

Dr. Roger Green, Reformation to the Present,

Lecture 4, Martin Luther to John Calvin

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This is Dr. Roger Green in his Church History course, Reformation to the Present. This is session 4 (session 3 is missing) on Martin Luther to John Calvin.

Actually, on Fridays, I like to begin by reading something.

Usually, it's kind of a devotional thing from something we're studying. But today, it's from the Gospel of John, Chapter 5. So, I'd like to just kind of get us started on Fridays or Wednesdays if we're over there on Fridays in the dining room. But I'd like to just get us started with some kind of a devotional thought of something we happen to be studying at the moment.

Today, it happens to be John 5, and I'm going to read it at 519. We'll mention this in the lecture, so that's why I'm reading it. Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.

For whatever he does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, that you may marvel.

For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life. So, from the Gospel of John, and that'll have something to do with what we're talking about today.

I'm on page 12 of the syllabus if that helps. And we're at Lecture 1, Medieval Roman Catholicism and the Nature of Justification. And we just, of course, as we've said, we're trying to put a puzzle together here.

God bless you. Once we see the puzzle all together in the four parts, we can stand back and kind of have the picture of Roman Catholicism in the medieval world, not to be confused with Roman Catholicism today. So, okay.

So, that's where we are. And we were right in the kind of the story of indulgences. And we're near the end of the story of indulgences.

So, just a reminder, we mentioned how bad Pope Leo X was. He was a really bad guy and an incredible person. And he had, and he needed, he had, when he came to be Pope, he came from, by the way, a very wealthy, influential family.

He didn't rise through the priesthood, as we've mentioned. When he came to be Pope, the treasury of the papacy was pretty much wiped out with wild parties and his lavish living and everything. And now he's got to raise money for himself and he's got to raise money for St. Peter's Basilica.

So, he sends indulgence sellers all over the country and over Europe and he sells plenary indulgence at a reduced cost. Now, Friar Tetzel ends up in Wittenberg, and poor Friar Tetzel meets the wrath of a guy named Martin Luther, who happened to be teaching at Wittenberg. So, that's where we kind of, we're kind of in the middle of that story.

We need to finish up that story, and then we need to see how the Reformation responds to all of this, which is number E in our outline. But let's finish off the story. So, here's a picture of Martin Luther and he's nailing his 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg and theses number, what, theses number 86.

Oh, by the way, the 95 theses really revolved around the issue of indulgences. So, there's lots of stuff going on about indulgences. So, here's an example: thesis number 86: the Pope's riches on this day far exceed the wealth of the richest millionaires.

Cannot he, therefore, build one single basilica of St. Peter out of his own money rather than out of the money of the faithful poor? So, there's nailing these theses to the church door and defending the poor, doing so, by the way. Now, what's going on with this event? I'm afraid that this event will be misinterpreted by church history. And often, maybe on Reformation Sunday in your church, it talks about the brave Martin Luther and this is an act of protest.

He's protesting here, he's nailing the theses to the door and so the Reformation starts. Well, it wasn't quite like that. It makes a good story, but there's no truth behind it.

What Martin Luther is doing is very common in the medieval world. He's a professor of theology, it's his job to teach theology, and it's his job to dispute theological issues in public at the university. When the teacher of theology is ready to discuss some theses, he nails them to the church door because the church door was kind of the bulletin board for the university, because the university was lodged in the church beside the church and everything.

So, it was the church that kind of governed the university. So, this is not an act of protest. He has no intention of protesting against the Roman Catholic Church.

He's a good Roman Catholic, but he is a teacher of theology, and it's his job to do this. So, he's just doing his job by posting these 95 theses and having an open discussion about these theses because that's how you learn theology. So, this is not an act of protest.

They would have been written in Latin because Latin was the language of the university, but they would have also been translated into German. One of the reasons Martin Luther is so well known is that, at the time Luther was beginning his work theologically examining the Roman Catholic Church, the printing press was invented. Luther's works get printed out, and then people can see them, including the Pope, and he didn't think this was very funny at all.

So, it's his argument about the indulgences that matters here. Okay, now I want to just say one thing. There's a theological argument being brought to bear here in the 95 theses, but please notice this is also an economic problem for the church.

He is creating an economic problem, not just challenging their theology. Because if the money dries up from this selling of indulgences throughout the land, then the church, Leo's not going to have the money he needs for his own treasury or to build St. Peter's Basilica either. So, this is not only pure theology that's going on here; there's something economic going on here.

And notice, economically too, he's defending the right in these theses, and he's defending the poor people because they are being taken advantage of by the church as far as he's concerned. So, he's defending the poor. So, a lot is going on here.

