Hello again. I hope all is going well with you in your studies, your ministry, and the activities of your life. It's nice to be back with you again. Today we're going to talk about Augustine as pastor, and this will be one of a two-part series covering the pastoral ministries of Saint Augustine. As our practice has been, let's begin with a contemplation by Augustine on prayer, and then I'd like to pray with you the Lord’s Prayer.

And so, to begin with, Augustine wrote many things about prayer. He wrote one tract to a distinguished Roman lady named Proba, a long letter, and he covered a lot of aspects of prayer, and in the course of it he said that Christians first learn to believe, then to pray, and then they're encouraged to pray that unbelievers may believe. The Lord’s Prayer has a significant role then as a model for prayer for the believer as the Lord has taught us to pray, so let's pray together the Lord’s Prayer and dedicate ourselves to Him this day.

Our Father, who abides eternally in heaven, sacred and holy is Your name. Let Your kingdom come and let Your will be accomplished on earth as it's accomplished in heaven. Please provide for us our daily sustenance, and, Father, forgive our sins as we forgive those who are indebted to us. Please do not permit us to fall into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For unto You is the kingdom, the power, and the glory now and forever. Amen.

We're going to think about today Augustine as a pastor, and we're going to look in this first part about the pastoral role as a spiritual leader, and in particular we're looking at the sacramental system and its development within the Church. But let's begin by trying to summarize some of the things that we covered in our previous lecture.

You'll remember that we talked a little bit about some of the crises that Augustine faced in his career, and we talked about the...
relationship between those controversies and Augustine’s own personal development. And I suggested that there’s a very close correlation between challenges, pressures, resistance, and the burning away of the dross and the refining of the servant of God. We looked briefly at some of the controversies, and we’ll look at them in greater detail as we look at Augustine’s written responses to these, but we reviewed, remember, orthodoxy, we reviewed its meaning as a term. Terminology is important. Everything rises and falls on terminology in a debate and how these terms are defined, and they’re very controversial in terms of the different definitions given or attached to each of these terms. But we looked at orthodoxy as straight teaching, and we looked at heresy and how that word evolved over time, and we looked at schism and thought about how these terms relate to the life and ministry of Saint Augustine.

Then we analyzed salient issues that were at stake in Manichaeism, in Donatism, and the Pelagian heresy, and we noticed that with the Manichees that they were interested in the origins of evil, which is a relevant topic today. Is God to blame for evil? How can God be sovereign, and how does evil exist then? And what is the relationship between the two?

We also looked at the Manichees and their view of Scripture briefly. It’s interesting to note that in a tract, Augustine’s response to Faustis, the Manichean teacher, he details how the Manichees without a blush will edit Scripture to their own advantage. This is something again that I’d point out that is a very relevant issue, that people from Augustine’s times, actually from the first and second centuries until our own century have been editing Scripture and editing out things that they don’t like or can’t reconcile or reconcile themselves to, and using and twisting Scripture to their own advantage rather than accepting the entire revealed truth. And so Augustine found himself debating issues of the canon and the authority of Scripture, which are such important issues even in our own day today.

With the Donatists, the question had more to do with the issue of the period of the church, and they saw themselves as the only pure church. They had rent asunder Christ’s Body, they associated themselves with the blood of the martyrs and with sacrifice that comes with that, of persecution. They believed that the ministry of the church was blessed and protected because of the sanctity of the office of the minister. The term that’s used to describe this is sacerdotalism. If the minister is right with God, then the ministry
will be right with God.

In response to this, Augustine developed and argument of sacramentalism, which would be pertinent today, that in fact, no, the ministry of the church is legitimate because it’s founded on the living Word Himself. One can see both sides of the argument perhaps and abuses of the extremes, but we find ourselves in the vortex of it as we look at Augustine and his controversy with the Donatists.

The Donatists as well had, as do these pure church movements, these sects who consider themselves the only pure church, tend to find themselves enwrapped by sociological and political issues, and they are usually sectarian not only in a religious sense but also of sociological and political sense, as it were. And so Augustine is working out both the social and political policies of Christianity as it relates to a group such as this, and so he gets into questions of church and state, which again, I’m trying to show are relevant issues.

