

Church History

Lesson 15 - Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Jerome

1. Introduction - All Saints Day

- 1.1. Today is All Hallows Eve - Hallowe'en
- 1.2. The church celebrated great saints of the ages on All Saints Day/All Hallows Day (which began on All Hallows Eve)
- 1.3. In part, this is based on Scriptures like Hebrews 12:1 - **Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses**, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.
- 1.4. Note: It was also on this day that Luther nailed the 95 theses to the Wittenburg Door, correctly pointing out how the church had abandoned and distorted the faith handed down from these great saints of the past.
- 1.5. Thus, it is fitting for us to take a look at three great early leaders of the church - Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Jerome

2. Ambrose

- 2.1. How Ambrose became a bishop (Gonzales, locations 3842-3851)
 - 2.1.1. In the year 373, Ambrose was the popular governor of the important city of Milan, and apparently had hopes of promotion to even higher roles within the empire. At this point he was still an unbaptized catechumen, being taught the faith and preparing for baptism and acceptance into the church.
 - 2.1.2. The bishop of Milan Auxentius, who had been appointed by an Arian Emperor after he had exiled the orthodox bishop, died.
 - 2.1.3. The death of Auxentius set off a controversy, as both the Orthodox and the Arian's were determined to have one of their own party designated as bishop.
 - 2.1.4. To prevent disorder, Ambrose attended the election as the governor of the city. As tempers began to flare, Ambrose rose and spoke, using all of his great rhetorical skill.
 - 2.1.5. Suddenly, a child in the crowd cried out "Ambrose, bishop." This caught on, and soon the crowd began to chant this as well.
 - 2.1.6. Ambrose, however, had no such intentions, and he tried in vain to dissuade the crowd. Eventually, he even tried to flee the city but was unsuccessful.
 - 2.1.7. When word of all of this came to the emperors ear, it pleased him, and thus Ambrose eventually relented.
 - 2.1.8. To keep the proper rules, Ambrose was baptized and moved through all appropriate "ranks" of clergy in 8 days! Thus he became bishop of Milan, but was still actually a novice in the faith!
- 2.2. Ambrose's growth and ministry
 - 2.2.1. He also undertook the study of theology, with the help of a priest who had taught him the basics of Christian doctrine. His keen mind helped him in this undertaking, and soon he was one of the best theologians in the Western church. - Gonzales, location 3858
 - 2.2.2. Ambrose had been trained in rhetoric and was considered one of the greatest preachers of his day. In fact, it was through the preaching of Ambrose that a young teacher of rhetoric - Augustine - was converted and became the greatest theologian in the early Western Church.

- 2.2.2.1.** Among the many who went to listen to him preach, there was a young teacher of rhetoric who had followed a long and tortuous spiritual pilgrimage, and who was so entranced by the bishop's words that he returned to his mother's faith, which he had abandoned many years before. Eventually, the young man, whose name was Augustine, was baptized by Ambrose, who does not seem to have been aware of the exceptional gifts of his convert, who one day would become the most influential theologian for the West since the apostle Paul. - Gonzales, location 3874
- 2.3. Ambrose and money**
- 2.3.1.** Like many other leaders of his day, Ambrose aspired to the monastic ideal. He was thus very critical of greed and was not impressed by the growing wealth of the church.
- 2.3.1.1.** God ordered all things to be produced so that there would be common food for all, and so that the earth would be the common inheritance of all. Thus, nature has produced a common right, but greed has made it the right of a few. AMBROSE OF MILAN - Gonzales, location 3837
- 2.3.1.2.** [On one occasion] there was news of many captives for whom the Goths were demanding ransom. Ambrose's response was to order that funds be raised for the refugees and for ransoming the captives by melting some of the golden vessels and other ornaments the church possessed. This created a storm of criticism, particularly among the Arians, who were eager to find him at fault and accused him of sacrilege. Ambrose answered: It is better to preserve for the Lord souls rather than gold. He who sent the apostles without gold also gathered the churches without gold. The church has gold, not to store it, but to give it up, to use it for those who are in need.... It is better to keep the living vessels, than the golden ones.*- Gonzales, location 3864
- 2.4. Ambrose and orthodoxy**
- 2.4.1.** Ambrose had learned the faith from an Orthodox priest, and became a great leader and defender of Orthodoxy against the Arian heresy.
- 2.4.2.** In fact, Ambrose refused to even allow the heretical Arian groups to have use of the church buildings of the Orthodox - which led him into conflict with the royal family as we will see below.
- 2.5. Ambrose and the Emperors of the Empire**
- 2.5.1.** Ambrose's' popularity and skill was such that emperors turned to him for help in difficult situations.
- 2.5.1.1.** Gratian was then killed in a rebellion, and the usurper, Maximus, threatened to take Valentinian's territories. The boy emperor was defenseless, and therefore, in a desperate move, he and his mother Justina sent Ambrose as an ambassador before Maximus. The bishop was successful, and the expected invasion was averted. - Gonzales, location 3880
- 2.5.2.** On occasion, Ambrose came into sharp conflict with the Emperors and their family - and always ended with the upper hand. Three such occasions stand out:

