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Teaching Notes

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## **A.C.T.S. Heroes of the Faith**

### **Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)**

#### I. “That Contemplator”

A. The Love of God shed Abroad in Our Hearts

*Romans 5:5 “and hope does not disappoint because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.”*

*Ephesians 3:14-19 For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

Types of Christian assurance:

Type 1) reasoned out in the mind

Type 2) worked out in the life

Type 3) poured out in the hearts

B. Are You Thirsty?

*John 7:37-39 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” <sup>39</sup> By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.*

*Luke 11:9-13 “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup> Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

Bernard of Clairvaux points the way to a deeper life of meditation on the love of Christ!!

### Major Events of Bernard of Clairvaux's Life

1090	Born in Fontaines, near Dijon, France
1112	Entered monastery at Citeaux
1115	Founder of monastery at Clairvaux
1147	Preached Second Crusade
1153	Died
1174	Canonized by Pope Alexander III
1830	Made Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius VIII

## II. An Overview of John's Life

### A. Early Life: The Impact (yet again) of a Godly Mother

1. Born in 1090 in Fontaines, near Dijon, in Burgundy, France
2. Parents were pious, of the highest level of nobility
  - a. father a Knight named Teclin, perished on the First Crusade (launched by Pope Urban in 1095)
  - b. mother Aleth a daughter of noble house of Mon-Bar... she died while Bernard was still a boy... yet had a deep influence on him
3. Very well educated, especially in literary Latin
4. Mother was extremely godly; she had wanted to enter a religious order, but married instead; during last years of her life she ran her home as if it were a monastic order
5. Bernard deeply affected by home life... mother's example ran deep with him
6. Consistent physical illnesses curtailed his activity; during first ten years at Clairvaux, he was so sick he was virtually confined to the monastery

### B. Entering the Monastery at Citeaux (1198)

1. Founded by Robert of Molesmes, on the point of extinction when Bernard arrived with thirty men: his brothers and many relatives!!! This group of young men of the highest

families would change the course of church history through their impact on medieval monasticism

2. Benedictine monasticism: simple goals
  - a. piety
  - b. simplicity
3. Corruption had taken over: laxness, worldliness
4. Cistercians had already begun these reforms: return to a simpler life of work and prayer... Bernard was one of a movement of people, but the greatest natural leader of them all
5. Bernard so effective at recruiting for the monastery that mothers would hide their sons and wives their husbands when he would come by!

#### C. Founding Clairvaux (1115)

1. Movement grew rapidly through Bernard's leadership
2. Time came to plant a daughter offshoot in Clairvaux... in a wild valley branching off from that of the Aube
3. Bernard named abbot of the new monastery
4. From 1130 to 1145, no less than 93 monasteries in connection with Clairvaux were founded

#### D. The Nature of Bernard's Ministry

Bernard was the most influential preacher of his day... he frequently preached before popes and kings

Preached all over Europe: Germany, Italy, in the Alps, and France

Tremendous personal courage and clarity of communication made his preaching powerfully effective

Not afraid to call sin sin, even if it is in the life of a pope or a king... or in himself

He had compassion, pleading for mercy for downtrodden, unpopular people (including the Jews)... constantly involved in relief for the poor

He was involved in the issues of the day: wealth, the use of money and power, governmental intrigues, prejudice, daily purity of life

1. Sought moral reform and personal piety
2. Stressed the need for a personal experience of Christ
3. Encouraged self-denial and the sublimation of all worldly loves for God
  - a. in his own monastery, he strictly enforced poverty
  - b. BUT not opposed to the church possessing wealth, just misusing it
4. Center of his ministry: Contemplation of the Love of God in Christ
  - a. preached the Second Crusade, BUT felt it was much more important for men to repent and trust Christ than to fight Moslems
  - b. primary concern: calling people into a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ
  - c. all life then centered around love relationship with Christ... deep experience of Christ through meditation and prayer the center of it all

#### E. Fighting False Teaching: The Struggle with Peter Abelard

1. Powerful preacher, clear Latin style... very emotionally appealing, extremely persuasive
  - a. heresies abounded in Bernard's day
  - b. Bernard's response was PREACH THE WORD!!!
  - c. on many occasions his sermons to heretics resulted in scores of heretics returning to the church
2. As a theologian and inspirational writer, Bernard said that theology and bible study should "penetrate hearts rather than just explain words."
3. Scholastic theologians spent all their time debating over logic, reason, and the meaning of words; Bernard focused on the need for a transformed life
4. Fought against Scholasticism, especially Peter Abelard (the medieval age's quintessential doubter)... he did everything he could to silence Abelard's teachings
  - a. Abelard was a phenomenal debater... men were afraid to face him because of his cutting brilliance in oratory
  - b. Bernard faced him fearlessly, many times... although confessing that he was but a child in regard to learning and oratorical abilities; Abelard was actually afraid to face him

- c. for many years the controversy between the two divided Europe
- d. Abelard was the equivalent of a liberal, Bernard staunchly conservative theologically
- e. Bernard had a great deal of influence with Rome, and in 1141, used that influence effectively to silence Abelard

