

John Calvin (part 2)

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[0 : 00] Now, it can be challenging for us to think about life in the medieval church. We live in 21st century America.

We're pretty far removed from the European church 500 plus years ago. In Luther and Calvin's day, freedom of religion was a foreign concept.

There was hardly any distinction between church and state. In France, where Calvin was born, citizens were legally obligated to be Catholic.

It's been said that France had two rules at the time. First, you must be Catholic. Second, you must never leave. Since we are so far removed from that time and place, it would be helpful to discuss at least some of the historical context of the medieval church.

What was the culture regarding church and state and why? As we've seen in the stories of Martin Luther and William Tyndale, the church had a zero-tolerance policy regarding what it deemed to be heresy.

[1 : 12] And the state typically enforced the church's policy. Now, as freedom-loving 21st century Americans, we may find that a little unsettling, especially since we know Protestants suffered most of the persecution during that time.

But we also need to understand their motivations. We need to understand them as well as we can because the Catholic church was not the only persecutors. This goes back to something I've said before.

History isn't black or white. The good guys were not always good guys. Sometimes they had blind spots. Sometimes they were glaring blind spots.

And this was true for Luther. And as we'll discover today, it was true for John Calvin. In the medieval church, heresy wasn't something to be taken lightly.

Read Jude's epistle in the New Testament. The Lord's brother tells us to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. He then proceeds to warn us about ungodly heretics who creep into the church, spread their false doctrines, and earn for themselves condemnation.

[2 : 27] Now, with these kinds of warnings in Scripture, you can understand why the Catholic church would take some of the measures it did to stop heresy as quickly as possible.

The Apostle Paul talks about sin spreading through the church in 1 Corinthians 5. We delved into this a little bit last time. He says, Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven. Purge it. Similarly, the medieval church viewed heresy as a virus, if you will.

It would spiritually kill more and more people as it continued to spread through the population. So the church believed it must do everything possible to stop it.

And as people who have personally lived through a pandemic, we know a little something about this. How many times did we hear, Stop the spread? I think it would slow the spread, but go with me.

[3 : 26] Stop the spread. The measures may seem extreme, but it's worth it if we can prevent more deaths, or spiritual deaths, as the case may be. The medieval church may have taken the wrong measures at times to stop heresy from spreading, and it may have distorted the definitions of truth and heresy.

But in the minds of the church leaders, in particular, they were contending for the faith, just as the Bible describes. And there's another element of the times that we need to consider, and that is the power struggle that existed during the Reformation.

Again, there wasn't a clear separation of church and state. The predominant religion in a region essentially became the state, which is how the church authorities could punish and execute heretics

and carry out justice as they deemed it to be justice anyway.

Obviously, the Catholic Church believed it was the true church, so the heretical Protestant movement was not only a spiritual threat, but it also threatened the very existence of the true church.

The Reformation, if it gained too much traction, well, Protestants could gain political and even military power, and the Catholic Church would suddenly be on the losing end of persecution.

[4 : 58] Jesus said, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. But his promise has not stopped people throughout history from fearing that the church could be destroyed by its enemies.

Again, it wasn't merely a culture war or a battle for a society's soul. It was a situation, it wasn't a situation, I should say, where people thought, you know, you can go your way, I'll go mine, we'll agree to disagree, no problems.

No, it was often a violent political struggle because everyone knew the losers could be conquered and potentially annihilated.

In short, a religious group was only guaranteed religious freedom if they wielded the powers of government. That was a reality of the Western world before, during, and even after the Reformation, and that helps us to understand why not only the Catholics' persecution of Protestants, but also some of the Protestant persecution against others that would come later. Once again, the good guys were not always the good guys. And once the Reformation started, the question every Reformer had to answer was, how much Reformation is enough?

[6 : 23] On which hills should we die? Beyond the authority of Scripture, the Gospel, and justification by faith, should we extend the dividing lines to other issues?

What about the Lord's Supper? What about baptism? Since there are so many Protestant denominations today, you will not be surprised that the Reformers did not agree on how to answer these questions.

The Lutherans, they took one path. The followers of Zwingli, another prominent Reformer, they disagreed with the Lutherans on certain issues, and they took a slightly different path.

Then the Anabaptists come into the picture and complicate everything. Before long, tensions arose among several church factions, and they were all competing for prominence.

