

Dr. Roger Green, Reformation to the Present,

Lecture 5, John Calvin

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This is Dr. Roger Green in his Church History Course, session 5 on John Calvin.

Basically, the discussion should be centered on the texts. Now, we can ask questions from the lecturers, but we really want to center them on the textbooks and make sure we're getting everything we should out of those textbooks, okay? So you want to bring your texts to those Friday sessions.

So, the next week we do the same thing. Wednesday, you hand me three questions, and on Friday, we're back in the lion's den. The difference next week is I'm also going to bring the exam with me next week because that's the last day we're together before the exam, which is on Monday.

So, I'm going to bring the exam with me, and I'm going to make sure you're covering all your bases from that exam. Make sure maybe there are some questions you should have asked, and you didn't, and I'm there to help. So, if I say something like, you may see this again in your lifetime, you should take that as a hint.

That means it's on the exam. So, I'm here to give as much help as I can. We're just where we should be in the lectures, so we're rejoicing in that.

Okay, let's pray, and then we'll get started.

Our gracious Lord, we stop at the beginning of the week to turn our hearts, our minds, and our attention to you, the giver of all good things and the one who gave us this vocation as students. And we constantly pray that we will be diligent in that vocation because that brings honor to you and to ourselves as well.

So, we give you thanks for yourself, and we thank you for the full and complete revelation of yourself in Christ, ministered to you through the Holy Spirit and the scriptures. We're grateful for that. And we also give you thanks for the people who were faithful to the kingdom of God, faithful to the church, faithful to the proclamation of the gospel.

Sometimes, at times of great suffering, we think of John Calvin, and we thank you for his life and for his ministry. And we pray that you will be with us as we study that life and ministry and try to understand it in the times in which he lived and why it was so important to say what he said. So, we thank those people on whose shoulders we stand today.

So, for each other, for this coming week, we pray that there will be every evidence of grace in our lives, both in our personal lives and in our corporate life together. We pray that you will be with these students on Wednesday and Friday without this class but with other responsibilities and that it will be a good week for them by Your grace. So, we pray these things gladly in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Okay. Well, this is lecture two, Theology of John Calvin.

Just kind of as a reminder here, Monday morning, hard to get going on a Monday morning, I think, but just as kind of a reminder, we began with his life, just some kind of highlights of the life of Calvin. I do that with maybe four or five really important people in the course to place them in their context, in their time, and so forth. Your textbook also does some of that, so that's kind of helpful to you.

And then we talked about his work. What was he all about while he was in his ministry? And we mentioned three or four things about his work. One, we mentioned that he was kind of an ombudsman, kind of a mediator between different points of view, especially among the Reformation, kind of stood in the middle.

He did not have the nature of Luther, who was very wealthy. Luther was not organized, and he was a scrapper and a fighter. Calvin wasn't that; he was more of a mediatorial role. We also mentioned that he tried to use Geneva as kind of a city of God, an exemplary city for the Reformation.

He founded the Geneva Academy. I think that's in your notes. I hope it is, but he founded the Geneva Academy, and that's where people came and studied theology and the basic ideas of the Reformation, which they were able to take back to their own homes.

So that was very important. Some people don't like the word systematizer. I don't think there's anything wrong with that word.

I think he was a good systematizer, a good organizer of theology. So he took what he learned from people like Luther, who was not an organized systematizer, and he put it in order. He tells us that the institutes are an orderly account.

So he did that. He also helps us to understand the principles of theology, especially how to organize theology and how to go about theology. Someday, we'll bring in the institutes and read from the very first beginning of the institutes.

All the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, begins with a knowledge of God and of ourselves. That's how he decided to go about theology

methodologically. We know about God, we know about ourselves, and then the rest of the book is trying to unpack that knowledge of God and of ourselves.

So that certainly was true of his work. Okay. Now, are there any questions right up to this, his life, his work? Are we all set with that? Okay.

We're going to go to his theology now. And with his theology, what we're going to do is try to choose the five elements of his theology that were very important in responding to the Roman Catholic Church and the medieval Catholicism that he encountered. So first, you can see that if you're using the outline on page 12, we're going to give an introduction first.

Then, two through six will be the five theological areas for John Calvin. So let's give an introduction. Actually, there are quite a few things I need to say by way of introduction.

So, if you'll bear with me on this. Okay. First thing by way of introduction, there are four very distinct branches of the Reformation.

And we just want to see where he fits in all of this. So, there is the Lutheran branch of the Reformation. We don't talk about that much.

We've mentioned Luther a little bit, but that's kind of the beginning branch of the Reformation. There's the Calvinist branch of the Reformation, which is going to interest us in this course. We'll talk about his theology.

