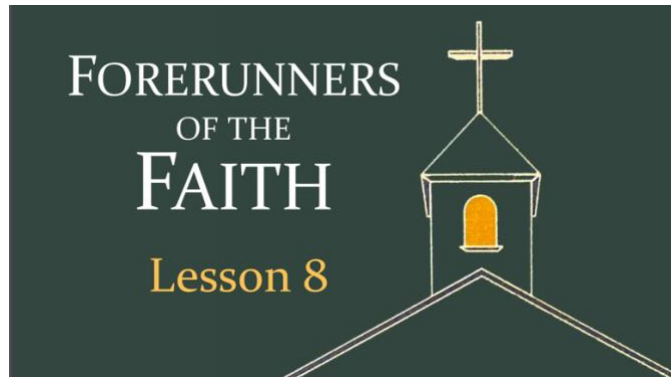


Forerunners of the Faith



Schisms, Scholars, & Soldiers

Key Passage

2 Timothy 3:13–15

¹³ But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

¹⁴ But you, continue in the things you learned and became convinced of, knowing from whom you learned them,

¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Setting The Stage: The Early Middle Ages

- In the fifth century (400s), things changed dramatically for the western half of the Roman Empire, which was overrun by Germanic tribal groups (like the Vandals, Goths, Huns, and Saxons). By 476, the western Roman Empire had fallen.
- Over the subsequent centuries, those tribal groups eventually formed the nations of Europe. But this process of social transformation took a long time.
- As a result, there was less theological development and scholarship in the west during the early Middle Ages.
- From the sixth through tenth centuries, theological scholarship was largely preserved in monasteries.
- In the sixth century (500s), the eastern Roman Empire (also called the Byzantine Empire) attempted to regain the territories in the west that had been lost.
- In the seventh century (600s), an unexpected religious movement arose in Arabia under the leadership of Muhammad (570-632).

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- Islamic armies quickly conquered lands in North Africa and the Middle East, which were under Byzantine control. Jerusalem fell in 637.
- Within a hundred years after Muhammad's death, large portions of the former Roman Empire were under Muslim control.
- Despite significant losses to Muslim armies, the Byzantine Empire would survive until Constantinople was finally defeated by the Turks in the fifteenth century.
- During the early Middle Ages, the western church sent missionaries to the Germanic tribal groups, and many of them were converted to Christianity.
- For example, in the 600s, a missionary named Augustine of Canterbury was sent to Britain to evangelize the Angles and Saxons.
- Some years before this, a powerful tribe known as the Franks had converted to Christianity.
- These tribal groups gave their allegiance to the bishop of Rome.
- The city of Rome was the most important Christian center in the west.
- Other important centers (Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem) were located in the east.
- Because no other city in the west rivaled the religious authority of Rome, the prestige and power of the papacy (the bishopric of Rome) was continually elevated.
- In the late 700s, a document known as the "Donation of Constantine" surfaced. It was later proven to be a forgery. The document claimed that prior to his death in 337, Emperor Constantine bequeathed the city of Rome to the bishop of Rome. From the eighth to the thirteenth centuries, popes used the "Donation of Constantine" to assert both their religious and political authority over Rome and the surrounding areas.
- Militarily, the popes maintained a good relationship with tribal groups like the Franks. This led to the creation of the **Holy Roman Empire**, when Charlemagne (king of the Franks) was crowned "Emperor of the Romans" by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day 800.
- The ninth and tenth centuries were a period of significant corruption for the popes of Rome. The papacy was fought over by rival groups in Rome who recognized it as a position of great political power.

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Schism: The Division Between East And West

- As we enter the high Middle Ages (11th-13th centuries), tensions continued to escalate between the eastern and western halves of Roman Christendom.
- A number of factors contributed to the strained relationship including:
 - **Cultural and Political Differences:** Part of the distancing between the East and West was due to political, cultural, and language differences. The eastern church spoke Greek and was part of the Byzantine Empire. The Western church spoke Latin and was connected politically with European powers like the Franks.
 - **The Filioque Clause:** In 1014, the Western church inserted the phrase "and the Son" into the Latin version of the expanded Nicene Creed (dating back to the Council of Constantinople in 381). The edited Latin Creed taught that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. In Latin, this phrase is filioque. The eastern church balked at the idea that the western church could unilaterally change one of the historic creeds.
 - **Papal Primacy.** In the east, the church viewed the Bishops of Rome and Constantinople as equals. However, Pope Leo IX saw the bishop of Rome as having primacy over the bishops of Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. Leo IX sent a delegation (led by Cardinal Humbert) to Constantinople in 1054. When the Patriarch of Constantinople refused to grant an audience to the delegation, Humbert issued a papal bull excommunicating the Patriarch. In response, the Patriarch excommunicated the papal delegation.
- These events culminated in a split between the two halves of Roman Christendom.
- The eastern church became known as Eastern Orthodoxy, the western church, as Roman Catholicism.
- Later events, including the Fourth Crusade in 1204, would deepen the rift between the Greek (eastern) and Latin (western) churches.

Skirmishes: The Crusades (1095-1291)

- Five decades after the East/West Schism, when Muslim armies again threatened the Byzantine Empire, the eastern emperor asked the west for military help.
- In response, Pope Urban II called for a crusade. In all, there would be seven major crusades fought over the next two centuries.

