

Why Presbyterian Part 3: Connection to History, June 8, 2025

Let's stand together and read Heb 11:1:1-2, 32-12:3, 25-29; Acts 7:38.

Intro and Preview:

We are picking up our study on why Presbyterianism. I deeply appreciate Dagan preaching over the last two weeks and trust that you and your family were edified by the snapshot of the book of Judges. Today, let's start off with a quick review

1. Continuity with the Bible -5/5/2025
2. Church Government -5/18/2025
3. Connection to **History**: All of history: OT saints and church, early NT church, early post apostolic church, medieval, Reformation, & American
4. Commitment to Solas of the Reformation: Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone, Scripture Alone, To the Glory of God Alone
- 5. Calvinism**: Doctrines of Grace
6. Covenant Theology & Confessionalism
7. Cultivation of the Mind: Rom 12:1-2

We have a form of church government that equips us to fight tyranny in the culture and the church. It is not on either end of the theological continuum of laissez faire individualistic congregationalism (pure democracy) or high control collectivism of despotism but instead gives us representational government federalism with both leaders from above and accountability from below.

Today, we are talking about our connection to the past. We are Presbyterians because of the connection to the God of history. We are not rootless gypsies or vagabonds with no home or past. We are not people who forge our own identities. We are not individuals. We are a people with a wonderful legacy. We have a glorious past that goes not only back for two millennia but goes all the way back to the beginning of creation and in fact our history goes back to the Creator Himself. We have a vibrant and rich heritage worth appreciating.

I know the Gen Z and millennials of the group may be like, "no cap, he goes hard." And, the boomers are saying, huh? Is that a different language, yes. It is. You may think that this new generation is crazy but they are not the crazy ones. The boomers disconnected from the past more than any previous American generation and bought into the post war census or what is also called the international liberal order. This mentality has very little connection with heritage America and these United States. It sees everything as a hodgepodge melting pot of global goo. That is not good and it is not so, we are not a global melting pot, we have a culture,

a heritage, a legacy... no matter what generation you're in, and where you come from, as Christians, we have a connection to history.

Today, we will look at what the Bible gives us for the paradigm or pattern of understanding who we are in light of those whom God placed before us.

So, first of all, let's see the...

I. Continuity of the **testaments** (also called Covenant Theology)

Hebrews 11 provides one of the most helpful links for our understanding of the **relationship** between the Old Covenant and the New. It is the Application of the New Covenant to Old Testament believers is an indicator of how we should understand the relationship between the two testaments.

You'll notice three things about the passage that we read.

1. It is part of bigger narrative explaining how the OT saints exercised faith. The repeating line is "by faith" and then it lists a person. Look with me...
2. 12:1 calls them witnesses and then gives us the **commands** as to respond. We don't just read this list and go, "cool" and keep doing what we were doing. No! We are called to lay some things aside. We are called to run... not walk with endurance the race that God has set before us. Everybody wants to say, slow down, go slow, don't wear yourself out. That is not what God says. In light of our spiritual inheritance, we are to run hard and fast and not stop and remain focused. Focus is the strategic ignoring of things that don't matter. Stop with the video games, drama, and mental masturbation. We are called to get going and keep going. We are to do this in pursuit of Christ.
3. 12:28-29 talks about the nature of God's kingdom. It is unshakable. It is permanent. This is not some cheap, one time use, throw away life He is calling us to. It is something that has eternal consequences and value. This is a heritage. This is a legacy. This is an enduring, eternal, everlasting kingdom.

So, We are part of this bigger narrative, and as a result we run hard, knowing that this is permanent.

One last observation... The writer of Hebrews uses those who have come before us as examples to follow. This informs us of how to understand the relationship between the testaments. They are a pattern and a promise of what God will do in the future. 11:40 says that we have something better, namely the New Covenant. Don't waste it. Don't squander it away. Be engaged and be frothy faithful.

In Acts 7, Stephen, the first martyr in the NT is recounting how the faith in Christ is a necessary outcome of the correct understanding of the OT. In v38 he uses the word translated “congregation” is the same word as “**church**”. So, there you have a connection between the OT believers and NT being called the same thing. Additionally, in the very next verse, he talks about the “faith of our fathers” indicating the same kind of thoughts as the writer of the book of Hebrews.

Calvin references Acts 7:38 in Book II, Chapter 10, Section 1 to support his argument for the unity of the Old and New Testaments. In the Battles translation, he writes:

"The very congregation of Israel, which is called the church [ecclesia] in the law and the prophets, was the same as ours, but its administration was different."

