

Tonight, we are going to do an overview of the doctrines that have been lost and reclaimed throughout Church History. I know some people shudder at the thought of History and see it as old and not applicable. Others are thrilled by history and see its immense value.

Specifically, Church History is hard to know how to value at times. There are major denominations and whole branches of Christianity that place an aspect of authority of Church History. Others go to the other extreme and say we have no need of it.

I am hoping to take a middle ground tonight. One thing I want to be clear on is Church History has no authority. It is not scripture and we must let scripture guide our thinking and what we call as true. With that said we also don't need to reinvent the wheel. God has given the Church great thinkers, who there is value in looking at the insight God gave to them.

The last warning, I want to give is that tonight will not be an overview of major events in church history. Jim made a statement that grace was a doctrine that was being lost in our time. He also pointed out that eschatology or the study of the end times was a doctrine that was being reclaimed in our time. This principal of losing and reclaiming truth can be seen throughout church history. So tonight we are going to mainly focus on specific seasons when major truth was lost or reclaimed.

The first one we are going to look at is in Acts 15

Jerusalem Council

Act 15:1-11

(1) But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, **“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”**

This was a loaded statement.

-At the base level it was saying you had to take on the Jewish culture, become a Jew, in order to be saved.

-It also implied that believes had to look and act a certain way

-It implied there should be an adherence to the law to be saved.

(2) And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

Paul and Silas are spitting mad. The word for dissension could also be translated riot.. It is so important they decide to get the Church leaders together to discuss and pray about it.

- (3) So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.
- (4) When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, **and they declared all that God had done with them.**
- (5) But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."
- (6) **The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.**
- (7) **And after there had been much debate**, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, **that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.**

Notice this was not a forgone conclusion. The early church has much debate. They were unsure of how to give an answer.

- (8) **And God, who knows the heart**, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us,
- (9) **and he made no distinction between us and them**, having cleansed their hearts by faith.
- (10) Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?
- (11) **But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."**

Notice the outcome. The Church decides you do not need to become Jewish or obey they Law. The conclusion is salvation is only by grace. We believe in Jesus and you will be saved. It is that simple.

This was an early church council. Think about what would have happened if the answer would have been yes you have to become a Jew to be saved, the church would have looked radically different and truth would have been corrupted early on.

Doctrine of the Trinity

The next major doctrine that was debated and settled by the Early church was the teaching about the Trinity. Most of the early church from 100 to 300 Ad was under sever persecution. Constantine changed that with the edict of Milan in 313 which

officially recognized Christianity as an approved religion. And eventually this led to Christianity being declared the official religion of Rome.

Now that Christianity didn't have to be in the shadows, it allowed the church leaders to get together to formalize what it believed. Listen to this quote from Arius who was one of the church leaders of the time.

Arius

“The Son was not always; for since all things have come into existence from nothing, and all things are creatures and have been made, so also *the Logos of God himself came into existence from nothing and there was a time when He was not*; and that before He came into existence He was not; but He also had a beginning of His being created.”

Listen to this quote from Athanasius another leader of the time:

Athanasius:

“Were he [the Word] a mere creature he would not have been worshipped nor spoken of [as in the Bible]. **But he is in fact the real offspring of the substance of the God who is worshipped, his Son by nature, not a creature.** Therefore he is worshipped and believed to be God”

These were two Church leaders of the day. Arius is saying that Jesus is a created being. That Jesus is not eternal and should not be considered to be God. Then you Athanasius saying Jesus is the same substance of God, was never created and is God Himself.

Remember the term we are so comfortable with, Trinity hasn't even been invented yet. They are struggling for the language to describe who Jesus is This again is a major doctrine that the Church is not sure what to do with.

The issue is settled in John 1

Joh 1:1-2

(1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, **and the Word was God.**

(2) He was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:14

(14) **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,** and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The early church spent two different councils having much debate of this issue.
Council of Nicaea in 325

Council of Constantinople in 381

Lead to the Nicene creed

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
 the only Son of God,
 begotten from the Father before all ages,
 God from God,
 Light from Light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten, not made;
 of the same essence as the Father...”

This was a major conclusion for the church. Jesus was God. It seems strange that this would be debated. Yet there are still cults today that believe Jesus was created.

So this debated happened in the 300 to 400. The next major reclaimed doctrine won't be until 1517. So there is this massive Jump in church History. It is unfair to say things weren't happening. Yet once Christianity was directly tied to the politics of Rome many things were lost during the middle ages.

In the late 300 early 400 a debate arose in the church over what role man had in salvation. And if Man was born a sinner or naturally good. Pelagius, looked around at how sinful the Roman Church was getting and wanted to encourage people to live good moral lifestyles.

Pelagius taught:

“Essentially, he believed that man is basically good and moral and that even pagans can enter heaven through their virtuous moral actions.