- 2.5.2.1.** The royal family wanted the heretical Arians to use a basilica to conduct their own worship in Milan. Ambrose refused, and when troops came to force the issue, he organized a sit in by the faithful, who sang hymns until the troops withdrew.
- 2.5.2.1.1.** In spite of this, relations between Ambrose and Justina were not good. The empress was Arian and insisted on having a basilica where Arian worship could be celebrated. On that point, Ambrose was adamant. He would not have a holy place desecrated by heretical worship, nor would he allow the empress' power to be used to further the Arian cause in Milan. - Gonzales, location 3883
- 2.5.2.1.2.** At one point, Ambrose and his followers were besieged by imperial troops surrounding a disputed church. While those outside threatened the besieged by the clash of arms. Ambrose rallied his flock by singing hymns that he had composed—for he was also a great writer of hymns. - Gonzales, location 3885
- 2.5.2.1.3.** 2. In 385–86 Ambrose successfully maintained orthodox possession of a basilica in Milan that the Arians, at the instigation of Valentinian II's mother Justina, requested for their use. Ambrose organized a "sit-in" by the orthodox, whose spirits he maintained by hymn singing, until the emperor's troops withdrew.- Ferguson, location 4276
- 2.5.2.2.** Ambrose clashed with the orthodox Emperor Theodosius over the rebuilding of a destroyed synagogue.
- 2.5.2.2.1.** The first clash took place when some overzealous Christians in the small town of Callinicum burned a synagogue. The emperor decided that they be punished, and that they also must rebuild the synagogue. Ambrose protested that a Christian emperor should not force Christians to build a Jewish synagogue. After several stormy interviews, the emperor yielded, the synagogue was not rebuilt, and the arsonists were not punished. This was a sad precedent, for it meant that in an empire calling itself Christian, those whose faith was different would not be protected by the law. - Gonzales, location 3903
- 2.5.2.2.2.** In 388 a Jewish synagogue was destroyed by rioting Christians and the emperor Theodosius demanded that Christians rebuild it. Ambrose successfully opposed this order on the grounds that Christian money could not be used to build a Jewish synagogue.- Ferguson, location 4279
- 2.5.2.2.3.** On this, we must simply say that Ambrose was wrong, and this set a bad precedent for the future.

2.5.2.3. Ambrose also clashed with the Emperor Theodosius over his actions in executing a large number of citizens for sedition and riot. Ambrose refused to allow the Emperor to take communion until he repented - which the Emperor did.

2.5.2.3.1. Theodosius seemed convinced, but later his wrath was rekindled, and he decided to make an example of the disorderly city. He sent word that the riot had been forgiven, and then, by his order, the army trapped those who had gathered at the circus to celebrate the imperial pardon, and slaughtered some seven thousand of them. - Gonzales, location 3909

2.5.2.3.2. In 390 Theodosius ordered the massacre of 6,000 to 7,000 citizens of Thessalonica for sedition after a riot resulted in the murder of several imperial officials. When Theodosius appeared at church in Milan, Ambrose refused him communion until he did penance for the executions. Theodosius, unlike his predecessors, was already baptized and thus subject to the discipline of the church.- Ferguson, location 4281

2.5.2.3.3. Ambrose resolved to demand clear signs of repentance from the emperor. Although the details are not clear, one of Ambrose's biographers tells us that the next time Theodosius went to church, the bishop met him at the door, raised his hand before him, and said, "Stop! A man such as you, stained with sin, whose hands are bathed in blood of injustice, is unworthy, until he repents, to enter this holy place, and to partake of communion."*- Gonzales, location 3912

2.5.2.3.4. At that point, some courtiers threatened violence. But the emperor acknowledged the truth in Ambrose's words, and gave public signs of repentance. - Gonzales, location 3916

2.5.2.4. Despite this, Ambrose was respected and trusted by the Emperor, who called him to his bedside as he drew near to death.

2.6. Ambrose's legacy

2.6.1. Ambrose is was an important figure in the victory of Orthodoxy over heresy. He is remembered for his solid theology, great teaching, and standing firm against the Arian heresy.

2.6.2. Ambrose is a great example of standing up to those in power when they have committed evil. He did not shrink before the powerful or wealthy, but held everyone - including the Emperor and his family - the standards of righteousness. Such courage is worthy of emulation.

2.6.3. Ambrose had a huge influence through his most well known convert - Augustine. It was God's work through Ambrose that convinced Augustine, whose influence on the thought and life of the church right down to our own day is hard to overstate.