Finally, we looked at Pelagianism and that controversy and the whole question of the ability of humankind. What kind of natural abilities does a person have? What are humankind’s ability of reasons? How have they been affected by the fall, if at all? What is the relationship between Adam’s sin, transgression, and human predisposition to sin? Is there a relationship at all or not? What is the relationship then between man’s disposition and grace? Can humankind please God unassisted on their own or then if so how does grace play into this in terms of the model of salvation?

These were the questions that were at the forefront of the debate with the Pelagians, and you can see that with these two heresies in one schism that Augustine found himself across the theological board, so to speak, dealing with issues of evil, origin, Scripture and authority, nature of humankind, of salvation, of political and social sphere issues. In all these things he was formulating arguments against and debating and defenses and teaching his people, and they helped to develop him as the great spiritual forefather. He developed into a great spiritual forefather directly as a result of these controversies.

There is one final controversy that we’ll talk about in the very near future, and that’s the fall of Rome, and it would be one thing if Rome would fall at the hands of some pagan horde that became marching in. But worse than that, it fell at the hands of a heretical
Christian horde, the Goths, who had been recently converted to Arianism. And we will have shortly yet one more theological crisis and political crisis that we’ll have to deal with with Augustine as he painfully lay on his deathbed as he’s reacting against the impending fall and doom of the Roman Empire.

Having said that, as we turn our focus today, we’re going to look specifically at Augustine’s pastoral responsibilities. Today we’ll develop some of the historical origins of, for instance, the hierarchical development in the church. We’ll investigate its origins and development in the emergence of church offices. I’d like to provide some background understanding to the origins of the sacramental system, which are foundational for our understanding of the medieval period and the Reformation. And finally I’d like to reflect on the purposes of the ministry of the church.

There was a major shift in focus in the Reformation where the purpose of the church was not to offer our blessings and worship to God, which is the medieval model, but to go to be fed by God through the teaching of the pulpit, and there’ll be a shift, a radical shift, that takes place. We need to lay aside our presuppositions about what church is all about and enter into the medieval and now the early church model and see how things developed and try to understand the reasons behind them. In particular, though, we’ll look at the sacramental system.

Now, let’s turn then and look at the clergy in the early church. We thought about this in times past. Think about the origins of the professional ministry. Think about your church models. And I’m wondering where do we for the offices that are before us today, ones that you may be pursuing, what are their origins in the Bible and in church history and how do these things develop. You may turn back to the Old Testament and to early Judaism, and there are certain models that are found in the priesthood, for instance, the role of prophet, depending on your church tradition. Certainly in early Judaism you have development of the synagogue; by the way, the earliest recorded description of a worship service in a synagogue is in the gospel of Luke, where Jesus comes from the wilderness temptation and reads from Scripture. The synagogue is a rather new development. But who were the officers in the synagogue? What was their role? Dare we ask the question, what is the relationship between that office and gender? Is it all males? Is it females? What kinds of restrictions were developed? How did this thing work? We could look then, and there’s a lot to be gained
by looking at the massive amounts of materials we have in the Old Testament but in particular in early Judaism, the intertestamental works, and so forth.

We could also go and look at models in the Roman-Greco world. These are models both that informed the ministry and were models that the ministry reacted against. I hear people who debate the issue of the role of women in the church and their relationship to office in the church, and the argument is made by some that in the ancient world women didn’t have a relevant, important role because of either issues of literacy or things of that nature, biases against women and their place in society as a trustworthy witness or their sanctity of some sort.

I should tell you that in the Greco-Roman world women were very active in the ministry. There were all kinds of offices for women in many of the Greco-Roman cults, and so one would have to revise that thesis if they want to maintain it.

