

# **"Church History: Heroes, Heretics & Holy Wars"**

## **Sunday School Notes**

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### **CLASS 3 – Augustine & Pelagius**

354-430 – Augustine of Hippo

(Pronunciation: St. **Augustine** is in Florida, St. **Augustine** is in heaven)

Born in Algeria, which was Roman Africa. His mother's name was Monica, a strong Christian, his father became a Christian on his deathbed.

Augustine's first experience with sin was as a teenager when he and some friends stole fruit that he didn't even want to eat from an orchard. Realized the depravity inside himself and the human condition of twisted desire and sin. Though raised as a Christian, he followed the Manichaean religion (which taught that there was a cosmological struggle between light and dark; made up by this guy in Persia in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century- so very new; combined Gnosticism with Buddhism), much to his mother's despair.

He also lived a hedonistic lifestyle and was not bound by any sexual restraint. One of his prayers earlier in his life was, "Give me chastity and continence, but not yet." He had an affair with a woman in Carthage that he never married but had a son with. He abandoned her when he became a Christian and his son was 17 yrs. old.

At the age of 30, Augustine became the Professor of Rhetoric in Milan, a very prestigious position. His mother followed him to Milan and tried to have him marry legitimately, though the girl she arranged was only 11 at the time! He also came under the influence of Ambrose, the bishop of Milan.

In the summer of 386, at 32 yrs. of age, Augustine heard a voice, "tolle lege"- take up and read. He opened to Romans 13:13-14 ("*Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.*") He and his son were baptized the following year. He moved back to North Africa a couple years later, but his mother died on the way. His son died soon after. Augustine sold almost everything and gave it to the poor; converted his house to a monastery. In 391 he became a priest in Hippo, in 395 he became co-Bishop, then eventually the full Bishop of Hippo and remained in that post until his death in 430.

*Confessions* was the first true autobiography, testified of God's grace in his life. Kings had written chronicles of their exploits, but this was the first true autobiography (though the main character is God, whom Augustine calls the "Hound of Heaven"). Famous quote from book: "You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."

*The City Of God* was written as the pagan German tribes were attacking Rome at the end of Augustine's life. People associated Rome as the Christian city, but Augustine taught that God was not preserving one city so much as he was preserving the church.

Augustine's views & teachings:

-He was against abortion, though only if the baby had a soul.

-He was the first theologian to teach amillennialism, which some think is closer to today's premillennialism.

-Because of his wild sexual life, he developed a pretty negative view of sex and women.

Thomas Cahill says he was the last classical theologian and the first medieval theologian.

-Becoming a Bishop really changed his views on humanity, confirming for him total depravity.

-Both Protestants and Catholics claim him- Protestants because Calvin built off of him and we see all the great doctrines in his work, and Catholics because he felt there was no salvation outside the One Church and also taught that the Apocrypha was Scripture.

### **Pelagius:**

Born in the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century most likely in Wales, but arrived in Rome in 400. Was shocked that Christians in Rome didn't have changed lives, were just "cultural Christians." If God had given a command, He expected Christians to be able to, and to actually try to, fulfill it. Sinlessness was possible, he had a zeal for holiness. He believed that all people are given the original state of Adam-born sinless, which is a kind of neutrality that they can fall away from in sin. Sin is not because of a corrupt nature but just free choice. People had to do their best to achieve salvation, they don't need salvation.

Augustine believed that people were born sinful because of "original sin" and the curse of Adam, but also because sex was sinful! So he was right, but not for all the completely correct reasons.

Posse peccare – possible to sin

Posse non peccare – possible to not sin

Non posse peccare – not possible to sin

Non posse non peccare – not possible to not sin

Pelagius believed that all of life was the 1<sup>st</sup> two. Augustine and traditional Christianity believe the best way to describe before the fall is Posse peccare. Then all people after the fall but before they are saved are Non posse non peccare. Sanctification is back to the first two; then after glorification it's Non Posse Peccare.

Essentially, Augustine answered Pelagius with TULIP minus the L. We usually associate these with Calvin, but Augustine taught them 1150 some years before Calvin did: According to "Heretics for Armchair Theologians", his order was something like: T I U P. Depravity makes irresistible grace necessary, which makes Unconditional Election make sense, which makes Perseverance of the Saints- we can't cease believing on our own since we didn't start believing on our own.

Pelagius & his followers were denounced by church Synods between 412-418; he was banished from Rome in 418. Died within 2 years. Council of Ephesus condemned Pelagianism.

Pelagians vs. Semi-Pelagians- complete works righteousness vs. cooperation with grace  
Not many Christians today are full-on Pelagians, but certainly the default American Protestantism as well as Catholicism, are at least Semi-Pelagian. Those who accepted semi-Pelagianism: The Council of Orange (France) in 529, Thomas Aquinas, the Council of Trent, John Wesley.

Technical terms: Monergism- one agent to work out salvation (God) or Synergism- two agents to work out salvation (God & us). Pelagius believed we worked alone for salvation, with Jesus as a good example. Augustine (and later Reformed theologians) taught/believed Monergism.

Because there was so much destruction from the Germans invading the Roman Empire, for the next 700 years there were not enough books and libraries to support an intellect equal to Augustine. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, a monk named Gottschalk got a hold of Augustine's writings and starting telling everyone that the church had misunderstood Augustine. But he was condemned. The next people to really discover and promote Augustine's theology were Calvin and Luther, who both believed that the church of their day was Pelagian. Not even Semi-Pelagian.

Rome sacked in 410, the traditional ending year is 476. Bring on the Dark Ages.

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