

Church History - the Christian Empire Part 2 (312-1500)

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon explores the complexities of the Christian Empire from 312 to 1500, focusing on the rise of monasticism, the dilution of true Christianity, and the emergence of papal authority.

Duration: 45:53

Scripture: Matthew 7:13

Topics: "Church History", "Christian Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of following God's commandments and the path of salvation. He emphasizes the need for discipline and hard work in the service of the Lord. The speaker also mentions the temptations faced by those who dedicate their lives to God, highlighting a story of a hermit in the desert who was tempted by jealousy. Additionally, the sermon touches on the role of Christ and his association with believers, emphasizing the importance of fulfilling one's duty and charge in him.

Transcript

I'm talking about the period of the Christian Empire. Now, do you know what an empire is? An empire is a... it's an organization or a government that doesn't just deal with one country. It covers a multitude of countries.

The United States is not an empire officially, but there's a sense in which culturally we have an empire because our culture rules, so to speak, over many different countries, not just our own. On the other hand, if you were to take Bulgarian culture, it's pretty much confined to Bulgaria, right? I mean, that's it. We're not influenced by Bulgarian culture except in a few of the smallest kind of ways.

So, you know, the idea of an empire is something that goes beyond just one country to cover a lot of different countries. Well, the Christian Empire refers to this period in Christianity. Now, last week we talked a lot about the whole relationship between the emperors and their coming to Christ and this whole conversion to Christianity of Constantine.

One of the important things that we need to understand about this period is that once Christianity became the preferred and the exclusive religion of the Roman Empire, the church instantly became deluded. And I don't mean deluded as in a lie, although you could say that was true. I mean diluted as in watered down.

Instantly it was very discernible that the passion and the level of Christianity dropped quickly. We all know that not everybody who attends church is a true Christian, correct? You can attend church, attend church faithfully and not be born again by the Spirit of God. And you would have to say that within any congregation of any size there's a proportion of people who attend that church who aren't born again.

You could just throw out a number, say 5%. Well, you could say at this time, at this place, it's 5%. At another time, at another place, you could say it's 60%.

What we're talking about is the delusion of the church to where the number of true, genuine Christians among the churchgoers just keeps shrinking and shrinking and shrinking. Part of this dynamic was when people saw the corruption of the church and the corruption of society, they thought that the real way to get right with God was to exit the church. To go out of the church.

And to make yourself a monk. To join a monastery. In other words, the idea was that the real Christianity was not being lived in the church.

Real Christianity. The people who were really on fire for the Lord, they lived in the monastery. This was a very important development of thought that came in roughly around the time when the church became officially the preferred and exclusive religion of the Roman Empire.

So, as the church becomes more institutionalized, and less and less a living and active organism, as the church sort of becomes a corporation, another thing you have is that the Bible becomes less available to the people. There's a lot of interesting reasons why that's the case. But the Bible becomes less known.

I would say that in the year... Well, let me give a very safe estimate. There was much more knowledge of the Bible by the common Christian in the year 60 than in the year 600. Much more.

So, you have this trend where the Bible becomes more and more removed from the people, where the church more and more adopts the attitude to safeguard the Word of God that says, you're a common Christian, you don't read the Bible. The priest will read the Bible and tell you what it says. But you don't read it.

By the way, until just recently, that continued to be the official policy of the Roman Catholic Church. It is not unusual for people, let's say not so much of my generation, but for my parents' generation, to remember the priest or the nun telling them, you don't read the Bible, the priest will read the Bible. Because it's not safe.

You don't know what you're going to figure out reading the Bible, right? So, in this time, true Christianity, and I want to put quotation marks around true, true Christianity became more and more the domain of monks and nuns. This monastic ideal, right? These are the people who live in a monastery, monks or nuns. Monastic refers to something that's relevant to an order of monks.

A monastery is another place for where they live. A cloister refers to a group within a monastery. An order is a specific kind of division or segment of monks.

And we'll talk a little bit more about that. The monastic ideal was based on an even more ancient idea of the hermit. Someone who goes off and lives by himself.