And this was certainly true in Switzerland, where Calvin would come to serve the church as pastor. Now, Switzerland was a unique place because it didn't have a unified central government.

[7 : 30] Instead, it was a confederation of 13 self-governed regions without a unifying language or any kind of overarching legal code among them.

They were all independent. It was like the United States, but without a federal government. And while the confederation had a loose relationship with the Holy Roman Empire, each region also maintained its sovereignty.

Now, starting in 1525, the Swiss Confederation began rejecting Roman Catholic authority. Zurich was the first to turn Protestant, and after Zurich, the dominoes began to fall, one after the other, as other regions officially joined the Reformation.

In the city of Geneva, where Calvin would serve as pastor, it was especially unique because it, too, was independent, though it was only a city.

It was not a member of the Swiss Confederation and would not become one until 1815, I think. I believe it was able to maintain its autonomy through various alliances it made with some of the other members of the Confederation.

[8 : 51] Otherwise, I'm not sure how they would have survived. Like the various regions in Switzerland and other places in the world, it faced the kind of religious power struggle I've described.

Well, the Reformation arrived in Geneva approximately two months before John Calvin. But we're going to return to Geneva in just a moment. For now, let me briefly tell you about young John Calvin.

Calvin was born in France in 1509, about 60 miles from Paris in a small town. His father was an attorney who wanted his son to also become an attorney.

Originally, it seems Calvin's father pushed him toward a career in the church, but that quickly changed when his father was excommunicated by the church. We don't really know the details except that it had nothing to do with the Reformation.

He did not become a Protestant and then was banished from the church. Some have speculated that he misappropriated church funds, but we don't know. Regardless, Calvin's father decided to put Calvin on a path to study law instead.

[10:07] So at 14, Calvin, he began his general studies at the University of Paris. He graduated in 1528, the same year his father was excommunicated, and that's when Calvin began pursuing a law degree.

But even that plan got interrupted. When his father died in 1531, he decided he would rather become a literary scholar.

Perhaps you are noticing some parallels between Calvin's story and Luther's. Both of their fathers pushed them to study law, but neither of them really wanted to do that.

Luther wanted to become a monk. Calvin wanted to become a scholar. Within two years, Calvin published his first book. It was a literary critique of Seneca's work on mercy.

And in case you don't know the name Seneca, he was a philosopher who at one time had tried really hard to teach morality to Emperor Nero. As you can guess, that did not work out so well.

[11:15] And in case you don't remember the name Nero, he severely persecuted Christians during the first century and likely approved, if not ordered, the executions of Peter and Paul.

Well, Calvin's first book is worth mentioning because it is a fantastic display of his intelligence and his vast knowledge.

He cites an incredible number of ancient writings. And that's no small feat. Keep in mind, he did not have access to Google or even Amazon.

And he also shows remarkable insight into various subjects, philosophy, language, ethics. And though the book was far from a commercial success, it was an impressive feat nonetheless.

Then at some point between 1533 and 1535, Calvin is, and I'll use his words, suddenly converted to Christ. He never writes a detailed description of his conversion, so we can't be sure of the circumstances.

[12:22] He later dedicates his commentary on 2 Corinthians to one of his former professors who happened to be a secret Lutheran. Perhaps that man was instrumental in leading Calvin to Christ.

Calvin also develops a friendship with another French reformer. We know they were together in France during this time, but again, we don't know whether he helped push Calvin in the right direction or not.

Regardless, in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms, Calvin indicates that his conversion was quite unexpected. You may remember that Calvin didn't like to talk about himself.

He wrote a lot. He wrote 50 volumes of Bible commentaries. He wrote who knows how many sermons. He wrote several volumes of personal and pastoral letters.

But he didn't talk about himself that much. You remember? For from God and through him and to him are all things. To God be glory forever.

[13:26] Not John Calvin. To God be glory. Even so, Calvin's preface to the Psalms is as close as we come to reading an autobiography from him.

Here's what he says. What happened first was that by a sudden conversion, God tamed and made teachable a mind too stubborn for its years.

For I was obstinately addicted to the superstitions of the papacy and nothing less could draw me out of so deep a quagmire. And so this mere taste of true godliness that I received set me on fire.

You would probably enjoy reading Calvin's commentary on the Psalms. Evidently, the sufferings of David really resonated with him.

