The Church Sustained

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Preacher: Aaron Hembree

[0:00] To think of church history and its significance to us, why should we study it, why should we contemplate it?! I want to get to some of the classical intellectual reasons later.! It establishes our orthodoxy, it gives us new expressions of the historic faith in our time, and those things are all true.

But I was once, as many of you probably are, very, very ignorant of church history. Very, very ignorant of church history until I'm in my 20s. And I'm going into seminary having never read the Bible and having to read it so I have at least read it before I get there.
And if that's you, I want to show you the reasons that I fell in love with church history. I want to start there. We'll get to the classical. We'll get to the philosophical and some of these things. But I want to show you what captured me about the subject and why I fell in love.
And the first one that I want to introduce you to is that studying church history is biblical. This is something that Scripture itself does. And there's a guy in Job, Bildad gives really good wisdom to Job, but he applies it horribly.
He says this in Job 8, 8-10. Inquire or consult, please, of bygone ages. Consider what the fathers have searched out.
[1:11] For we are but of yesterday and know nothing. For our days on earth are a shadow. Will they not teach you and tell you and utter words from their understanding? Again, his application is wrong, but the wisdom there is true for us in the Old Testament here.

And if you'll open in your Bibles to Hebrews 11, it exercises what I'm trying to do for you this morning. It takes history in Hebrews, which is a sermon.
And he's going back and reminding you of things that have happened. And as he does it, he's giving you insights and commenting on it. And he's actually applying it in places to your life.
It's church history as a sermon, within a sermon. And there's kind of three points to this that I want you to see just in this first point as we go from Hebrews 11 and 12.
It begins in verse 1, demonstrating that God is sovereign over all of history. This is his story. He's writing it. He's ruling over it. Read with me Hebrews 11, verses 1 to 3.
[2:13] You know these words. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it, the people of old receive their commendation.

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. So he's establishing right at the outset, talking about these people of old, that God is the author of history.
This is his story. He began it. He sustains it. And as you move on, you're going to see that the author of Hebrews begins to make a list of all of the great works of faith in history up until that point. They're recorded for us in the Bible. And look with me. You can glance with me as I just highlight this. In verses 4 to 39, God is working uniquely through church history. So the first point is God rules over history.
The second one is he works uniquely through his history. It says, Abel, by faith, gave a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. Enoch, by faith, led a life that was so pleasing to God that God took him up and he did not see death.
[3:20] Noah, by faith, constructed an ark. By the way, Noah being a historic figure, exercising faith, a true man. Abraham going out at God's command, not knowing where he was going.

It goes on to Sarah, says, conceiving in her old age, trusted God by faith after she left. Abraham, again, is tested by God and it records in Genesis 22 that he gives his son, his only son, the one whom he loved, Isaac.
He didn't hold him back. Isaac invoked future blessings by faith. Jacob, by faith, blessed each of the sons of Joseph. Joseph taught us how to end our life well. He ended and crossed the finish line in

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faithfulness.
Moses led Israel through the Passover and through the Exodus and it says that Rahab gave a friendly welcome to the spies, which moves us to the third point now. He's going to say in verses 32 to 38, he goes on, he goes, and what more can I say?
I can't list all of the amazing figures in the Bible that you need to base your faith on and that teach you all of these things. My list is cut short. I'm going to say the same thing about church history. I don't have time and 45 minutes to get to go through and introduce you to all of the reformers, all of the church fathers, all of the great men and women in church history of the faith.
[4:34] I want to. If you would allow me to, I would stay here until we fell asleep. It's beautiful. That's what he says in verses 32 to 38. What more can I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah and David and Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword.

Are you inspired yet? Were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. But women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release that they might rise again to a better life.
Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned and sawn in two and they were killed with the sword. And he goes on and says, these were men and women of whom the world was not worthy.
Finally, as you look to Hebrews 12, verse 1, move your eyes there. Our third point, God brings us into church history. This is incredible. The Bible does not stop.
Well, the Bible stops at the end of the, but his story continues in you. You stand on the shoulders of all of these men and women that you've heard of in the faith.
[5:52] The gospel has come to you. They've handed the baton on to you. You stand on their shoulders. And now the story comes to us. It's up to you to faithfully communicate the gospel to the next generation.