There's the English Reformation under people like Henry VIII. That's where it got started. And we're actually going to lecture on the English Reformation and try to figure out what was going on there.

Fourthly, there's the Anabaptist wing of the Reformation, which is called the left wing of the Reformation or the radical wing of the Reformation. We make reference to that. We don't take time to give much Anabaptist history in this course, but we do make reference to it.

Certainly, your textbooks make reference to this as well. But those are the four distinct Reformation branches that we want to remember. Okay, now the next thing I'd like to do by way of introduction is I'd like to look at the influences upon John Calvin.

What influenced him? What moved him in the direction of his theology? And this is not in any order of importance. This is just as they kind of come to mind. Okay, the first thing that moved him and motivated him was a branch of philosophy known as nominalism.

Now, one of the things we want to do in this course is keep asking ourselves, what's the relationship of philosophy and theology? How do they relate to each other? How do they speak to each other? Or is there a relationship between philosophy and theology? Maybe philosophy and theology should be seen more separately. However, John Calvin was very knowledgeable about philosophy and very knowledgeable about nominalism. Okay, now we could spend our whole next 16, 15, 14 weeks on nominalism.

Nominalism is very, what shall we say, complex. So basically, nominalism was a philosophical movement called the modern way, which was, in a sense, opposed to the realism that was developed by people like Plato. Nominalism was a philosophical movement that really paved the way philosophically for the sciences, no doubt about that.

Now, the one thing that interests us about nominalism is that nominalists who were theologically inclined talked about the sovereign will of God. And they talked about the sovereign will of God as though it were complete in and of itself. There was an absolute sovereign will of God.

And it was a rather harsh view of God, so Calvin felt. He was influenced by nominalism, but Calvin said, you know, that understanding of God really has to be mediated a little bit by God's justice and God's wisdom and God's love. God is not arbitrarily sovereign.

And there were nominalists who said that God was sovereign and that there's an arbitrariness about it, which we can never understand, so we shouldn't even try. Calvin didn't buy that at all. Calvin said you'll never understand the sovereign will of God if you don't understand how that works through his wisdom, through his love, through his grace, and through his justice.

There's kind of a modification of nominalism by Calvin. But he certainly was influenced by nominalism, influenced by philosophy, and was willing to use philosophy in shaping his theology. But there were times when he had to say, here's where I stand apart from other nominalists who are theologians.

I think they've got it wrong to talk about the sovereign will of God as though that sovereign will of God was some kind of absolute sovereign will. Okay, so nominalism is one influence, okay? A second influence was because of his French background. There was a precision in his writing that you don't find in Luther, for example.

There was clarity of thought, and there was clarity of expression in John Calvin that you don't find in Martin Luther. Are any of you linguist majors by any chance? I'm

certainly not. But I think when you read French, there's more clarity about it than when you read German, especially when you're reading German theologians.

When you read German theologians, sometimes you start on one page, and you're still reading one sentence a page later or so. It can be complicated and involved. But there's clarity to Calvin's language, and there wasn't to Luther's language, no doubt about that.

So that's number two. Okay, number three. Number three is he is influenced, no doubt, by humanism.

Now, let's just define humanism in that medieval world. Remember that human... It's not necessarily a bad term. Humanism was a kind of a reappraisal, re-understanding of the Greeks and the Romans, and Greek and Roman thought, and Greek and Roman philosophers, and Greek and Roman writers, and so forth.

So, humanism was kind of trying to bring that... Have a re-understanding, a reordering, and a reappraisal in that sense. And in a sense, you could say that Calvin's culture was a culture of humanism. He certainly learned humanism in the universities where he went and where he studied, and there is no doubt about that.

So now, what we want to take note of with humanism is that Calvin did not see culture and the church as necessarily antithetical. So, there are things to be learned from culture. There are things that the church can learn from culture.

If the church really wants to speak to the culture, there are things that it can learn from the culture. There can be a conversation with the culture. He recognized the deficiencies in the culture.

If there's a culture trying to be shaped without reference to God or reference to Christ or reference to the church, he recognizes the deficiencies in humanism and in the culture. But he wasn't a person who said the culture is totally fallen, the church is totally good, the culture is totally fallen, and the two shouldn't talk to each other. So we need to take note of that.

He learned a lot from humanism. He is very knowledgeable about the Greeks and the Romans. So that's number three.

Okay, we mentioned number four the other day, but I'll just mention it here because in terms of influences upon him, especially in writing his theology, he was trained in law. He argues like a lawyer. He's got a very careful, deliberate, precise argument to make for the sake of the gospel.

And it's very hard to argue with Calvin, I'll tell you. Whether you agree with him or not, his arguments are airtight at times, legally tight. So that's number four.