Calvin uses Acts 7:38 to argue that the Old Testament believers, as God’s covenant people, were essentially part of the same "church" as Christians, differing only in the mode of God’s revelation (Law vs. Gospel).

So, we see in these two passages the connection between the OT and the NT. The church did not come into being in Acts 2. Rather, the church or congregation of God has always existed as the faithful followers of God throughout history. This is our legacy and example. Now let’s look at some other examples quickly...

II. Pre-Modern **Era**

A. Acts to Constantine (65-325AD) “Ante Nicene Fathers”

Personalities:

1. Clement of Rome (fl. c. 96 AD)
2. Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 110 AD)
3. Polycarp of Smyrna (d. c. 155 AD)
4. Justin Martyr (d. c. 165 AD)
5. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. c. 202 AD)
6. Tertullian (d. c. 220 AD)
7. Origen of Alexandria (d. c. 254 AD)
8. Cyprian of Carthage (d. c. 258 AD)

B. Post Nicea (325-700s)

Personalities

1. Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373 AD)
2. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–395 AD)

3. Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–397 AD)
 4. John Chrysostom (c. 347–407 AD)
 5. Jerome (c. 347–420 AD) -translated the Latin Vulgate
 6. Augustine of Hippo (c. 354–430 AD) Saint Augusteeene is grass not an early church father.
 7. Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444 AD)
- C. Medieval **Period** “Middle Ages” (476-1450s)
- Personalities:
1. Charlemagne (c. 748–814 AD)
 2. Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033–1109 AD)
 3. Bernard of Clairvaux (c. 1090–1153 AD)
 4. Peter Abelard (c. 1079–1142 AD)
 5. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274 AD)
 6. John Wycliffe (c. 1320–1384 AD)
 7. Jan Hus (c. 1372–1415 AD)
- D. Reformation and Renaissance (1500-1600)
- Personalities:
1. Martin Luther (1483–1546 AD)
 2. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (c. 1466–1536)
 2. Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531 AD) -memorial view of Lord’s supper
 3. William Tyndale (c. 1494–1536 AD) -first translated the Bible into English
 4. John Calvin (1509–1564 AD)
 5. Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560 AD)
 6. John Knox (c. 1514–1572 AD) -Great Scottish Reformer who sat under Calvin.
 7. Theodore Beza (1519–1605 AD) -Calvin’s successor.
- E. **American** Revolution
- Personalities: John Whinthrop (city on a hill), John Witherspoon (signer of the Declaration and first President of Princeton, George Whitfield, Johnathan Edwards
- F. American **History**
- Hodge, Thornwell, BB Warfield, Machen, Dabney, Vos, VanTil

Conclusion:

We Presbyterians are people **of the book**. We are Presbyterians because of our continuity with the Bible. That book (the Bible) directs us to have order in our church and civil government so that it includes both bottom up and top-down influences, allowing us to elect our leaders and fight tyranny.

Our Presbyterian pride in the past provides us with a pattern for the future. Our **connection** to history is to the Author of history. He is the one who has given us this glorious past.

Application:

Know your Christian background. Do not be ignorant and flighty. Do not be a ditz. Do not be dismissive of the powerful works of God in history. Know your people. Don't be dumb and have to repeat the mistakes and learn the lessons that previous generations have already learned. Wisdom is learning from the mistakes of others and acting accordingly. Know your Christian heritage and BE WISE.

Trust the creeds and confessions. The creeds and confessions are relatively short and concise summaries of what these people believed. They were usually written down to combat error that had crept into the church. They are extremely helpful in providing theological guardrails for us today as we navigate this world. You don't have to figure out the Trinity. You don't have to work through the deity of Christ. We stand at a tremendous advantage if we will utilize these wonderful works God has provided us with.

Be bold, knowing that you are in good company.

Christianity is a hundred-pound sledgehammer to the works of the devil. Hebrews 12 calls us to run, wide open, pedal to the metal, no holding back, not turning aside, no giving up, no letting up. Christ has been capturing culture for 2000 years. May He continue to expand His rule and reign and may we be found faithful! Be bold. Be strong. Be of good cheer. Christ is King! Now and forevermore!

Closing prayer: Father, help us by Your Spirit to be people of the book, people rightly organized, rightly motivated. May You use us in our generation, to destroy the works of the devil and build the glorious kingdom of our God and King. As we come to the table of communion, help us to remember that Christ gave His life as a ransom for many. In Christ's name, Amen.