
Sunday, October 22, 2017
Did You Know?

John Calvin

Last week we took a brief look at Martin Luther (1483-1546), the great German reformer. After Luther, the next great reformer would undoubtedly be John Calvin (1509-1564). Calvin got a late start to the Reformation as he was only 8 years old when Luther nailed his 95 theses in 1517, the act that triggered the Reformation, but it didn't take long before Calvin fully embraced the doctrines that reemerged during the Reformation. Calvin is of particular importance to us because our church is Calvinistic in theology, as is the case with many Biblical churches. To be Calvinist means we are Reformed in our doctrine, which means that we hold dearly to the Doctrines of Grace.

Calvin's influence is quite amazing. The following are some of the ideals that he is responsible for: separation of church and state, toleration, representative democracy, establishing the rights and liberties of subjects, constitutional monarchy, the ideal of a common Christian culture, the idea that the secular is also sacred. J.I. Packer says, "He became the most influential man in the world in the sense that his ideas made more history than did those of anyone else alive in his day and for at least a hundred years after." Calvin influenced Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, George Whitefield, Sir Isaac Newton, William Wilberforce, Charles Spurgeon, William Carey, Abraham Kuyper, Martin Lloyd-Jones, and so many others. Packer adds, "We may fairly say, indeed, that it is not possible to understand our own religious and cultural heritage today without knowing something about Calvin, since his shadow hangs over so much of it."

Calvin was a sickly, small-framed, French theologian and pastor that produced an incredible output of work while he pastored a congregation in Geneva. He slept four hours a night and utilized four secretaries that would write down the vast quantity of the words he dictated. He wrote a systematic theology at the age of 27 called the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that is still considered a masterpiece and is used by many today, myself included. He wrote a commentary on virtually every book of the Bible, and preached thousands of sermons.

Calvin was the greatest thinker to come out of the Reformation. Praising Calvin, Packer writes that he was "Bible-centered in his teaching, God-centered in his living, and Christ-centered in his faith." At his deathbed he said, "I give thanks to God who had mercy on me...He delivered me out of the deep darkness of idolatry in which I was plunged, that he might bring me into the light of this gospel...I have no other defence or refuge for salvation than his free adoption, on which alone my salvation depends." Though none of us may have the impact Calvin did, we do share the same Saviour. May his confession be ours as well.

Soli Deo Gloria
Pastor Peter