Number five, of course, would be the Reformation, very influenced by the Reformation. And we mentioned that when he went to study in Paris, one of the first persons he was reading was Luther. And I don't think there's any doubt that Luther was even partially responsible for Calvin's conversion.

He was very taken by Luther and by what was being said in the Reformation, what was going on in the Reformation. We've also talked about other people who have already influenced him during the Reformation. Okay, just two more influences.

The next to the last, I should have maybe saved this to last to show how important it was, but it's the Bible, of course. He was a man of the word. He was a man of scripture.

So, the Bible became the most important influence on John Calvin. First and foremost, Calvin is an interpreter of the Bible. Whatever else you think about John Calvin, he was a person who interpreted the scripture and so on.

Okay, and the last is what I have just written down in my notes and other literary sources. He is very influenced by Saint Augustine, very influenced by Saint Thomas Aquinas. We've already mentioned how much he was influenced by Luther.

But lots of literary sources come his way, and mostly these are theological sources that he's reading, but lots of literary sources help to form his reading. Okay, so that's just an introduction. And then there's one more thing I need to say to introduce all of this, and that is what prompted him to write the Institutes.

I want to just give some reasons that he wrote the Institutes because that became his life's work. I mean, he wrote lots of other stuff, but the Institutes is what we're interested in here for his theology. So, okay, obviously, the Holy Spirit prompted him, but here are some basic reasons.

Okay, and he tells us all this in the Institutes, so you don't have to guess. He's very good about kind of laying all this stuff out. But the number one reason for writing the Institute was he wanted the Institutes to be a key to understanding the Bible.

As far as he was concerned, the Institutes were kind of a hermeneutical key to what he called a good and right understanding of the Scriptures. So he wants people to read his Institutes; he wants people to have the Bible here and the Institutes here, read the Institutes as a way of opening up the Scriptures to them. So, it's a key to understanding the Bible.

That's one reason why he's writing this stuff. Yeah. Yes, in a way, I mean, in a sense, it's both, and because when in the Institutes, when he makes a biblical reference and he explains that reference, he would like people to be reading that reference in the text as well.

So it's probably both, and rather than read the whole Institutes first, which became a two-volume thing and then read your Bible. It's probably both; keep going with both, probably. Because, as he explains it, he'd like you to look at that text.

Something else here, that first reason, opening up the Bible to people. Okay. The second reason is what he called, I'm setting forth the sum of religion.

I'm giving a summary of religion. I'm giving what is most important in religion. Now by religion, he meant Christianity.

He didn't mean religion in general, but he's setting out a sum of religion. He's putting it in order, giving you a summary. What's most important in religion? What's most important, substitute the word Christianity; what's most important in Christianity to know? Well, he felt if you read the Institutes, you'd kind of get that.

Okay. Number three, the Institutes definitely are kind of a, here's the language you hear about at Gordon College, but kind of a Christian world order, a Christian philosophy, how you should, as a Christian, how you should view the world and what's in the world. So, Christian world order, seeing the world Christianly, understanding the world through Christian glasses.

Certainly, that was important to John Calvin. So this is a Christian philosophy setting up here. Okay.

Number four is it's an apologetic work. There's no question. Calvin is defending, and he's a good apologist.

He's a defender of the Christian faith, but he's a defender of the Christian faith as understood by the Reformation. So, he's using Reformation principles, Reformation hermeneutics, and so forth to defend the Christian faith. There's no doubt that this is an apologetic.

This work is an apologetic. It is a defense of the faith, no question about that. So, okay.

And finally, there is really an evangelistic preface, an evangelistic reason for writing the book. Calvin tells us that he wants to reach the lost in writing this book. Now, that changed a little bit, however.

So let me just show you how that changed. He wrote the first edition in 1536. The first edition of the Institutes was definitely written for people who had not learned, for people who didn't know a lot about the Bible or about the church.

It was very evangelistic, trying to lead them into faith in Christ and get into the scriptures, become a member of the church, and so forth. So the 1536 edition of the Institutes was evangelistic in that very basic way of trying to reach people with the message for Christ and so forth. Now, the later editions, as the Institutes were developed more and more and more, the later editions were really, or the later material was really written for pastors and teachers of the church to help them understand how they could take this material and be good evangelists.

How can the pastors and teachers... So, the material becomes much more complicated. The argument becomes much more detailed as he writes more about the Institutes. So, he knows that the later editions of the Institutes are not going to appeal to a person who doesn't know anything about Christianity.

That person's not going to understand the Institutes. But the pastor and the teacher will be better equipped to carry out his office and be good evangelists. So there is an evangelistic purpose, first of all, almost to the unlearned at the beginning, but then as he moves along, it's to pastors and teachers and so forth, and they become the evangelists.

