

the 3rd book of the institutes expounds thoroughly *the mode of obtaining the grace of Christ, the benefits it confers, and the effect resulting from it*

-in it is the discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit, faith, regeneration, repentance, summary of the Christian life as self-denial, meditating on the future life, justification, judgment-seat of God, Christian liberty, prayer, election, predestination, reprobation and resurrection

chapter one is a dissertation on the *secret operation of the Holy Spirit*

-be sure to read the devotion before you delve in - it is a very helpful summary

3.1.1 - 3.1.4

1.1

in discussing how we obtain salvation, calvin begins with . . . *so long as we are without Christ and separated from him, nothing which he suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us*

-to understand why everyone doesn't embrace the offer of Christ in the gospel we must *ascend higher and inquire into the secret efficacy of the Spirit. . .*

-for Christ's shed blood to avail . . . *our souls must be washed in it by the secret cleansing of the Holy Spirit. . . the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually binds us to himself*

1.2

then next two paragraphs deal with some of the names of the Holy Spirit

-the Spirit of sanctification - because he makes us alive

-@ times the Spirit of God the Father - @ other times the Spirit of God the Son - see Rom 8:9-11

-the Father is the author of the gifts of salvation, of grace, while Christ bestows them on His people thru the Spirit - thus the Spirit of the Father & the Spirit of Christ

-He is a quickening - life-giving - Spirit

-speaking of paul's benediction to the corinthians, *"the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. . ."* calvin says *without which [that is without the communion of the Holy Spirit] no man shall ever taste the paternal favor of God or the benefits of Christ*

-it's thru the Holy Spirit that God sheds his love in our hearts - rom 5:5

1.3

more titles

-Spirit of adoption - because *he is witness to us* that God has embraced us in Christ, *so as to become our Father and give us boldness of access to him*

-the Spirit of life because of righteousness

-the Spirit of water - *since it is his secret irrigation that makes us bud forth and produce the fruits of righteousness, he is repeatedly described as water*

-he is also called oil and unction - because when we are *sprinkled with the Spirit [we] are restored to the full vigor of life*

-as well as fire - because . . . *he is constantly employed in subduing and destroying the vices of our concupiscence [illicit desires] and inflaming our hearts with the love of God and piety*

-he is described as a fountain - all riches of heaven flow to us thru him - *everything good in us is the fruit of his grace. . .*

. . . *it is by the Spirit alone that he [Christ] unites himself to us*

1.4

but. . . faith is his principal work

-it's only by faith that he brings us to the light of the gospel - without which we would remain in unbelief -

-we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise - he is our internal teacher. . . *by whose agency the promise of salvation, which would otherwise only strike the air or our ears, penetrates into our minds*

- . . . *faith itself is produced only by the Spirit* - 2 Theses 2:13

-he assures us that Christ abides in us

-he reminds us what Christ has taught

. . . *teachers would cry aloud to no purpose, did not Christ, the internal teacher, by means of his Spirit draw to himself those who are given him of the Father*

-we are baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire to make us partakers of grace - . . . *enlightening us into the faith of his gospel, & so regenerating us to be new creatures. thus cleansed from all pollution, he dedicates us as holy temples to the Lord*

here in the first paragraphs of chapter 2 calvin begins a series of discussions on the nature of faith - I've found them hard to understand & distinguish the nuances - certain words he uses have been redefined in our day - he says things in ways that we'd never say them, leading us to think his views are quite different than ours - but in the end, if we can get a grasp on what he's saying, I think you'll find yourself agreeing with all that he's trying to say - in particular, he is refuting shallow faith - what we call today easy-believism -

-be sure to read at least the next two devotions - they helped clear the air for me somewhat - I'll bring in some of the modern english renderings where they are helpful

from today's devotion - *in our age, when many self-proclaimed 'persons of faith' aimlessly engage in all manner of 'spiritual' activities, calvin's words of clarity on Spirit-wrought faith could hardly be more timely*

3.2.1-3.2.6

2.1

calvin's intent in these next paragraphs is to give . . . *a clearer definition of faith, so as to enable the readers to apprehend its nature and power*

he begins by reminding us of 3 things he has already said

1. we're all guilty of breaking God's law and therefore subject to eternal death

2. unable to fulfill the demands of the law, if we seek to be justified by our own good works, *no ground of hope* [for salvation - deliverance from eternal death] *remains*

3. there is only one way of deliverance - Christ the Redeemer

-it's not just a contemporary issue that many think faith is just agreeing with what calvin calls gospel history - the life of Christ as presented in the gospels

-calvin's argument here is stunning to me -

-he says, that if people are told simply to have faith in God, those telling them that *hurry wretched souls away from the right mark instead of directing them to it. FOR SEEING THAT GOD DWELLS IN LIGHT THAT IS INACCESSIBLE, CHRIST MUST INTERVENE*

-using a number of scriptural proofs, the most enlightening being . . . *no man knows who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him*

-i.e., Jesus is the only one who can reveal God the Father to us - he is the only one who can know the invisible, infinite Father

-that's why we need a Mediator - that why the Lord Jesus is the only Mediator

-that's why Paul directs our faith toward Christ rather than the Father - we can come to know God, but only as he is revealed to us in Christ

God would remain far off, concealed from us, were we not irradiated by the brightness of Christ - It's in that sense that he is the light of the world

. . . *the invisible Father is to be sought nowhere but in the image of Christ*

calvin then quotes augustine *the thing to be know is, where we are to go, and by what way. . . the surest way to avoid all errors is to know him who is both God and man. it is to God we tend, and it is by man we go, and both of these are found only in Christ*

2.2.

it seems to me as we go, that when calvin speaks of "the schoolmen" he is not only speaking of educators, but, in particular, I think he's meaning roman catholic educators

-anyway, he says their version of faith does nothing but *draw a veil over Christ*
-the fiction of "implicit faith" - which he says is faith that understands nothing, merely submitting *your convictions implicitly to the church*
-i.e., believe in God and let the church worry about the knowledge and content of faith
-this statement sums up paragraph 2 - *we do not obtain salvation either because we are prepared to embrace every dictate of the church as true, or leave to the church the province of inquiring and determining; but when we recognize God as a propitious Father thru the reconciliation made by Christ, and Christ as given to us for righteousness, sanctification, and life*

2.3

since, as long as we're in this fleshly body there will be misunderstandings and errors in our faith, there will be times we have to suspend judgment for the sake of unity

-to call humble ignorance faith is absurd - *faith consists in the knowledge of God and Christ*

-to just take everything the church teaches as "gospel truth" leads to monstrous errors -

2.4

perfection - to calvin in these discussions is "maturity" - and that there is a sense of "implicit faith" in Christians, but not as the roman church defined it

even the most mature must determine to make spiritual progress - and on certain matter we have to wait for further illumination - philippians 3:15

as long as we're in the flesh (physically, not theologically) *our attainments are less than is to be desired*

-just reading our bibles should convict us of our ignorance - . . . *every teacher, however excellent, may still be disposed to learn*

-calvin's example of the faith of the disciples of Jesus "mingled with incredulity(unbelief)" gets a little cloudy for me -

-it's hard to say at what point calvin believes them to be converted - I would say it's not until after the resurrection that calvin understands them to be "saved"-

-but I can't be sure

he says *they are said to have believed only when, by the reality, they perceive the truth of what Christ had spoken [concerning the resurrection]; not that they then began to believe, but the seed of a hidden faith, which lay as it were dead in their hearts, then burst forth in vigor. they had, therefore, a true but implicit faith, having reverently embraced Christ as their only teacher* - seems to me he is equating this faith in the disciples [true but implicit] with the false "implicit faith" of the roman catholics - he continues, . . . *then being taught by him, they felt assured that he was the author of salvation: [tho' not yet saved] in fine, believed that he had come from heaven to gather disciples, and take them there through the grace of the Father. there cannot be a more familiar proof of this, than that in all men faith is always mingled with incredulity [unbelief]*

2.5

we may also call their faith implicit, as being properly nothing else than a preparation for faith -

-calvin then gives examples in the gospels of those who "believe" because they saw miracles but *went no farther than to believe that Christ was the promised messiah, without being at all imbued with the evangelical doctrine [the gospel]* -

-makes think of john 2:23-24 - many believed in his name when they saw the miracles, but Jesus didn't believe in them because he knew what was in their hearts

-another example was the nobleman who believed in Jesus' promise of his son being healed [toward the end of john 4], yet when he went home he "believed" - . . . he had first received the words which fell from the lips of Christ as an oracular response [responding to an oracle of God], and thereafter submitted to his authority and received his doctrine. . . the latter gives him a place among those disciples who had devoted themselves to Christ

-another example was the samaritans who believed the report of the woman about Jesus but when they went out to Christ and heard them they *heard him [them]selves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world*

-he concludes this paragraph with . . . *it is obvious that even those who are not yet imbued with the first principles, provided they are disposed to obey, are called believers, not properly indeed, but inasmuch as God is pleased in kindness so highly to honor their pious feeling. but this docility, with a desire of further progress, is widely different from the gross ignorance which those sluggishly indulge who are contented with implicit faith of the papists* [followers of the pope, i.e., roman catholics]

2.6

saving faith will always have knowledge of Christ as its object, *as he is offered by the Father. . . as invested with his gospel.*

. . . *there is an inseparable relation between faith and the word*

calvin then gives a number of scriptural proofs - *hear, and your soul shall live* being one - isaiah 4:3

. . . *whether God uses the agency of man, or works immediately by his own power, it is always by his word that he manifests himself to those whom he designs to draw to himself*

-paul states that faith is the obedience given to the gospel - rom 1:5

-he says unbelievers are condemned because they don't obey the gospel - 2 thess 1:6-8

. . . *faith includes not merely the knowledge that God is, but also, nay chiefly, a perception of his will toward us. it concerns us to know not only what he is in himself, but also in what character he is pleased to manifest himself to us. we now see. . . that faith is the knowledge of the divine will in regard to us, as ascertained from his word.*

didn't mean to go so long but this is really what we're dealing with in our contemporary Christian culture in many ways - the more things change the more they stay the same - *there is nothing new under the sun*

calvin continues on his intricate journey through the nature of faith

3.2.7 - 3.2.10

2.7

tho' saving faith includes more than assent to the gospel, it certainly doesn't include anything less - . . . *it is the office of faith to assent to the truth of God whenever, whatever, and in whatever way he speaks. . .*

-gracious promise of a saving God - *a propitious Father* - *is the only thing on which the heart of man can recline*

-this is the reason we find mercy and truth so often together in God's word

-it would be presumptuous to think we could be reconciled to God without that promise in his word

-because we are dead in sin and walking in darkness, calvin says that *in order that the word of God may gain full credit, the mind must be enlightened, and the heart confirmed, from some other quarter*

now, at last, calvin says he can give a *full definition of faith. . . it is a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favor toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit*

2.8

again he refutes the schoolmen who *imagine that persons who have no fear of God, and no sense of piety, may believe all that is necessary to be known for salvation. . . they dogmatically give the name of faith to a persuasion devoid of the fear of God. . . they insist that faith is an assent with which any despiser of God may receive what is delivered by scripture*

-calvin holds that assent in the biblical way of understanding is more of the heart than the brain - the data or facts of the gospel are issues of the brain while assent must go deeper into the heart -

-no one has saving faith without it affecting their life - . . . *faith consists in the knowledge of Christ; Christ cannot be known without the sanctification of his Spirit: therefore faith cannot possibly be disjoined from pious affection*

2.9

the schoolmen apparently contend or at least would accept as saving faith a faith that is without love -

-but only the pious - those living holy lives - have faith

-multitudes believe that God exists and admit the truth of the gospel - in the same way they believe events they actually witness
and that is not saving faith

2.10

was simon magus possessing saving faith when it is said he believed - even tho' soon after gave proof of his unbelief?

calvin contends that *overcome by the majesty of the gospel, he yielded some kind of assent, and so far acknowledged Christ to be the author of life and salvation, as willingly to assume his name* - in most cases we would affirm his salvation

-but calvin likens his faith to the two soils in the parable that received the word but proved to be false believers - they are said to have believed for a time

-they eagerly receive the word, have some feeling of its divine power - *they imagine that the reverence which they give to the word is genuine piety, because they have no idea of any impiety but that which consists in open and avowed contempt. but whatever that assent may be, it by no means penetrates to the heart, so as to have a fixed seat there. altho' it sometimes seems to have planted its roots, these have no life in them.*

note this quote - ***the human heart has so many recesses for vanity, so many lurking places for falsehood, is so shrouded by fraud and hypocrisy, that it often deceives itself.***

-those who image they have faith, are *not a whit superior to devils*

more thoughts on true and false faith -

3.2.11 - 3.2.15

2.11

here calvin defends his writing that unbelievers are said to have a kind of faith

-he recognizes it's hard to get clear in our minds because Paul says that faith is a fruit of election but he says that easily solved & he does it, at least adequately in his mind, in this paragraph and the next

-yes, only the elect are *enlightened into faith & truly feel the efficacy of the gospel yet experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected in a way so similar to the elect, that even in their own judgment there is no difference between them*

-thus at times they are said to have a faith, tho' only temporary

-it is the elect alone who gain the assurance of faith, enabling them to cry *Abba, Father* & it is the elect person only that God regenerates and effectually seals

-because of the similarities between false faith and true faith believers are taught to examine themselves carefully and humbly

. . .the reprobate [unbeliever] never have any other than a confused sense of grace, laying hold of the shadow rather than the substance

-calvin even goes so far as to say that *God illumines their minds* in such a way that they *believe God to be propitious to them. . .that they recognize his grace yet they . . .never attain to the full result or to fruition in the elect alone he implants the living root of faith, so that they persevere even to the end*

evanescent - quickly fading or disappearing

2.12

tho' the unbeliever does have a knowledge of God's favor toward man, and can be persuaded that is true, . . .*the sense of divine love. . .for him is missing*

in short, as by the revolt of the first man, the image of God could be effaced from his mind and soul, so there is nothing strange in his shedding some rays of grace on the reprobate, and afterwards allowing these to be extinguished. there is nothing to prevent his giving some a slight knowledge of his gospel, and imbuing others thoroughly

-he continues . . . *we must remember that however feeble and slender the faith of the elect may be, yet as the Spirit of God is to them a sure earnest [down payment] and seal of their adoption, the impression once engraven can never be effaced from their hearts, whereas the light which glimmers in the reprobate is afterwards quenched. nor can it be said that the Spirit therefore deceives, because he does not quicken the seed which lies in the hearts so as to make it ever remain incorruptible [in the unbeliever] as in the elect*
-calvin then says this explains king saul's *pious affections* before his sinful departure from anything like a believing life
-when believers sin, . . . *they, at the same instant, fell that [God] is angry with them or their sins, and also propitious toward them*
-not so with unbelievers - *they are born along by some sudden impulse of zeal, but then laziness prevents . . . them from examining their hearts with due care*
-then calvin gives a number of scriptural evidences for this type of faith - unbelieving faith -

2.13

calvin now discusses 4 ways in which faith is used in the new testament

1. the faith = . . . *the whole sum of heavenly doctrine* - all that we believe . . . *the faith that was once for all passed delivered to the saints*
2. sometimes it is simple trust in a particular object, i.e., a person - like those who lowered down the paralytic - they had faith Jesus could & would heal him
3. sometimes it is used for the power to perform miracles - . . . *a gift possessed by persons who were neither regenerated by the Spirit of God, nor sincerely revered him*
4. saving faith = including a knowledge of the love of God in Christ - from the devotion - it distinguishes the children of God from unbelievers
 - a. the faith by which we invoke [appeal to as an authority] God the Father - *Abba*
 - b. by which we pass from death into life
 - c. by which Christ our eternal salvation and life dwells in us

2.14

faith includes knowledge - but not just comprehension

-in this paragraph calvin determines this "saving knowledge" is more than what we can attain . . . *under human sense. for that knowledge is much superior. . .*
-the knowledge of faith can't come solely from the mind - . . . *what our mind embraces by faith is every way infinite, that this kind of knowledge far surpasses all understanding*
hence we conclude that the knowledge of faith consists more of certainty than discernment

2.15

calvin says unbelief is *so deeply rooted in our hearts. . . that no man ever believes it without an arduous struggle*
-it takes the work of the Holy Spirit to . . . *induce us to give full credit to the divine promises*
-many hold to an inadequate idea of God's mercy that *yields them very little comfort. . . they are harassed by miserable anxiety while they doubt whether God will be merciful to them*
-they know God is abundantly merciful but not sure it will reach them - . . . *their knowledge stopping short leaves them only mid-way; not so much confirming and tranquilizing the mind as harassing it with doubt and disquietude*
-so very different from the full assurance of faith available to believers as revealed in the word
- . . . *boldness springs only from confidence in the divine favor and salvation. so true is this, that the term faith is often used as equivalent to confidence*

more on true faith, in particular, now the believer lives in a fallen world - carl trueman says in the devotion, . . . *we must grasp [the promises of God] in a way that changes our very lives by giving us confidence, peace of conscience and assurance of God's love*

-calvin particularly deals with how people respond to the trials and tribulations of life - how true faith holds to the end

3.2.16 - 3.2.21

2.16

the only way to gain confidence or peace in this life is to embrace the promises of God inwardly

-this is the security which quiets and calms the conscience in the view of the judgment of God. . .

calvin seems to say that assurance of faith is an essential of salvation - that no one can be saved who doubts that he is saved - by the time we get to 2.21 we see what he means by that

-here he says

1. . . *.he only is a true believer, who, firmly persuaded that God is reconciled, and is a kind Father to him, hopes everything from his kindness, who trusting to the promises of the divine favor, with undoubting confidence anticipates salvation*

2. the only good hope is in *those who confidently glory in being the heirs of the heavenly kingdom*

3. no one is a believer but the one who *trusting to the security of his salvation, confidently triumphs over the devil and death*

calvin concludes that no one is saved *when security* [assurance of salvation] *does not follow as its fruit*

-as long as he doesn't mean fruit will follow immediately I agree - but I think for some, assurance is a later fruit rather than immediate

2.17

calvin now discusses that it is said some believers do *feel disquietude* [worried unease]. . . *sometimes tremble, overcome with terror. . .*

-but he says that doesn't seem consistent with certainty of faith - so he now works thru to resolve this conundrum calvin's assurance of faith is not one which is

1. never affected by doubt

2. never assailed by anxiety

he maintains that believers are in a *perpetual struggle with their own distrust* - that he is far from saying they are always living in quiet, uninterrupted peace

-but that they never *abandon that sure confidence. . .in the mercy of God*

-he then illustrates with David - who was faithful even tho' he was far from *being always at peace* - citing numerous psalms

-david when he seemed to be overwhelmed, ceased not by urging himself forward to ascend to God

-believers, tho' weighed down and almost overwhelmed with the burden of temptation, constantly rise up, tho' not without toil and difficulty. . .

-. . .they do not withdraw or turn their backs, but persevere in the contest. . .

2.18

the 2 principles of the Christian life at work in believers

1. *one filling him with delight in recognizing the divine goodness, the other filling him with bitterness under a sense of his fallen state*

2. *one leading him to recline in the promise of the gospel, the other alarming him by the conviction of his iniquity*

3. *one making him exult with the anticipation of life, the other making him tremble with the fear of death*

the diversity is owing to imperfection of faith. . .the invariable issue of the contest is, that faith in the long run surmounts the difficulties by which it is beset and seemed to be endangered

2.19

the whole, then, comes to this: as soon as the minutest particle of faith is instilled into our minds, we begin to behold the face of God placid, serene, and propitious; far off, indeed, but still so distinctly as to assure us that there is no delusion in it

- the progress ought to be interrupted - at least in its direction

-when faith first enters, it comes in much ignorance which. . . *is gradually removed. still this partial ignorance. . . does not prevent that clear knowledge of the divine favor which holds the first and principal part in faith*

2.20

calvin now cites paul as to. . . *how very minute a portion of divine wisdom is given to us in the present life* thus making it so important that we be *constantly engaged in learning* because of our imperfection

-doubt and trembling is part of the Christian life in which we are being transformed step-by-step into the image of Christ by the Spirit of the Lord

-our consciences *burdened with an incumbent load of sins*

1. *at one time complains and groans, at another accuses itself*

2. *at one time murmurs in secret, at another openly rebels*

2.21

to withstand these assaults, faith arms and fortifies itself with the word of God

-tempted when in affliction to believe God is against us, *faith replies, that while he afflicts he is merciful, his chastening proceeding more from love than anger*

-if true Christians call upon God in the midst of affliction, it is evidence they hope in him - *they never would invoke him did they not believe that he is ready to assist them. . . faith remaining fixed in the believer's breast never can be eradicated from it. however it may seem shaken and bent. . . its flame is never so completely quenched as not at least to lurk under the embers*

. . . *unbelief reigns not in the hearts of believers, but only assails them from without. . . annoys them, or, at the utmost, gives them a wound which can be healed*

augustine's quote: - *whatever be the engines which the devil erects against us, as he cannot gain the heart where fails dwells, he is cast out*

-interesting that augustine said that in the early 400s - what were the "engines" of the 400s? - certainly that word has changed in meaning in 1600 yrs -

calvin's closing quote concerning 1 John 5:4 "this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith" - *it is not said that it will be victorious in a single fight, or a few, or some one assault, but that it will be victorious over the whole world, though it should be a thousand times assailed - AMEN!*

3.2.22 – 3.2.27

calvin now discusses the interaction between faith and fear

-certain fear is good – the fear of God – a fear that is reverence toward him

-whereas all other fear is sin for the believer and terror for the unbeliever

2.22

fear and trembling are often pair together in scripture

-for the believer the warnings of judgment become *beacons warning them*

1. *not to provoke the wrath of God by similar wickedness*

2. *keep anxious watch*

3. *OR taking a view of their own inherent wickedness, learn their entire dependence on God*

-it keeps us humble yet confident in God's strength

temerity = excessive boldness – audacity

2.23

. . . *when he bids us work out our salvation with fear and trembling all he requires is, that we accustom ourselves to think very [lowly] of our own strength, and confide in the strength of the Lord*

diffidence = lacking confidence in one's ability

equanimity = mental calmness and composure

-when Solomon says *happy is the man who fears always*, -prov 28:14 – he speaks of a kind of fear that

1. rather than causing believers to despair, renders them more careful –

2. when confused it helps regain peace of mind

3. when downcast it leads to courage in God

4. and when one falls into deep distrust of self, it breathes confidence in God

. . .there is nothing inconsistent in believers being afraid, and at the same time possessing secure consolation as they alternately behold their own vanity, and direct their thoughts to the truth of God

holiness begets proper fear or reverence toward God

the sweet attractiveness of grace inspires a man. . . with fear and admiration, making him feel his dependence on God and submit humbly to his power

2.24

calvin now deals with an error or *pestilential philosophy*

-instead of seeing hope and fear as twins living in the mind of those abiding in Christ, they are set at odds with one another – pictured in complete contrast – *the one falling as the other rises* and vice versa

-another ploy of Satan –trying to undermine any assurance of faith one might have

-the propagators of this error teach

1. look to Christ and salvation is sure

2. look to yourself damnation is certain

-so they would have you continually alternating between despair and hope –

-failing to recognize Christ is dwelling in the believer – having united ever Christian into his body – through union with Christ believers not only are *partakers of his benefits, but also of himself*

-calvin replies . . .*if you look to yourself damnation is certain; but since Christ has been communicated to you with all his benefits, so that all which is his is made yours, you become a member of him, and hence one with him*

. . .the condemnation which we of ourselves deserve is annihilated by the salvation of Christ. . – Rom 8:10

. . .faith occasionally suffers certain interruptions when, by violent assault, its weakness is made to bend in this direction or in that; and its light is buried in the thick darkness of temptation. still happens what may, faith ceases to long after God.

2.25

this paragraph muses over the teaching of Bernard – of clairvaux –

I found this paragraph tough sledding

-considering who we are, in and of ourselves: *burdened with sin, obscured with darkness, ensnared by allurements, teeming with lusts, ruled by passion, filled with delusions, ever prone to evil, inclined to every vice; full of ignominy [public shame or disgrace] and confusion. . .*

-yet, believers have become the treasure of God

seeing ourselves in these 2 contrasting ways, . . .*in the one view our nothingness, in the other our greatness – I presume our glorying will seem restrained; but perhaps it is rather increased and confirmed, because we glory not in ourselves but in the Lord.*

-we are [in the heart of God], by his dignifying, not by our own dignity

2.26

Malachi 1:6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'"

here malachi says:

1. *the obedience paid to God as a Father he by his prophet terms honor*

2. *the service performed to him as a master he terms fear*

the fear of the Lord, therefore, may be defined reverence mingled with honor and fear

. . .he who considers with himself what kind of a father God is to us, will see sufficient reason, even were there no hell, why the thought of offending him should seem more dreadful than any death. but so prone is our carnal

nature to indulgence in sin, that, in order to curb it in every way, we must also give place to the thought that all iniquity is abomination to the Master under whom we live; that those who by wicked lives, provoke his anger, will not escape his vengeance

2.27

when john says that perfect love casts out fear, calvin shows that he is speaking of the fear of unbelief, which is different from believing fear and reverence

1. the unbeliever lives in fear of God knowing he deserves God's judgment and feels it *impending over him*
2. the believer fears offending God more than the punishment

threats only harden unbelievers when God *thunders verbally from heaven* – they *obstinately persist in their rebellion*

but when God afflicts them they are forced to fear whether they want to or not

this is *servile* fear as opposed to the *free and voluntary fear which becomes sons of God*

more on the faith that separates unbelievers from believers

from the devotion: *the believer's assurance is built not upon outward circumstances, but upon the promises of God*

- calvin's primary emphasis on the unconditional promises of God, not those conditioned upon our response - i.e., promises that are conditioned upon our response

- unbelievers should primarily look to the mercy of God as being His character

3.2.28 - 3.2.31

2.28

when we become believers all enmity between us and God is removed, all danger is gone *and every thing good will befall us*, altho' *faith does not promise us length of days, riches, and honors*. . .