Maybe he somehow felt a kinship to David. So he opens up about himself a bit more in that commentary than he does in any of his other writings.

[14:31] Like Luther, the Psalms really have a special place in his heart. Interestingly enough, Calvin never preached from the Old Testament on Sunday. He always preached from the New Testament on Sunday, but he made a special exception for the Psalms.

On occasion, he would preach from the Psalms on a Sunday afternoon. Anyhow, it didn't take long for Calvin to realize that France was not a friendly place for Protestants.

So he packed his bags and he headed towards Strasbourg, Switzerland in 1536. He knew that Strasbourg was firmly in the Protestant camp by this time, so it would be a perfect place for a young, aspiring theologian to lead a quiet life and study and meditation and writing.

And once again, we find parallels in Calvin's story to those in church history that we've studied previously. You may remember that Augustine, he sought the quiet life, but as he said, I was grabbed, I was made a priest.

The quiet life was not to be for Augustine or Calvin. Last time, I mentioned that Calvin was a theologian who wanted nothing more than to become a pastor, but he did not begin that way. [15:57] It was the opposite in the beginning. He wanted to become a theologian. He wanted to study scripture. He wanted to write about it. And before arriving in Strasbourg, he stayed with a friend for a while and that is where he wrote his first edition of the Institutes of the Christian Religion.

It only had six chapters, but it quickly gained him some fame. He soon had a reputation as a gifted theologian and young Calvin assumed this meant that he could best serve the cause of Christ by writing books.

And again, Strasbourg would be the perfect place for a Protestant theologian to get some work done. In Acts 16, we read of the Apostle Paul.

He's trying to make his way to Asia Minor, but the Holy Spirit stops him. So then he attempts to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow it.

And finally, Paul learns that God wants him to preach the gospel in Macedonia. Calvin had a similar experience. As Calvin was making his way to Strasbourg, a small war between France and Germany forced him to take a detour through the city of Geneva.

[17:12] And he assumed, of course, that he would just stay for a night and then he would finish his journey the next morning. But instead, William Farrell, the pastor in Geneva, heard that the author of the Institutes was in town.

Farrell was the man who was responsible for reforming Geneva, but he was a humble man and he recognized his own limits. He could preach. He could persuade people very effectively.

But what Geneva really needed at that time was a systematic thinker like Calvin to really organize things. So Farrell finds Calvin and he says to him, you need to stay.

And Calvin replies, no thanks. I'm just passing through. See, I'm a theologian. I'm a writer. I'm not a pastor. I'm not an organizer. I'm not the man for the job.

You'll have to find someone else. And with that, Farrell responded, if you don't stay, God will curse you. You will have no peace.

[18:21] Your life in Strasbourg as a writer will be miserable. And with that, Calvin said, you've convinced me. I'll stay. These are not exact quotes, by the way.

In short, Calvin felt as though God were speaking through Farrell at that moment. And he couldn't bring himself to walk away.

More than a few pastors, I think, have shared that experience. They feel that God is leading them one way and they may feel very strongly about it. And yet, God finds and uses various means to get their attention and redirect their paths.

That certainly happened in the case of Calvin. Calvin never had an easy time in Geneva.

Remember that the city had undergone significant changes not very long before he arrived, just two months.

The Reformation had taken hold only two months ago, which meant that the government in Geneva had also undergone some pretty big changes. In other words, the changes were more than cultural.

[19:28] They were more than religious. But even so, the religious and cultural dimensions were certainly factors. Not every citizen wanted to become Protestant. But as I mentioned before, they didn't have much of a choice.

Law says you go to church and in this case, you go to Protestant church. Geneva was now a Protestant town whether some people liked it or not. the challenge for Calvin was that the government council made the rules.

The council dictated Geneva's religion in many respects, yet he and Pharaoh were supposed to be church leaders. What is a pastor to do in a situation like that?

He's supposed to shepherd what is now a divided flock, lead the people in biblical truth, and find a way to bring the civil authorities along with you who are in charge over you.

They are your authorities as well. You have no authority over them, but you're supposed to be leading them as pastors of the church. Well, Calvin did the best he could, but he ran into some trouble.

[20 : 37] Specifically, as I discussed last time, he was a strong proponent of church discipline. And while everyone knew it was important to eradicate heretics, the medieval church largely turned a blind eye to unrepentant sin in the pew.