But there is an evangelistic purpose, no doubt about that. So, and we want to just take note, too, in terms of this one final thing in terms of the introduction in general, is that Calvin wrote a lot of stuff other than the Institutes. So, Calvin wrote and published sermons.

He published catechisms. He published commentaries on the Bible. We're going to be concentrating on the Institutes, but we need to remember that his writing is voluminous.

So, he was pretty remarkable. Okay, yeah, Jesse. Jesse, when you said it was an apologetic work, is that kind of defending? It often defends against Roman Catholicism, right?

He did believe, and remember he left the church, or he didn't leave the church, the church left him. So, it wasn't really the true church. There were local; we'll talk about this. Actually, there were local Catholic churches he felt were part of the true church, no doubt.

But he had to leave the hierarchical church in order to stay in the true church. So, it is apologetic and a defense against what he believed were Catholic erosions of the faith, yeah. So, he did come to blows with the Roman Catholic church, no doubt.

Something else about this, just while we've stopped here, is why he's doing this, what's prompting him to do this, and what's motivating him to do this. Okay, let's look at some theology here as he's trying to speak to the church. And we'll start with his Theology of Mankind.

I'm using that language because that's the language in the Institutes, Theology of Mankind. And we'll see if we can figure that out. Now remember, look at two, the Doctrine of Mankind; look at three, the Doctrine of God.

Remember what Calvin himself said: all the wisdom we possess, that is to say true and sovereign wisdom, begins with an understanding of God and of ourselves, but which one comes first is hard to discern. Okay, so we're taking him at his word, and we're starting with his Doctrine of Humankind, and then we're going to the Doctrine of God. We could have started with the Doctrine of God and then went to the Doctrine of Mankind, Humankind.

So, we're just taking Calvin's word; we're just staying with his own methodology in doing this. So, let's start with us. Okay, first thing, let me put some words, and then we'll have them up here.

Oh, I actually had nominalism up here. Did you spell nominalism okay? I actually had it up here. Okay, the first thing we need to do is to understand how the medieval Roman Catholic Church viewed mankind.

What was their understanding of mankind, humankind? Well, that can be found in the phrase, *facere quod in seest*. So, and there aren't too many kinds of words and phrases we'll be using here, like Latin or anything like that, but just the ones we do, you'll become familiar with. *Facere quod in seest*.

Literally, *facere quod in seest* means do what is in you to do. And that was a medieval kind of anthropology, that human beings still had goodness in them, so they were able to do what was in them to do, to do the right thing that was in them to do. So, *facere quod in seest*, do what's in you to do, do the right thing that you're able to do as a human being. You've still got some goodness in you, so do that.

Okay, that's the theology Calvin would have been understood as a good Roman Catholic. That's what he would have been reared in. Calvin comes along, and he denies it; he says this is not true.

You cannot do what is in you to do. Human beings cannot do what is in them to do. Why? Because of original sin.

So, for Calvin, by original sin, what he meant is that we all share the sin of Adam, and the word he uses in his institutes is the image of God has been mutilated in us. So, the image of God has been mutilated in us. Now, if you're driving down the road and something's there on the road that's been run over a lot of times and is really mutilated, you almost can't tell what it is, you know.

Well, that was Calvin's understanding of original sin: the image of God is mutilated in us, okay. And so therefore, for Calvin, our spiritual kind of do what you're able to do, spiritual gifts, they are entirely lost for Calvin. There is no do what is in you to do possibility when it comes to the spiritual life for Calvin because the image of God is mutilated in us.

There are, however, as Calvin reminds us, St. Augustine reminded us, and Calvin reminded us there are natural gifts that we have. We have some ability to reason and to think and to speak, and, you know, those are natural gifts that are corrupted but not mutilated. So even though we are fallen, even though we are corrupted, even though we don't bear the image of God any longer because it's mutilated in us, we still can add two and two and get four, or we can still farm our land or we can still occasionally be good to our neighbor, you know, do a good thing, a good deed.

Okay, but this ability to do what is in you to do, you don't have the ability to do what is in you to do in a spiritual sense. You can do some things in the natural sense but even that is corrupted. So even Calvin had a jaundiced view of what you're able to do in the natural sense, okay? Okay, for Calvin, the basic life of people from here on in their life, their everyday life, basically for Calvin, is that people are living their lives in total rebellion against God.

That's what's happening with the masses of people. They are not doing what is in them to do, good to do, because they can't do it. They're incapable of doing it. They're living their lives in rebellion against God, and therefore, they are without excuse for those actions.

Okay, and the root of all of that for Calvin basically is pride. Pride is what keeps us from knowing ourselves and knowing God as we should. And just so that you would get the point, he called it stinking pride.