It's up to you and this story, this Acts 29, the moving on of the gospel through you, that you have the opportunity through your life to inspire future generations of the church.
You are part of this story. Glorious. Read with me Hebrews 12. Therefore, since we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.
He's applying history, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne.
He ends with the crowning jewel of church history. The whole purpose of creation was that Jesus could come and redeem his church. The second thing that inspired me to study church history, I hope it's for you as well, is that studying church history is inspiring.
[7:05] It's so inspiring. It's entertaining. It keeps you on the edge of your seat. But it's inspiring. And my favorite story from history, there was one moment that really sparked my love of history, and I want to share that story with you.

I want to take you through this, and it's what led me to start reading on my own. It's what ultimately culminated in me getting to teach church history at OBU. And if this is something that you enjoy, there's so much more to this.
You can take history and doctrine as an elective and saturate your mind with this over a semester and two semesters. But to tell the story well, I need to introduce you to three people.
And raise your hand if you've ever heard of William Tyndale before. Anybody know him? Good. We'll start there, and we'll get more obscure as we go. William Tyndale, if you don't know him, he was a brilliant scholar and Cambridge University professor.
He was fluent in French, in Greek, in Hebrew, in German, in Italian, in Latin, and Spanish, not counting his native language, which was English.
[8:10] And so he fell under deep conviction in 1521, and he left his post at Cambridge because he decided God laid it on his heart and his sovereignty. The world needs an English Bible.

Nobody's heard the Bible in their own language in a thousand years. You go to Mass, you get Latin. The Bibles are kept by the pastors of the church, the priests. They haven't heard it, and Tyndale says, I'm going to change that, 1521.

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When did the Reformation happen? When did Martin Luther nail the 95 Theses to the door at the Castle Church in Wittenberg? What year? 1517. What day?
Yeah, October 31st. We call it Halloween. It's Reformation Day, so this is new. There's still a Catholic church. There is no Protestant church yet. There is no evangelical. It's 1521, just a few years after Luther.
He's actually, in a moment, we're going to meet people that studied under Luther. And he begins to go to some of his fellow professors at Cambridge and ask them, will you accompany me in this work?
[9:10] Which is an amazing statement because if you even possessed an English Bible at this time, at this day, you could be put to death? If you're caught translating an English Bible, you are certainly going to be put to death.

So this isn't something that Luther can just, or not Luther, Tyndale, can just go up and put on a little ad board at his school and say, if anybody's interested in helping me translate this, let me know. This is a very sensitive issue, a very private issue, and he's trying to recruit, and nobody will help him.
He leaves his post. He does it alone. And he's the first person to complete a translation of the English Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew. Up until this time, a little bit before, you've got Wycliffe.
You've probably heard of him, Wycliffe Bible Translators. He translated it from the Vulgate. So way back, Jerome translates the Bible into Latin. You know, you've got Wycliffe, who's going to take it from Latin to English, and all of a sudden, you're playing a game of telephone with the Bible.
I mean, the Vulgate's already on shaky ground, and then you translate off of that. Tyndale says, no, we're going back. I'm a master of the languages. God's equipped me for this. He was a polished arrow. He was a sharp sword, right?
[10:16] This was the man for the moment, the moment for the man. He's translating a Bible. And he begins to travel all over the world because now he is a fugitive. And people know what he's up to.

And he becomes an outlaw by trying to translate the Bible. And it's amazing. Nobody knows what he looks like. There's not like wanted posters. And so people are inquiring. The Catholic Church is beginning to send agents to find him.
And he travels to escape for his life to Wittenberg, to Cologne, to Worms in Germany. And finally, his translation journey takes him to the Netherlands.
There's even moments where he's in the publishing shop finishing copies of his New Testament when the authorities come in. And he grabs as many as he can, and he leaves out the back door. I mean, it's close.
Calls. And he ends up in 1534. He moves into a guy's house named Thomas Points with some English merchants in a boarding house in the Netherlands. And he sets up base there under these British merchants in the back of this house.
[11:17] They're readers of Luther. They're sympathetic to the Reformation. And by God's providence, he needs a place to be. And these merchants protect him. They give him a room. They cover for him. They protect him from the Catholic authorities.

