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“In this book, Dr. Steve Lawson has masterfully presented us with thirty-two keynotes that made Calvin the best preacher of the Reformation, all of them centered around the Word of God preached expositively. He describes for us in a powerful as well as profound way how Calvin brought his congregation upward to gaze upon God’s glory as he preached verse by verse, then ended his sermons with prayers filled with the Word! Dr. Lawson is right in saying that because of the spiritual bankruptcy of our time, we need Calvins once again. I would make this book recommended reading in courses such as homiletics and missions for any serious pastor and student of theology.”

— DR. ALONZO RAMÍREZ, Professor
Biblical Reformed Seminary, Peru





THE EXPOSITORY GENIUS
of JOHN CALVIN





A **Long Line of Godly Men** Profile

The Expository Genius of

John Calvin

STEVEN J. LAWSON

IR

Reformation Trust

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To John MacArthur—
faithful shepherd, peerless expositor,
defender of the faith.

For almost forty years, Dr. MacArthur has stood in the pulpit at Grace Community Church and has been the gold standard of biblical exposition for an entire generation of preachers. His masterful preaching through books of the Bible, as well as his New Testament commentaries, study Bible, seminary, college, missionary academy, and worldwide radio ministry, make him, I believe, the John Calvin of our day.

*For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord,
and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.*

(2 COR. 4:5, NASB)





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PREFACE

Standing on Holy Ground

To step into the pulpit is to enter onto holy ground. To stand behind an open Bible demands no trifling with sacred things. To be a spokesman for God requires utmost concern and care in handling and proclaiming the Word. Rightly does Scripture warn, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1).

But sad to say, we live in a generation that has compromised this sacred calling to preach. Exposition is being replaced with entertainment, preaching with performances, doctrine with drama, and theology with theatrics. Desperately does the modern-day church need to recover its way and return to a pulpit that is Bible-based, Christ-centered, and life-changing. God has always been pleased to honor His Word—especially His Word *preached*. The greatest seasons





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of church history—those eras of widespread reformation and great awakening—have been those epochs in which God-fearing men took the inspired Word and unashamedly preached it in the power of the Holy Spirit. As the pulpit goes, so goes the church. Thus, only a reformed pulpit will ultimately lead to a reformed church. In this hour, pastors must see their pulpits again marked by sequential exposition, doctrinal clarity, and a sense of gravity regarding eternal matters. This, in my estimation, is *the* need of the hour.

This book is the first of a series that will examine the varied ministries of noted men from church history. Given the pressing need in our time for powerful pulpits, preachers will be a key focus. The reason for this emphasis is simple—I can think of no better discipline for preachers today, apart from the study of Scripture itself, than to examine the biblical exposition of spiritual giants from the past.

To that end, this book will investigate the preaching of the great Reformer of Geneva, John Calvin. Future books in this series will delve into the ministries of other gifted preachers, such as Martin Luther, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, and others. These mighty men were used by God to reform the church, confront the world, and alter the flow of history. At the very epicenters of these extraordinary ministries were pulpits that were anchored to the Word. In a very real sense, these pulpits were the hinges upon which history turned.

As we look back upon those men and the momentous





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times in which they lived, certain questions must be raised: What marked the preaching of these influential men? What were their commitments in the public proclamation of the Word? The approaches these men took to the pulpit must receive our closest attention if we are to see another great movement of God in our day.

As we consider Calvin's life and work, we will survey the distinguishing marks of his pulpit ministry, consider the core presuppositions that undergirded his biblical preaching, and examine his personal preparation for the pulpit. Along the way, we will gain an overview of his preaching itself—his sermon introduction, interpretation, application, conclusion, and final intercession. In short, we will explore the distinguishing marks of Calvin's expository genius.

The goal here is not to take a sentimental journey—the hour is too desperate for such a triviality. Rather, the aim of this book is to raise the bar for a new generation of expositors. The method is to see what a commitment to biblical preaching looks like by examining the work of a man who was sold out to this sacred duty.

