

## **Doctrine of Solus Christus**

### **John Calvin and the Blessing of Christ Alone**

1. Dr. Stephen Nichols of Ligonier Ministries, asks the following question. “Would you choose this life for yourself? Your mother dies as you pass into your third birthdate. You reluctantly go into the ministry. At 27 you become a pastor in a culture where age is important to the community. You are in a foreign land, where foreigners are suspect. You do not get paid for the first eight months of your ministry. Early in your ministry you get a toothache that infects the gum. The pain is so excruciating you are incapacitated for nine days. You finally take a triple dose of medicine, and have the tooth extracted. After two years of strife and conflict with your church, you get voted out. You get married, and your first child, your only child, dies as an infant. Your wife is struck by severe illnesses, so often she is basically bed-ridden, and then, just shy of your tenth anniversary, she dies. As you turn 50, you suffer from gout, repeated bouts with intestinal parasites, and tuberculosis. You are in so much pain, you have to be carried to the pulpit to preach, and carried home after you are done. You spend the last painful weeks of your life in bed. At age 55, you die.”
2. This was the life of John Calvin. Pain and suffering was not the totality of his life, but it was a significant part.
3. Calvin was born in Noyon, France, July 10, 1509. He would be 8 years old when Luther nailed his 95 Thesis to the Church door of Wittenburg.
4. At age 12, Calvin was sent to the University of Paris to study to be a priest.
5. As Calvin studied the Humanities, he set aside his studies for the ministry in order to pursue an academic degree. He secured a Master’s degree, and published a book, a commentary on Seneca (c. 4 BC – AD 65), a Roman Stoic philosopher, statesman, and dramatist.
6. In the providence of God, the ideas of the Reformation found their way to Paris, and to Calvin’s roommate.
7. Through his roommate, Calvin was introduced to the doctrines of grace. His conversion took place sometime around May, 1534 when Calvin was 24. Calvin had what he called a “sudden conversion”. “God subdued and brought my heart to docility.”
8. By 1536, Calvin wrote and published in Basel, the first edition of The Institutes of the Christian Religion. Over the next 25 years plus, Calvin added to The Institutes.
9. Desiring to leave Paris, France, Calvin wanted to go to Strasbourg, in north eastern France, in order to study with the Reformer, Martin Bucer (November 11, 1491 – February 28, 1551).
10. Making a detour, Calvin travelled to the city of Geneva. His intention was to stay one night, and then continue his journey.

11. In the providence of God, the Reformation leader, William Farel (1489 – September 13, 1565), heard of Calvin’s stay in Geneva, and went to see him.
12. Farel knew his limitations. He knew Geneva needed Calvin to establish a Reformation church.
13. In desperation, Farel convinced Calvin that if he left, God would curse him. Farel said to Calvin:

"You are concerned about your rest and your personal interests. . Therefore I proclaim to you in the name of Almighty God whose command you defy: Upon your work there shall rest no blessing . . . Therefore, let God damn your rest, let God damn your work!"
14. For the next two years, John Calvin, “That Frenchman”, as he was called, tried to establish a good work for the Lord. It was not appreciated.
15. Calvin wanted to set up districts in the city, and have no more than 50 people be responsible to a pastor under his authority.
16. Other proposals were also resisted. In 1538, on Easter Sunday, Calvin refused to give the citizens of Geneva communion.
17. Two weeks later, the city voted Calvin out, and forced him to flee. Calvin made it known that people wanted preachers, not pastors.
18. Calvin went to Strasbourg, where he married a widow of an Ana-Baptist, Idelette de Bure (d. 1549).
19. While in Strasbourg, Calvin wrote his first commentary. Meanwhile, back in Geneva, the Catholics tried to retake the city. The people resisted that effort and invited Calvin to return.
20. Reluctantly, Calvin returned in 1541, upon conditions. From 1541 to 1564 Calvin preached, lectured, supervised the Company of Pastors, and Calvin sent missionaries to France, and even to the shores of Brazil.
21. More than 2,000 Frenchmen went to Geneva, and then returned to France to establish churches.
22. Geneva was a city that received refugees. Many came from Florence, Italy, where they stopped making icons, and started making watches.
23. A number of other people came to Geneva, including John Knox who fled from Bloody Mary, of England.
24. Some of the Scottish refugees were placed in homes that had to raise the roof of their homes to form a hiding place.

25. The strength of Calvin was his teaching, including the Doctrine of Union with Christ. Our union with Christ is not only theological, but personal. Christ knew about human suffering, and human weakness, and frailty.

- *Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

26. The Reformers took the church from the saints, “Help me St. Ann”, to Christ alone, in just a few short years.