There's always been this idea, or I shouldn't say always, but it arose pretty early within the church. The idea that this was the way to really draw close with God. You really want to draw close with God? Get away from everybody, live out in the middle of the barren, desolate wilderness, live in complete seclusion, and that's how you can have the closest walk with God.

You know, can I say, that's not a biblical idea at all. I'm not saying that there shouldn't be times of solitary reflection with the Lord and such like that. But this idea that this life, this solitary hermit life is really the way to draw close with God, that's not biblical at all.

That's something that people just think in their own minds. Pretty early on, late in the 3rd century or the middle of the 3rd century, the first monk of note was a hermit named Anthony. Anthony lived in the desert of Egypt.

And Anthony was just a normal Christian who one day was reading his Bible and he came across the story of the rich young ruler. What Anthony did was he read that and he said, Jesus is saying this to me. I need to sell everything I have and go and just be alone with Jesus.

And that's exactly what he did. He sold everything he had and he went off to live all alone with God. First of all, he lived alone in a place not very far out of town, kind of near his house.

But that wasn't good enough. So you know where he lived after that? In a tomb. You know, like in a mausoleum he lived in.

After the tomb, he lived in a fortress. And in this abandoned fortress, it had high walls, so he would never see anybody. People would bring him supplies and just throw it over the wall.

And he lived in that fortress so he never would have to see anybody. Finally, he ended up living 20, 30 years out on a lonely, desolate mountain. Twice a year, his friends brought him food.

And basically his food, all he lived on, was bread and water and a little bit of salt. That was it. He decided that he would never comb or cut his hair except at Easter.

Then he'd live it up. What was very typical for Anthony, as it was typical for many of these hermits, they described strange visitations of demons and temptations in the wilderness. All intended to distract him from his relationship with God.

I mean, are you kind of familiar? It's coming back in a strong way in our Christian culture today. This kind of idea of the spiritual warrior. Boy, he could duke it out with the demons.

And they came after him really hard. Of course, these guys had to deal with temptations in a different way than a lot of people. You're not tempted to go out and go gambling or to watch too much TV or whatever when you're all out in the middle of the desert.

But you have different temptations. There's one story of a hermit who was out in the middle of the desert and there he was trying to be all holy, all this. And the devil came and he tried to tempt him.

First he tries to entice him with all these sensual pleasures and all these lusts of the flesh. It just bounces off the hermit. He's like a rock.

And then finally the devil comes along and he whispers in his ear, Your brother has just been promoted to bishop. When he heard that, he got jealous. And he gave in to that temptation.

There's all sorts of inner things. I'll be very straight with you. I think that this whole business of the monastic ideal was very misguided in the church.

Now, another notable group of hermits, and I just mentioned this almost as a humorous aside, were known as the stylites. It comes from the Greek word stylos, which equals pillar. It means a pillar.

These were the guys of the pillar. And what that basically mean was they took their name from a certain guy named Simeon who died about the year 459. Simeon imagined that by living on top of a pillar, his soul would be closer to God.

Remember seeing pictures from back in the 20s and 30s, these flagpole sitters? That was these guys. They thought by living on top of a pillar, he'd be closer to God. So he built a pillar six feet high, and he lived on top of that pillar.

And he thought that he would be closer to God from it. Well, you know how that works, right? Pretty soon six feet ain't big enough, is it? If you really want to be... There you are, you're at six feet. Another guy comes along and builds his pillar ten feet.

Well, who's closer to God, right? Eventually, Simeon got up to 60 feet off the ground. He was living on this pillar 60 feet tall. And he lived for 30 years on top of a pillar 60 feet tall.

You know, and people would throw him up food, and he would be down there, and he would preach to people. Because, you know, this was a sight to see, right? It was a big tourist attraction. And there he was, Mr. Holy, Mr. Simeon.

Well, the stylites were a group who followed in his footsteps. You know, they all had their own little pillars that they would go around and live on top of. As it developed, it went from this thing of just having a hermit to having a guy with followers.

This guy, Simeon, was a perfect example. And the stylites wanted to be his followers. Well, you would get this man who would say, I'm going to be this great, devoted man to God.

I'm going to do this. And people would be attracted to him. People would want to follow him.

