

HEROES AND HERETICS:
An 8-Week Course on Early Church History

WEEK 11 **May 15, 2016**
Teacher: **Pastor Pickens**

Gregory – The Movement to Papacy

Life:

- Gregory was born about 540 AD in Rome.
- Born into a distinguished political family. His father (Gordianus), Prefect of Rome; mother (Silvia), upper class; great-great-grandfather (Felix III), bishop of Rome.
- Around a hundred years ago the Goths had captured Rome marking the end of the Western Roman Empire. During the 540's the Eastern Roman Empire retakes Rome. Rome stands as a division point at this time in history.
- Gregory receives a thorough education. At 33 he becomes the Prefect of Rome.
- Leaves the public life and becomes a monk. He turns his property into a monastery.
- Appointed as a deacon and from 579-585. Pelagius II (Bishop of Rome) sends Gregory to Constantinople as a clerical ambassador to appeal to the Emperor for aid.
- Returned to Rome and in 590 was appointed the Bishop of Rome.
- Calls on Christians for donations and to show mercy. Appeals to the Lombards for relief.
- Gregory has conflict with John of Constantinople over the term 'universal bishop.'
 - The progress to papacy: The term 'Pope' comes from Greek (παππας - Παπα). Used of bishops in the 3rd century.
 - Presbyter/elder (πρεσβυτερος) and bishop/overseer (επισκοπος) (Titus 1:5, 7).
 - 1st century: bishops instructed in the faith and opposed heresies.
 - 2nd and 3rd centuries: bishops further established as the leadership of the church.
 - The first five centuries: authority resided primarily in the plurality of bishops.
 - In 444 Leo was named the head of the church in the west.
 - Practice, not widely accepted, of tracing the Bishop of Rome back to Peter.
 - Gregory completed the move to papacy. Bishop of Rome had always been the de facto leader and successor to Peter. Offices of deacon, presbyter, and bishop viewed as progressive in authority.
- Sends missionaries out to local Germanic tribes and into Britain to the Anglo-Saxons.
- Gregory passes away in 604.

Thought:

- Church authority:
 - 1) Viewed as "the last great catholic" 2) viewed as solidifying papal supremacy.
 - 1) "It is one thing that we should preserve unity of faith; another, that we ought to repress self-exaltation. But I say it confidently, because whoever calls himself 'universal bishop,' or wishes to be so called, is in his self-exaltation Antichrist's precursor, for in his swaggering he sets himself before the rest."¹
 - 2) Uses the term 'apostolic (or holy) see' in reference to Rome. Assumed the authority to excommunicate another bishop; prescribed standards for the church at large. Papal supremacy finds wide traction and acceptance.
- Missions: an understanding that the gospel ought to go out even to 'barbarians.' A shifting culture means a shifting audience, not shifting purpose.
- Satan and the Atonement:

¹ Gregory in Calvin, Institutes IV.VII.4

- High view of Christ as Victor. He believed that the ransom price paid was paid to Satan. Christ came in the form of sinful man and Satan laid claim to him without realizing he was accepting the ransom price.
- Takes seriously a real and powerful devil. Diminishes the redemption which God has accomplished in Christ. We are saved from God by God.

Take Away:

- Jesus is the Head of his Church:
 - Optimism: Jesus will not let his church fail. Jesus abides with his church until the end of the ages (Matt. 28:20). Comforting individually and corporately.
 - He guides us by his Word and by the government he's put in place (Matt. 16:13-20; 18:15-20; Eph. 2:19-22; Titus 1:5-9).
 - The Church is Christ's, bonded in covenant and in love (Mt. 26:26-28; Eph. 5:25-27). We may be sure that he is anything but indifferent.

For Further Reading:

Bainton, Roland H. *Early Christianity*. Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 1984.
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 McGrath, Alister E. *Historical Theology*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1998.
 Nichols, Stephen J. *For Us and for Our Salvation*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007.
 Waters, Guy. *How Jesus Runs the Church*. Philipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2011.