And they protect him from people like the next individual I want to introduce you to, a guy named Henry Phillips. Raise your hand if you've heard of Henry Phillips. Yes. Okay. We've got some scholars.
Henry Phillips is the antagonist. You can boo when I say his name if you want to. Henry Phillips. Yeah. He's the son of a three-time parliamentarian. He's registered for a law degree from Oxford. Notable and wealthy English family. I say all this to tell you he's set up for a life of success. It's an easy road. He's coasting. It's a good position. He's entrusted by his father with a fortune to take to London to pay his father's debt.
And he arrives in London and he gambles every cent of it away. And so here's the problem. And the Catholic church members meet Phillips and they learn about this and they tell him, we will pay your debt in full if you will bring us William Tyndale.
[12:26] Your father never has to know. And we're going to leave him there and introduce you to our third individual. If Tyndale's Batman, John Rogers is Robin.

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He was born in 1500. You'll see why in a moment. Small town near Birmingham. Graduated from Pembroke College in Cambridge. A brilliant mind. A learned scholar.
He's selected to be a junior canon at Christ Church Oxford at a time where they were trying to feed Oxford with the most brilliant minds. They only allow the best of the best and Rogers is here.
And he's one of the best men in the nation. And I want to remind you there's no Reformation yet. There's no Evangelical church. There's no Protestant church. He's, there's only the Catholic church.
And so he's ordained as a Catholic priest. And he goes through some obscure years. But he picks up in history in London in 1532. Where he starts pastoring in 1534. He travels to Europe where he stays for 13 years as he ministers to British merchants.
[13:29] And he finds, he comes to this house, again by God's providence, to some merchants who own a boarding house in the Netherlands. Does that sound familiar? And he comes under the protection of these men.

And in the back room of this house, he realizes he's not even saved. He meets a guy named Tyndale. And immediately, Tyndale leads him to the faith. And he's born again. And Rogers becomes his assistant.
He's helping him with his Bible translation. Tyndale's done the New Testament. Which this is really funny. He finishes the New Testament. And the Catholic church wants to, to squelch out this New Testament. And so they purchase from all of the bookstores, all of the New Testaments.
So they can burn them. Which, what do you think that does for Tyndale? That funds the Old Testament. Thank you for purchasing every copy. And now he's, he's doing this Old Testament.
And the New Testament, the people haven't heard their Bible.
And their language in a thousand years. They're taking these from the coastline of the Netherlands. And they're, they're smuggling in Bibles and hay bales. And selling them on the black market. Can you imagine? This is what we say of the Reformation.
[14:31] After darkness, light. Because out of the darkness of the medieval ages came this Bible. And so Rogers begins assisting him with the Old Testament. And while they're busy with this translation, the man named Henry Phillips has made enough contacts to find out where Tyndale is.

And he moves 30 miles away. And he comes and he begins to form a relationship with the men of the house. And the men are questioning this. And they're telling Tyndale, stay away from this guy, Phillips.
Like, what's, what's his deal? Why is he here? Where did he come from? And they're suspicious. And the most suspicious one was Points, the owner of the house. He never let Henry Phillips out of his sight.
And there was a night when Points had to leave town. And Phillips comes to Tyndale and he tells Tyndale, let's go for a walk. It's a nice night.
Let's go together. And in his naivety, Tyndale follows him. Remember, nobody knows what Tyndale looks like. He's a fugitive. They don't have the internet. There's not Facebook. And so they come to a narrow passage.
[15:34] If you've ever gone to the Netherlands, these little side streets are so narrow. And they come to a spot where it's only wide enough for one person. And Phillips says to him, you go first. He turns the corner.

