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Exploring the Church Fathers

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For The King - Rocky Ramsey

The church father's are DEFINITELY worth reading! We have to be a people rooted in history. We already stand on the shoulders of giants, we might as well recognize it and look down and see who they were!

Key Text:

* Matthew 16:17-19

Parallel Christian Economy

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Transcript

Hello, For The King listeners. I am not your host, Rocky Ramsey. My name is Will Drzymski, a brother in Christ and friend of Raku's, whom he has generously invited onto the show in order to verbally showcase my artwork to you in 50 seconds.

As an artist, I strive to accurately reflect the glory of God and everything that I paint, and through that process I hope to flood as much of the earth as possible with paintings, which accurately proclaim the undeniable fact that Jesus is Lord and the creation which he made commands us to worship him. So if you would like to join with me in distributing clean, refreshing artwork showcasing the creativity of the God who made us, I would be overjoyed to have your help. I run my own website called Reflected Works, where I showcase the artwork I've done in the past, sell original paintings and prints, and take requests for unique commissions.

Once again, that's ReflectedWorks.com, all one word, and I'm looking forward to helping you further the kingdom of God right now here on this earth by putting some of your free wall space to productive use. Thank you very much for your kind attention, and now, enjoy the show. And I'll not apologize for this God of the Bible.

Friends, welcome to the For the King podcast, where we proclaim the edicts of the King, namely and chiefly that Yahweh reigns. This is your host, Rodly Ramsey, and I am with Bryce, the normal other dude that talks about stuff with me. How you doing, dude? I am doing very well.

How are you? I'm doing awesome, actually. I've been taking some V3, and with my grounding mat, and dude, I'm sleeping like a rock. It's awesome.

I'm getting so much sleep. I just feel amazing for once. That's good.

Do you guys still use your grounding mat? We don't have a proper way to use it. Oh, okay. You haven't been to Rod yet? Okay.

I can show you where to buy one. But yeah, I honestly, dude, I've been feeling really good. Like, I feel very rested and alert.

So, if you hear me slur my speech, that shouldn't be happening. I should speak very clearly right now. That's just a effect.

Yeah. That's just a part of the fall. Okay, so we are hoping this evening to dive into the topic of the church fathers, something we haven't talked about much on the podcast of yet.

I mean, I think we've noted over the years, man, dude, I think by the time this releases, this will be three years of the podcast, which is crazy. I've been doing this for three years. You've been doing it with me for three years.

You've been the whole way. You're about to leave me out of that. Like, I've been along for the whole.

Dude, you were a teeny teeny. I'm your Sam. I'm the Sam Wise to your Frodo Baggins.

You are. You are. You've carried the burden of the ring, and I'm just the happy-go-lucky guy with the skillet.

And then I'm gonna find some bread crumbs on you one day. I'm gonna betray you. Oh, wait a second.

That's not in the book. That ain't in the book. Yeah.

Um, were you a teenager when we started this? I don't know. I think you were just like really early 20s. Dude, I am 24.

Okay, so you would have been, yeah, 21. All right. You're my own brother, and you don't even know my age.

I forget sometimes, dude. Guys don't care about birthdays. That's for women folk.

I've never been good with birthdays. Okay, so yeah, thanks for sticking with us, guys. Those that have listened, if you have listened for the past 30 years, awesome.

Thanks for being with us. This is great. It's been really enjoyable.

I absolutely love doing this, so I appreciate you guys listening for those of you that do. So, like I said, we'll be talking about the Church Fathers this evening on this episode. This is just more of an encouragement episode.

Bryce and I have been introduced more and more, especially the past year, to different bits of church history and understanding the Church Fathers. Reading books by them, reading quotes by them, seeing what they thought, thinking historically when we're coming into new theology or being confronted with a theological topic. So, I know for the longest time, I was just concerned about what a modern Christian thought.

And I wouldn't really ever think to console. Maybe the oldest would have just been the Puritans. That was probably as far back as I went.

And yeah, the longer I am going, I'm starting to want to go back further and further and further in church history. Obviously, I was reading the scriptures and I wanted to know what the Lord Jesus Christ said, what the Apostle Paul said. Of course that, but we're talking about the patriarchs, the early church.

So, any opening thoughts, Bryce, there? Yeah, quick disclaimer. So, today, I was at Half Price Books, and I was trying to find some more books from some church fathers. And in order to find the books, I had to go to the Catholic section.

So, here's a quick disclaimer. Just because we're talking about the early church father does not mean we're talking about some Roman, Popish bullcrap. That's not what we're talking about.

