Compass Life Adult Sunday School

Pastor Pete

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**“Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book One”**

**I. An Introduction to the Institutes of the Christian Religion**

The book was written as an introductory textbook on the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ creed for the new believers of the Reformation and it covered a broad range of theological topics from the doctrines of church and sacraments

to justification by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Christian liberty. It vigorously attacked the teachings of those Calvin considered unorthodox, particularly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, to which Calvin says he had been "strongly devoted" before his conversion to Protestantism. Calvin wrote the initial preface to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of France. What we find is that on one level Calvin clearly wants this to impact the lives of many people, especially his fellow Frenchmen when he says that, “My purpose was solely to transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness. And I undertook this labor especially for our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ countrymen, very many of whom I knew to be hungering and thirsting for Christ; but I saw very few who had been duly imbued with even a slight knowledge of him.” The word ‘Institutio’ was commonly used for a ‘manual or summary of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It is an instructional and practical handbook for the Protestant Reformation. Throughout the Institutes, Calvin sought to continue and complete the work begun by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and other Reformers. He intended both as a defense of the Protestant Reformation movement, begun by Martin Luther less than two decades before Calvin’s first edition, and as an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to followers of the Reformers in the basic tenets of the Christian faith, so that they could study the Bible with greater ability. Calvin also goes on to show that another intention is to answer false accusations and put the record straight in writing an introduction to, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the protestant faith. This was also an appeal to the king, answering many objections and accusations against himself and those who held to the protestant position, who were being identified with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ rebels and were being severely persecuted. His intention is ‘to inform the king about the motivation of those disposed to the Reformation. In his own words he says, ‘My objects were, first, to prove that these reports were false, and thus to vindicate my brethren, whose death was precious in the sight of the Lord; and next, that as the same cruelties might very soon after be exercised against many unhappy individuals, foreign nations might be touched with at least some compassion towards them and solicitude about them. Finally, not long before his death John Calvin composed his will and reflected back on the intention of his whole ministry, including the writing of the Institutes, which he himself rightly understood to be his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He states that his desire was to teach his Word in all its purity, whether by sermons or in writing, and faithfully expound Holy Scripture.

**II. The Knowledge of God is Corrupted by Ignorance and Malice (Book 1, Chapter 4)**

This chapter begins with Calvin asserting that even though God has sown the seed of religion in all human beings, only a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ percentage of people will foster this seed, and none will bring it to full fruition.  The bottom line for Calvin is that regardless of the reasons, all persons will “degenerate, from the true knowledge of” God. (p.47).  Thus, there will be no piety in the \_\_\_\_\_\_ and the outcome is that people “imagine him (God) as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ have fashioned him in their own presumption.” (p. 47) To prove his point he quotes Romans 1:22 where Paul writes that people in, “Striving to become wise, they make fools of themselves.”  For Calvin, approaching a god of one’s own making is \_\_\_\_\_\_ because it shows that humans are still trying to know more than they ought to know (because God is in some ways ultimately unknowable) and that they are filled with a false confidence that they can “discover” God on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Calvin continues this line of thought by asserting that as people deny God’s existence, God “fattens” (p.48) their hearts so that they cannot see God even if they desire so to do.  Calvin also contends that when people do accept that there is a god, they “strip” him of his power so that all they have is an empty idol.  What this means is that belief in a god will not bring about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of true religion.  Of particular concern to Calvin are the “superstitions” that people add to religion in order that their god suit their wishes and whims.  He reminds his readers that no religion is genuine unless it is joined with the \_\_\_\_\_\_ about God. A second sin now comes into focus.  This second sin is that people do not approach God voluntarily, but must be compelled to do so.  As he puts it, “they do not come nigh until they are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ there despite their resistance.” (p.50) Even when people fear God and God’s judgment, rather than relent and seek God, they “wage war” (p.50) against God.  In addition, even if they do offer some semblance of religion (including sacrifices), that religion does not change their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  They do not cease from “polluting themselves with every sort of vice, and from joining wickedness upon wickedness…until they violate the holy law of the Lord…” (p.50) They do not have any true piety (reverence for and love of God)