-if we have everything we wish for but aren't assured of salvation, our happiness will be cursed and we'll be miserable

-if we gain the assurance of God's love our *misereries will be blessed* - nothing can separate us from the love of God

- Rom 8

2.29

the foundation of our faith should be based upon the unconditional promises of God

-saving faith. . . *properly begins with promise, continues with it and ends with it. it seeks life in God. . . in the promise of mercy. and this promise must be gratuitous; for a conditional promise, which throws us back upon our works, promises life only in so far as we find it existing in ourselves*

-as believers, tho' we recognize God as judge, focus our faith upon the mercy of God - he is *good and ready to forgive, plenteous in mercy, slow to anger, good to all, and shedding his tender mercies over all his works* - all

quotes from various psalms

2.30

inveigh = rail against

one aspect of saving faith is fear of his threats, thus it is said that noah had faith in God because he *feared the destruction of the world, when as yet it was not seen*

-when looking for the difference between the faith of unbelievers and believers, calvin says that

1. true *faith is never decided until it attains to a free promise* - i.e., unconditional promise

2. the only faith that saves is one that unites us with Christ

faith, then, has no firm footing until it stands in the mercy of God

the *particular mark which distinguishes the believer from the unbeliever* is that the faith of believers unites them to Christ - *grafts us into the body of Christ*

2.31

this paragraph's emphasis is that there is no saving faith apart from the word of God -

*. . .faith has no less need of the word than the fruit of a tree has of a living root. . .none can hope in God but those who know his name. this knowledge. . .depends on the testimony which God himself gives to his goodness
- . . .we derogate [deviate] from the power of God, by attaching less importance to his promises than to satan's threatening against them*

-when God seems far away or not there at all we should. . .*take courage from his former favors* - psalm 143:5

. . .there is not faith until God presents us with clear evidence of his grace

-calvin then discusses sarah, rebekah, and isaac in their seeming failures of faith, and says that they weren't devoid of faith, just that their faith weakened and they "took over" in trying to accomplish that which God had promised - they believed God's promise by faith, yet determined to help God accomplish it

these examples certainly show that error is often mingled with faith. . .rebekah showed how prone the human mind is to turn aside whenever it gives itself the least indulgence. but tho' defect and infirmity obscure faith, they do not extinguish it

calvin now turns the coin over & discusses faith from God's perspective as his gift to us thru the agency of the Holy Spirit

3.2.32 - 3.2.37

2.32

unbelievers never recognize the benefits they receive from God's constant common grace

-every promise, calvin says, is a demonstration of God's favor

-but . . .*without controversy, God loves no man out of Christ. he is the beloved Son, in whom the love of the Father dwells, and from whom it afterwards extends to us. . .therefore, whenever any promise is made to us, we must turn our eyes toward Christ. . .as paul declares that in him all the promises of God are confirmed and completed*

-objections arise with naaman, cornelius and the ethiopian eunuch often used as illustrations of those with apparent faith but no knowledge of Christ

-calvin beautifully refutes each, then concludes, *therefore, although their knowledge of Christ may have been obscure, we cannot suppose that they had no such knowledge at all. they used the sacrifices of the law, and must have distinguished them from the spurious sacrifices of the gentiles, by the end to which they referred, viz., Christ*

2.33

prevent = used here in the old sense of "precede"

. . .without the illumination of the Spirit the word has no effect - therefore . . .it is obvious that faith is something higher than human understanding - both the mind and the heart must be affected by the Spirit for anyone to be saved

faith is the special gift of God in both ways - in purifying the mind so as to give it a relish for divine truth, and afterwards in establishing it therein. for the Spirit does not merely originate faith, but gradually increases it, until by its means he conducts us into the heavenly kingdom

-thus the Spirit not only brings us into a relationship with Christ, but he then conducts us in the Christian life, slowly but surely sanctifying us, and will complete his work only when he ushers us into the heavenly kingdom

-and the . . .*Spirit is given by the hearing of faith*

recondite = secret, deep

-2 reasons so many people have such a hard time with the notion that no one can believe Christ *save those to whom it is given*

1. partly because they don't realize the height nor the depth of heavenly wisdom or the radical fallenness and depravity of man's natural condition

2. partly because they don't regard the fact that the main ingredient of faith is a stable and firm attitude of the heart

2.34

-our limited ability of discernment . . . *prevents us from beholding divine mysteries, which are revealed only to babes* -

-therefore the Holy Spirit's work is necessary

-considering john 6:44-46

1. we're completely unable to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit

2. when we are drawn both our mind and our spirit are elevated beyond our own understanding

-the Holy Spirit's work is so necessary that even when the 2 from emmaus heard God, the Son teaching with his own lips, no impression was made until

1. he opened their minds to understand the scriptures

2. the Spirit of truth instilled into their minds what they heard with their ears

. . . *we are all naturally blind; and hence the word cannot penetrate our mind unless the Spirit. . . makes an entrance for it*

2.35

paul designates faith as the or a work of God [2 thess 1:11] - . . . *it is not of man's own nature. . .*

-calvin alludes again to augustine

-concerning john 6:44, augustine remarks at how strange it is when 2 people hear this verse one hates it & the other embraces it

-then augustine asks, "why?" - and answers it's too deep for man to understand on his own - the cross is *an abyss*

I see that I am able; but how I am able I see not - after he was in Christ

-he concludes that when Christ produces faith in us thru the work of his Spirit, he then unites us w/himself, into his body, that we might enjoy the blessings of grace

2.36

-now . . . *what the mind has imbibed must be transferred into the heart* - it must take *deep root in the heart. . . to withstand and repel all the assaults of temptation*

-if it takes the Spirit to illuminate our minds, much more so is his work required to confirm our hearts - . . .

.inasmuch as there is more distrust in the heart than blindness in the mind; and it is more difficult to inspire the soul with security than to imbue it with knowledge

-the Spirit then seals our hearts the promises which have entered our minds and then becomes our down payment, our earnest, to confirm those promise of a future inheritance that awaits

2.37

calvin says he's not forgetting that he previously said that the believer's faith is subject to various doubts. . . *so that the minds of believers are seldom at rest, or at least are not always tranquil*

-he then cites a couple of psalms to show david's unrest that is quieted by a sure knowledge of God and his mercy

as calvin continues defining & describing true faith, today the emphasis is upon assurance of faith, mostly refuting the roman catholic view that anyone living in the assurance of their faith that will by God be carried all the way to the end is arrogant - the reading seemed a little hard and some of his arguments obscure, so I'm including the modern english version of today's reading also

3.2.38 - 3.2.42

2.38

scholastic dogma = doctrines of the academic roman catholic priests

-their teaching is that only as . . . *each individual deems himself not unworthy of God's favor*, should anyone have any assurance they are believers

calvin replies *with what kind of confidence. . . shall we be armed if we reason in this way - God is propitious [favorably disposed] toward us, provided we deserve it by the purity of our lives?* - not the last bit of sarcasm from calvin in this discussion

-one reason [others will follow] calvin argues against this is that prosperity is not a sure sign of God's favor, any more than affliction proves his disfavor

2.39

using primarily romans 8, calvin now builds the case for assurance of true faith that is available to believers thru the sanctifying work of the indwelling Holy Spirit as he illuminates the word of God to us

we have rec'd the Spirit *that we might know the things that ARE freely given to us of God* - 1 cor 2:12

if it is sinful to hold that the word of God is untrue, then . . . *how can we be wrong in maintaining its certainty*

-but the rc schoolmen say it is too audacious and arrogant for anyone to be assured of God's gracious favor - [my comment: the reason they think this is that they think God's favor is merited by a purity of life - see paragraph above]

in comparing biblical, evangelical doctrine vs rc doctrine calvin proceeds

1. paul says only those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God - rom 8:14

these men [rc schoolmen] believe those led by their own are the sons of God

2. paul tells us we approach God as Father as taught us by the Spirit who bears witness with our spirit we are true believers - rom 8:16

though they allow us . . . *to invoke God, [they] withdraw the Spirit, by whose guidance he is duly invoked*

3. paul says those led by the Spirit of Christ are the servants of Christ - rom 8:9

they imagine a Christianity which has no need of the Spirit of Christ

4. paul declares only those who [feel??] the indwelling Spirit have a legitimate hope of resurrection unto eternal life - rom 8:11

they imagine hope when there is no such feeling - no sense or conviction of the Spirit within

then when calvin imagines them to counter with it being modest & humble that they don't know for sure

something they can't see, he responds that we are encouraged to examine ourselves to see if Christ is in us and if not we are failing the test of true spirituality -

. . . it is the most wretched blindness to charge Christians with arrogance, for presuming to glory in the presence of the Holy Spirit; a glorying without which Christianity itself does not exist

-then he declares these men unbelievers because of their firm position - john 14:17

2.40

their 2nd attack on the assurance of faith for the believer comes in the form of: allowing that it is true that a believer enjoys the favor of God, the final outcome is still in question - they must persevere to the end

tho' calvin agrees this is 1/2 of the doctrine of the security of the believer, he knows it's their whole doctrine - tho'

he agrees that the saints of God will and must persevere to the end, he knows the true saints of God will

persevere to the end because of God's preserving hand - while the entire doctrine for the rc teachers is that man

must persevere to the end to be saved - and that essentially it is something they must do to gain God's full favor

calvin sarcastically replies to their viewpoint: *an admirable security, indeed, is left us, if, for the present moment*

only, we can just from moral conjecture that we are in grace, but know not how we are to be tomorrow! - some

abundant life it is to be bouncing in and out of grace depending on how spiritual or holy we were that particular day -

paul speaks in a much different way - rom 8:38 - as we sang last sunday "what can separate my soul from the God who made me whole, wrote my name in heaven's scroll, nothing. hallelujah!

rc teachers then say paul only said what he said in 8:38 because of his special revelation but the context shows clearly he is speaking of all believers

calvin closes this paragraph: *therefore since believers owe it to the favor of God, that, enlightened by his Spirit, they, through faith, enjoy the prospect of heavenly life; there is so far from an approach to arrogance in each glorying, that any one ashamed to confess it, instead of testifying modesty or submission, rather betrays extreme ingratitude, by maliciously suppressing the divine goodness*

2.41

continuing to define the nature of faith - using heb 11:1 - calvin says that to infer that until the last day . . . *the things pertaining to our salvation are too lofty to be perceived by our sense. . . and that in the meantime there is no possible way in which these can be possessed by us* is contrary to paul, who says that a hope ;that is seen is not hope - the schoolmen say we have to see it to believe it - God's word, paul, calvin, even I, say, no we have to believe it now to see it then -

in other words our faith is assured by our hope - that's calvin's argument in this and the next paragraph - the bible will not allow us to separate faith and hope

-on *faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* - calvin calls in augustine who interprets "evidence" as "conviction" - i.e., faith is the conviction of things not present -

it is the same as if the author of hebrews had called it

1. the appearance of things not apparent
2. the sight of things not seen
3. the clearness of things obscure
4. the presence of things absent
5. the manifestation of things hid

calvin says we ought to be as *firmly persuaded* of the truths we find in God's word *as if we held that every thing which it says were done and completed*

-read carefully that last 3 sentences of this paragraph - it is great

2.42

wherever this living faith exists, it must have the hope of eternal life as its inseparable companion, or rather must of itself beget and manifest it. . . and without this there is not faith at all

for if faith is a firm persuasion of the truth of God. . . those who have received this assurance must at the same time expect that God will perform his promises

-therefore, hope is *nothing more than the expectation of those things which faith previously believes to have been truly promised by God*

1. *faith believes God is true - hope expect that in due season he will manifest his truth*
2. *faith believes that he is our Father - hope expects that he will always act the part of Father towards us*
3. *faith believes that eternal life has been given to us - hope expects that it will one day be revealed*
4. *faith is the foundation on which hope rests - hope nourishes and sustains faith*

the italicized section below is from the modern english version

therefore *paul rightly sets our salvation in hope - rom 8:24 - for hope, while it awaits the Lord in silence*

1. *RESTRAINS faith that it may not fall headlong from too much haste*
2. *STRENGTHENS faith that it may not waver in God's promises, or begin to doubt concerning their truth*
3. *REFRESHES faith that it may not fail in mid-course, or even at the starting gate*
4. *INVIGORATES faith again and again with perseverance*

back to calvin's language

hope is necessary to establish our faith - as shown in the different ways believers are *assailed and shaken* in temptation

1. the Lord often suspends the fulfillment of his promises longer than we like - in this case hope helps us to wait for the fulfillment

2. at times God permits faith to wane, or even *openly manifest his displeasure* with his own people - hope then holds us up to say tho' he slay me yet will I trust him - my reference - calvin uses isaiah 8:17

3. skeptics & unbelievers scoff at the Lord's delay, insinuating our hope in the returning Christ is a pipe dream yet hope produces patience and helps us fix our eyes on Jesus seated at the right of God and to consider that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day

3.2.43-3.3.4

more about faith but calvin concludes chapter 2, his discussion on the interplay between faith and hope, then begins chapter 3 with his discussion of the connection of faith and repentance

the devotion is very good to lay out today's readings

2.43

scripture sometimes makes no distinction between faith and hope, as they are so intimately connected

-calvin cites 1 peter in which peter *attributes to faith what more properly belongs to hope.* [1 peter 1:5] *and not without cause. . .hope is nothing else than the food and strength of faith*

-then in another verse [1:21] he joins faith and hope together
execrate = curse, detest, abhor

seeing that, by the oracles of God, sinners are enjoined to entertain the hope of salvation, let us willingly presume so far on his truth as to cast away all confidence in our works, and trusting in his mercy, venture to hope. he who said, 'according to your faith be it unto your' [matt 9:29], will never deceive.

I just heard a great quote from Alistair Begg on this same topic - . . .*the ground of our assurance is not the depth of our conviction but the reliability of the one who made the promise. . .*

3.1

now to make make saving faith more clear in our minds calvin discusses the relationship between faith and repentance

the sum of the gospel is. . .made to consist in repentance and forgiveness of sins; and, therefore, where these two heads are omitted, any discussion concerning faith will be meager and defective, and indeed almost useless

-calvin declares **repentance always follows faith** – it also is produced by faith and this should be without controversy

for since pardon & forgiveness are offered by the preaching of the gospel, in order that the sinner, delivered from the tyranny of satan, the yoke of sin, and the miserable bondage of iniquity, may pass into the kingdom of God, it is certain that no man can embrace the grace of the gospel without retaking himself from the errors of his former life into the right path, and making it his whole study to practice repentance. those who think that repentance precedes faith instead of flowing from. . .has never understood its nature. . .

3.2

this paragraph is a refutation of those who think repentance precedes faith

-calvin determines a man won't or can't *seriously engage in repentance unless he knows that he is of God*

-but as the devotional writer said, *it is not as though faith slowly gives rise to repentance, bringing it to birth after a long period of gestation. those who are serious about God fear him and those who fear him repent before him.*

-no one will fear God in a reverential way until he trusts that he has received God's forgiveness
-no one will willingly set out to obey God's word and his law until he is persuaded that what he is doing is pleasing to God
repentance is a life-long journey for every Christian

3.3

in the next 2 paragraphs, calvin looks at 2 different ways "certain learned men" view repentance – in both cases repentance consists of 2 parts

-in 3.3 the 2 parts are mortification and quickening – calvin doesn't mind this breakdown but doesn't like the word quickening – that term is better used concerning regeneration than repentance

-by this view

1. mortification means *grief of soul and terror, produced by a conviction of sin and a sense of divine judgment* – when a man comes to understand sin, he begins to hate it – and is dissatisfied with himself which leads to his acknowledging his lost condition – and then when he understands in some sense God's justice, he is *terror-stricken, humbled and dejected*, and he becomes despondent and despairing

-this is contrition, the 1st part of repentance

2. quickening means *the comfort which is produced by faith*

a. when a man is brought low by a consciousness of sin

b. producing the fear of God

c. then as he sees God's goodness and the mercy, grace, and salvation available thru Christ he

1. looks up

2. *begins to breathe*

3. *takes courage, and, as it were*

4. *passes from death unto life*

3.4

another way some have *set down 2 forms of repentance*

1. **legal repentance** – brought to an understanding of his own sin, a man is overwhelmed with the fear of God's wrath, and is unable to escape his alarming situation

2. **evangelical repentance** – tho' bro't to the realization of his alarming situation before almighty God, . . . *he looks up and sees in Christ the cure of his wound, the solace of his terror, the haven of rest for his misery*

-calvin then gives cain, saul and judas as illustrations of the 1st form of repentance

-they saw their sin and were in dread of God's wrath and being overwhelmed they only wanted to avoid hell – actually beginning to experience it in this life, living before an offended God

examples of gospel or evangelical repentance are all those who *stung with a sense of sin. .*

.afterward, raised and revived by confidence in the divine mercy, turned unto the Lord

-hezekiah, those living in Nineveh, david, those who heard peter at pentecost, even peter himself are given as examples

calvin today works thru an understanding of repentance - defining it and giving 3 major aspects of it

3.3.5 - 3.3.10

3.5

just as faith and hope are two different things yet inseparable, so are faith and repentance - they are different but you can't have one without the other - both are enjoyed through our union with Christ
-faith and repentance can't be separated but they ought to be distinguished
-in both hebrew & greek repentance carries the notion of turning away from something and turning toward something - thus calvin uses "conversion" and "change of mind and purpose" to describe repentance
then he defines it as: . . . ***substantially this, that withdrawing from ourselves we turn to God, and laying aside the old, put on a new mind. . . a real conversion of our life unto God, proceeding from sincere and serious fear of God; and consisting in the mortification of our flesh and the old man, and the quickening of the Spirit***

3.6

3 things to be considered in repentance

this paragraph described the 1st - repentance requires. . . *a transformation not only in external works, but in the soul itself. . .*

-a new heart and a new spirit according to ezekiel

-it must be done with the whole heart and soul according to moises, calling it *the circumcision of the heart* which points to the internal affections

-in quoting jeremiah 4:1-4, calvin says . . . *it will be of no avail to commence the study of righteousness unless impiety shall first have been eradicated from the inmost heart*

-but don't fret about impiety (unholiness) being eradicated from your heart - calvin says later this is accomplished only thru the lifelong journey of repentance

3.7

2nd part of repentance: it *proceeds from a sincere fear of God*

before the mind of the sinner can be inclined to repentance, he must be aroused by the thought of divine judgment. . . it will perpetually urge him to adopt a different plan of life, that he may be able to stand securely at that judgment seat.

-that's why judgment is often introduced when the biblical writers call for repentance

calvin defines what paul means by "godly sorrow" in 2 cor 7.10 - . . . *he means when we not only tremble at the punishment, but hate and abhor the sin, because we know it is displeasing to God*

-this is different from so many being sad because they get caught in their sin and the consequences that follow - true repentance includes a broken heart over displeasing God - not just how our sin affects us but also how it affects God - a true hating of the sin not just the results or consequences of the sin

. . . *another reason why the fear of God lies at the root of repentance. . . is that though the life of man were possessed of all kinds of virtue, still if they do not bear reference to God. . . they are mere abomination in heaven, inasmuch as it is the principal part of righteousness to render to God that service and honor of which he is impiously defrauded. . .*

3.8

the 3rd part of the definition of repentance is that repentance consists of 2 parts: mortification of the flesh and quickening [making alive] of the Spirit

-we must first renounce our own nature - *renovation is afterwards manifested by the fruits produced. . .*

-we must not only *depart from evil* but we must also *do good* - psalms 34:14

-not only *cease to do evil* but also *learn to do well* - isaiah 1:16,17

-put off the old man and put on the new man - thru the renewing of our minds by the word of God - ephesians 4:22-24
mortification is . . . *as if God were declaring that to be ranked among his sons there must be a destruction of our ordinary nature*

3.9

all of this is made possible by our union with Christ - . . . *if we have true fellowship in his death, our old man is crucified by his power, and the body of sin becomes dead, so that the corruption of our original nature is never again in full vigor* - rom 6:5,6

-calvin then ties repentance to regeneration - in fact, almost makes them synonyms - and the only aim of repentance/regeneration . . . *is to form in us anew the image of God, which was sullied, and all but effaced by the transgression of adam*

-calvin says we are *renewed by that regeneration into the righteousness of God from which we had fallen thru adam*. . . *this renewal, indeed, is not accomplished in a moment, a day, or a year, but by uninterrupted, sometimes even by slow progress God abolishes the remains of carnal corruption in his elect, cleanses them from pollution, and consecrates them as his temples, restoring all tier inclinations to real purity, so that during their whole lives they may practice repentance, and know that death is the only termination to this warfare.*

3.10

by regeneration the children of God are delivered from the bondage of sin, but not as if they had already obtained full possession of freedom, and no longer felt any annoyance from the flesh. . . an unremitting contest remain[s]. . . .in the regenerate man, there is still a spring of evil which is perpetually sending forth desires that allure and stimulate him to sin.

here calvin calls on Augustine again, but he also states a difference with augustine

1. augustine determines that evil desires don't become sin until an external act or consent is added
2. calvin, on the other hand, deems it sin *whenever man is influenced to any degree by any desire contrary to the law of God* -

concupiscence - a strong desire, usually considered evil or sinful in scripture

rectitude - honesty, integrity, righteousness

. . . *we hold that there is always is in the saints until they are freed from their mortal frame, because depraved concupiscence resides in their flesh, and is at variance with rectitude*

ok - some great stuff here - the devotion summarizes it very well

3.3.11-3.3.15

3.11

the devotion writer summarizes this paragraph: *in believers, says calvin, 'sin ceases only to reign; it does not also cease to dwell in them'*

-as believers we are said by paul to be "holy and blameless" - but only in reference to *the guilt rather than to the matter of sin*

-in regeneration God destroys the dominion of sin by giving us the Spirit who enables us to be victorious in Christian living - but tho' sin cease to reign, it continues to dwell in them

- tho' the old man is crucified, . . . *the remains of sin survive, not to have dominion, but to humble them under a consciousness of their infirmity*

-in Christ, believers are not charged with the guilt which would *otherwise make them sinners before God*

-calvin, along with augustine, takes the position that the 1st part of romans 7 is paul's testimony as a believer and not prior to conversion - I do too

-since we're called to love God with all our heart, soul and strength, any desire of the heart that leads away from that love of God is sin -

3.12

when calvin says all the desires of man are sinful, he doesn't mean those desires *which God so implanted in the mind of man at his first creation*

-he means to say that all of man's faculties are impaired and corrupted by the fall in such a way that *a perpetual disorder and excess is apparent in all our actions. . . we hold that all human desires are evil, and we charge them*

with sin not in as far as they are natural, but because they are inordinate [excessive] and inordinate because nothing pure and upright can proceed from a corrupt and polluted nature
invidious - unjust, unfairly discriminating

3.13

quoting augustine, calvin says, that the law of sin that remains in believers *is both remitted [forgiven] in spiritual regeneration and remains in the mortal flesh; remitted because the guilt is forgiven in the sacrament by which believers are regenerated, and yet remains, inasmuch as it produces desires against which believers fight. .*
.therefore the law of sin is forgiven in baptism not ended. . .the law of sin, the guilt of which, though remaining is forgiven in baptism

-it's at this point we will depart from both calvin and augustine - I take it to mean that they are saying, at least augustine, writing in the 5th century, that baptism produces forgiveness - they both hold to regeneration as necessary for salvation, so baptism doesn't produce regeneration - therefore, they must mean that when they baptize their children, the guilt of original sin is forgiven or at least "held off" until that child becomes a believer??? - it could possibly be that augustine is meaning spiritual baptism and not physical baptism and we would agree with all of this - but I don't think so - augustine's view is very "roman catholic" if my conclusions are anywhere near correct -

-modern day paedo-baptists, at least the ones I've talked with, will not consider baptism to result in forgiveness - however, it comes so close that it's a very easy position to slide into - baptism brings the infant into the visible church [tho' not really a member], really brings that child into the covenant family - and tho' it doesn't guarantee salvation, it comes very, very close - in fact, the westminster confession says this of baptism: *the efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time* - i.e., doesn't guarantee - doesn't save - but almost

that's just a side note to calvin's discussion here - as baptists however, a very important one

-continuing with calvin's discussion which is most helpful as to the spiritual battle of Christian living - *sin is dead in the guilt by which it bound us; and until it is cured by the perfection of burial, though dead it rebels.*

-as long as we live sin will be in the members of our body - . . .*but at least let its dominion be destroyed; do not what it orders*

3.14

-some hold that regeneration restores believers to a state of innocence and in this state they don't need to worry too much about *curbing the lust of the flesh* - they have *the Spirit for their guide, and under his agency never err* - olden day charismatic theology

-calvin calls this insanity - followed out logically, *there will be no difference, then, between whoredom and chastity, sincerity and craft, truth and falsehood, justice and robbery.*

-the Holy Spirit produces his own godly fruit, not the lusts of the flesh - he leads those he indwells into wisdom and understanding, enabling each to discern between justice and injustice -

2 things every believer knows [or at least ought to know] about the Spirit

1. . . *he is given to us for sanctification, that he may purge us from all iniquity and defilement, and bring us to the obedience of divine righteousness*

2. . . *though purged by his sanctification, we are still beset by many vices and much weakness, so long as we are enclosed in the prison of the body*

- . . *placed at a great distance from perfection, we must always be endeavoring to make some progress, and daily struggling with the evil by which we are entangled* - fighting off laziness and apathy - being vigilant to not fall into snares of the devil

- . . *unless indeed, we presume to think that we have made greater progress than the apostle, who was buffeted by a messenger of satan, in order that his strength might be perfected in weakness. . .*

3.15

-calvin now enumerates 7 causes or effects or affections of repentance from 2 cor 7:11

using the terms in our ESV and calvin's descriptions of each:

1. earnestness - dissatisfied with himself for sinning against God which then creates care and attention to avoid sin in the future
2. eagerness to clear ourselves - not defending ourselves or excusing our sin but apologizing - trusting *more to intercession than to the goodness of the cause*
3. indignation - *inwardly murmur[ing] against himself & offended with himself or recognizing his perverseness and ingratitude to God*
4. fear = trepidation possessing our minds as we consider what we deserve, sensing God's anger against us, which leads the repenter to humility and makes him more cautious for the future
5. longing - to be diligent in holiness and eager [alacrity] to serve God and others
6. zeal - inflamed by thinking, *what have I done? into what abyss had I fallen had not the mercy of God prevented?*
7. punishment - . . . *the stricter we are with ourselves, and the severer the censure we pass upon our sins, the more ground we have to hope for the divine favor & mercy*