They'd say, I want to be like you. I want to join up with you. This developed in what we call monastic orders.

And this is just an association of like-minded monks. So you have monastic orders. And the order was usually named after the founder.

Anybody here ever hear of the Benedictine monks? Well, they come from Benedict. The Franciscan monks, they come from Francis. What do we think about the monastic movement? Well, it was bad in the sense that it cultivated a false sense of spirituality.

The idea was that if you were really committed to God, you'd shut yourself off from society and live in the cloister. And this led to a two-level system of Christianity, where the real Christians lived as monks, and the low-level Christians lived in the outside world. And you know, that's a very, very dangerous thing.

One thing you need to understand, though, is that not every monastic order lived inside the monastery and just stayed within the walls of the monastery. Some monastic orders were very evangelistic. And these were the missionaries of this period of time.

During this period, monks were at the forefront of spreading the gospel to unreached regions. The gospel continued to spread, especially among the barbarian tribes of Europe. The Goths were converted by 720, the Picts by 400, the Irish by 435, the Franks by 496, the Scots by 563, and the Angles and the Saxons by 600.

And most of this evangelistic work was done by monks, because these were the real leaders of Christianity at that time. At their best, monasteries were places like intense discipleship schools, where their graduates were discipled and then sent out to do ministry. But it oftentimes didn't work out like that.

Another good thing about monasticism was it was good because it provided a place where some semblance of learning and culture could survive the general breakup of society after the fall of Rome. We're going to talk more about the fall of Rome next week and all that it entailed for the history of Europe. But when Rome fell and culture collapsed, society and schools collapsed, the monastery became an island of learning and literacy and culture in the midst of a society that didn't know anything.

Another aspect of monasticism was that monasticism was bad in some ways, it was good in some ways, but it was useful. Because what monasticism did was it absorbed, monasticism absorbed reform movements within the church. Now, this is a very important idea, because the Reformation that happens later on in the 16th century, that was not the first time somebody thought something was wrong with the church.

There were lots of people who came along before and thought something was wrong with the church. Let me give you an example. Saint Francis of Assisi.

Francis of Assisi. He thought that the church was corrupt. He thought that the church was on the wrong track.

He thought that the church had gotten away from the simple following of God and the preaching of the gospel. So you know what he did? He did it himself. He said, I'm going to do this.

I'm going to go out and I'm going to live the Christian life the way it should be lived. Even though the church isn't doing it, I'm going to do it. And you know what the church did? They said, great! We'll make a monastic order after you.

And the church absorbed the movement of Francis by making a monastic order out of it instead of saying, well, then you don't like us. Get out of here and kicking him out. You see how monasticism was helpful for absorbing reform movements within the church and making them a part of the Roman Catholic Church.

What's interesting was, before the Reformation, the church said, you know what? There's too many monastic orders. We're not going to have any new ones. That shut the door to absorbing new reform movements within the church.

And that was one of the small contributing factors to the Reformation in the time of Martin Luther. Listen to these selections from Benedict's Rule. These are rules for Benedictine monks used today, written originally in 529.

It says, in every aspect also follow the rule as their guide and let no one depart from it without good reason. Let no one in the monastery follow his own inclinations or brazenly argue with his abbot. You know what an abbot is? He's the head of the monastery.

It comes from the word Abba, which is father. He's the father of the monastery. The abbot, for his part, should do everything in the fear of the Lord and in obedience to the rule, knowing that he will have to account to God for all his decisions.

If a brother is insubordinate or disobedient, proud or a grumbler, or in any way acting contrary to the holy rule and despising the orders of his seniors, let him, according to the Lord's commandment, be privately warned twice by his seniors. If he does not improve, let him be publicly rebuked before them all. But if even then he does not correct himself, he should be excommunicated, if he understands how severe this penalty is.

If, however, he is beyond conviction, he should be physically punished. Put him out in a whipping post. The brothers shall take turns to wait on each other so that no one is excused from the kitchen work unless prevented by sickness or taken up with some vital business.

Everybody's got to work in the kitchen. An hour before each meal, the week's servers are to receive a cup of drink and a piece of bread over and above their ration so they can wait on their brothers without grumbling or undue fatigue. At the brothers' mealtimes there should always be a reading.