What other kinds of models might we explore that would help us understand the emergence of the offices within the church? You and I may look at the models of organization in the late Roman political structure. That would be an area of great interest to look at. What were the political structures that were set before the emerging church and their strengths and weaknesses? And in particular not only offices, but also how did they organize the administration of their people? If you’ve come from a Roman Catholic background or are Roman Catholic, you will note that your churches are divided up into, for instance, dioceses. This is a political administrative division that was devised by Diocletian, and the church filled that vacuum and adopted that scheme. Good, bad, neither, it was just the structure that was in place.

A final thing that I provoke you to think about when we think about the origins of the offices in the church is what is the relationship, if any, between theological developments and hierarchical developments? Think with me, what relationship exists, if any, between theological developments and hierarchical developments? Let me unpack this in two ways just for you to think through. The first will be that we’ll note here in a few minute that in the second century, when Gnostics came on the scene and you had opposing viewpoints and very charismatic teachers, the church had to respond to that. And if we graph the emergence of these heretical opposition, if we graph the hierarchical development of the church, we would see that there
is a relationship between the two, that the church responded in part hierarchically, and sometimes we will do that. And I’ll try to unpack how that happens.

Now, that is a negative example of the relationship between theology and in this case heresy and the emergence of the hierarchy of offices of the church. Let me turn it around and do a positive example. Is it plausible that as the church was delineating arguments about the deity of Christ, defining theologically the Trinity and in particular the person of Christ, is it possible that these ideas found models in how the church sought to organize itself here on earth; that is, that the vicar or representative of Christ here on earth, of course, would emerge in the medieval times as the church, and the church as Christ’s body mystically, and in the same time is His bride, but as mystical body, the head of that mystical body is the emerging hierarch of the church. The reason I think about this is that there’s been recent thinking about the relationship between theological issues and models in the Roman state, and people have contemplated questions about the primacy of imperial rule and theological questions about the person of Jesus Christ and how these things are in dialogue in the early church, the late Roman Empire. And I would suggest that one cannot completely disconnect the emergence of these things from the emergence of the hierarchy of the church. These are things for you to think about.

What kind of sources would we work with when we want to look at the emergence of the offices of the church? We’ve talked about Scripture, we’ve talked about extracanonical writings, Jewish, Christian, and even pagan writings. Another important source are inscriptions, and regrettably there’s not enough time to go into this, but there are a lot of interesting inscriptions that have survived that give us important, pertinent data that would otherwise be lost to us.

Today we might think of inscriptions, epithets, as “rest in peace,” rather standardized formulae, and perhaps there was an element of this in the early Christian period as well, but for the most part, when Christianity became legal—this is not necessarily a worthwhile avenue to pursue in times prior to the legalization of Christianity because to dedicate epithets was to reveal one’s Christian feelings, unless they were veiled in Jewish language before Judaism fell from grace in 135. This is a tricky area of study but one that’s very interesting, and we have titles that emerge in various places that correspond to offices within the church.
Regrettably these titles are also titles that are used in the pagan world. There are standard titles of respect like calling male and female an elder. So to determine whether, in fact, these are Christian or not is a more difficult problem. But suffice it to say that there are a number of early Christian epithets, for instance, that talk about women having the epithet of an elder, and so this opens up a whole question of the role of women in the church and are these in orthodox movements or not, and this is another problem. But the inscriptions are an important source of data for us.

As far as the hierarchical development in the Church, briefly, we might think that this whole notion of the offices of the Church developing in stages over time is natural, it’s not given in Scripture, and therefore it must be wrong. I’ll tell you that it’s a perfectly natural response to the growth of the Church. As the church grew, your staff grew, and this is a natural administrative response to the growth of the Church.

there is the question that we have to deal with, and that is the relationship between the engifted Body of Christ as revealed in the New Testament in particular and the professional offices of the church, which are also spelled out in the New Testament. And one should be careful to distinguish between engiftment and office. When we think about office, we’re thinking about in the earliest church, the bishop, the pastor, and the elder, and these three terms are used interchangeably in our earliest evidence. Deacon or servant is a different tier; they are those who would support them, the pastoral ministries of the church. You’re probably aware that the word bishop means an overseer and “pastor” comes from a Greek word which means “shepherd,” and elder is a term of respect for someone advanced in years and wisdom.