- 2.6.3.1. Ambrose was an able preacher whose expositions of Scripture had a part in the conversion of Augustine, something that in itself would have earned him a place in church history.- Ferguson, location 4297
- 2.6.4. However, Ambrose's thought and especially his actions regarding the relationship between the church and the state were problematic.
 - 2.6.4.1. In theory, Ambrose held to a distinction between two powers under God - civil and ecclesiastical. However, this thought was still in development.
 - 2.6.4.1.1. Ambrose formulated a theory of two powers—civil and ecclesiastical—but in his actions he represented an authority of the church over the state, and that became the significance of his precedent in the Middle Ages.- Ferguson, location 4289
 - 2.6.4.1.2.
 - 2.6.4.2. In action, the church always held power over the government. This was adopted by the Western Church in the middle ages, with very bad results.
 - 2.6.4.2.1. Ambrose achieved the success he did because he had the Christian populace behind him and the emperors themselves were devoted Christians (moreover, Gratian and Valentinian II were young). It was through the emperors' personal faith that Ambrose influenced state policy. He had a spiritual view of the church and did not aim at a state church, but that was virtually the result.- Ferguson, location 4284
 - 2.6.4.2.2.
 - 2.6.4.3. Finally, he did not understand the freedom of religion inherent in the new covenant (and the two kingdoms model he was trying to articulate) and this led him to very questionable actions in cases such as the rebuilding of the Jewish synagogue.

3. Chrysostom

- 3.1. John Chrysostom's early life
 - 3.1.1. John was reared by a devoted, godly Christian mother. She made sure he received the best training in Scripture, the classics, and rhetoric. This deeply shaped John's later life.
 - 3.1.1.1. John was born about 347 at Antioch. His mother, Anthusa, lost her husband when she was twenty and John was an infant. She renounced another marriage and devoted herself to her son. She provided him with the best education possible, both in Scripture and in the classics.- Ferguson, location 4221
 - 3.1.1.2. For the latter, John studied under the most famous pagan rhetorician of the time, Libanius, who paid Anthusa the compliment, "God, what women these Christians have!- Ferguson, location 4223
 - 3.1.1.3. Anthusa, John's mother, was a fervent Christian who loved her child with a deep and possessive love. - Gonzales, location 3937

- 3.1.2.** Like many others in his day, John felt drawn to the ascetic life of a monk
 - 3.1.2.1.** He was above all a monk. Before becoming a monk he was a lawyer, trained in his native Antioch by the famous pagan orator Libanius. - Gonzales, location 3935
 - 3.1.2.2.** John's way of solving the tension between his monastic vocation and his mother's possessiveness was simply to turn their home into a monastery. There he lived with three like-minded friends until, after his mother's death, he joined the monks in the Syrian mountains. He then spent four years learning the discipline of monastic life, and two more rigorously practicing it in complete solitude. Later, he himself would admit that such life was not the best kind of training for the shepherd's task. - Gonzales, location 3945
 - 3.1.2.3.** Baptized at the age of eighteen, John became a reader in the church. He was drawn to the ascetic life and spent two years in a mountain cave, an experience that ruined his health.- Ferguson, location 4224
 - 3.1.2.4.** Back in Antioch, he was ordained a deacon in 381 and a presbyter in 386. In the latter capacity he served as the preacher in the principal church in the city until 397.- Ferguson, location 4226
 - 3.1.2.5.** In any case, when John returned to Antioch after his six years of monastic withdrawal, he was ordained a deacon, and a presbyter shortly thereafter. As such, he began preaching, and soon his fame was widespread throughout the Greek-speaking church. - Gonzales, location 3950
- 3.2.** John becomes a leader in the church
 - 3.2.1.** John became known as the greatest expositor in the Greek speaking church, which is why he was later given the title "Chrysostom" (Golden mouth).
 - 3.2.1.1.** Over time, John established his fame as the greatest of Christian pulpit orators and expositors. His designation Chrysostom ("Golden Mouth") has been current since the sixth century. His typical method was to preach through a biblical book, a passage at a time, first giving an exposition of the main points in the text, and then going back through it with application to his hearers. He had a gift for seeing the meaning of the text and how to make an immediate and practical application of it.- Ferguson, location 4227
 - 3.2.1.2.** One hundred years after his death, John of Constantinople was given the name by which later ages know him: John Chrysostom –"the golden-mouthed." That was a title he well deserved, for in a century that gave the church such great preachers as Ambrose of Milan and Gregory of Nazianzus, John of Constantinople stood above all the rest, a giant above the giants of his time. - Gonzales, location 3928