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- For the next two hundred years, "Christian" armies from Europe engaged in what they claimed was "holy war."
 - Old Testament passages instructing Israel to fight their enemies were reinterpreted for the church. New Testament passages in which military metaphors are used, like Ephesians 6:10-18, were reimagined in literalistic terms. This misguided approach to interpretation twisted the meaning of Scripture for political purposes.
 - The theory of a "Just War" dates back to Augustine. It argued that military conflict was justifiable when it was authorized by a legitimate authority and when it had a just cause, such as self-defense or defending others against evil. For those who promoted them, the Crusades were justified because they were sanctioned by the pope and were fought to defend both the Christian pilgrims who traveled to the Holy Land and the people of the Byzantine Empire who had asked for help.
 - Sadly, the Crusades included barbaric atrocities that were decidedly unchristian. These atrocities tarnished the reputation of medieval Christendom and created longstanding tensions between Western nations and people groups in the Middle East.
- For the first time in church history, different orders of "warrior-monks" came on the scene. These include the Knights Templar (who had their headquarters near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem) and the Knights of St. John.
- _____ (1095-1099) resulted in the conquest of Jerusalem and the establishment of several crusader kingdoms. From a military perspective, the First Crusade was successful.
- When one of the crusader kingdoms, Edessa, fell to Muslim armies, a _____ (1147-1149) was commissioned. Bernard of Clairvaux (see below) was one of its supporters. The Second Crusade failed to achieve its military objectives.
- _____ (1189-1192) was organized in response to the military conquests of Saladin, the sultan of Egypt and Syria who reconquered Jerusalem in 1187. This crusade involved kings like Frederick Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire and Richard "the Lion Heart" of England. In spite of the fame of its leaders, this crusade was unable to reconquer Jerusalem.
- The situation worsened dramatically in the year 1204. After a series of political twists and turns, the western crusaders sacked the city of Constantinople. Instead of defending the Byzantine Empire (the initial purpose of the Crusades), the soldiers of the _____ attacked and looted its capital city.
- In this way, the crusades may have done more to weaken the Byzantine Empire than to preserve it.

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- In the subsequent decades, several more crusades would be fought, ending in defeat and disaster. By 1291, the crusaders had been pushed out of the Middle East.
- *For further reading on The Crusades and their heroes, see *Defenders of the West: The Christians Who Stood Against Islam* by Raymond Ibrahim.

Scholars: The Rise Of Scholasticism

- During this period, things began to change in European education. The first European universities were established, as education shifted from monasteries to universities.
- The earliest universities in Europe were started in Bologna (1088), Oxford (1096), and Paris (1150). Cambridge was established in 1209.
- A new method of learning, called "Scholasticism," began to develop within monastic schools during the time of Charlemagne (748-814). It became the dominant approach to learning in medieval universities.
- Scholasticism accompanied the rediscovery in the west of Greek philosophy, and particularly Aristotle.
- Two of the most important scholastics were Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).
- One notable contribution made by Anselm was his articulation of the **Satisfaction Theory** of the atonement. Rather than seeing Jesus' death as a ransom paid to Satan (a view held by some in the early Middle Ages), Anselm taught that Christ's death satisfied the debt that sinners owe to God. The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers would build on this understanding of the atonement.
- Two centuries after Anselm, Thomas Aquinas wrote two important works: *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologica*. In these works, Thomas brought Aristotelian philosophy to bear on Christian theology.
- Famously, Thomas articulated several classic arguments for the existence of God. These include the Cosmological Argument (namely, that God is the Unmoved Mover or First Cause of the universe) and the Teleological Argument (that God is the Designer behind the order found in nature).
- Through his writings, Thomas became one of the most influential thinkers in the history of the western church.

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Testimonies Of Grace

- As we've seen in this lesson, the Middle Ages includes examples of ecclesiastical corruption, biblical misinterpretation, theological confusion, and political turmoil.
- In the midst of the chaos, we still find glimpses of the gospel of grace from Christian leaders like Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153).
- Anselm (discussed above) served as the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093-1109. Bernard founded a monastery in France in 1115.
- The sixteenth-century Reformers did not agree with everything that Anselm and Bernard taught. However, they saw them as allies with regard to salvation by grace through faith alone, based solely on the finished work of Christ.
- Anselm and Bernard were men who held the following convictions:
 - Sinners are saved, not on the basis of their deeds, but because of God's mercy given through Christ.
 - The immeasurable imperfections of the believer are covered by the infinite perfections of Christ. We are clothed in His righteousness.
 - In the eyes of our holy Judge, the sinner's good works are like filthy rags. The sinner's only hope is to cry out for mercy.
 - The only way sinners can be justified is through faith in Christ. Because they have no merits of their own, His righteousness is imputed to their account.
 - Salvation is given to those who have Christ's righteousness imputed to them. This righteousness is given as a gift of God's grace, received through faith in Christ, and not on the basis of works.
- In the centuries after Bernard, we begin to see the rise of _____ like Peter Waldo (c. 1140-1205), John Wycliffe (c. 1320-1384), and Jan Hus (c. 1369-1415). These men paved the way for the sixteenth-century Reformers like Luther and Calvin.

ANSWERS:

1. The First Crusade
2. The Second Crusade
3. The Third Crusade
4. The Fourth Crusade
5. Pre-reformers