-with all of that, . . . *moderation must be used, so that we may not be overwhelmed with sadness*

-knowing that one of satan's most effective devices is to send believers into despair over their sin - which often causes them to avoid God who is calling them to return to him thru repentance

calvin ends w/a great sense of summary from bernard of clairvaux: *grief for sins is necessary, but must not be perpetual. my advice is to turn back at times from sorrow and the anxious remembrance of your ways, and escape to the plain, to a calm review of the divine mercies. let us mingle honey with wormwood, that the salubrious bitter may give health when we drink it tempered with a mixture of sweetness: while you think humbly of yourselves, think also of the goodness of the Lord*

these paragraphs deal in particular with the doctrine of penance that was so prevalent in the roman catholic church during calvin's day - but it also has application for us today in our (at times overemphasis) on the evidences of repentance that can minimize the inward change of heart true repentance requires - i.e., we are very big on evidences of repentance/God is very big on inward heart repentance

3.3.16- 3.3.18

3.16

the prophets typically scorn *the frivolous observances of those who labor to appease God with ceremonies*

-outward evidences are not the main aspect of repentance because God looks at the heart

rend your heart, and not your garments - joel 2:13 - is an illustration of the sense of repentance found throughout the prophets

-however, evidence of repentance are not invalid - & will be found where there is true repentance

-outward evidences accompany true repentance, but outward actions do not guarantee that repentance has been worked in the heart

-*cleanse your hands* (outward sign) *ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double minded* - James 4:8 - reveal both aspects hand-in-hand

to which calvin comments *here indeed the accessory is set down first; but the source and principle is afterwards pointed out. . . that hidden defilements must be wiped away, and an altar erected to God in the very heart. there are, moreover certain external exercises which we employ IN PRIVATE (my emphasis) as remedies to humble us and tame our flesh, and in public, to testify our repentance*

-calvin seems to think, rightly in my opinion, that the key to true repentance is not change to remedy the consequences, but change because of the offense against God thus the person who has sinned . . . *cannot rest until, in his humility, he has given glory to God*

calvin now begins to address the error of ancient writers - early church fathers, not biblical authors - who speak of the fruits of repentance and mean the outward signs - in other words, the sacrament of penance in which the catholic church taught that the doing of the deeds "merited" or gained God's approval -in this they overemphasize the outward at the expense of the inward aspect of salvation & the priests tended to be too harsh in prescribed the acts to be performed in penance that they deemed would be sufficient for God to forgive the sins

3.17

calvin continues impressing upon his readers that the outward signs required by some, tho' often appropriate, are not the . . . *principal part of repentance* and that . . . *we must dispel their delusion*

tho' joel commands the outward signs of sackcloth, fasting and tears, he addresses the heart of true repentance when he calls for israel to *rend your heart, and not your garments* - the outward actions are not . . . *invariable or necessary effects, but as special circumstances. having foretold that most grievous disasters were impending over the jews, he exhorts them to turn away the divine anger not only by repenting but by giving public signs of sorrow* - even still there are times when *weeping and fasting are very appropriate in our case whenever the Lord threatens us with any defeat or calamity*

-again, calvin reiterates, fasting is not a guarantee of repentance, but it is *specially destined for seasons of calamity*

-Jesus connects fasting with mourning, tells the disciples to save their fasting for when he will leave them

- . . . *the life of Christians ought ever to be tempered with frugality and sobriety, so that the whole course of it should present some appearance of fasting*

3.18

...when the name repentance is applied to external profession, it is used improperly, and not in the genuine meaning. . . for that is not so much a turning unto God as the confession of a fault accompanied with deprecation expression of disapproval] *of the sentence and punishment*

-the outward signs can be . . . *just to testify self-dissatisfaction when God is angry with us for having grievously offended him* or . . . *a kind of public confession by which, condemning ourselves. . . we prevent the judgment of God*

-

-i.e., the outward signs can be no more than seeking to avoid the consequences of our sin

-it's not always necessary to public confess our repentance - private confession to God however, must always accompany true repentance

-calvin encourages each Christian to not only confess current sins, but to examine past lives and confess any sin . . . *long ago buried*, as david did in psalm 51 in which he goes all the way back to the womb, . . . *acknowledging that even then he was corrupted and defiled*

-calvin is so insightful in his indictment that contrary to david, . . . *many hide themselves in the crowd, and catch at impunity by involving others along with them* - instead of confessing their own personal sins, they sort of generalize sin, by the excuse "we're all sinners" -

-david on the other hand is simply saying to God that he has added . . . *iniquity to iniquity* ever since he was a young child - in psalm 25:7 he surveys his past life and pleads for forgiveness of the sins of his youth - this can become a morbid interest in the past, an excuse of our current life based on the sins of our past, but it need not degenerate into that - it can be a continuing humbling of ourselves in confessing to God our true condition -

-supine - lying down or in a restful mode of living

-the last section of this paragraph deals with those who are involved in blatant throwing off of *the authority to God* - by falling into shameful sin, idolatry, and other gross sins of *uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness*

-the repentance he has been speaking of is the life of repentance that true Christians must live - admitting they are not yet glorified, and confessing their ongoing sins while making progress of becoming more like Christ day by day - those who are involved in the sinful lifestyle are called to repentance that leads to initial salvation -

-Christian repentance is different from the repentance of the unbeliever coming to Christ by turning the his sinful lifestyle - as john says, Christians do not, nor can they live in a lifestyle of ongoing sin

today's reading is short & sweet - calvin goes back almost to the beginning of chapter 3 and discusses some more regarding the interplay between faith and forgiveness of sins - I really like sean lucas' statement in the devotion - "hating our sins and hastening to God, dying and rising daily, is the contour of the Christian life" - I like the word contour used to describe the Christian life of repentance and trusting (hastening to) God

3.3.19-3.3.20

3.19

calvin opens this paragraph saying that . . . *nothing can be more certain, than that a complete summary of the gospel is included under these two head[ing]s. . . repentance and the remission of sins. . .*

-the Lord both justifies his people by grace thru faith while at the same time sanctifies them by his Spirit - bringing them to true holiness

-when John the Baptist preached for all to repent, he was calling them to acknowledge they were sinners,

condemned before God so that they might seek to kill the desires of the flesh and seek the new birth in the Spirit

-calvin then states that . . . *by the kingdom of God which he [john] declared to be at hand, he meant forgiveness of sins, salvation, life, and every other blessing which we obtain in Christi*

-as mark & luke both record that john's baptism was . . . *the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*

=when Jesus began his ministry preaching the same thing - mark 1:10 - *the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel, -*

1. he declares the gift of God's mercy was opened in him

2. he calls for repentance

3. he encourages trusting in the promises of God

after his resurrection he then summarized that he came . . . *to suffer, and to rise from the dead the 3rd day, and that repentance & remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations*

-the apostles after preached that God exalted Christ, his Son, to his right hand . . . *to give repentance to israel and forgiveness of sins*

-*repentance is preached in the name of Christ, when men learn, through the doctrines of the gospel, that all their thoughts, affections, and pursuits are corrupt & vicious; and that, therefore, if they would enter the kingdom of God they must be born again. forgiveness of sins is preached when men are taught that Christ is 'made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,' . . . that on his account they are freely deemed righteous and innocent in the sight of God*

-both these graces - repentance and forgiveness of sins - are obtained by faith

3.20

. . . *as hatred of sin, which is the beginning of repentance, first gives us access to the knowledge of Christ, who manifests himself to none but miserable and afflicted sinners, groaning, laboring, burdened, hungry, and thirsty, pining away with grief and wretchedness, so if we would stand in Christ, we must*

1. *aim at repentance*

2. *cultivate it during our whole lives*

3. *continue it to the last*

Christ came to call sinners, but to call them to repentance

He was sent to bless the unworthy, but by 'turning away every one' from his iniquities

-when God offers forgiveness, he usually stipulates for repentance

-which implies that *his mercy should induce men to repent*

-but we all know that too often sinners see God's mercy as condoning what they are doing, or at least he's not too angry - rather than seeing his mercy as granting a time for recognition of their offense and a time to repent

all that being said, calvin reiterate that repentance in no way merits forgiveness - . . . *it rather indicates the end [goal, purpose] at which they must aim if they would obtain favor, God having resolved to take pity on men for the express purpose of leading them to repent*

-we'll struggle with the desires of the flesh as long as we're *the prison of the body* - not meaning that our bodies are evil, but just that they are the "beachheads from which satan establishes his attacks"

. . .the life of a Christian man is constant study and exercise in mortifying the flesh, until it is certainly slain, and the Spirit of God obtains dominion in us

-the one who is most dissatisfied with himself seems to have made the most progress in his Christian life
-however, he doesn't . . .*remain in the miry clay without going forward; but rather hastens and sighs after God, that. . .he may constantly meditate on repentance*

more on repentance plus an extensive dealing with calvin's view of the unpardonable sin - it's the view that makes best sense to me also

3.3.21 - 3.3.25

3.21

calvin again reiterates that repentance is a special gift from God - citing a number of scriptural proofs

-God indeed declares, that he would have all men to repent, and addresses exhortations in common to all; their efficacy, however, depends on the Spirit of regeneration. - therefore believers are God's workmanship

thus calvin surmises that . . .*wherever the fear of God is in vigor, the Spirit has been carrying on his saving work*

-it's hard to get a clear picture of how calvin views heb 6:6 - a much discussed passage - it seems that he says when someone falls away (an apostate) it is obvious they have not been brought to repentance by God - while. . .*.God, by renewing those whom he wills not to perish, gives them a sign of paternal favor, and in a manner attracts them to himself, by the beams of a calm and reconciled countenance -*

-calvin's . . .*on the other hand.* . . lays out his much hated doctrine of reprobation - by which he means those who are the ones God did not choose (elect) before the foundation of the world - God doesn't intervene in their lives to make them sin, that's their nature - but he chooses not to intervene in their lives thru the Spirit of regeneration to give them the gifts of faith, mercy & repentance - and bring them to himself - in fact, . . .*by hardening the reprobate, whose impiety is not to be forgiven, he thunders against them* - this seems harsh to us - but we know God not to be a harsh God - however, he is just and if anyone refuses to repent and believe he must punish their unbelief

-it seems in the next sentence that calvin makes a distinction between voluntary apostates and apostates of another sort (or reprobates)

-the distinction apparently being that reprobates or apostates never give any indication towards Christ or the gospel while voluntary apostates fall away . . .*from the faith of the gospel.* . .they once confessed

-in this way they *mock God, reject his favor, profane and trample underfoot the blood of Christ. . .crucify him afresh* - still God leaves hope for pardon to voluntary sins

-then he determines that the person in heb 6:4-6 is not a believer - I think that he is by the way - and he brings in 10:25-26 to buttress his argument

calvin then introduces the unpardonable sin passage - all sin & blasphemy can be forgiven, except blasphemy against the Holy Ghost

-in the coming paragraphs he will explain what he views as that unforgivable sin

- . . .*to know sin is pardon denied save to one. . .the man guilty of it is possessed by the devil*

3.22

calvin's definition of the unpardonable sin: . . .*he sins against the Holy Spirit, who, while so constrained by the power of divine truth that he cannot plead ignorance, yet deliberately resists, and that merely for the sake of resisting.*

since Jesus says that blasphemy against him can be forgiven but blasphemy against the Spirit cannot, calvin asks the question, *how can anyone insult the Son, without at the same time attacking the Spirit?*

-he then answers his own question - *those who in ignorance assail the unknown truth of god, and yet are so disposed that they would be unwilling to extinguish the truth of God when manifested to them. . .sin against the Father and the Son.* - many in every age hate the gospel

-but those who are convinced in their conscience that what they are rejecting is the Word of God are *said to blaspheme against the Spirit, inasmuch as they struggle against the illumination which is the work of the Spirit.*

such were some of the jews, who, when they could not resist the Spirit speaking by stephen, yet were bent on resisting.

-there can be no forgiveness when unbelief is accompanied by knowledge

3.23

-the author of hebrews, when speaking of apostasy and reprobation, is not speaking of one or two escapades into sin but a . . . *universal revolt by which the reprobate renounce[s] salvation*

-those who . . . *knowing and willingly* reject Christ have no means of returning to him - not those who . . . *merely* . . . *transgress the word of the Lord, but by those who avowedly reject his whole doctrine* . . . *universal aversion to God, and (so to speak) the apostasy of the whole man*

-these have abandoned the only means whereby they may be forgiven, that is, Christ's blood as a . . . *sacrifice for [their] sins*

3.24

calvin is not saying that these apostates will be refused forgiveness if they turn to the Lord - he is saying that they can't . . . *turn to repentance, inasmuch as for their ingratitude they are struck by the just judgment of God with eternal blindness*

-calvin makes the great point concerning the heb 11 passage that says esau sought repentance with tears but couldn't find it -

-he says that esau's was not true repentance but rather an anxiety over what he lost by disregarding what he could have had - he wasn't returning to the Lord as much as desiring to alleviate the consequences of his sin - that is not true repentance

-only by God's help can he repent and he doesn't call out for the Lord to help him - this is simply lamenting the loss of his birthright - esau was experiencing the despair of the wicked

-the author of hebrews is not saying that God is contradicting what God said in ezekiel 18:21-22 that if the wicked will turn from all his sin he would live

preventing = preceding

. . . *the mind of man cannot be changed for the better unless by [God's] [preceding] grace*

-the promise of forgiveness to all those who call on his name will never fail - . . . *but the names of conversion and prayer are improperly given to that blind torment by which the reprobate is distracted when they see that they must seek God if they would find a remedy for their calamities, and yet shun to approach him.*

3.25

there is a difference between forgiveness and delayed judgment - using the pardon obtained by ahab, averting punishment, as an illustration, calvin reminds that his was not a true repentance, as he continued his former life -

he gave the outward signs but God looks at the heart & knew there was not inward contrition - . . . *it was a small matter to rend his garments while his heart continued obstinate* . . . *yet we see the God was inclined to mercy*

-hypocrites are occasionally spared for a time, yet the wrath of God still abides on them - . . . *spared not so much on their own account as for a public example.*

-ahab only treasured up more wrath by being spared punishment - he just didn't suffer it while on earth

-same w/esau, who received a temporal blessing yet not eternal forgiveness

alacrity = willingness, eagerness

-these 2 examples, along with many others in the Word, are given . . . *that we may learn to apply our minds, and exert ourselves with greater alacrity, in the way of sincere repentance, as there cannot be the least doubt that God will be ready to pardon those who turn to him truly and with the heart* . . .

-God's delayed judgment is not only an example for us, but also to bring the sinner to repentance or leave him without excuse

-his examples of his . . . *inclination to pardon*

1. stimulates the righteous to . . . *amend their lives*

2. while at the same time brings a more severe condemnation on those who refuse to repent

calvin now shows the errors of the "medieval theologians" concerning repentance - he divides repentance into three parts - contrition, confession, and satisfaction

today's readings are concerned with the roman church's teaching on contrition - how it wrongly taught that one could muster up enough contrition to "match the magnitude of the crime" and thus be forgiven - how could ever gain assurance that he was sad enough to receive forgiveness?

3.4.1 - 3.4.3

4.1

scholastic sophists = medieval theologians

-they clearly show they *never understood what repentance means*, defining repentance as *deplor[ing] past sins and not commit[ting] what is to be deplored*

-they were. . . *keenly bent on external exercises. . . .of internal renovation of mind, bringing with it true amendment of life, there is a strange silence.* - in the teachings of these theologians

-they shrewdly divide repentance into contrition of the heart, confession of the mouth and satisfaction of works - calvin then lists a number of their questions . . . *which. . .move and agitate and. . .miserably entangle themselves.* .

-and concludes that . . . *with their gross error, they greatly torment themselves with a saying of jerome, that repentance is a 2nd plank after shipwreck*

-also saying that daily repentance only covers venial sins

4.2

their error concerns one of the most important issues of life, the forgiveness of sins, teaching that contrition of heart, confession of the mouth, and satisfaction of work are required to obtain pardon

unless our knowledge here is clear and certain, our conscience can have no rest at all, no peace with God, no confidence or security, but is continually trembling, fluctuating, boiling and distracted; dreads, hates and shuns the presence of God

-there can be nothing more *wretched and deplorable* than their way because they say it must be *full and complete*

- when we must be sorrowful enough to. . . *correspond to the magnitude of the offense* -

-this can only honestly lead to. . . *miserable consciences.* . . because there is *no measure of what is due, so as to enable them to determine that they have made full payment* - miserable indeed

-calvin asks that when we understand the depth of our sin against God we must ask . . . *when will any man venture to promise himself that he has done his utmost in bewailing sin?*

4.3

calumny - slander, libel

-calvin is impugned and persecuted for what he says and writes concerning this & thus challenges the catholic theologians to . . . *point out a single individual who, by this doctrines of contrition, has not either been driven to despair or [the modern version of the institutes helps clarify the next phrase] has not met God's judgment with pretended rather than true sorrow*

-true repentance and the resulting forgiveness will never come by looking at how contrite we are, or how sad we become, but by fixing . . .both eyes on the mercy of God alone

-to contrast his view with the catholics' view he concludes this section with: . . . *there is a great difference between teaching that forgiveness of sins is merited by a full and complete contrition, (which the sinner never can give,) and instructing him to hunger and thirst after the mercy of God, that recognizing his wretchedness, his turmoil, weariness, and captivity, you may show him where he should seek refreshment, rest, and liberty: in fine, teach him in his humility to give glory to God*

now calvin tackles the erroneous view of the medieval theologians concerning confession - mostly this section breaks down the catholic dogma of auricular confession - each person needing to confess his sins to the priest - a practice only started in early 13th century

3.4.4 - 3.4.9

4.4

effrontery - impudence, insolence

calvin first points out their improper interpretation of certain passages they use as proof texts for confession of sin to the priests - the lepers in matthew 8 & luke 5

-they resort to allegory rather than good hermeneutics or biblical interpretation

sacerdotal - relating to the priesthood

-calvin's answer is that all sacerdotal functions have been transferred to Christ - therefore believers go to him as their great high priest to confess their sins and receive forgiveness

4.5

next he refutes their understanding of Jesus' command after raising lazarus, for others to *loose him and let him go*

- they interpret that (allegorically) to mean Jesus commissioned his disciples to free him from that which has him bound, i.e., they spiritualize the story of lazarus to such an extent that Jesus' disciples alone (the apostles & those who follow, the priests of the true [catholic] church) are able to release bound sinners

4.6

other examples of proof that we are to confess our sins to the priests according to catholic teaching are those coming to john's baptism confessed their sins, and james tells us to confess our sins one to another

-calvin clearly & surely logically exposes their errors of interpretation here - in context neither passage can stand up as defense for their position

-james actually says that

1. . . .*we are to deposit our infirmities in the breasts of each other, with the view of receiving mutual counsel, sympathy, and comfort* - not to confess our sins to the priest to be forgiven of them

2. . . .*mutually conscious of the infirmities of our brethren we are to pray to the Lord for them*

4.7

here calvin delves into the history of confession to the priests - he puts its official origin in the days of pope Innocent III - who was pope from 1160-1216

-he says . . .*surely if there had been a more ancient law they would have fastened on it, instead of being satisfied with the decree of the council of lateral* [in 1215]

-they had fabricated decrees at other times concerning other matters but not on this matter -

-Christ wasn't the one to command this law - it wasn't decreed until 1200 yrs after he ascended to heaven

-according to sozomen - born around 400 it was . . .*carefully observed in the western churches* [the catholic churches whose capital was rome] and sporadically in the eastern churches whose capital was constantinople - in fact, may have been abolished altogether by nectarius the bishop - who died around 397

. . .*if auricular confession was a divine law, how could nectarius have dared to abolish or remodel it - . . . a holy man of God, approved by the suffrage of all antiquity.* .

4.8

with a number of quotes from chrysostom, archbishop of constantinople in late 4th century, calvin shows that he rejected it completely - read the quotations

-one example from chrysostom - *show your wounds to the Lord, the best of physicians, and seek medicine from him*

-calvin concludes: *shall we say that chrysostom, in writing these and similar passages, carried his presumption so far as to free the consciences of men from those chains with which they are bound by the divine law? by no means; but knowing that it was not at all prescribed by the word of God, he dares not exact it as necessary*

4.9

calvin's stance - *there [in scripture] one method of confessing is prescribed; since it is the Lord who forgives, forgets and wipes away sins, to him let us confess them, that we may obtain pardon. he is the physician, therefore let us show our wounds to him. he is hurt and offended, let us ask peace of him. he is the discerner of the heart, and knows all one's thoughts; let us hasten to pour out our hearts before him. he it is, in fine, who invites sinners; let us delay not to draw near to him. . . we are to fall down before him with a grieved and humbled heart, and sincerely accusing & condemning ourselves, seek forgiveness of his goodness and mercy.*

after addressing the errors of the roman catholic confession system, calvin now addresses the legitimacy of confession of sins, both private and public

be sure to read the devotion for this section - a good concise summary

3.4.10 - 3.4.15

4.10

I think when calvin refers to "this confession from the heart" in the first line, he means what he closed 4.9 with; 1 John 1:9

-Christians should be willing to confess their sins . . . *whenever there is occasion among men to publish the mercy of God*

-over and over we see calvin's passion to advance the glory of God - his God-centered approach to all of life
ignominy - public shame or disgrace

when to confess publicly

1. after confession has been made to God

2. when God will be glorified and we will be brought low - humiliation, but not in the worst sense - better rendered today, humbling

4.11

public confession in the church should be both ordinary and used . . . *on extraordinary occasions, when the people in common happen to have fallen into any fault* - such as after the exile under the guidance of ezra and nehemiah, the people confessed that . . . *their long captivity, the destruction of the temple, and suppression of their religion* . . . was the result of their idolatry and departure from God -

-calvin exemplifies "extraordinary occasions" as pestilence, war, famine or any other calamity

calvin's view of the worship service - . . . *in every sacred assembly we stand in the view of God and angels* -

therefore we should always include, if not begin by acknowledging our unworthiness - always in prayer - often in confession, i.e., worship through confession

4.12

2 other forms of private confession

1. james 5:16 - confess your sins one to another - . . . *disclosing our infirmities to each other, we are to obtain the aid of mutual counsel and consolation*

2. for the sake of our neighbor - if we have offended him - discussed in 4:13

- here, concerning point #1 above, calvin says, we have . . . *the free choice of confessing to any member of the church* . . . *yet as for the most part pastors are to be supposed better qualified than others* . . . *persons by whose lips we are to be taught to subdue and correct our sins* . . .

-*let every believer* . . . *if in private he is so agonized and afflicted by a sense of his sins that he cannot obtain relief without the aid of others, it is his duty not to neglect the remedy which God provides for him, viz., . . . a private confession to his own pastor, and for consolation privately implore the assistance of him whose business it is, both in public and private, to solace the people of God with gospel doctrine*

-this form of confession is not dictated to all but for those who feel they need it & when they do avail themselves of this means of grace, all confession should be at the discretion of the confessor

4.13

of point #2 - confessing for our neighbor's sake when we have sinned against them, calvin cites matt 5:23-24 to say make this right as best as you can before bringing your gift to the altar -

. . .love, which has been interrupted by our fault, must be restored by acknowledging and asking pardon for the fault

-calvin then quotes early church father, Cyprian, concerning the restoration to fellowship of a sinning member - *they practice repentance. . .for a proper time, then they come to confession, and by the laying on of the hands of the bishop and clergy (this would be the elders in our context), are admitted to communion - and fellowship in the church*

4.14

the following sections are so foreign to our view of private, personal Christianity with little nor no corporate sense -the "power of the keys" from matt 16:19, 18:18 - . . .*has place in the three following modes of confession. . .*

1. when the whole church formally acknowledges its sin and prays for pardon

-there is benefit when a congregation stands before God, corporately, confesses its guilt and finds refuge in God's mercy, for one in spiritual authority to pronounce forgiveness - not forgiving the congregation but pronouncing God has forgiven because the congregation has obeyed God's word and God's promise is forgiveness

2. when an individual who has publically sinned, . . .*testifies his repentance* thru public confession - the confession should be as public as the sin

-when someone has become excommunicated and then restored to fellowship within the body, . . .*how great is the benefit of understanding that he is pardoned by those to whom Christ said, 'whose soever sins ye remit [forgive], they are remitted unto them -*

3. when one is not able to gain the assurance of forgiveness and seeks the help of his elders or pastor, confessing his sin

-in this instance private assurance of forgiveness promised from God upon repentance is also beneficial

using "the keys" must always be accompanied by the preaching of the gospel - . . .*whatever privilege of binding and loosing Christ has bestowed on his church is annexed to the word. this is especially true with regard to the ministry of the keys, the whole power of which consists in this, that the grace of the gospel is publicly and privately sealed on the minds of believers by means of those whom the Lord has appointed; and the only method in which this can be done is by preaching*

4.15

the error of roman catholicism exposed in light of the biblical teaching on confession

1. the requirement that every person *confess all their sins to their own priest* at least once a year

2. *that the sin is not discharged unless the resolution to confess has been firmly conceived*

3. no one enters paradise unless this resolution is acted upon

4. . . .*that the priest . . .has the power of the keys, by which he can loose and bind the sinner*

yet, they are at odds with one another as to what the is meant by the "power of the keys"

1. some say there's only one key - the power of binding and loosing sin

2. others have determined 2 keys - discernment and power - all priests have the power of the keys but only those with discernment can exercise it

3. others have . . .*forged other keys* - a third might be . . .*knowledge as a counselor*

at the same time, they don't really believe the priests can actually forgive sin - knowing, isa 43:11, 25 clearly teach that only God can forgive sin

-they say it belongs to the priests to declare whose sins are bound or loosed, forgiven or retained

-that people are often *undeservedly bound and loosed, and therefore not bound or loosed in heaven*

-calvin closes with the 2 classes of priests

1. the keys were conferred on all priests by Christ at their ordination

2. but . . .*the free use of them is with those only who discharge ecclesiastical functions -*

i.e., excommunicated or suspended priests still have the keys, but they are *tied and rusty*

-I wonder if this doesn't work to absolve the church of any error when a priest is ordained who falls into sin -

tho' the error calvin specifically addresses - that is, yearly confession of sins to the priest - the principles on which he rejects it hold for us in our daily and regular confession of sin to our heavenly Father -

-in that respect this is very helpful and shows how debilitating the emphasis of external religion is - something which I find a millstone around the neck of one trying to live a faithful Christian life - martin luther is a perfect example - as I read today's section, I thought of his testimony about trying to live the life of a monk in the monastery before his conversion - I've included a reference from a blog that quotes him

Luther] describes [his struggle with sin] in terms of his life in the monastery. "When I was a monk," he wrote, "I tried with all diligence to live according to the rules, and I used to be contrite, to confess, to assiduously perform my allotted penance. And yet my conscience would never give me certainty. I always doubted and said, "You didn't do that correctly, Martin. You were not contrite enough. You left that out of your confession." The more I tried to remedy a weak and afflicted conscience with the traditions of men, the more I found it each day more uncertain, weaker, and troubled."