There shall be complete silence at table and no whispering or any voice except the reader should be heard. The brethren should pass to each other in turn whatever food is needed so that no one needs to ask for anything. If anything should be wanted, ask for it by sign language rather than speech.

Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, at fixed times, the brothers should be busy with manual work and at other times in holy reading. A mattress, a woolen blanket, a woolen underblanket, and a pillow shall be enough bedding.

Beds are to be searched frequently by the abbot for private belongings. And if anyone is found to possess anything he did not receive from the abbot, he shall be severely disciplined. To abolish private property, everything necessary shall be given by the abbot.

A hood, tunic, shoes, long socks, belt, knife, pen, needle, handkerchief, tablets, so they can have no excuses about needing things. In other words, you're not allowed to have anything. No books of your own, no Game Boy, no, you know, anything like that.

You got it. It's out. We intend to found a school to train men and the servants of the Lord, but where we shall not make the rules too strict and heavy.

If we seem to be too severe, do not get frightened and run away. The entrance to the path to salvation must be narrow, but as you progress along the life of the faith, the heart expands and speeds with love sweetness along the pathway of God's commandments. I mean, those are just some selections.

There's more to it than that. But you get the feeling of this, right? You come to the monastery, this is how you're going to live. So that's monastic movement.

All right. Next up, I want to talk about the emergence of what we would call today the Roman Catholic Church and what we would also call the battle or the struggle, let's say, between kings and popes. In the days when the church was persecuted, there wasn't much of a struggle with political power with the church, right? The church was just trying to hang on.

But there was, no doubt, politics among Christians in the early church. And we talked about it before how there established four patriarchal cities. The patriarch of Rome emerged as the leader among all of these, top dog among all, at least in the West.

And we'll talk about the division of the church between East and West more next time. This developed in some ways slowly, in some ways, but there were some important landmarks along the way. Pope Innocent I, in the year 402, made a decree that no important decision could be made by a church without the knowledge and approval of the Bishop of Rome.

That's pretty significant, isn't it? That's basically saying you can't make a rule with that. Now, a lot of times these rules were made because churches were making bad decisions. Churches were going off and becoming heretical.

And so, a lot of times, these things emerged in times of problems. So they made this rule. Following here, the next Bishop of Rome, a guy named Zosimus, declared that no one had the right to question a decision made by the Bishop of Rome.

Not only could he decide on it, but his decision was final. And as the years went on, these things just continued to get solidified. Let me read you a couple of selections.

Emperor Valentinian III. Okay, this is a Roman emperor. These are selections from an edict in support of papal authority.

Look at the year. They're 445. He says, Certain it is that for us and our empire the only defense is in the favor of the God of heaven.

And to deserve it, our first care is to support the Christian faith and its venerable religion. If you're a biblical Christian, that should chafe at you right then. Certain it is for us that for us and our empire that the only defense is in the favor of God.

Right? That's reasonable to say, right? God needs to show us his favor. What does he say next? And to deserve it, our first care. You don't get God's favor by deserving it.

That's a total works concept. Anyway, I'll go on. Inasmuch then as the primacy of the apostolic see.

Alright, here's a good term. Apostolic see. The papal office.

Think of it in that terms. Okay? The office of the pope. He goes on to say here, Inasmuch then as the primacy.

Primacy. Okay, what's primacy mean? The first. Primary nature.

The first place regard that we have for the papal office is assured by the merit of St. Peter. Prince of the Episcopate. And by the rank of the city of Rome.

And also by the authority of a sacred synod. Do you know what a synod is? A synod is a gathering of bishops. In other words, this is interesting.

I mean, this gives you insight into how they thought. Why was Rome number one? Why was the bishop of Rome more important than the bishop of Alexandria? Why is he on top? Well, they'd say, well, we'll give you three reasons. First of all, because of the merit of St. Peter.

And supposedly, not factually, but supposedly, Peter founded the church at Rome. And Peter was the first bishop of Rome. Which has no historical justification whatsoever.

None. Zero. Zip.

