

## Heroes:

### ***Augustine of Hippo***

- Born in 354 in North Africa (near Carthage). Died in 430 in Hippo.
- His father Patricius was a pagan who became Christianity just prior to his death. His mother Monica was a godly Catholic woman who prayed for Augustine her whole life.
- Augustine began living a hedonistic (pleasure seeking) lifestyle at the age of 17. He took a concubine, whom he kept for 13 years, and had a son Adeodatus.
- When he was 19, he fell into Manichaeism for nine years and when it finally did not satisfy him, he took up Neo-Platonism.
- During this time period, he taught grammar in his hometown (373). Then he moved first to Carthage (375), then to Rome (383) and finally to Milan (385) to study and teach rhetoric.
- While in Milan, he went to hear Bishop Ambrose in order to learn his speaking style, but Augustine fell under conviction through Ambrose's preaching.
- The garden incident in the summer of 386 and his reading of Romans 13:13-14 changed his life. Ambrose baptized both Augustine and Adeodatus on Easter Sunday 387. This was the answer to Monica's lifelong prayer.
- On his way back to Africa, Monica died, and Adeodatus died soon after that. Augustine was left alone. He sold his possessions keeping only his house, which he turned into a monastery.
- He was ordained as a priest in 391 and became bishop of Hippo in 396. He wrote and preached and taught for almost 40 years.
- Augustine wrote more than any other early Christian father. His works include:
  - His autobiography, Confessiones (Confessions)
  - His masterpiece on the church, De civitate dei (On the City of God)
  - Apologetics against the Manichaeans, Arians, Pelagians and Donatists
  - Theological works: On Christian Doctrine, On the Trinity and On Free Choice of the Will
  - A life's end review of all his prior works, Retractationes (Retractions)
  - Numerous exegetical works and biblical commentaries
  - More than 350 authenticated and preserved sermons
- He taught that the more we know God's greatness the more we know man's sinfulness. We can be saved only by God's free grace and it is by nothing we can do from out of our own merit or good works.
- Augustine died from a fever in 430 just as the Vandals were beginning to lay siege to North Africa. To prepare for his death, he had requested that David's penitential psalms be written on sheets and hung on the walls in his room so he could meditate upon them in repentance for his own sinful life.
- His writing and teaching shaped key thinking in the church for over 1,000 years, and he continues to influence reformed theology even today.

## **Heresies:**

### ***Pelagianism***

- This heresy is named for its founder Pelagius (c. 354 – 420 or 440)
- Tradition has Pelagius coming from Britain (Augustine referred to him as “Brito”), but nothing definite is known about his origin
- Pelagius denied the doctrine of original sin and taught freedom of the will:
  - The human will is free to choose either good or evil without any divine aid
  - Original sin (the sin of Adam) does not taint human nature
  - Adam set a “bad example”, but he did not impute his sin to his posterity
  - Jesus set a “good example” for men to follow
  - Men have full control and full responsibility for choosing to obey the Gospel
  - Men also have full responsibility for choosing to sin (this is orthodox)
  - Men are not victims of Adam sin, but they are criminals by their own choice
  - Jesus provides atonement for those sins that we do commit
- According to Pelagius, we are sinners because we sin, which is directly opposite to the reformed belief that we sin because we are sinners.
- Augustine fought against Pelagius until he was condemned as a heretic at the Council of Carthage in 418
  - Augustine taught that perfectionism was impossible without grace because we are born sinners with a sinful heart and will (Ephesians 2:1-2)
  - He taught that salvation comes only through the irresistible gift from God and that free choice and good works are not involved in our salvation (Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8-9)
- Semi-Pelagianism is still alive and well today:
  - Original Semi-Pelagianism taught that man first chooses God and then God increases faith – repudiated at the Second Council of Orange in 529
  - Arminianism is a form of Semi-Pelagianism that teaches that God gives man a “prevenient grace” that enables a man to choose God

## **Audio CD: #7 – Augustine**

### ***Discussion***

- How does the quotation R.C. read from “Confessions” remind you of Augustine’s tendency toward and/or struggle with Manichaeism?
- What does Monica’s treatment of Augustine before his conversion tell us about Monica? What does it teach us about how we should live?
- What can we learn from the final days of Augustine’s life?