There's no doubt about that. It's kind of amazing what is happening here. But this event is what, in a sense, launches the Reformation.

But we want to put the event itself in proper context. Okay, are we okay right up until and including the 95 theses? Are there any questions about where this whole thing of indulgences was going? Alright, yeah, Jesse. Right, right.

It does seem, you're right, you're right, it does seem immediately kind of defensive. That's one thing about Luther: he didn't care who he offended. If he was speaking the truth and speaking theologically correct and economically defending the poor, he's ready to put it out there.

So, Luther didn't have any particular acts to grind with Leo X as a person, but the office of the papacy didn't believe the office of the papacy was biblical. So, the whole

office of the papacy is very disturbing to Luther. But you're right, and this language is a little incendiary.

And when Leo X saw the 95 theses, he was very upset by them. It is a bit incendiary. And that's the way Luther was.

But also, because he's a teacher of theology, he feels it's my job to do this. It's my job to bring this to light and have a good discussion about it. But you're right, people were offended.

The Pope was offended by it, actually. Yeah. Something else here, yeah.

Did he base his 95 theses on theology? Right. He based them basically on theology. He was challenging the whole system of indulgences.

And, of course, if you start challenging that piece of the puzzle, you're also going to be challenging penance. You're going to be challenging works of supererogation. You're going to be challenging the two natures of sin.

I mean, in a sense, with the 95 theses, the House of Cards is exposed now, and things start to come unglued. Because one thing is a challenge, but he's not doing it because he doesn't want to be a Roman Catholic anymore.

He thinks the Roman Catholic Church should be dissolved or something like that. He's doing it as a theologian to be faithful to his vocation as a theologian. Bring these things to light.

Let's discuss them, and then maybe some good will come out of this. Yeah. It's interesting to read the 95 theses.

It doesn't take long to do it. It's kind of interesting to read them. Something else in terms of where we are here is the challenge.

Okay? All right. Now, what we want to do now is look at number E, the response of the Reformation. How did the Reformation respond? Now that we can see the four pieces of the puzzle and what the medieval Roman Catholic Church was like, how did the Reformation respond to all of that? Okay.

Well, there are four or five things I just want to mention here. The first thing I want to mention is we often say the Reformation was fought over the nature of justification by faith, and that became the battleground for the Reformation. We've even used that in the title, Medieval Roman Catholicism and the Nature of Justification.

That is true. People like Luther and later Calvin are challenging the Roman Catholics' notion of justification. That's true.

But I've always thought that that was overblown because I think there's another issue that's being challenged here. I think it's an equally important issue, and that's assurance. What is really being challenged is the issue of assurance because the fact of the matter is that people in the medieval Roman Catholic world could not be assured that they were the children of God.

They couldn't have a calm heart and a calm mind that they were God's children and that someday when they died, they were going to go and be with God. They were always worried about all of the punishment due to the sins that they had committed in this life. They were always worried that maybe they had committed a mortal sin that they hadn't that they'd forgotten or hadn't confessed, and therefore, they were going to go to hell anyway immediately upon death.

They were always worried about suffering in purgatory for maybe thousands of years after they died before they could go and meet with God. So, a basic issue of the Reformation, a basic issue of people like Luther, was the issue of assurance. Can I be sure that I'm a child of God? Can I be sure in this life and in the next that I am God's child and that I'm going to go and be with God after I die? So, all right.

In a sense, the Roman Catholic Church as a church, as an institution, wasn't able to provide that assurance for them because the Roman Catholic Church couldn't tell them how long they were going to serve in purgatory. I mean, God knows that. The Roman Catholic Church couldn't help them with plenary indulgence for the most part.

So, in a sense, the Roman Catholic Church brought this upon itself, this lack of assurance. So, in terms of lecture number E, what the Reformers have to do now, what the Reformation has to do now is respond to that lack of assurance. How are we going to respond to this lack of assurance? How are we going to give people the assurance that we think the Bible gives to them? And there are just a few ways that I'd like to just mention in terms of the response then.

Okay? So, the problem is assurance. How do we respond to that? Okay. The first response is that not only are you redeemed as a believer.

Now, this is Luther lecturing or preaching or Calvin lecturing or preaching, so you can hear. This is the kind of thing they would say. Not only are you redeemed as a believer, but you can be sure of your redemption because redemption is not something that you gain by any works that you do.

The redemption has already been gained for you by the finished work of Christ on the cross. So that would be very common. You know, you can be sure that you are redeemed. You can be sure that you are saved.