If you are a preacher or teacher, may you be challenged to a higher standard in your handling of the Word. If you are a supporter of one called to this ministry, may you know how best to pray. May all who read these chapters find them impactful and inspirational, mighty and motivational—all for the ushering in of a new reformation.

I want to express my gratitude to the team at Ligonier





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Ministries for their keen interest and involvement in this project. Tim Dick, president and chief executive of Ligonier, first saw the value in this book being placed in your hands. Greg Bailey, director of publications for Ligonier's Reformation Trust Publishing division, did a masterful job of fine-tuning my work, and Creative Director Chris Larson added his talented touch to the graphic design.

At Christ Fellowship Baptist Church, I want to thank the elders, pastors, and congregation, who urged me to pursue God's will in writing this book. I also want to thank my executive assistant, Kay Allen, who typed this document and coordinated the efforts, and Keith Phillips and Mark Hassler, who provided invaluable help in researching and working with the manuscript.

At home, my wife, Anne, and our four children, Andrew, James, Grace Anne, and John, have only encouraged me in my writing assignments. May all who read this book know the loving home environment in which I study and write.

Soli Deo Gloria.

—Steven J. Lawson
Mobile, Alabama
September 2006





CHAPTER ONE

Calvin's Life and Legacy

Calvin had no weapon but the Bible. . . . Calvin preached from the Bible every day, and under the power of that preaching the city began to be transformed. As the people of Geneva acquired knowledge of God's Word and were changed by it, the city became, as John Knox called it later, a New Jerusalem from which the gospel spread to the rest of Europe, England, and the New World.¹

—JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

Towering over the centuries of church history, there stands one figure of such monumental importance that he still commands attention and arouses intrigue, even five hundred years after his appearance on the world stage. Called “one of the truly great men of all time,”² he was a driving force so significant that his influence shaped the church and Western





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culture beyond that of any other theologian or pastor. His masterful expositions of Scripture laid down the doctrinal distinctives of the Protestant Reformation, making him arguably the leading architect of the Protestant cause. His theological thunder defined and articulated the core truths of that history-altering movement in sixteenth-century Europe. In turn, those lofty ideas helped fashion the founding principles of Western civilization, giving rise to the republican form of government, the ideals of public education, and the philosophy of free-market capitalism.³ A world-class theologian, a revered exegete, a renowned teacher, an ecclesiastical statesman, an influential Reformer—he was all of these and more. His name was John Calvin.

First and foremost, however, Calvin was a *pastor*—the faithful shepherd for twenty-five years to a local flock in Geneva, Switzerland. Every pastor has many demands on his time, and Calvin, because of his status in Geneva, had more responsibilities than most. Reformation historian J. H. Merle D'Aubigné wrote:

On Sundays [Calvin] conducted divine service, and had daily service every other week. He devoted three hours in each week to theological teaching; he visited the sick, and administered private reproof. He received strangers; attended the consistory on Thursday, and directed its deliberations; on Friday was present at the conference on Scripture, called the *congregation*; and, after the





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minister in office for the day had presented his views on some passage of Scripture, and the other pastors had made their remarks, Calvin added some observations, which were *a kind of lecture*. . . . The week in which he did not preach was filled up with other duties; and he had duties of every kind. In particular, he devoted much attention to the refugees who flocked to Geneva, driven by persecution out of France and Italy; he taught and exhorted them. He consoled, by his letters, “those who were still in the jaws of the lion”; he interceded for them. In his study he threw light on the sacred writings by admirable commentaries, and confuted the writings of the enemies of the gospel.⁴

But amid these many pastoral duties, Calvin was primarily a *preacher*, a biblical expositor of the highest order. Indeed, the German Reformer Philip Melanchthon labeled him simply “the theologian,” an indication of the respect Calvin was accorded for his abilities as an interpreter of Scripture. In his years in Geneva, Calvin viewed the pulpit as his principal responsibility, the first work of his pastoral calling. Thus, this magisterial Reformer gave himself to the exposition of the Word as perhaps no one else in history. He esteemed and elevated biblical preaching to be of highest importance, and so he made it his lifelong commitment.