"Luther," Rosell observes, "was caught in what we might call a circle of despair. To be absolved from sin, one needed to love God above all else. But to love God above all else Martin felt that he needed to know that his sins were forgiven. Otherwise he would only fear a wrathful God. He wouldn't love a merciful Father.

-this is the result of legalistic, formulated religion - trying to live by rules and external devices - . . . *having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power*

3.4.16 - 3.4.20

4.16

3 errors of "auricular confession" - the once-a-year confession to a priest to receive forgiveness in the roman catholic church

1. making it a requirement that only those sins enumerated are forgiven - requiring the people to remember & confess each sin

2. the confession must be a firmly conceived one -

3. no one admitted to paradise if confession to the priest is neglected

-calvin begins refuting #1 by citing david, who, confessing that he didn't even know all of his sins, prayed asking God to *cleanse [him] from secret faults* -

he knew how deep was the abyss of our sins, how numerous the forms of wickedness, how many heads the hydra carried, how long a tail it drew

-david didn't draw up a list of his sins but declared he was overwhelmed & asked God to deliver him from . . . *the abyss into which I am plunged*

4.17

great illustration of the priests' rules causing despair in the life of followers of Christ - like floating on a raft in the middle of the ocean with no harbor in sight - no refuge to which they can go -

-thinking of all their sins, dividing them into categories, counting their numbers - *but after they had advanced farther, when they looked around, naught was seen but sea and sky; no road, no harbor. . . there seemed no hope of escape. . . till at length the only issue was found in despair*

fomentations - stirring up undesirable sentiments

- . . . *these cruel murderers, to ease the wounds which THEY made, applied certain fomentations. everyone was to do his best. but new cares. . . new torments excruciated their souls. I have not spent enough time; I have not exerted myself sufficiently; many things I have omitted through negligence; forgetfulness proceeding from lack of care is not excusable.*

-these are the desperate thoughts of a legalist who has a sensitive conscience toward sin

calvin continues, *new drugs were supplied to alleviate their pains. repent of your negligence; and provided it is not done supinely [lethargically, apathetically] it will be pardoned. all these things, however, could not heal the wound,*

being not so much alleviations of the sore as poison besmeared with honey, that its bitterness might not at once offend the taste, but penetrate to the vitals before it could be detected. the dreadful voice, therefore, was always heard pealing in their ears, 'confess all your sins,' and the dread thus occasioned could not be pacified. . .let the reader consider whether it be possible to take an account of the actions of a whole year, or even to collect the sins committed in a single day. . .

-how different a view of our sins than what we see in our day or think concerning ourselves

animadvert - criticize, censure, blame

calvin recommends instead to hide 1 john 3:20 in our hearts, and . . .*therefore, tremble at the thought of that judge whose knowledge far surpasses our comprehension* and confess your sins to him, knowing that he forgives confessors - those who say the same thing about their sin that God does

4.18

calvin says that it's impossible to observe this man-made "law" the priests have erected - so . . .*it only results to destroy, condemn, confound, to plunge into ruin and despair*

-it also creates hypocrites, ignorant of God and themselves - . . .*wholly occupied with the enumeration of their sins, they lose sight of that lurking hydra, their secret iniquities and internal defilements, the knowledge of which would have made them sensible of their misery*

-he recommends simply to acknowledge and confess our sins . . .*to be an abyss so great as to exceed our comprehension* - and let the publican be our example as we cry out to God to be merciful to us, sinners -

-he then lines out how to confess our sins in a way as to be acceptable to God

1. as much as in us, pour out our whole heart to God

2. confess ourselves as sinners - . . .*to feel without whole soul how great and various the pollutions of our sins are*

a. *not only that we are impure, but what the nature of our impurity is, its magnitude and its extent*

b. *not only that we are debtors, but what the debts are which burden us, and how they were incurred*

c. *not only that we are wounded, but how numerous and deadly are the wound*

3. then . . .*seriously and sincerely reflect that a greater number of sins still remains, and that their recesses are too deep for him thoroughly to penetrate*

-most would say how discouraging - how depressing - if so, let them say, what a great God we have who can forgive even me, in other words, *God be merciful to me, the sinner*

as for confessing sins to the priest, calvin retorts, *in all the passage in which we read that sinners obtained forgiveness from God, we read not that they whispered into the ear of some priest*

-then he says that the priests, by claiming to have the "power of the keys" and therefore, they have the right to establish this method of forgiveness, are abusing the privilege of their office - . . .*the whole system of loosing [forgiving] depends on faith and repentance, two things which no man can know of another, so as to pronounce sentence* -

-God has given the "power of the keys" to church leaders, but that . . .*the certainty of binding and loosing is not subject to the will of an earthly judge, because the minister of the word, when he duly executes his office, can only acquit conditionally* -

-so in Matthew 18 when Jesus speaks of excommunication of those professing Christ but refuse to repent of their sins, they are to be treated as unbelievers, not declared to be unbelievers - only God can determine that - and the same with repenting sinners - we must treat them as if they have repented, God alone knowing if the truly have

-the roman priests, assumed the authority to forgive - in calvin's mind - an authority they have no right to

4.19

the once-a-year tended rather than to promote holiness, to promote just the opposite

1. the Catholics suggest that shame of having to admit their sin to the priest makes the people more cautious for the future -

-calvin says quite sarcastically "admirable proficiency" - ceasing to sin *because we are ashamed to make one man acquainted with it, and blush not at having God as the witness of our evil conscience*

2. calvin, in answer to the catholic suggestion, says, . . . *there is nothing which gives men greater confidence and license in sinning than the idea, that after making confession to priests, they can wipe their lip, and say, I have done it. and not only do they during the whole year become bolder in sin, but, secure against confession for the remainder of it, they never sigh after God, never examine themselves, but continue heaping sins upon sins, until, as they suppose, they get rid of them all at once. . . think[ing] they are disburdened of their load, and imagine they have deprived God of the right of judging, by giving it to the priest; have made God forgetful, by making the priest conscious*

-my comment is that calvin's scenario is probably the worst of the worst result - but surely he was speaking of his own 16th century experience

4.20

more about "the power of the keys"

-the power of the keys is only legitimately used if . . . *the Holy Spirit precedes, teaching and dictating what is to be done. they [the priests] pretend, indeed, that they have the Holy Spirit, but by their works deny him. . . no priest lings [surely a derogatory term, if calvin actually used a different word than the one normally translated "priests"] have the power of the keys, because they everywhere and indiscriminately loose what the Lord was pleased should be bound, and bind what he has ordered to be loosed*

-by and large, because theirs was a religion of faith + works, calvin determined that the catholic priests were not true believers

more on the practice of confession by roman Catholics

3.4.21-3.4.26

4.21

the catholic leadership is obstinate in holding that even disqualified priests still have the power of the keys - In my opinion, to protect the fact that the infallible church ordained ungodly or "bad" priests -

calvin continues to argue that forgiveness is based upon the person repenting and confessing, not upon the one who hears the confession and then absolves the confessor -

-he says, *we admit, that none can be bound or loosed but those who are worthy of being bound or loosed. but the preachers of the gospel and the church have the word by which they can measure this worthiness*

-by the word

1. gospel preachers can promise forgiveness to all who are in Christ by faith and condemnation on all who refuse Christ

2. the church can assuredly declare that sinners will not inherit the kingdom of God - 1 Cor 6:9-10

3. the church looses and consoles all those who repent

it is an imaginary power the priests have who can only forgive repentant sinners, when they can't really know if they are truly repentant

-if some of the priests don't use the powers correctly, and forgiveness is dependent upon the priests to rightly discern repentance, how can anyone be sure the priest to whom they confess rightly uses the power so that they are legitimately forgiven?

libidiously - lasciviously, or lustfully

licentiously - lacking moral discipline or ignoring legal restraint

-calvin concludes that this doctrine is meant to reign libidiously and licentiously, without God and his word -

4.22

according to their doctrine, forgiveness which depends on faith, will always be ambiguous - as only God knows the heart but the priest must forgive

-they say only those sins the priest is aware of can be forgiven - yet, if there are any sins not forgiven, the person cannot be reconciled to God, so how can the priest ever deem a confessor reconciled to God, not knowing whether that person has made him aware of all their sins?

calvin's delineation of this *profound abyss*

1. where confession is not complete there can be no true hope of pardon
2. the priest has no idea that the confessor has listed all his sins, therefore, he can't confidently declare their forgiveness

3. many priests are ignorant of the word and not fit to perform their office

on the other hand, the biblical view of confession and forgiveness, that can only come from God and his word, allows . . . *the sinner to trust that God is propitious to him, provided he sincerely seek expiation in the sacrifice of Christ, and accept of the grace offered to him*

-the forgiveness comes from God based on the knowledge of the sinner that he has confessed his sins and truly repented

the sinner, again, can receive a clear and sure absolution when, in regard to embracing the grace of Christ, the simple condition annexed is in terms of the general rule of our Master himself - a rule impiously spurned by the papacy - 'according to your faith be it unto you - matt 9:9

4.23

this paragraph was a little cloudy to me -

the romans have taken what applies to public sins to make it pertain to secret sins, i.e., church discipline

-they look for passages - mostly from ancient non-biblical authors to defend their position that confession to God alone is not sufficient for forgiveness

-from one side of their mouth they say that the priests don't actually forgive sins as much as pronounce that they are forgiven - while from the other side, there is no forgiveness without confession to the priest, substituting ceremony in place of biblical doctrine

-they also give authority to the priest that which is God's only by adding to repentance and faith, as the requirement for forgiveness, the *infliction of penalty and satisfaction* - indeed, the priest determines the penalty - what it will take from the confessor - what penance is required - to satisfy God enough to forgive

. . . *it is just as if the priest, . . . were to interfere with God, and try to prevent him from admitting to his favor by his mere liberality anyone who had not previously lain prostrate at the tribunicial bench [come before the priest], and there been punished*

4.24

pestiferous - harboring infection and disease

this practice of confession is nothing more than a sacrilegious tyranny, . . . *insulting to God*. . . who alone can bind consciences by his word

mitigations - lessenings of the force of something

they. . . *entangle, obscure, and corrupt the pure doctrine, and cloak their iniquities with deceitful colors*

4.25

calvin now discusses their doctrine of penance - their belief that . . . *it is not sufficient for the penitent to abstain from past sins, and change his conduct for the better, unless he satisfy God for what he has done* [i.e., Christ's work is not completely satisfactory]; *and that there are many helps by which we may redeem sins* [I can redeem my own sin? - Christ is the only Redeemer!], *such as tears, fastings, oblations, and offices of charity* and by these acts

1. the Lord is propitiated

2. our debt to divine justice is paid - BLASPHEMY or at least HERESY

3. our faults are compensated

4. pardon is deserved - what? I deserve to be forgiven - I've earned God's forgiveness? - NEVER - CHRIST HAS EARNED MY FORGIVENESS ONCE AND FOR ALL

calvin's summation . . . *we indeed obtain pardon of our sins from the mercy of God, but still by the intervention of the merit of works, by which the evil of our sins is compensated, and due satisfaction made to divine justice.*

again, in contrast, the biblical doctrine of forgiveness of sins is thus: forgiveness is a gift of *mere liberality* - God's grace

-if it is free grace, all ideas of us satisfying God are cast away!

-forgiveness is to be sought from the goodness of God alone - the name of Christ alone - . . .scripture says. . . we are to bring nothing, pretend nothing on our own, but lean entirely on the recommendation of Christ

4.26

more error of the romans

. . .they maintain that both the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation take place at once when we are received into the favor of God thru Christ in baptism; [baptismal regeneration - washing away the original sin of the baby] that in lapses after baptism we must rise again by means of satisfactions; [penance] that the blood of Christ is of no avail unless in so far as it is dispensed by the keys of the church [absolution declared by the priest after full confession of all sins]

. . .in baptism all the temporal penalties of sin are relaxed; but that after baptism they are lessened by means of repentance, the cross of Christ AND OUR REPENTANCE THUS COOPERATING TOGETHER.

-the bible says differently - that Christ is our perpetual and only advocate and the propitiation for our sins - 1 john 2:1,2,12

-there is no other satisfaction by which our offended God can be propitiated

-Christ. . .always, by his intercession, reinstates us in his Fathered favor - a perpetual propitiation by which sins are expiated

-trying to satisfy God by our own acts of contrition & penance only seeks rob Christ of all he has accomplished in his life, death, & resurrection

continued discussion concerning the categorizing of our sins -

3.4.27 - 3.4.31

4.27

. . .the power and curse of sin was destroyed in [Jesus Christ's] flesh when he was offered as a sacrifice, on which the whole weight of our sins was laid:

1. with their curse and execration [denouncement]

2. with the fearful judgment of God

3. and condemnation to death

no mention of satisfying penance - that pestilential dogma that the grace of God is effectively only in the first forgiveness of sins; but if we afterwards fall, our works cooperate in obtaining the second pardon

there's a vast difference between the evangelical view [that our sins are laid on Christ so he might erase them] and the catholic view [they are erased by our works, i.e., that Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and that God is to be propitiated by works]

if we are to be forgiven by our works - if we must do enough to satisfy God, how much or how many works, what works? - how can we ever be assured God is satisfied? - assurance will be a fleeting thing if ever gained - those who rest satisfied with petty satisfactions form too contemptible an estimate of the justice of God, and little consider the grievous heinousness of sin. . .

-the peace made thru Christ's cross is not restricted to the moment of our conversion but extends over our entire life as Christians

4.28

when the catholics make the distinction between mortal and venial sins, heavy and light remedies, . . . they insult and trifle with God

calvin says all the believer's sins are venial because God's mercy provides, thru Christ's atonement, that there is now no condemnation for those in Christ

-their sin is not counted against them but erased by pardon

4.29

roman catholics also make a distinction between penalty of sin & the guilt of sin

-guilt is *forgiven by the mercy of God*

-but though the guilt is forgiven, *the punishment which divine justice requires to be paid remains. satisfactions [penance] then properly relate to the remission of the penalty -*

how ridiculous this levity! says calvin

when God says he won't remember sins he means he won't bring them to punishment

-same thing in other passages - casts them behind his back, blots them out, casts them into the depths of the sea, doesn't impute them, hides them

if God

1. punishes sins, he imputes them

2. avenges, he remembers

3. brings them to judgment, he hasn't hid them

4. examines, he hasn't cast them behind him

5. investigates, he hasn't blotted them out

6. exposes them, he hasn't thrown them into the depths of the sea

per augustine *if God has covered sins, he willed not to advert [call attention] to them; if he will not to advert, he willed not to animadvert; [reproach, blame, or take notice of] if he willed not to animadvert, he willed not to punish; he will not to take knowledge of them, he rather will to pardon them*

4.30

just what did Christ accomplish for us if we're still punished for our sins -

-he bore our sins in his own body - endured the penalty and punishment which was due us

-he bore our sin . . . *that he might thereby exempt his people from it*

-when paul says he won our redemption he means the *very price AND SATISFACTION of redemption* was paid

God never encourages or commands . . . *works as the means of procuring pardon, but only requires sacrifices for expiation* - the only kind of satisfaction that appeases God's justice

-even the OT sacrifices of the israelites . . . *weren't regarded as human works, but were estimated by their anti-type, that is, the sole sacrifice of Christ*

. . . *if we are freed from guilt by Christ, the punishment consequent upon guilt must cease with it*

4.31

catholics also hold that even though God pardons he also afterwards punishes, which they say are to *ransom by satisfactions*

-i.e., david was forgiven of his sin with bathsheba, but to satisfy God's justice his son died

after giving some other scripture-twisting references by the catholics, calvin concludes, *how perverse and preposterous the judgment they ever form of the doings of God!*

-calvin says there are two kinds of divine judgment

1. exemplary punishments which God inflicts on the lost

2. divine chastisements which he brings to his own people

in judicial punishment God. . . takes vengeance on his enemies by displaying his anger against them, confounding, scattering, and annihilating them. . . punishment accompanied with indignation

in judicial chastisement, he is offended, but not in wrath; he does not punish by destroying or striking down. . .

the one is the act of a judge, the other of a father. when the judge punishes a criminal, he [takes notice of] the

crime, and demands the penalty. when a father corrects his son sharply, it is not to. . . avenge, but rather to teach him, and make him more cautious for the future.

more distinguishing between God's chastisement of his people as opposed to vengeance and punishment reserved for his enemies

wise fathers also want to be quick to be merciful, quick to restore, and will discipline with the care of their children as the goal - great words to earthly fathers about our perfectly heavenly Father's treatment of his children

3.4.32 - 3.4.35

4.32

to ensure proper understanding of the whole issue, calvin says we need to make two distinctions - this paragraph will speak to the first and the next paragraph with the 2nd

the first being, unlike how God deals with believers, when infliction is meant to avenge, God's wrath becomes obvious

-while God's chastening of his people brings his blessing and proves his love -

-everything bad that happens to unbelievers is a foretaste of their punishment in hell

-and rather than bringing them to repentance and benefitting them, they're being prepared for their final doom on the other hand, when believers are chastened, tho' it might be heavy, they know it is good for them, to teach them his statutes

calvin then gives quite a number of scriptural proofs from the OT - showing that believers experience a lessening of the grief and pain because they know God's loving and good purposes -

-however, they are so wounded at times, . . . *that they seem to themselves on the very eve of perdition. . . that they may be more careful in their desires to appease God, and anxiously hasten to seek his pardon; still at this very time, he gives clearer evidence of his mercy than of his anger*

-unbelievers, not knowing the good purposes of God in the affliction, . . . *turn their back, as well upon their sins as upon the divine judgment, and become hardened in their stupor. . .*

again, conversely, believers . . . *immediately begin to reflect on their sins, and struck with fear and dread. . . plead for God's mercy*

4.33

the 2nd distinction calvin wants us to consider is that unbelievers, in their affliction, in a fashion begin . . . *to pay the punishment due to his justice* in this life

-they aren't afflicted to reform their lives as much as . . . *to teach them by dire experience that God is a judge and avenger*

while believers are *beaten with rods. . . that they may thereby be led to repent*

-early church fathers help here

his object in imposing a penalty upon us, is not to inflict punishment on our sins but to correct us for the future - chrysostom

the suffering at which you cry, is medicine, not punishment; chastisement, not condemnation - augustine

calvin then contrasts God's working in king saul's life vs king david's life

- . . . *when he rejected saul from the kingdoms he punished in vengeance* - calvin deems saul an unbeliever

. . . *when he deprived david of his child, he chastised for amendment*

4.34

calvin then suggests how we ought to think during our afflictions, trials and sufferings

-as long as someone feels God is vengeful toward him or and still . . . *disposed to inflict punishment upon him. . .* he can only conceive of him. . . *as angry and at enmity with him; cannot but detest the rod of God as curse and condemnation; in short, can never persuade himself that he is loved by God. . .* mainly because he isn't

-*he only profits under the divine chastening who considers that God, though offended with his sins, is still propitious and favorable to him*

4.35

God's severe chastening of David was to prove that *murder and adultery are most offensive to God, and to manifest this offensiveness in a beloved and faithful servant, that david himself might be taught never again to dare to commit such wickedness; still, however, it was not a punishment designed in payment of a kind of compensation to God*

-as to God's harsh dealing with david and the people of israel because of david's sinful census,

1. he completely forgave david the guilt of his sin

2. . . .but because it was necessary, both as a public example to all ages and to humble david himself, not to allow such an offense to go unpunished, he chastened him most sharply with his whip

-we must learn to understand how offensive to God our sin is - and he will work in our lives what it takes to teach us - as God. . . knows what the disposition of each requires, he treats one with greater harshness and another with more diligence

-and . . .as soon as anyone repents he will be ready to receive him

-fixing their eyes on david's son's death, even after forgiveness and then building their doctrine of penance and satisfaction spoken of before, catholics completely forget . . .the many examples in which they might have beheld the free forgiveness of sins

1. the public who went from the temple justified with no punishment following

2. when we read peter received forgiveness, . . .we read not of satisfaction

3. to the healed paralytic Jesus said, 'your sins are forgiven' and not told to do penance

all the acts of forgiveness mentioned in scripture are gratuitous

heads up! one of my favorites is writing the next couple of devotions - derek thomas - make sure to mull over what he says in intro to our reading today

-more attacks from the works-righteousness mentality answered - there is a fundamental misinterpretation of scripture in this thinking - scriptures that are meant to be interpreted horizontally - between man and man - or interpreted vertically - between man and God

-for instance, *love covers a multitude of sins* is interpreted to mean that acts of love, kindness, etc will "satisfy" in God's sight and gain forgiveness of sins - while the context is clear that it is between man and man, i.e., in Christian love we can overlook many sins of others -

-then chapter 5 of book 3 addresses . . .the 'mad' catholic doctrine of 'indulgences'. . .that salvation could be bought at the price of 'a few coins. . .'

calvin's language reaches new heights of expressive anger and disgust. . . calling indulgences . . . 'a profanation of the blood of Christ, a satanic mockery'

SALVATION, CALVIN INSISTS, IS BY CHRIST ALONE

3.4.36 - 3.5.2

4.36

citing passages in daniel, solomon, peter, another in proverbs, and hebrews, calvin demonstrates this error of interpreting passages meant to be taken horizontally, as between God and man

. . .solomon says, *that love covers a multitude of sins; not, however, with God, but among men*

4.37

calvin takes a close look at the parable in luke 7:36ff to continue his point but from a little different angle

-the pharisees of Jesus' day, as do the romanists of calvin's day & ours, I surmise, took Jesus to mean by his words, *her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.*, to mean that her love brought forgiveness - but the context . . .*is plain he does not make love the cause of forgiveness, but the proof of it*

-she loved much because she was forgiven much

-her love ought to have been. . . a proof of her having obtained forgiveness, that love being an expression of gratitude for the benefit received. . . something is demonstrated by the results produced by it

-then Jesus says, 'thy faith has saved thee'

-by faith, therefore, we obtain forgiveness: by love we give thanks, and bear testimony to the loving-kindness of the Lord

4.38

as the catholics citing early church fathers, including chrysostom and augustine, who calvin often quotes in defending his positions, calvin says that some have made errors on this issue or spoken too harshly - . . .*but I*

cannot admit that they were so rude and unskillful as to write these passages in the sense in which they are read

by our new satisfactionaries [the catholic teachers that we must satisfy God's wrath against our sins with our penitent works]

-he demonstrates clearly, tho' certain passages seem to contradict, that augustine believed that sinners were justified and sanctified by the one time sacrificial atonement of Christ alone

4.39

again calvin reiterates that augustine and other church fathers meant satisfaction in a horizontal way, assuring . .

