

SUNBEAMS AT SUNSETS

(Support from Scripture for one's latter days)



God's Son's sunbeams
even after our human sunsets

by

Rev. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee

Professor-Emeritus in Systematic Theology
and Caldwell-Morrow Lecturer in Church History
at the Queensland Presbyterian Theological College
St. Lucia, Brisbane, Australia, 2011.

FOREWORD

The development of this work, has had an interesting history. In 1989, while lecturing from Australia *via* the United States around the world, I was on a 'plane from London to South Africa. The purpose of that trip, was for me (an only child) to visit my aged parents (see their photo on our front page) -- for what I then correctly anticipated might well be the last time here on Earth.

I wanted later to leave something of value with my octogenarian father and mother when I left them in February 1990. So, on the 'plane, I made a list referring to 366 passages from every book of the Bible -- **one for each day of the year** (also for leapyears), which deal with old age. In fact, I even 'oversubscribed' that list to 400 entries -- which surely shows that the Bible has more than enough to encourage old folk!

I finished the list long before the plane reached Johannesburg. While with my parents in South Africa, I read to them and explained one passage from my list each day. Before I left, I gave them copies of that list and urged them to keep on reading one passage each day after I left them. I forgot about my own copy, till more than a decade later (some years after both parents had gone to glory).

Yet it seems my father -- a converted atheist -- did not forget! Though I never again saw him alive on Earth, here are excerpts from his last letters to me.

Nov. 27th 1993: "Dear Nigel and family.... Your mother is...still the girl I love, who bore me a beloved son for whom I thank the Lord.... Pray for her, that the Lord will give her peace...and that she waits on His blessing.... We are in the Lord's hands." Jan. 4th 1994: "Praise the Lord!" Feb. 15th 1994: "God bless you richly!" Feb. 18th 1994: "We do hope Miekie [my daughter just finishing university] gets a suitable position.... The Lord is on her side.... She believes this, and awaits His pleasure. The Lord does indeed work in mysterious ways.... I prayed to the Lord to help.... Praise the Lord!" April 24th 1994: "God's richest blessings.... God bless you all!" His last letter, May 14th 1994, said: "Just received a missionary letter, which makes very interesting reading.... We can only live **from day to day** in His grace." On July 17th 1994, he was murdered -- and went to glory! (Later, I led his murderer in jail to the Lord; and subsequently also his parents).

Nor did my mother -- earlier a Roman Catholic -- ever forget. Long after she lost the ability to read God's Word, she clung to the Bible I gave her. She then tore out and quite literally **ate a page a day** from Genesis to Joshua; and again, backwards, from Revelation to Second Corinthians -- until her death in 1996.

At the end of 2000, I retired from my Professorship in Theology and settled down to update my various writings in the sunset of my own life here in Australia. While searching for another manuscript, I came across the above-mentioned list for the first time in more than two decades! I then realized that **if I fleshed it out into a series of short daily readings**, it could be used to encourage many of God's saints in their old age -- including my wife and I, who have now joined that category!

Here, then, in 2011, is the final product -- including also the extra 'oversubscribed' items -- toward a personal gerontological eschatology, with copious comments from the great theologian John Calvin. It was completed just after I was diagnosed with incurable Lou Gehrig's Disease, and given about two years to live. May Almighty God be pleased to use it to His Own glory, and to give much encouragement and some fresh **sunbeams at sunsets** in the earthly lives of His saints!

Rev. Professor Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, Sep. 19 2011

INDEX

Foreword		p. 2
Index		p. 3
Genesis 1:1	In the beginning -- with no the end!	Jan. 1
Genesis 1:26f	Be fruitful! -- the blessings of (grand)children	Jan. 2
Genesis 2:7	Man made from the dust	Jan. 3
Genesis 2:17	God said: "You shall surely die!"	Jan. 4
Genesis 3:4	Satan said: "Surely you shall not die!"	Jan. 5
Genesis 3:14f	Rather a nicked heel, than a crushed skull!	Jan. 6
Genesis 3:17f	Eating in sorrow...the herb of the field	Jan. 7
Genesis 3:19	Unto dust you shall return!	Jan. 8
Genesis 3:20	Eve the mother of all living	Jan. 9
Genesis 3:21f	How to live for ever	Jan. 10
Genesis 4:3	At the end of the days	Jan. 11
Genesis 4:6f	The first human death	Jan. 12
Genesis 4:9f	Blood crying out from the ground	Jan. 13
Genesis 4:13f	The fear of death	Jan. 14
Genesis 5:2-5	The generations of Adam, before he died	Jan. 15
Genesis 5:18-24	Enoch walked with God for 365 years	Jan. 16
Genesis 5:25-27	The oldest man who ever lived	Jan. 17
Genesis 5:28-31	The 777-year life of Noah's father Lamech	Jan. 18
Genesis 6:1-8	God saved Noah and destroyed the wicked	Jan. 19
Genesis 6:8-13	God's grace and the end of all flesh	Jan. 20
Genesis 7:10f	All flesh died, save the family of Noah!	Jan. 21
Genesis 9:1-7	Noah's spared family again to multiply	Jan. 22
Genesis 9:9-15	The rainbow covenant of life	Jan. 23
Genesis 9:24-29	The end of Noah's 950 years	Jan. 24
Genesis 11:10-32	Shrinking lifespans after the Great Flood	Jan. 25
Genesis 15:1-15	Going to one's forefathers in a good old age	Jan. 26
Genesis 23:1-20	The death and burial of Sarah	Jan. 27
Genesis 24:1-3	When Abraham was old and well stricken in age	Jan. 28
Genesis 25:7-10	Abraham died in a good old age	Jan. 29
Genesis 27:46	What good shall my life do me?	Jan. 30
Genesis 35:1-8	Deborah's burial at the oak of weeping	Jan. 31
Genesis 35:9-20	Jacob erected a pillar on Rachel's grave	Feb. 1
Genesis 35:27-29	Isaac's death at the good old age of 180	Feb. 2
Genesis 47:28-31	The time drew nigh that Israel must die	Feb. 3
Genesis 48:1-2	Jacob's blessed sickness unto death	Feb. 4

Genesis 48:21	Behold, I die -- but you must live!	Feb. 5
Genesis 49:1-2	Some of the dying Jacob's last words to his sons	Feb. 6
Genesis 49:18	"I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord!"	Feb. 7
Genesis 49:29-33	The dying Jacob was gathered unto his people	Feb. 8
Genesis 50:1-13	The mourning at the burial of Jacob	Feb. 9
Genesis 50:22-26	The bones of the dying 110-year-old Joseph	Feb. 10
Job 1:1-20	An upright old man loses all he had	Feb. 11
Job 1:21	Blessed be the Lord Who gives and takes away!	Feb. 12
Job 2:1-10	"Curse God and die!" said Mrs. Job foolishly	Feb. 13
Job 2:11-13	Old Job receives even his diseases from God	Feb. 14
Job 4:7-9	Does the blast of God cut off the righteous?	Feb. 15
Job 4:17-21	The destruction of those dwelling in clay-houses	Feb. 16
Job 6:1-4	The arrows of the Almighty are in me!	Feb. 17
Job 6:8-10	Comfort -- if God would only cut me off!	Feb. 18
Job 7:1-6	Man's appointed time on Earth	Feb. 19
Job 7:7-14	O, remember that my life is wind!	Feb. 20
Job 7:15f	My soul chooses...death, rather than life!	Feb. 21
Job 7:17-20	How long will You not depart from me?	Feb. 22
Job 7:21	I shall now sleep in the dust!	Feb. 23
Job 8:3-7	Your latter end would greatly increase!	Feb. 24
Job 8:9-19	Our days upon Earth are but a shadow!	Feb. 25
Job 8:20-22	God will not cast away a perfect man!	Feb. 26
Job 10:1-8	My soul is weary of my life	Feb. 27
Job 10:9-21	Will you bring me back to dust again?	Feb. 28
Job 13:15f	Though He slays me -- yet will I trust in Him!	Feb. 29
Job 14:1-4	Man, born of woman, is of few and troublesome days	Mar. 1
Job 14:5	Man's days are determined, and his months are with God	Mar. 2
Job 14:6-9	At the end of man's day, God gives him rest	Mar. 3
Job 14:10-12	After death, no resurrection of man -- till the end of history!	Mar. 4
Job 14:13-15	Man will answer God from the grave at the set time	Mar. 5
Job 16:11-12	God has broken me asunder!	Mar. 6
Job 18:15-17	Will man's remembrance perish from the Earth?	Mar. 7
Job 19:25-27	These eyes, after decomposing, will yet see God!	Mar. 8
Job 21:13	The wicked in a moment go down to the grave	Mar. 9
Job 23:1-10	God knows the way I take, and He'll make me pure gold!	Mar. 10
Job 27:1-5	Till I die, I'll not remove my integrity!	Mar. 11
Job 27:6	My heart shan't reproach me, as long as I live!	Mar. 12
Job 29:1-5	O, that I were as in the days when God preserved me!	Mar. 13
Job 29:18-20	I shall die in my nest and multiply my days like sand!	Mar. 14
Job 30:1-2	Old age has perished in me!	Mar. 15
Job 30:16-23	I know that You will bring me to death!	Mar. 16
Job 33:12-18	God keeps back man's soul from the pit!	Mar. 17

Job 33:19-21	Man's flesh keeps on being consumed away	Mar. 18
Job 33:22-23	Man's soul keeps on being drawn near to the grave	Mar. 19
Job 33:24-30	God's Ransom delivers man from going down to the pit!	Mar. 20
Job 42:10-17	Job died doubly-blessed when old and full of days	Mar. 21
Exodus 3:6-14	"I am" is the God also of the dead Abraham-Isaac-Jacob!	Mar. 22
Exodus 20:4-6	The multigenerational God blesses 1000s who love Him	Mar. 23
Exodus 20:8-11	God's heaven-foreshadowing life for all the family!	Mar. 24
Exodus 20:12	How to get long days in the land God gives you	Mar. 25
Exodus 20:13	'You shall not kill' -- means look after yourself, too!	Mar. 26
Exodus 34:5-7	God is merciful to thousands, from fathers to children	Mar. 27
Leviticus 26:21-29	Children suffer, because of the sins of their parents!	Mar. 28
Numbers 23:10	Let me die the death of the righteous!	Mar. 29
Deuteronomy 30:16-20	How to have long life for oneself and one's descendants	Mar. 30
Deuteronomy 32:39	The Lord kills, and the Lord keeps alive!	Mar. 31
Deuteronomy 34:5-7	Moses died when 120, in his full strength!	Apr. 1
Joshua 14:6-14	Caleb at 85 still followed the Lord wholeheartedly!	Apr. 2
Joshua 23:1-2	When Joshua was old and stricken with age	Apr. 3
Joshua 24:1,15	I and my house will serve the Lord also in our old age	Apr. 4
Joshua 24:29-33	Joshua died and was buried when 110	Apr. 5
Judges 8:21	Gideon slew Zebah and Zalmunna	Apr. 6
Judges 16:28-31	Samson slew more at his death than when alive	Apr. 7
Ruth 4:13-17	Naomi was restored and nourished in her old age	Apr. 8
First Samuel 2:6-9	The Lord kills, buries, resurrects, and re-enlivens	Apr. 9
First Samuel 25:1	Samuel died and was lamented and buried in Ramah	Apr. 10
Second Samuel 12:15-24	David and illegitimate son both saved before their deaths	Apr. 11
Second Samuel 19:31-37	Barzillai, 80, wished to be buried by his parents' grave	Apr. 12
First Kings 2:1-10	David encouraged Solomon just before he died	Apr. 13
First Chronicles 29:26-28	David died in a good old age full of days and riches	Apr. 14
First Kings 15:22-24	The godly Asa diseased in his feet in his old age	Apr. 15
First Kings 19:4-11	The revival of Elijah when he wished he were dead	Apr. 16
Second Kings 2:2-11	Elijah's blessed departure from this world	Apr. 17
Second Kings 13:20-21	The death and burial and the dead bones of Elisha	Apr. 18
Second Kings 20:1-21	Hezekiah's reprieve in his sickness unto death	Apr. 19
Second Chronicles 26:1-21	The godly Uzziah sinned and died of leprosy	Apr. 20
Second Chronicles 32:33	The death and honourable burial of Hezekiah	Apr. 21
Second Chronicles 35:22-25	The war-death and burial of the godly Josiah	Apr. 22
Psalms 1:1-6	The godly flourish, but the ungodly shall perish	Apr. 23
Psalms 13:1-6	Illuminate my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death!	Apr. 24
Psalms 16:1-11	Preserve me, God! You won't leave me in the grave	Apr. 25
Psalms 17:15	I'll be satisfied with Your likeness when I re-awake	Apr. 26
Psalms 18:3-16	The sorrows of the grave surrounded me	Apr. 27
Psalms 18:46-50	The Lord lives and keeps on delivering me	Apr. 28