That was not the kind of leaven the church did much to purge from its membership. Well, Calvin believed the church had the authority under God to excommunicate people as an act of discipline. This, he said, was for the sinner's own good. More importantly, it was necessary for the glory of Christ. For the sake of the whole church. And the city council may have gone along with him on this issue.

But Calvin believed, imagine his audacity, that even the rich and the powerful people should be excommunicated if necessary. Think about this.

Even if someone wasn't a sincere believer, the social ramifications of church discipline were significant. One would be cut off from the Lord's body.

[21 : 49] They could be cut off from the Lord's supper. He would be an utter outcast. He may as well brand himself with a scarlet letter. And the prospect was especially troubling for a council member because a council member was essentially an authority figure over the church, yet he could be excommunicated by the church.

Suffice it to say, the council in Geneva wasn't thrilled by Calvin's insistence on discipline. Well, matters finally came to a head on Easter.

Easter Sunday, 1538. Now, previously, the council had officially denied Calvin's request to discipline church members. And in response, on this Easter Sunday, Calvin refused to administer the Lord's supper to the entire church.

In a sense, he excommunicated the entire church at once. Younger Calvin was not known for patience. The council then, in response, removed him from his pastorate and banished him from the city.

As it happened, Calvin didn't mind at all. He never felt he belonged in Geneva. He didn't want to be there in the first place, so he was happy to move on to Strasbourg where he wanted to be from the beginning.

[23 : 07] He's going back to that quiet life, he thinks. In Strasbourg, Calvin returned to writing. He went to work revising his institutes.

He also wrote his first commentary on the Bible. Can you guess what it was? What would you pick if you were going to write a Bible commentary? Probably start with something simple, right?

He chose Romans. He dug right into Romans. Seems that he finally had time to study and to develop and to mature his theology, and that's what he spent his days doing.

Now, one notable area was his study of the Holy Spirit. When most people think of Calvinism, they don't think about the Spirit's work in salvation.

That's not the first thing that comes to mind. We think about God's election. We think about the Son's definite atonement. Well, the thing is, lots of people had believed and taught election and atonement before Calvin.

[24 : 11] Not all of them hit the nail quite as squarely as Calvin, but they knew the U and the L of Tulip to some degree or another. Calvin contributed to the church's understanding of the I, irresistible grace.

He elevated the work of the Spirit in salvation more than maybe anyone had done before him. Strasbourg was also the place where Calvin got married.

His friends encouraged him strongly to find a wife because Calvin was a workaholic and they thought that a wife might be good for his health. And he did marry, but he would never be known as the most romantic guy in the world.

In one letter, he describes what he was looking for in a wife. He says, I am none of those insane lovers who once smitten with the fine figure of a woman embrace also her faults.

This is the only beauty which allures me if she is modest, decent, plain, thrifty, patient, and able to look after my health. Calvin may not have been romantic, but I do get the impression that he sincerely loved his wife.

[25 : 27] She was a widow who already had two children of her own when they married. They tried to have more children together, but sadly, none of them survived infancy. In fact, his wife died shortly after the birth of their last child in 1549.

And Calvin later writes to a friend, I have been bereaved of the best companion of my life. Meanwhile, back in Geneva, a Catholic cardinal named Sadalito saw an opportunity to take back the city in Calvin's absence.

He writes a powerful and eloquent appeal to the city council pleading with them to return to the Catholic church. But the council has no interest in un-reforming, if you will.

City leaders didn't like Calvin, not because he was a Protestant, but because they couldn't control him. They still had a desire to be a Protestant city. Even so, the council quickly realized that they don't have anyone qualified to respond to Sadalito.

They want to put forth a compelling case regarding their decision to become Protestant and remain Protestant, but they can't think of anyone quite as capable of writing the letter as John Calvin.

[27 : 01] So, they send word to him asking whether or not he's willing to do it. And I think here's when we really begin to see that Calvin is not merely a theologian, he's also a pastor.

He later described his paternal affection for Geneva. He says, God, when he gave me Geneva, he put Geneva in my charge, he bound me to be faithful to her forever.

Calvin agrees to write the response. And it may have been one of the best defenses of the Reformation ever written. Now, as you may expect from Calvin, it was thoroughly systematic, step by step, point by point, he eloquently answers and refutes Sattelito.