And there are all the Catholic authorities waiting for him. And it's amazing that for a Bible study or a devotional, you can look at the parallels between Tyndale and Phillips and Jesus Christ and Judas. Because he turns the corner and there's the authorities. And as he turns to run, he runs into Phillips' hands and he shoves them. And like Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss, he points at him saying, this is the man.
And they carry him away. And it's by providence. John Rogers is back at the house working on the translation. He hears word of what's happened.
And so he grabs all of the translation work as quick as he can. He throws it in a box. And he literally leaves. He just flees the back door before the authorities can come and confiscate everything.
[16:31] And he shoulders the task. He finishes the Old Testament. He publishes it under the pseudonym Thomas Matthews, which is known in history as the Matthews Bible, the first English Bible printed with official approval.

And he takes Tyndale's work from Ezra through Malachi. It wasn't finished. He makes all the edits and the corrections. Makes sure it's precise. His work was so precise.

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He adds a summary statement to the end of every page of the Bible. And there was a thousand pages in this Bible. He adds 6,000 study notes. He adds introductory sentences at the beginning of every chapter of the Bible.
He draws little hands in the margins that point to the key verses in the Bible. He writes a 20-page summary of the Bible. He writes an account of creation until 1536 and binds it with it.
He writes summaries that teach people how to study the Bible. He highlights key people and places and doctrines and words. Do you think we would have got along with this guy? That's an amazing resource.
[17:33] And it formed the basis of all future English translations. 83% of the language in the New Testament of the King James Bible was identical to the Matthews Bible.

And so if you have an English Bible in your lap or on your phone, would you just hold it right here? And I want you to recognize the legacy of how that came to be in your hands. How God used these men to put that book in your hands.
You can lay it back in your lap because I want you to hear now what it cost those men. Tyndale is taken to prison at Vilvoorde Castle where he would stay until he's martyred.
He wrote in his journal that he would shiver through the day and he would freeze at night. And like Paul writing to Timothy, he only asked for two things. He says, please bring me a cloak and please bring me a Hebrew dictionary so I can work while I'm here.
He said he got a few hours of sunlight every day and the rest of the time he sat in solitude and darkness. He wrote his final book in prison. It was called Faith Alone Justifies Before God.
[18:36] Like Jesus, he has a civil trial. And then after 18 months in cold prison, he has a religious trial. Or excuse me, I got those backwards.

He has a religious trial and then after 18 months a civic trial. And he's put to death for a long list of charges. I want to give you six of them. Number one, maintaining that salvation is by faith alone. Number two, maintaining that belief in the forgiveness of sins and embracing the mercy offered in the gospel is enough for salvation. Number three, by believing that the human will is bound by sin. Number four, by denying that there is such a thing as purgatory. Number five, by affirming that the Virgin Mary and the dead saints do not pray for us. Number six, by affirming that we do not need to pray to the dead saints nor to Mary to be heard by Christ.
For those reasons, in 1536, they hung a chain. They fashioned a noose to his neck. He utters the final words of his life. Oh, God, open the eyes of the king of England and he strangled and burned and the remains are blown up with gunpowder.
[19:48] And I think of the song we just sang, though his body, our body, they may kill. God's truth abides still. His kingdom is forever. The king of England, by the way, died unconverted in 1547.

And that moves our story forward. The boy king, Edward VI, takes over for a few brief years. And then came Mary Tudor. Mary I.
In 1553, you might know Mary as Bloody Mary. Hands up if you've ever heard of Bloody Mary. Keep your hand up if you know how she got that name. She got that name by murdering John Rogers, the assistant to William Tyndale.
In 1555, she martyred him. 1555 to 1558, she started a special commission to examine and prosecute Protestants. In three years, she would put to death 288 Christians who became known as the Marian Martyrs.
And she earned her title, Bloody Mary, because the first one that she killed was John Rogers. One month after becoming queen, she arrests him because he was a marked man. She wanted him dead.
[20:55] Rogers was interrogated. She set up commissions to prosecute Christians. Her company asked Rogers, he says in his own words, I was asked whether I believe the sacrament to be the very body and blood of our Savior that was born of the Virgin Mary and hung on the cross.

