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CHURCH HISTORY MONTHLY

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Timeline of Topics

- Quote:
- William Carey, Father of Modern Missions
- Early Church
- A letter to the Corinthians 40 years after Paul
- How much were the early Christians persecuted?
- 40 Martyrs

Class starting tomorrow on how we got the OT and the OT false books

Discover how they got the Old Testament plus the OT Apocrypha, books that Catholics and Orthodox include in their OT's but Protestants don't, plus other false OT books that no one includes in their Bibles.

New class for this summer:

How to grow in Christian Maturity: Readings in Christian Spiritual Classics from 1500 years of Church History

This class will run for 8 weeks in June and July. It will be a different kind of class in that this will not focus on teaching new information but in reflecting on how to grow your faith. Each week, we will do readings in 1-2 different Christian Spiritual classics from our rich Christian past to learn what they have to teach about Christianity maturity. If you need a time of self-reflection or if you feel like you have plateaued in your faith or that you are in a spiritual cul-de-sac, this might be the class for you. These books were written from 1700 to 200 years ago, so their messages have been tried and proven by many, many Christians. We will discover where they are similar and where they are different. It will start on June 6

Another letter to the Corinthians, 40 years after Paul's letters

Clement (died early 2nd Century), also known as Clement of Rome, was a bishop of Rome and, according to Catholic tradition, he was the fourth pope. While his life story is sketchy, some evidence exists that he was with Paul in Philippi and may have traveled with him to Corinth. Some scholars believe he is the Clement mentioned in Philippians 4:3 [Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help . . . Clement and the rest of my fellow workers . . .].

As bishop of Rome, Clement apparently wrote letters to churches in other cities in order to encourage and/or to solve problems. The only letter we have from Clement is to the church in Corinth. Most scholars believe this letter was written in the late AD 90s. [I and II Corinthians in the New Testament were written in the mid-50s.] This letter, called I Clement, was very popular in early church times. Eusebius (260-340) wrote: "We are aware that this Epistle ["Epistle" is another word for "letter."] has been publicly read in very many churches both in old times, and also in our own day." I Clement consists of 59 chapters, although each chapter is more like a paragraph. The rest of this article consists of one of these chapters. [If you are interested in reading all of I Clement, go to www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ii.ii.i.html.] Chapter XIII.—Let us therefore, brethren, be of humble mind, laying aside all haughtiness, and pride, and foolishness, and angry feelings; and let us act according to that which is written (for the Holy Spirit says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, neither let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories glory in the Lord, in diligently seeking Him, and doing judgment and righteousness"), being especially mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus which He spoke, teaching us meekness and long-suffering. For thus He spoke: "Be ye merciful, that you may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven to you; as you do, so shall it be done unto you; as you judge, so shall you be judged; as you are kind, so shall kindness be shown to you; with what measure you measure, with the same it shall be measured to you." By this precept and by these rules let us establish ourselves, that we walk with all humility in obedience to His holy words. For the holy word says, "On whom shall I look, but on him that is meek and peaceable, and that trembles at My words?"

William Carey is considered the “Father of Modern Missions” for the work he did in India from 1793 to 1834. His fame as a missionary spread widely while he was alive. As he when he lay dying in 1834, though, his thoughts were only about Christ. Upon hearing people talk about his accomplishments, he summoned fellow missionary Alexander Duff to his side and whispered, “Mr. Duff! You have been speaking about Dr. Carey, Dr. Carey; when I am gone, say nothing about Dr. Carey. Speak about Dr. Carey’s Savior.”

The extent of the early persecutions

While Nero’s persecution was the first Roman persecution of Christians, it did not occur for religious purposes nor was it widespread. Instead, he persecuted Christians in response to a fire in Rome. The first persecutions of Christians because of their faith did not occur until the 90s with Domitian, who also had the Apostle John placed on the island of Patmos as punishment for being a Christian (where he wrote Revelation). After Domitian, persecution of Christians was sporadic and local (meaning up to the local Roman leaders) for 150 years. The first systematic, widespread persecution of Christians did not occur until the mid-Third Century. After that, Roman persecution of Christians was common until the early 300s.

Questions, comments, or want to join a free class contact Mark at marknickens@gmail.com

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THE 40 MARTYRS: YOU WILL BE AMAZED AT WHERE THE 40TH MARTYR CAME FROM

We know about the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste from Basil of Caesarea’s (330-379) “Homily of the Forty Martyrs.” The sermon is too long to reprint here, but let me get you started with background information, and then I will present part of Basil’s “Homily.” The Emperor Lucinius (died 323) decided that everyone should worship him. It was winter, and forty soldiers in a far off and cold region, all Christians, refused. I pick up from the midst of Basil’s homily from http://www.thehtm.org/forty_martyrs.htm. “What then was the governor to do? . . . At first he wished to charm them with flatteries, thus attempting to weaken the power of their piety. He said: ‘Do not cast your youth away; do not exchange this sweet life for an untimely death. . . .’ Moreover, he promised them money [which they refused]. . . [next], he put them in fear of torments, of death, and of trial by the most unbearable tortures.

“But what of the Martyrs? They reply: ‘Why, O enemy of God, do you entice us by laying these good things before us as snares, so that we might fall away from the Living God?’ {And they refused.}

“When he heard these things . . . he came upon the means, and behold how cruel his [judgment] was! Having considered the climate of that land, for it was bleak, and the season of year, for it was winter, he observed that during the nighttime the chill attained its highest intensity, and moreover that a northerly wind then blew: therefore he gave the command that they all be left naked in the open air in the midst of the city, and thus being frozen, they should die.

“Thus it was that they were sentenced to spend the night under the open sky. The lake, round about which the populous town lies and in which the Saints contested, was covered with ice and had become, as it were, solid land fit for chariot driving.

[They then stripped themselves and went onto the ice. The governor ordered a pot of warm water to be placed at the edge of the ice in order to entice any to rebuke his faith and save his life. One of the Forty did leave the company and attempted to save his life by going to the warm water.]

“What a sad sight for the righteous ones! A warrior becomes a deserter . . . [yet one of the soldiers by the water] throwing off his raiment, he joined himself to the naked ones, crying out in unison with the Saints: ‘I am a Christian.’ The bystanders were astonished at the unexpectedness of his conversion.”

So, even in the last hours of their lives, the example of the faithful Thirty-nine introduced one other to Jesus.