Psalm 22:14-22	I will praise God for saving me from all distresses	Apr. 29
Psalm 23 1-6	God is with me even in the valley of the shadow of death	Apr. 30
Psalm 30:5	After weeping comes joy to those who live in God's favour	May 1
Psalm 31:9-16	God's face to shine again on those who have been wasting away	May 2
Psalm 31:21-22	God hears and blesses those who pray when they feel cut off	May 3
Psalm 34:12	Desire life and love many days in order to see good!	May 4
Psalm 34:22	None who trust the Lord shall be left desolate	May 5
Psalm 36:9-12	With God is the fountain of life, but the wicked are cast down	May 6
Psalm 37:9-11	Those that keep on waiting upon God, shall inherit the Earth	May 7
Psalm 37:18-20	The inheritance of the upright shall be for ever	May 8
Psalm 37:23-27	God upholds good men, and is merciful to their descendants	May 9
Psalm 37:28-30	The Lord preserves His saints for ever, and they inherit the land	May 10
Psalm 38	Smashed and wounded, yet still keeping one's hope in the Lord	May 11
Psalm 39:5-7	My age is as nothing before God, yet I keep hoping upon Him	May 12
Psalm 39:12	Lord, hear the prayer of a strange sojourner here on Earth!	May 13
Psalm 46:6-7	The Lord is our refuge, even when the Earth melts down	May 14
Psalm 49:6-7	None of the greedy can ever redeem his brother	May 15
Psalm 49:10-15	Even wise men don't abide but die; yet God redeems my soul	May 16
Psalm 52:8	Like a green tree, I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever	May 17
Psalm 55:18-23	God delivers my soul, but brings the deceitful into the pit	May 18
Psalm 61:6-8	God prolongs the king's life and years as many generations	May 19
Psalm 69:13-16	Lord, don't let me sink in the mire -- but deliver me!	May 20
Psalm 69:28	Let not the wicked be written up in the book of the living!	May 21
Psalm 69:32	The humble who seek God shall be glad, and keep on living	May 22
Psalm 71:6-9	You are my God, from the womb till my old age!	May 23
Psalm 73:14-18	I have been plagued, but the wicked shall be destroyed	May 24
Psalm 73:23-26	My flesh fails, but God is my strength for ever!	May 25
Psalm 84:2	My soul longs and keeps on crying out for the living God	May 26
Psalm 88:1f	Lord, my life is drawing nigh unto the grave	May 27
Psalm 89:1f	I will sing of the mercies of the Lord unto all generations	May 28
Psalm 90:1-7	Lord, we are consumed by Your anger; troubled by Your wrath	May 29
Psalm 90:9-10	The days of our years are seventy, and soon cut off	May 30
Psalm 90:12-14	Teach us to count our days so that we may acquire wisdom!	May 31
Psalm 91:11	God shall keep all your ways, lest you dash your foot	Jun. 1
Psalm 91:15f	The Lord delivers those who call upon Him when troubled	Jun. 2
Psalm 92:1	It's good to thank the Lord, morning and evening	Jun. 3
Psalm 92:7	The wicked, seemingly flourishing, shall be destroyed for ever	Jun. 4
Psalm 92:12-15	The righteous shall flourish, and bear fruit even in old age	Jun. 5
Psalm 95:8-11	The wicked shall never enter into the rest of God	Jun. 6
Psalm 97:10-11	The Lord preserves His saints who love Him and hate evil	Jun. 7
Psalm 102:9-12	My days are like a shadow, but the Lord endures for ever	Jun. 8

Psalm 102:25-28	The Lord changes not, and His years have no end	Jun. 9
Psalm 103 13-17	The Lord knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust	Jun.10
Psalm 112:9-10	God endures for ever, but the wicked shall melt away	Jun. 11
Psalm 115:17-18	The dead don't; but we will praise the Lord for evermore	Jun. 12
Psalm 116:3-8	I was brought low, but the Lord delivered me from death	Jun. 13
Psalm 116:15	Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints	Jun. 14
Psalm 118:13-25	I shall not stay dead, but keep on living!	Jun. 15
Psalm 124:1-8	If the Lord hadn't sided with us, we would have been drowned!	Jun. 16
Psalm 129:1-8	Much afflicted by the ungodly; yet never prevailed against!	Jun. 17
Psalm 133:3	Brothers united unto everlasting life are like refreshing dew	Jun. 18
Psalm 138:7-8	Though I walk through the midst of trouble, God will revive me	Jun. 19
Psalm 140:9-13	God maintains the afflicted and the upright in His presence	Jun. 20
Psalm 142:1-6	The Lord is my refuge in the land of the living	Jun. 21
Proverbs 1:10-33	Whoever listens to God, shall keep on dwelling safely	Jun. 22
Proverbs 3:13-18	Length of days is for the wise who find Wisdom	Jun. 23
Proverbs 3:35	The wise shall inherit glory; but fools get promoted to shame	Jun. 24
Proverbs 4:18-22	The path of the just keeps on shining more and more	Jun. 25
Proverbs 10:7	The memory of the just is blessed; while that of the wicked rots	Jun. 26
Proverbs 10:16	The labour of the righteous keeps on tending toward life	Jun. 27
Proverbs 10:30-31	The righteous shall never be removed from the Earth!	Jun. 28
Proverbs 11:30-31	A tree of life is the fruit and reward of the righteous	Jun. 29
Proverbs 12:28	In the way of righteousness is life and no death!	Jun. 30
Proverbs 13:9-13	The light of the righteous keeps on rejoicing unto reward	Jul. 1
Proverbs 14:27-30	The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, departing from death!	Jul. 2
Proverbs 15:9-10	The Lord loves him who keeps on following after righteousness	Jul. 3
Proverbs 15:13	A merry heart makes a countenance cheerful	Jul. 4
Proverbs 15:24-25	The way of life is above to the wise, and strengthens widows	Jul. 5
Proverbs 15:31	The ear that heeds reproof, keeps on abiding among the wise	Jul. 6
Proverbs 21:21	He who keeps following righteousness, finds life and honour	Jul. 7
Proverbs 23:13-14	Don't withhold correction, if you would save from hell!	Jul. 8
Proverbs 23:22	Do not despise your mother when she is old!	Jul. 9
Ecclesiastes 3:1-3	There is a time to break down and to die	Jul. 10
Ecclesiastes 3:18-25	Man is not a beast; for the spirit of man goes upward!	Jul. 11
Ecclesiastes 5:15-19	Naked shall man return, even as he came forth from the womb	Jul. 12
Ecclesiastes 6:1-6	The long-lived who are not good, are no better than abortions!	Jul. 13
Ecclesiastes 8:12-13	The God-fearing shall fare well; but not the long-lived wicked!	Jul. 14
Ecclesiastes 9:3-6	While there's life there's hope; but not if one dies in one's sins!	Jul. 15
Ecclesiastes 11:7-9	Though a man lives for years, let him remember the dark days!	Jul. 16
Ecclesiastes 12:1-14	Remember your Creator, before you grow old and die!	Jul. 17
Song of Songs 2:17	I am His, till that day breaks when the shadows flee away!	Jul. 18
Song of Songs 8:6f	The immortal and unquenchable seal of ardent love	Jul. 19
Isaiah 6:1-3	The thrice-holy Jehovah seen in the year Uzziah died	Jul. 20

Isaiah 6:13	The holy seed is solid, even when oaks shed their leaves	Jul. 21
Isaiah 9:6-7	The unending increase of the government of the Saviour-Son	Jul. 22
Isaiah 25:4-8	Earth's inhabitants burned up for transgressing the Covenant	Jul. 23
Isaiah 26:19-21	The dead arise and live when God's indignation has passed	Jul. 24
Isaiah 28:15	Man's covenant with death and the grave shall not stand	Jul. 25
Isaiah 46:4	I will carry you in your old age, when your hair is white!	Jul. 26
Isaiah 51:2-6	The dead and even the heavens shall vanish away like smoke	Jul. 27
Isaiah 53:1-12	God's later exaltation of His suffering servant	Jul. 28
Isaiah 65:17-20	No more weeping, when children shall die at age 100!	Jul. 29
Isaiah 66:22-24	You and your seed shall remain on the New Earth	Jul. 30
Jeremiah 31:31f	In the days when the Lord will make a New Covenant	Jul. 31
Lamentations 3:1-4	Affliction and aging in flesh and skin and bones	Aug. 1
Lamentations 3:18-23	We are not consumed because of God's great faithfulness	Aug. 2
Lamentations 3:31-34	The Lord will not cut us off for ever, but show compassion	Aug. 3
Ezekiel 31:14-16	God casts men down into the grave	Aug. 4
Ezekiel 33:1-11	God desires that the wicked repent, and not die in their sins	Aug. 5
Ezekiel 37:1-14	God to open the graves, and put His Spirit into dead people	Aug. 6
Daniel 7:9-14	The Kingdom of the Son shall never be destroyed	Aug. 7
Daniel 9:26	How the Messiah was cut off, but not for Himself	Aug. 8
Daniel 12:2-3	Resurrection from the dust unto everlasting life or death	Aug. 9
Daniel 12:9-13	Going into rest, before resurrection at the end of the days	Aug. 10
Hosea 6:1-2	God has smitten, but He will also resurrect us	Aug. 11
Joel 1:3	Tell your children's children!	Aug. 12
Joel 2:28	Your old men shall dream dreams	Aug. 13
Amos 4:12	Prepare to meet your God!	Aug. 14
Amos 8:3	There shall be many dead bodies	Aug. 15
Obadiah 8	The Lord destroys, but not annihilates, even the wise	Aug. 16
Jonah 2:1-9	God hears one's cry even from the belly of hell	Aug. 17
Jonah 4:3-11	God's spares Jonah and also the city of Nineveh	Aug. 18
Micah 1:9	Incurable wounds	Aug. 19
Micah 2:10	This is not your rest	Aug. 20
Nahum 3:19	No healing of your bruise	Aug. 21
Habakkuk 1:1-12	God is from everlasting – we shall not die!	Aug. 22
Habakkuk 3:16-19	Though all collapses -- I will rejoice in the Lord!	Aug. 23
Zephaniah 1:3	God consumes man and beast	Aug. 24
Haggai 1:5-7	Consider your ways!	Aug. 25
Zechariah 10:1-3	Ask God for refreshing rain, after the drought of sin!	Aug. 26
Zechariah 12:8-10	Mourning for the One Whom we have pierced	Aug. 27
Ezra 6:14	The Elders of the Jews built and prospered	Aug. 28
Nehemiah 6:11	Who would go into the temple to save his life?	Aug. 29
Esther 4:16	If I perish -- well, then I perish!	Aug. 30
Malachi 3:16-18	The book of remembrance when God collects His jewels	Aug. 31

