14, compelled them to come in. Now, when I think of compelled them to come in, I'm thinking of using persuasion.

Right? I think that's what the Lord had in mind. He used the idea of compelled them, actually used the arm of the state and the beginnings of what we call the Inquisition to compel them to come in. In other words, use force.

And now, of course, you're married to the state. So, you've got the armies of the empire at your disposal. Okay? So, compel them to come in.

So, that's what he said. But he also, he was a neo-Platonist and a lot of his teaching tried to fuse together philosophy with scripture. Now, it's not a good mixture.

So, some of the things that he said was this, that before time began, God determined that a certain number would be saved. That number is the elect. That number can never be increased or decreased.

And God, because man is so depraved, he can't save himself, he is gonna secure the elect by his supernatural imposing his will upon them. And basically, if you're not one of the elect, it doesn't matter what you do, you don't have a hope. Right? So, again, now, we're not in the days of John Calvin.

But I said last night, John Calvin was an Augustinian student. He studied at a university that was run by Augustinians. He quotes Augustine 800 times in his institutes.

And by the way, he'd only been saved a few years when he wrote his institutes. And so, what's coming out is all this Augustinian thinking. And Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk.

So, Augustine is gonna have, that's what I said, these two individuals, Constantine and Augustine, their footprints or their dirty fingerprints are gonna be all over the church to this very day. Right? And so, the Catholic Church in all its present state, much of it goes back to Augustine. Reformed theology goes back to Augustine.

That's why Robert Anderson says it's almost like every error comes from this one man. And he's considered to be a great doctor in the church and all the rest of it. And I suppose because I came out of an Augustinian system, being raised Catholic, he's not high on my hero list.

In fact, I detest the teachings of Augustine. I don't know about the man whether he was really converted or not. I have no idea.

It's not for me to determine that. But what I would say is this, that things like amillennialism, baptismal regeneration, Calvinism, and Catholicism, all come from that one source. Right? So, he's really kind of responsible for a lot of things.

Now, there are other groups at this time. And again, just to give you a positive side of things, there was another group called the Nestorians, Nestorianism. Followers of a guy called Nestorius.

And this man, he really had an objection. The church were kind of following these creeds at this time. And one of the things they kept saying was that man was the mother of God.

And Nestorius had a real problem with that. He didn't deny the baby of Christ for one second. But what he did say is that the Bible never calls her the mother of God.

He's correct. It always calls her the mother of Jesus. The scripture is very careful in how it uses words.

And so, anyway, as a result, like the Donatists, he gets pushed out. And so what he does is he leaves Africa and where does he go? He goes to China and takes the gospel to China. Isn't that amazing? You see, we think nobody went to China until Hudson Taylor went to China.

Nestorius went to China way back and preached the gospel. So sometimes we think that everything happened in missions in our day. No, no, Africa, North Africa was evangelized in the early days of Christianity.

China was evangelized by men like Nestorius. So I find that encouraging, right? We agree with that view of Nestorius. In this 300 to 500 timeframe.

I don't have the exact dates of him, but that timeframe. So basically, an edict 392 prohibited paganism. So now, not only is Christianity kind of a state religion, paganism is now officially prohibited and the state will persecute the pagans now.

So it's kind of like everybody's so-called Christians. And of course, what happened during Constantine and that era is that because it was the respectable thing to be a Christian, literally thousands were baptized to become Christians. Not because they saw themselves as sinners who needed a savior, but if you want to get on in the Roman Empire, you've got to be a Christian now.

So tons of pagans get baptized, but their hearts are unchanged. They still think like pagans, they're still superstitious like pagans, but now they're externally at least Christians. And so you can see how things are very confused and all the rest of it.

And because the church becomes so corrupt, because you have this unholy mixture, the weakness of the testimony, there's a rise of people who react against this. And this is when you get the beginning of monasticism, the monasteries. And it actually doesn't really begin with monks, it begins with hermits.

A guy called Anthony, 250 to 350, that time frame, so he lived a long life, but he, this man Anthony of Egypt, he just got so disillusioned with the church, he went and lived in a cave. And just kind of said that the church is so corrupt, the only way to walk with God is to just be so separated, so he went and lived in a cave. And others kind of felt the same way, and pretty soon there were so many hermits, there wasn't hardly a spare cave to be had.