We absolutely despise the Roman pontiff. We decry all of his heresies. So, we're just talking about the rich history of Protestantism that goes all the way back to the early church.

So, I wanted to, in fact, you know what? I should have. I should repent for this. I should have moved the early church fathers from the Catholic section.

I should have moved them to the, I guess there's not a Protestant section. There's not a Protestant section. It's just a Christian living.

I guess the Christian living section. But yeah, that's kind of what we're wanting to talk about today, just the connectivity that we have from the early Protestants to all the way back to the earliest that you can get with the early church fathers. We're mainly just talking about the first five centuries after Christ's death.

That's mainly what we're talking about when we refer to the church fathers. Yeah, exactly. I guess before we go that far back yet, and talk about some of the stuff we've been reading there, I just read a book on the Waldenzis, which was a pre-reformer group from 11th century, 10th century, all the way up to the Protestant Reformation.

And they were believing all the things that the Protestant reformers were believing. They actually were being persecuted by the Catholics in the mountain range in Northern Italy well before Geneva came around and Calvin and all them. And they actually Calvin found out about them and called a meeting with them and had some of their pastors from the Waldenzis come out.

And they were articulating all their beliefs and Calvin's like, whoa, you guys have been believing this for hundreds of years. So I just make that point to say we can trace back Protestant theology very easily to many, many different groups that held the faith once for all delivered to the saints before the Popish people came in and completely marty and distorted it. And the Waldenzis can trace back their lineage of who planted their church in those mountains in Northern Italy back to church fathers.

And they had a Presbyterian church government. They had a reformed understanding of sociology. They were basically just Protestant through and through.

And they were planted, their church was planted by church fathers. So it's pretty cool to read history and to see stuff like that. So check out the history of the Waldensians by J.A. Wiley.

He was a Presbyterian guy from the 1850s in Scotland and wrote a history of that people group. And it's really, really cool to see. And if we had like a scripture verse, that would kind of be the theme of what we're talking about.

It's just the gates of hell won't prevail against God's church. God, God had Christ has always had his kingdom in this world. His kingdom will not be thwarted.

His church will not be overcome. So we shouldn't think, Oh, you guys are talking about these people thousands a year before us. Of course they were corrupted by the Roman, you know, satirical logical system.

Like, of course not. That is not true because Christ promised us that the gates of hell will never prevail against his church. So that's just a good understanding to work through when you look at, when you're looking at church history, you're looking at a history of our brothers.

Yeah, exactly. So that's just important to think through. Yep.

Yeah. I mean, I agree. That's, that's the operating principle.

It's not that church, church councils can air theological stands can air and maybe parts of the visible church can definitely air. But like you said, Bryce, we need to look at church history and find that vein of true Christendom always pumping blood from the heart of Christ, I guess, in a sense, it's going to be running through the whole way. And there's always going to be a life blood in the church.

Right. So it's just beautiful. So this episode, we want to encourage you to start digging into history a little bit and specifically the church fathers.

So Bryce and I have been kind of honing in on St. Augustine of recent. I know Bryce was reading some Justin Martyr. I mean, there's still so many other names we need to start diving into.

But how has that been for you, Bryce, diving into some of these guys? Yes. Yeah, it's been very enlightening. One, yeah, I've been, you know, kind of taught the lie that the early church father is just, it's a bunch of blind people trying to figure stuff out.

Not very robust, very simplistic. And in a sense, they are simplistic. But at the same time, they are very thoughtful.

We like they were people who were thinking through Christianity, you know, they were the first reformers, they were the first people working through major great doctrines. You know, the rich heritage that we have even of our language of like Trinity. The history of that comes all the way back to Nicaea or the eternal generation of the sun goes back to origin.

Like so yeah, as I've read through, I've read through everything I can find on Justin Martyr, I've read a decent amount of Tertullian, Ignatius, Irenius. And as I've been going through it, I've just been confronted with the number one reality is, these were people who love Jesus, who loved his gospel, who were willing to not only like when they were writing their theological work, it was really in complete defiance against either one, decrying that Caesar is not Lord, Christ is Lord, and that has gospel avail, or two writing against heretics who are coming into the church and trying to distort that gospel message. That's why the Nicene Creed says, who for us men and for our salvation came down and was born of the Virgin Mary, right? Because that's the whole theological focus of all their ministry was, salvation was brought to us, the incarnate Christ, the logos, the word made flesh came down, and God saved his people.