Malachi 4:1-2	The Sun of righteousness rising with healing in His wings	Sep. 1
Malachi 4:6	Repentance of families, before God comes in punishment	Sep. 2
Matthew 5:21-22	Murderers and angry men in danger of hell fire	Sep. 3
Matthew 5:44-48	Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect!	Sep. 4
Matthew 8:11	One day, many shall come from all quarters into heaven	Sep. 5
Matthew 10:28-29	Fear Him Who can destroy both soul and body in hell!	Sep. 6
Matthew 16:21-26	Deny yourself, and take up your cross and follow Jesus!	Sep. 7
Matthew 17:1-9	A preview of Christ's glory, when risen from the dead	Sep. 8
Matthew 19:16-18	Good Master, what must I do to get eternal life?	Sep. 9
Matthew 19:27-30	Forsake everything, to inherit heaven and its riches!	Sep. 10
Matthew 20:18-23	Christ to be crucified, but also to rise from the dead	Sep. 11
Matthew 21:33-45	The killing of God's servants, and of His Son	Sep. 12
Matthew 22:23-33	God is not the God of the dead but of the living	Sep. 13
Matthew 26:7-12	Jesus perfumed with a view to His burial	Sep. 14
Matthew 26:28	Jesus' blood shed for the remission of the sins of many	Sep. 15
Matthew 27:39-54	If you're the Son of God, save yourself from the cross!	Sep. 16
Matthew 28:5-6	The crucified Jesus is not here, but risen	Sep. 17
Mark 10:30-34	Christ to be killed, but to rise again the third day	Sep. 18
Luke 16:19-31	The rich man in hell, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom	Sep. 19
Luke 23:42-43	Today, you shall be with Me in Paradise!	Sep. 20
Luke 24:26	How Christ had to suffer before entering into His glory	Sep. 21
John 1:4-18	In Christ was life, and the life was the light of men	Sep. 22
John 2:19-22	Christ would raise up His dead body in three days	Sep. 23
John 3:15-16	Whoever trusts in Jesus shall not perish, but live for ever!	Sep. 24
John 3:36	He who keeps on trusting in the Son, has everlasting life	Sep. 25
John 4:13-14	Getting a well inside one, to keep gushing forth water for ever	Sep. 26
John 5:21-28	He who believes in Jesus has passed from death to life	Sep. 27
John 6:35-39	Christ will raise up all whom the Father has given Him	Sep. 28
John 8:12	He who follows Jesus shall have the light of life	Sep. 29
John 8:56	Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and was glad	Sep. 30
John 8:58	Jesus said: "Before Abraham was, I am!"	Oct. 1
John 10:15-17	Jesus lays down and again takes up His life for the sheep	Oct. 2
John 10:27-29	Jesus gives eternal life, and nobody can take it away	Oct. 3
John 11:1-45	Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life!"	Oct. 4
John 12:24-25	If a seed dies, it brings forth much fruit	Oct. 5
John 14:1-6	Jesus prepares places in His Father's house of many rooms	Oct. 6
John 15:13-26	A man who loves, lays down his life for his friends	Oct. 7
John 16:7-15	It's better for us, that Jesus went away from us!	Oct. 8
John 16:16-22	Christians will rejoice, when they see Jesus	Oct. 9
John 17:1-5	The Father gave Jesus power over all flesh	Oct. 10
John 17:24	Jesus prays Christians may come where He now is	Oct. 11

John 20:25-31	Having everlasting life through the Name of Jesus	Oct. 12
John 21:17-19	Needing to be cared for and clothed when old	Oct. 13
Acts 2:22-26	Christ captured, crucified, undecomposed, and resurrected	Oct. 14
Acts 3:13-19	Christ resurrected, to bring us times of refreshing	Oct. 15
Acts 4:8-12	The only Saviour and Healer crucified and resurrected	Oct. 16
Acts 4:24-29	Lord, embolden Your servants to keep speaking Your Word!	Oct. 17
Acts 5:27-32	God resurrected Jesus to give repentance to Israel	Oct. 18
Acts 7:51-60	Stephen stoned to death even while praying to Jesus	Oct. 19
Acts 10:34-43	Jesus fellowshiped with His Disciples even after His death	Oct. 20
Acts 12:2-23	Herod killed James, before he himself died desperately	Oct. 21
Acts 13:28-30	The murder and burial and resurrection of Jesus	Oct. 22
Acts 13:33-38	Jesus could not decompose, and was resurrected from death	Oct. 23
Acts 14:19-22	The revival of Paul, after being supposed to have been dead	Oct. 24
Acts 16:23-33	Paul whipped, jailed, jeered at, and released	Oct. 25
Acts 17:1-3	Paul proved Christ had to suffer and to rise from the dead	Oct. 26
Acts 17:18-34	Paul preached to scoffers about Jesus and His resurrection	Oct. 27
Acts 20:7-12	Paul revived Eutychus who was picked up as though dead	Oct. 28
Acts 20:22-26	Paul expected afflictions and counted not his life as dear	Oct. 29
Acts 21:10-14	Paul was prepared even to die for the Name of Jesus	Oct. 30
Acts 21:30-37	The Ephesians threatened Paul with much bodily harm	Oct. 31
Acts 22:20-27	Paul's own people said he didn't deserve to live	Nov. 1
Acts 23:6	Paul on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead	Nov. 2
Acts 23:12	Certain Jews swore not to eat, till they had killed Paul	Nov. 3
Acts 23:14-16	Some Jews made ready to ambush and to kill Paul	Nov. 4
Acts 24:15	There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both just and unjust	Nov. 5
Acts 24:21	Paul on trial, regarding the resurrection of the dead	Nov. 6
Acts 25:11	Paul did not refuse to die, if he so deserved	Nov. 7
Acts 26:9-18	After approving Christians be killed, Paul was blinded	Nov. 8
Acts 26:23	The resurrected Christ a Light to the Gentiles	Nov. 9
Acts 27:13-44	Paul in perils of shipwreck on the sea	Nov. 10
Romans 1:4	Christ declared the Son of God by His resurrection	Nov. 11
Romans 4:23f	Believing in God Who raised up Jesus from the dead	Nov. 12
Romans 5:8f	God loved us, in that Christ died for us while yet sinners	Nov. 13
Romans 5:12f	Death reigned from Adam, who prefigured Christ	Nov. 14
Romans 6:1-4	Dead to sin, and alive unto righteousness	Nov. 15
Romans 7:2-4	We are dead to sin, to as to bring forth godly fruit	Nov. 16
Romans 8:11-14	We keep on living through the Spirit, Who raised up Jesus	Nov. 17
Romans 8:31-39	No distress or death, can ever separate us from God's love	Nov. 18
Romans 10:6-9	If you believe God resurrected Christ, you shall be saved	Nov. 19
Romans 11:2-4	Wicked Israelites killed God's prophets and hounded Elijah	Nov. 20
Romans 11:12-15	The reconciling of the Israelites shall be life from the dead	Nov. 21
Romans 16:20	The God of peace shall shortly crush Satan under your feet	Nov. 22

First Corinthians 7:39f	When a husband dies, his wife is free to remarry	Nov. 23
First Corinthians 13:9-13	One day I shall know, even as I am known	Nov. 24
First Corinthians 15:3	Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures	Nov. 25
First Corinthians 15:35-58	When our bodies will rise again	Nov. 26
Second Corinthians 4:7-17	Our bodies are earthen vessels full of treasure	Nov. 27
Second Corinthians 5:1-8	When absent from the body, we'll be present with God	Nov. 28
Second Corinthians 5:14-15	Don't live for yourself, but for Christ Who died for us	Nov. 29
Second Corinthians 11:23	Many stripes and prisons and death, for Christ's sake	Nov. 30
Second Corinthians 11:33	Paul once escaped with his life, in a basket on a rope	Dec. 1
Second Corinthians 12:1-10	I take pleasure in infirmities and persecutions, for Christ	Dec. 2
Galatians 3:13	Christ redeemed us, by being made a curse for us	Dec. 3
Ephesians 1:7	In Christ, we are redeemed through His blood	Dec. 4
Ephesians 1:20f	God raised Christ from the dead to give us His power	Dec. 5
Ephesians 2:4-6	God raised us from sin, so that we can rule in heaven	Dec. 6
Ephesians 2:13	We have now come near, through the blood of Christ	Dec. 7
Ephesians 5:25f	Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for her	Dec. 8
Philippians 1:20-24	For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain	Dec. 9
Philippians 2:8f	Christ obeyed to death; so every knee shall bow to Him	Dec. 10
Philippians 2:25f	God healed Epaphroditus, when sick nigh unto death	Dec. 11
Philippians 3:8f	I suffer the loss of all things to win Christ and His power	Dec. 12
Colossians 1:18-20	Christ in His cross, the firstborn from the dead	Dec. 13
Colossians 2:11-13	Buried and risen and enlivened together with Christ	Dec. 14
Colossians 3:5f	You are risen with Christ; so put your sins to death!	Dec. 15
First Thessalonians 4:13f	Don't sorrow like those who have no hope!	Dec. 16
Second Thessalonians 1:6-10	When Christ comes back to be glorified in His saints	Dec. 17
First Timothy 1:12-17	Now to the King eternal, immortal, God only wise!	Dec. 18
First Timothy 3:16	God the Son was received up into glory	Dec. 19
First Timothy 6:6-16	Certainly we can carry nothing with us out of this world	Dec. 20
Second Timothy 1:10	Christ abolished death and brought immortality to light	Dec. 21
Second Timothy 2:8	Remember Christ was raised from the dead!	Dec. 22
Second Timothy 4:1-6	Endure afflictions, right up to the time of departure!	Dec. 23
Second Timothy 4:17f	Delivered from danger, and preserved for heaven	Dec. 24
Titus 1:2	In hope of eternal life which God has promised	Dec. 25
Titus 2:2-3	The aged are to be sober and sound in faith	Dec. 26
Philemon 9	Paul the aged prisoner of Jesus Christ	Dec. 27
Hebrews 1:6f	The heavens shall perish, but the Lord remains!	Dec. 28
Hebrews 2:5f	Jesus humbled to death, but now crowned gloriously	Dec. 29
Hebrews 4:3f	Christ entered in His rest, and we shall follow Him	Dec. 30
Hebrews 5:2-9	Christ, surrounded with weakness, had compassion	Dec. 31

EXTRA!