So pride is what really keeps us from knowing ourselves and from knowing God. So we go through our lives rebelling against God in this prideful way, and there it is. Okay, now, where does responsibility come in here? Do I have any responsibility here as a person living in this way that Calvin has kind of outlined his anthropology? Not like the Roman Catholic, *fac request in se est*, but anthropology which is original sin, filled with original sin, stinking pride, we're rebelling against God and everything.

Do I have any responsibility? I go to hear Calvin preach on Sunday morning in Geneva. What's my responsibility? My first responsibility is to see myself as a sinner in rebellion against God and to confess those sins. The first responsibility of the listener of the gospel is to acknowledge my sins and to confess my sins.

Because if I don't take that responsibility of acknowledging myself as a sinner and confessing my sins if I don't, I will never know myself, and I will never know God. So, for Calvin, you take that responsibility on your shoulders. You confess your sins, and you affirm that you are a sinner.

That's the beginning of self-knowledge. Now, that was a bit of a counter-cultural day in the medieval world, but it's really a counter-cultural. It's a counter-cultural message in our world for sure, isn't it? I mean, in our world, is that how people think of themselves first and foremost? First thing in the morning, they think of themselves as sinners in a rebellion against God.

I don't think people think of themselves that way in our world. I don't think they're taking responsibility for thinking of themselves as people who are in rebellion against God. Calvin's response to that, of course, was until you do that, you can't; God bless you; you can't know yourself until you do that.

Once you do that, you start to have some real self-awareness and self-knowledge, and that's going to lead you to a knowledge of God. And then, the more you know about God, the more you're going to know about yourself. So, for Calvin, this is absolutely critical.

So that's where it all begins. Now, when it comes to this doctrine of mankind, Calvin believed that, do I need to do anything with this mic? No, okay, okay. When it comes to the doctrine of mankind, Calvin believed that everybody's able to understand this doctrine when they hear it preached from the pulpit.

There's nobody who can't understand this. Everybody's capable of understanding. You don't have to be a person, and you don't have to be a good Christian to understand this message.

It is capable of being understood by everybody. So, there's no kind of doubt about that for Calvin. And as far as he was concerned, everybody needs to be explicitly instructed in this.

Therefore, he wanted people in Geneva to attend church, all citizens to attend church, because how can they be good citizens if they don't know themselves properly? So, okay, so that's the first thing, the doctrine of mankind or the doctrine of humankind, as we would say today. I'm just using the language that was translated into the institutes. Okay.

Okay, total depravity, the doctrine of humankind, not fact required to say yes, but we are totally depraved. The image of God is mutilated in us. We're filled with stinking pride.

We're in rebellion against God. And boy, it's tough, it's tough, you know, counterculture message. Anything about that message? I'm not asking you necessarily to agree with Calvin.

I am asking you to kind of think of your own theology in relation to what Calvin is teaching us and say, how does this match with what I think? Do I agree? Do I disagree? Is it helpful to me? Is there a discourse I can have with Calvin over this? You know, so that's the most important thing. So, okay. Are we okay with that? Okay.

The doctrine of God is C. All the wisdom we possess begins with the knowledge of ourselves and of God. Those two things are intertwined. Okay.

Okay. Now, the first thing about the doctrine of God is he did like the word sovereign. God is the sovereign Lord of the universe.

No doubt about that. But he's not the sovereign Lord of the universe the way the nominalists taught it. He is the sovereign Lord of the universe, and we understand his sovereignty.

We understand his sovereignty because that sovereignty is demonstrated in love. It's demonstrated in justice. It's demonstrated in his faithfulness toward us and his grace toward us.

So it's not an absolute sovereignty that he's going to do as he pleases to do, and we'll never understand why. That was some nominalists who taught that. No, it's not that.

It is a sovereignty that is beautifully related to us in these kinds of ways. So that was important. Now, it's interesting to notice when you read the Institutes how we should respond to God. Here are the kinds of words that you read in our response to that God.

We should fear God. We should honor that God. We should trust God.

So, it wasn't just because he is sovereign and because he demonstrates his sovereignty in these wonderful ways. Notice when you read the Institutes the response words on our part to this God. Honor, revere, fear, love, trust.

That's how we should be grateful that we are the children of this God. So, our response to that is very, very important. Okay, now another thing about God himself, and that is the glory of God is never to be impaired in any way.

You always must accentuate the glory of God. You must never do anything or say anything that impairs or hurts, or denies the glory of God. So, just read the Psalms and read about the glory of God.

And so, he talked a lot about the glory of God. We should also take note that the freedom of God is never impaired. God is free because he is God.