Okay. Let me give three examples of this. The first is the passage we read, John 5, and especially John 5.24. So, I'll give three examples. They all happen to be from the Gospel of John, but John 5.24. Look at what we read this morning.

This is Jesus saying, truly, truly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.

So you can imagine Luther preaching on a passage like that or Calvin preaching on a passage like that, telling people that they can be sure of that. Let me give you two other passages just to jot down, and then you can look them up when you get a chance. But John 3.36, so if you just put that one down and 1 John 1:7. So, these are all passages having to do with this great assurance.

John 3:36, 1 John 1:7. Okay, so that's one response. The first one is John 5, especially verse 24. We read a little longer passage this morning, but John 5.24. Okay, so that's one response.

So, you can hear Calvin and Luther writing about this. Okay, second response. Luther and Calvin tell these people that after you are redeemed, you are kept redeemed.

Christ is able to keep his people redeemed. But you're kept redeemed by his faithfulness to you. You're not kept in a state of redemption by the works that you're doing.

That's not what's keeping you in that work of redemption. Those good works that you're doing are wonderful because they're a sign of your redemption. But those good works are not what is keeping you in the palm of his hand.

They're not what keeps you regenerating and what keeps you safe. So, the general title for this is the Perseverance of the Saints. Perseverance of the Saints.

So, they preach the Perseverance of the Saints. Luther and Calvin preach the Perseverance of the Saints. But there is a however here under the Perseverance of the Saints.

When we talk about the Perseverance of the Saints, we think it means I am persevering in holding on to God. God's kind of reaching down, and I kind of got him by his hands, and I'm really working hard to hold on to God. Sometimes, I feel like I'm

slipping out of the hands of God, and I just feel the tips of his fingers, and I'm slipping away.

That's because that's how maybe we think of perseverance. But that's not how the Reformers thought of the Perseverance of the Saints. Perseverance of the Saints was not I'm having trouble holding on to God.

Perseverance of the Saints was God's perseverance in holding on to his believers. So, it's God's perseverance. It's not ours.

So God has us in his arms, and he keeps us in his arms so that this is not us holding on to God; it's God holding on to us. So that's the second way in which they responded. Let me just give you one imagery for that, and that's John 10:28, and 29.

If you just jot that down, then you can look it up. But John 10:28 and 29. Number three, a third way that they wanted to stress all of this is that they wanted people not only to be saved and redeemed but also to know that they were redeemed.

They wanted people, and the way you know that you're redeemed is to bear witness to it. So, they wanted people to bear witness to the fact that they were the redeemed people of Christ. It was hard for Roman Catholics to do that because they couldn't think of themselves in that relationship with God because they were always sinning and always needing to do punishment for sin and so forth.

But they wanted them to know that they were saved. Okay, number four, fourth way. This becomes the fourth way is very important.

You can hear Luther shouting this out again from the pulpit, but there is no such thing as purgatory. Purgatory doesn't exist. It's made up.

Now, when Luther and Calvin and others were preaching this, you could almost hear people giving a sigh of relief that they were convinced biblically, intellectually, and experientially there's no such thing as purgatory. You can almost hear people breathing. Wow, this is good news because now I know that I do not stand under any judgment from God. I know that I have eternal life now.

It will continue in heaven and so forth. And I know that none of my relatives are in purgatory. None of my friends are in purgatory.

There's no such thing as purgatory. So once the reformers were able to convince people from the pulpits and from the writing about this, this became very important. So, there is no purgatory.

Okay, finally, a fifth kind of a way of responding to all this lack of assurance and everything, and that is justification, is by God's grace. The message of grace. Again, I think it helped people to breathe easily when they heard this message.

We're justified by grace. We're God's children by his grace. It's by his grace that he saves us.

The works that we do are a sign of that grace, but we're saved by his grace. So no longer do I have to live in the kind of fear that I've been living in, so said medieval Roman Catholics. And it was a word of grace, and that was really a good word for these people.

So, what is happening here is what is happening is they're getting a sigh of relief throughout Europe as they're hearing this message of assurance. And you can just see them, if they've lived as medieval Roman Catholics all their lives, you can just see them saying, this is good news for me. It's the good news of the gospel.

Now, let me just read. I just want to read one little section from a book here, and then let's see if we want to take any questions about medieval Roman Catholicism, about what it looked like to people, how they lived under it, how the reformers came along and kind of liberated them. But if I could read one kind of paragraph. It is not enough to see that, in the Reformation, there was only a reaction against certain abuses and certain instances of decadence in the church of the later Middle Ages.