He answered, I believe it to be false. Corporately, Christ is only in heaven. And so Christ cannot be corporately in your sacrament. He can only be in one place in one time. He's at the right hand of God the Father.
He's not in this cup. He's not in this bread. He's confined to house arrest. He's forbidden to leave. He's stripped of his job and his ministry, which meant that they would cut his hands with glass. They would give him the sacraments and then take them away, meaning you're excommunicated. You're damned. He's thrown in Newgate prison in January 1554 where he's confined with others for

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a year.
He tries to petition to state his case and it's denied. He's disregarded. January 28th to 29th, 1555, he stands trial for two days and is appointed to death for two reasons.
[22:00] Number one, denying the Christian character of the Church of Rome. And number two, denying the real presence of Christ in the sacrament. Something that you deny every day. And then the legendary date, Sunday, February 4th, 1555.

Early in the morning, he's brought out of prison to be taken to Smithfield. One of the sheriffs comes to him with his pardon in his hand. And he says, this is yours if you would just revoke your abominable doctrines.
Rogers answers, what I have preached I will seal with my blood. And the sheriff responds, then you're a heretic. Rogers says, the last day, the day of judgment will show it.
The sheriff said, I will never pray for you. Rogers says, I will pray for you. And he's led out of his cell through the streets. He's put in chains and he's led through the very neighborhood that he preached in.
As the Catholic Church is making a statement, if you believe in the Protestant faith, if you're an evangelical, this is what happens to you. They march him through his own church. As he's being led, he's led to the point of his execution site is within sight of his church.
[23:11] He's led along the way with his wife and children. One of his children was born while he was in prison. He meets his baby child for the first time on the way to be burned. He doesn't, he's not allowed to stop.

He's not allowed to say goodbye. He memorized Psalm 51. And so he marched through the streets repeating Psalm 51. And there's a legacy. If you want to prepare yourself to die, if you want to prepare yourself for your own martyrdom, memorize Psalm 51.
And you will be ready on that day because as these martyrs go, they recite Psalm 51. It's a tradition. It's a legacy. An immense crowd lines the street. Why?
Because nobody knows. Mary has been, she's a devout Catholic and she's been spewing all of this rhetoric and people are wondering, what's she going to do? How far is she going to go? What's going to happen to John Rogers?
What's going to happen to the rest of those who are in prison? There's a huge turnout. And if you want to know what the moment is like, J.C. Ryle comments on it. He writes in his commentary on it, They rent the air with thunders of applause.
[24:12] As they cheered their pastor on to remain strong in the faith, an ambassador to France is there. And he reports that his own congregation began to cheer him on and bolster his courage. This is the church sustained with a word.

The French ambassador says, This day was performed, the confirmation of the alliance between the Pope and the Kingdom of England by a public and solemn sacrifice of a preaching doctor named Rogers, who had been burned alive for being a Lutheran.
But he died persisting in his opinion. At this conduct, the greatest part of the people were not afraid to make him many exclamations to strengthen his courage. Even his children assisted in it, comforting him in such a manner that it seemed as if he was going to his wedding.
John Fox, in Fox's Book of Martyrs, writes, The fire was put unto him, and when it had taken hold, both upon his legs and shoulders, he as one, feeling no pain, washed his hands in the flame as though it had been cold water.
And lifting up his hands into heaven and not removing them until devouring fire had consumed them, most mildly this happy martyr yielded up his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father. A little before his burning, his pardon was brought.
[25:24] If he had recanted, he would have received it, but he utterly refused it. He was the first martyr of all the blessed company that suffered in Queen Mary's time, that gave the first adventure upon the fire. His wife and children being eleven in number, ten being able to go to the scene, and one sucking on her breast, met him on the way as he went to Smithfield.

The sorrowful sight of his own flesh and blood could not move him, but he constantly and cheerfully took his place in death in the defense and quarrel of the gospel. And from that moment, he breathed his last, and he gave courage to everyone that was in prison.
He gave courage to every Protestant. There was three major leaders of England, Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer. They were in prison in Oxford awaiting their trial, awaiting their execution, and they

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got word of this, and they were on fire.
They were excited. They were bold, and that led them to be able to be martyred, because they get martyred. It's another incredible story. Again, there's not time to tell all of the stories, but Ridley and Latimer get martyred back to back.
You want to talk about a good way to make a best friend, right? They're there back to back, tied to the same stake, and Latimer says, play the man, Ridley, because today we're going to light a flame such that no one in England will be able to burn it out.
[26:37] And we say it's true. We're still talking about it today. These are the heroes of the faith, and they got this strength because the Holy Spirit empowered Rogers and brought us our English Bible.