So, you can never impair, talk against, or doubt the freedom of God. As a matter of fact, as we'll see later on with his theology, God is free to choose those who are going to be saved. And he's free to choose those who are going to be damned.

That is the freedom of God. You can never impair that freedom of God. You can never devalue that freedom of God.

He's totally free because he is God. We may not understand that freedom, but nevertheless, for Calvin, he is free. So okay, just one more thing we want to take note of when it comes to God.

I mean, obviously, we could talk about God for the rest of the course with Calvin, but because this is kind of a survey course, we do move through the stuff. But I love the imagery of God as creator and redeemer. God is the creator and redeemer.

And in order to understand God fully, we can only understand him in Christ, of course. Christ is the full revelation of God. It is Christ who helps us understand the nature of God as creator and redeemer because Christ is creator and redeemer.

So, his understanding of God is not a Christ-less understanding of God. It's not a Unitarian. Let's go back to Servetus.

Servetus had a Unitarian understanding of God. Remember Michael Servetus, who was burned at the stake in Geneva? He had a Unitarian understanding of God. God is up here.

We're down here. There's a gap between. That wasn't true for Calvin, of course, because the best understanding we have of God is when we look in the face of Christ.

And Christ is the creator and redeemer, and that's who God is. So, if you want to know who God is, look at Christ. That's how we best understand God.

Okay. Let me stop there for just a minute. So, we start with God.

I'm sorry. We start with humankind, and then all the wisdom we possess begins with the knowledge of God and of ourselves. And we go to God.

And the more we understand about God, the more we're going to understand about ourselves. And the more we understand about ourselves, the more we understand about God. It goes around in a circle.

So, do you have any questions about this wonderful circle we're in here as we begin Calvin's theology? That is a statement and an instruction. As he is preaching, he is telling people that you must never be impaired by your actions. You must never impair the glory of God by your actions, by your words, by your deeds.

You must always remember that you're standing in the presence of the glory of God, and you must never do anything that's going to detract from that in any way. So it's both a fact for Calvin but it's also an admonition. Yeah.

Yeah, Ruth? When you use the term, other means of Christ, is it something that God means? Christ is the full revelation of God. Yeah. Christ, we understand God.

How do we understand God? We understand Him fully and completely by looking in the face of Christ. So, Christ is, it's the word that became flesh and dwelt among us. It's the full and complete revelation of God.

Yeah. Something else here about humankind and God, you know, it's a circular kind of thing here. So, we all set with that? Okay.

Yeah. Okay. Let's go on to the doctrine of the church, number four in your outline, but it's the third kind of doctrine, the doctrine of the church.

Okay. Boy, there's a lot here. Doctrine of the church.

Okay. Okay. First of all, for Calvin, the church is never completely fallen.

The church has never completely fallen. The church is never completely fallen away from God. So, you see, the church and what Calvin did was make a distinction between the visible church and the invisible church.

So, let's make that distinction. There's the visible church and the invisible church. Okay.

So, what is the visible church? The visible church is the church that you see all around you. It's the congregation that meets on Sunday morning. It's the church on the corner.

It's the pastor, the priest, taking the Eucharist or the Lord's supper preaching that you hear. But the visible church is the church that you see, the church that you see with your senses. That's the visible church.

All right. Now, for John Calvin, it's very important to take note that that visible church is flawed, and we know that all too well, don't we? That visible church is a flawed human organization, and there are bad priests, and there are bad ministers, and there are bad lay people, and sometimes when a person becomes a Christian, and you bring that person into the church, the thing you want to do is keep them away from some of the saints of the church, because some of the saints of the church are the most awful people you could ever meet. Some of the saints of the church are the people you don't want them mixing with.

Some of the people outside the church are a lot nicer than some of the saints in the church. So, the visible church is flawed. There is no doubt about it.

It's a flawed church. It's not a perfect church. We recognize that, he said.

Okay, but the invisible church, however, is the pure church. The invisible church is the body of Christ, the righteous body of Christ. It's pure.

It is God's pure body here on earth. That's the invisible church, all right? And the visible church contains the invisible church. So, within the visible church, you've got the pure church.

It is there. So, I'm always saying to students, and I'll say to you because I don't know your theological background. I don't know your church background.

I don't know where all of you are coming from. I'd love to know that someday. Maybe in our discussions, you'd be willing to share that someday.

But people are pretty quick to leave the church as soon as there's a bit of a problem in the church, a bad minister or some lay people are causing problems or division in the ranks or something like that. So, people do leave the church for all kinds of reasons, and they certainly leave the church. And some of them are legitimate reasons for that.

All I say to people is to think pretty clearly before you leave your local church or before you leave your local denomination. You may be getting upset with what's

going on, or there may be things going on in the church that are really bad news. But in every church, there is the invisible church.