- 3.2.2.** Chrysostom becomes bishop of Constantinople - one of the most important churches in all of Christendom.
- 3.2.2.1.** In 397, the bishopric of Constantinople became vacant, and the emperor ordered that John be taken to the capital city to occupy that prestigious position. But his popularity in Antioch was such that the authorities feared a riot, and therefore kept the imperial decree secret. They simply invited the famous preacher to visit a small chapel in the outskirts of the city, and when he was there they ordered him into a carriage, in which he was forcefully taken to the capital. There he was consecrated bishop early in 398. - Gonzales, location 3952
- 3.2.2.2.** Constantinople often looked to Antioch to find its theological and ecclesiastical leaders, and in 397 John was chosen bishop of Constantinople and consecrated to that office in 398. It proved to be a great personal misfortune. His efforts to raise the moral tone of the capital met with strong opposition.- Ferguson, location 4231
- 3.3.** Chrysostom's troubles in Constantinople
- 3.3.1.** The church in Constantinople had practices which were not in line with the Gospel, and were leading to immorality and disrepute. Foremost among these was the practice of certain "celibate" priests keeping "spiritual sisters" in their homes, which was a great scandal. Many of these priests also lived in luxury and were not caring for the flock. John immediately set about reforming the church.
- 3.3.1.1.** John took all those issues head on. He ordered that the "spiritual sisters" move out of the priests' homes, and that the latter lead an austere life. Church finances were placed under a system of detailed scrutiny. The luxury items that adorned the bishop's palace were sold in order to feed the hungry; and the clergy received orders to open the churches at such times as were convenient not only for the wealthy, but also for those who had to work. Obviously, all these measures gained him both the respect of many and the hatred of others. - Gonzales, location 3968
- 3.3.2.** Constantinople had become a city of great wealth and inequity, and this was unacceptable to John, who railed against practices that preyed upon the poor
- 3.3.2.1.** Constantinople was a rich town, and one given to luxury and intrigue. The great emperor Theodosius was dead, and the two sons who had succeeded him, Honorius and Arcadius, were indolent and inept. - Gonzales, location 3956
- 3.3.2.2.** The new bishop of Constantinople was not completely aware of all this. From what we know of his character, it is probable that, had he been aware, he would have acted just as he did. The former monk was still a monk, and could not tolerate the manner in which the rich inhabitants of Constantinople sought to wed the Gospel with their own luxuries and comforts. - Gonzales, location 3962

- 3.3.2.3. The gold bit on your horse, the gold circlet on the wrist of your slave, the gilding on your shoes, mean that you are robbing the orphan and starving the widow. When you have passed away, each passer-by who looks upon your great mansion will say, “How many tears did it take to build that mansion; how many orphans were stripped; how many widows wronged; how many laborers deprived of their honest wages?” Even death itself will not deliver you from your accusers.*- Gonzales, location 3974
- 3.3.2.4. How think you that you obey Christ’s commandments, when you spend your time collecting interest, piling up loans, buying slaves like livestock, and merging business with business?...And that is not all. Upon all this you heap injustice, taking possession of lands and houses, and multiplying poverty and hunger. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM- Gonzales, location 3924
- 3.3.3. Chrysostom eventually clashed with the most powerful people of the city, including Eutropius, the powerful palace chamberlain.
 - 3.3.3.1. Eutropius, the palace chamberlain had the confidence of the emperor, and it was he who had actually convinced the Emperor to appoint John as the new bishop, against the wishes and intrigues of the Patriarch of Alexandria.
 - 3.3.3.2. Eutropius used his position to satisfy his own ambition and desires, as well as those of his friends.
 - 3.3.3.3. As a result of all of this, Eutropius was resented by the people, and even by the Empress Eudoxia who felt he had too much influence - even thought it was he who had arranged her marriage to the Emperor Arcadius!
 - 3.3.3.4. Eutropius thought that John would be grateful to him and thus grant him special favors. But this was not how Chrysostom viewed anyone! Everyone was equal before God and everyone needed the Gospel and needed to be taught how to apply the faith - including Eutropius! This led to great conflict, so that Eutropius wanted John removed from his position.
 - 3.3.3.4.1. Eutropius, who had made him bishop, expected special favors and concessions. But John was convinced that Eutropius was simply another Christian in need of having the Gospel clearly and unambiguously preached. The result was that Eutropius repented, not of his sin, but rather of his error in having brought the meddlesome preacher from Antioch. - Gonzales, location 3981
 - 3.3.3.5. One day, a group of people fled Eutropius and sought asylum in the Hagia Sophia (the great church of Constantinople). Eutropius sent soldiers to get them, but Chrysostom refused the soldiers entry. Eutropius pled with the emperor, but was overruled - and thus his fortunes began to wane, largely because he had clashed with the popular Chrysostom and lost.