Who did Bloody Mary martyr? She martyred the leaders, of course. The Archbishop of England, who answered to no one but the King of England. He was martyred for being Protestant.
Four bishops were burned. Twenty-one clergymen were burned, of course. But I want you to listen to a list of the occupations of the rest of those who are martyred. There were preachers.
There's Bible translators. There's bishops. There's rectors. But there's also a fisherman. And a weaver. And a weaver. And a butler. And a barber.
And a butcher. A curate. A surgeon. A physician. An upholster. A linen draper. A soap fuller. A bricklayer.
[27:35] A linen weaver. A widow. A beer brewer. A carpenter. A lame man. A shoemaker. A clerk. A cook. A hosier.

A common laborer. A hat maker. A painter. A chaplain. A priest. A lawyer. A maid. A tailor. A mason. You could go on.
You could go on. Who did she martyr? She martyred the best Christians. The most faithful Christians. And it wasn't just pastors. A few preachers.
And a few leaders. But most notably. Common people. With tremendous faith. 54 women. Four children. Were so convicted. By the protestant faith.
That they would go. And suffer. And die. To be burned at the stake. Rather than. Renounce their faith. And I don't know about you. But. That story was encouraging.
[28:30] To my faith. Why should we study church history? Why should we inspire. Be. Why should we study it? Why should we go through it? Because it's inspiring. It's incredible. We study church history.

Because it's biblical. The Bible does it. We study church history. Because it's inspiring. We also study the church history. The third reason. Because it gives us wisdom. Skill in living.
It teaches us the way. That we should go. It's not infallible. But. There's. Men before us. That have the same Holy Spirit. They were inspired by.
Wisdom incarnate. And some of the greatest wisdom. In the church. Has come to us through. Quotations. Andrew Reed says. Do we have health?
Let us relieve the sick. Have we wealth? Let us help the poor. Are we strong? Let us uphold the weak. Are we happy? Let us feel for the miserable. Let us bear each other's burdens. And so fulfill the law of Christ.
[29:24] One of my favorites is. He says. The greatest. The greatest ally. And exponent of Christianity. Is. Charity. Love that one. I preach it way too much. In sermon illustrations.

Church history is also. The best for sermon illustrations. It's just weighty enough. And relevant enough. If you saturate your mind in history. Then. You always have a word in season. It's always. Relevant.
A bible quotation. And an example from history. Will always. Hit. Always helpful. Luther. Gave advice on how to handle heretics. Saying. Heretics should be vanquished with books.
Not with burnings. Meaning if somebody disagrees with you. We don't put heretics to death. And we don't burn their books. We take up our pens. And we write. And we put them to shame.
We stop their movement with our pens. Augustine. You've made us for yourself. Oh Lord. And our hearts are restless. Until what? They find their rest. In you.
[30:19] Thomas Aquinas. Charity is the form. Mover. Mother. And root. Of all the virtues. And on and on. It's. It comes to us in quotes. But it comes to us in people. Seems like God uniquely uses people. To have certain words.

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R.C. Sproul. Of holiness. And John Piper. Right. Just the enjoyment of God. And people just have these themes. That kind of surround their life. George Mueller is one. He teaches you. How to rely on God daily for provision.
God impressed it on his heart. To take a vow of poverty. He died with nothing. And he lived with nothing. What do we get to learn from him? How we can care for 10,000 orphans. On a shoestring budget.
You get to see God over and over again. Take a half a cent. And multiply it like loaves and fishes for weeks. Take care. Caring for the children in three orphan houses. With nothing in the bank.
If you've never studied Mueller. It's. I'm jealous. You get to go read his story for the first time. Erman Frank. Andrew Reed. Teach us.
[31:16] What a heart for vulnerable people looks like. You've got Erman Frank. Starting a legacy of caring for the poor in the orphan house. That extended for 350 years.