Matter of fact, you can historically demonstrate otherwise. There was a live, functioning church in Rome before Peter ever left Jerusalem. He did die there.

He did go to Rome. Paul was also crucified there. And that gave it length.

Okay, so first of all, the merit of St. Peter. That's the first reason. Second reason, the rank of the... Oh, Prince of the Episcopate.

Episcopate means bishops. In other words, they're saying, Peter was the head of all the bishops. And this was Peter's bishop seat.

Peter was the bishop of Rome. And when he was the bishop of Rome, he was in charge over everybody. So the bishop of Rome's always in charge over everybody.

That's how they thought. Next, the rank of the city of Rome. What does that mean? Hey, Rome's number one.

We're number one. Our bishop's number one. Pretty simple there.

And then finally, by the authority of a sacred synod. What does that mean? The bishops all got together and said, Rome's number one. So therefore, the bishop of Rome's in charge.

Okay, he goes on. He goes, let not presumption endeavor to attempt anything contrary to that seat. For then at length will the peace of the churches be everywhere maintained, if the whole body acknowledges its ruler.

Hitherto, these customs have been involubly or absolutely observed. But Hillary, Bishop of Arles, as we are informed by the trustworthy report of that venerable man, Leo, Pope of Rome, has with conticmatious daring ventured upon certain unlawful proceedings. And therefore, the churches beyond the Alps have been invaded by abominable disorders.

He goes on just to say, and to reinforce the, well, look at it here. I'm going to pick it up with the line that says, we decree there. We decree by this perpetual edict that it shall not be lawful for the bishops of Gaul or any of the other provinces, contrary to the ancient customs, to do aught without the authority of the venerable Pope of the eternal city.

And whatever the authority of the apostolic see has enacted, or may hereafter enact, shall be the law for all. Do you get the sense of that? Now, think just a minute. Come back from this.

Who is issuing this edict? An emperor. Is that a spiritual office or a political office? A political ruler is declaring spiritual authority here and saying, we're going to back it up. And that's significant, isn't it? I mean, that is akin, in some ways, to it coming down from, you know, Washington, the president declaring Presbyterianism is going to be the official religion of the United States of America.

Period. And the head of the Presbyterian church is the head of the whole Christian movement in the United States. Period.

That's it. No more dispute about it. This is significant, isn't it? And this was not a revolution.

This didn't surprise us. Nobody went around saying, oh, the emperor did this. Oh, yeah.

Yeah, this is what emperors do. Now, go on and take a look at what Leo, the pope during this time, said. He said, nor yet I feel sure is the fostering condescension of true love of the most blessed apostle Peter absent from this congregation.

He has not deserted your devotion in whose honor you are met together. And so he too rejoices over your good feeling and welcomes your respect for the Lord's own institution as shown towards the partners of his honor, commending the well-ordered love of the whole church. In other words, Peter looks down from heaven and he's happy at how things are going here.

And then he goes on. The dispensation of the truth, therefore, abides in the blessed Peter, persevering in the strength of the rock which he has received, and not abandon the helm of the church which he undertook. For he was ordained before the rest in such a way that from his being called the rock, from his being pronounced the foundation, from his being constituted the doorkeeper of the kingdom of heaven, and from his being seated as the umpire to bind and loose, whose judgments shall retain their validity in heaven, from all these mystical titles we might know the nature of his association with Christ.

And still today, he more fully and effectually performs what is entrusted to him, and carries out every part of his duty in charge of him and with him, through whom he has been glorified. Do you understand what he's saying here? Let me explain this to you. He's saying, Peter still rules the church from heaven.

When Jesus said that he gave Peter the keys, that I give you power to bind on heaven and earth, he said, fine, he did it on earth, now he's doing it from heaven. So you know what this Pope Leo is saying? Peter's still in charge, I'm just his messenger boy. You get that idea? Peter is still in charge of the church from heaven.

But we are his messengers. The bishop of Rome is the messenger, is the representative of Peter. Now, I'm going to throw out a word here that is important for you to understand.

You may have heard this word, but I bet there's not many people in this room who know what it means. Vicar. Vicar means representative.