There’s another question that relates directly to the offices in the church, and that’s probably the question of privilege. Did wealthy people become bishops and poor people deacons, or what is the relationship between privilege and leisure and education and the emergence of the ministry? I’m going to leave that unanswered, but there’s good information pro and con and of great interest to pursue.

Another question that we’ll get at here in a second is not the question of people of privilege, but the question of the privilege of place where some places are deemed more spiritual than other places, and again, this is more difficult to unpack and it depends
where you’re looking and when. Of course, Jerusalem early on had privilege of place, but that would be eclipsed by other areas as they emerged and fell into decline. And we’ve got to think ultimately about Rome and the relationship between political power and spiritual power there, and we’ll do that in just a second. But briefly, the development of hierarchy in the church by century, and the very earliest evidence that we have, we have a two-tiered kind of ministry where bishop, pastor, and elder are used interchangeably and speak of one level, and then we have the deacon at a second level. You also have itinerant teachers, you have prophets, you have other engifted people in different roles early on, and each in areas of offices, evangelists as well.

In the second century, however, because of the challenges of Gnosticism in particular, the church will develop, and in its expansion, the church will develop a third tier, and what will happen is that the bishop will be elevated above the pastor and the presbyter or elder. Then gradually over the course of time, in the third and fourth centuries, and particularly by the early fourth century, we have evidence of different scales of development within these subfields, and so you’ll have, for instance, with deacons, you’ll have archdeacons and subdeacons and so forth. You’ll have archbishops, for instance, and the word *papa* or *pope* or *father* would be used of a bishop over a large seat, and it could be in Alexandria, it could be in Carthage, or it could be in Rome. But gradually, by the fourth and fifth centuries, primacy would be given to the bishop at Rome and the bishop in Constantinople, each representing the East and the Western church, and we’ll talk about that in greater detail in lectures to come.

But this does raise the whole question of the primacy of the church in Rome and briefly let me say, these things directly relate to medieval developments and the Reformation church. Claims were made of Christ’s dialogue with Peter, with his profession of faith, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” and Christ’s responds, “Peter, upon this rock I’ll build my church, and hell’s gates will not prevail against it.” This a problematic passage. Christ and the disciples are traveling into Caesarea Philippi. There are temples that are up on top of high cliffs. Were they passing by there and was he gesturing, instead of temples on this cliff was he gesturing back to Himself? Was a rock the content of the profession that Christ is Lord? Or you may be aware that Peter, Petrus, means “pebble” or “small stone.” Is Christ contrasting here the profession of faith over against the person of Peter? Or, in fact, as the Roman Catholics predominantly hold to and
some Protestants, was He saying, “Peter, you know, you are the cornerstone of the faith and in some way the church will be built upon you”?

This is a matter of great debate, and I would say be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater, for those who would be quick to dump Peter are fast to hang on to Paul. It is part of our natural disposition to want apostolicity. Every regional episcopacy in the early church had some kind of legend that tied it back to the apostles, and in particular, where Peter was claimed in Rome, in Alexandria it’s Mark. He’s related to Peter, isn’t he? Who does Constantinople claim? Andrew, Peter’s brother. So all of them in some way intimately tie into Peter, and I would suggest for your thinking that Peter had a very important role and function in the early church because of his simple but strong faith, and that cannot be denied.

Did Peter ever go to Rome? Don’t argue he didn’t. Early archaeological evidence would suggest a veneration of his cult in the early second century. Was there only one church in Rome? No, there were many. Nearly thirty house churches in the first century, so it’s not like we have a succession of pastors, but we had instead leaders of house churches and we have some preliminary lists with bishops that go from Peter onward, but no doubt each house church with its own ruler of the house leading some kind of ministry that was going on.

And later, retroactively, Peter is seen as being over all of this, but in fact the evidence wouldn’t bear that or suggest it. Was Peter important, though? Yes, he was. The meaning then of Christ’s statement to him is one of debate.