Part of the reason that I love orphans so much. And bring them into my own home. He inspired about everybody that you've heard of in history. Spurgeon. Whitfield. Andrew Reed. Reed started five major philanthropic institutions in London.
Massive buildings. He had took the help of the prince. To put together the London Orphan Asylum. The Infant Orphan Asylum. The Asylum for the Fatherless. The Asylum for the Intellectually Disabled.
He called it the Asylum for Idiots. And I thought I would call it Intellectually Disabled. But that was what he called it. Doesn't mean the same thing today, obviously. The Asylum for Idiots.
And finally, the Asylum for the Incurables. The people that everybody else forgot about. Is the first person that he served. They teach us what caring for vulnerable people looks like.
[32:15] John Calvin teaches us what a single individual is capable of in a lifetime. He only ministered for 30 years. Converted at age 24.

Wrote the greatest theological work of the Reformation by age 25. The Institutes of the Christian Religion. Which started shorter, but by its fifth edition was 450,000 words with 3,000 Bible references.
He preached at a minimum twice on Sundays. And one sermon every weekday morning every other week. Which means he preached on average 20 sermons a month.
He would preach in French. And then he would go across the street and lecture in theology three times a week in Latin. He was in leadership of the local government in Geneva. And he took his place at all the sessions of the consistory.
And yet his congregation said they were never neglected. Approachable to all. His commentary on the Bible is the largest commentary ever written by a single man. 45 volumes.
[33:15] Over 400 pages each. His commentary on his own life at what he perceived to be a low point. As he said, He preached 20 sermons that month and lectured three times a week.

And he felt useless. And through all of this, his health was poor. And we know from his doctor in 1564, He describes his colic, His spitting up of blood, His ague, His gout, And the, quote, Excruciating sufferings of his hemorrhoids.
End quote. And so he also, worst of all, Had to pass kidney stones unsedated. And he died at the ripe old age of 54.
He did all this in 30 years. He teaches us what you can accomplish in a lifetime. Fully submitted to God. John Piper. Or almost in opposition to Calvin. Teaches you what a balanced life can look like. As he says that he only does everything at 70%. So he always has time for his family. And he always has time for his church and his writing. Elizabeth Elliot. Teaches us how to love people who hurt us.
[34:29] Her husband is stabbed to death. You know the story. Her husband is stabbed to death. And she moves in with the very people that murdered him. So that they could hear the gospel. And they're saved. Corrie ten Boom.

From Harlem. Taught us how that we can participate in an underground movement. And engage in civil disobedience. As she created a secret room in her house to hide Jews from Nazis.
And started Bible studies in her concentration camp cabin. So that she could preach to all the other women. So these are the reasons that I love church history most.
It's biblical. It's inspiring. It's full of wisdom. It teaches us the way to go. It teaches us what we are to do. And I also want to give you just a few important reasons. Other reasons. Classical reasons.

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Why you should believe in this. Why you should study this. I think one. It helps the church distinguish orthodoxy from heresy. And you'll go and you'll read the Nicene Creed. Or the Niceno-Chalcedonian-Constantinopolitan Creed.
[35:27] There it is. You read the Athanasian Creed. You go through all these formulations. It teaches us. Alistair McGrath says tradition is like a filter. Which allows us to identify suspect teachings immediately.

To protest that we've never heard and believed this before. Is not necessarily to deny the correctness of the teaching in question. But it's to raise a fundamental question. Why have Christians not believed this before? And on further investigation.
It usually turns out there's pretty good reasons for not accepting that belief. The past year acts as both a resource and a safeguard. Checking unhelpful and unorthodox doctrinal developments. By demanding that their supporters explain.
Their historical and theological credentials. End quote. Another one briefly. It keeps you focused on the universal church. We like to think of this kind of progressive way.
That history is kind of culminating in us. This is us. And we forget that God's been moving in the church history up until this point. He's been moving for 2,000 years since Christ walked the earth.
[36:26] It's bigger than America. And not every doctrine is about us. And God's story doesn't start and end with us. It's his story. And so it takes the spotlight off of the present. And puts it on Jesus and his church.