- 3.3.3.6. Soon thereafter, a series of events brought about the downfall of Eutropius - who fled to the Hagia Sophia for sanctuary! When a mob arrived to get him, Chrysostom stood in the way of the mob and protected Eutropius. He continued to do this even when the army and the emperor himself showed up! However, Eutropius feared this would not hold, so he fled the church building, and was captured and executed by a mob of people he had wronged.
- 3.3.3.7. This incident showed both the character and integrity of Chrysostom, but also his growing influence.
- 3.3.4. Chrysostom clashes with Eudoxia, the Empress
 - 3.3.4.1. Chrysostom's growing influence and especially his preaching soon greatly displeased the Empress Eudoxia. This was especially true of his preaching against pomp and folly of the wealthy and powerful.
 - 3.3.4.1.1. Eudoxia, the emperor's wife, resented the bishop's growing power. Besides, what was being said from the pulpit of Saint Sophia was not to her liking—it fitted her too well. When Chrysostom described the pomp and the folly of the powerful, she felt the people's eyes staring at her. - Gonzales, location 3994
 - 3.3.4.2. Eudoxia tried to buy Chrysostom's favor with gifts to the church, but Chrysostom simply thanked her and continued his preaching as before.
 - 3.3.4.3. When Chrysostom had to leave the city in order to attend to some matters in Ephesus, Eudoxia joined Theophilus of Alexandria in plotting against the meddling preacher. Upon his return, Chrysostom found himself the object of a long list of ridiculous charges brought before a small gathering of bishops convened by Theophilus. He paid no attention to them, but simply went about his preaching and his management of the church. Theophilus and his partisans found him guilty, and asked Arcadius to banish him. Prodded by Eudoxia, the weak emperor agreed to that request, and ordered Chrysostom to leave the city. - Gonzales, location 3998
 - 3.3.4.4. The situation was tense. The people were indignant. The bishops and other clergy from neighboring towns gathered at the capital, and promised their support to the bishop. All that he had to do was to give the order, and they would convene as a synod that would condemn Theophilus and his followers. This could be coupled with a popular uprising that would shake the very foundations of the Empire. One word from the eloquent bishop, and the entire conspiracy against him would crumble. Arcadius and Eudoxia were aware of this and made ready for war. But Chrysostom was a lover of peace, and therefore made ready for exile. Three days after receiving the imperial edict, he bid farewell to his friends and followers and surrendered to the authorities. - Gonzales, location 4005

- 3.3.4.5. The populace was not ready to give up without a struggle. The streets were boiling with rumors of mutiny. Arcadius, Eudoxia, and the army did not dare show themselves in public. That night, in what was taken as a sign of divine wrath, the earth quaked. A few days later, in response to the fearful and urgent pleas of Eudoxia, Chrysostom returned to the city and to his pulpit, where he was received with shouts of acclamation. - Gonzales, location 4010
 - 3.3.4.6. Chrysostom's preaching angered Eudoxia again. The Gospel text on the beheading of John the Baptist occasioned Chrysostom's undiplomatic remark, "Once more Herodias demands the head of John on a platter.- Ferguson, location 4238
 - 3.3.4.7. Chrysostom's enemies sought his banishment for unlawfully resuming the duties of a see from which he had been canonically deposed. Their argument: a synod of bishops could depose a bishop from office; the emperor could exile or recall from exile, but could not put a person back into office. Chrysostom, however, did not recognize the bishops' jurisdiction.- Ferguson, location 4240
 - 3.3.4.8. The emperor then ordered Chrysostom to cease performing ecclesiastical functions, but he refused to do so. While he was gathering catechumens for baptism, soldiers showed up and drove him from the church. The soldiers' violence ended up staining the baptismal waters with blood.- Ferguson, location 4243
 - 3.3.4.9. After a few months of further intrigues, confrontation, and humiliation, Chrysostom received a new order of exile. Once again he refused to heed the advice of his friends, and quietly surrendered to the soldiers who went after him, rather than stirring up a riot that would cause the people further suffering. - Gonzales, location 4014
- 3.3.5. Chrysostom's exile and death**
- 3.3.5.1. Chrysostom was initially exiled to the remote village of Cucusus. Unable to preach, he began to write, and soon people from every quarter of the Empire were moved to take up the cause of Chrysostom and condemn the Emperor, the Empress, and Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria. Even Innocent the bishop of Rome rallied to the support of Chrysostom.
 - 3.3.5.1.1. Meanwhile, the preacher with the golden mouth was lead to exile in the remote village of Cucusus. Since he lacked a pulpit, he took up the pen, and the world was moved. Innocent, the bishop of Rome, took up his cause, and many followed his example. The emperor's actions were criticized from every quarter, and Theophilus of Alexandria had no support but that of a few timid souls who dared not oppose imperial power. As the controversy became widespread, the little town of Cucusus seemed to have become the center of the world. - Gonzales, location 4020

- 3.3.5.2.** As a result, Chrysostom was ordered to be banished to an even more remote location - a frigid, unknown hamlet on the Black Sea. Chrysostom, whose health had never been good since his ill-advised two years of ascetic solitude in the wilderness and caves as a young man, became very ill during the journey.
- 3.3.5.3.** Realizing he would not survive the journey, Chrysostom asked to be taken to a small roadside chapel, where he took communion, bid everyone around him farewell, and preached his final message: "In all things, glory to God. Amen."
- 3.3.5.4.** Chrysostom thus died in exile in 407, but twenty one years later his remains were brought back to Constantinople and buried in the Church of the Apostles. Furthermore, while his opponents are largely remembered for their intrigues against him, Chrysostom has been universally lauded as one of the greatest saints and leaders of the ancient church, and his influence continues down to the present day.