Vicarious? To live through somebody else or to do something through somebody else? It's the same idea. Vicar is a representative. One of the titles for the Pope was the Vicar of Peter.

Peter still rules the church in heaven. The Pope is his vicar. He's his representative.

That's exactly the idea he's expressing here. And so he goes on, if you take a look at the very end here, he says, And so if anything is rightly done and rightly decreed by us, if anything is won by the mercy of

God by our daily supplications, it is of his work and merits whose power lives and authority prevails in his sea. In other words, it's Peter's power.

It's Peter's authority. It's Peter. We are just Peter's representatives.

This is how they thought back then. Later on, a very important Pope emerged named Gregory I, also known as Gregory the Great, and this is like in the end of the 6th century, say about the year 590. He led Rome not only spiritually but also politically because when Rome was being attacked by some barbarian groups, he organized the defense.

He arranged the peace treaty. He was like the president of the city of Rome, not just its spiritual leader. As a matter of fact, Gregory had a huge impact, so much to the point where he really introduced and popularized doctrines such as the worship of the saints in purgatory and the celebration of masses for the dead in purgatory.

As a matter of fact, what do we call middle-aged church music? The chants, they call them Gregorian. It's after Gregory the Great. He had such an influence on the life and the worship of the church.

Each of these things, plus hundreds of smaller events, consolidated the power of the Bishop of Rome, making him the Pope. Now, the leadership role of Gregory I was just the beginning because when the Roman Empire fell, the church was the most significant institution after the fall of the Roman Empire. People look to an institution to lead them.

If the government falls, they'll look to the strongest institution that's around, and in this case, it's the church. So the church assumed even more of a leadership role in society when the Roman Empire fell. One interesting development in this happened in the year 800.

In the year 800, there is a very significant political and military leader in Europe known as Charles the Great. Charles the Great was a descendant of Charles Martel, who turned back the Turks. But Charles the Great was the king of the Franks, what we'd call France today.

But he really expanded his kingdom both to the north and to the south and to the east. I mean, he did an amazing work. And he also had the title, which you may know him by, Charlemagne.

And Charlemagne was the king. He was the king of this vast area of Europe. Nobody had ruled as much of Europe as Charles the Great did since the time of the Roman Empire.

This was in the Middle Ages. Now, on Christmas Day in the year 800, Charlemagne was visiting the Pope, Pope Leo II. And the Pope crowned Charlemagne, not king, but emperor.

Where were the previous emperors? From the Roman Empire. But the Roman Empire had been dead for 400 years. It had been broken up for 400 years.

Now, the Pope comes along and he says, Charles, you are the new Roman emperor. You're the emperor of Rome. And this was a very significant political development.

Matter of fact, Charles went on by then to call himself by this title, Charles, by the will of God, Roman emperor. And this is the foundation of what became known as the Holy Roman Empire, which thought of itself as the successor of the old Roman Empire, except now it was holy, right? Now it's not the Roman Empire anymore. Now it's the Holy Roman Empire, which, as more than one historian has said, was

neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire.

But that's what they called it. As things developed, there became a constant tension again between the emperor and the Pope. Who would really rule? Who claimed authority over who? You know the Pope claimed authority over the emperor, right? If the Pope crowns Charles, who has the authority over Charles, right? If he puts the crown on his head, who can take it off? He's the man, right? The Pope's the man.

And so the Pope would always go around and say, well, I'm in charge, I'm the leader, I'm the one. You know, sure, you've got the emperor and you've got the Pope, but everybody knows who's really in charge, it's the Pope. How do you think the emperors felt about that? Do you become emperor without having a lot of pride and ambition? No way.

The emperors did not dig that business. And they did not like it when the Popes got what they believed was uppity on them, and it was a constant struggle. In the midst of this kind of political struggle, it doesn't surprise us that the papacy became a highly political office.

And it was often fulfilled by very corrupt men. One of these was Pope John XII. He was charged by a council of bishops on almost every imaginable crime.

He was said to have toasted the health of the devil and was said to have invoked the help of pagan gods to help him in his gambling. The whole council agreed that Pope John XII was a very corrupt man and should be deposed. But do you know what John XII said in reply? All these bishops got together and said, dude, you're out of line.