No matter how bad the corruption at the court of the Renaissance popes, and no matter how ghastly the deception of men through the multiplication of indulgences, relics, and the like, these things in themselves would not have led to the Reformation. As far as the general decadence is concerned, it had many causes that may be disregarded here. It is important to note in this context, however, that superstition, the system of indulgences, pilgrimage, and the rest are, in the last analysis, the result of a deficiency in the theology of scholasticism and of the entire medieval church.

The church was unable to satisfy man's desire for genuine assurance of salvation. And that's why I say the great battle was over the battle of assurance. The church was unable to satisfy man's desire for genuine assurance of salvation.

The church taught that certainty of salvation results only from the special revelation imparted by God to the individual. But even to seek such a special revelation from God was regarded as improper. The average Christian could hope for God's gracious acceptance if he regularly received the sacraments of the Catholic church and committed no mortal sin.

No provision was made, however, either in the church's teaching or in its practice for the person who was not satisfied with being an ecclesiastically approved average Christian and instead took seriously God's demand in all its radicality. According to Catholic teaching then, man's justification depended in part on righteousness to be found in himself. And for this righteousness, works are of great significance.

In Luther's day, however, a man who was troubled by his sinfulness was simply told that he should set his hope in God. The certainty of salvation was unknown. And too long for such certainty of salvation would have been regarded as presumptuous.

The aim was to establish a balance between fear and hope. So, assurance of salvation, that's what it was all about in terms of the Reformation, and the Reformers come along, and that's what they preach. Alright, let me stop there for just a minute.

Lecture 1, Medieval Roman Catholicism and the Nature of Justification. Anything here at all? Do we understand what was going on? Do we understand why it was so problematic to the Reformers, people like Luther and Calvin? Do we understand how they responded to this assurance stuff and everything? But, anything, does anybody want to discuss any of this stuff at all? Anybody? Any questions? Discussion? Things that you're not sure about that we lectured on? Clear about what we lectured on and what was going on here in the Medieval Roman Catholic Church? Is everybody okay with this? Okay. Okay.

Yeah. The whole business of assurance, you mean? What is the whole underlying business of assurance? Okay. Well, the first response was that it can be a surety of your eternal life, a sureness, a certainty of your eternal life.

In the John 5:29 passage, John 5:24, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. It doesn't come into judgment. He's passed already from death into life.

So Johannine emphasizes that you already have eternal life and that death is a transition from this eternal life that you already have into an eternal life totally and so forth. Does that make sense? Anything else here? Are you doing okay? All right. Okay.

Well, let's go on to John, then. John Calvin. I'm also in Lecture 2, The Theology of John Calvin.

Very interesting person here. Let me get to Lecture 2, The Theology of John Calvin. And you can see I'm going to do three things.

I'm going to say a few things about his life. I just want to place him kind of biographically into the story here of what we're talking about. Then, we're going to talk about the general work that he accomplished.

And then, we're going to talk about certain aspects of his theology. I mean, we'd need all 16 weeks just to do the theology of John Calvin. So, we've got to do some picking and choosing from his theology to see where his theology kind of hits up against the medieval Roman Catholic Church and why he was able to lead the Reformation in the second generation and so forth.

Okay? So, are you all right with that? So, first of all, just a few things, a few kinds of highlights about his life that you should take note of that I think are biographically kind of important. All right. To begin with, I've got some places here too.

I'm going to have some names and places. To begin with, he is born in N-O-Y-O-N in France. Noyon.

Are any French majors here by any chance? Speak now. Are there any bilingual people here? Speak French? Okay. So he was born in France.

All right. That's very, very interesting. Now, this is so interesting to me because John Calvin was born in France, and because of his family background and everything, he's the exact opposite personality of Martin Luther.

John Calvin was a student and a French thinker who wrote in Latin and French and was very careful about the choice of his words. Martin Luther was an extemporaneous preacher, not careful about the choice of his words at all and very scattered out. John Calvin's going to be very organized.

Luther's not going to be organized at all. It's fascinating to me that God chose two people of two different personalities to get this reformation launched. I mean, there couldn't be, it couldn't be two people who were so different from each other.

So, okay. So, there he is, born in France. All right.

Now, he has gone to various universities, and basically, he studies law, which is also very important. So here are a couple of the universities I mentioned, just a couple of universities that he went to here: Orléans, Bourget, and the University of Paris. So, he went to various universities basically to study law.

So, he was trained as a lawyer. Now, does that surprise you? No, that doesn't surprise you because when you see Calvin, when you read Calvin, or when you read his sermons, he argues his case like a lawyer. So, he almost gives you a legal argument for Christianity.

So, he studied law and also he studied humanism, what was generally labeled as humanism. Now, humanism would have been humanism, which was really kind of a regard for the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It's a kind of renewal of Greek and Roman literature, philosophy, thinking, and so forth.