As a result, apart from the biblical authors themselves, Calvin stands today as the most influential minister of the





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Word of God the world has ever seen. No man before or since has been so prolific and so penetrating in his handling of Scripture. Calvin's exegetical insights address most of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament except Revelation. By overwhelming consent, he remains the greatest biblical commentator of all time. On his deathbed, when Calvin reviewed his many accomplishments, he mentioned his sermons ahead of even his vast writings. For Calvin, preaching was job number one.

THE REAL CALVIN

This estimation of the priority of biblical preaching in Calvin's ministry is not novel. No less an authority than Emile Doumergue, the foremost biographer of Calvin, stood in the great Reformer's pulpit in 1909 to mark the four-hundredth anniversary of Calvin's birth, and said: "That is the Calvin who seems to me to be the real and authentic Calvin, the one who explains all the others: Calvin the preacher of Geneva, moulding by his words the spirit of the Reformed of the sixteenth century."⁵ In that same memorable address, Doumergue remarked: "While he has come to be remembered as a theologian who recovered the doctrinal landmarks which had been buried under the debris of confused centuries, or as a powerful controversialist whose name opponents have sought to fasten upon beliefs which they judged odious, the truth is that Calvin saw himself, first of all, as a pastor in the church





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of Christ and therefore as one whose chief duty must be to preach the Word.”⁶

D'Aubigné has likewise affirmed the primacy of Calvin's preaching amid his many ministries. Calvin's principal office, D'Aubigné remarked, was the one he assigned to the minister: to proclaim the Word of God for instruction, admonition, exhortation, and reproof. To this end, Calvin's preaching was replete with practical instruction and application, which he saw as a fundamental necessity.⁷ Thus, according to D'Aubigné, Calvin's chief mission was the explication and application of the Holy Scriptures. This was the *real* Calvin—the biblical expositor who considered the pulpit to be “the heart of his ministry.”⁸

If the real Calvin was preeminently a preacher, who was Calvin the *man*? What was the road God marked out for him to travel? What were the times in which he lived? What were his accomplishments? More important, what contributed to his greatness? We will address these questions and more in this chapter before turning our attention to Calvin's expository genius.

CALVIN THE MAN

The world into which Calvin was born was ripe for reformation. At Calvin's birth, Martin Luther was 26 years old and already had commenced his teaching ministry at the University of Wittenberg. Eight years later, in 1517, the German Reformer





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posted his Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg, a protest that proved to be “the shot heard round the world.” The Diet of Worms followed (1521), where Luther took his now-famous stand for the Word of God. Soon after, Reformation fires began to burn brightly in Germany and to spread rapidly across Europe into Scotland and England, especially to the universities. Meanwhile, the five *solas* of the Reformation—salvation by *grace alone*, through *faith alone*, in *Christ alone*, to the *glory of God alone*, based on *Scripture alone*—were being forged on the anvils of minds that were being renewed in the Scriptures.

John Calvin—his French name was Jean Cauvin—was born to Gerard and Jeanne Cauvin on July 10, 1509, in the farm country of Noyon, France, sixty miles northeast of Paris. Calvin’s father, a financial administrator for the Catholic bishop of the Noyon diocese, raised his son to enter the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. When John was 11, Gerard used his influence to gain a chaplaincy for his son at the Noyon Cathedral. Then, when John was 14, he entered the University of Paris to study theology in formal preparation to become a priest. Calvin’s time at the university resulted in a master of arts degree at age 17. But more important, this future Reformer emerged with a solid grounding in the basics of a classical education, including Latin, logic, and philosophy.

Upon Calvin’s graduation from the University of Paris, his father attempted to gain two more appointments for him in the Catholic Church. But a conflict with the bishop of Noyon





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prompted Gerard to redirect his brilliant son to study law at the University of Orléans (1528). During his time there, and later at the University of Bourges, Calvin learned Greek, the powers of analytical thinking, and persuasive argument, skills later to be used in his Genevan pulpit. Armed with such abilities, Calvin would later be nicknamed “the accusative case” for his penchant to argue his point convincingly.