III. Scripture is Needed as a Guide and Teacher to Know God (Book 1, Chapter 6)

Calvin has been building his argument concerning humanity’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to see and know God. God. Even though human beings ought to be able to know about God because God implanted God’s own image within our minds and also because the universe itself makes it clear that there is a maker and a sustainer, many humans do not embrace or even \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of God. Calvin, however, makes it clear that ultimately, without \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ no one can know God as they should. Calvin asserts that human beings need something more than \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to know God fully.  This something is scripture.  Calvin puts it this way, “It was not in vain then that he (God) added the light of his Word (scripture) by which to become known unto salvation (pg. 69-70)  God did this because God “saw the minds of all men, tossed and agitated…” (pg. 70).   This Word was given to the Jews as God’s own flock in order that it be a “fence about them that they might not sink into oblivion as others had” (pg. 70).  Calvin sees \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as being like eye-glasses in that it gathers up “the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (pg. 70).  One of the key thoughts here is that in scripture, “Not only does he (God) teach the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to look upon a god, but also shows himself as the God upon whom they are to look” (pg. 70). Calvin believes that this Word was at work in and through Adam, Noah, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the rest of the patriarchs allowing them to penetrate “to the intimate knowledge of him that in a way distinguished them from the other unbelievers” (pg.70).  Even so, what they possessed was not the true doctrine that showed them the hope of eternal life.  Nonetheless, they were able to see God not only as creator but as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  These individuals not only knew God through looking at the universe but were given an inner knowledge that “alone quickens dead souls, whereby God is known not only as the Founder of the universe…but also in the person of the Mediator and Redeemer” (pg. 70-71).  Calvin makes clear at this point that he is not yet ready to discuss the covenant with Abraham and the Jews, but that he simply wants to make it clear how \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ helps us distinguish the living God from all other supposed gods. In order to clarify his argument, Calvin assures us that when he speaks of scriptures as regards the patriarchs that he is not speaking of written scripture alone, but that whether it was through “oracles and visions or by the work of men, he put into their minds what they should hand down (about God) to their posterity” (pg. 71).  This leads Calvin to assert that “no one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of scripture” (Pg. 72).

**IV. Trinitarian Background Material (Book 1, Chapter 13, Parts 1)**

In Scripture, from Creation onward, we are taught \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of God, which contains three persons.
Calvin argues that knowing God means knowing the God we discover through the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Calvin reminds us that God is in fact ultimately \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because God’s nature is “immeasurable and spiritual.” (pg. 120) Nonetheless he writes that “For he (God) so proclaims himself the sole God as to offer himself to be contemplated clearly in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” (pg. 122) This observation then introduces us to the first term, “person.” The Greek for this is “hypostasis” and means “individual existence.” This term for Calvin and the church implies that Father, Son and Spirit have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ realities/existences of their own...they are not merely God appearing in different disguises at different times. Calvin puts it this way. “Therefore...it follows that there are in God three hypostasis.” (Pg. 123) This is critical if we are to make sense of Jesus praying to the Father, or the Spirit coming to Jesus. They are individual “persons”. The second term is “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” The Greek word for this is “ousia” which means the most basic substance of something. Consider how we speak of the essence of things. When we do so we mean their basic reality. Essence for Calvin then is a description of the nature of God’s oneness; in other words, God is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, one unity. “For since the essence of God is simple and undivided, and he contains all in himself without portion or derivation, but in integral perfection...” (pg. 122) Thus Calvin can speak of God being one essence but three persons. While the terms essence, person and Trinity are not biblical, Calvin believes that they help Christians better understand the nature of God. He in fact entitles one sub-section of this chapter, “The expressions “Trinity and “Person” aid the interpretation of Scripture and are therefore admissible.” (Pg. 123) Calvin sums up this teaching in this way: “...that Father and Son and Spirit are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, yet the Son is not the Father, nor is the Spirit the Son, but that they are differentiated by a peculiar quality.” (pg. 12)
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**8/4 “Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book Two”**