So yeah, I think that's just been the most astounding reality is just the people who were completely in love with the gospel and that entirely transformed that they were legit pagans, worshiping pagan gods, and now they're Christians. I know. Yeah, it's been beautiful.

So I still have a lot more reading to do. Ignatius' epistles were great. The first Pope, Pope Clement read his epistle, a few of his epistles, and those are great too.

The pastoral counsel of these men, like you said, they love the gospel of Jesus Christ. They loved God's people, and they have the advice is not, it hasn't aged poorly. When you read these men, you're greatly, like you said, they weren't idiots.

They were thinking through and properly on so many topics that we need to learn from that we need to get back to our roots on. So every Christian ought to read the church fathers. One point I wanted to make tonight in this conversation is just how accessible they are.

We were talking a little bit beforehand about the Puritans are way more difficult and inaccessible to the average person, the average Christian than the church fathers are. I think any Christian, even if you're just a run-of-the-mill evangelical that goes to a mega church, you can pick up these church fathers with ease, I'd say. It'd be kind of a shock for you to read some Puritans.

It'd be difficult to get through, but man, we have some great translations now of these works of these church fathers. Everything I've read from Augustine or any of, like I said, Clement or Ignatius, very easy to understand, very good advice, sound, logically

articulated. And they were.

They were using, they were trained rhetoricians. They were trained logicians. They could argue in a really coherent manner that what it is very, I'm going to be honest, it was very easy to understand.

It wasn't super difficult. I would kind of say Calvin's a little bit more difficult than some of the church fathers. I think Calvin's pretty clear, but when I'm reading the Institutes, slightly harder, I would say.

It's a tier up in terms of. Yeah, and that's probably because he has like, he's writing a systematic theology. And most of the stuff that we've read so far is not a systematic theology.

They're epistles. Yeah, Christian living stuff. So you're right.

Like the style, the genre is going to be different there with the systematic. But I mean, the Christian life is easy on the Christian stuff is easy to understand. I mean, honestly, all of it flows out of their view of, they had a very high view of the word being made flesh.

They love John chapter one. And I see that cited constantly when I'm reading them, their theology of the logos, it reconciles all these different issues going on philosophically, and we don't have to get into that. But their notion that the logic of God becoming flesh and incarnate actually is the revelation of God.

So because of that theology they had, I mean, if they're going to exposit God's word, it must be revelatory. Yeah, like Jesus didn't come for the highly astute and the ivory tower, man, Jesus came for your common shepherd, your farmer. He came for literally, he literally came for all men.

So because of that, they had this notion that when you're revealing and opening up God to the people, you open up God simply. Yeah. And I just like that really flows through their writings.

Yeah. So they ask how been part of mine. No, I agree.

And they what they're what they're doing is being trained rhetoricians in the context they were in Rome. You had a lot of people called, they were sophists, they practice sophistry, right? They wanted to sound really high and lofty. You know, it was sophistry.

But what the Christians are doing is the logos is coming down in Christ. And like you said, it's, it's foolishness to the world, but it's, he's the wisdom of God. And they were synthesizing in a sense, those hard to reconcile truths that were good, right? We need rhetoric, we need logic, we need reason.

Those are good things. But how did they come down to the common man? It's through

Christ, through the revelation of Jesus Christ. And they were tapping into that.

And I guess that's a little teaser, I guess, to how they're reconciling some of those philosophical conundrums. But it is beautiful. And I think that's why they're easy to understand because they understood in that context.

That's one of the central labors is displaying Christ as that true logos. So well, and something, sorry, go ahead. No, no, yeah, you go.

Something else that comes to mind is Spurgeon wrote this little book called *Why I'm a Calvinist*. And in it, he says that Calvinism is a golden thread that goes from him back to Calvin, all the way back to Augustine, which leads back to the apostles and back to Christ. And essentially, what he's getting at is, you know, we can leave the Calvinism portion out of it.

All good doctrine, if it's good, and if it's true, it has been the doctrine that's been handed down from the apostles. So when you have like a rich understanding of the way church history works, you're looking at not really the development of doctrine over time, but you're looking at either the handing down of doctrine or the discovery of doctrine. And like, there has been nothing that I've read in Calvin or any Puritan, anything from John Owen, that isn't already there when I'm reading.

And that's part of the beauty of it, because it's the same doctrine, that it's understood within a different context. Yeah. So like, you know, when, you know, when you and I came to faith, we were, you know, largely in the Calvinistic tradition.