When Gerard died (1531), the 21-year-old Calvin was freed from his father’s dominant influence and moved back to Paris to pursue his first love, the study of literature, especially the classics. He later returned to Bourges, where he completed his legal studies and received his doctor of laws degree (1532). In that same year, Calvin published his first book, a secular treatment of *De Clementia (On Mercy)* by the Roman philosopher Seneca the Younger. The book, which was Calvin’s doctoral dissertation, revealed his growing ability to break down language and grasp the intentions of an author. In the future, this was precisely what Calvin would do with the Scriptures, both in the pulpit and in print—giving the God-intended meaning by explaining the message of the biblical writers.

A SUDDEN CONVERSION

It was while he was studying at Bourges that Calvin came in direct contact with the biblical truths of the Reformation. Upon being introduced to the gospel, a growing restlessness with his way of life came upon him, and a deepening conviction of his





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sin drove him to seek relief in the grace and mercy of God. Here is how Calvin later described his encounter with Christ and its immediate effects:

God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life. Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, yet I pursued them with less ardour.⁹

Of this “sudden conversion,” Alexandre Ganoczy wrote, “Calvin understood his life story as analogous to that of the Apostle Paul, who on the way to Damascus, suddenly turned from the sin of opposing Christ to unconditionally serving Christ.”¹⁰ Indeed, Calvin emulated Paul in that, upon his conversion, he immediately changed his allegiance, abandoning the Roman Catholic Church to join the growing Protestant cause.

REFORMER IN THE MAKING

Calvin soon met opposition for his new faith in Christ. In November 1533, Nicolas Cop, rector of the University of Paris and a friend of Calvin, preached the opening address





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of the winter term at the university, which was “a plea for a reformation on the basis of the New Testament, and a bold attack on the scholastic theologians of the day.”¹¹ However, Cop encountered strong resistance for his expressed “Luther-like” views. Calvin, who is believed to have written the speech for Cop, was forced to flee Paris in the middle of the night, lowering himself out a window by means of sheets and escaping to safety in the guise of a vinedresser with a hoe on his shoulder. This virulent opposition was but a harbinger of things to come for the rest of Calvin’s life.

After suffering imprisonment for a short time, Calvin fled to the estate of Louis du Tillet, a well-to-do man who was sympathetic to the Reformation cause. In this “quiet nest,” as Calvin described it, he had the opportunity to spend five months in du Tillet’s extensive theological library. There he read the Bible, along with the writings of the church fathers, most notably Augustine. By hard work, genius, and grace, Calvin was becoming a self-taught theologian of no small stature.

Finally, under the deepening conviction of the truth of Scripture, Calvin renounced the income he had been drawing from the Catholic Church since childhood for his supposed Noyon pastorate. The die was cast. He was fully aligned with the truths and cause of the Reformation.

After a brief journey to Paris and Orléans, Calvin went to Basel, Switzerland (1534–1536), and began writing his magnum opus, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin’s *Institutes* would become the defining masterpiece of Protestant theology,





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the single most important book to be written during the Reformation. It would take its place ahead of even Luther's most revered work, *The Bondage of the Will*. During the next twenty-three years, the *Institutes* would undergo five major expansions until reaching its present form in 1559. Addressed to King Francis I of France, this work explained the true nature of biblical Christianity. Calvin hoped the book would ease the persecution that was being brought against Protestants by the Roman Catholic Church in France. It was a theological tour de force, presenting a compelling argument for core Reformed teachings, and its publication instantly thrust Calvin into a recognized leadership role among the Reformers.

TO GENEVA: A STRANGE PROVIDENCE

When a temporary amnesty was granted to French exiles, Calvin quickly returned to France, where he gathered his brother, Antoine, and sister, Marie. He then set out for Strasbourg, then in southern Germany, intending to study and write in seclusion and tranquility. He would never return to his homeland.