You've got to step down. You know what he said? If you wish to set up another Pope, by Almighty God, I excommunicate you. So that you will not have power to perform Mass or ordain anyone.

That kind of settled it right there. Pope Boniface VIII. He came to office by strangling his predecessor in the year 1268.

He was described by a council of bishops as a papal monster who in his abject depravity exceeds all mortals. Doesn't surprise us. Because when the papacy becomes such a political office, this is the kind of men who take political office, or at least aspire to it.

Gregory VII, also known as Hildebrand. He reigned as Pope from 1073 to 1085. He shows us both the height and the beginning of the decline of papal power.

He issued a famous document titled *Plenitudo Potestas*, which basically means in Latin, the fullness of power. Do you know what he said in that document? What did I say before about the Pope being the vicar? Whose representative was the Pope? Hildebrand, Gregory VII, said no. You know what? We're changing that.

He's not the vicar of Peter. Now he must regard the Pope as the vicar of Christ. Big difference, isn't it? Now he's not just representing Peter's power on the earth.

Now he's the vicar of Christ. I don't know, maybe Peter lost his job ruling the church from heaven, right? Now it's just straight from Jesus to the Pope. And there was a very interesting and significant battle between Gregory VII.

You've got Gregory VII, he's the Pope. Here in this corner, Pope Gregory VII. Here in this corner, Emperor Henry IV.

These guys were born to buttheads. Now it was based on the important issue of appointments to church offices. The Emperor and the Pope both claimed the right to appointment to these politically important and financially important offices.

If being a bishop is important politically and financially, then the Emperor has an interest in naming who the bishop is, right? But so does the Pope. And so who has the right to name a bishop? Well, this was the source of the battle between Henry IV and Gregory VII. Basically, Gregory VII said that the Emperor had no right to appoint anybody to a church office.

Henry ignored the Pope's decrees and Gregory summoned the Emperor to Rome. Henry refused to come to the Pope. And Henry declared that Gregory deposed.

Gregory responded by excommunicating Henry and declaring him deposed. Now, this is interesting. Read this.

This is great. Selections of a letter from Gregory VII to Henry IV. December 1075.

Bishop Gregory, servant of the servants of God, to King Henry, greeting an apostolic benediction. That is, if he be obedient to the apostolic chair as is fitting to a Christian king. For you are said knowingly to be in fellowship with those excommunicated by a judgment of the apostolic chair and by the sentence of a synod.

Therefore we counsel thy highness that if you do feel yourself guilty in this matter, you do seek the advice of canonical bishop with speedy confession. In other words, greetings to you from the Pope. If you get right.

If not, no greetings to you. We're coming with power. He goes on to say, since you do confess yourself to be a son of the church, it would have been fitting for your royal dignity to look more respectfully upon the master of the church, that is, Saint Peter, the chief of the apostles.

Huh? Pretty heavy, right? Now, I love Henry's reply. Henry, king, not through usurpation, in other words, a false pretense, but through the holy ordination of God to Hildebrand, at present, not Pope, but false monk. Such greetings as this you have deserved through your disturbances inasmuch as there is no area of the church in which you fail to make yourself a partaker of not honor, but confusion.

Not of blessing, but of curses. And this is how he ends his letter. I love the ending.

There's a lot in between there, but I love the ending. You, or thou, therefore, damned by this curse and by the judgment of all our bishops and by our own, descend and relinquish the apostolic chair which you have usurped. Let another ascend the throne of Saint Peter, who shall not practice violence under the cover of religion, but shall teach the sound doctrine of Saint Peter.

I, Henry, king, by the grace of God, do say unto thee, together with all our bishops, descend, descend to be damned throughout the ages. Sincerely, Henry. In light of all this, at the end, Pope Gregory VII forced Henry IV to humbly submit in light of his disobedience to the papal power.

And submit, Henry did. You know what Henry did? He took his wife and his child, and he crossed the Alps in the winter, came to the Pope's residence, knocked on the door. This is winter, there's snow outside, it's desperately cold.