.the church of their repentance

coryphaeus - the leader of a party or a school of thought

framed his centos - the modern english version renders this phrase *framed his patchworks*

-here calvin cites the catholics as paying heed to a book bearing the name of augustine as its supposed author but which any . . *person of the least learning*. . would know it wasn't

5.1

from this dogma of satisfaction that of indulgences takes its rise -

-catholics defining indulgences as . . *a dispensation of the merits of Christ, and the martyrs which the Pope makes by his bulls* [edicts]

-calvin says that the fact that indulgences have . . *so long stood safe and with impunity*. . is . . *proof into how deep a night of ignorance mankind were for some ages plunged*

-the people of the medieval church . . *saw the salvation of the soul made the subject of a lucrative traffic, salvation taxed at a few pieces of money, nothing given gratuitously -*

strumpets - prostitutes

-yet they were received . . *with the greatest reverence, worshipped and bought*

-but calvin saw them falling slowly out of favor . . *preparatory to their final extinction* - or so he hoped - I'm

reminded of the pope declaring the bishops could offer indulgences at Y2K celebrations at the turn of the millennium - in fact, an article in the NY times, 2/10/09, says that bishops around the world are currently offering indulgences

5.2

rapine - pillage, robbery

-the idea is that Christ, the apostles, and martyrs exalted by papal bulls, have built up extra merits of grace that others can partake of - the pope himself can/could dispense *these great blessings* - or he can delegate the power to others -

-I think it's good to say at this point calvin is not infallible - this is a critique of the catholics by a protestant - we want to keep that always in our mind

plenary indulgences from the catholic perspective = from the handbook of indulgences, the result of the efforts of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States,

The Handbook of Indulgences* states that a plenary indulgence is granted to the faithful who perform the works listed below. This means the full remission of all temporal punishment (time spent in purgatory) due to sin in one's entire lifetime up to that point. Plenary indulgences can also be requested of Our Lord for the deceased.

according to calvin, the pope can offer plenary (full) indulgences or partial ones - cardinals can off 100 days, bishops 40

of indulgences, calvin says, and we would agree, . . .are a profanation of the blood of Christ, and a delusion of satan, by which the Christian people are led away from the grace of God and the life which is in Christ, and turned aside from the true way of salvation. . .how could the blood of Christ be more shamefully profaned than by denying its sufficiency for the remission of sins, for reconciliation and satisfaction, unless its defects, as if it were dried up and exhausted, are supplements from some other quarter? - calvin's words dripping with sarcasm

calvin now cites a number of passages that declare clearly we are saved by grace alone thru faith alone in Christ alone and shows the many errors of indulgence theology

1. acts 10:43 - *but indulgences bestow the remission of sins thru peter, paul and the martyrs* - [sounds like a singing group - but look who's being sarcastic now]
2. 1 john 1:7 - *indulgences make the blood of the martyrs an ablution [washing] of sins*
3. 2 corinthians 5:21 - *indulgences make the satisfaction of sin to depend on the blood of the martyrs*
4. 1 cor 1:13 - *indulgence declare that paul and others died for us*
5. acts 20:28 - *indulgences assign another purchase to the blood of martyrs*
6. heb 10:14 - *indulgences on the other hand, insist that sanctification, which would otherwise be insufficient, is perfected by martyrs*
7. rev 7:14 - *indulgences tell us to wash our robes in the blood of saints*

more about indulgences - . . .*this impious dogma. . . astounding blasphemy. . . turns Christ into a mere saintlet*
 then the doctrine of purgatory -
a deadly fiction of Satan which

1. nullifies the cross of Christ
2. inflicts unbearable contempt upon God's mercy
3. overturns and destroys faith

3.5.3 - 3.5.9

5.3

concerning martyrs' excess merit - *altho' brethren die for brethren, yet no martyr's blood is shed for the remission of sins: this Christ died for us and in this conferred upon us not what we should imitate, but what should make us grateful*

-the doctrine of indulgences is the most blasphemous of all their . . .*patchwork of sacrilege and blasphemy*
 calvin calls on the catholics to acknowledge that they teach that the martyrs' death . . .*merited more than was necessary for themselves, and that they have a large surplus of merits which may be applied to others; that. . .their blood is mingled with the blood of Christ, and out of both is formed the treasury of the church, for the forgiveness of sins, expiation, and sanctification*

5.4

calvin now shows how they misinterpret col 1:24 which speaks of paul filling up what was lacking the sufferings of Christ

-that Christ's sacrifice needed some additional "oomph" - namely paul's sufferings to render satisfaction to God for some people's sins

-a misinterpretation indeed

-what paul meant, calvin says, . . .*Christ so honors us as to regard and count our afflictions as his own*

-*"for the church" = . . .not for the redemption or reconciliation or satisfaction of the church but for the edification and progress*

-augustine: . . .*if you are among the members of Christ, whatever you suffer from those who are not members of Christ, was lacking to the sufferings of Christ*

. . .*it is an insult to God and his Anointed to place the worthiness of any saint in anything save the mercy of God alone. . .monstrous dogmas*

5.5

undoubtedly either the gospel of God or indulgences must be false

-calvin here gives his view as to the origin of indulgences

5.6

now to purgatory

there is no authority from the word of God - propped up by . . .*fictitious revelations, the wiles of satan and. . . certain passages of scripture. . .ignorantly wrested*

-tho' calvin didn't want to give credence to purgatory by speaking about it, he felt it was too dangerous not to say something - it was an issue of the gospel being perverted in that. . .*the expiation of sins is sought elsewhere than in the blood of Christ, and satisfaction is transferred to others*

-*we are bound therefore, to raise our voice. . . to cry aloud that purgatory is a deadly device of satan: that it makes void the cross of Christ; that it offers intolerable insult to the divine mercy; that it undermines and overthrows our faith*

-nothing but . . .*the satisfaction for sin paid after death by the souls of the dead*

- . . .*mere blasphemy, horrid blasphemy against Christ*

5.7

here calvin speaks to the unpardonable sin & the catholics' misinterpretation of the phrase that says those committing this sin won't be forgiven in this age or the age to come - it means, according to calvin that . . .*he who of set purpose endeavors to extinguish the offered light of the Spirit, shall not obtain pardon either in this life, which has been given to sinners for conversion, or on the last day when the angels of God shall separate the sheep from the goats, and the heavenly kingdom shall be purged of all that offends* - i.e., calvin determines that blasphemy of the Spirit is nothing more than rejecting Christ - the conviction of the Spirit - until one dies - it's the sin of unbelief

5.8

"things under the earth" - phi 2:10 - when catholics says this *can't mean those doomed to eternal damnation, the only remaining conclusion is that they must be the souls suffering in purgatory* - they have no basis for that conclusion

-all that this says is that Christ is given dominion over. . .*every part of the universe, from the highest pinnacle of heaven to the very center of the earth, each in its own way proclaims the glory of the Creator*

-calvin now mentions the spurious passage in 1 maccabees - from the apocrypha - which the catholics use as one of their proofs of purgatory

-tho' he says that the apocryphal books have . . . *been received by the church not uselessly, if [they] be read or heard with soberness* - he quotes jerome who says they can never be used to establish doctrine since they are not of the word of God

-

two more paragraphs on purgatory - *what does paul mean that some will be saved 'but only as through fire' ?* - derek thomas, our devotional writer for today says

1. in our day, those who minimize necessity of sanctification as evidence of true conversion use this verse to say we can take Jesus as savior without submitting to him as Lord

2. in calvin's days, the catholics took this verse to mean that the fires of purgatory would make those fit for heaven who leave this life not yet refined enough

calvin also discusses prayers for the dead who are in purgatory - . . . *yet again an example of man's irrepressible default of a works-righteousness mentality*

3.5.9 - 3.5.10

5.9

catholics view the fires as those . . . *by which the defilements of sin are wiped away. . .*

most of the early church fathers viewed them as . . . *the tribulation or cross by which the Lord tries his people, that they may not rest satisfied with the defilements of the flesh* - calvin says that's more probable than the. . . *fiction of a purgatory*

calvin breaks down the absurdity of the catholic interpretation using Augustine's interpretation - however calvin doesn't really hold to even Augustine's view

1. they teach that the apostles have excess merit built up in this life that others may draw from

2. yet, paul says that the works of all people will be tried by the fire, not just certain people's

calvin's view is that the fire is the . . . *examination of the Holy Spirit* -

1. that false doctrines and man-made works of building the church are wood, hay, stubble which are burned in the fire

2. the true doctrines, like silver and gold, are proved to be genuine the closer they are brought to the fire

3. this purging happens only at the day of the Lord - it's not a refining process through the ages, as purgatory is viewed

finally he asks, *how are those who suffer the loss of their works saved by fire?*

1. the people he is speaking of are the builders of the church

2. when they retain . . . *the proper foundation, yet build different materials upon it* [when seeking to build, edify, or grow the church], . . . *not abandoning the principal and necessary articles of faith, err in minor and less perilous matters, mingling their own fictions with the word of God, they're saved. . . yet so as by fire; that is, not that their ignorance and delusions are approved by the Lord, but they are purified from them by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit*

this is contrary to the basic pre-millennial view of 1 cor 3:15 - which interprets this passage as the judgment seat of Christ - the judgment of Christians only, when the rewards of the Christian life are determined - but the context or earlier verses in the chapter indicate that the works being tried are of those who are the "builders of the church" - those building on the foundation paul, as the wise masterbuilder had laid - and the these works are being put to the test as to whether or not they have been according to God's masterplan for the church

5.10

all those who attempt to build the church with . . . *something not conformable to the foundation, must suffer the loss of their work*

-calvin determines that praying for the dead arose from the perfectly legitimate concern for proper mourning of those who die, but eventually these prayers . . . *received new additions, until the highest holiness of the papacy consisted in giving assistance to the suffering dead*

-in fact, he felt that augustine's love for his mother - . . . *doubtless an old woman's wish* - caused him to teach or write about prayers for the dead without bringing that particular doctrine . . . *to the test of Scripture. . . - . . . a profanation of prayer*

today's reading is one chapter - 3.6 w/5 paragraphs - this section in our institutes was earlier published as its own booklet *on the Christian life* -

referring to his own love of brevity (after writing 700 pages that entail 1/2 of the institutes!) - the central point of this chapter is that true spiritual life - conversion - will produce a love of righteousness - a real desire to be holy because God is holy and calls His people to holiness - and our holiness should be . . . *molded in the imitation of Christ. . .* according to derek thomas

-calvin attacks a true malady of our day, nominal Christianity - those claiming to be Christians with no progress toward or desire to become like their Savior

3.6.1. - 3.6.5

6.1

we have said that the object of regeneration is to bring the life of believers into concord and harmony with the righteousness of God, and so confirm the adoption by which they have been received as sons.

-calvin says he will find the time to write at length one day on this, but for now we'll have to settle for his . . . *natural love of brevity. . .*

perspicuity - clarity

6.2

advert - turn or call attention to

believers are commanded to be holy because God is holy

-when we were lost sheep, not knowing our way, he brought us back into his fold

1. not that thru our own holiness we were bro't in

2. but our holiness is evidence of our union with him

. . .it greatly concerns his glory not to have any fellowship with wickedness and impurity

-in order to be counted as his sheep, . . .*we must inhabit the holy city Jerusalem* - psalm 15:1,2; 24:3,4

. . .the sanctuary in which he dwells [our bodies] certainly ought not to be like an unclean stall

6.3

the Lord Jesus, . . .*through whom we have returned to favor with God*. . . is to be our model for living

abjure - renounce, repudiate

ever since:

1. God revealed himself to us as a Father, we are guilty of ungratefulness if we don't . . .*exhibit ourselves as his sons*

2. Christ cleansed us with his blood, it's wrong that we are. . .*defiled with new pollution*

3. we are brought into the body of Christ, we . . .*should anxiously beware of contracting any stain or taint*

4. ever since Christ, our Head, ascended into heaven, we must set our mind on things above and . . .*withdraw our affections from the earth*

5. the Holy Spirit chose to inhabit us as his temple, we should strive, labor, work . . .*to show forth the glory of God, and guard against being profaned by the defilement of sin*

6. . . .*our soul and body were destined to heavenly incorruptibility and an unfading crown*, we should strive to stay pure & uncorrupt until the day of the Lord

these I say are the surest foundations of a well-regulated life

6.4

nominal Christians is the topic here

-those who have . . .*nothing of Christ but the name and sign, would yet be called Christians*

-*how dare they boast of this sacred name* - no one has a true relationship w/Christ

1. except those who have true knowledge of him revealed in the gospel

2. who hasn't learned to put off the old man & put on Christ

doctrine is not an affair of the tongue, but of the life, is not apprehended by the intellect and memory merely. . . but is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds its seat. . . in the inmost recesses of the heart

calvin says these nominal Christians should

1. either quit boasting of something they aren't

2. or show themselves worthy disciples of their Master

-knowledge of the faith must move from the mind to the heart and then work its way out in conduct, producing the fruit of godliness

6.5

I insist not that the life of the Christian shall breathe nothing but the perfect gospel, though this is to be desired, and ought to be attempted

-no one will attain perfection but all believers make progress

1. God . . .*recommends . . . singleness of mind. . . as opposed to a double mind*

2. the beginnings of spiritual life are sure when . . .*the internal affections are sincerely devoted to God, in the cultivation of holiness and justice*

3. yet while in . . .*this earthly prison of the body, no man is supplied with strength sufficient to hasten his course with due alacrity [readiness, willingness]. . .*

hesitating, and halting, and even crawling on the ground, they make little progress

4. however, . . .*no one will travel so badly as not daily to make some degree of progress. . . our labor is not lost when today is better than yesterday, provided with true singleness of mind we keep our aim, and aspire to the goal. . . making it our constant endeavor to become better, until we attain to goodness itself*

if during the whole course of our life we seek and follow we shall at length attain it, when relieved from the infirmity of flesh we are admitted to full fellowship with God

as Derek Thomas says in the devotion, chapter 7 begins, *we are not our own* . . .

-this section calvin explores the call on the life of the Christian – . . . *self-denial and cross-bearing are the twin (negative) marks of genuine holiness*

-hard stuff for contemporary, 21st century “soft – life is easy” believers

3.7.1 – 3.7.7

7.1

calvin’s opening scripture is romans 12:1- we’re to present our bodies a living sacrifice, not be outwardly looking like the world, but to be inwardly transformed by the renewing of our minds

-the great point, then, is that we are consecrated and dedicated to God, and therefore, should not henceforth think, speak, design, nor act, without a view to his glory

-then this epic statement

we are not our own, therefore. . .

1. *neither is our own reason or will to rule our acts and counsels*

2. *let us not make it our end to seek what may be agreeable to our carnal nature*

3. *as far as possible, let us forget ourselves and the things that are ours on the other hand, we are God’s, . . .*

1. *let us, therefore, live and die to him*

2. *therefore, let his wisdom and will preside over all our actions*

3. *to him, then, as the only legitimate end, let every part of our life be directed*

-our only safe course of action is to have no other will than . . . to follow the Lord wherever he leads. let this be the 1st step, to abandon ourselves, and devote the whole energy of our minds to the service of God

7.2

for he who has learned to look to God in everything he does, is at the same time diverted from all vain thoughts

-which will leave no room for pride, show, ostentation, avarice, lust, luxury

we can’t make progress in our Christian life until we give ourselves up - . . . renounce ourselves

7.3

titus 2:11-14 – *a more distinct account of each of the parts of a well-ordered life*

1. *grace of God gives us life*

2. *get rid of . . . the two greatest obstacles for the Christian, ungodliness and worldly lust*

a. *godliness = everything at variance with the true fear of God*

b. *worldly lusts = the lusts of the flesh*

3. *paul then reduces all of our actions to 3 areas*

a. *sobriety = chastity, self-control and . . . the pure and frugal use of temporal goods, and patient endurance of want (lack)*

b. *righteousness = all the duties of equity*

c. *godliness = . . . separates us from the pollutions of the world, and connects us with God in true holiness these, when connected together by an indissoluble chain, constitute complete perfection*

-but there is nothing harder than to say goodbye to our own wills & desires

4. *so paul then reminds us of our blessed hope – the 2nd coming of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*

a. *urging us on in our faith because Christ came and gave himself for us*

b. *to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*

c. when he returns he *will give full effect to the salvation obtained by him*
-this is how calvin teaches us to fight off the . . . *allurements which becloud our path*

7.4

calvin now turns to a 2nd aspect of self-denial – our relationship to each other - . . . *to prefer them in honor to ourselves, and labor to promote their advantages*

-realizing that we are . . . *utterly incapable of obeying* these commands until we first cast off our natural self-love

the vices with which we abound we both carefully conceal from others, and flatteringly represent to ourselves as minute and trivial, nay, sometimes hug them as virtues

-how so very true

-while we *maliciously lower & carp* at those in whom we see the very same things we excuse in ourselves
animadversion = criticism, censure

the poor man yields to the rich, the plebeian to the noble, the servant to the mast, the unlearned to the learned, and yet every one inwardly cherishes some idea of his own superiority. thus each flattering himself, sets up a kind of kingdom in his breast. . .

-we must pluck up by the roots . . . *those most noxious pests, self-love and love of victory*

-we do this by learning scripture which . . . *teaches us to remember, that the endowments which God has bestowed upon us are not our own, but his free gifts. . .* – 1 Cor 4:

the only way by which you can ever attain true meekness, is to have your heart imbued with a humble opinion of yourself and respect for others

7.5

now, the difficulty of putting our neighbor 1st –

-after citing 1 Cor 13, calvin reminds us that everything God gives us is to be used for the common good of the church – all that we have is given to us as stewards – we are to be “house managers” of God’s gracious blessings – they’re not ours but God’s - . . . *divine deposits entrusted to us for the very purpose of being distributed for the good of our neighbor. . . we are his steward. . . and are bound to give account of our stewardship. . . which is to be regulated by love*

7.6

when considered how we are to bless our neighbors, we are not to look at how deserving they are, . . . *but to attend to the image of God, which exists in all, and to which we owe all honor and love*

. . . *whoever be the man that is presented to you as needing your assistance, you have no ground for declining to give it to him*

-he may be unworthy but the image of God, both in you and in the other person, is worthy & even tho’ he may have . . . *provoked you by injury and mischief, still this is no good reason why you should not embrace him in love, and visit him with offices of love*

-we are to forgive whatever he might have done against us – the only way we can . . . *love those who hate us, render good for evil, and blessing for cursing, remembering that we are not to reflect on the wickedness of men, but look to the image of God in them, an image which, covering and obliterating their faults, should by its beauty and dignity allure us to love and embrace them*

7.7

calvin says if we’ll fulfill all the duties of life . . . *from a pure feeling of love. . .* [I take it he means “from the heart”] we will . . . *succeed in mortifying ourselves*

-we can perform all the right actions, yet be far from performing them rightly

-contumely = insult, outrage

- we must serve and love others by putting ourselves in their place to ministering to them as we would want

to be ministered to
-to . . . *pity his misfortune as if [we] felt & bore it*
-our help should only be limited by our means

the chief part of self-denial looks to God – calvin is full of *striking 'one liners'* according to Sinclair ferguson in today's devotion

-self-denial isn't attained by self-focus but rather by God-centeredness

. . . *if the Father purposes to conform his children to the image of his Son, what other instrument would he use than cross-bearing*

-so, self-denial [the remainder of chapter 7] and Christian suffering [discussed in chapter 8] are tied together in today's reading

what ferguson calls . . . *muscular Christianity*. . .

3.7.8-3.8.3

7.8

-to gain peace in this world we must *resign ourselves, and all we have, to the disposal of the Lord, to give him up the affections of our heart, that he may tame and subdue them*

1. we have a . . . *frenzied desire*. . . to chase down wealth, honor, power, luxury

2. we also have a . . . *remarkable dread, a remarkable hatred*. . . of poverty, humility, lowliness all of which we . . . *feel the strongest desire to guard against them*

-those who choose to follow their own desires and/or dreams in this life will never satisfy the restlessness of their minds, no matter how many plans they tirelessly try

--to avoid this Christians should

1. . . *not long for, or hope for, or think of any kind of prosperity apart from the blessing of God*

2. whatever we gain from the pursuits of our own personal agenda will amount to nothing, if not add to our misery

7.9

knowing that all prosperity comes from the Lord and any other will work to our harm, we shouldn't . . . *early contend for riches and honors*. . . and be satisfied with what he provides

1. thus we must resolve that . . . *we will only follow such fortune as we may enjoy with innocence*

2. this will help curb our illegitimate appetites toward riches and/or honor

3. even if God doesn't provide according to our wishes and hopes, materially, trusting in his provision will keep us from . . . *impatience and detestation of our condition*. . . as well as from murmuring against God

-whether rich or poor we can be satisfied and rest in peace knowing that our *affairs are ordered by the Lord in the manner most conducive to*. . . our sanctification

7.10

only those who place all they are and all they have entirely at the Lord's disposal has properly denied himself

-calamities come from all angles – war, weather destroys crops, houses are destroyed by fire, children, parents, spouses die,

-these events cause many to . . . *to curse their live, detest the day of their birth, execrate the light of heaven, even censure God, and (as they are eloquent in blasphemy) charge him with cruelty and injustice*

-as self-denying Christians, at God's full disposal, we . . . *should we see [our] house by the removal of kindred reduced to solitude even then [we] will not cease to bless the Lord; [our] thought will be, still the grace of the Lord, which dwells within my house, will not leave it desolate*

-same for Christian farmers whose crops fail

-same for Christians . . . *afflicted with disease, the sharpness of the pain will not so overcome him, to make him break out with impatience, and expostulate w/God*. . . *but rather will patiently endure*

-we can receive whatever comes to us with . . . *placid and grateful mind*, refusing to resist his providence because we know it all comes from his hand by his grace and for his glory as well as for our good
-that's the heart of one who has placed his all at God's disposal
. . . *the hand of God is the ruler and arbiter of the fortunes of all, and instead of rushing on with thoughtless violence, dispenses good and evil with perfect regularity*

8.1

how different than we typically think!!!!

those whom the Lord has chosen & honored with his intercourse must prepare for a hard, laborious, troubled life, a life full of many and various kinds of evils; it being the will of our heavenly Father to exercise his people in this way while putting them to the proof.

-God began this with his Son and continues it in all his children

-as Jesus . . . *learned obedience by the things which he suffered [heb 5:8]*, so do his followers

-can we expect to be exempt from what he experienced?

-we should, like the apostles, count it a privilege to have . . . *fellowship with the sufferings of Christ* – [acts 5:41; 14:22]

how powerfully should it soften the bitterness of the cross, to think that the more we are afflicted with adversity, the surer we are made of our fellowship with Christ; by communion with whom our sufferings are not only blessed to us, but tend greatly to the furtherance of our salvation [that is, our sanctification]

8.2

calvin gives a number of reasons why we need. . . *to live constantly under the cross* . . . including

1. we have a higher estimation of our holiness than we should

2. we are too sure that it will continue . . . *unimpaired and invincible* no matter what happens

3. thus we hold too much confidence in our own fleshly endeavors. . . *as if our own faculties were sufficient without his grace*

-this arrogance is shattered when . . . *He proves to us by experience, not only how great our weakness is, but also our frailty is. therefore he visits us with disgrace, or poverty, or bereavement, or disease or other afflictions*

1. this causes us to realize our inability to live without his help

2. thus humbled we cry out for his strength to bear us up – isa 41:10

-even the greatest and strongest and most mature Christians would think too highly of themselves without . . . *the trial of the cross*

-david confesses his dependence on God waned when he was prosperous and untroubled and he began to lean on himself rather than God's grace – psa 30:6-7

-if that happened to david, do you think it wouldn't happen to you?

though in tranquility they flatter themselves with the idea of greater constancy and patience, yet, humbled by adversity, they learn the deception

8.3

this is what paul means when he says tribulation works patience – which is the experiential proof God gives the help he has promised – if not, we would all fall away

-but in that he helps us unto perseverance, our faith is confirmed

-when we victoriously continue in the faith, hope is produced –

then victory is followed by hope, inasmuch as the Lord, by performing what he has promised, establishes his truth in regard to the future

-hope is established in the confidence that God will do all he has promised

I love Sinclair ferguson's opening – *Christians are. . . cross-bearers. the cross is laid across the back of the spiritually obese. . . the cross [our suffering] is the spiritual lap-band surgery that alone curtails our appetite for this world*

- so goes this part of chapter 8 as calvin continues to discuss suffering and the Christian life

-suffering tests us, produces endurance as it . . . *presses us into the way of obedience*
-which involves both waiting ON the lord and waiting FOR the Lord *who works when, how and where he pleases*
-in the meantime we may have to “bear patiently the cross of grief or pain” as the songwriter has taught us
-calvin as a young 20-something writer, knew the life of an exile, both literally, driven from his home more than once, as well as spiritually, seeking a greater, better city than the one in which we now live

3.8.4-3.8.10

8.4

one purpose of the Lord’s bringing suffering into the life of. . . *his people is to try thing patience and train them to obedience*

-thus God tempted Abraham who proved his faith by being willing to sacrifice his son

-and peter tells us our faith is refined & proven by trials, suffering, & tribulation

-as for training us in obedience, calvin recites the early *church* father, Seneca, who intimated. . . *that men truly submitted to the yoke of God only when they gave their back and hand to his rod*

8.5

even as believers, there is a tendency, we are prone to try to shake off God’s yoke when things go so very easy for us, thus we learn how important obedience in all things is

-in the midst of the ease we become just like what God said of Israel . . . *waxing gross and fat, we kick against him who reared and nursed us. . . deu 32:15*

so the Lord. . . *interferes* [I like that word here] *as he sees. . . fit . . . subduing and curbing the arrogance of our flesh* so that we don’t

1. . . *become emboldened by an over-abundance of wealth*

2. . . *elated with honor, we become proud*

3. . . *inflated with other advantages of body, or mind, or fortune, we grow insolent* [disrespectful]

-the Lord “interferes” in many different ways as each of us has our own deficiencies and tendencies toward sin, so he deals with us a father deals differently with his various-tempered children – some more gently, and with others more harshly. . . *his purpose being to provide a cure for all. still none is left free and untouched because he knows that all. . . are diseased*

8.6

. . . *whenever we are afflicted we ought immediately to call to mind our past life*

1. to see what sins we’ve committed that are . . . *deserving of such castigation*

2. the encouragement to endurance is found in our acknowledging of our sin because we’re told that God chastens us that so we’re not condemned with the world –

3. therefore, we become grateful for God’s remedial chastening

. . . *in the very bitterness of tribulation we ought to recognize the kindness and mercy of our Father* as we realize he is determined to make us like Christ

for he afflicts, not that he may ruin or destroy but rather that he may deliver us from the condemnation of the world

-otherwise he dooms us to destruction if he doesn’t bring us back to himself when we fall away

then calvin gets really tough

we are most perverse when we cannot bear him while he is manifesting his goodwill to us [thru our afflictions] *and the care which he takes of our salvation. . .*

-the difference between believer and unbelievers

1. unbelievers, as slaves of sin become more obstinate. . . *under the lash*

2. while believers . . . *like free-born sons turn to repentance.*

NOW, THEREFORE, CHOOSE YOUR CLASS

8.7

moving now from suffering as chastisement, calvin deals with persecution for righteousness' sake

. . .how high the honor which God bestows upon us in distinguishing us by the special badge of his soldiers!!!!

-being persecution for . . .*the defense of righteousness in any way*

-we must not consider ourselves cursed in the very things God has pronounced blessed

-poverty is considered misery – God says blessed are the poor

-exile, contempt, imprisonment, humiliation & finally death are all considered calamity

-when by God's grace each of these may turn out to bring joy

I heard a story today of a family working in the underground church in china, responsible in the training of a network of church pastors – the husband was taken away to prison by the authorities, leaving his wife and children to fend for themselves with no means – finally after months of not knowing whether her husband was alive or dead, finally was brought word where he was and she was allowed to visit him –the Lord had enabled him to win a number of converts, including the warden of the prison, and a new, thriving church was born and being established – the wife's question: how should I pray about my husband's situation – for God to release him so we could be reunited as a family and I and my children provided for, or for God to continue to use him in the prison church? –

-a seeming calamity had been turned into blessing for many by God but brought a great dilemma for this faithful woman of God – how would you have counseled her to pray?

we should rejoice, along with the apostles, if or when we are “counted worthy to suffer shame for his name”

1. *if, while conscious of our innocence, we are deprived of our substance by the wickedness of man, we are, no doubt, humanly speaking reduced to poverty; but in truth our riches in heaven are increased*

2. *if driven from our homes we have a more welcome reception into the family of God*

3. *if vexed and despised, we are more firmly rooted in Christ*

4. *if stigmatized by disgrace. . .we have a higher place in the kingdom of God*

5. *if we are slain, entrance is thereby given us to eternal life*

8.8

-we are very ungrateful if we don't receive these things as from God's hand

-God doesn't expect us to have . . .*a total insensibility to pain* while maintaining a cheerful attitude

if there wasn't *hardship in poverty. . .pain in disease. . .sting in ignominy. . .fear in death. . .patience under the cross while being tortured with pain. . .*where would be the advantage gained in enduring them?