There is the pure church. Every visible church contains an invisible church. So, there is purity there.

Sometimes, I think what we need to do is find like-minded believers in the church who want to bring reform to that local church or reform to that denomination instead of just automatically leaving it. But he made this great; this was made by Augustine, and he's picking it up and making it for his day and for his age. I think we need to think more about the visible church versus the invisible church.

The invisible church is the pure church, no doubt. And we get very upset with the visible church, don't we? I do. I certainly get upset with the visible church because there's a lot of rancor and bitterness and hatred and foul things going on in the visible church.

But the invisible church is always there. So we want to remember that. Maybe Calvin can help us here.

So, okay. That's one thing about the church. If anybody wants to talk about that, you are certainly welcome to.

I'd love to know what your denominations are and what your church life is. Maybe at the end of the course, you'd be willing to share that with me. I'd just be fascinated to know how divergent we are.

Okay. Now, Calvin said, if you're going to try to find then in your life, you're going to try to find the true church. You're going to find the church that you think is the New Testament church, the true church.

What are the marks of the true church? Calvin said there are two marks of the true church. The true church, the New Testament church, has got to have these two marks to it. If it doesn't, it's not the true church.

There may be some purity still within it and so forth, but if it doesn't, that visibleness is pretty clear. So, okay. Now, these two marks, nothing is more important than the language of Calvin here.

So, I'm going to give you these two marks. I'm going to actually quote them to you because Calvin is very precise about this. And every single word, it's like a lawyer.

You're going to ask, well, what does he mean? But anyway, okay. So, number one, the word of God is purely preached. The word of God is purely preached in the true church.

He doesn't say the word of God is preached. He says the word of God is purely preached, rightly preached, rightly dividing the word of truth, you know. That's the first characteristic.

If you find the word of God being purely preached, you know you've got the invisible church there, you know, the true church. Okay. So, are we okay there? The word of God is purely preached.

Okay. The second one, the sacraments, are validly administered. The sacraments, by which he meant baptism in the Lord's Supper, and we're going to get to, I think right at the end, don't we get to the sacraments? Maybe I should mention that.

Well, we'll see. I think we get to the sacraments later on. But anyway, the sacraments are validly administered.

Okay. So, they have to be administered as they were instituted by Christ. And of course, for Calvin, being validly administered means they have to be administered by an ordained pastor.

You can't have lay people giving the sacraments and baptizing people in them. And he believed just in baptism in the Lord's Supper, by the way. So, you can't have that.

So, okay. So, that's the true mark of the church. The word of God is purely preached.

Sacraments are validly administered. Now, there's the lawyer. There's the lawyer.

Every word counts. He means every word. He talks about every word, you know.

So, there's the lawyer coming through there. So, okay. Okay.

We've already talked about whether you should leave the church. I don't know if there's anything more that we need to say. Should you leave the church? Well, maybe I should say a couple of things.

Should you leave the church? I got talking about it earlier, but okay. First of all, only God knows who the elect are. You don't know who the elect are.

So, if you're thinking about leaving the church, you may think about leaving the church because it can become heretical and so forth. There may still be people that God has elected for salvation. There may be some elect people in that church still.

So, that's one thing about whether you should leave the church. Only God knows who the elect are. Let me mention two and three, and then I got to give you a break.

But let me mention two and three. It's very interesting. Calvin was not anti-Catholic.

Calvin disagreed with the hierarchical Catholic church like Luther did. But Calvin believed that a local Catholic church might be part of the invisible church. There might be real purity in that local Catholic church.

That word might be properly preached, and that sacraments might be validly administered. Only God knows that. But Calvin, like Luther, did not condemn the Catholic church.

Calvin, like Luther, condemned the hierarchy and structure of the Catholic church. But the local Catholic church down the street, neither Calvin nor Luther would ever condemn that. They believed that it was possible that the church was part of the invisible church.

So, Calvin and Luther were not like American fundamentalists today. There are American fundamentalists today who are so anti-Catholic that there are no good Catholics. There are no good Catholics and no good Catholic church.

You can't lay claim to that with Calvin and Luther at all. In many churches, Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox, there is the invisible church, no doubt about that. Okay, we should also mention that should you leave the church, there is a warning Calvin always gives here, and that is, remember, outside of the church, there is no salvation.

There's no salvation outside of the church. You've got to be in the church to know, to hear the message of salvation and faith in Christ and so forth, and then to mature in that life. So, outside of the church, there is no salvation at all.

So, Calvin was very strict about that. You cannot find salvation outside of the church. I don't know.

Should I preach here? Yeah, I'll preach. Okay, I'm going to preach now. I'm not teaching anymore.