Hebrews 10:5f
Hebrews 11:8-16
Hebrews 11:17-22
Hebrews 11:23-29
Hebrews 11:30-31
Hebrews 11:32-34
Hebrews 11:35-37
Hebrews 12:7-13
James 1:10-11
James 1:15
James 5:14- 20
First Peter 3:18-21
Second Peter 1:13-15
Second Peter 2:1-4
First John 3:2-3
Second John 1-2
Third John 2
Jude 6-10
Revelation 1:5-7
Revelation 1:17f
Revelation 2:7f
Revelation 4:10f
Revelation 5:9f
Revelation 6:9f
Revelation 7:13f
Revelation 11:15f
Revelation 12:4-11
Revelation 14:13
Revelation 20:4-15
Revelation 21:1-4
Revelation 21:23-27
Revelation 22:1-5
Revelation 22:14-15
Revelation 22:16-20

Christ sacrificed Himself for us in His body
Abraham's descendants all desired the heavenly country
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all looked up to Heaven
Moses avoided destruction at the Passover and at the Red Sea
Rahab did not perish when the walls of Jericho fell down
Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel all escaped!
Women received back their dead, while others were slain
How to endure chastisements unto eternal life
The rich shall pass away like the grass that perishes
Sin, when it has finished, brings forth death
Know that he who converts the sinner, shall save a soul from death!
Christ the just, suffered for the unjust -- to bring us to God!
Encouraging others while we're alive -- and after our death!
God thrusts both the demons and the wicked into hell
When Jesus comes again, we shall be like Him
Advice to the Church from her old Elder
May you prosper, and be in health!
The punishment of the wicked is to be a warning to us
Christ washed us from our sins with His Own blood
Christ was dead, but now keeps on living for ever
Christ gives the tree of life in Paradise to overcomers
Worshipping Him Who keeps on living for ever and ever
Christ has redeemed us to God, and we shall reign on Earth!
How long, Lord, before you avenge our blood?
Through great tribulation, unto future glory!
Christ to reign for ever and ever, over this world!
Overcoming by the blood of the Lamb, and defying death!
Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth!
The resurrection of the dead at the final judgment
Death shall be no more!
Is your name in the Lamb's book of life?
The healing of the nations, and reigning with God for ever
Only Commandment-keepers have the right to the tree of life!
Amen, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

About the author

'Beginning, God created Heavens and the Earth.... God created great whales.... God created man in His Own image!' (Genesis 1:1,21,27).

He created the Heavens and the Earth -- neither of which had ever previously existed. Having created them -- they would never end. As Calvin comments: "The world was not perfected at its very commencement, in the manner in which it is now seen.... It was created an empty chaos."

Yes, thereafter, the world would then get old -- and ultimately, even perish. But it would never cease to exist. The Heavens and the Earth would be changed, from their present format into their final format. But even at the end of time, they shall never pass away. Hebrews 1:10-12.

When the day of the Lord comes, the Heavens change. The Earth also shall be burned up, so man's works in it may be found and preserved for ever. For we, according to God's promise, look for renewed Heavens and a renewed Earth in which righteousness dwells. Second Peter 3:10-13.

Then, there shall be a renewed Heaven and a renewed Earth. There shall be no more sea, to keep on separating one Christian from another. Revelation 21:1. The renewed Earth shall then descend from the renewed Heaven -- full of light, with its walls garnished with all kinds of precious stones Genesis 1:3 & 2:12 *cf.* Revelation 21:10-18*f.*

Our Earth was born *'in the beginning,'* and then passed through light and air and dry land and plants and heavenly bodies like the sun and the moon -- and animals of the waters and the air and the land, toward its maturity. Genesis 1:1-25. God then created man, to rule it. God made man male and female, and told them to multiply. Genesis 1:26-28.

That is how you and I were born. Genesis 2:21-24. We then grew up; started subjugating our part of the Earth; got married; raised children; and reached the prime of our life.

If man had never sinned, he would indeed have become older. But he would never have become old! Diseases would have been unknown to man, and he would never have died.

As Calvin commented on Genesis 2:8*f.*, Adam -- "in passing through his earthly life" -- would "meditate on heavenly glory.... The tree of life..., a symbol and memorial of the life which he had received from God.... Man, as often as he tasted the fruit of that tree, would remember whence he had received his life.... Adam, hitherto innocent..., had need of monitory signs to lead him to the knowledge of divine grace.... By this sign, Adam was admonished that he could claim nothing for himself as if it were his own -- in order that he might depend wholly upon the Son of God and might not seek life anywhere but in Him!"

Calvin commented on Genesis 2:16 that man's "earthly life...would have been temporal. Yet he would have passed into Heaven without death." Thus it was *'in the beginning'* -- with no end!

'God said: "Let Us make man in Our image!"... Male and female, He created them. And God blessed them and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the Earth and subdue it! And have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moves on the Earth!"... Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife -- and they shall be one flesh.' Genesis 1:26 to 2:24.

Calvin commented: "Man is...a certain pre-eminent specimen of divine wisdom.... He is deservedly called by the ancients *mikrokosmos*, 'a world in miniature'.... The dominion...was given to man, that he might...acts as God's vicegerent in the government of the world. This truly is some portion...of the image of God.... He (Adam) would have authority over all living creatures. He (God) appointed man...lord.... This authority was not given to Adam only, but to all his posterity....

"Adam with his wife was formed for the production of offspring, in order that man might replenish (or fill) the Earth.... God intends the human race to be multiplied by generation.... He has joined the man to his wife, so that they might produce...a legitimate seed.... Beginning at holy and chaste marriage, He proceeds to speak of the production of offspring." And the command to '*fill*' the Earth with children, indicates that this would take a long time. Many generations!

God said to Adam: *'I will make him a help!'* (Genesis 2:18f). Calvin comments: "Woman is given as a companion and an associate to the man.... In the person of the woman, the human race was at length complete -- which had before been like a building just begun.... The husband ought to prefer his wife to his father.... The father is said to be 'left' -- not his wife!... It is less lawful to desert a wife, than parents."

In his *Institutes* (II:12:6), Calvin added: "Man...was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). And in him, the Creator was pleased to behold -- as in a mirror -- His Own glory."

Finally, not only did Adam reflect God. Eve imaged Adam. And their children image Adam and Eve. And their grandchildren image their parents, and anticipate the rest of the human race which those grandchildren in turn would produce. But all of them together -- would anticipate the whole Christian Church!

As Calvin said in his *Institutes* (IV:19:35): "Adam said...after Eve was brought into his presence...: *'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh'* (Genesis 2:23).... This was spiritually fulfilled in Christ.... Paul declares...that we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones, and so one flesh with Him.... Truly, it is a great mystery that Christ allowed a rib to be taken from Himself, of which we might be formed.... When He was strong, He was pleased to become weak, so that we might be strengthened by His strength."

So, be fruitful! Consider the blessings of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren! For thus is the Christian Church expanded!

'And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the Breath of life. And man became a living soul.' Genesis 2:7.

How did man come to exist? Calvin comments: "Man had been, in the beginning, dust of the earth.... The body of Adam is formed of clay, and destitute of sense.... Brute animals...arose out of the earth in a moment.... The peculiar dignity of man is shown in this, that he was gradually formed.... God did not command him immediately to spring alive out of the earth" -- like an animal!

'God *'breathed into his nostrils'* (*inspiraverat in faciem*). Commented Calvin: "I do not hesitate to subscribe to the opinion of those who explain this passage of the anima-ated life of man.... I expound...the vital spirit, by the word *'Breath'*.... Here, mention is made only of the lower faculty of the soul which imparts breath to the body and gives it vigour and motion. This does not prevent the human soul from having its proper rank....

"Moses first speaks of the *'Breath'*.... A soul was given to man, by which he might live.... Three gradations indeed are to be noted in the creation of man.... His dead body was formed out of the dust of the earth.... It was endued with a soul, whence it should receive vital motion.... On this soul, God engraved His Own image, to which immortality is annexed....

"Moses intends nothing more than to explain the animating of the clayey figure, whereby it came to pass that man began to live.... The state of man was not perfected in the person of Adam.... It is a peculiar benefit conferred by Christ, that we may be renewed to a life which is celestial. Whereas before the fall of Adam, man's life was only earthly."

In his *Institutes* (I:15:5f), Calvin adds: "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life.... Paul...tells us we are His offspring (Acts 17:28) -- not in substance (or essence)..., but in quality.... He has adorned us with divine endowments.... Creation, however, is not a transfusion of essence -- as if one were to draw wine out of a cask.... But a commencement of (existence)...out of nothing. Nor...when it (the spirit) quits the flesh, again returning to Him, does it follow that it was a portion withdrawn from His essence...(which) He cut...from His substance like a branch from a tree!..."

"Man was conformable to God not by an influx of substance but by the grace and virtue of the Spirit (Second Corinthians 3:18)... By beholding the glory of Christ, we are transformed into the same image -- as by the Spirit of the Lord.... Certainly the Spirit does not work in us, so as to make us of the same substance with God.... Man was undoubtedly created to meditate on the heavenly life. So it is certain that the knowledge of it was engraven on the soul."

In his *Psychopannychia*, Calvin adds: "The *'Breath of life'* was introduced into this clay body, not making the image of God...in man till he was complete.... Do you think that this *'Breath of life'* is the image of God?... That *'Breath of life'* is distinguished from the soul of brutes.... The soul of man is not of the earth. It was made by the Mouth of the Lord." Yet, man is but dust!

"The Lord God commanded the man, saying: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it. For in the day that you eat of it -- you shall surely die!"" Genesis 2:16-17.

Commented Calvin: "man was the governor of the world.... A law is imposed upon him, in token of his subjection.... The prohibition of one tree, was a test of obedience.... God, from the beginning, imposed a law upon man -- for the purpose of maintaining the right due to Himself....

"At the time of which we speak, a precept was given to man. Whence he might know that God ruled over him.... Our life will then be ordered rightly, if we obey God -- and if His will be the regulator of all our affections.... By denouncing punishment, He strikes terror -- for the purpose of confirming the authority of the law....

"Man fell. He was, in every respect, happy.... He would have passed into Heaven, without death.... Death...is now a terror to us.... There is a kind of annihilation, as it respects the body.... The soul feels the curse of God.

"We must also see what is the cause of death -- namely, alienation from God.... How was it, that God threatened death to Adam on the day in which he should touch the fruit -- when he long deferred the punishment" some 930 years (Genesis 5:5)? "Adam was consigned to death, and death began its reign in him!"

In his *Institutes* III:2:7, Calvin adds: "The heart of man is not brought to faith by every Word of God. We must still consider what it is, that faith properly has respect to in the Word. The declaration of God to Adam was, '*You shall surely die!*' (Genesis 2:17).... It is the office of faith -- to assent to the truth of God whenever, whatever, and in whatever way He speaks."

Adam had been ordered by God in '*the garden to Eden, to dress it and to keep it*' or to guard it (Genesis 2:15). Very soon, Adam would stop keeping it -- and let Satan into the garden. And in the next two verses, God warned Adam: '*Of every tree of the garden, you may freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it! For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die!*' (Genesis 2:16-17).