The real estate market for caves was done. The caves were full of people. Another guy, Simon Stylites, he came on the scene, and just again a fascinating figure, 390 to 459 he lived.

He lived on the top of a pillar. He built a little platform on top of a pillar, and he just spent his time in prayer and contemplation on the top of this pillar in the desert. And it's amazing that his pillar, he felt it wasn't high enough because he was still too close to the corruptness of the world, so he ended up getting a pillar 60 feet high and lived on that.

People would bring him food and all the rest of it, and that's the way you know you're giving charity to the monks and all this kind of stuff. And so this is Simon living on a pillar, thinking somehow he's escaping the corruption from the world, but he forgot that you've got corruption in your heart, so you can go on the biggest pillar you like, but you're still taking corruption with you, right? So this is what's going on. There's this reaction, and part of this reaction results in monasticism, this separation from the church, and in some ways an interesting thing is that when you get to places like Ireland and the British Isles, you find that some of these monks actually were quite evangelical, and the monasteries were places where kind of centres for evangelistic labour.

So you do have some of the Irish monks, actually one of my girls is actually translating right now from ancient Irish some of the tracts that these individuals wrote, but they were very active in evangelism from

their monastic places. But they were people that wanted to be separate from the corruption that they saw in the world and in the church. Now, just also during this time frame, something else of note that we need to mention is that there was a man called Jerome who translated what we call the Latin Vulgate 347 to 420.

So that was a significant event, the translation of the Bible into Latin. Again, because we're still in the Roman Empire, and Latin is the language of Rome, so again, it's the idea of putting the Bible in the language of the people. Now, unfortunately, only the educated could read, and so it didn't do the average person a whole lot of good.

But nevertheless, at least the trinitical scriptures were translated at that time. He called it the Divine Library, and so that's Jerome. Now, we're going to move on to the next one.

I want to just go back now to Revelation 2, 18 onwards, and we want to look at Thyatira, 18 through 29, so this is kind of a lengthy letter, but we just again want to focus on the salient feature. This is going to be the Dark Ages, A.D. 500 to A.D. 1500, a long period, a thousand years covered during this time, and in Revelation 2, let's look at verse 20, as we consider this particular church, it says, Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman, Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants, to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And Thyatira has the idea of continual sacrifice, because we're going to learn how the simple Lord's Supper, the simple Remembrance Feast, during this time frame, kind of morphed into what we call the Sacrifice of the Mass.

So we'll think about that in a little bit, but first of all, let's just think about Jezebel. Jezebel introducing idolatry. When you look at Israel's history, there were lots of dark times in Israel's history, but probably the darkest time in Israel's history was during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel.

It was the Dark Ages of Israel's history. And there are certain things that stand out about that time, and I just want to give you a quick biographical sketch of her and that time. First of all, it begins with a marriage that should never have happened.

She marries Ahab, and that was a compromise, wasn't it? Because she was a daughter of a pagan priest, and he was supposed to be the king of Israel. So it started with an unholy marriage. We've already seen in our last church, the unholy marriage between Constantine, the emperor, and the church, is where it all began.

And that's where things start to go bad. 2 Corinthians 6, we were talking about separation, come out from and be separate. And be not unequally yoked to unbelievers, right? Well, when the church as a whole becomes yoked to unbelievers, you've got a big mess on your hands.

And so certainly it begins with this compromise, this marriage between so-called people of God and paganism. She was a persecutor of the true saints of God. She was killing the prophets, and remember there were ones that were hiding them.

She supported 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah, promoting pagan practices. And, of course, she does blacken somebody who cares about his heritage and his inheritance, Naboth, and doesn't want to give it up. And what does she do? She blackens his character.

So during this period, we're going to see that God raised up a remnant, just like there was a remnant in the dark ages of Israel's history. In fact, Elijah thought he was the only one. God had to show him, remember, that there were 7,000 that hadn't found the need to Baal.

And during this period, there's going to be a lot of true believers, the Albigenses, the Waldensians, the Lollards. God is not going to leave himself without a witness. And maybe I'll just pause here.