Here's just a sample. We Protestants abound indeed in numerous faults. Too often do we sin and fall. Still, modesty will not permit me to boast how far we exceed you Catholics in every respect. Rome, that famous abode of sanctity, has so overflowed with all kinds of iniquity that scarcely anything so abominable has been seen before.

[28 : 23] In case it isn't clear from that brief passage, Calvin did not pull any punches. But his letter was still remarkably dignified.

It was certainly powerful. Now, you'll not be surprised to learn that Geneva then decided, hey, we really should ask him to come back. And so they did.

And while a large part of his heart was still with the people in Geneva, initially Calvin didn't want to come back. And it had a lot to do with the politics in Geneva.

He was tired of that. He wrote to his former co-pastor, Farrell, and said, I would rather submit to death a hundred times than go to that cross, speaking of Geneva.

Who will not excuse me if I'm unwilling to plunge again into the whirlpool I know to be so dangerous? They did kick him out, after all. Farrell, however, knew exactly how to get Calvin back.

[29 : 24] He once again threatened a divine curse. And Calvin returned to Geneva in 1541, under the condition he is permitted to structure the church, as he says, such as is prescribed in the word of God and was in use in the early church.

Perhaps one of my favorite details about Calvin is regarding his first sermon back in Geneva. Calvin was a systematic, expository preacher.

He preferred to start at the beginning of a book of the Bible and preach all the way through it to maybe five verses at a time. And I can't remember which book of the Bible he was on when he left Geneva, but as soon as he came back, he picked up right where he left off in that book and kept right on going.

Another interesting detail about Calvin is that he was never ordained as a pastor. When he was first brought into the church in Geneva, he filled the role of what they called a reader or teacher.

He was a teacher, not a pastor. Yet, eventually, everyone came to think of him as a pastor. They knew him as a pastor. It's possible that city leaders appointed him as a pastor.

[30 : 41] We don't know, but the historical records are very clear. He became senior pastor of Geneva. That's the role he played. Now, I want to get back to the matters of politics and persecution, specifically in Geneva.

I could spend another hour talking about Calvin's role as a pastor. He had a lot of battles during his time in Geneva.

His conflict with city leaders never ceased, but he never neglected his pastoral responsibilities.

Another preacher wrote of him, I do not believe there can be found his like.

I don't believe there is any man in our time who has more to listen to, respond to, write, or do. He never ceased working day and night in service to the Lord.

For example, Calvin, he always visited the sick. He never neglected that part of his ministry. He once said, we ought to weep with those who weep. That is to say, if we are Christians, we ought to

have such compassion and sorrow for our neighbors that we should willingly take part in their tears and thus comfort them.

[31 : 58] I think the pastoral side of Calvin is often missing in his biographies. I've read a lot about him over the last couple of weeks.

And I remember stumbling upon an article, this has been years ago now, the article was titled, The Humanity of John Calvin. And I remember thinking, was there any doubt?

Does someone actually believe he wasn't human? Well, maybe not, but we may forget about his humanity. He wrote and preached and served like a machine, churning out rich theological material at a surprising rate.

His volumes of books aside, he preached no less than five times a week. I think it's easy enough to forget that he was a human. And more to the point, he was a faithful pastor in all the ways a pastor should be.

Even so, Calvin wasn't perfect. He had his blind spots. His opponents today will go as far as accusing him of being a tyrant over Geneva.

[33 : 14] If you read enough about Calvin, you will eventually come across these kinds of accusations. It wasn't true. He wasn't a tyrant over Geneva. But in response, we shouldn't overcorrect and pretend that he was some flawless human being.

I believe we can recognize his shortcomings and still really appreciate his virtues and all of his contributions to the church and to Western civilization as we talked about last time.

Opponents of Calvin will often mention his treatment of Michael Servetus of France. That's the story they like to highlight. Servetus gained notoriety for denying a series of fundamental Christian doctrines including the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and original sin.

By pretty much everyone's definition of heresy at the time, he was a heretic. He also denied infant baptism, which at least for some people qualified him as a heretic as well.

Now for reasons unknown to me, Servetus seems to have been mildly obsessed with Calvin. He began writing to Calvin in 1545. In 1553, he published a book titled Restitutions of Christianity, or Restitutions of the Christian Religion.

[34 : 44] The title was meant to mock Calvin's work, Institutes of the Christian Religion. Restitutions instead of Institutions. Now before I go any further, remember the historical context.