And it was very like, hey, you need to go read the Puritans, which is good, you should read the Puritans, the Puritans are phenomenal. But we only got that contextual understanding of Calvinistic doctrine of Reformed theology. Yeah, right.

When you read it all throughout church history, it just really puts a different light on it. Like I just read Augustine's *On Grace and Free Will*. It's amazing.

Like, it just through me, like, like, it just goes to show when Calvin's working through, you know, his high understanding of predestination, man's free will and responsibility, the grace of God that intervenes the redeemed man from his total depravity, like he's doing it from a totally different context. He's doing it against Contra, the the Popish doctrine, right, showing them how they're false, they're destroying the grace of God. But Augustine has a completely different, you know, he's in a different area.

So it just really puts it in a new light. And practice when I whenever I have the privilege and opportunity to preach, I will always use commentaries from every single period throughout church history, because it really just puts a text and it's proper light. Yeah, help understand it and its fullest meaning when I'm looking at it from all throughout church history.

So yeah, it's just cool seeing that thread. Yeah, good doctrine, the succession at Babbings, current Babbings puts it not the succession of hopes or the succession of bishops or the succession of pastors, but it's the succession of doctrine. Yeah, it's been handed down to us.

Yeah, so beautiful. Very cool. Yeah, I eat.

Well, I think Calvin's a good instance of that kind of reforming and recapturing, but I'm kind of thinking, in my mind, I was thinking Luther versus Erasmus, right? Like you had, you had Luther is just getting all this from Augustine and Erasmus Erasmus has deviated. You know what I mean? From Yeah. Augustinianism.

You know, kind of awkward, right? You know, and you love the church fathers. And when I read on Grayson, I actually read that last year, that was I think, I think that might be one of the first books I ever read from church, church father. And I read that last year.

And yeah, I kind of walked away with the same thing, where you have this birth perfect balancing act of while like, he keeps going on over and over in that book, Augustine about, we have all these texts about God commanding us to do things. So, you know, we need to still weigh, although God's working and willing in us to do these things that we still have a responsibility. And I love that like he just, I guess it goes back to what you were saying, they were really highly considering these things.

They weren't idiots that were just falling into stupid teaching. They weighed the scriptures, they're quoting scripture ad nauseum, the amount of scripture quoted in that on grace and free will is insane and that little tiny volume. And the way he takes truths that are very clearly there in scripture, like commands to do something, therefore, you need an act of the will to do something.

But then he balances it perfectly with all these other texts that make it very clear, God has to regenerate the will and make the will willing to do these things. That's where he has that great line, command what you will and will what you command, like so helpful. That's like literally, yeah.

Yeah, I mean, our sufficiency doesn't come from us, but we have obedience because he quoted this all time from Paul, our obedience comes from God's mercy. Yeah. So yeah, but it goes to show like, tell me what you think about this, this just came to mind.

You have all these guys nowadays who will subscribe to doctrine, they'll say, oh, I'm a Calvinist, or I'm reformed. Yeah. And they'll start saying things that is not reformed.

They'll start saying stuff like, oh, like, I don't believe in free will. It's like, okay, well, then clearly, you're saying you're Calvinist, but you've never read anything by Calvin, clearly, with you. And then clearly, you've never read anything by Augustine, where which is what Calvin's getting all, you know, is the idea from.

So like, you kind of have this notion of, like, subscription to theology with not out actually believing in it. Yeah, right. It's like the faith without works is dead principle, even in what you believe.

Like, it's people who are just subscribing to all these doctrines without even understanding what they even mean. Exactly. No, I agree.

No, I totally agree with you. It's that critique of the young restless reform, the, oh, you hear some teacher that's charismatic teaching something you like it, you see it a little bit in the scripture, but you don't labor to actually understand what God's word is saying about that. And I think a part of it is in that last blog article I read about the grace of lending an ear about why it's important to listen as a Christian and why we need to cultivate listening.

And part of listening is reading. You need to listen to what Augustine said. You need to sit under his tutelage and listen to him and listen to Calvin.

These are the guys that pulled a lot of weight for you to even have the opportunity to believe in Calvinism, right? Obviously they pulled a lot of weight to deliver that, to keep that going down. Like you said, the succession of doctrine, like Babbings said, they're pulled. So you need to go back to the, yeah, Apostle Paul, the scriptures, but you need to see how these men have labored for this and argued for it over time rather than just, like you said, just a sending to some title.

And I think I really, I really do think it's an aversion to listening. We don't sit down and listen. We don't sit down and put the work in that it takes to read.