3.4. Chrysostom's legacy

- 3.4.1.** Chrysostom stands as a picture of a leader of integrity, unwilling to be bought by the rich and powerful.
- 3.4.2.** Chrysostom stands as a picture of a church leader of integrity in the midst of a growing corruption within the leadership of the church. As priests were descending into immorality and embracing luxury, he lived a model life of godly character and service to others.
- 3.4.3.** Chrysostom does also show the ill advised path of asceticism, which he admitted did nothing to prepare him for shepherding a flock, and which caused him health problems throughout life. But even the best of us are often swept into the currents of the practices of our age.
- 3.4.4.** Chrysostom is an example of a church leader trying to stay uninvolved (as much as was possible) from the political intrigues of the day. Although this was virtually impossible, Chrysostom viewed his job as a shepherd of the flock and not a political leader. Thus, he gave himself to preaching and the sacraments, and tried to avoid political intrigue - even when doing so cost him personally.
- 3.4.5.** Chrysostom's greatest legacy in his careful exposition of the Scripture. Many of his teachings are studied to this day, and his insights into Greek are still referenced by scholars and leaders throughout the church.

4. Jerome

4.1. Jerome's early life

- 4.1.1.** He was born around A.D. 348, in an obscure corner of Northern Italy. By his date of birth, he was younger than many of the great figures of the fourth century. - Gonzales, location 4047
- 4.1.2.** Jerome was born in Dalmatia to Christian parents, who gave him a good education. He was baptized in Rome toward the end of his student days.- Ferguson, location 4323

- 4.2.** Jerome's education and struggle regarding classical learning and literature
- 4.2.1.** Jerome was educated in classical literature and loved it. However, he felt guilty about this, and thought that he should not love the writings of these learned pagans. This was exacerbated by a dream he had which rebuked him as being more of a follower of Cicero than of Christ. However, it was this very training and love of good writing that allowed him to be used of God in translating the Scriptures!
- 4.2.1.1.** During an illness at Antioch Jerome had a dream in which he was rebuked as "a Ciceronian, not a Christian." He resolved to give up his classical studies and devote himself to Christian writing, but the renunciation of pagan learning was not as absolute as he professed, for his work continued to show the influence of classical authors.- Ferguson, location 4325
- 4.2.1.2.** He was an ardent admirer of classical learning, and felt that this love for an essentially pagan tradition was sinful. His inner turmoil on this score peaked when, during a serious illness, he dreamt that he was at the final judgment and was asked: "Who are you?" "I am a Christian," Jerome answered. But the Judge retorted: "You lie. You are a Ciceronian. - Gonzales, location 4050
- 4.3.** Jerome's struggles regarding sex and time as a monk
- 4.3.1.** Jerome, like Augustine, early on had a real struggle regarding sex. To overcome this, he tried becoming a monk, and practiced strict asceticism. However, he found the urges and memories followed him to the desert. Consequently, he undertook the study of the Hebrew language, hoping this would occupy his mind to help him overcome temptation.
- 4.3.1.1.** He was also obsessed by sex. Upon retiring to the monastic life, he hoped to be rid of that burden. But even there he was followed by his dreams and by the memories of dancers in Rome. He sought to suppress such thoughts by punishing his body, and by an exaggeratedly austere life. He was unkempt, and even came to affirm that, having been washed by Christ, there was no need ever to wash again. And yet that did not suffice. In order to fill his mind with something that would take the place of the pleasures of Rome, he decided to study Hebrew. - Gonzales, location 4055
- 4.3.2.** However, Jerome was not really fit for the life of a hermit, and his companions disliked him, so within three years he returned to Antioch, where he was ordained by the bishop of the Orthodox community (not the Arian leaders.)
- 4.3.2.1.** Withdrawing to the desert as a hermit (Epistle 22.7), Jerome learned Hebrew. His fellow hermits disliked his company, however, so Jerome went back to Antioch, where the bishop of the Nicene community, Paulinus, ordained him a presbyter.- Ferguson, location 4327
- 4.3.2.2.** Eventually Jerome conceded that he was not made for the life of a hermit. It was probably before three years were up that he returned to civilization. In Antioch he was ordained a presbyter. - Gonzales, location 4060

4.4. Return to Rome

4.4.1. Jerome returned to Rome in 382, where the bishop of Rome recognized his great literary skill and made Jerome his personal secretary. Bishop Damasus also encouraged Jerome to further study and writing, and eventually suggested he work to make a fresh translation of the Bible into Latin - the work for which Jerome is most remembered.