Everything I said in the beginning about the church's view of heresy and the relationship between church and state comes into play here. As I've said, Calvin wholeheartedly believed in church discipline.

failing to attend church, dancing, laughing during a sermon, gambling, retaining Catholic practices, even public disrespect of Calvin as an elder of the church.

These were all subject to discipline. Calvin also believed in harsher punishments for more serious offenses such as heresy or blasphemy or perhaps the second act of adultery one is caught in. These offenses could get you the death penalty and possibly even torture. As Calvin and Servetus corresponded back and forth, Calvin tried to dissuade him from his heretical views, but Servetus wouldn't listen.

[36 : 05] Calvin even attempted to meet up with him to discuss some of these issues, but Servetus, he didn't show up for the meeting. And finally, Calvin thought it was best to contact Catholic authorities in France, so Servetus was arrested.

He was convicted of heresy and sentenced to death by fire, but he escaped. Strangely, Servetus flees to Geneva.

Calvin had made himself clear that Servetus' heresy would not be tolerated in Geneva. Calvin told a friend, I will never let Servetus depart alive if I have any authority.

I don't know why he wanted to go to Geneva, but he did. And some French refugees in the city recognized him. Servetus then stands trial in Geneva, just as he had in France, only this time he's being tried by Protestants rather than Catholics.

To be clear, Calvin did not serve as judge, jury, and executioner, as some have suggested. He certainly believed Servetus was guilty of sins, worthy of death, but he did not have the desire or the authority to personally execute Servetus.

[37 : 30] Servetus. Instead, Calvin served as what we might think of as the prosecution's expert witness because he knew all of the heresies involved and he had communicated with Servetus.

He knew exactly where this man stood, and so he could testify to those things. Servetus was condemned and sentenced to death. And even then, Calvin tried to persuade him to recant, but he refused.

Then Calvin tried to plead with city authorities, asking them to give Servetus a more humane death than burning at the stake. But they also refused.

While executing heretics may seem relatively harsh by today's standards, some people, I think, are guilty of judging men like Calvin unfairly. He was not a tyrant in Geneva.

If we were to judge him by the standards of his day, he was actually quite compassionate. He did not want to see Servetus or anyone else executed.

[38 : 39] He wanted to see them converted. That was his ultimate goal. And though he didn't show, when Calvin tried to arrange a meeting with him, Calvin was putting his own life at risk by meeting up with this man, I'll summarize this issue with two points.

First, Calvin may have had a blind spot regarding the treatment of heretics, but everyone in his day had the same blind spot.

Does that excuse him? Not necessarily, but it certainly means we should be slow to judge him for it. After all, we've got blind spots. We don't know what they are, but I'm certain we've got them.

And second, Calvin was not an all-powerful dictator over Geneva. He didn't personally execute anyone. He had a lot of influence in Geneva, but he himself was subject to the governing authorities.

And as he learned earlier in his life, the city council could remove him from his pastorate at any moment and even banish him from the city or worse. In short, Calvin wasn't perfect, but he had far more bright spots than blind spots.

[39 : 58] For the remainder of his life, Calvin continued to teach, preach, write, and counsel people worldwide. He continued to navigate the politics in Geneva.

He assisted thousands of refugees who flooded into the city. He provided them education through his university. And despite all of his physical afflictions, which seemed to increase with age, he never stopped working for the glory of God.

On his deathbed, his protege, Theodore Beza, begged Calvin to rest. He was busy dictating yet another Bible commentary. But Calvin couldn't stop.

Why? He feared that the Lord would return and find him sitting idle. Despite his reputation as a theologian, Calvin, I think, was first and foremost a pastor.

And it seems only fitting that I close with a word from Calvin that he wrote to pastors everywhere, if you will. In his 61st sermon on Deuteronomy, he said, Let the pastors boldly dare all things by the word of God.

[41 : 19] Let them constrain all the power, glory, and excellence of the world to give place to and to obey the divine majesty of this word. Let them enjoin everyone by it, from the highest to the lowest.

Let them edify the body of Christ. Let them devastate Satan's reign. Let them pasture the sheep, kill the wolves, instruct and exhort the rebellious.

Let them bind and loose thunder and lightning if necessary. But let them do all according to the word of God. And I believe that pretty well summarizes his life in ministry.

And with that, we're just...