But he's, what would we say? He's liberally trained in his study of law and humanism. He's liberally trained. Now, let me just say that we're still back in the medieval world, so it's a different world from our world.

Let me just say something about these universities that he went to. In that world, you went to a university to study with a particular professor or to study a particular course. The university didn't sustain you.

You just went to the university, and then if you needed to study another course, you'd go maybe to another university and so forth. It is so completely different from our kind of world and our university life today. So that's just the way it was, and that's what he did.

Okay, now in terms of his life, another thing in terms of his life, the most important for us training was at the University of Paris. So, for what we're interested in, it was at the University of Paris that was kind of a turning point for John Calvin. What happened at the University of Paris was two things.

Well, so you kind of picture him there in Paris as a university student, but two things did happen. Number one, he started to read the writings of a guy by the name of Martin Luther. Martin Luther, who is this guy, what is he writing and what should I know about him? So, he starts to read Martin Luther, and he's very taken by his writings, no doubt about that.

Okay, and number two, he himself told us in 1533, he experienced what, in his own language, was kind of a sudden conversion 1533. Now, he was born into the Roman Catholic Church. He was a nominal Roman Catholic, not particularly religious, but in 1533, he experienced a sudden conversion. This is the way he describes it, God subdued and brought my heart to docility.

My heart was more hardened against such matters than was to be expected in such a young man. Okay, so John Calvin became a believer in 1533. So that's important.

So, two things at Paris, studying Luther and then becoming a believer through the Bible, but also through reading Luther and so forth. So those two things are critical. Okay, another thing in terms of his life, and that is where he goes from here. All right, John Calvin decides that he has to leave the Roman Catholic Church.

So, it's different from Luther. Luther was actually thrown out of the Roman Catholic Church. He was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church, whereas John Calvin made a decision to leave the Roman Catholic Church.

Okay, that leaving the Roman Catholic Church is very important. So I need to describe that leaving of the church. I think the other day we looked for magic markers and we didn't see any in here.

So, there's a, there's a, is there one down, oh, is there a magic marker here somewhere? Great, if there is one, that would be great. But, oh, thank you, sir. Okay, I've got to do it; I've got to have someone help me do a PowerPoint of this.

Then I don't have to do this anymore. Okay, here is the Roman Catholic idea. Here's the Roman Catholic understanding of Calvin.

Calvin was a Roman Catholic, and he strayed away from the church. What he should have done is stay in the true church as a true believer. So, the Roman Catholic kind of story is about John Calvin's straying.

He left, he strayed away, and he should have stayed in the true church. That is not Calvin's understanding of what happened in his own life. So here's Calvin's understanding of what happened.

Calvin's understanding of the Roman Catholic Church was that the Roman Catholic Church is what had strayed. So, in order to stay in the true church, he had to leave the Roman Catholic Church. So, by leaving the Roman Catholic Church, he is staying with the biblical church.

So, you get two different opinions about what is happening with John Calvin and the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic opinion, he strayed. Calvin's opinion is that the Roman Catholic Church is no longer the true biblical church.

So, I have to, in order to stay with the true church, I had to leave the Roman Catholic Church. So, this was really a matter of disagreement in terms of what happened here. However, John Calvin decides to leave the Roman Catholic Church and take a break.

So, okay. What happens is he ends up in Basel, and here it's on this overhead. He ends up in Basel, and you know, we're just seeing some of the places where Calvin went, and I don't know why I put an airplane in there.

I, I can't quite explain that, but I just thought it represented travel, even though it doesn't represent travel in his day. So, I don't know. Anyway, there it is.

So, he ends up in Basel. Okay. Why Basel? Well, when the Reformation began, when the Reformation kind of exploded, you get very distinct Roman Catholic areas in Europe and you get very distinct reform, Protestant and reformed areas in Europe.

There was a real dividing line and, and so Basel was a reformed city. Basel was a city, and Basel, Switzerland, was a city that had embraced the Reformation. So it, it's pretty natural that he's going to go to some place he's going to feel at home now as a Protestant, and he decides he's, he's going to go to Basel, which was, which is, was and is in Switzerland.

So, okay. Long story short, in Basel, 1536, that's an important date. By the way, In 1536, John Calvin began to write his Institutes of the Christian Religion. Let me just see.

I don't think, no, sorry about that. He began to write his Inst, what became known as his Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1636. All right.

Now, what the Institutes began as, and we're going to talk about the Institutes later as well, is a clear, clear defense of Reformation theology. That's why he started writing his Institutes 1536 in Basel. He is trying to clearly defend the theology of the Reformation.