#### F. On Society, Government, and Church Politics

1. For four years after 1130, Bernard was heavily involved in the politics surrounding the selection of a new pope; the papal election had been disputed, and Bernard championed the cause of Innocent II against his rival Anacletus II
2. Bernard traveled throughout France, Germany, and Italy mustering support for Innocent II... in the end Innocent II was triumphant and Bernard's influence was immense
3. Debate was raging concerning relationship of church and state
4. Bernard was a staunch churchman who believed the civil power rested beneath the power of the state
5. Bernard was challenged by the Pope to preach a Second Crusade in 1147, and Bernard did... with spectacular results
  - a. Moslem forces had captured Edessa in eastern Turkey and were threatening to capture Jerusalem
  - b. King Louis VII of France had asked Bernard to preach the Crusade, but he refused
  - c. Louis then went to the Pope who ordered it
  - d. Bernard complied and preached the Second Crusade, and whole villages were emptied of able-bodied men who headed for Palestine to defend the Sacred Shrines with their lives
6. The preaching of the Crusade had an ugly side-effect: anti-Semitism
  - a. in Rhineland, a monk named Raoul wandered around telling crowds that, if they were going to fight for the faith, the logical first step was to kill Jews in their villages
  - b. anti-Jewish riots in Mainz... archbishop sheltered many Jews in his palace and sent for Bernard to help quell the riot

- c. Bernard came and called Raoul arrogant and without authority, a preacher of insane and heretical doctrines, a liar and a murderer... Raoul snuck out of town, and the riot was over
- d. to this day, Rhineland Jews remember Bernard as a righteous Gentile, and many name their children Bernard as a result

#### 7. The Crusade: a disaster!!

- a. Bernard felt God had given him signs that the Crusade would be successful
- b. he put this into his preaching
- c. of the soldiers who set out, most died of starvation and disease before reaching their goal
- d. most of the remainder were killed or captured
- e. the result was devastating to Bernard and to Europe

### III. Bernard's Mysticism: Yearning After God

#### A. Bernard's Writings

- 1. Letters: we have over 500 preserved
- 2. Sermons, treatises

#### "On Loving God"

88 Sermons on the Song of Songs: treated as an allegory of the love of Christ

- 3. Hymns

O Sacred Head Now Wounded

Jesus the Very Thought of Thee

Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts

#### B. A Sample of Bernard's Contemplations

On Diversity of Meanings from a Single Text of Scripture

***“I will not be condemned by a prudent person because of a diversity of meanings as long as truth is protected in each case, and the love which the scriptures should serve is more helpful to many the more true meanings it draws forth from them for its purposes. Why should what we experience time and again in using things bother us in the case of scripture? How many uses does water alone serve for our bodies? And so any single text will not be off the mark if it gives rise to different understandings that can be adapted to the diverse needs and purposes of souls.”***

On Meditating on the Incomprehensible Christ

***“[Christ] was incomprehensible and inaccessible, invisible and completely unthinkable. Now He wishes to be comprehended, to be seen, wishes to be thought about. How, you ask? As lying in the manger, resting the Virgin’s lap, preaching on the mountain, praying through the night, or hanging on the cross, growing pale in death, and also as rising on the third day, showing the apostles the place of the nails, the signs of victory, and finally as ascending over heaven’s secrets in their sight.***

On Steps of Love

***“That carnal love through which the carnal life is excluded and the world is condemned and overcome is good. When it is also rational it advances; it is perfected when it becomes spiritual.”***

On the Superiority of Love

***“Of all the motions, senses and affections of the soul, it is love alone in which the creature is able, even if not on an equal basis, to repay to its Creator what it had received, to weigh back something from the same measure.”***

On Stages Along the Road to Perfection

[Bernard wrote *The Steps of Humility and Pride*, in which he distinguished twelve degrees in the progress of humility, the necessary ascetical preparation for the subsequent progress to mystical union with Christ; in a sermon on the Song of Songs, he noted seven ascending reasons why the soul seeks the word:]

***“...to whom she consents for her correction, by whom she is illuminated for her knowledge, to whom she owes her virtue, by whom she is reformed to wisdom, to whom she is conformed to beauty, to whom she is wed for her fruitfulness, and whom she enjoys for her bliss.”***

**On Loving God:**

***Step One: the love of a slave***

***Step Two: the love of a mercenary***

***Step Three: the love of a son***

Three Types of Souls Who Ascend to Heaven

*1) Those who are pulled there; 2) those who are led there; 3) those caught up to the goal, (as Paul was in 2 Cor. 12:2)*

*The first are certainly happy, because they will possess their souls in patience; the second are happier because they will confess him voluntarily; the third are happiest. In God's deepest mercy, when the will's power is almost buried, they are rapt into the riches of glory in a fiery spirit, not knowing whether they are in or out of the body, only knowing they are rapt.*

[Amazingly, Bernard said all three levels also coexist within one soul!!]

Spiritual Senses Yearning for God

*In tears I ask, "How long shall we smell and not taste, gazing toward our homeland but not grasping it, hailing it from afar with sighs?" O truth, homeland of exiles and end of exile! I see you, but caught in the flesh I cannot enter you—befouled with sins, I am not worthy to be admitted. O Wisdom, you reach mightily from one end to the other in setting up and maintaining things, and you arrange all things sweetly by blessing and ordering the affections. Direct our actions as our temporal need demands and dispose our affections as your eternal truth requires, so that each of us may confidently glory in you and say, 'He has ordered love in me.' (Song 2:4)*