I'm preaching. There's a fine line sometimes. So, at Gordon College, because you go to chapel two or three times a week, you still need to be going to church on Sunday morning.

You need a community of believers that you're comfortable with to worship with, to take the Lord's Supper and baptism and communion, and to hear the word of God preached. You need that because that community is very important to your life. The thing I often fear most, I have to say, as it's being taped, I think it is.

The thing I often fear most about Gordon College students is that when you graduate, you will not find a community of believers to worship with because you may be, you know, the first year or so, your second year, third year, and the more you get away from the community of believers, the more you are outside the church, in which Calvin said outside the church there's no salvation, but the more you're outside of a community of believers in the body of Christ, the easier it gets to do that. And then finally, it's kind of you and Jesus and just you reading your Bible and so forth. Calvin wouldn't buy that at all.

You need the body of Christ. You need the community of believers to know what you are all about and what God is all about, you know. So, I'm pleading with you when you leave Gordon College, wherever you settle in, find a community of believers, find a local church, you know.

Please do that. That's really important. So, okay, now I'm preaching, so, and I didn't give you your five seconds, so I'm doing it now.

So just stretch, rest, whatever, you know. Five seconds. You deserve a break.

It's Monday morning. I don't feel too sorry for you, though, because Wednesday and Friday, Wednesday and Friday, you're going to be not resting, but in the library and studying and reading your books and everything. So I'll be thinking of you on Wednesday and Friday.

Is anybody here from Virginia, by any chance? I'll be in Williamsburg, Virginia. Beautiful country down there, and so the retreat is in Williamsburg, Virginia. So pretty nice, isn't it? It's a nice place for it.

Okay, you had your break? Okay, we'll press on here a bit, and then have a good week, and then we'll see you next Monday. Okay, number, oh, we're still in the church. We haven't left the church yet, no pun intended, but we haven't left the church yet.

Okay, because we do need to talk about the ministry in the church, and I'll have time maybe just to do that, and then we need to talk about the sacraments, and I won't have time to do that, but the ministry in the church, so. Okay, ministry in the church, there are two words that are really important to understand, Calvin, when it comes to ministry in the church. Okay, the first word is the priesthood of all believers, the priesthood of all believers.

Now, the priesthood of all believers means that all believers can minister as priests to one another. I can pray for you. I can confess my sins to you.

I can counsel you. The priesthood of all believers means that we can be priests to one another. Okay, now the second word is vocation or calling.

Every Christian has a vocation. Every Christian has a calling. Your calling presently is you are called to be students, and you're fulfilling that calling right now, but we don't want to confuse the two because the priesthood of all believers did not mean that you could preach or that you could give the sacraments.

Preaching, giving the sacraments, and interpreting the Bible, had to do with a specific vocation. That is the vocation of ministry, so sometimes Protestants feel that this notion of the priesthood of all believers means, oh, I can preach, or I can give the sacraments or something like that, not for Calvin.

It doesn't mean that because, for Calvin, preaching and giving the sacraments was tied up with a particular ministerial vocation. Now, that vocation of the minister or the pastor was no better than other vocations, maybe than being a teacher or taking care of the home or something. It was no better a vocation.

There's no hierarchy of vocations for Luther and Calvin, but it did mean that there were certain responsibilities that only the person in that vocation could do. So a layperson can pray for one another, but a layperson can't preach or give the sacraments. So those two words are really, really important.

Okay. Another thing in terms of the ministry we should take note of is that, as far as he's concerned, the minister, the local minister in the local church, has a great deal of authority, and it includes these kinds of things. Preaching included teaching, giving the sacraments, administration, disciplining the laity, disciplining the people of the church, and a ministry of forgiveness.

So, when people confess their sins, part of the great, great ministry and the authority of ministry that the minister has is to remind them that they are forgiven by God. Okay. Now, remember we said, what was one of the great words over which the Reformation was fought? It was the word assurance, assurance.

Part of the authority of the minister is to assure people that they are the children of God. And boy, that's a big responsibility to do that. So, the work of ministry included a lot of really wonderful things.

Now, in general, Calvin said there were two ministerial offices, and I'll just mention that then we have to go. The first office is the office of the pastor. Okay.

The second office is the office of the deacon. The pastor was the person who preached and taught. The deacon was the person who did the kind of the servants' work in the church.

Some of you come from churches that have pastors and deacons, or maybe elders and deacons, or maybe presbyters and deacons. So, you'd be very familiar with that language. So those were two offices because those were the only two offices for Calvin.

Why? Why would those be the only two offices that he would acknowledge? Why? Why not others? Because those are the two, he read about in the Bible. So, he felt those are the two that have biblical authority.

This is Dr. Roger Green in his Church History Course, session 5 on John Calvin.