

John Calvin, the Theologian of

- Awesome beards
- Burning heretics
- Meddling in politics
- Verse by verse exposition while blinded by migraines
- Foreign Missions
- Mercy ministries to refugees and the sick
- Fearful sufferer of IBS so he invented "Sovereignty"



John Calvin, (1509-64). Calvin's personal motto was: "My heart I offer to you, O Lord, promptly and sincerely."

The REAL John Calvin

I. The Institutes was a manual for Personal study of the Word.

"I may add that my object in this work was to prepare and train students of theology for the study of the sacred volume, so that they might both have an easy introduction to it, and be able to proceed in it, with unfaltering step, seeing I have endeavoured to give such a summary of religion in all its parts, and have digested it into such an order as may make it not difficult for anyone, who is rightly acquainted with it, to ascertain both what he ought principally to look for in Scripture and also to what head he ought to refer whatever is contained in it. Having thus, as it were, paved the way, I shall not feel it necessary, in any commentaries on Scripture which I may afterwards publish, to enter into long discussions of doctrine. . . . In this way the pious reader will be saved much trouble and weariness, provided he comes furnished with a knowledge of the present work as an essential prerequisite." *Preface* to the 1545 edition

II. The Centerpoint of Christian Life is the same as the Centerpoint of Christian Theology: Union With Christ. (Institutes: <http://www.reformed.org/books/index.html>)

[Christ's] task was to restore us to God's grace as to make of the children of men, children of God; of the heirs of Gehenna, heirs of the Heavenly Kingdom. Who could have done this had not the self-same Son of God become the Son of Man, and had not so taken what was ours to impart what was his to us, and to make what was his by nature *ours by grace*" (II.12.ii).

"In short, since neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin he might submit the weakness of the one to death; and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for us." "...Our common nature with Christ is the pledge of our fellowship with the Son of God; and clothed with our flesh he vanquished death and sin together that the victory and triumph might be ours" (II.12.iii).

(cf. Rev. Charles Biggs <http://bit.ly/p0Pu0q>)

III. A balanced view of the Law:

In the precepts of the law, God is but the rewarder of perfect righteousness, which all of us lack, and conversely, the severe judge of evil deeds. But in Christ his face shines, full of grace and gentleness, even upon us poor and unworthy sinners.

Not Law vs. Gospel. Promise and Fulfillment.

IV. Communion as Union with Christ in living, daily reality.

Some Reformed theology has focused on the intellectual understanding of the Gospel in the Lord's Supper: you must have right thoughts, a right attitude, and an understanding of how the Supper works in order to spiritually benefit.

Calvin points to the nature of the word "communion", the nature of Incarnation, and the living relation believers have with Jesus. Communion is not merely a mental exercise of running back to the Cross, but a present fellowship with Jesus and his church.

"For the Lord there communicates his body so that he may become altogether one with us, and we with him. Moreover, since he has only one body of which he makes us all to be partakers, we must necessarily, by this participation, all become one body. This unity is represented by the bread which is exhibited in the sacrament. As it is composed of many grains, so mingled together, that one cannot be distinguished from another; so ought our minds to be so cordially united, as not to allow of any dissension or division. This I prefer giving in the words of Paul: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread," (1 Cor. 10: 15, 16.) We shall have profited admirably in the sacrament, if the thought shall have been impressed and engraven on our minds, that none of our brethren is hurt, despised, rejected, injured, or in any way offended, without our, at the same time, hurting, despising, and injuring Christ; that we cannot have dissension with our brethren, without at the same time dissenting from Christ; that we cannot love Christ without loving our brethren; that the same care we take of our own body we ought to take of that of our brethren, who are members of our body; that as no part of our body suffers pain without extending to the other parts, so every evil which our brother suffers ought to excite our compassion. Wherefore Augustine not inappropriately often terms this sacrament the bond of charity. What stronger stimulus could be employed to excite mutual charity, than when Christ, presenting himself to us, not only invites us by his example to give and devote ourselves mutually to each other, but inasmuch as he makes himself common to all, also makes us all to be one in him." (IV.17.38)