While en route to Strasbourg, however, Calvin was providentially redirected. A war between Charles V, the Holy Roman emperor, and Francis I resulted in troop movements that blocked the road to Strasbourg, and Calvin was forced to detour through Geneva, Switzerland, nestled under the snow-capped Alps on the shores of Lake Geneva, the largest





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lake in Europe. Calvin intended to spend only one night there, but he was recognized by William Farel, the Protestant leader in this newly Reformed city. Their meeting proved to be one of history's most pivotal encounters, not just for the church in Geneva, but for the world. As Calvin later recounted it:

Farel, who burned with an extraordinary zeal to advance the gospel, immediately strained every nerve to detain me. And after having learned that my heart was set upon devoting myself to private studies, for which I wished to keep myself free from other pursuits, and finding that he gained nothing by entreaties, he proceeded to utter an imprecation that God would curse my retirement, and the tranquility of the studies which I sought, if I should withdraw and refuse to give assistance, when the necessity was so urgent. By this imprecation I was so stricken with terror, that I desisted from the journey which I had undertaken.¹²

In response to Farel's challenge—"If you do not assist us in this work of the Lord, the Lord will punish you"¹³—the young theologian agreed to stay, acknowledging that this was the direction of God for his life. Rather than study in the cloistered quietness of Strasbourg, Calvin was suddenly thrust into the visible spotlight of Geneva, with its many demands. He was first appointed professor of sacred Scripture in Geneva,





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then, four months later, pastor of Saint Pierre Cathedral.

BANISHED TO STRASBOURG

Calvin and Farel immediately began working to reform the church in Geneva. Drawing up a confession of faith and oath, they audaciously sought to bring the lives of the ten thousand citizens of the city into conformity with Scripture. But they soon met strong opposition. Their attempts to fence the Lord's Table by excommunication—that is, restricting those living in open sin from partaking of the elements—resulted in their banishment from the city in 1538.

Once again, Calvin went into exile, this time to Strasbourg, the place he had intended to go to study and write. For three years (1538–1541), Calvin pastored a Protestant congregation of some five hundred French-speaking refugees in Strasbourg. He also taught the New Testament in the local theological institute, wrote his first commentary (on Romans), and published the second edition of the *Institutes*.

During these years in Strasbourg, Calvin also found a wife, Idelette Stordeur, a member of his congregation. An Anabaptist widow, she had a son and a daughter from her first marriage.¹⁴ They married in 1540, when Calvin was 31. In future years, this union would bring much heartache to his soul. Idelette would miscarry once, lose a daughter at birth, and deliver a son who would die at two weeks of age. Calvin later wrote, “The Lord has certainly inflicted a bitter wound





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in the death of our infant son. But He is Himself a father and knows what is good for His children.”¹⁵ Idelette herself would die of tuberculosis in 1549 at age 40. Calvin would never remarry. For the rest of his life, he would devote himself to the work of the Lord with singular vision.

RETURNING TO GENEVA

Meanwhile, the City Council of Geneva found itself in much struggle, and called for Calvin to return as the city's pastor. After a ten-month hesitation, he reluctantly accepted the invitation, knowing that much hostility awaited. Calvin re-entered the city on September 13, 1541, never to relocate again. In Geneva, he made his mark as the Reformed church leader and the Reformation's brightest light.

Upon his return, Calvin hit the town preaching. Reassuming his pulpit ministry precisely where he had left off three years earlier—in the very *next* verse of his earlier exposition—Calvin became a mainstay, preaching multiple times on Sunday and, during some weeks, each weekday. His verse-by-verse exposition of Scripture, week after week, even day after day, would make Geneva a shining beacon of truth.

During this tumultuous time, French Protestants, known as Huguenots; Protestant saints from Scotland and England, who were escaping the martyr's stake of “Bloody Mary”; and refugees from Germany and Italy began pouring into Geneva, seeking safety from the life-threatening dangers they faced in





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their native lands. In a short time, Geneva's population doubled to more than twenty thousand. The city was alive with students of the Word, and Calvin was their teacher.