This is a good time to stop and say something. Somebody asked me, if you've never read church history, what are some good resources? And I'm going to give you three that I think would be worth having in your library. And one of the three is by Andrew Miller, no relation to Steve, but Andrew Miller and his church history is available for free on STEM Publishing's website.

STEMpublishing.com This stands for Sound Teaching Electronic Media. So you can read, and it's very readable, Andrew Miller's church history. And he takes the seven churches just like I do and uses that as a basis for going through church history.

He does a good job. Another one is called the Pilgrim Church. By E. H. Broadbent.

Edmund Hammer Broadbent. Published by Gospel Folio Press. And what I love about Broadbent's treatment of church history is that normally when we see church history, it deals with two streams, the Catholic and the Protestant streams.

What Broadbent does, he says, no, there's three streams in church history. There's the Catholics, there's the Protestants, and then there are simple, believer's churches that are not linked with the state at all, that often were persecuted by both. And he traces the history of some of these groups, like the Albigenses, the Waldensians, the Lollards, throughout church history, and tells you that, again, God never, ever left himself without a witness, and there was always a faithful remnant.

And that faithful remnant just wanted to get back to the simplicity that's in the Word of God. What was the name of Broadbent's book again? The Pilgrim Church. Thank you.

Yeah, very, very helpful book. The third one is just, if you want a basic, simple starter, is called The Story of the Church by A. M. Rennick. R-E-N-W-I-C-K.

The W is silent. Rennick. And that was the first one I ever read.

As a fairly new believer, I read Rennick's book, and that got me hooked. The Story of the Church. A. M. Rennick.

IVP published it, I think, into Varsity Press. So, anyway, that's a short, but just kind of brief introduction to church history. Okay, so, anyway, during this Dark Age, so she blackens the character of Naboth, and, of course, the church blackens the characters of all of these that dare to go back to the simplicity of Scripture and calls them heretics.

And the description of the term heretic now is basically anybody that disagrees with the big church. Anybody that... And, by the way, to this day, the Catholic Church has pronounced an affirmation, the Council of Trent, on anybody that believes in justification by faith. That person is a heretic.

Outside the true church and outside the grace of God. So, I'm one. You are listening to... According to the Catholic definition, you are listening to a first-rate heretic in this monarchy.

Right? Because I believe in justification by faith. Right? And a list of things that you and I would believe in, they would just say, heretic, heretic, heretic, heretic. And it's basically anybody that disagrees with us is a heretic.

Amazing thing about this, and we'll just look at verse 21 just for a second. It says, I gave her space to repent of her fornications, and she repented not. The amazing thing is that the Catholic Church has had lots of opportunities to repent.

Luther was a Catholic priest. He had no desire to leave the Catholic Church. That's why they call it the Reformation.

The desire was to reform it. John Huss was a Catholic priest. John Wycliffe was a Catholic priest.

So, God has raised up a witness to the Catholic Church, and these individuals never wanted to leave it. They wanted to reform it. They wanted it to come back to Scripture, and they were either burned at the stake or basically forced out.

And so, she has had lots of opportunities to repent. Notice what's going to happen. It says, I gave her space to repent of her fornications, and she repented not.

Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. Can I just say this? We're getting from history to prophecy now. But I believe with all my heart that when the rapture occurs, the Catholic Church will be undisturbed.

It will be business as usual the day after the rapture. And it will go into great tribulation, and I believe that just as Christ has his true bride, the man of sin has a whore. And that whore, the very center of it will be the Catholic Church.

And she will go into great tribulation, and those that join with her. Right? So, we just want to see that there's not a good end. The end of the true church is the rapture.

We're going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the end. The end of the false church is it will go, and the midpoint of the tribulation, once the man of sin has established his position, he'll want him to be back to emperor worship again. And he will destroy the whore.

You know, she'll gain the power with him, but once she's finished her purpose, he will destroy her. So, we kind of quickly morphed into prophecy there. She repented not.

Hus, Luther, Menno, Simons, Calvin, all were Catholics. He wanted to reform the church. And here's another interesting twist.