Finally, in his *Psychopannychia*, Calvin remarks "that the soul, though endowed with immortality, lapsed into sin -- and thereby sank.... This was the appointed punishment for sin, as denounced to our first parents -- '*Dying, you shall die!*' (Genesis 2:17)."

That dying would start immediately in the soul. But in the body, it would take 930 years to become accomplished (Genesis 5:5). Yes, God would still save man. Nevertheless, God also said: '*You shall surely die!*'

'The serpent...said: "Yes, has God said 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" And the woman said..., 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said "You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it -- lest you die!'" But the serpent said to the woman, 'You shall not surely die!'" Genesis 3:1-4.

Here, there are five untruths! First, God had not said 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'; God had said, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat!' Second, God had not said to either the man or the woman that they 'may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden'; God had said to the man 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat!' Third, God had not forbidden man to touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; but the woman told the serpent 'God has said "You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it!'" Fourth, the woman told the serpent: 'God has said "You shall not eat of it..., lest you die!"; whereas God had told the man: 'In the day you eat of it, you shall surely die!' And fifth, God has said 'You shall surely die!'; whereas the serpent said to the woman, 'You shall not surely die!'"

Clearly, the devil inside that serpent was a liar from the beginning (John 8:44)! As Calvin comments: "Satan perverted to his own deceitful purposes, the gift...imparted to the serpent.... Men were deceived by the serpent.... The serpent was only the mouth of the devil. For not the serpent but the devil is declared to be 'the father of lies'...."

"The Prophets...saw Satan to be the real enemy of the human race, the contriver of all evils, furnished with every kind of fraud and villany.... Moses describes Satan, the prince of iniquity, under the person of his...instrument.... The principle of evil with which Satan was endued, was not from nature -- but from defection. Because he had departed from God the Fountain of justice...."

"Adam was not created to those multiplied miseries under which all his posterity suffer.... He fell into them by his own fault.... The serpent was not eloquent by nature. But when Satan by divine permission procured it as a fit instrument for his use -- he uttered words also by its tongue.... Nor do I doubt that Eve perceived it to be extraordinary.... The craftiness of Satan betrays itself in this, that he does not directly assail the man -- but approaches him...in the person of his wife."

Satan said to her: 'Can it be, that God should forbid the eating of any tree whatever?'.... Under the pretext of inquiring into the cause, he would indirectly weaken her confidence in the Word!.... He wished to inject into the woman a doubt which might induce her to believe that not to be the Word of God.... Satan...insinuated that all the trees had been forbidden.... Satan now springs forward more boldly.... He dares to exalt himself petulantly and with proud confidence against God.... He now, seizing upon Eve's doubt, penetrates further -- so that he may turn it into a direct negative.... He now...openly accuses God of falsehood. For he asserts that the Word, by which death was denounced, is false and delusive!"

God said: 'You shall surely die!' Satan said: "You shall not die!" Whom do you believe?

'God said to the serpent...: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed. He shall crush your skull; but you shall nick His heel!'" Genesis 3:14-15.

Calvin commented: "The serpent is said to have done what the devil did by its means.... God...severely avenged the destruction of man.... Much less did he spare Satan, the author of the whole evil....

"He (the serpent) who had exalted himself against the image of God, was to be thrust back.... I now throw you back again, to the place from which you have attempted to emerge'....

"The Lord...does not permit Satan to touch (man), except in the heel -- while He subjects the head of the serpent to be wounded.... Thus God leaves...dominion to man.... Men would...proudly triumph.... It became necessary to promise them, in their posterity, victory over Satan.... So that they may contend against him with the assured confidence of victory!....

"To show that He would be odious not only to one generation, God expressly says '*between you (Satan) and the seed of the woman*'.... Victory is promised to the human race, through a continual succession of ages.... The human race which Satan was endeavouring to oppress, would at length be victorious....

"The whole Church of God, under its Head (Jesus Christ), will glorious exult over him (Satan). To this, the declaration of Paul refers: '*The Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly!*' (Romans 16:20)."

In his *Institutes* (I:14:16 & II:13:2), Calvin adds: "This trial...is common to all the children of God. But as the promise of bruising Satan's head (Genesis 3:15) applies alike to Christ and to all His members -- I deny that believers can ever be oppressed or vanquished by him....

"Moses (Genesis 3:15)...says that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent.... The words there used, refer not to Christ alone -- but to the whole human race. Since the victory was to be obtained for us by Christ. God declares generally, that the posterity of the woman would overcome the devil.... From this it follows, that Christ is a descendant of the human race. The purpose of God in thus addressing Eve, being to raise her hopes!"

On Golgotha, the place of the skull -- Satan's skull would be crushed. There, Christ's heel would only be nicked. Yes, Christ would then die -- as a result of being poisoned by the serpent's venom, when He atoned on the cross for the sins of His elect. But shortly thereafter, He would rise from the dead forever -- and leave the dying serpent there, all crushed unto death.

O aging Christian, be encouraged! Yes, you too will die. But you shall also rise again -- which Satan shall never do. Rather a nicked heel, than a crushed skull!

God said to Adam: *'Because you have hearkened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you saying "You shall not eat of it!" -- cursed is the ground for your sake! In sorrow you shall eat of it, all the days of your life.... You shall eat the herb of the field!'* Genesis 3:17-18.

Commented Calvin: "Punishment was not inflicted upon the first of our race, so as to rest on those two alone. But was extended generally to all their posterity. In order that we might know that the human race was cursed in their person.... They were subjected only to temporal punishment -- so that, from the moderation of the divine anger, they might entertain hope of pardon....

"After He had briefly spoken of Adam's sin, He announced that the earth would be cursed for his sake. The ancient interpreter has translated it, 'In your work'.... God withdraws His favour.... Through the son of man, punishment would overflow the earth.... The ruin of man drives headlong all those creatures which were formed for his sake and had been made subject to him....

"Properly speaking, this whole punishment is exacted not from the earth itself, but from man alone. For the earth does not bear fruit for itself, but in order that food may be supplied to us out of its bowels.... Although (as David says) the earth is still full of the mercy of God (Psalm 33:5) -- yet at the same time appear manifest signs of His dreadful alienation from us....

"Lest sadness and horror should overwhelm us, the Lord sprinkles everywhere the tokens of His goodness.... If what remains behind be considered in itself, David truly and properly exclaims: *'The earth is full of the mercy of God'....*

"By *'eating of the earth,'* Moses means 'eating of the fruits' which proceed from it. The Hebrew word...*itsabon*...is rendered 'pain.' (It) is also taken for 'trouble' and 'fatigue'.... It stands in antithesis with the pleasant labour in which Adam previously so employed himself....

"In that labour, there had been sweet delight. Now, servile work is enjoined upon him -- as if he were condemned to the mines! And yet, the asperity of this punishment also is mitigated by the clemency of God. Because something of enjoyment is blended with the labours of men, lest they should be altogether ungrateful....

"By the increasing wickedness of men, the remaining blessing of God is gradually diminished and impaired.... 'You shall eat the herb of the field' are expounded too strictly...by those who think that Adam was thereby deprived of all the fruits which he had before been permitted to eat.

God intends nothing more than that he (man) should be to such an extent deprived of his former delicacies, as to be compelled to use in addition to them the herbs.... As if it had been said: 'Although the earth which ought to be the mother of good fruits only, be covered with thorns and briars -- still it shall yield to you sustenance.'" By eating, in sorrow, the herb of the field!

'In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread till you return to the ground from which you were taken. For you are dust; and to dust you shall return!' Genesis 3:19.

Commented Calvin: "By '*sweat*,' is understood hard labour...; full of fatigue and weariness which...produces sweat.... This...belongs to all.... Nevertheless..., labour is not imposed equally on each.... They who meekly submit to their sufferings, present to God an acceptable obedience -- if indeed there be joined with this bearing of the cross, that knowledge of sin which may teach them to be humble.... The faithful, the more they labour in procuring a livelihood -- with the greater advantage are they stimulated to repentance....

"God often remits a portion of this curse -- to His Own children. Lest they should sink beneath the burden.... *'Some will rise early and go late to rest; they will eat the bread of carefulness. But the Lord will give sleep to His beloved!'* (Psalm 127:2).... Those things which had been polluted in Adam, are repaired by the grace of Christ. The pious feel more deeply that God is good, and enjoy the sweetness of His paternal indulgence....

"Because even in the best, the flesh is to be subdued -- it not unfrequently happens that the pious themselves are worn down.... We, being admonished by the miseries of...life, should weep over our sins and seek...relief from the grace of Christ which...mingles its own sweetness with it....

"In chastising the faithful, God does not consider what they deserve -- but what will be useful to them in future." He "fulfils the office of a physician, rather than of a judge.... That He nevertheless 'punishes' those who are received into favour -- is to be regarded as a kind of chastisement which serves as medicine for future time -- but ought not properly to be regarded as the vindictive punishment for sin committed."

God still graciously assures us: *'You shall eat bread!'* And Christ tells Christians to pray: *'Give us, this day, our daily bread!'* (Matthew 6:11).

'Yet you are dust; and to dust you shall return!' "The death of Adam had commenced immediately from the day of his transgression. For this accursed life of man, could be nothing else than the beginning of death.... In Adam himself, nothing but death will be found. Yet, in this way -- he is urged to seek a remedy, in Christ!

"The declaration of Paul is clear.... *'All die in Adam -- as they (the believers) shall rise again in Christ'* (First Corinthians 15:22).... We dread death, because dissolution...cannot naturally be desired. Truly, the first man would have passed to a better life, had he remained upright.... There would have been no separation of the soul from the body; no corruption."

Now, however, under sin: 'You are dust; and unto dust you shall return!' But after that, all true believers rise again in Christ -- for ever!

'Then Adam called his wife's name "Eve" (or Chaavah, meaning 'Life'). Because she was the mother of all living' -- and no longer (as "Death" or Mooth alias Th^emoowthaah) of all the dying!
Genesis 3:20.

Comments Calvin: "There are two ways in which this may be read. The former, in the pluperfect tense, 'Adam had called.' If we follow this reading, the sense of Moses will be that Adam had been greatly deceived in promising life to himself and to his posterity, from a wife whom he afterwards found by experience to be the introducer of death....

"If, however, we read the passage in the preterite tense, it may be understood either in a good or bad sense. There are those who think that Adam, animated by the hope of a more happy condition -- because God had promised that the head of the serpent would be wounded by the seed of the woman -- called her by a name implying life." For 'Eve' translates the Hebrew *Chaavah* -- meaning: 'Life.'

"This would be a noble and even heroic fortitude of mind. Since he could not, without an arduous and difficult struggle, deem her 'the mother of the living' -- who, before any man could have been born, had involved all in eternal destruction.

"But...let the reader consider whether Moses did not design rather to tax Adam with thoughtlessness. Who -- being himself immersed in death -- yet gave to his wife so proud a name" as 'Life!'

"Nevertheless, I do not doubt that when he heard the declaration of God concerning the prolongation of life, he began again to breathe and to take courage.... As one revived(!), he gave his wife (Eve) a name derived from 'life.'

"I therefore thus expound the passage (as follows). As soon as he had escaped present death -- being encouraged by a measure of consolation -- he celebrated that divine benefit which beyond all expectation he had received in the name he gave his wife."