So, that's why it was so important. Okay. Now, let me come back to the previous PowerPoint if I can here.

A man by the name of Farrell and I put the dates down just so you know. These are not dates to memorize or anything, but they just give you a sense of when these people lived. But a man by the name of William Farrell, that's how we would pronounce the first name now in our time, but a man by the name of William Farrell. William Farrell organized the Reformation in Geneva, and Geneva was also in Switzerland, and it became a Reformation city like Basel.

What happens is that Farrell convinces Calvin to join him in Geneva and to kind of consolidate the Reformation in Geneva. So, Farrell, a friend of Calvin, Calvin, you know, and he gets together, and Calvin goes to Geneva in Switzerland to consolidate the Reformation. Now, what happens, long story short, is that a lot of the people in Geneva oppose Farrell and Calvin.

They think that their Protestant ethic is too much to follow. They think that their Protestant theology is too deep. Their Protestant kind of ethical demands are too much to follow.

You're imposing these on us, and we don't like it. So, they virtually threw him out of town. So the visit to Geneva and helping to kind of consolidate the Reformation

wasn't successful with Farrell, and both Farrell and Calvin were kind of run out of town on the rails in a sense.

So, and so they were expelled from the city. So, Geneva, it doesn't look like Geneva is going to be kind of the model Reformation city. If we can't get this Reformation principle instilled in civic life here, it doesn't look like we're going to be able to do much here.

So off, off they go. Okay. Okay.

Now, what happens to John Calvin when he leaves? John Calvin goes to Strasbourg. John Calvin ends up in Strasbourg. Okay.

Why did John Calvin go to Strasbourg? He goes to Strasbourg for a couple of reasons. One reason is that Strasbourg was a French-speaking city and a Reformation city. So that fit perfectly for John Calvin.

If it's French-speaking and Reformation, that's what he speaks French, and he can help with it and influence the Reformation that's going on there. So, it was; I think he probably thought he was going to stay there the rest of his life because of French-speaking and Reformation, and he could do a lot of writing and so forth. So he goes to Strasbourg, and I think he thinks he's going to settle down there forever.

It was in Strasbourg that he met a man by the name of Martin Butzer, and this is pronounced Bucer rather than Butzer. So, Butzer, it's like it's B-U-T-Z-E-R, but it's in Strasbourg where he meets Martin Bucer. That was a very important meeting because Martin Butzer helped Calvin to shape and form his theology.

Martin Butzer is one of the most important theologically influential persons upon John Calvin. So, the time in Strasbourg proved to be very, very beneficial for John Calvin. As I said, there was a time when I think he thought he would stay there forever.

In terms of his writing, while he's at Strasbourg, two things have been accomplished. Okay, number one, he elaborates upon the institutes and he's going to do that for the rest of his life. Number one, he began publishing the institutes in Basel.

While he's in Strasbourg, he begins to elaborate upon the institutes. So, he republishes the institutes, fills them out a bit more, discusses more discussions, and so forth. Okay, the second thing he does is very important.

So, we want to take note of this. He writes a commentary on the book of Romans. It's his first commentary.

He wrote a commentary on the book of Romans because he felt that Romans were critical to understand. From there on, he'll write a lot of commentaries on a lot of Bible books. He doesn't write a commentary on every book in the Bible, but he writes a lot of commentaries on biblical books.

So, Strasbourg really kind of enhanced his career, in a sense, his writing and publishing career, not only for the institutes but for Romans. Okay, let me just finish up on Calvin's life, and then we'll see if we have some odds and ends of questions about his life before we go on to his work. Calvin eventually does go, and he's called back to Geneva in 1541.

Representatives from Geneva come to Calvin. Here, he is settled in Strasbourg. They come to Calvin, and they say, maybe we were wrong.

Maybe we need you in Geneva. Maybe we need you to come to Geneva and help us live by the principles of the Bible, Reformation principles, and so forth. And so they invited him to come back, and Calvin did go back, and he became a citizen in Geneva and had a great influence upon life in Geneva.

You shouldn't see Calvin as a, he wasn't a politician in Geneva. He didn't have political office in Geneva. So, he didn't have that authority.

His authority was basically through his preaching ministry and his writing and teaching. That's the authority that he had to try to convince the people of Geneva to govern their lives according to Scripture and the theological principles of the Reformation. So, he had authority, but he didn't have political authority.

The authority that he had was as a biblical theologian, as a preacher, as a teacher. That's the authority that he had in Geneva. He preached on almost, he preached daily, and people of the town would come and hear Calvin preach. then he died in Geneva and was buried in Geneva.