Third. It gives us perspective for theology. Because when you read the Bible. You read it as a wealthy American in 2025.
And so when you read things. You make some assumptions. That a 20th century Christian communist in China might not assume. And you get to kind of balance thoughts.
And you get to have a conversation. A broader conversation. And learn from each other. And you think it's helpful to hear from somebody else. Is it helpful to hear from a medieval theologian?
Or an early church father living 6,000 miles away? We could go on and on. Four. It ties us to the past. Five. It helps us focus on the essentials.
[37:22] Six. It teaches how to express our beliefs in a contemporary form. We could go on and on. But we don't have time. And so I'll say this. Why should you study church history?

Why should you care? Because you need to know who your heroes are. Your friends at school have the wrong heroes. Al Mohler said that.
Even some of your family members. They have the wrong heroes. Maybe you have the wrong heroes. And to look at church history is to introduce yourself to those you haven't met yet. Jesus is your savior. But he inspired others.
They're your heroes. And you need to meet them. And so with that said. I want to give you some practical advice. If you don't have any knowledge of church history. Don't let that be a deterrent from starting.
Actually it should be all the more reason. Because you get to do this for the first time. It's like when you're watching someone who's never seen Star Wars before. It's like I'd rather watch you than the movie itself. That's how I feel about you.
[38:19] I'd rather watch you. And see you light up for getting to hear about these things for the first time. So pick something that piques your interest. Pick a period or a person that piques your interest. And start reading.

And be inspired. And over time it's going to take a lot of time. But over years as you read a few books and a few articles. It's going to start clicking. And you're going to start to see this grand picture.
Of how God is building and sustaining his church in the world. It's his providence on display. And to give you even more practical advice. Two of the camp sponsors here. Are two of the greatest publishers of church history.
Banner of Truth. Are you kidding me? Banner of Truth is here. Their resources are available. Read Banner of Truth. Ligonier. Read Ligonier. They have a series called A Long Line of Godly Men. They're very short books on all of these heroes of the faith. And they'll tell you why they're important. Even in the title. The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield is one. You know what you're getting. Go read and be inspired.

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[39:17] You can graduate to Nick Needham's 2,000 Years of Christ Power. You can go to Philip Schaaf's eight volume set on the history of the church. And I'm only smiling and laughing because then when you graduate from that you can read his 38 volume set on the history of the church.

You'll never get it all. And the command to you is go read them and be inspired. Go learn who your heroes are and go and do likewise.
Let's pray together and we'll sing and respond. Lord, what a gift your church is. What a gift this cloud of witnesses is.
That we get to open up scripture and read about all the way from creation through Christ, through David. And we get to read all the way through the exiles. We get to read all the way through Revelation.
And then we get to read through history of the disciples of the people that you called as your apostles. And all the way in. We get to see how you've built your church over 2,000 years. What a gift. And the story now comes to us.
[40:20] Lord, we take this soberly, Lord. We don't take this for granted that the baton has been handed to us. And it's our responsibility to share these stories and these songs and above all this gospel with the next generation.

May we do it faithfully. Use your church and the history of your providence and your sovereignty to inspire us, Lord. Thank you for this camp where we can come together and be refreshed and learn about your church.
Again, which you love and you bought with your blood. We love you, Jesus. And we ask all this in your son's name. Amen. Amen. We'll stand and sing.
How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord.
He is laid for your faith in his excellent word. What more can he say than to you he has said.
[41:29] To you who for refuge to Jesus I plan. Fear not, I am with thee.

Oh, be not dismayed. For I am your God. I will still give thee aid. I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand.
Upheld by my righteous omnipotent hell. When through fiery trials the pathway shall lie.
By grace all sufficient shall be your supply. The place shall I burn to I only be found.
The Lord God, you can sing. Thank you for me. The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose.
[43:10] I will not, I will not desert to its foes. That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake.

I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake. That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake.
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake. Father, thank you that our faith is centered on the cross.

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