The Hebrew word *Chaavah*, Eve, is in the (270 B.C.) Septuagint rendered *Zoeee* -- 'Life.' Adam comforted himself in his wife, because he would through Eve produce a posterity in which -- as parents in their children -- they would permanently be victorious!

So, my older Christians, as death draws ever nearer -- let us remember that even the fallen Adam, on his way to death, did not give that name to his fallen wife! For he realized that by God's great grace, he and his family were now among the living rather than among the dying.

So he '*called his wife's name "Eve"*' (or *Chaavah*, meaning 'Life'). Because, even after the fall, she was indeed 'the mother of all living!'

'Unto Adam also, and to his wife, the Lord God made coats of skins -- and clothed them. And the Lord God said: 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil!' But now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live for ever -- therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he had been taken. So He drove out the man!' Genesis 3:21-24.

Commented Calvin: "Adam and his wife...put some (animals) to death, in order to cover themselves with their skins -- having been divinely directed to adopt this counsel.... Moses calls God the Author of it...."

"The (Triune) Lord God said: *"Behold, the man has become like one of Us!"*" Calvin commented: "Adam, not content with his condition, had tried to ascend higher than was lawful.... In future, he be debarred from the fruit of the tree of life!..."

"There never was any intrinsic efficacy in the tree.... He (the fallen Adam) was bereft of his former delicacies. Yet, he was still supplied with some kind of food. He was excommunicated from the tree of life. But a new remedy was offered him in sacrifices." And in his 'daily bread!'

In his *Institutes* II:1:4 & IV:14:12, Calvin added: "The promise which gave him (Adam) hope of eternal life as long as he should eat of the true of life..., meant to prove and exercise his faith.... He (God) deprives Adam of the gift of immortality, and expels him from the garden -- *'lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and live for ever'* (Genesis 3:22)...."

"What is this we hear? Could that fruit have restored Adam to the immortality from which he had already fallen? By no means! It is just as if He had said: Lest he indulge in vain confidence, if allowed to retain the symbol of My promise -- let that be withdrawn, which might give him some hope of immortality!"

'Therefore the Lord God sent him forth' -- by ejecting and driving man out of the garden by force (*gaaresh*). Here, Moses partly prosecutes what he had said concerning the punishment inflicted on man -- and partly celebrates the goodness of God, by which the rigour of His judgment was mitigated. God mercifully softens the exile of Adam, by still providing for him a remaining home on earth.... Adam thence infers that the Lord has some care for him, which is a proof of paternal love!....

"It was the determination of God, altogether to exclude man from the garden -- so that he might seek life elsewhere.... We, conscious of our own infirmity, may not attempt without assistance to soar to Heaven.... Symbols...were ordained, so that the faithful...might themselves rise toward Heaven" -- through the sacraments, and by the grace of God in Christ alone!

How, then, are we sinners now to 'live for ever?' By God's grace, while we 'till the ground!'

'In process of time (or 'at the end of days'), it came to pass that Cain brought, of the fruit of the ground, an offering to the Lord. But Abel...brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of its (best) fat. And the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering!' Genesis 4:3f.

Calvin comments Cain and Abel "followed a kind of life in itself holy and laudable.... The cultivation of the earth was commanded by God; and the labour of feeding sheep was not less.... They had been well instructed by their father (Adam). The rite of sacrificing, more fully confirms this.... It proves that they had been accustomed to the worship of God....

"The first men...had been deprived..., when they were prohibited from the tree of life.... Yet had been so deprived of it, only so that a hope of salvation was still left to them -- of which they had the signs in sacrifices.... The Apostle (Hebrews 11:4) refers the dignity of Abel's accepted sacrifice, to faith. It follows...he had not offered it without the command of God."

Hebrews 11:4 states: *'By faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he (Abel) obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts. And by it, he (Abel) being dead, yet keeps on speaking.'*

Calvin comments: "The sacrifice of Abel was more acceptable than that of his brother, only because it was sanctified by **faith**.... The fat of brute beasts did not smell so pleasantly, that it was able to please God by its odour.... The words of Moses are, '*God had respect to Abel and to his gifts.*' From which we may readily conclude that his sacrifice pleased God, because he himself was pleasing to God. Where did his pleasing come from..., than that he had a heart purified by faith?....

"It is also a matter of faith, that God bore witness of his concern for Abel no less after his death than in his life. In saying that although he is dead he still speaks..., it was an especial evidence of God's love toward him that God was concerned for him in death.... From this it is clear, that he was thought of as one of the saints of God whose death is precious to Him."

On Genesis 4:2f, Calvin's comment continues: "God has always been like himself.... He deemed those sacrifices of the first age acceptable.... They had spiritually been offered to Him.... The command respecting sacrifice, was given to the fathers from the beginning....

"The Jews foolishly imagine...the oblations of Cain were unacceptable, because he defrauded God of the full ears of corn.... (But even) the strong scent of burning fat, could not conciliate the divine favour to the sacrifices of Abel.... Being pervaded by the good odour of faith, they had a sweet-smelling savour." As Calvin remarks in his *Institutes* III:14:8, "*the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering*' (Genesis 4:4).... Respect to Abel, before He had respect to his works."

All this occurred '*at the end of the days*' (*miqqeets yaamiym*). That also points forward as to how we too should serve the Lord -- at the end of our days. Not by mere rote, but by faith!

'The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry?... If you do well -- shall you not be accepted?... Sin lies at the door!.... It desires you!".... (But) Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him.' Genesis 4:6-8.

Cain was angry that God accepted Abel's faithful offering, but not his own. Calvin comments: "He does not consider that through his own fault, he had failed" -- faithlessly! "Referring to sacrifices..., God will accept them -- when rightly offered.... Cain could have no greater adversary, than that sin of his which he inwardly cherished.... Abel...was...a diligent worshipper of God. But (Cain) the first-born, worshipped God negligently.... (So) Cain was admonished of his duty....

"Cain...did not keep his malignant feelings within his own breast.... He broke forth in accusation against his brother.... He deferred vengeance."

'When they were in the field..., Cain rose up against Abel...and slew him.' Comments Calvin: "This single deed of guilt clearly shows where Satan will hurry men, when they harden their mind in wickedness. So that in the end, their obstinacy is worthy of the utmost extremes of punishment."

In his *Institutes* II:5:16, Calvin remarks: "The purpose of God, (was) to point out the injustice of the envy which Cain had conceived against his brother. And this He does in two ways. By showing first that it was vain to think he (Cain) could by means of wickedness surpass his brother in the favour of God, by Whom nothing is esteemed but righteousness. And secondly, how ungrateful he was for the kindness he had already received, in not being able to bear with a brother" whose sacrifice God had accepted.

"God...speaks of sin.... His words (that Cain should rule over his evil desire) contain either an order or a promise. If an order..., this is no proof of man's ability. If a promise -- where is the fulfilment of the promise, when Cain yielded to the sin over which he ought to have prevailed?"....

"The dominion spoken of, refers to (dominion over) sin.... Both the nature of the case and the rule of grammatical construction, require that it be regarded as a comparison between Cain and Abel. We think the only preference given to the younger brother, was -- that the elder made himself inferior, by his own wickedness."

As the Apostle John later remarked: *'Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.'* First John 3:12. Calvin comments: "Cain was driven to slay his brother, because his (Cain's) works were evil.... Where ungodliness rules, hatred occupies all the parts of life.... May we learn to bear it patiently, when the world hates us gratuitously and without just provocation!"

'Cain rose up against Abel..., and slew him.' Genesis 4:8. That was the first human death! Not Cain, but Abel would rise unto glory. And so too, when we believers thus rise!

"The Lord said to Cain: "Where is Abel, your brother?" And he (Cain) said: "I don't know! Am I my brother's keeper?".... And He said (to Cain): "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground!"" Genesis 4:9-10.

Calvin comments: "The instruction which Moses here intended to deliver..., (is) that God -- both by secret inspiration and by some extraordinary method -- cited the parricide to His tribunal.... Prodigious was the stupor of Cain who, having committed a crime so great -- ferociously rejected the reproof of God from Whose hand he was nevertheless unable to escape....

"Cain gained nothing by his tergiversation. God first inquired where his brother was. He now more closely urges him -- in order to extort an unwilling confession of his guilt....

"God both pronounces him guilty of the slaughter, and at the same time declares the heinousness of the crime.... We are warned by his example, that pretexts and subterfuges are heaped together in vain when sinners are cited to the tribunal of God....

"God first shows that He is cognizant of the deeds of men, though no one should complain of or accuse them. Secondly..., He holds the life of man too dear -- to allow innocent blood to be shed with impunity. Thirdly..., He cares for the pious not only while they live, but even after death....

"Abel was speechless when his throat was being cut, or in whatever other manner he was losing his life. But, after death, the voice of his blood was more vehement than any eloquence of the orator.

"Oppression and silence do not hinder God from judging the cause which the world supposes to be buried. This consolation affords us most abundant reason for patience, when we learn that we shall lose nothing of our right -- if we bear injuries with moderation and equanimity.... God will be so much the more ready to vindicate us, the more modestly we submit ourselves to endure all things. Because the placid silence of the soul raises effectual cries, which fill Heaven and Earth.

"Nor does this doctrine apply merely to the state of the present life -- to teach us that among the innumerable dangers by which we are surrounded, we shall be safe under the guardianship of God. But it elevates us by the hope of a better life. Because we must conclude that those for whom God cares, shall survive after death....

"God will show that innocent blood has not been mute.... He has not said in vain, *'the death of the saints is precious in His eyes'* (Psalm 116:15) This doctrine bring relief to the faithful, lest they should be too anxious concerning their life over which they learn that God continually watches. So does it vehemently thunder against the ungodly, who...scruple wickedly to injure and to destroy those whom God has undertaken to preserve."

For the voice and the blood (of the innocently slain), cry out from the ground!

'Cain said to the Lord: 'My punishment is greater than I can bear!.... Today, You have driven me out from the face of the Earth! And from Your face, I shall be hidden! And I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the Earth!.... It shall come to pass, that everyone who finds me, shall slay me!''

Calvin comments: "*My punishment is greater than I can bear'*...is the language of desperation. Because Cain, confounded by the judgment of God, had no remaining hope of pardon.... The reprobate are never conscious of their evils till a ruin, from which they cannot escape, overtakes them.... Even Judas confesses his sin; but, overwhelmed with fear -- flies as far as possible from the presence of God....

"Reprobates have no medium" and no Mediator. "When the anger of God presses upon them, they are broken -- rather than corrected.... Their fear stuns them, so that they can think of nothing but of Hell and eternal destruction....

"A greater punishment...is imposed upon me than I can bear!.... Cain, although he does not excuse his sin..., yet complains of the "intolerable severity"(?!) of his judgment.... The reprobate, however clearly they may be convicted, make no end of storming!....

"No corner of the earth should be left him (Cain) by God, in which he might quietly repose. For, being excluded from the common rights of mankind so as to be no more reckoned among the legitimate inhabitants of the Earth, he declares that he is cast out from the face of the Earth and therefore shall become a fugitive because the Earth will deny him a habitation....

"To be 'hidden from the face of God,' is to be not regarded by God -- or not protected by His guardian care. This confession also which God extorted from the impious murderer, is a proof that there is no peace for men unless they acquiesce in the providence of God and are persuaded that their lives are the object of His care.... How wretched...is the instability of the wicked who know that not a foot of earth is granted to them by God!....