So that became very important. I do want to just mention one incident in Geneva. Maybe I'll stop there for just a minute.

First of all, are there any questions here about, I want to mention one incident in his life. Calvin, 1509 to 15, I've got to look these up myself, 1564. 1509 to 1564.

And he died in Geneva, and he asked to be buried in an unmarked grave. He did not want to be kind of extolled after his death. So he was buried in an unmarked grave.

Something else about Calvin up to this point. Okay. I'm going to stop there for just a minute because you've been writing and clicking away and everything, and

sometimes I give you a five-second break, and on Fridays, I give you a ten-second break.

So, it's a Friday so you can rejoice in this. So just take, I don't know how this comes along in the taping, Ted, but I like to give people a little bit of a break and stretch if you need to and just crash if you need to a little bit. Bless your hearts.

We can do this. This is doable. Okay.

Good. One more thing about Geneva: I want to say some things about the work that he was doing and then some things about his doctrines. The doctrines are the most important thing for the course.

But one more thing about Geneva. This shows a little bit about the man. There was a very important person at this time, named Michael Servaitis, and there are the dates for Michael Servaitis.

We don't know exactly when he was born, but about 1511. Michael Servaitis was basically a Unitarian. He did not believe in the Trinity, and he came to Geneva and was burned at the stake at Geneva.

Now, and often, people will say, look at John Calvin. What kind of a person was John Calvin, and would he burn someone at the stake? Give me a break here, Calvin. Why did you do this? We want to make this as perfectly clear as we can.

The burning at the stake was not John Calvin's doing. So, when Servaitis came to Geneva and was burned at the stake, that was not the work of John Calvin. As a matter of fact, John Calvin was willing to dispute with him in public about the Trinity but he encouraged Servaitis not to come to Geneva because he knew what would happen if Servaitis came to Geneva.

So, he said to him, don't come. Don't do this to yourself. And Servaitis was stubborn enough to say, yes, I'm coming to Geneva, and I'm going to debate the Trinity in public with you because I don't believe in it.

So, they burned him at the stake. So, it was the city council that burned Servaitis at the stake. It had nothing to do with Calvin.

It was a city council. In fact, Calvin visited him after he was in prison. Calvin even went and visited him in prison but it had nothing to do with John Calvin.

So, I hope you're ready to be good defenders of the faith in the story that Calvin burned someone at the stake because it's not a true story. So he tried to get Servaitis not to come to Geneva. But that's the burning at the stake story of Servaitis.

He only had moral authority and moral influence, but he had no influence on the laws of the land. He had no influence on the city council. So, and that's a good point Jesse.

Why were people burned at the stake in the medieval world? Why were heretics burned at the stake in the medieval world? So, if Servaitis is considered to be a heretic, they burn him at the stake. Why did they do that? Not, they didn't do it only because they didn't like his theology. Why else did they do that? Does anybody want to take a guess on this? Why did you burn people at the stake? Yes.

Yes, exactly. They are afraid that heretics will breed a social disorder. They'll bring disorder to society.

So, these burning at the stakes like Servaitis was to keep an orderly society because the things he's talking about are getting people all nervous and upset and everything, and there's disputes and so forth, and we can't have that and maintain an orderly society in Geneva. So, the council burned the stake to maintain order. So that's why it wasn't done by Calvin to maintain correct theology.

The council did this to maintain order. So, Calvin lives in Geneva. Until he died, he was at Geneva and that was his life.

Okay. Are you okay with his life? You're going to see a lot of his life in the book you're reading anyway. But I just want to, throughout the course, I pick maybe, I don't know, four or five people to give you their biographical story just because the story is so crucial to what's going on in that theology.

So, all right. Well, let's talk about number B just for a few minutes. Let's talk about Calvin's work.

What did Calvin kind of give himself to do? Then, the most important thing is his theology. Okay. A few things.

Number one, Calvin was the great mediator in the Reformation. Calvin was the person who kind of stood between opposite poles in the Reformation, and he devoted an awful lot of energy to settling differences among the Reformation leaders. So Calvin played a very wonderful mediatorial role, and you see Calvin playing that role in a lot of areas, such as the Lord's Supper.

We'll talk about that when we get under his theology. But how should people think about the Lord's Supper? Well, Calvin tried to take a middle ground between two extremes here and helped settle that matter. So that's one thing about John Calvin.

However you feel about his theology. However, you feel about John Calvin as a person, you've got to give him credit for that to build a more congenial kind of Reformation in a sense. Okay, that's number one. Number two, Calvin really wanted to build a kind of city of God on a hill.