4.4.1.1. He returned to Rome, where bishop Damasus, a good judge of human nature, made him his private secretary and encouraged him to further study and writing. It was also Damasus who first suggested to him the project that would eventually take up most of his time, and would become his greatest monument: a new translation of Scripture into Latin. - Gonzales, location 4062

4.4.1.2. Back in Rome in 382, Jerome was set to work by Damasus on a new Latin translation of the Psalms and the New Testament. The literal and unliterary character of the Old Latin versions of the Bible offended many educated persons, and Damasus wanted the best for the church.- Ferguson, location 4329

4.4.2. While in Rome Jerome received the support of a wealthy woman named Paula, along with her three daughters. Jerome enjoyed their company, and they become his disciples, even becoming accomplished in Greek and Hebrew.

4.4.2.1. The bishop's secretary visited that house regularly, for in its women he found devoted disciples, some of whom became accomplished students of Greek and Hebrew. It was in that company that Jerome felt most free to discuss the scholarly questions that occupied his mind—particularly questions having to do with the text of the Bible. - Gonzales, location 4068

4.4.2.2. It is significant that Jerome, who never had any close male friends, and who was obsessed by sex, found such solace in this group of women. Perhaps he felt at ease because they did not dare compete with him. In any case, it was they that came to know the sensitivity that he desperately sought to hide from the rest of the world. - Gonzales, location 4070

4.4.3. Eventually, however, Jerome made enemies among the clergy in Rome. This was even worsened by the election of Siricius to be bishop of Rome. Jerome decided he had had enough of Rome, and in 385 decided to return to Palestine to continue his studies and labors. Paula went with him, and they set up monasteries for men and women and continued Jerome's great work of writing and translation.

4.4.3.1. Among Jerome's supporters was a circle around the wealthy Paula and her three daughters. Jerome's attacks on luxury and on a less than ascetic lifestyle provoked opposition from the clergy, and his disappointment over the election of Siricius as bishop led him to leave Rome in 385. With Paula he toured Palestine, and they settled at Bethlehem, establishing dual monasteries for men and women. Thus began his most fruitful period of studying and writing.- Ferguson, location 4332

- 4.4.3.2.** However, Jerome was not a tactful man, and he soon made enemies among the leaders of the church in Rome. When Damasus died, late in 384, Jerome lost his staunchest defender. Siricius, the new bishop, had little use for Jerome's scholarship. - Gonzales, location 4077
- 4.4.3.3.** Finally, he decided to leave Rome and go to the Holy Land—or, as he said, “from Babylon to Jerusalem. - Gonzales, location 4080
- 4.4.3.4.** By 386 he had returned to Palestine, where both he and Paula had decided to settle and devote themselves to the monastic way of life. Their goal, however, was not the extreme asceticism of the desert monks, but rather a life of moderate austerity, spent mostly in study. Since Paula was rich, and Jerome was not lacking in means, they founded two monastic houses in Bethlehem, one for women under Paula's leadership, and another for men under Jerome's supervision. - Gonzales, location 4082
- 4.4.3.5.** He then pursued further studies of Hebrew, in order to translate the Bible, while he taught Latin to the children of the neighborhood, and Greek and Hebrew to Paula's nuns. - Gonzales, location 4086
- 4.4.3.6.** Above all, however, he devoted himself to the work that would be his great literary monument: the translation of the Bible into Latin. - Gonzales, location 4087

4.5. Jerome and the Vulgate

- 4.5.1.** Undoubtedly, Jerome's greatest contribution was the translation of the Scriptures from Hebrew and Greek into Latin. There were already older Latin translations, but these were of an uneven, inferior quality, and the Old Testament had been based on the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), and was thus a translation of another translation.
 - 4.5.1.1.** By then there were other translations, but these had been done on the basis of the Septuagint—the ancient translation of the Hebrew text into Greek. What Jerome then undertook was a direct translation from the Hebrew. After many years of work, interrupted by a voluminous correspondence and by the calamities that shook the Roman world, Jerome completed this enormous task. - Gonzales, location 4088
 - 4.5.1.2.** Unlike the Old Latin versions, which translated the Old Testament from the Greek Septuagint, Jerome translated from the Hebrew, giving his translation a value as an independent witness to the Hebrew text of his day.- Ferguson, location 4347
- 4.5.2.** Because Jerome's translation went back to the Hebrew text, there were places where it was different than the older Latin translations, which were based on the Septuagint. This caused some to accuse Jerome of lacking respect for the inspired Word of God. But Jerome replied that the inspired Scripture was originally given in Hebrew, and while the interpreter needed to use all resources available, the truth of the original Hebrew must never be abandoned. This has been the Western Church ever since. (The Eastern Church does not use the Hebrew Old Testament but instead uses the Septuagint.)