"He is no longer covered by the protection of God. He concludes that he shall be exposed to injury and violence from all men. And he reasons justly!....

"They have spoken prudently who have said not only that our life hangs on a thread, but also that we have been received into this fleeting life out of the womb from a hundred deaths. Cain, however..., not only considers himself as deprived of God's protection, but also supposes all creatures to be divinely armed to take vengeance against his impious murder.... He so greatly fears for his life, from any one who may meet him.... The meeting with any man, was formidable to the murderer!"

However, we believers who get old without murdering anyone, can be assured of God's protection to the very end of our life. If we faithfully trust the Lord to keep on taking care of us -- there should be no fear of death!

'Male and female, He created them; and blessed them -- and called their name "Adam"...when they were created.. And Adam lived 130 years, and begat a son...called...Seth. And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth, were 800 years.... All the days that Adam lived, were 930 years. And he died.' Genesis 5:2-5.

Calvin commented: "*Male and female, He created them.*" This clause commends the sacred bond of marriage, and the inseparable union of the husband and the wife.... Moses has mentioned only **one**.... He assigns a common name ('Adam') indiscriminately to both....

"Posterity might learn more sacredly to cherish this connection between each other, when they saw that their first parents were denominated as one person.... He (Moses) records the blessing pronounced upon them -- so that we may observe in it the wonderful kindness of God in continuing to grant it....

"Moses traces the offspring of Adam only through the line of Seth, to propose for our consideration the succession of the Church.... He refers in part to the first origin of our nature. At the same time, its corruption and pollution is to be noticed which -- having been contracted by Adam through the fall -- has flowed down to all his posterity.

"If he (Adam) has remained upright, he would have transmitted to all his children what he had received.... Now, we read that Seth...was born a sinner; he was renewed by the grace of the Spirit....

"Through six successive ages, when the family of Seth had grown into a great people -- the voice of Adam might daily resound in order to renew the memory of the creation, the fall, and the punishment of man. To testify of the hope of salvation!...

"After his death, his sons might indeed deliver as from hand to hand what they had learned -- to their descendants. But far more efficacious would be the instruction from the mouth of him (Adam) who had himself been the eye-witness of all these things....

"And he (Adam) died".... Death was not in vain denounced against men.... We are now exposed to the curse to which man was doomed -- unless we obtain deliverance elsewhere!

"In the meantime, we must reflect upon our lamentable condition.... The image of God being destroyed, or at least obliterated in us -- we scarcely retain the faint shadow of a life, from which we are hastening to death....

"It is useful, in a picture of so many ages, to behold at one glance the continual course and tenor of divine vengeance.... To nothing are we more prone, than to dream of immortality on Earth -- unless death is frequently brought before our eyes." Thus Adam's generations, before he died

'Jared lived 162 years, and he begot Enoch.... And Enoch lived 65 years, and begot Methuselah.... Enoch walked with God after he begot Methuselah.... All the days of Enoch, were 365 years. And Enoch walked with God.... He was not, for God took him.' Genesis 5:18-24.

Calvin commented: "Enoch is honoured with peculiar praise.... He '*walked with God.*' Yet, both Seth and Enoch, and Cainan and Mahalaleel and Jared were then living" -- and all pious.

"Notice the brief description of a holy life contained in the words: '*Enoch walked with God*'.... The Spirit of God had established a rule of living well and rightly.... One man...stood firmly, in the season of most dreadful dissipation.... Enoch, lest he should be drawn aside by the corruptions of men, had respect to God alone....

"*And he was not; for God took him*'.... Something extraordinary is here pointed out.... Moses plainly declares that Enoch was taken out of the world by an unusual mode, and was received by the Lord.... Enoch, in the middle period of life, suddenly and in an unexampled method vanished from the sight of men -- because the Lord took him away....

"In the 'translation' of Enoch, an example of immortality was exhibited.... God designed to elevate the minds of his saints with certain faith before their death.... They would know that a better life was elsewhere laid up for them.

"It is, however, remarkable that Adam himself was deprived of this support...of comfort.... It was not till about 150 years after his death, that the 'translation' of Enoch took place -- which was to be as a visible representation of a blessed resurrection....

"There was, in the 'translation' of Enoch, an instruction of all the godly -- that they should not keep their hope confined within the boundaries of this mortal life.... He was taken to a better abode.... He was received into a heavenly country.... His transition was by a peculiar privilege -- such as that of other men would have been, if they had remained in their first state." Namely the state of Adam before his fall.

"Death is not always the separation of the soul from the body.... Such will be the 'death' of those who will be found surviving, at the last day."

In Hebrews 11:5, we read that '*Enoch was "translated" so he should not see death.*' Calvin commented: "It happened as a benefit of his faith.... Enoch was '*translated*'...as an outstanding sign by which all might see how dear he was to God.... His being snatched away without death, showed clearly the hand of God from Heaven.... It was the result of faith.... He walked with God!"

Yes, Enoch walked with God for 365 years -- the number of days in a year. May we too walk with God every day of our life, and in all of our years!

'Enoch...begot Methuselah.... And Methuselah lived 187 years, and begot Lamech. And Methuselah lived, after he begot Lamech, 782 years -- and begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Methuselah were 969 years; and he died.' Genesis 5:21-27.

Methuselah was the oldest man who ever lived -- 969 years! His father Enoch the Sethite never died. Methuselah's son, Lamech the Sethite, begot the godly Noah -- and lived but 777 years.

Methuselah died in the very year of Noah's Flood. Seeing both his father Enoch was godly; and his son Lamech as well as his grandson Noah were godly -- it is unlikely Methuselah, a child of the covenant, died in or after the commencement of Noah's Flood.

He probably died right before the Flood commenced, before the 17th day of the second month of that year (Genesis 7:11). For Lamech lived 182 years, and begot a son and...called his name Noah -- saying: *'This one shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord has cursed'* (Genesis 5:28-39).

Methuselah grew old, watching Noah build the ark for more than a century (Genesis 5:32 & 6:3 & 7:11). In fact, he may well have helped his grandson Noah to build the ark. But Methuselah died, just before he could enter it.

Methuselah apparently means 'man of a dart.' And indeed, it seems he certainly moved like a dart in helping to raise his grandson Noah -- and probably also in helping him build the ark.

Some translate Methuselah's name 'man of the javelin.' And his life certainly represents a long throw like a javelin -- at a time when humanity itself was becoming full of violence!

Too, Methuselah transmitted much of the character of his father Enoch, who *'walked with God'* -- to his grandson Noah, who did the same (Genesis 5:22 & 6:9). Yet his life here on Earth was not shortened like his father Enoch's, but instead perhaps full of difficulty and sorrow.

And after 969 years here on Earth, Methuselah still died apparently before the Flood -- and never entered into the ark, the construction of which he had carefully witnessed. What a pity!

Or was that a pity? For Methuselah died and went straight into the very presence of God, right before the Flood commenced. But surely, that was better than to live here on Earth yet longer -- and to have had to have put up with all those smelly animals for a full extra year, inside the ark?

So we too, after a long life here on Earth, may not quite live long enough to enjoy the company of our descendants inside an earthly place of refuge -- but instead, go straight to Heaven. Thus did Methuselah, the oldest man who ever lived!

'Methuselah lived...and begat Lamech.... And Lamech lived 182 years, and begot a son. And he called his name "Noah" -- saying, "This one shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands!".... And Lamech lived, after begetting Noah, 595 years -- and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Lamech were 777 years. And he died.' Genesis 5:25-31.

Lamech called his son's name 'Noah.' Commented Calvin: "In the Hebrew language..., *noach* signifies 'to give rest'...; *naacham*, to comfort. The name 'Noah' is derived from the former verb....

"Lamech says: '*This same [Noah] shall comfort us, concerning our work*'.... There is no doubt that he promises to himself an alleviation or solace of his labours.... Whence he had conceived such hope from a son, whose disposition he could not yet have discerned."

Prophetically, Lamech already gave the answer to the question. He named the son born to him, 'Noah.' For by that name, Lamech indicated that this one would console us in our work and the toil of our hands.

Calvin continued: "The Jews do not judge erroneously, in declaring Lamech's expression to be a prophecy.... In the expression '*the toil of our hands*'..., under one kind of toil he (Lamech) comprises the whole miserable state into which mankind had fallen.... No mitigation of the penalty could be hoped for, unless the Lord should bring unexpected succour....

"The name was not rashly given to Noah.... Lamech hoped for something rare and unwonted from his son.... Something great was promised, concerning his son."

Lamech had already reached the ripe old age of 182, when Noah arrived. Yet Lamech did not die as soon as this promised son Noah was born to him. For Lamech still lived another 595 years after he begot Noah, . And he begot other sons and daughters.

It's a great thing to have many sons and daughters -- even if all conceived in one's old age! '*And all the days of Lamech, were 777. Then he died.*'

Think of it, though! The godly Lamech had a long life. He lived not just seven years. Nor seventy years. Nor seventy-seven years. Nor seven hundred years. Nor seven hundred and seventy years. But fully seven hundred and seventy-seven years.

That's as much as the perfect number seven (Genesis 2:2-4). Multiplied tenfold, to seventy. Then again multiplied tenfoldly, to seven hundred. Then to have another seventy added to that, making seven hundred and seventy years. And finally, to have yet a further seven years added to that -- making fully seven hundred and seventy-seven years!

Thus the 777-year life of Noah's father. May we too, in our old age, gladly count our years!

'It came to pass...that the sons of God saw the daughters of men...were fair.... They took them wives...whom they chose.... There were giants (or "fallen ones") on the Earth.... Also after that, when the sons of God came to the daughters of men, and they bare children to them. The same became mighty men..., men of renown.... God saw that the wickedness of man was great.... The thoughts of his heart was only evil, continually.... But Noah found grace!' Genesis 6:1-8.

Calvin commented: "This narration must be traced to an earlier period than the 500th year of Noah.... The language used..., refers...to a time of repentance...granted to the...world....

"*'There were giants in the earth'....* The Hebrew noun...*n^ephilym*...is known to be from the verb...*naaphal* -- which is 'to fall'.... These robbers, brought destruction and desolation....

"There were also others from among that promiscuous offspring, which was produced when the sons of God mingled themselves with the daughters of men.... The holy seed was defiled by the same corruption....

"They who first exercised tyranny or power in the world, together with an excessive licentiousness and an unbridled lust of dominion, had begun from this race... The mind of those..., was...thoroughly imbued with iniquity!....

"It grew worse and worse, as time advanced.... The inveterate depravity which the children...received..., (was) transmitted from their parents.... 'But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.'

"This...signifies that God was propitious to him, and favoured him.... Men infer with futile subtlety that if men find grace in God's sight, it is because they seek it by their own industry and merits.... Noah is declared to have been acceptable to God.... Whence, however, did he attain this integrity -- but from the prevenient grace of God?....

"This favour was gratuitous mercy! Afterwards, the Lord having once embraced him, retained him under His Own hand -- lest he should perish with the rest of the world!"

In his *Institutes* II:2:25 & I:17:12, Calvin states "the Holy Spirit...distinctly declares that '*every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*' (Genesis 6:5).... God...repented of having made man (Genesis 6:6)."