He knocked on the door. Who is it? It's King Henry IV. I've come to apologize to the Pope.

He won't see you. So you know what Henry does? He says, fine, I'll wait here. And he waited outside the door of Hildebrand's home, Gregory VII, waited outside the Pope's home for three days in the snow.

I don't know, if he knocked every hour or a couple times a day. Hi, Henry, still here. Can I come in? I want to apologize to the Pope.

He won't see you. Three days. Finally, the Pope said, you know what, I've got to give in here.

I've got to let him come in. Henry comes in, makes his apologies, humbled himself at the Pope's feet, and then the Pope repealed his excommunication and brought Henry back into the church. But you know what? It was really all for show on both sides.

Seven years later, Henry's armies marched into Rome and forcibly deposed Gregory. You know, I mean, who has the real power? Well, the Pope says, I have the real power because I have the spiritual power. You can kill me, the Pope says, but I can damn your soul to hell.

And people back then believed that the Pope had the power to save you or damn you. All he had to do was decree it. He'd save you or damn you.

That's it. So the Pope said, I've got the real power. And you know what the Emperor says? Well, Pope, that's fine.

But as, wasn't one of Hitler's henchmen who said, how many divisions does the Pope have? Where's your armies, Mr. Pope? And believe me, the Pope had armies, but he had to depend on kings for them. And so, you know, who had the power? It was a constant struggle. This is the decree of Gregory VII after Henry IV's repentance.

And this is what we all agree upon, right? These are my decrees. That the Roman church was founded by God alone. That the Roman pontiff can alone rightly be called universal.

That he alone can depose or reinstate bishops. That among other things, we ought not to remain in the same house as with those excommunicated by him. That he alone may use the imperial insignia.

That of the Pope alone, all princes shall kiss the feet. That his name alone shall be spoken in the churches. In other words, you can't go to the church and say, we're gathered here under the permission of King Henry.

No, can't say that. We're gathered here under the permission of the Pope. That this is the only name in the world.

That it may be permitted to him to depose emperors. That no chapter and no book shall be considered canonical without his authority. That he himself may be judged by no one.

That the Roman church has never erred. Nor will it err to all eternity. The scripture bearing witness.

That the Roman pontiff, if he has been canonically ordained, is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter. Oh, don't you love that one? The Pope is automatically a saint. Period.

Alright? As long as he was rightfully elected, he's automatically a saint. Because of his own merits? No, because of the merits of St. Peter. That he may depose and reinstate bishops without assembling a synod.

In other words, he doesn't gather others with their opinions. Okay, check this out. That he who is not at peace with the Roman church shall not be considered Catholic.

And that he may absolve subjects from their fealty to wicked men. In other words, this was a huge power that the Popes had. If Gregory declares Henry excommunicated, then Gregory tells all the people, because everybody in Henry's domain is a Christian, right? Why are they Christians? Because they live in Henry's domain.

Not because they made a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Gregory says to all of Henry's subjects, you don't have to obey him anymore. You don't have a Christian king anymore.

I excommunicated him. You don't have to obey him. Pay your taxes? Don't have to.

March in his armies? Don't have to. You know, the people loved that, didn't they? The kings hated it. Let's just wrap up with this.

Pope Boniface VIII, 1302. His papal bull. Therefore, if the earthly power err, it shall be judged by the spiritual power.

This authority, moreover, even though it is given to man and exercised through man, is not human. He's talking about the Pope's authority. But rather divine.

Being given by divine lips to Peter and founded on a rock for him and his successors through Christ himself, who he has confessed. Indeed, we declare, announce, and define that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff. If you believe that, it changes everything, doesn't it? This introduces a concept that I suppose, we'll just end with this.

So important. You need to get this in your mind about the medieval church. Salvation was not by Jesus Christ.

Salvation was by Jesus Christ. You were saved by being a member of the true church. You know what? It's not God at all.

Church membership never saved a single person. Personal relationship of trust and faith with Jesus Christ. Of reliance on and clinging to the truth.

That's what saves us. But salvation came by the church, granted by the pleasure of the Pope. And when you have that power over a whole continent, you've got a lot of power, don't you? That was the Pope's power.

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