- 4.5.2.1. Therefore, when Jerome published a version that disagreed with the Septuagint, there were many who felt that he lacked respect for the inspired Word of God. - Gonzales, location 4095
- 4.5.2.2. Although Jerome was committed to the original languages in which the Bible was written, he recognized the pastoral responsibility of the interpreter: "We have the obligation to expound the Scripture as it is read in church, and yet we must not, on the other hand, abandon the truth of the Hebrew" (Commentary on Micah 1.16).- Ferguson, location 4354
- 4.5.3. Despite early controversies, Jerome's version became so popular that it soon became the official Bible of the Western Church - a position it retained until the Reformation returned to the original Greek and Hebrew to produce translations in modern languages - thus doing exactly what Jerome had done a little over a millennia before!
 - 4.5.3.1. Jerome's version, commonly known as the Vulgate, eventually became the standard Bible of the entire Latin-speaking church. - Gonzales, location 4091
 - 4.5.3.2. It is as a literary man that Jerome is remembered. His outstanding contribution to the future of Western Christendom was the Latin translation of the Bible. Although not immediately winning general acceptance, it became the common version and hence is known now as the Vulgate.- Ferguson, location 4344
- 4.5.4. Jerome and the canon of Scripture
 - 4.5.4.1. Unlike some of the other Fathers, Jerome rejected the Apocryphal books as being part of the canon. He largely did this because they were not originally written in Hebrew, but in Greek, and thus were not part of the Old Testament. Furthermore, they had been rejected by the Jews for centuries. Thus, Jerome's' canon was actually like that of the Protestants rather than the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. (In this he is like Athanasius but against Augustine.)
 - 4.5.4.1.1. His knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures led him to reject the Apocrypha from the canon. Under pressure from his friends, he did translate (although hurriedly) some of the Apocryphal books, all of which books came to be included in the Vulgate.- Ferguson, location 4348
- 4.6. Jerome and controversy
 - 4.6.1. As seen above, Jerome was not an easy man to get along with, and he often spoke very sharp dismissive words to people who disagreed with him, even if they were friends. Some of this was for causes of defending the true faith, but much of it was due to his own irascible nature.
 - 4.6.1.1. The two men above (Ambrose and Chrysostom) both incurred Jerome's wrath, but that hardly makes them distinctive, for Jerome was peevish and ill-tempered. His life story is that of fallings out with associates and controversies over religious issues of the time.- Ferguson, location 4319

- 4.6.1.2. Despite his personality—described as bitter, vindictive, vain, and inconsistent—Jerome’s scholarship left future centuries in his debt.- Ferguson, location 4365
- 4.6.1.3. Jerome was drawn into a series of controversies involving asceticism and the ecclesiastical issues of the day, writing against: (1) Helvidius, who denied the perpetual virginity of Mary; (2) Jovinian, who denied that monasticism was a superior form of the Christian life; (3) Vigilantius, who denied the cult of the martyrs; (4) Rufinus, who supported Origen’s orthodoxy; and (5) Pelagius, who supported the possibility of human sinlessness. In each case the positions Jerome championed, albeit with exaggeration and bitter invective, ended up prevailing in the Catholic church.- Ferguson, location 4340
- 4.6.2. Jerome even had harsh words for Augustine, who later became a close confidant and friend.
 - 4.6.2.1. Although most of Jerome’s controversies ended in wounds that never healed, the outcome was different in this particular case. Years later, Jerome felt the need to refute the doctrine of the Pelagians—which will be discussed in the next chapter—and to that end he had recourse to Augustine’s works. His next letter to the wise bishop of North Africa expressed an admiration that he reserved for very few. - Gonzales, location 4109

5. What we can learn from these great figures

- 5.1. Once again we see that each of these men had flawed doctrines, understandings of the Christian life, and even some serious character flaws. If God only used perfect vessels, no one would ever be used!
- 5.2. Each of these men has very important gifts. Most of these gifts were possessed by them prior to their conversion, but were rather gifts they possessed from childhood, that God harnessed and used for the good of the church.
- 5.3. All of these Fathers promoted the ascetic lifestyle of monks, even though none of them practiced it for more than a short period of time. This is due to the prevailing opinions and practices of the times. All of us are subject to certain blindnesses of our own age - which is why it is important to study church history and be challenged by the writings and lives of those who have gone before us!
- 5.4. Two of these men were raised in godly families, while Ambrose came to the faith later in life.
- 5.5. Although these men had different gifts, and are remembered for different strengths (Ambrose as a great orator and leader; Chrysostom as the greatest expositor and speaker of his century; Jerome as a Bible translator and scholar), the Scripture was central for all of them. Their lives were devoted to the study and exposition of the Scripture.

NEXT CLASS: Saturday, November 21 or 28

NEXT TIME: Augustine and the Fall of Rome (Chapters 24-25)