Among these refugees from abroad was a Scotsman named John Knox, who commended Calvin's church in Geneva as "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the Apostles."¹⁶ While in Geneva, Knox was part of a team of Protestant exiles who sat under Calvin's exposition and translated the Geneva Bible for English-speaking refugees. It was the first Bible to have theological notes printed in the margin, a direct extension of Calvin's pulpit. This Bible became the predominant Bible among English Puritans for the next one hundred years. Additionally, it became the official version of the Scottish Protestant church and the household Bible of English-speaking Protestants everywhere. The Pilgrims brought the Geneva Bible with them on the Mayflower to America, and it became the Bible of choice among the early Colonists.

AN EXPANDING INFLUENCE

As the chief expositor of Scripture in a bastion of biblical teaching, Calvin found himself wielding an international influence of no small proportions. A thousand of the men who had fled to Geneva to sit under his preaching eventually returned to France, carrying biblical truth with them. Knox later became the leader of the Reformation in Scotland. Others left Calvin's





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side to plant Reformed churches in anti-Protestant countries such as Hungary, Holland, and England. Because persecution was certain and martyrdom common for these saints, Calvin's school of theology became known as "Calvin's School of Death."

The printing press also spread Calvin's influence. During this time, a man named Denis Raguenier began taking down Calvin's sermons for his own use by means of a private system of shorthand. Eventually, he was employed to produce a transcript of each one-hour sermon, which contained about six thousand words. Raguenier did his work with amazing accuracy, hardly a word escaping him. These written expositions were soon translated into various languages, gaining a far-reaching distribution. Scotland and England especially came under the sway of Calvin's pulpit via the printed page. Later, the Synod of Dort in Holland (1618–1619) and the Westminster Assembly in England (1643–1649), which drafted the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, became indirect outgrowths of Calvin's biblical preaching. To this day, many of Calvin's sermons remain in print.

IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

For Calvin, these prolific years in Geneva were anything but an "ivory tower" experience. While ascending his pulpit regularly, he met much difficulty on every side. Frail in stature, Calvin suffered many ailments. He also endured physical





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threats to his life. Yet Calvin never ceased his exposition.

Further, groups of Geneva's citizens caused him much pain, not the least of them being the Libertines, who boasted in sinful licentiousness. Sexual immorality was permissible, they claimed, arguing that the "communion of the saints" meant that their bodies should be joined to the wives of others. The Libertines openly practiced adultery and yet desired to come to the Lord's Table. But Calvin would have none of it.

In an epic encounter, Philibert Berthelier, a prominent Libertine, was excommunicated because of his known sexual promiscuity. Consequently, he was forbidden from partaking of the Lord's Supper. Through the underhanded influence of the Libertines, the City Council overrode the church's decision, and Berthelier and his associates came to church to take the Lord's Supper with swords drawn, ready to fight. With bold audacity, Calvin descended from the pulpit, stood in front of the Communion table, and said, "These hands you may crush, these arms you may lop off, my life you may take, my blood is yours, you may shed it; but you shall never force me to give holy things to the profaned and dishonor the table of my God."¹⁷ Berthelier and the Libertines withdrew, no match for such unflinching convictions.

FAITHFUL TO THE END

As the end of his life approached, Calvin faced death as he had faced the pulpit—with great resolution. The theocentricity





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of his faith appears in his last will and testament, which he dictated on April 25, 1564:

In the name of God, I, John Calvin, servant of the Word of God in the church of Geneva, . . . thank God that He has shown not only mercy toward me, His poor creature, and . . . has suffered me in all sins and weaknesses, but what is much more, that He has made me a partaker of His grace to serve Him through my work. . . . I confess to live and die in this faith which He has given me, inasmuch as I have no other hope or refuge than His predestination upon which my entire salvation is grounded. I embrace the grace which He has offered me in our Lord Jesus Christ and accept the merits of His suffering and dying, that through them all my sins are buried; and I humbly beg Him to wash me and cleanse me with the blood of our great Redeemer, . . . so that I, when I shall appear before His face may bear His likeness. Moreover, I declare that I endeavored to teach His Word undefiled and to expound Holy Scripture faithfully, according to the measure of grace which He has given me.¹⁸