There’s another issue that relates directly to that, however, and that’s the issue of Christ saying to Peter that “I am not going to give you keys,” and the translation roughly goes like this and then I’ll be specific: “Whatever you loose will be loosed; whatever you bind will be bound.” This is a problematic passage in the Greek for those of you have background in Greek. The participial construction of the original language would suggest a translation that went something like this: “Peter, whatever you will bind here on earth has already been bound in heaven. And whatever you would loose here on earth has already been loosed in heaven.” And so the whole question of keys—Peter iconographically is always shown holding keys—does this mean forgiveness of sin? The context would suggest that in some way, shape, or form,
but the language would suggest that sin that’s already forgiven. Is there still authority given to the minister and to the church? Absolutely. “Where two or three are gathered together, I’m there in the midst.” That passage is not talking about prayer. I mean, the immediate context is praying about someone wayward in sin, but the issue is that two or three is a technical formula used in the church for witness, and these two or three are a witness against somebody in sin (Matthew 18), and they go to the person with the authority of Jesus Christ being present. That’s powerful language. And in some ways, I’m afraid the Protestants throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water and miss some of this. They get rid of Peter and hang onto Paul. They denounce the authority of the church and consequently have a weak ministry with no claims of temporal authority, and we should be careful to look at the evidence carefully and understand it in its context.

By Augustine’s time, you had then a many-tiered ministry. There is, at least in the West, Rome is revered as a seat of authority and of power. That is directly related to the fall of the Roman Empire and the church naturally filling the vacuum that’s there. What then do we say about Augustine as a pastor? We’ve mentioned a little bit about his ordination before. We know that he was ordained, we’re told, against this will. That could just be humility. We know the same thing happened to Ambrose. It happened to Chrysostom and to others. He became a priest, so he missed the early ranks of development as presbyter and so forth, and he would then shortly become bishop.

We do know that there were three churches in Hippo in Augustine’s time. He had responsibility for all—to marry, to bury, to catechize, to teach, to encourage, to administrate properties, and so forth. Watch out for the widows and the orphans and all. So he had a lot of responsibility, albeit in a relatively small North African town, but as far as his successor, he ordained his successor in 426, several years before his death. All we know in the episcopal list that survived that Augustine and his successor were the only two bishops of the city that the Christians would soon be disbanded by the fall of the empire, the bands that moved across North Africa and several centuries later would all be converted to Islam. Augustine, however, lives on—lives on in his converts, lives on in the many bishops that he trained and ordained, the monks that he trained, and in his writings.

As far as Augustine’s office of pastor, he had said a lot of things in a lot of places of the role and responsibility of a pastor. At one
First and foremost, I beg your wise holiness to consider that there’s nothing in this life and especially in our own day more easy and pleasant and acceptable to men than the office of bishop or priest or deacon. If its duties be discharged in a mechanical or sycophantic way; but nothing more worthless and deplorable and meet for chastisement in the sight of God.

Oh, that’s a strong statement

And on the other hand that there’s nothing in his life and especially in our own day more difficult, toilsome, and hazardous than the office of bishop or priest or deacon, but nothing more blessed in the sight of God if our service be in accordance with our Captain’s orders.

And he talks elsewhere about the need to have a knowledge of Scripture, to be continually in prayer, in the study of the Word, in teaching others, and in the task of the ministry. He says at another place, “I do not propose to spend my time in empty enjoyment of ecclesiastical dignity, but I propose to act as mindful of this, that I must give an account of the sheep committed to me.” In other places, he regrets not being able to sit down in dialogue about the philosophical writings or things of that nature, because he has to be given over to the preoccupations of the ministry set in front of him.

So these were important things. What did that mean in his life? He had a number of responsibilities, and I guess that I would organize it around four key areas. He was a spiritual leader. Second, he was a teacher, and that had a writing component. He was an apologist, which was his rhetorical and debate and writing component as he was a spokesperson for the church against paganism and heresy. Also as a heresiologist. And finally he was an administrator, as he had to administrate properties and money and so forth. We’ll talk more about those capacities later, but let’s look then at the sacramental system as the major focus of a spiritual leader in the earliest church.