-while each of these in themselves are bitter, the believer in this displays his:

1. *fortitude, that though fully sensible of the bitterness and laboring grievously, he still withstands and struggles boldly*

2. *patience, that though sharply stung, he is however curbed by the fear of God from breaking forth into any excess*

3. *alacrity [readiness, willingness] , that though pressed with sorrow and sadness, he rests satisfied with spiritual consolation from God.*

8.9

paul gave personal testimony of this conflict we have *against the natural feeling of pain* while, at the same time, trying to gain endurance and holiness – 2 Cor 4:8-9

-bearing the cross of suffering doesn't mean we have no feelings of pain or hurt – that would be stoicism

-a pulling up your boots and getting on with life – keeping a stiff upper lip, etc

the greek stoics' hero would be . . .*affected in the same way by adversity and prosperity, grief and joy; or rather, like a stone, was not affected by anything*

-calvin says that in his day there were a *new kind of stoics* among Christians who held it inappropriate to groan or cry, to be sad or worry

-what about Jesus? who not only condemned these ideas, but himself . . . *grieved and shed tears for his own and others' woes*

-who told his disciples they'd weep and lament

-who sweat drops as blood in the garden

if every kind of fear is a mark of unbelief, what place shall we assign to the dread which, it is said, in no slight degree amazed him; if all sadness is condemned, how shall we justify him when he confesses, 'my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death'?

8.10

don't despair or feel bad when you can't contain your feelings of grief or pain and want to give up on holy living

-just trust the Lord and continue on in the midst of the pain and hurt

scripture gives saints the praise of endurance when,

1. *though afflicted by the hardships they endure, they are not crushed*

2. *though they feel bitterly, they are at the same time filled with spiritual joy*

3. *though pressed with anxiety, breathe exhilarated by the consolation of God*

still there is a certain degree of repugnance in their hearts, because natural sense shuns and dreads what is adverse to it, while pious affection, even through these difficulties, tries to obey the divine will

-when peter faced the martyrdom Jesus predicted he would go through, surely he obeyed God's will with a ready and willing heart, but he was still human and . . . *was distracted by a double will. . . he would willingly have avoided it; on the other hand, when he considered that it was God who called him to it, his fear was vanquished and suppressed, and he met death cheerfully*

-we must commit, yield, and give ourselves to study Christ in such a way as to fill our minds with . . . *such reverence and obedience to God* so as to overcome all notions against his will

1. *when afflicted with disease, we shall groan & be disquieted, and long for health*

2. *pressed with poverty, we shall feel the stings of anxiety and sadness, feel the pain of ignominy [humiliation], contempt, and injury*

3. *pay the tears due to nature at the death of our friends*

but our conclusion will always be

1. *the Lord so willed it*

2. *therefore, let us follow his will*

-in the midst of the bite of grief, among the hurt and tears, this remembrance will strengthen us and cheerfully goad us on to . . . *endure the things for which we are so afflicted*

a great reminder in these times – God's word to his people thru the lips of isaiah

Isaiah 41:10 ¹⁰ fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

calvin enters into a discussion of thanksgiving in affliction that can only flow out of a cheerful and happy heart

-ferguson comments: *may we say, on this basis, that Calvinism – which claims to point firmly to the biblical basis for thankfulness – is always meant to produce cheerful and happy Christians?*

-this also enables us to have a *radically different perspective on death*

-looking to our glorious future which will give a certain disdain for this life – but only by comparison with life to come

-the interesting thing about calvin's notes on this life vs the next life and our life here being spent as pilgrims, i.e., this world is not our home, is that calvin spent more than half his life exiled from the place he called home

8.11

tho' unbelieving philosophers may agree that afflictions test us, when we see them as the will of God, they come with a very real purpose – not just bad luck but they work toward justice and equity and push us farther down the road toward our final salvation

-no affliction comes to God's people except by the will and providence of God, and . . . *that everything he does is in the most perfect order* – after all do we deserve less chastening than he gives?-

-is it not good that he brings to us what will be our help in overcoming the inordinate passions of our flesh

-therefore any . . . *murmur or struggle*. . . against afflictions is sin

-instead of being commanded to. . . *yield because it is necessary*. . . we have. . . *obey, because it is unlawful to resist; bear patiently, because impatience is rebellion against the justice of God*

-all is for our good – God assures that each cross . . . *provides for our salvation* – remembering calvin is using salvation in these kinds of manner as we would use sanctification

the effect of these thoughts is, that to whatever extent our minds are contracted by the bitterness which we naturally feel under the cross, to the same extent will they be expanded with spiritual joy – hence arises thanksgiving, which cannot exist unless joy be felt

9.1

-every tribulation and trial from God's hand is designed to train us to not love this present life and stimulate us to desire the future one

-it's our nature to love this world – it's what we see, feel, touch, breath

-so, . . . *in order to prevent us from clinging too strongly to it, [God] employs the fittest reason for calling us back, and shaking off our lethargy*

-our minds are easily . . . *dazzled with the glare of wealth, power, and honors*

-our hearts . . . *engrossed with avarice [greed], ambition, and lust*

-to combat these tendencies the Lord will continue to prove to us the vanities and miseries of this present life

-so he . . . *often allows [us] to be assailed by war, tumult, or rapine [plunder], or to be disturbed by other injuries*. . . so that we don't *promise [ourselves] deep and lasting peace* here

-then this very interesting application comes: *that they may not indulge too complacently in the advantages of married life, he either vexes them by the misconduct of their partners, or humbles them by the wickedness of their children, or afflicts them by bereavement*

-think of how many people feel or think they would just as well be dead if their spouse were to die – or when their spouse dies they end up being of no use in this world, pining for their partners – we should feel loss, deep loss, when death does part us, but we can also make our marriages our idols, just as much as jobs, houses, bank accounts – going against the flow of today's contemporary Christian trends of idolizing the family, calvin tells us that God brings trials, tribulations, and troubles in our marriages to keep us from this idolatry

-when life here it all blessing – and God blesses us in so many ways, each day – it's hard to not fall in love with it – to lose sight of our future home – to fail to take into account that . . . *its blessings are uncertain, fleeting, vain and vitiated* [rendered ineffective] –

-trials come, we realize everything we desire is gained at a struggle and that causes us to . . . *raise our eyes to heaven*

9.2

-we can't have our cake and eat it too, says calvin – . . . *the earth must either be worthless in our estimation, or keep us enslaved by an intemperate love of it*

-since its pleasures are so alluring we have . . . *to be now and then called off from its fascinations*

-we go to a funeral, think of the fragility of life, how short our stay on earth really is, . . . *but, at the best, our philosophy is momentary. it vanishes soon and we turn our back*. . . *it passes away, just like the applause of a theater at some pleasant spectacle*

it is of the highest importance to us all, I say not, to be admonished by words, but convinced by all possible experience of the miserable condition of our earthly life

-if God feels it necessary to train us this way, we must. . . *listen to him when he calls, and shakes us from our torpor [lethargy, apathy], that we may hasten to despise the world, and aspire with our whole heart to the future life*

9.3

even then, we mustn't hate this life or be ungrateful to God for each day he gives us – *this life, though abounding in all kinds of wretchedness, is justly classed among divine blessings which are not to be despised*

-failing to recognize God's kindness to us, we are guilty of ingratitude – a most heinous sin

-again, God's blessings are meant to promote our sanctification – he reveals himself to us as a heavenly Father in this way

-the blessings of this life from God designed to cause us to be grateful also have a purpose

-also to prepare us for the glory of heaven

-for the Lord hath ordained, that those who are ultimately to be crowned in heaven must maintain a previous warfare on the earth, that they may not triumph before they have overcome the difficulties of war, and obtained the victory

-also, in experiencing blessings from the hand of God in this life, we enjoy . . . *a foretaste of the divine benignity [goodness], in order that our hope and desire may be whetted for its full manifestation*

9.4

thoughts of a lost man: . . . *a most accurate opinion was formed by those who thought, that the best things was not to be born, the next best to die early. for, being destitute of the light of God and of true religion, what could they see in it that was not of dire and evil omen?*

-the things God brings to believers in this life for their advantage only brings unbelievers to despair

-therefore, as believers we must estimate this mortal life . . . *that in itself it is nothing but misery* – and thus aspire. . . *to the future of eternal life*

if heaven is our country, what can earth be but a place of exile?

if departure from the world is entrance into life, what is the world but a sepulcher, and what is residence in it but immersion in death?

if to be freed from the body is to gain full possession of freedom, what is the body but a prison?

if it is the very summit of happiness to enjoy the presence of God, is it not miserable to want it?

-when we compare this life to our promised heavenly life, . . . *it may undoubtedly be despised and trampled under foot*

-at the same time we should not hate this life . . . *except in so far as it keeps us subject to sin*

. . . *while longing for its termination*. . . we should . . . *be ready at the Lord's will to continue in it, keeping far from everything like murmuring and impatience* – think of Paul to the Philippians wanting to depart and be with Lord but completely content in that his remaining would benefit them

for it is as if the Lord has assigned us a post, which we must maintain till he recalls us – HOW INSPIRING TO FAITHFULNESS ARE CALVIN'S WORDS TO ME!!!!

-wherefore, if it becomes us to live and die to the Lord, let us leave the period of our life and death at his disposal. still LET US ARDENTLY LONG FOR DEATH, and constantly meditate upon it, and in comparison with future immortality, let us despise life, and, on account of bondage of sin, long to renounce it whenever it shall so please the Lord

again, Ferguson's devotion is a must – be sure to read it

-his first question: *how can we happily contemplate the future life when the access route to it is by death?*

-Calvin's remedy is to look to the hope of resurrection promised by God – it's perfectly normal to have a bit of fear of the unknown and in this case. . . *the dissolution of our bodies* –

-besides our natural longings will only be satisfied by those things we will experience in the next life

-Calvin's challenge: . . . *no one has made progress in the school of Christ who does not joyfully await the day of death and final resurrection*

-plus, remember what awaits believers and unbelievers –

1. for us no more tears, unceasing fellowship with God fully experienced
2. for unbelievers, not just . . . *nothingness, but laughter turned to weeping, and peace becomes torment* so ferguson concludes, believers should
 1. use God's gifts for purposes he intended – use and pleasure
 2. remember they are sinners, and resist all inordinate desires
 - 3, hold to things of this world loosely – they're not ours – we're only stewards – all things belong to God

3.9.5-3.9.10

9.5

calvin's grasp of the whole of life – his holistic approach – is amazing, considering he's not yet 30 yrs old as he began the institutes – when was the last time you read about the beauty and smell of flowers from a reformed theologian

-it's incongruous for Christians to have a trembling fear of death –

-years ago rc sproul helped me here – as I heard so many say they weren't afraid to die, I wasn't quite there – rc said the same thing – that it wasn't that he was afraid to stand before God – it's just that he was a little nervous about the transition from this life to the next – how would it come? what would it be like? that was encouraging to me – it's not so much I was fearful of death but how it might come – contemplating upon the future life and all its glories will help create in us such a desire for it that how we get there won't matter so much

-when we die, our exile will be over – we will finally and truly at home, our heavenly country we have been seeking since our conversion

-nothing is forever here on earth – there our bliss and joy will be forever

-when we read that the whole creation groans to be redeemed, we should be ashamed that we who have a greater intellect and the Spirit of God indwelling rise no higher than the animals and inanimate creatures

-it's here that calvin says we've made very little progress in Christian growth if we don't look forward to our final resurrection

-the Lord Jesus . . . *will come as a Redeemer to deliver us from an immense abyss of evil and misery, and lead us to the blessed inheritance of his life and glory*

9.6

looking to the great day of the Lord will help us to bear any and all hard things of this life – all tears will be wiped away, we'll be clothed in the robe of righteousness from Christ, fed with . . . *the ineffable sweetness of his pleasures, sharing with him in glory and participation in his happiness*

-the wicked – i.e., unbelievers – tho' they may have enjoyed more pleasure and ease in this life, upon Christ's return will

1. *will be cast forth in extreme* [disgrace]

2. have their delights changed into torments – their laughter & joy into wailing and gnashing of teeth

3. have their *peace into the gnawing of conscience*

4. have their luxury punished with unquenchable fire

5. something I never think about – *he will also place their necks under the feet of the godly, whose patience they abused* – 1 Thess 1:6-7

this is our only consolation

. . . *the cross of Christ then only triumphs in the breasts of believers over the devil and the flesh, sin and sinners, when their eyes are directed to the power of his resurrection*

10.1

calvin now moves to the ethics of Christian living – how to walk the razor’s edge between legalism and license – knowing it’s so easy to fall into the ditch on one side or the other – it’s a masterful description . . . *in the proper use of earthly blessings, a subject which, in forming a scheme of life, is by no means to be neglected*
 -we are to use . . . *the necessary supports of life. . . for necessity or for pleasure*
 -this life is . . . *a kind of pilgrimage by which [we] hasten to the heavenly kingdom*
 -we are to use the blessings only as they assist us on our way
 -we are to . . . *use this world without abusing it*
 . . . *this is a slippery place, and there is great danger of falling on either side, let us fix our feet where we can stand safely*
 -as for legalists, calvin says they give . . . *a counsel pious indeed, but unnecessarily austere [harsh, rigid, somber] for it does the very dangerous thing of the binding consciences in closer fetters than those in which they are bound by the word of God*
 -they proclaim abstinence from everything that we can live without . . . *so that they held it scarcely lawful to make any addition to bread and water*
 -he then cites *Crates the Theban, who threw his riches into the sea* thinking that would prevent his destruction and curb his lust for them –
I indeed confess that here consciences neither can nor ought to be bound by fixed and definite laws; but that scripture having laid down general rules for the legitimate uses we should keep within the limits which they prescribe

10.2

God meant the . . . *gifts of providence. . .*, to be used, since they were given for our good
 for instance,

1. food given not only for our necessity but also enjoyment and delight
2. clothing, meets a definite need in our life, but also can be worn for beauty and honor
-has the Lord adorned flowers with all the[ir] beauty. . .to the eye, and sweet odor. . .shall it be unlawful for us to enjoy that beauty and this odor?
has he not given qualities to gold and silver, ivory and marble, thereby rendering them precious above other metals or stones? in short, has he not given many things a value without having any necessary use?

10.3

now calvin stands against any view of the Christian live that allows people any . . . *sort of license*
 -one restraint against this is to realize God’s purpose in creating anything is . . . *to teach us to know their author, and feel grateful for his indulgence.*
where is

1. *the gratitude if you so gorge or stupefy yourself with feasting and wise a to be unfit for offices of piety, or the duties of your calling?*
2. *the recognition of God, if the flesh, boiling forth in lust thru excessive indulgences infect the mind with its impurity, so as to lose the discernment of honor and rectitude [goodness, decency]?*
3. *thankfulness to God for clothing if*
 - a. *on account of sumptuous raiment we both admire ourselves and disdain other*
 - b. *from a love of show and splendor, we pave the way for immodesty?*
4. *our recognition of God, if the glare of these things captivates our minds many become so delighted with marble, gold, and pictures, that they become marble-hearted – are changed as it were into metal, and made like painted figures*
where too much liberty is given to them, they break forth without measure or restraint

this section exemplifies calvin’s expansive view of the Christian life – it’s really amazing all the areas of life he addresses

10.4

the best restraint to this antinomianism [those who live as if there is no law] comes. . . *by despising the present life and aspiring to celestial immortality*

calvin quotes cato: *luxury causes great care, and produces great carelessness as to virtue*

- people who spend much time caring for their bodies usually spend little time caring for their soul
therefore while the liberty of the Christian in external matters is not to be tied down to a strict rule [legalism] it is, however, subject to this law – he must indulge as little as possible; [curbing antinomianism – license]; on the other hand, it must be his constant aim not only to curb luxury, but to cut off all show of superfluous abundance, and carefully beware of converting a help into a hindrance

whatever kind of theology best describes calvin's institutes, ferguson says it. . . *engages the mind, heart, will and affections* - if it didn't it wouldn't be biblical theology anyway

ending chapter 10, there is a summary to reflecting on the future life

1. *if you have little, learn how to go without*
2. *remember, you will render account for your stewardship*
3. *reflect on your God-given calling*

if you picked up the institutes and read in order to become a calvinist, you have so far, probably been disappointed - but finally, after 750+ pages, calvin now introduces justification by faith alone in book 3, chapter 11 -tho' it is by faith alone apart from any works, calvin emphasizes that it . . . *it is never devoid of good works*

3.10.5-3.11.4

10.5

calvin contends those who are impatient in the lean times will . . . *almost always betray the contrary disease in abundance*

1. the one ashamed of not-so-fine clothes will be vain in fine clothes
2. the one unhappy in lean times will abuse any luxury
3. those dissatisfied with humble means will be prideful in honor

we must learn from paul to learn holiness whether full or hungry, abounding or wanting

-every blessing is from God's kindness, given as a trust & one day the Lord Jesus will require an accounting of our stewardship

10.6

in the closing paragraph of chapter 10, calvin encourages us to think about our own calling

-knowing the restlessness, fickleness, eagerness, and ambition of our minds, . . . *lest all things should be thrown into confusion. . . [God] has assigned distinct duties to each. . . i.e., our distinct and separate calling - . . . a kind of station assigned him by the Lord, that he may not be always driven about by random*

-and our calling. . . *is the foundation and beginning of right action* - without considering it, we'll never. . . *keep the right path* and all we do. . . *will be rejected before the throne of God*

-our calling will keep us from trying to do more than we are able

everyone in his particular mode of life [calling] will, without repining [regret or dissatisfaction], suffer its inconveniences, cares, uneasiness, and anxiety, persuaded that God has laid on the burden

11.1

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE AT LAST!

-we obtain Christ thru faith receiving two benefits

1. . . *reconciled by the righteousness of Christ, God becomes, instead of a judge, an indulgent Father*
2. . . *being sanctified by his Spirit, we aspire to integrity and purity of life*

-the reason calvin gives for discussing sanctification before justification is that the Christian life well-lived is

evidence of justification, i.e., . . . *the faith by which alone, thru the mercy of God, we obtain free justification, is not destitute of works. . .*

-now coming to justification - . . . *it is the principal ground on which religion must be supported. . .* - the basis for us believing we belong to God

-unless we can understand our true condition before God, we have no proper. . . *foundation on which [our] salvation can be laid*

11.2

calvin now defines the terms *to be justified in the sight of God* and *to be justified by faith or by works*

1. we are . . . *justified in the sight of God when in the judgment of God [we] are deemed righteous and [are] accepted on account of his righteousness*

-no sinner can be justified as long as he is still regarded as a sinner

- . . . *wherever sin is, there also are the wrath and vengeance of God*

2. we are . . . *justified. . . when we are . . . regarded not as a sinner, but as righteous, and as such stand acquitted at the judgment-seat of God, where all sinners are condemned*

. . . *a man is said to be justified by God when, removed from the catalogue of sinners, he has God as the witness and assertor of his righteousness*

- we can be said to be justified by works

1. . . . *if in [this] life there can be found a purity and holiness which merits an attestation of righteousness at the throne of God OR*

2. . . . *if by the perfection of his works he can answer and satisfy the divine justice*

-on the other hand. . . . *a man will be justified by faith when*

1. excluded from his own works

2. . . . *he by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ*

3. and clothed in it appears before God not as a sinner but as righteous

thus we simply interpret justification, as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor AS IF we were righteous; and we say that this justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ

11.3

calvin now piles up the list of scriptural proofs for justification by faith alone -

1. first dealing with verses which use justified, justification, etc when not dealing with salvation - *all the people. . . justified God - wisdom is justified of all her children* - etc - justification is not always talking about being seen as if we are righteous in the sight of God

-also when Jesus chastises the pharisees for justifying themselves. . . *he means not that they acquired righteousness by acting properly, but that they ambitiously courted a reputation for righteousness of which they were destitute*

- I'm sure calvin will deal with it later, but when james says, *so we see a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. . .* he is not contradicting paul - the context of james makes it clear he is speaking of our justification before men - faith without works is dead is one of james' themes - he then says there is no justification for claiming to have saving faith if works do not accompany that confession - paul and james are perfectly congruent - **paul speaks of justification before God - james before men** -

2. then calvin deals with scriptures that do use justification as being declared or counted righteous before God - gal 3:8 - God imputes righteousness faith

-or rom 3:26 - . . . *that [God] might be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus, thus freeing . . . them from the condemnation which their wickedness deserves*

-or rom 8:33-34 -

to justify therefore, is nothing else than to acquit from the charge of guilt, as if innocence were proved. . . when God justifies us thru the intercession of Christ, he does not acquit us on a proof of our own innocence, but by an IMPUTATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS [the caps are my emphasis upon this very important phrase], so that though not righteous in ourselves, we are deemed righteous in Christ

-justified mean acquittal - it can't be obtained by works of the law - it is entirely thru Christ as our mediator - his stepping in before God for us & his righteousness being accounted as ours - and that happens only by faith

-his satisfying of God's wrath becomes our satisfaction before God, our sins are pardoned and we are regarded as righteous before God - just as the publican who went down to his house justified - luke 18:14

-he was justified, therefore, not by any approval of works, but by gratuitous acquittal on the part of God

11.4

more scriptural proofs

eph 1:5,6 - . . . *wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved* - that phrase is the epitome of the meaning of justification

-*being justified freely by his grace* - rom 3:24

-imputation of righteousness and forgiveness of sins are deemed justification in rom 4:6-8

no passage more clearly depicts this doctrine as 2 cor 5:18-21 where paul deems - . . . *the sum of the gospel message to be reconciliation to God, who is pleased, thru Christ, to receive us into favor by not imputing [counting against us] our sins*

-paul clearly equates reconciliation and justification -

the last sentence is more easily understood in the modern version of the institutes: *and surely, what [paul] teaches elsewhere - that "we are made righteous by Christ's obedience" [rom 5:19] - could not stand unless we are reckoned righteous before God in Christ and apart from ourselves*

OK - today's reading is a little thick & technical - I've included the modern english version rendering - I haven't read it but thought it might be helpful

-the devotion gives some good background on osiander - essentially, calvin complains that he mixes up justification and sanctification into one pot - tho' calvin says you will never have one without the other, and in that sense they are inseparable, they are altogether 2 different things

-in justification - God simply declares us righteous

-in sanctification - God equips us with the Holy Spirit to live righteously

in justification - righteousness is imputed

in sanctification - righteousness is infused or implanted in a sense

there's a big difference - something calvin calls . . . *a kind of monstrosity*. . . a . . . *delirious dream, which we must strenuously resist* - or as paul helm says in the devotion, confusing justification and sanctification is a . . . *serious blunder*

3.11.5-3.11.8

11.5

-osiander errs in that he transfuses God's very essence into us - our new nature is something like Christ's, both divine and human - calvin, along with all orthodox writers, preachers, and theologians, denies that -

-osiander determines that when converted we are . . . *substantially righteous in God by an infused essence as well as quality* - rather than by the . . . *obedience and sacrificial death of Christ alone*

-for osiander we're not justified by the grace of Christ alone

11.6

for osiander when justified were are. . . *not only*. . . *reconciled to God by a free pardon but also MADE JUST; and righteousness being not a free imputation, but holiness*. . . *which the divine essence dwelling in us inspires* - i.e., we achieve righteousness by the holiness God's indwelling inspires

osiander, *in the confusion of a two-fold grace*, confounds righteousness and sanctification -

-he see justification as more than being made new creatures

-he says it is MAKING (not just declaring) us just - and proves it by perverting rom 4, where paul says it is God who justifies, and it's plain that he is simply speaking of guilt and acquittal, not bestowing or infusing us with righteousness - not making us just but declaring us just based upon Christ's righteousness

-paul clearly says that . . . *the only way in which [abraham] pleased God was by receiving the grace which was offered by the promise, in faith*. . . *paul maintains there is no room for works in justification*

11.7

if our faith justifies. . . *by its own intrinsic virtue, as it is always weak and imperfect, its efficacy would be partial, and thus our righteousness being maimed would give us only a portion of salvation*

-God alone justifies - calvin compares . . . *faith to a kind of vessel, because we are incapable of receiving Christ, unless we are emptied and come with open mouth to receive his grace*

-calvin's illustration - a clay pot does not become a treasure because gold is deposited in it - yet, that clay pot can give wealth

-in the same way we are not saved BY faith, but through faith - faith. . . *is only the instrument for receiving justification*, and osiander confused faith with Christ, equating the two

11.8

osiander makes . . . *a ridiculous boast*. . . that God [meaning the Father] is our righteousness, misinterpreting jeremiah 23:6; 33:16 - all those verses actually say is . . . *that Christ, who is our righteousness, was God manifest in the flesh*

-he doesn't see Christ as Jehovah God - in isaiah 53:11 the Father . . . *attributes the office of justifying to the Son, and adds the reason, - because he is "righteous"*

calvin's conclusions here

1. *Christ was made righteousness when he assumed the form of a servant*

2. *he justified us by his obedience to the Father*

3. *and accordingly that he does not perform this for us in respect to his divine nature, but according to his human nature*

for tho' God alone is the fountain of righteousness, and the only way in which we are righteous is by participation with him, yet, as by our unhappy revolt we are alienated from his righteousness, it is necessary to descend to this lower remedy, that Christ may justify us by the power of his death and resurrection

this is shorter than most but I need to understand this better - and it will take more study on my end

calvin continues with his assault on the heresies of osiander concerning the doctrine of justification by faith alone - his arguments are a bit technical and nuanced because of what was going on in his day - tho' there are those who believe what osiander was teaching, these issues don't really rise much in our day - but besides his refutation, calvin also, in a very detailed way, ensures that all who read understand his precise meaning of this important doctrine - so important that luther said it was the doctrine on which the church stands or falls

again, read the devotion, which boils down the 3 paragraphs very well

3.11.9 - 3.11.11

11.9

Christ must be God - because no mere man could accomplish what he accomplished on the cross

1. . . *purify our souls by his own blood*

2. . . *appease the Father by his sacrifice*

3. . . *acquit us from the charge of guilt*

yet, . . . *he performed all these things in his human nature*

and we infer that . . . *righteousness was manifested to us in his flesh*

thus, it required the God-man - the unique Son of God who became a man

turgid - swollen/bloated

tyros - novices

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

in this passage paul . . . *places the fountain of righteousness entirely in the incarnation of Christ*

1. although at times the righteousness of God means that which comes from God and he . . . *bestows upon us*. . .