Calvin died at age 54 on May 27, 1564, in the arms of Theodore Beza, his successor. Looking back on Calvin's life, Beza concluded:





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Having been a spectator of his conduct for sixteen years, I have given a faithful account both of his life and of his death, and I can now declare, that in him all men may see a most beautiful example of Christian Character, an example which it is as easy to slander as it is difficult to imitate.¹⁹

It is appropriate that Calvin's last words—"How long, O Lord?"—were the words of Scripture. He literally died quoting the Bible he preached, having expended himself in the work and will of God, faithful to the very end.

CALVIN: A PREACHER FOR THE AGES

Given the momentous life of the Genevan Reformer, and especially his devotion to the pulpit, certain questions beg to be asked: What kind of preacher was this remarkable man? How did he approach this sacred duty of expounding the Word of God? What were the distinctive features of his famed pulpit? And what can present-day preachers learn from him? What follows in this book is an attempt to set forth the distinguishing marks of Calvin's expository genius.

As a result of this study, my prayer is that now more than ever, those who stand behind the sacred desk would recover the vanishing art of expository preaching. The church is always looking for better *methods* in order to reach the world. But God is looking for better *men* who will devote themselves to





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His biblically mandated method for advancing His kingdom, namely, preaching—and not just any kind of preaching, but *expository* preaching.

This being so, nothing could be more relevant for preachers in this hour—a time when fads and gimmicks seem to be hypnotizing church leaders—than to revisit the pulpit power of the Genevan Reformer. May a new generation of expositors arise to embrace his core distinctives in their preaching ministries.

Notes

1. James Montgomery Boice, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace? Rediscovering the Doctrines that Shook the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 83–84.
2. Curt Daniel, *The History and Theology of Calvinism* (Dallas, TX: Scholarly Reprints, 1993), 24.
3. For further reading, see Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford, England, and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1990, 2001), 219–261; John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (London, England; Oxford, England; and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1954, 1967), 411–425; and Jeannine E. Olson, “Calvin and Social-Ethical Issues,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 153–172.
4. J. H. Merle D’Aubigné, *History of the Reformation in Europe in the Time of Calvin, Vol. VII* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1880, 2000), 82.
5. Publisher’s introduction, “John Calvin and His Sermons on Ephesians,” in John Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Carlisle, PA, and Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1562, 1577, 1973, 1975, 1979, 1987, 1998), viii.
6. Ibid.
7. D’Aubigné, *History of the Reformation in Europe in the Time of Calvin, Vol. VII*, 82.





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8. Douglas Kelly, introduction to John Calvin, *Sermons on 2 Samuel: Chapters 1–13*, trans. Douglas Kelly (Carlisle, PA, and Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), ix.
9. Calvin, preface to *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Edinburgh, Scotland: Calvin Translation Society, 1845; reprinted by Baker Books, 2003), xl–xli.
10. Alexandre Ganoczy, “Calvin’s life,” trans. David L. Foxgrover and James Schmitt, in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, 9.
11. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. VIII* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1910, 1984), 318.
12. Calvin, preface to *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, xlii–xliii.
13. Theodore Beza, *The Life of John Calvin*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh, Scotland: Calvin Translation Society, 1844; reprinted by Back Home Industries, 1996), 26.
14. William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York, NY, and Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1988), 23.
15. Beza, *The Life of John Calvin*, 134.
16. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. VIII*, 518.
17. William Wileman, *John Calvin: His Life, His Teaching, and His Influence* (Choteau, MT: Old Paths Gospel Press), 96. This famous line has also been rendered as: “I will die sooner than this hand shall stretch forth the sacred things of the Lord to those who have been judged despisers.” Beza, *The Life of John Calvin*, 71.
18. Beza, *The Life of John Calvin*, 99–103.
19. *Ibid.*, 117.