Look at verse 26. He that overcometh keepeth my works to the end. To him will I give power over the nations.

You know, the irony is that the one thing the Catholic Church has always wanted is power over the nations. That's why it's got embassies all around the world. Because it really wants political power.

And yet, the true overcomer will get the very thing the Catholic Church has always wanted. You and I are going to reign with Christ as kings and priests on the earth. Right? The very thing that they wanted to reign, we'll get it.

Just because we were loyal to the Lord Jesus in the day of his rejection, we'll be glorified with him in the day of his vindication. And we will suffer with him. We shall also reign with him.

That's our destiny. The very thing that she wanted, she went about it the wrong way. So let's think about these dark ages from a historical point.

Even though Jerome translated the scriptures, initially it wasn't recognized by the Roman Catholic Church until 1546 and the Counter-Reformation. It wasn't officially recognized. Because the last thing the Catholic Church wanted is for you to read your Bible.

My mother-in-law, a very devout Roman Catholic, she said, she told us, she said when she was a little girl, she was interested in the Bible, she went to a priest, and he said to her, if you read the Bible, you'll either go blind or insane. What a terrible indictment. But you know what's behind all that? You see, if you read the Bible, you won't stay a Catholic very long.

Because you'll see, there's a huge disconnect. Right? That's the last thing they want, is you reading the Bible. And so the Latin Vulgate was there, but it wasn't encouraged that anybody, in fact, it was suppressed.

So let's look at some of the key individuals and how things developed. Gregory I, the first medieval Pope, Gregory 540 to 604 AD, founder of the Gregorian chant. Sounds pretty nice.

He disclaimed the title of Pope, but he did say that the Bishop of Rome was supreme. So even though he didn't take the title Papa, he basically is saying that of all the churches, because Rome is kind of still the center of things, center of the empire, it has primacy. And so, for instance, the title of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

Rome is the center of it. And he began to assert the spiritual supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over other bishops. One of the things that he did is he sent Augustine, now not Augustine of Hippo, this is another Augustine, to evangelize the Angles of Britain.

The story is that there was a slave market in Rome and he saw these handsome young men and he thought they looked like angels. And he said, who are they? And the answer was, they're the Angles, from England, because they do look angelic, don't they? So he said, we need to send somebody to evangelize these. And so he sent Augustine to Britain, landed at Canterbury, became the first Bishop of Canterbury.

And, of course, the problem was that Britain was already being evangelized. Remember we talked about these Irish monks, men like Patrick and Columba? They were already evangelized. You go to Lindisfarne in the north of England, that's where the gospel first came in, from Ireland.

These Celtic monks bringing the gospel. And they were evangelizing, they were moving down Britain, sharing the gospel all down the British Isles. And yet here comes Augustine in the south and he's coming and there's always sort of this clash between the Catholic church and the Celtic church.

And Gregory held to the verbal inspiration of the Bible, but he also said that tradition had an equal place with the Bible. And again, that is a problem. Like now the Catholic church, they believe the Bible is the word of God.

But they also believe that tradition is of equal weight with the Bible. And ironically, when the two clash, guess which takes precedence? The vision every time, right? So this is where it goes back to this, Gregory I. So anyway, this Celtic church and the Catholic church, there was a synod at Whitby in the north of England, 664 AD, where officially Catholic became the religion of England, sadly. And so in the dispute between them, the Catholics won.

The condition of the church at this time too, big emphasis on relics of the apostles and martyrs abounded. A cathedral could not be consecrated without relics. So you've got to find these relics.

And pilgrimages became a big thing to Israel to, I guess, to find relics and bring them back. Also during this time, lots of interesting things going on. As the church becomes more corrupt, AD 571 to 632, a guy called Muhammad comes on the scene.

The rise of Islam. 610, he has a special revelation from the angel Gabriel. Initially he thought that it was demons.

And he was convinced that he was demon-possessed. But his wife told him, no, no, it's God speaking to you. And he listened to his wife.

Dangerous thing sometimes. I'm not sure. Anybody know that? That's what they say.

Okay. You only say that at a mass conference, brother. Yeah.

Yeah. So 620, Muhammad is expelled from Mecca. Goes to Medina.