2. paul, in this passage however, means only that having our sins wiped away by Christ, we can stand before God

-God showed us . . . *his own hidden and incomprehensible nature* in the Lord Jesus
. . . *Christ has been in a manner set before us as a fountain, whence [from which] we may draw what would otherwise lie without use in that deep and hidden abyss which streams forth to us in the person of the Mediator.*

11.10

we are in union with Christ, our head, as members of his body - Christ resides within us. . . *making us partners with him in the gifts with which he was endued*

-we have put him on - been engrafted into his body & we . . . *glory in having a fellowship or righteousness with him*
- he is not far away and outside us

calumny - false and defamatory statement

-osiander, on the other hand, . . . *spurning this spiritual union, insists on a gross mixture of Christ with believers*
[what osiander terms essential righteousness, meaning we actually are made righteous in justification, by God who molds together our human nature and his divine nature into one - as one would mix two lumps of clay together]

-anyone who doesn't hold to his view he calls followers of Zwingli - who taught that the Lord's supper is only a memorial service, Christ is not present in the supper at all - calvin would reject that view - as I would also - Christ is present in the Lord's supper - not in the bread or the cup but spiritually present as his people partake in faith that he will be there

in holding to essential righteousness, osiander means

1. God . . . *transfuses himself into us*
2. thus . . . *he makes us really righteous with himself*

probity - honesty/integrity

-again calvin and we hold that in justification God only declares us righteous, he doesn't make us righteous

-he then refutes this idea of gaining the divine nature at justification with 2 peter 1:4

2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

-saying that "you may become partakers of the divine nature" is a reference to our heavenly life, not our present state, as osiander takes it -

-according to calvin, it's future because it's based upon the promises God has granted to his people - i.e., calvin doesn't believe that divine nature is given to us at salvation - rather the promises are given to us "so that by them" we may become partakers of the divine nature - . . . *as if we now were what the gospel promises we shall be at the final advent of Christ* - see 1 john 3:2

-I'll have to study on that a little longer - I hadn't seen it that way before

11.11

but more poison lurks in the 2nd branch of osiander's heresy

pestiferous - annoying

jejune - naïve, superficial, simplistic

disrelished - disliked, having a feeling of distaste

since there is nothing osiander hates worse than the doctrine of . . . *being justified by a free imputation*, he rejects the idea that justification is a legal term - a term from the law courts - that justification is simply God's verdict that we are acquitted - he rather says we are actually made righteous or we can't be forgiven

-appealing again to 2 cor 5:19,21, calvin lays out how this refutes osiander's view

1. those reconciled to God are REGARDED as righteous - not really righteous
2. God justifies by pardoning - justification is the opposite of accusation - rom 8:33

verdant - green, unripe

-calvin then applies to rom 4:6-7 & psalm 32:1 and david's words that there is blessing for "the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works. . . whose iniquities are forgiven"

-david judges himself righteous . . . *not in reality, but by imputation*

justification and regeneration, tho' never separated are 2 distinct things

- . . as it is too well known by experience that the remains of sin always exist in the righteous, it is necessary that justification should be something very different from reformation to newness of life, which . . . God begins in his elect, and carries on during the whole course of life, gradually and sometimes slowly

-God justifies, not in degrees or partially, but freely

-thus we appear in heaven . . . as if clothed with the purity of Christ

it must be decided that we are pleasing to God, as being without exception righteous in his sight

-so . . . the doctrine of justification is perverted and completely overthrown whenever doubt is instilled into the mind, confidence in salvation is shaken, and free. . . prayer is retarded; yea, whenever rest and tranquility with spiritual joy are not established

-the holiest man on earth could have no confidence of a right standing with God if it depended anything at all upon his imperfect nature mingled w/Christ's perfect nature - we must be completely, totally, perfectly righteous or we have no access to God - thus it is Christ's righteousness that is imputed to us, put into our account, that provides us joyous fellowship with our heavenly Father

-calvin then cites rom 7:24 & 8:33,35 to buttress his case

-because we are justified freely, as paul teaches us clearly, we can, with all the saints. . . *groan under the burden of sin, and yet with victorious assurance rise above all fears*

-osiander's doctrine will only cause people to . . . *remain in doubt, vibrating to this side and to that, because he will be unable to assume to himself as much righteousness as will be necessary to give confidence*

. . . *herein is the wondrous method of justification, that, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, [we] dread not the judgment of which [we] are worthy, and while [we] justly condemn [our]selves, are yet deemed righteous out of [our]selves*

after 3.11.12, calvin leaves osiander to wallow in his muddled misunderstandings, and continues in his exposition of justification by faith alone apart from works

-imploring that we must look to God's mercy and Christ's perfection, since our graces - our works done, even in the power of the Holy Spirit - are always imperfect and our obedience tainted

3.11.12 - 3.11.17

11.12

again calvin reminds that osiander's main problem is in thinking that, in justification, we are given Christ's righteousness & His divine nature becomes part of our being - we become "essentially righteous" - rather than the orthodox and biblical understanding of justification as that righteousness of Christ, being counted as ours, being imputed to us, not becoming inherent within us

-tho' Christ is the eternal light that has always shone in the darkness, even before he became a man, . . . *yet, he was a hidden light until he appeared in human nature as the Sun of Righteousness*. . . and it wasn't until then he called himself the light of the world

-citing a number of passages - gal 3:13, heb 2:14, david, phi 2:13, john 17:19, isa 59:17 - righteousness is put on us, not in us by God in justification - . . . *by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous - rom 5:19*

-everyone who becomes entangled in this fiction of. . . *a twofold righteousness [essential righteousness]. . . is prevented . . . from resting entirely on the mere mercy of God. . . and. . . mocks Christ. . .*

11.13

either we are justified by grace through faith or by works - can't be both -

-the verdict from the bible is it is by faith alone - phi 3:8-9 - . . . everyone who would obtain the righteousness of Christ must renounce his own

-the jews were rejected because . . . *they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God - rom 10:3*

- . . . *so long as the minutest portion of our own righteousness remains, we have still some ground for boasting - if faith excludes boasting - rom 3:27 - then works can't come into play at all*

11.14

sophists - the wisdom teachers - who are simply wrong per calvin - the contend man is justified by faith as well as works

-gal 3:11-12 - paul says that the law must be obeyed perfectly to obtain salvation thru it - which none can or ever will be able to do - while . . . *the righteousness of faith consists in believing that Christ died and rose again* - rom 10:5-9

-justification and sanctification - as calvin has said before - are inseparable but they must always be kept distinct - and the blessings from either are different

11.15

we, indeed, hold with paul, that those who fulfill the law are justified by God, but because we are all far from observing the law, we infer that the works which should be most effectual to justification are of no avail to us, because we are destitute of them

-2 errors of the papists [those who follow the pope] and schoolmen [academic catholics]

1. *calling faith assurance of conscience while waiting to receive from God the reward of merits*

2. interpret grace as

a. not the imputation of righteousness

b. but the assistance of the Spirit to be holy

lombard, one of the catholic schoolmen of the middle ages - 12th century - taught that grace in our justification directs us in doing good works by the helps of the Holy Spirit -

-even augustine . . . *classes the grace by which we are regenerated to newness of life under the head of sanctification* - calvin doesn't hold to any one man's interpretations - he is his own man, knowing that he's responsible to God to find the truth from the word - tho' we would say he was "augustinian" in his theology, he doesn't buy augustine lock, stock and barrel - a good lesson for us all!

11.16

scriptural justification, on the other hand . . . *bids us look only to the mercy of God and the perfection of Christ calvin's "order of justification"*

1. God by pure grace embraces the sinner, . . . *in whom he see nothing that can move him to mercy but wretchedness, because he sees him altogether naked and destitute of good works*

2. so, he . . . *seeks the cause of kindness in himself, that thus he may affect the sinner by a sense of his goodness, and induce him, in distrust of his own works, to cast himself entirely upon his mercy for salvation*

3. this is the meaning of faith thru which sinners possess salvation, realize they're reconciled by God to himself, and by Christ's intercession obtain forgiveness of sins and are justified

4. . . *though renewed by the Spirit of God, the justified person . . . instead of leaning on his own works . . . must look solely to the righteousness which is treasured up for him in Christ*

11.17

in the relationship between faith and the gospel

1. faith justifies. . . *because it receives and embraces the righteousness offered in the gospel*

2. being freely offered in the gospel, then excludes all works

citing romans 10:5 & 6:9 calvin says of paul's distinction between the law and gospel

1. law furnishes a justification to works

2. gospel . . . *bestows it freely without any help from works*

-justification given by the gospel is diametrically opposed to the law - gal 3:18

both gospel and law have promises, but

1. the promises of the gospel are gratuitous based on the mercy of god

2. the promises of the law are based on the performance of works

love assuredly is the chief commandment in the law, and since the Spirit of God trains us to love, it cannot but be a cause of righteousness in us, though that righteousness even in the saints is defective, and therefore of no value as a ground of merit

3.11.18-3.11.23

calvin continues his discussion of faith and works, in regard to justification

-these technical discussions regarding justification are sometimes tedious, but remember that this is the primary doctrine of the gospel around which the reformation arose and if luther is the heart of the reformation, bring the fire of the movement toward the true gospel, calvin is really its first theologian, bringing the light
-calvin is careful in using the phrase, "justification by faith alone," since it is not explicitly used in scripture, although it is clearly present all through paul's writings

-in fact, james says we're not justified by faith alone, explicitly

James 2:21-24 ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" - and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

-but the context is quite different – it seems the entire tenor of james' letter deals with being justified before men – i.e., our profession of faith is made credible by our works – while paul speaks of justification before God

-I hope before the discussion is over, calvin will deal with james

-calvin closes out chapter 11 discussing another "ingenious subterfuge" that when paul speaks of no man being justified by works of the law, he means by ceremonial works – that paul is not referring to the moral aspect of the law – which is a "strange fiction"

11.18

citing gal 3:11, calvin declares that the law is different from faith – and proceeds to logically prove that's what paul says – which he summarizes by saying we. . .*are justified independent of, nay, in the absence of, the merit of works, because faith receives that righteousness which the gospel bestows* – we're justified completely thru the mercy of God

-thus paul says Abraham had no basis for any boast – faith was imputed to him, not conjured up by him

11.19

the fact that paul never explicitly says that justification is by faith ALONE, does not negate paul's meaning that it is by faith alone – but that is clearly the only conclusion we can come to if faith is disconnected from works – how can paul say we are . . .*justified freely by his grace*, if our works play into our justification?

-here, the early church father, origen, is cited by the "sophists" [roman catholics] to . . .*pretend that the works excluded are ceremonial, not moral works*

-calvin says this is just illogical – and cites a number of clear statements from galatians and romans to substantiate his claim

effrontery – impudence, impertinence, insolence

-even children will laugh at their impudent claim that paul means ceremonial law only and not moral law
the true conclusion, therefore, is, that the whole law is spoken of when the power of justifying is denied to it

11.20

the only value of works is that in them . . .*we endeavor to manifest obedience to God*

cavil = petty objection

on the basis of scripture they have no argument to bring forth that . . .*can enable them to prove that the exclusion of works is not general*, i.e., includes the moral, as well as the ceremonial law

-if works were taken into account, grace gives ways to debt – but paul says, . . .*to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness* –

-calvin asks could paul make it any clearer that works are out . . .*and that faith is imputed for righteousness only when righteousness is conferred freely without merit?*

11.21

justification defined by calvin: *justification by faith is reconciliation with God, and that this consists solely in the forgiveness of sins*

an axiom of the faith: *the wrath of God lies upon all men so long as they continue sinners*

using isaiah 59:1-2, calvin says this is because . . . *sin is a separation between God and man; that his countenance is turned away from the sinner; and that it cannot be otherwise, since, to have any intercourse with sin is repugnant to his righteousness*

-we must begin with a holy, just, righteous God – even his grace, mercy, and kindness cannot set aside the fact . . . *to have any intercourse with sin is repugnant to his righteousness* – God is not able to ignore our sin, because . . . *sin is a separation between God and man . . . man is at enmity with God until he is restored to favor by Christ* God thus justifies him only when he . . . *admits him to union with Christ – . . . because he can neither receive him into favor, nor unite him to himself, without changing his condition from that of a sinner into that of a righteous man. . . this is done by remission of sins*

-if it is thought reconciliation to God comes by works, since our works are never completely free of sin, they are never completely pure, we . . . *still prove to be in reality sinners*
. . . *the only way in which those whom God embraces are made righteous, is by having their pollutions wiped away by the remission of sins, so that this justification may be termed in one word the remission of sins*

11.22

this is now proven by scripture – 2 cor 5:19-21; rom 4:6; luke 1:77; acts 12:38-39

-he also cites Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux –

11.23

. . . *it is entirely by the intervention of Christ's righteousness that we obtain justification before God*

-and that righteousness is received . . . *by imputation. . . while we are . . . strictly deserving of punishment*

- . . . *the only way in which we become possessed of [righteousness] is by being made partakers with Christ, since with him we possess all riches*

-citing rom 8:3-4, and paul's statement about the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in us, calvin concludes that . . . *the only fulfillment to which he refers is that which we obtain by imputation. our Lord Jesus Christ communicates his righteousness to us. . .*

to declare that we are deemed righteous, solely because the obedience of Christ is imputed to us as if it were our own, is just to place our righteousness in the obedience of Christ

-ambrose's illustration of the blessing of Jacob doesn't work for me – because jacob's presenting himself to his father, Isaac, was in deceit – we must come to our Father, clothed in Christ's righteousness, fully admitting who we truly are

3.12.1-3.12.5

how necessary or vital is justification by faith alone? is it a hill to die on? is it really worth fighting for?

calvin says it's more important than we can say or think or imagine

we're not talking about what men think of us but how God will judge us concerning our eternity

-it's a "serious matter" way beyond "frivolous word battles"

as our devotion writer says, *only God's righteousness is immaculate, underived, Creatorly righteousness. . . such righteousness will not be satisfied with any works of man. CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IS NOT A GAME! THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS HARDLY A WAY THAT WE CHOOSE TO SPEND OUR LEISURE*

12.1

the foundation of the discussion of justification is important because it concerns the righteousness that . . . *is not that of a human, but of a heavenly tribunal* – it's about what we will plea before God's judgment bench

-the irony of sinful mankind is that those . . . *whose diseases are most palatable, and blemishes most apparent. . . are those who . . . talk more confidently. . . more blusteringly about the righteousness of works*

-logomachy = an argument about words

-this discussion is not just an argument about word – the issue is *how shall we answer the heavenly judge when he calls us to account*

-better not be thinking of him according to how . . . *our own unaided intellect conceives of him, but as he is portrayed to us in scripture*

-I meant to insert in my last note that those who think of God as love, can't conceive that God cannot – it is impossible for him – to wink at our sin – to just ignore it and then let us into heavenly bliss – in scripture he is portrayed as

1. a brightness which obscures the stars
2. a strength which melts the mountains
3. an anger which shakes the earth
4. a wisdom which takes the wise in their own craftiness
5. a purity before which all things become impure
6. a righteousness to which not even angels are equal
7. a vengeance which once kindled burns to the lowest hell

-and remember, as calvin alluded to much earlier, that as long as anyone is outside of Christ, the wrath of God continually abides on him – so if a person remains an unbeliever, he can expect nothing other than #7 above
sisting = insisting

if God judges our actions, which of us can feel secure in insisting that he be fair or just with us?

. . . even if a man could satisfy the law, he could not stand the scrutiny of that righteousness which transcends all our thoughts

11.2

thus, then, must we raise our eyes that we may learn to tremble instead of vainly exulting

-even if we consider ourselves equal to or better than other men, that means nothing to God

go now and make a proud boast of your righteousness among men, while God in heaven abhors it!

-calvin then cites a number of scriptures to show how foolish it is to compare ourselves with our own standards rather than God's perfect ones –

I also thought of paul reminding the Corinthians that comparing themselves to each other is a fool's errand

2 Corinthians 10:12 ¹² Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

11.3

besides the scriptural proofs given in the last paragraph, calvin now quotes 2 of his favorites to establish his point: Augustine & Bernard

11.4

for if the stars which shine most brightly by night lose their brightness on the appearance of the sun, what think we will be the case with the highest purity of man when contrasted with the purity of God?

-his scrutiny will penetrate. . . *to the most hidden thoughts of the heart. . . to bring forward every thing, even things which have now escaped the memory*

if we look seriously at God's . . . *true standard of righteousness we will find:*

1. that, judged on their own worth, our works. . . *are nothing but vileness and pollution* – isa 64:6
2. what we commonly consider righteous, . . . *is with God mere iniquity*
3. what we deem . . . *integrity is pollution*
4. what we deem. . . *glory is ignominy* – i.e., public shame or disgrace

11.5

. . . while man flatters himself by wearing an external mask of righteousness, the Lord weighs the hidden impurity of the heart in his balance

-the only way we can examine ourselves properly is

1. to . . . *be called to the judgment seat of God*

2. for his light. . .to disclose the secret recesses of wickedness which otherwise lie too deeply hid then we will . . .clearly perceive what the value of our works is

. . .the strictness of the examination ought to be continued until it has completely alarmed us, and in that way prepared us for receiving the grace of Christ

today is the penultimate reading of the 1st half of calvin's institutes - if you've made it thus far, tomorrow we're half-way done!

calvin continues with his discussion on justification emphasizing our total lack of righteousness and the pure mercy of God in providing Christ's righteousness to and for us - nothing, nothing, nothing in us warrants God's saving us - that's calvin's point to maintain the unimpaired glory of God -relying not on our own merits but on Christ's will allow us *full peace and assurance*

3.12.6-3.13.3

12.6

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble - 1 peter 5:5 - the means of humbling us is our making. . .way for the mercy of God by our utter indigence and destitution

1. no one is saved until or unless . . .*all pride is laid aside and true humility is embraced*

2. that humility is

a. . .*not a kind of moderation by which you yield to God some article of your right*

b. . .*it is the unfeigned submission of a mind overwhelmed by a serious conviction of its [lack] and misery. .*

.those who lie afflicted by a knowledge of their poverty. . .

citing Isaiah 57:15, 66:2 - requiring a contrite heart, calvin defines contrition as . . .*a wounded heart, which humbling the individual to the earth, allows him not to rise. with such contrition must your heart be wound, if you would, according to the declaration of God, be exalted with the humble - referring back to 1 peter 5 if this is not your case, you shall be humbled by the mighty hand of God to your shame and disgrace*

12.7

the parable of the tax collector and Pharisee praying in luke 18 illustrates the point

-because of the pharisee's confidence in his righteousness he leaves . . .*unaccepted and abominated*

-the tax collector acknowledges he has nothing to offer, confesses his sin and inability and leaves justified *hence we see how highly our humility is valued by the Lord: our breast cannot receive his mercy until deprived completely of all opinion of its own worth*

-the prideful view of the pharisee closed . . .*the door of mercy*

Christ's mission when he came was to save . . .*the meek. . .broken-hearted . . .captives. . .those that mourn*

-in fulfillment of that mission, the only persons whom he invites to share in his beneficence are the "weary and heavy laden" - matt 11:28; 9:13

12.8

in order to come to Christ we have to . . .*put far from us all arrogance and confidence*

1. arrogance. . .*is produced by a foolish persuasion of self-righteousness*

2. confidence. . .*may exist without any confidence in works. for many sinners, intoxicated with the pleasures of vice, think not of the judgment of God never shall we*

1. . .*have sufficient confidence in him unless utterly distrustful of ourselves*

2. . .*take courage in him until we first despond of ourselves*

3. . .*have full consolation in him until we cease to have any in ourselves*

in order to . . .*apprehend and obtain the grace of God. . .we must*

1. throw away all self-confidence

2. trust in His goodness alone

. . .he is prepared to reap the fruits of the divine mercy who has thoroughly emptied himself, I say not of righteousness, (he has none,) but of a vain and blustering show of righteousness; for to whatever extent any man rests in himself, to the same extent he impedes the beneficence of God

13.1

2 goals of justification

1. the unimpaired glory of God

2. peace and tranquility of conscience, in anticipation of God's judgment

calvin lays out and explains a number of scriptural proofs in this paragraph - justification, gained thru the redemption of Christ, enables God to be both just and justifier of those who believe in him - as luther wrote, believers are *simul iustus et peccator* - at the same time just and sinner

-since the righteousness accounted to us is not ours but Christ's perfect righteousness, . . .*every mouth may be stopped* - no claims or boasts are possible

for so long as a man has anything, however small, to say in his own defense, so long he deducts somewhat from the glory of God. . .rebels against God, and obscures his glory

13.2

. . .we never truly glory in him until we have utterly discarded our own glory. . .whoso glories in himself glories against God

-again a number of scriptural proofs are given

let us remember, therefore, that in the whole discussion concerning justification the great thing to be attended to is, that God's glory be maintained entire and unimpaired

. . .man cannot claim a single particle of righteousness to himself, without at the same time detracting from the glory of the divine righteousness

13.3

the only way to have a genuinely quiet and clear conscience. . .*is by having righteousness bestowed upon us freely by the gift of God*

- . . *there is not one man who is not covered with infinite pollutions - pro 20:9*

let the most perfect man descend into his own conscience, and bring his actions to account, and what will the result be? will he feel calm and quiescent, as if all matters were well arranged between himself and God; or will he not rather be stung with dire torment, when he sees that the ground of condemnation is within him if he be estimated by his works?

talking of righteousness will never helpful until we believe it will . . .*support our souls before the tribunal of God. when the soul is able to appear intrepidly in the presence of God, and receive his sentence without dismay, then only let us know that we have found a righteousness that is not fictitious*

-in rom 4:14 paul fixes this in the minds of his readers

1. faith is made void if righteousness comes thru the . . .*merit of our works*

2. no one could ever rest assured that he'd fully satisfied the law - in fact, everyone could know and should feel condemned in knowing they had not satisfied the law fully

hence it appears how deep and dark the abyss is into which hypocrisy plunges the minds of men, when they indulge so securely as, without hesitations to oppose their flattery to the judgment of God, as if they were relieving him from his office as judge. - how treacherous is the ground under the feet of those who consider their works sufficient to stand before God and claim their fitness for his presence!

- . . *very different is the anxiety which fills the breasts of believers who sincerely examine themselves to have faith is*

1. *not to fluctuate, to vary, to be carried up and down, to hesitate, remain in suspense, vacillate, in fine, to despair*

2. *it is to possess sure certainty and complete security of mind, to have whereon to rest and fix your foot*

ha! 1/2 way done now

more on justification and righteousness from God as a free gift - resting on the promises of God, received by faith - calvin masterfully explains why even the virtues or good works of the unsaved are evil - the basic motivation is not for the glory of God

. . .our religion distinguishes the just from the unjust not by the law of works but by that of faith, without which what seemed good works are turned into sins

3.13.4 - 3.14.5

13.4

calvin continues his discussion of romans 4:14 from above

-the promise to become heirs. . . *will not be fulfilled [except] to those who put faith in it*

-but he also says, . . . *whatever God has mercifully promised he faithfully performs*

-in this we pin our hopes, . . . *paying no respect to our works, and asking no assistance from them*

-calvin once again cites his favorites, augustine and bernard

-faith has to enable us - and truth assist us . . . *in order that the secret purpose of the Father respecting us may be revealed by the Spirit, and the Spirit testifying may persuade our hearts that we are the sons of God*

-the only way to have peace is to have our sins forgiven - only Christ does that - thus he is called the Prince of peace and he is called our peace

how is God appeased for our sins by Christ's sacrifice? - . . . *peace must be sought nowhere but in the agonies of Christ our Redeemer*

13.5

. . .the conscience can have no peace or quiet joy until it is held for certain that we are justified by faith - never resting until we're sure we are pleasing to God

-tho' we may gain that assurance, *until we have reached that haven [heaven], the slightest breeze will make us tremble, but so long as the Lord is our Shepherd, we shall walk without fear in the valley of the shadow of death. thus those who pretend that justification by faith consists in being regenerated and made just, by living spiritually, have never tasted the sweetness of grace in trusting that God will be propitious*

-to have assurance, . . . *we must hold that the only hope which believers have of the heavenly inheritance is, that being engrafted into the body of Christ, they are justified freely. . . faith is merely passive bringing nothing of our own to procure the favor of God, but receiving from Christ everything that we want [lack]*

14.1

4 categories of people in the world

1. not justified at all - . . . *endued with no knowledge of God. . . sunk in idolatry*

2. "churched" . . . *but by the impurity of their lives denying him whom they confess with their mouths - nominal Christians - professors who are truly believers*

3. hypocrites who . . . *hide the iniquity of their hearts . . . with lofty words and good things done*

4. . . *regenerated by the Spirit of God AND aspire to true holiness*

-calvin now spends time proving that there is . . . *not an iota of good to be found in our. . . natural endowments*

-we are head to toe sinful -

-that the value . . . *on which men are to plume themselves*

-in order to judge as God does, . . . *we must penetrate to the very source of action. . . look within, and see from what affection of the heart these works proceed*

14.2

by God's common grace unbelievers are able to do good things

-and there is a difference between the moderate evil of some versus the raging evil of others

-a big difference. . . *between the observance of law and justice, and the contempt of them*

-however, both deem a person guilty and liable to God's everlasting banishment

-God has put in each the different between. . .*honorable and base actions* and then confirms it by his providence
-blessings come to those who . . .*cultivate virtue* - not at all by merit . . . *but he is pleased thus to show how much he delights in true righteousness, since he does not leave even the outward semblance of it to go unrewarded*

14.3

no matter how virtuous, unbelievers are . . .*more deserving of punishment than of reward, because, by the pollution of their heart, they contaminate the pure gifts of God*

-executing whatever good works they do . . .*in the worst manner, because they are kept from acting ill, not by a sincere love of goodness, but merely by ambition or self-love, or some other sinister affection*

- . . .*these actions are polluted as in their very source, by impurity of heart*

-the goal of righteousness is always to serve, honor and glorify God and since unbelievers have no concern for the purpose . . .*divine wisdom prescribes, although from the act seems good, yet from the perverse motive it is sin. . .*

.duties are estimated not by acts but by motives

14.4

since. . .*there is no sanctification without union with Christ, it is evident that they are bad trees. . . pretty to look at, even producing some sweet fruit maybe, . . .but are still very far from good*

-everything an unbeliever. . .*thinks, designs, and performs, before he is reconciled to God by faith, is cursed, and not only of no avail for justification, but merits certain damnation*

-without faith it is impossible to please God

14.5

God comes to man by his . . .*free liberality* . . alone, because there is nothing in any person . . .*to induce him to show kindness. . .to any of us*

-but when God gives us new life - regeneration - we're raised from the dead and made new creatures

-calvin now gives a number of scriptural proofs that God initiates and gives new life to dead sinners

. . . *our first power to act aright is derived from regeneration. . .by nature, sooner shall oil be extracted from stone than good works from us*

-man is stripped . . .*of every particle of righteousness, until by mere mercy he is regenerated unto the hope of eternal life*

-if works count for anything toward this, as paul says, *grace is no more grace*

-if sinners alone are admitted, why do we seek admission by means of fictitious righteousness?