The Puritans used that term when they came over to Boston, but Calvin wanted to build a city of God on a hill that would be an example for the Reformation, an example for Reformation life and thought. And he wanted Geneva to be that city. He wanted Geneva to be that place, this place, this city of God.

Now, it wasn't a theocracy, as we mentioned, because he had no political power in Geneva. He had moral power, but he had no political power. So it wasn't a theocracy, but it was a visible kind of city of God and so forth.

Okay, so in order to do that, what he did was establish what was called the Geneva Academy. So he got going the Geneva Academy. The Geneva Academy would be where people would come to Geneva, and they would discuss and learn about theology from John Calvin and others.

Then, they would go back to their own places and disseminate that good biblical theology or systematic theology and so forth. So, people literally from all over Western Europe came to the Geneva Academy to learn from John Calvin and others. So that was a way of disseminating the message about what Geneva was supposed to be, a model as a city of God on a hill, and so forth.

That was a way of getting the message out to the Geneva Academy. Okay, number three. Number three, Calvin was, and I use this word very carefully because there's a debate about the word.

So, Calvin was a great systematizer of theology, of Reformation theology. He organized Reformation theology. And a lot of people don't like that word.

And the reason they don't like the word systematizer is because it sounds too static. It sounds too much like medieval scholasticism, and the medieval scholastics would argue about very fine points of theology and so forth. So a lot of people don't like that word, but I do.

I like the word. He was a systematizer. Maybe if you want to use the word organizer, he was a brilliant organizer of theology.

So, in that way, he was completely different from Luther. Luther was not a systematizer or an organizer. Whatever came to Luther's mind, that's what was written down.

That was preached. He was all over the map theologically. What you had to do with Luther was kind of find his major points throughout his life and what he taught and go with those.

But Calvin was a brilliant organizer and systematizer. So, that's a real contribution to the Reformation. There's no doubt about that.

Okay, and number four, what Calvin did, too, in a game for the Reformation. Calvin gave organizing principles for how to go about theology. If you want to say Calvin developed a methodology for doing theology, there are certain basic principles that you can use for doing theology.

Okay? And if you put those principles into practice, you're going to be faithful to the Bible and to what God has wanted you to know. All right, I'm just going to mention one here, and maybe I'll pick up on a couple more when we come back on Monday. Let me just mention one.

That's the principle of the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. That's a principle of self-knowledge, knowledge of God, and knowledge of ourselves. Maybe I can use this one more time here.

This would be a good one to put on a PowerPoint, too. Let me put God here, and let me put us here. Calvin methodologically, when it came to knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves, this is what Calvin said.

All the wisdom we possess begins with the knowledge of God, and that leads to a knowledge of ourselves. But also, the more we know about ourselves, the more we know about God. So that's how the institutes begin.

All the wisdom we possess that is, the knowledge of God and of ourselves, begins with the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But then he says, but which knowledge comes first? It's really impossible to say. Do we know God first, and because we know God first, we know ourselves? Or do we have a good knowledge of ourselves, and by knowing ourselves, do we have some knowledge, therefore, of God? Which is it? Well, for Calvin, it's a complete circle.

That keeps going around and around and around. But for Calvin, methodologically, that's how he began his institutes. So, knowing God, knowing yourself, knowing yourself, knowing God, one leads automatically to the other, and it's a wonderful cycle that goes on in life.

Now, whenever I'm lecturing on this for various courses, and certainly for the core Christian theology course, this is a countercultural message. Why is it a countercultural message? It's a countercultural message. Am I preaching now, or am

I teaching? I'm not sure what I'm doing now, so have I stepped over the line? I probably have.

Why is it a countercultural message? Because in this day, in the world we live, a lot of people want to know nothing about God. They know nothing about God. They don't want to know about God.

They don't believe in God. Well, that's a problem for Calvin. Calvin would say, then how can you know about yourself? If you don't know about your Creator, the one who created you, how could you possibly know anything about yourself? You can't.

The knowledge of yourself is going to be severely limited if you don't put it in the context of knowing God. So there's a countercultural message right from Calvin. There is no doubt about that, certainly in the world we live in. But anyway, what he developed was some organizing principles by which you should approach theology.

I mention this one because that happens to be how the institutes began, but it was a very important organizing principle. I think it still is. I think that for studying theology seriously, knowing God and knowing ourselves is a cyclical thing you want to continually be in.

You want to continually be in that cycle. The more you know about yourself, the more you're going to know about God. The more you know about yourself.

Okay. Let me stop there just from some announcements here.

This is Dr. Roger Green in his Church History course, Reformation to the Present. This is session 4 (session 3 is missing) on Martin Luther to John Calvin.