And he forms an army. And he comes back in 630 and takes Mecca. At 632 he died.

And his dying words were, fight every man until all say God is Allah. Famous last words. Fight every man until all say God is Allah.

And we got to be careful, but the bottom line is, Muhammad was a pedophile and a terrorist. That's what he was. And what's interesting is that, again, there are a billion souls that idolize a man who is a pedophile and a terrorist.

You see the consequences of that? If you spend your time meditating on him and thinking about him, what's he going to make you? And we see the ugliness of this. But I wonder, somehow it's interesting that, as we said, North Africa, 80% of North Africa was Christian. Conquered by Islam.

Just a note, what you just said is actually illegal to say in Canada. I'm not Canadian. Good.

What's illegal? Oh, you can say it. You can label it anywhere in North America. Hate speech? Yeah, hate speech.

But you're saying it well, so that's okay. Yeah. Yeah, so Islam conquered the land of Israel, conquered Turkey, conquered Egypt, conquered North Africa, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, even into Spain.

In fact, Europe almost fell. There was a battle in 732, the Battle of Tours, and Charles Martel, who was the king of the Franks, actually turned Islam back. And at that point, it was almost like it was all over for Europe too.

Now what's interesting is that the Muslims have this thing that once they've conquered a land, it's supposed to belong to Islam forever. That's why they want the land of Israel back, because they conquered it. That's why they want Spain back, because they conquered it.

And so once they've conquered it, it's supposed to be theirs forever. They'll never settle until it is. And so there's a consequence to all these places falling, because prior to that, there were really five key bishoprics where you had these metropolitan bishops that were over the church.

You had Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. So Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, all fell. All that's left is two, Constantinople and Rome.

So now, the battle to be who's the supreme bishop is between Constantinople and Rome. You know where this is going, right? Remember the big division in the church over when is Easter going to be, and you're going to have the Orthodox Church, you're going to have the Catholic Church. These are the two bishops that are left fighting for supremacy.

By the way, when Charles Martel conquered the Muslims or pushed them back, Gregory the Great, and he was the guy who accepted the title of Pope or Father for the first time, he was so impressed that he crowned Charles Martel as the Holy Roman Emperor. So now you've got the reinstalling of the Holy Roman Empire, even though it's in name only, and you've got Charles Martel who's the now new emperor and of course the Pope who conferred that title to him so he kind of owes everything to the Pope. So that's where you are in terms of politics.

Then came in 800 AD a guy called Charlemagne and again crowned as Holy Roman Emperor. And the Holy Roman Empire would continue at least in name until Napoleon Bonaparte. And Napoleon Bonaparte brought an end to the Roman Emperors.

He was the one that brought that to an end. So during this period, again the rise of monasteries, again partly because of the corruption of the church, the Benedictine orders, and again a good thing that was going to happen during this time is that these monasteries became centers of learning and education. And one of the things that most monasteries had was a scriptorium.

And these scriptoriums, they would carefully copy the scriptures in them. And you can go, if you go to Trinity College in Dublin for instance, you can see some of these gospels that were written so beautifully by these monks. And so there was a preservation of the word of God and a very careful copying of the word of God that took place in these monastic places.

And the Book of Kells is found there in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. It was copied at about 800. And I've seen it, it's beautiful.

Lindisfarne, the Lindisfarne Gospels. Again, you can see those in Northern England, again beautifully preserved. And so there are places to preserve learning.

So basically what you've got, right, at this point in what we call the Dark Ages, you've got Charlemagne who's the political head of the Empire, so to speak. You have the Pope who's the religious head. And the monks are the educational leaders.

And that's how you got education, was the monks. And for instance, when I used to do secular work, I worked as a clerical officer in the administration of the power plant. And so the title clerical officer was

because the clergy were the only people who could read and write.

And so it kind of came down into our language. If you've got a clerical job, it means you can read and write, basically. But it comes from the clergymen.

It comes from the monasteries. They were the only ones that could do that. They were the educated ones.

And so certainly clerical, the monks would do your tax forms because they still pay taxes in those days. They were the ones that knew Latin. They were the ones that would do any kind of work that you needed doing in terms of contracts, all the rest of it.