And in terms of getting at the sacramental system, we should give some background briefly to it, and you should realize that when you think of the Catholic Church, if you’ve been raised Catholic, if you are Catholic, if you know Roman Catholics, you think in
terms of the church being defined around the seven sacraments. Of course, they have their origins, and one would want to look at the background and development of the sacramental system. There tends to be a continuum in religion from a works-orientated salvation to a faith-orientated salvation, and I would argue that this continuum was present in the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, but I would say that there are many good and positive things that developed in and around the sacramental system. It was a matter of one’s approach and appropriation of these things that was the issue. Was it done in kind of a blind works? Augustine would condemn this. Was it done in faith? Of course, this would be applauded. But as one understands *sacramentum*, it became a means of blessing whereby grace was conferred to the believer. You might look at this with some kind of disdain, but I would suggest to you that if you or I lived in Augustine’s time, we, in fact, would embrace the same system. The only other option was to be a Donatist, was to be a heretic, and to, therefore, stand condemned. So be careful not to condemn Augustine because he doesn’t fit into your ideological package. Augustine was a great champion of the faith who loved the Lord, and we would only hope to kneel in his shadow if we lived at that time. And yet he adopted and promoted a system that had developed, and that’s what we need to get at so that you get some kind of understanding of its background and origins when we think about the Middle Ages and later times.

The sacramental system then is something that’s easy probably for you to denounce but hard to understand. It did gradually develop. There were a number of influences. There’s a scriptural precedent that’s present with some of this, and one should be careful not to neglect that or to overlook it. There are, as well, natural tendencies that are at force. Individuals’ desires for sanctity and a kind of a desire to actualize one’s faith, and those are internal qualities. There are external qualities that are in play here. The church develops a sacramental scheme as a way of reacting to the oppositions around it, and these things should be taken into context. As well, you have with the Donatist movement, this whole contrast between sacramentalism and sacerdotalism.

In Augustine’s day, he mentions six of the seven sacraments. He talks in detail only about five of them, however, and he gives us a lot of information about the sacramental system in his day and time. It is of absolute importance as we peel back the evidence to understand the development along these lines and to appreciate that. And what I’ll do, in our next time together,
I’ll talk specifically about a few of the sacraments and the other ministry responsibilities of Augustine. But let me before we’re done today set it up by saying something briefly about confession or penance.

For Protestants, there’s this idea of a confessional salvation where there’s a repentance and acceptance of Christ and ipso facto, immediately all things forgiven. I’m not denigrating that in any way, because obviously it’s biblical and enjoined upon us and is our avenue to the new birth. But at the same time, we are commanded in Scripture to confess our sins, and there is a place and element in 1 John where this is very prominent, that there should be an ongoing life of confession of sins because of our fellowship one with another that’s vertical with God and with each other horizontal so that we can walk together in His light.

The church has always had difficulty trying to implement a kind of confessionalism or penance. How do you deal with people who’ve sinned greatly and then bring them back into the fold? Pastors fall into heinous sin and then say in tears, sackcloth, and ashes that they confess these things. God’s forgiven it; therefore, you must immediately forgive. This is problematic. The church dealt with these issues, and there will be a penitential system that’s developed that deals with these things in a very practical way. Did it develop into abuse? It absolutely did, and we’ll have to explore that. But I want to be careful to have you think about these things not altogether negatively, but to understand their origins, to understand their practical value, and to be aware of their abuse.

That just scratches the surface. We have much more to explore as we look at Augustine and his role as a pastor. Some of us think maybe that we’re overwhelmed with our pastoral ministries or preaching several times a week; their ministry was daily, and they had the daily cares and concerns of the entire Christian society on their shoulders. Oh, that we might put our shoulder to the wheel to serve with such great diligence.

I look forward to talking to you again. Bye-bye.