Like we hate to read. We haven't cultivated that in America and the West. We are, we're fools now and our educational system actually dissuades people from reading, like reading old, old stuff that you think is going to be too hard to understand.

But when you, like we've been saying, you pick up the church fathers, they are easy to understand. You can do it. I'm encouraging you right now listening.

You literally can do it. You can, you can get on LibriVox. It's a free audio book platform and there's lots of church fathers on there and you can listen to it and you can understand it.

It's not over your head. If you can understand the word of God, you can understand these guys. And on that note too, like the society that we live in and where we're headed is a product of illiterate men.

Like we have so many men nowadays who are not well read. And it's because of that, that we have all these people who are stupid. They don't know political theory.

So our politics suck. They don't know good logic. So they're unable to adequately like equip their children fight against the onslaught of modernism and post-modernism especially.

So we just, being illiterate doesn't mean that you're incapable of reading. Being illiterate means that you're not, you're not willing to do the reading. That's what being illiterate is.

I saw this funny video one time where there was just like, like 18 year old kid. It's like one of those red pill things. This 18 year old kid was like doing this interview with like all these different like only fans girls or something like that.

I don't even know what it was. And he called them a bunch of illiterate women. He's like, he says something like, I didn't know I was going to be on this interview with these illiterate women.

And she's like, what do you mean? I can read. And he says to her, he says, name 10 books, name 10. Name me 10 titles with two 10.

And dude, she couldn't do it. She literally couldn't do it. She didn't attend.

Talk to the show. Like that's the issue at hand. Being illiterate does not mean you can't read.

It means you're unwilling to read. Do you have it? You don't, you don't read. Yeah, exactly.

And it's the same thing with, yeah, you know, that different rabbit trail, but that's just very important for the thriving of civilization. It is, it is being an educated, uh, populous is the way that you get away away from tyranny. Yeah.

The entire loves stupid people. Yeah. I think the boy like stupid people, you know, exactly.

Yeah. And it's the same thing with these false pagan churches. They don't want you to know good true doctrine.

They just want your money. Did you see that? Carter put it in the chat, but the, uh, the Superbowl mega church thing where they kicked a Bible in service, they pointed a Bible into the crowd. Did you see that? That's what we're talking about.

It's like that church, obviously, nobody in that, in that congregation and neither is the pastor reading actively like good stuff. That's supposed to be right. They're like hunting Bibles on the stage, dude.

I, that, my jaw dropped. I told Candace or I showed Candace that and she was like, are you kidding me? Is that real? Is that a joke? No, like that was straight up a church

service. They put in a Bible.

If only Will Smith was in the crowd that he could get up and smack that pastor. Oh man, dude. Yeah, that's crazy.

Um, so let's just be a reading people. And yes, we, we're people of the book capital T. The scriptures are the foundation of our knowledge. God's revealed word.

And then out from that we have all these things because we're sub creators. Humans are sub creators and there's so many good things humans have sub created based on the word the Logos, the mythos of Christ, right? Um, so there are books worth reading. The church fathers have written a lot of them and there's some modern people worth reading.

And there are some Puritans worth reading. There's some medieval guys worth reading. There's all sorts of stuff you can read out there.

So we're, we're big advocates of just being well read. Um, and I think, I think Lewis has some good advice for every one modern book, you know, read two old ones. Um, I think that's good advice.

Um, yeah, pick up an old book, you know, pick up a real old book. Yeah. If you're getting into it, like you're not going to understand everything the first time you read it.

And that's fine. That's fine. Yeah, you don't like I, there has never been a single book that I've read and I finished it and I said, I understand everything he said, I understand that argument.

Exactly. You know, so that's not the goal. It's not necessarily to understand everything.

It's sanctification. It's slowly growing over time. Yeah, it's forming you.

Yeah. Some things that form you, you don't even, you're not even intellectually ascending to it. You're just kind of the way people live around, right? You just need to put yourself in situations where you're being rubbed off on in a good way.

God works on those things. Um, yeah. Okay.

All right. Well, go read some church fathers. Um, Bryce and I will keep reading with you.

Um, you're always welcome to go on my sub stack and I have a reading list there and you can see as I read church fathers, you can see what I read with the church fathers and I'd love to talk about it. Um, so if you want some good books, uh, I hope I'm reading good books. I'm trying my best to select good books.

So go on, go on my reading list and read with me, see some of the things I've read and,

um, and yeah, join me, uh, join Bryce and I as we read, read more and we want to invite you guys into that. Thanks guys for listening to the key to the ages of moral, invisible, the only God we honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sole day. Oh, yeah.