And again, corruption became rife, particularly in terms of, because it was so advantageous to be a clergyman because you were the only person that would have a proper education. Wealthy people would want to get their sons into the clergy because it's the only way you're going to get an education. So people were beginning to buy offices, right? And to patronage, paying them to get office so that they can get this education and all the rest of it.

And around this time, some interesting things happened. They're going to have a bearing on the Reformation. 1054, there was this split between Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

East-West split. And so that would divide the church. And then 1456, Constantinople would fall to the Muslims.

And what happened was that the Eastern Orthodox Church, when it fell, they fled north of Turkey into Russia. You ever wondered where the Russian Orthodox Church came from? It came from Constantinople. They just fled north.

But not everybody fled north. Some of them escaped to Rome and they brought manuscripts with them that had been preserved in the libraries of Constantinople. This is going to set the tone for the Reformation because the ones that came, they brought with them.

One of the treasures they brought with them were copies of the Greek New Testament. They also brought things like Plato's works and Aristotle and all the poetry and all this kind of stuff, all these kind of things. And southern Europe couldn't wait to get their hands on the philosophy stuff.

Northern Europe wanted the Greek New Testament. You see where this is all going, right? So now, as a result of the fall of Constantinople, the Greek New Testament is now being studied in the universities of northern Europe. Another interesting thing is that a man called Hildebrand 1097 became, he was a monk that became the Pope, became Gregory VII.

And he brought in the celibacy of priests. He said, it'll keep expenses low. No wife to shop for.

There's no succession because remember everybody wants an office. So if a priest had children, the first person that's going to get his office would be his kids. So if you're celibacy, there's no succession, which means we can sell those places for a lot of money.

And then mobility, they have no ties. We can send them anywhere we want. So that's where celibacy came.

And so we'll talk more. We haven't quite finished this, but you can see that these dark ages, but the good news is that even in the dark ages, God did not leave himself without a witness. We'll have to wait till this evening, but we want to talk about the morning star of the Reformation.

We want to talk about Peter Waldo. I want to talk about some of these groups that preach the true gospel in great simplicity during this time. And I think one of the encouraging things is that you still see the Lord is sovereign over all.

That he's even using the fall of Constantinople to set the tone for the coming Reformation. Just a lot of different things that are happening that are paving the way. The corruption was driving men to react against the corruption of the system to go outside the camp.

And people are doing that. And so we're going to see that there's going to be a lot of good things. We're getting to a good part soon, folks, so just bear with us a bit longer.

But again, God is preparing the way for the marvelous life of the Reformation. So we're going to go to prayer now, but before we do, I just want to say a couple of things. I've been asked to do this, but I want to just say a couple of things about our times of prayer.

One is that the reason why we have so many times of prayer tied into this is perhaps there's a sense in which Acts 6-7, we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. You notice the order, the divine order, we'll give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. And sometimes I think the Word is really important, but we emphasize the Word and sometimes prayer is being neglected.

So we feel it's very important to have these times of prayer. Not just important in the sense of recognizing our need of divine help this week to be able to take in what we're learning, but one of the ways that you can make things real to your own heart is pray back to the Lord things that He's spoken to you. So we want to use this opportunity to, you know, God has spoken to your heart, just speak back to Him and respond to Him.

And as we do have this time of prayer, I just want to encourage us too to give opportunity for others to pray. So we don't want, you know, just be aware that we don't want to take up all the time, allow other people time to pray too. So just be sensitive to one another as we come to the Lord in prayer.

And let's just avail of these opportunities and lay hold on God. There's a lot of burdens that we have too. Many of us are burdened about the state of the church, right? A lot of us are deeply exercised about the condition of the church, the church that we know, that we love.

And we know that God delights to hear the cries of His children. And so let's come to Him on behalf of the church and pray, Lord, bring us back to the simplicity of New Testament Christianity. Let's get rid of any vestiges of this Roman system that clings to us.

And let's go back to simplicity and not just in form, as we heard in our last session, but in passionate hearts of love for the Savior. I just want to encourage us to avail of this time. And this time goes till noon.

So we've got about 22 minutes.

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