What men and women need is moral direction, not a new birth; therefore, Pelagius saw salvation in purely naturalistic terms—the progress of human nature from sinful behavior to holy behavior, by following the example of Christ.”

Augustine fought tooth and nail against Him. Augustine wanted to champion grace.

“humans were in possession of a will that was corrupted and tainted by sin, which biased them toward evil and away from God. Only the grace of God could counteract this bias toward sin.” He became known as the doctor of grace.

As you can see the Jerusalem council is going to be had throughout church history over and over again. How are people saved. Are they good and just need to follow the right rules, or is there something categorically wrong in them that needs to change?

It is the questions of are we by nature sinners?

Rom 3:10-20

- (10) as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;
 (11) **no one understands; no one seeks for God.**
 (12) **All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”**
 (13) “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.”
 (14) “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”
 (15) “Their feet are swift to shed blood;
 (16) in their paths are ruin and misery,
 (17) and the way of peace they have not known.”
 (18) “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”
 (19) Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, **and the whole world may be held accountable to God.**
 (20) **For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight,** since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

There cannot be any salvation found in any works of the law, because we are sinners. We are not morally neutral. God is telling us that at our core because of Adam’s sin, we are sinful beings. WE do not have the capacity to worship God by ourselves.

1Co 2:14

- (14) The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and **he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.**

Augustine understood this, and fought Pelagius that we cannot be saved by our own doing.

The council of Carthage in 418 solidified that Augustine was correct.

Yet Augustine went off the rails quickly. Augustine was so convinced we needed Jesus to save us listen to were it lead him.

“By this grace baptized infants too are ingrafted into his [Christ’s] body, infants who certainly are not yet able to imitate anyone. Christ, in whom all are made alive . . .

gives also the most hidden grace of his Spirit to believers, grace which he secretly infuses even into infants. . . . If anyone wonders why children born of the baptized should themselves be baptized, let him attend briefly to this. . . . The sacrament of baptism is most assuredly the sacrament of regeneration”

Augustine believed we must baptize all infants in order to save them. This became a major teaching in the church. Listen to Thomas Aquinas in the 1200s

Thomas Aquinas: “According to the Catholic Faith we are bound to hold that the first sin of the first man is transmitted to his descendants, by way of origin. **For this reason children are taken to be baptized soon after their birth, to show that they have to be washed from some uncleanness.** The contrary is part of the Pelagian heresy, as is clear from Augustine in many of his books.”

2Ti 2:14-18

(14) Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.

(15) Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

(16) But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,

(17) and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,

(18) who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

Augustine’s teaching directed the church really until the protestant reformation in the 1500s.

During this time the power of the Roman Catholic church continued to grow. Honestly most of this period of Church History it is hard to separate national history and politics from the church. But one key thought continued to grow. Papal bull *Unum Sanctum* (1302):

“That there is one holy (*unum sanctum*), Catholic and apostolic church we are bound to believe and hold, our faith urging us, and this we do firmly believe and simply confess: **that outside this church there is no salvation or remission of sins. . . . We declare, state, define, and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation** for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff”

Do you realize what was just said? They said the only place you can find salvation is here at the catholic church.

Act 4:11-12

(11) This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

(12) **And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

Salvation is found in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. Salvation is not found in the Church. I want to make sure that statement is understood. You can go to church to learn about Jesus in order to be saved. But someone can be saved by learning about Jesus outside of a church. The Catholic church would disagree. Salvation can only be found through the church.

Is this really that different from the Jerusalem council they wanted to know if you had to be a Jew to be saved, and now in the 1300's the Church says you have to submit authority to the pope and be a roman catholic to be saved.

What is really said about this time in church History is that the Bible was not even in the common language for the normal person to read it. Again the Church had the authority to tell you what it said.

John Wycliffe had to stand up for the bible to be translated into English.

“You say it is heresy to speak of the Holy Scriptures in English. **You call me a heretic because I have translated the Bible into the common tongue of the people.** Do you know whom you blaspheme? Did not the Holy Ghost give the Word of God at first in the mother-tongue of the nations to whom it was addressed? Why do you speak against the Holy Ghost? You say that the Church of God is in danger from this book. How can that be? Is it not from the Bible only that we learn that God has set up such a society as a Church on the earth? **Is it not the Bible that gives all her authority to the Church?** Is it not from the Bible that we learn who is the Builder and Sovereign of the Church, what are the laws by which she is to be governed, and the rights and privileges of her members? **Without the Bible, what charter has the Church to show for all these?** It is you who place the Church in jeopardy by hiding the Divine warrant, the missive royal of her King, for the authority she wields and the faith she enjoys.”

2Ti 3:14-17

(14) But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it

(15) and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings,

which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

(16) All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

(17) that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.