3.14.6 – 3.14.11

more on the 4-fold categorizing of people in regards to justification –

1. calvin has been speaking of those in the 1st category – outside of Christ & unjustified

-he concludes his discussion on them today

2 & 3 then combines these 2 in one discussion

2. the nominal Christian – Christian in name only but not in reality

3. the hypocrite – hiding his true nature behind the veil of a moral life

4. finally, he begins his thoughts about the . . .*the people who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are justified by faith*

14.6

calvin's humility is seen in the beginning of this paragraph

-he knows he's on dangerous ground fighting so hard for the cause of justification by faith alone so diligently, as if he were the only one who understood it

-so he resorts to scripture, allowing its words thru God's inspired authors to continue his argument

-isaiah is brought to the witness stand – no man can assist the Lord in recovering salvation for Israel

hosea is next – if salvation depends on God's mercy, there's no room for man's righteousness

were reminded paul's deeming us enemies of God until justified

-if justification is the beginning of love, how can the righteousness of works precede it?

-what do you say, john? God first loved us

again hosea teaches that God determined I will love them freely. . .

calvin concludes: assuredly he is not influenced by works if his love turns to us spontaneously. but the rude and vulgar idea entertained is, that we did not merit the interposition [intervention] of Christ for our redemption, but that we are aided by our works in obtaining possession of it

-calvin won't allow this – or better, calvin says God won't allow this

. . .though we may be redeemed by Christ, still, until we are engrafted into union with him [i.e., justified] by the calling of the Father, we are darkness, heirs of death, and enemies of God. for paul declares that we are not

purged and washed from our impurities by the blood of Christ until the Spirit accomplishes that cleansing in us

-if that be true, how can anyone think that prior to this “sprinkling” that . . .we are anything but sinners without Christ?

the last sentence is one of that establishes both the T and the I in the TULIP acrostic

14.7

in this paragraph calvin reveals his view, the biblical understanding, at least in my opinion, that regeneration both precedes and produces faith ALWAYS

impurity of conscience proves that as yet neither [category 2 & 3] of these classes is regenerated by the Spirit of God. and, again, their not being regenerated proves their want [lack] of faith

-both these categories think their works are . . .worthy of the approbation [commendation, praise, acceptance] of God

-thus convinced, they will never confess that they don't own righteousness – knowing they're not altogether or completely righteous, yet, thinking . . .some degree of righteousness will satisfy God –

-calvin calls in haggai to witness against them now –

. . .all the works performed by sinners are contaminated by impurity of heart

14.8

Isaiah confirms haggai's words –

nugatory = useless, futile, unimportant

-hypocrites in disguising their hearts, . . .lay God under obligation by their works. in this way they will only offend him more and more

-while the scriptures assure us that the best of men at their best, tho' . . .not yet truly sanctified, are so far from being righteousness in the sight of the Lord, that he regards them as sins. . .works are not pleasing to God unless the person has previously found favor in his sight

now moises testifies for us - . . .the Lord was propitious [had respect] to abel, before he had respect to his works

-jeremiah – then luke are brought in to continue calvin's onslaught of the false idea that our works have any merit at all before God

14.9

finally, calvin reaches the 4th category of men – those truly justified and sanctified by God

-in one long sentence, he lists the results of being born again into Christ

1. God reconciles us to himself thru the righteousness of Christ

2. by which he then gives us free pardon – the forgiveness of all sins

3. thus he can regard us as righteous – his goodness . . .conjoined with [his] mercy

4. the Holy Spirit indwells each justified person

5. and by his power believers are putting to death the lusts of the flesh, having been set apart by God and consecrating ourselves to the Lord for holiness of life

6. being trained in our desire to obey his law, which is his will

7. all to his glory

yet, in this life there remains imperfection to keep us humble

...the best thing which can be produced by [man] is always tainted and corrupted by the impurity of the flesh, as has, as it were, some mixture of dross in it. . .even saints cannot perform one work which, if judged on its own merits, is not deserving of condemnation

14.10

Ezekiel and James are now called to the stand – both agree that even if we could perform an absolutely pure work, . . .*one sin is sufficient to efface and extinguish all remembrance of former righteousness. . .whatever righteousness we could acquire would ever and anon [always] be corrupted, overwhelmed, and destroyed, by subsequent sins*

-one or two good works will not fulfill the righteousness what the law demands – uninterrupted obedience
-here Calvin rejects the notion that many have – that is, that at conversion we are forgiven all our sins once for all, yet, having all our past sins erased, we now, as Christians, seek righteousness thru our obedience to the law *for since perfection is altogether unattainable by us, so long as we are clothed with flesh, and the law denounces death and judgment against all who have not yielded a perfect righteousness, there will always be ground to accuse and convict us unless the mercy of God interpose, and ever and anon absolve us by the constant remission of sins. . .if we are estimated by our own worthiness. . . with all our studies and endeavors we deserve death and destruction*

14.11

2 things Calvin insists upon

1. . . *no believer ever performed one work which, if tested by the strict judgment of God, could escape condemnation*

2. . . *were this granted to be possible, (though it is not,) yet the act being vitiated [spoiled, destroyed, impaired] and polluted by the sins of which it is certain that the author of it is guilty, it is deprived of merit*
-tho' the "sounder schoolmen" [another description of Roman Catholic teachers] agree that sinners are. . .*freely delivered from condemnation. . .obtaining justification and forgiveness of sins, they then proceed to teach that being once reconciled to God by means of Christ, he is afterwards deemed righteous by his good works, and is accepted in consideration of them*

-Paul what say you? Habakkuk do you have a response? – what, you both say, *the just shall live by faith?* –
hmm, the schoolmen must be wrong

-David, do you have any help? oh yes, *blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered* and that only come when God does not impute to us our iniquities

. . .*the message of free reconciliation with God is not promulgated for one or two days, but is declared to be perpetual in the church. . .Christ ever remains a Mediator to reconcile the Father to us, and there is a perpetual efficacy in his death. . .perfect obedience by which all our iniquities are covered*

3.14.12-3.14.18

at last, in the devotion we have an actual definition of those Calvin called the "schoolmen" - . . .*theologians who taught theology and philosophy at major European universities during middle ages 0*

-these were the teachers of the doctrines that Calvin has been refuting and rejecting – especially this series of chapters on *justification* by faith alone - here the Roman doctrine of supererogation is broached – . . .*good works that went above and beyond the call of duty stacking up "extra points" for future forgiveness*

-Calvin rejected this outright, feeling the schoolmen failed to take sin as seriously as God takes it

-neither did they understand God's perfect requirement of obedience

14.12

-the schoolmen did teach that good works weren't . . .*sufficient to procure justification* – it was only due to God's grace – they also agreed that the righteousness of our works. . .*is always imperfect. . .we stand in need of the forgiveness of sin in order to supply the deficiency of works, but that the faults which are committed are compensated by works of supererogation*

-of course, calvin rejects this – reiterating what he’s already said a number of times – only the righteousness of Christ can bring acceptance with God – imputing it to us so that before Him we stand cleared of all charges -forgiveness and justification comes by faith alone –
our imperfection and impurity, covered with this purity, are not imputed but are as it were buried when we are in Christ

14.13

. . .the only righteousness acknowledged in heaven being the perfect observance of the Law – our impartial & impure good works can never accomplish this
execrable = abominable, wretched
. . .those who trifle with sin do not at all consider how execrable it is in the sight of God; if they did, they would assuredly understand, that all the righteousness of men collected into one heap would be inadequate to compensate for a single sin. for we see that by one sin man was so cast off and forsaken by God, that he at the same time lost all power of recovering salvation
-the Lord can have no respect for our works until we have first been forgiven

14.14

when it comes to our doing any good works, if it is so, we are nothing more than unprofitable services
. . .we do not perform gratuitous duties, but pay him service which is due
. . . the obligations of service under which we lie are so numerous that we cannot discharge them though all our thoughts and members are devoted to the observance of the law

14.15

1 Cor 9:15 is one of the verses the schoolmen misinterpret to build their supererogation doctrine
-tho’ paul went above and beyond, he only did that which was . . .*always due our Master*

14.16

. . .our righteousness is offensive in the sight of God unless it derives a sweet odor from the purity of Christ; . . .it can have no other effect than to excite the divine vengeance unless sustained by his indulgent mercy
-a Christian is one who has had his mouth shut! – Sinclair ferguson – rom 3:19
. . .when brought to the bar of God all that mortals can do is to stand dumb – calvin
our soul, therefore, will not be duly purified until it ceases to have any confidence, or feel any exultation in works

calvin’s summary thoughts on justification – tho’ he is not finished

14.17

what is the source of cause of our salvation – calvin’s discussion of primary and secondary causes of it
1. *the efficient cause* [that which makes it happen]. . . *the mercy and free love of the heavenly cause toward us* [i.e., free and sovereign grace]
2. *the material cause* [the substance by which it is able to be made to happen]. . .*Christ, with the obedience by which he purchased righteousness for us*
3. *the formal or instrumental cause* [the means by which it actually happens – by which it is applied & apprehended] . . .can be nothing. . .*but faith*
4. *the final cause* [the purpose for it all]. . .*the demonstration of the divine righteousness and the praise of his goodness*
-all found in rom 3:23-24
-important to notice that . . .*all parts of our salvation thus exist without us* [therefore] *what ground can we have for glorying or confiding in our works?*
we’re enemies of God – how can we imagine that we could do anything to please God or merit righteousness apart from his mercy?

... scripture reclaims. . . that Christ is both righteousness and life, and that the blessing of justification is possessed by faith alone

4.18

2 ways in which people can consider themselves OK before God on their own account

1. compare themselves with the ungodly – gaining a sense of security . . . *not so much from commendation of their own righteousness, as from the just and merited condemnation of their adversaries* OR
2. maintaining the purity of their own conscience, they give themselves some comfort & security

but true believers look for security by directing . . . *their eyes to the goodness of God alone. . . not only in the first instance [i.e., initial conversion]. . . but rest in it as the completion*

-and consider any works in service to God simply as . . . *proofs of God dwelling and reigning in us*

-we can't think of our works, subsequent to conversion, as adding or aiding to our salvation

... the gift of good works. . . show that we have received the Spirit of adoption

again, it seems like calvin is redundant - saying the same things over and over again - and he is - but it is for emphasis I think - the very heart of the gospel is under attack at the savage hands of the schoolmen

3.14.19-3.15.3

contrary to some modern opinion, the debates over the nature of justification were not just local, European debates involving luther and calvin and a few others against the catholic church –

-calvin disagrees, regarding the idea of man's works of righteousness being possible, even necessary, to be right with God, as . . . *endemic to the idolatrous, sinful human condition*

-we can see that little has changed in the 500 yrs since calvin, as we read his description of false ideas and teaching of his day

-however, even tho' calvin throws out any notion of works being included in our justification before God, he carefully proclaims that they do play in our assurance – but only in the sense that they are proof or evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit – not meritorious in any way

as our devotional writer says, . . . *we must never commend our good works to God, but only commend God in our good works*

-it takes perfect works, completely fulfilling God's law to merit God's approval and we can't produce them on our own, ever

-even so, we must persevere in the faith, and not grow weary in well-doing

14.19

when the scriptures speak of man's good works, or someone asks the Lord to hear based on their integrity and sincerity, they are viewed only as evidence of regeneration and the indwelling Spirit

-God's goodness only comes thru His promise, not thru our works

-if we begin to depend upon our own works for our assurance, . . . *nothing will be weaker or more uncertain; works, when estimated by themselves, no less proving the divine displeasure by their imperfection, than his goodwill by their [incomplete] purity*

we are victorious . . . *thru him who loved us – rom 8:37*

14.20

calvin once again cites Augustine to strengthen his point – speaking to God he says, . . . *but I commend not the works of my hand, for I fear that when thou examines them thou wilt find more faults than merits*

-augustine gives 2 reasons for not boasting in his own deeds

1. any good works he might perform are empowered by God
2. any good works he might perform are . . . *overwhelmed by a multitude of sins*

14.21

when the bible intimates that we the works of believers cause the Lord to bless them, calvin says, don't forget the various causes of salvation - . . . *there is nothing to prevent the Lord from embracing works as inferior causes. . . those whom in mercy he has destined for the inheritance of eternal life, he, in his ordinary administration, introduces to the possession of it by means of good works. . . but whenever the true cause is to be assigned, he enjoins us not to take refuge in works, but to keep our thoughts entirely fixed on the mercy of God*

-God adds grace to grace – bestows more grace & blessing upon his people to enrich them throughout their lives – yet, we're not to look to our works as gaining those blessing, but to his . . . *free election as [their] source and beginning*

15.1

. . . *justification if dependent upon works, cannot possibly stand in the sight of God, it must depend solely on the mercy of God and communion with Christ, and therefore on faith alone.*

-it seems redundant, but it expresses calvin's deep concern about maintaining the grace of God apart from works

- . . . *no man is justified by works unless he has reached the summit of perfection, and cannot be convicted of even the smallest transgression.*

-then calvin raises a separate question: . . . *do they not merit favor with God* – after justification

15.2

here calvin says that using words that are not biblical words, [tho' it is unavoidable at times, such as trinity] often causes confusion as to their meaning – words that . . . *might produce much offense, but very little fruit. . .*

-“merit” is one such word - . . . *can only obscure the grace of God, and inspire men with pernicious pride*

-but even Augustine, bernard & chrysostom used it in their writings – as well as other “good” writers of theology

15.3

all our works can merit nothing before God because they are full of impurity

-if we perfectly obey the law (which we can't) we only become unprofitable servants – luke 17:10

. . . *only perform due service by which no favor is deserved. and yet those good works which the Lord has bestowed upon us he counts ours also, and declares that they are not only acceptable to him, but that he will recompense them*

-we should be prodded by his promise, and continue in courage, and not become weary in well-doing, rather in gratitude for God's great kindness toward us

-*the most perfect things which proceeds from man is always polluted by some stain*

-**USUFRUCT**. - the legal right of using and enjoying the fruits or profits of something belonging to another.

manumitted – released from slavery – set free

3.15.4-3.15.8

those who won't submit to clear teachings of scripture will always end up imposing their views into their interpretations, if they care about scripture at all

-calvin continues to expose “false doctrines” concerning justification in the remainder of chapter 15

1. justification is by grace alone yet good works earn favor in this life

2. the subtle way that the idea that we . . . *get in by grace but stay in by works* creeps into the thinking and living of serious Christians

-calvin calls in the cavalry of a multitude of scriptural references to establish righteousness as a gift of pure grace that has nothing to do w/anything the Christian merits

15.4

roman catholics appeal to one passage in the apocryphal book of ecclesiasticus which calvin refuses to give any authority, yet points out the error in translation from greek to latin – the latin version being the one the “sophists” teach from

- he also shows the error in interpretation of one of their proof texts for the merit of works [heb 13:16] – making it to seem to fit their version of justification when in fact it actually refutes it
- calvin so eloquently says that since our good works are never perfectly pure, we find that . . . *God is justly offended and made angry against us. . .since they can never . . .call forth his favor toward us*
- yet, . . .*because of his indulgence, he does not examine them with the utmost strictness, he accepts them just as if they were most pure; and therefore rewards them, tho’ undeserving with innumerable blessings, both present and future*
- . . .*the recompense of our toils and crown of our contest, our Lord almost uniformly places in heaven*
- the Lord does take account of our works, demonstrating his great love for us, . . .*thus highly honor[ing] not ourselves only, but the gifts, which he has bestowed upon us*

15.5

calvin’s first statement of this paragraph, in my opinion, deserves real tho’t today – he says, *had these points been duly handled and digested in past ages, never could so many tumults and dissensions have arisen.*

- this may have been true in his day, when everyone maintained a sense of history and what happened in the past having a real effect on and for the present – today, in our culture that lives by and for the moment only, even those doctrines that have . . . *been duly handled and digested in past ages. . .* don’t matter in the least today – everyone can believe what they want, do what they want, no matter what was “true” or deemed right believe and behavior in the past –
- this is one of our challenges to bringing the gospel to those outside the church in our day – what has been hammered out in the past as orthodox Christianity does not matter anymore – this is a brave new world – the result is “new covenant theology” “the new perspective on paul” “a new perspective on scripture” – all casting off traditional understandings – it’s definitely a challenge we must study and work to overcome- and of course, it’s only overcome thru Christ & His gospel and Word, as calvin reminds us that he is the only foundation –
- Christ wasn’t sent to help us gain righteousness – he was sent as our righteousness
- notice how calvin takes tho’ts from ephesians 1 to show it is in Christ alone we stand –

1. redemption thru his blood, forgiveness of sins
2. peace thru the blood of his cross
3. reconciled by his blood
4. under his protection we’re . . .*delivered from finally perishing*
5. engrafted to him we have eternal life and hope to enter the kingdom of God *being admitted to participation [fellowship] in him:*

1. *tho’ we are still foolish, he is our wisdom*
2. *tho’ we are still sinners, he is our righteousness*
3. *tho’ we are unclean, he is our purity*
4. *tho’ we are weak, unarmed, and exposed to satan, yet ours is the power which has been given him in heaven and in earth, to bruise satan under our feet, and burst the gates of hell*
5. *tho’ we still bear about with us a body of death, he is our life*

in short, all things of his are ours, we have all things in him, he is nothing in us

15.6

good works that cause men to be . . .*rendered agreeable to God. . .* in order to be justified is simply unbiblical

1. how can dead men produce materials of life?
2. if whatever is not of faith is sin, how can our actions before faith, i.e., sin, produce life?
3. what about the fact of scripture that says a bad tree can’t produce good fruit?

- calvin now attacks the idea that Christ . . .*merited for us the first grace. . .and it is our part not to let slip the occasion thus offered* – what has he left for Christ to do after his death on the cross? it’s now up to us

this is a . . .*daring effrontery [affront] of impiety*

...the doctrine of these men is, that the only benefit which proceeds from him is to open a way for each to justify himself

-this is absolutely no different from Mormon doctrine that says Christ died that we might work our way to heaven – and every other false religion for that matter

-in this way, many are modern day sophists and followers of the sophists

calvin now breaks out into a long chorus of scriptural proofs to show justification is by faith alone

...not, that by faith in Christ an opportunity is given of procuring justification or acquiring salvation, but that both are given us

-as soon as you are engrafted into Christ by faith you are made

1. a son of God
2. an heir of heaven
3. a partaker of righteousness
4. a possessor of life

...you have not obtained an opportunity for meriting, but all the merits of Christ. . .

15.7

the schoolmen have thus *...deprived us of justification by faith, which lies at the root of godliness*

-obloquy – strong public criticism, verbal abuse

-tho' they can't deny justification by faith, they certainly depart from the biblical understanding of it

-they end up *... by the praise of good works transfer[ring] to man what they steal from God*

...seeing that good works give little ground for exultation. . .if they are regarded as the fruits of divine grace, they derive them from the power of free-will; in other words, extract oil out of stone

-how important it is to be a successful student of scripture is illustrated in the case of peter Lombard –

15.8

calvin now piles on more scripture to establish the truth of his point, concluding that *he who has denied himself has cut off the root of all evils so far as no longer to seek his own; he who has taken up his cross has prepared himself for all meekness and endurance*

Christ is our example for this

1. *he obeyed his Father even unto death*
2. *his whole life was spent in doing the works of God*
3. *his whole soul was intent on the glory of his Father*
4. *he laid down his life for the brethren*
4. *he did good to his enemies, and prayed for them*

more scriptural proofs –

...see how it is that we do justify men before God by works, but say that all who are of God are regenerated and made new creatures, so that they pass from the kingdom of sin into the kingdom of righteousness. in this way they make their calling sure, and like trees, are judged by their fruits

the saga continues - calvin refutes the minutiae of error in the roman doctrine - but just as 1/2 degree of course deviation will take an airplane way off course in very little time, the same goes for justification, due to fallen man's default position of the deep inner desire to be justified by his own doing

-so we continue - as our devotion writer says of calvin, *let's keep beating them back!*

3.16.1-3.16.4

...while time flies, challenges to the gospel seldom change

more objections to justification by faith alone that never seem to die

-in part kept alive by roman church

-but heresy calls forth great writings from great Christians

-calvin will address how subtle these errors creep in, even in the minds of thinking Christians

-as for justification in relation to sanctification, the devotion writer reminds that *Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. these benefits are joined together by an everlasting & indissoluble bond*
-a second error calvin addresses in chapter 16 is the idea that it takes the incentive of merit thru good works to inspire zeal for good works – he points out that in scripture good works are never mentioned as motivation to morality – that will be addressed more fully in my discussion below

16.1

2 objections answered

1. we destroy good works and lead men away from them by saying justification is thru faith alone apart from works

2. justification is too easy our way & again, lures men to sin, of which they are already too much inclined
-justification by grace alone thru faith alone never claims a faith . . . *devoid of good works, nor . . . can [justification] exist without them*

-tho' justification is thru faith and not works, they are necessarily connected

-by faith we . . . *apprehend the righteousness of Christ, which alone reconciles us to God. this faith, however, you cannot apprehend without at the same time apprehending sanctification. . . Christ, therefore, justifies no man without also sanctifying him* – they're perpetually & inseparably tied together

-those

1. whom he enlightens by his wisdom he redeems

2. whom he redeems he justifies

3. whom he justifies he sanctifies

tho' we distinguish between them, they are both inseparably comprehended in Christ.

-we receive both justification and sanctification at the same time- never one without the other

- . . . *we are justified not without, and yet not by works*

16.2

it is absolutely untrue that depriving us of merit gained from our works we then have no . . . *desire of well-doing*

1. wrongly, they assume, . . . *unless a hope of reward is held forth, no regard will be had to the right conduct of life*

-God, on the other hand, clearly desires to be worshipped freely – and approves those who would worship him even if there were no promise of reward

-calvin now lays out a litany of scriptural proofs that encourage believers to holiness apart from a promise of reward

-strong incentives to holy living – grateful responses to grace, mercy and love bestowed – the one justified apart from works will follow their Master in sacrificial service to him

16.3

what an understatement! *I have given these few [actually a multitude] passages merely as a specimen all the apostles abound in exhortations, admonitions, and rebukes, for the purpose of training the man of God to every good work, and that without any mention of merit.*

-our salvation depends wholly on God's mercy – when Paul finally exhorts us to faithful living in rom 12 after 11 chapters concerning our salvation, he says, now, therefore, I encourage you *by the mercies of God* – the free grace of God is the basis and motivation for paul's exhortation to presenting ourselves to God as living sacrifices – not because when we do we will earn rewards, either in this life or the next

-that God may be glorified is the one sufficient motivation

-how about also, doesn't his kindness that led us to repentance incite us to holiness?

-the enemies of free grace falsely accuse that we have no real means of . . . *exhorting to good works*

-as if God would be pleased by our giving to get rather than cheerfully giving because he first gave to us

-there is a promise that God will repay to everyone according to their deeds

1. but this is not the only, nor the main motive

2. it is not the 1st motive

3. it has nothing to do with the merits these false teachers are constantly preaching

4. this promised reward has no value unless we're . . . *justified solely by the merits of Christ as apprehended by faith*

- . . . *the beginning of the due worship of God is confidence in his mercy; but that the fear of God cannot be entitled to the name of merit. . . because it's founded on the forgiveness of sins*

16.4

the persistent accusation by all arminians that eternal security, i.e., preservation and perseverance of the saints, invites men to sin is completely contrary to our doctrines and confessions – I will admit, some, by the way they live, might cause them to think so – but those few who live carelessly, because “once saved, always saved” pervert the magnificent, beautiful and God-glorifying truths of justification –

-*justification is a thing of such value, that it cannot be put into the balance with any good quality of ours;*

-it could never be gotten unless it was by God's grace –

-even tho' it is free to us, it wasn't to Christ who paid dearly for it, by his own most sacred blood

-this reminds us we've accomplished nothing and contributed nothing toward our own justification

- . . . *our pollution is so great, that it can never be washed away save in the fountain of his pure blood. must not those who are thus addressed conceive a greater horror of sin than if it were said to be wiped off by a sprinkling of good works?*

-however, it is disconcerting at times, that some, as I recently heard alan redpath quoted as saying, *sometimes we are more afraid of the Holy Spirit than we are of sin* – what a shame! what a disgrace to Christ's name!

-which of the two views of justification . . . *makes the forgiveness of sin of less value, and derogates from the dignity of justification*

1. *they pretend that God is appeased by their frivolous satisfactions; i.e., by mere dross.*

a. *we maintain that the guilt of sin is too heinous to be so frivolously expiated;*

b. *that the offense is too grave to be forgiven to such valueless satisfactions;*

c. *and, therefore, that forgiveness is the prerogative of Christ's blood alone*

2. *they say that righteousness, wherever it is defective, is renewed and repaired by works of satisfaction*

a. *we think it too precious to be balanced by any compensation of works,*

b. *and therefore, in order to restore it, recourse must be had solely to the mercy of God*