Yet '*Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord!*' (Genesis 6:8). Noah, and his whole family (Genesis 6:18).

Let us too remember, also in our old age, that God is gracious to His elect and their family. Even at a time of great wickedness. For God destroyed the wicked. But He saved Noah!

'Noah found grace.... Noah walked with God.... The Earth...was corrupt before God, and the Earth was filled with violence.... God looked at the Earth, and...it was corrupt.... All flesh had corrupted its way on the Earth.... And God said...: "The end of all flesh has come before Me. For the Earth is filled with violence.... I will destroy...the Earth!"' Genesis 6:8-13.

Calvin commented: "*Noah found grace*'.... One man was found whom God -- when He had determined to destroy the whole world -- would yet preserve. He briefly describes what kind of person he was....

He was just and upright among the men of his age.... The word *tamiym*...is of the same force as 'upright' or 'sincere'; and is opposed to what is deceitful, pretended, and vain.... If...we desire to be approved by God and accounted righteous before Him, we must not only regulate our hands and eyes and feet in obedience to His Law. But integrity of heart is above all things required, and holds the chief place in the true definition of righteousness.... They are called 'just' and 'upright' who are not in every respect perfect and in whom there is no defect, but who cultivate righteousness purely....

"God does not act towards His Own people with the rigour of justice, as requiring of them a life according to the perfect rule of the Law.... If only no hypocrisy reigns within them, but the pure love of rectitude flourishes and fills their hearts -- He pronounces them according to His clemency to be righteous....

It was a remarkable instance of constancy, that Noah -- being surrounded on every side with the filth of iniquity -- should hence have contracted no contagion.... The singular virtue of Noah is here commended. So let us remember that we are instructed what we ought to do, though the whole world were rushing to its own destruction....

"Dreadful was the confusion in the time of Noah, when he had not even one associate in the worship of God and in the pursuit of holiness! If he could bear up against the corruptions of the whole world, and against such constant and vehement assaults of iniquity, no excuse is left for us -- unless with equal fortitude of mind we prosecute a right course through innumerable obstacles.... He had '*walked with God*'.... He may fix all his thoughts on God, and make Him the sole Arbiter of his life....

"Equity being extinct, all men had plunged into sin.... He declares that the love of oppression; that frauds, injuries, rapines; and all kinds of injustice prevailed.... '*The Earth is filled with violence*'.... God intimates that men were to be taken away, in order that the Earth...might be purified. Moreover, in speaking only of the iniquity and violence, of the frauds and rapines of which they were guilty towards each other -- he does it...because this was a more gross and palpable demonstration of their wickedness."

The end of all flesh was near! But Noah found grace -- and so he walked with God!

'The Flood was upon the Earth.... Noah, and Shem and Ham and Japheth the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, entered into the ark.... The waters increased.... And all flesh died that moved upon the Earth -- both of fowl and of cattle and of beast and of every creeping thing...and every man.... And Noah alone remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.' Genesis 7:10-23.

Calvin commented: "The Deluge began about the time of Spring. *'The same day, were all the fountains of the great deep broken up'*.... Although the Lord burst open the flood-gates of the waters, yet He does not allow them to break forth in a moment so as immediately to overwhelm the Earth -- but causes the rain to continue.... For they who had so long scorned the patience of God, deserved to feel that they were gradually perishing under that righteous judgment of His....

"The whole human race was destroyed. But...Noah and his family escaped.... Peter teaches the Noah's deliverance from the universal Deluge was a figure of Baptism (First Peter 3:21). As if he had said the method of the salvation which we receive through Baptism, agrees with this deliverance of Noah. Since at this time also, the world is full of unbelievers as it was then -- therefore it is necessary for us to separate ourselves from the greater multitude, so that the Lord may snatch us from destruction....

"Noah, believing the promise of God -- gathered himself, his wife and his children together. So that...he might emerge out of death.... It is fitting we should renounce the world and die, in order that the Lord may quicken us by His Word. For nowhere else is there any security of salvation."

Peter expressly teaches us that what happened to Noah, concerns us too. *'In the days of Noah..., few -- that is, eight -- souls were saved, by water. The like figure (or antitype) of which, even baptism, does now save us too. Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Christ'* -- just as the water of the Flood then carried the ark, and baptized those within it by rain sprinkled from above. First Peter 3:20-21.

Over every child baptized, the Church recalls the memory of what God wrought in the terrible days of Noah, when every child of man was drowned and suffocated in the depth of the waters, and the ark of God saved only eight souls of all who had lived. *'God...did not spare the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a Preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly'* (Second Peter 2:5).

Finally, Noah and his household stood alone. Noah, who believed, escaped the Flood.. And so Noah comforts us. Comforts us, by showing us the Almightyness of God's grace! For all flesh was immersed and unbaptized, dying in the Flood, save the family of Noah!

Yes, all in that family were then adults. But if any in that family had then had babies, would they then have left those babies outside the ark -- to perish unbaptized, in immersion? Surely not!

'God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the Earth! And the fear and dread of you shall be upon every beast of the Earth...and upon all the fishes of the sea.... Every moving thing that lives, shall be meat for you...; but flesh with its life, which is its blood, you shall not eat.... Surely, your blood of your lives, I will require! At the hand of every beast, I will require it; and at the hand of man.... Whosoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in His image. But you -- be fruitful and multiply! Bring forth abundantly in the Earth, and multiply in it!' Genesis 9:1-7.

Calvin commented: "God blessed Noah and his sons. He does not simply mean that the favour of fruitfulness was restored.... But that...the new restitution of the world was revealed to them.... Those four men and their wives..., the Lord prescribes...their future condition of life.... They shall raise up mankind from death to life.... He directs His Word to men, in order that they may recover the lawful use of marriage...so that a progeny shall spring from them which shall diffuse itself through all regions of the Earth....

"After the fall of man, the beasts were endued with...ferocity. Yet some remains of that dominion over them which God had conferred on him in the beginning, were still left.... The same dominion shall continue.... The fact that oxen become accustomed to bear the yoke; that the wildness of horses is...subdued...to cause them to carry a rider...(and) to bear burdens; that cows give milk, and permit themselves to be milked; that sheep are mute under the hand of the shearer -- all these facts, are the result of this dominion!....

"The Lord...grants animals for food to men, so that they may eat their flesh.... God here does not bestow on men more than He had previously given.... They had before offered sacrifices to God, and were also permitted to kill wild beasts.... (Yet) if it be a savage and barbarous thing...to swallow down living flesh, men betray their brutality by eating blood....

"God so highly estimates our life (as men), that He will not permit murder to go unavenged.... They are deceived...who think that a political law simply for the punishment of homicides is here intended.... The punishment which the laws ordain, and which the judges execute, are founded on this divine sentence!.... God so threatens and denounces vengeance against the murderer, that He even arms the magistrate with the sword for the avenging of slaughter -- in order that the blood of men may not be shed with impunity....

"And you, be fruitful and multiply!" He again turns His discourse to Noah and his sons, exhorting them to the propagation of offspring. As if He would say: 'You see that I am intent upon cherishing and preserving mankind. Do you therefore also attend to it! At the same time, in commending to them the preservation of seed -- He deters them from murder, and from unjust acts of violence.'

So Noah's spared family was again to multiply! Ours too!

'Behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your seed after you, and with every living creature that is with you -- of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth.... This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you for perpetual generations -- I have set my (rain)bow in the cloud.... It shall be for a token of the covenant between Me and the Earth.... It shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the Earth -- that the (rain)bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you.... The everlasting covenant!' Genesis 9:9-16.

God had previously made His covenant with Noah and his family, before the **Flood** (Genesis 6:18). And even with Adam and his seed, before the **fall** (Hosea 6:7). Now, after the Flood, God re-establishes that covenant with Noah and his children.

Calvin comments: "So that the memory of the Deluge might not inspire them with new terrors as often as the sky were covered with clouds, lest the Earth should again be drowned -- this source of anxiety is taken away.... God, making His covenant with the sons of Noah, commands them to hope for the best.... It was not therefore a private covenant, confirmed with one family only -- but one which is common to all people, and which shall flourish in all ages to the end of the world...."

"The favour which the Lord promises, extends also to animals. Yet it is not in vain that He addresses Himself only to men.... We enjoy the sky and the air in common with the beasts, and draw the same vital breath. But it is no common privilege, that God directs His Word to us...."

"Here, three distinct steps are to be traced. First, God as in a matter of present concern makes a covenant with Noah and his family.... Secondly, he transmits his covenant to posterity..., so that as by continual succession the effect may reach to other ages.... Thirdly, He declares that He will be propitious also to brute animals -- so that the effect of the covenant towards them might be the preservation of their lives...without imparting to them sense and intelligence.... God promises salvation to a thousand generations [= 20,000 years!]...."

"A sign is added to the promise.... *'I have set my (rain)bow in the clouds.'* From these words, certain...have been induced to deny that there was any rainbow before the Deluge. Which is frivolous!.... The words of Moses do **not** signify that a (rain)bow was then formed, which did not previously exist.... The celestial arch which had before existed naturally, is here consecrated into a sign" -- *naathaththiy*, 'I **have** set'; not 'I **now** set'!

"Let this therefore be the meaning of the words 'As often as the rain shall alarm you, look upon the (rain)bow!'.... It shall...be to you a pledge of returning dryness. And thus it will then behoove you to stand with greater confidence, than under a clear and serene sky.... God...speaks after the manner of men, when He says that at the sight of the rainbow He will remember His covenant."

For the rainbow seals and signifies -- the covenant of life!

'And Noah...planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine.... Ham, the father of Canaan, saw..his father, and told his two brothers.... Noah awoke...and knew what his younger son (Ham) had done.... He said: "Cursed be Canaan -- a servant of servants he shall be to his brothers!" And he said: "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem -- but Canaan shall be his servant! God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem -- but Canaan shall be his servant!" And Noah lived after the flood, 350 years.... All the days of Noah were 950 years. And he died.' Genesis 9:24-29.

Calvin commented: "Some excuse might certainly be made for the holy man who, having completed his labour..., (was) exhilarated with wine... Ham, by reproachfully laughing at his father, betrays his own depraved and malignant disposition.... 'Noah awoke'.... Moses...introduces him speaking in the spirit of prophecy.

"The holy man (Noah)...perceived that the most abundant grace of God was destined for his son Shem.... The benediction of Shem would be divine.... The posterity of Japheth would at length be increased (into the Gentile Celts, Germans, Russians, Greeks and Spaniards [Genesis 10:2-5]).... 2000 years and some centuries more elapsed before the Gentiles...were gathered together in one faith.... This is done by the sweet and gentle voice of God, which He has uttered in the Gospel -- and this prophecy is still daily receiving its fulfilment.... Abraham was nearly fifty years old, when his ancestor Noah died.... His eyes of faith must have been exceedingly penetrating, which did not fail to behold afar off the grace of God in preserving the Church!"

The final fulfilment of Genesis 9:27 shall occur when God enlarges Japheth to dwell in the tents of Shem. Pages 49-53 from Rev. Professor Dr. Kuyper Sr.'s *Twelve Old Patriarchs* are here well worth quoting. There, he wrote: "Japheth has been enlarged! In order to summarize Japheth's generations, you would have to travel from the extreme south of India over the Himalayas throughout Asia and Europe and America.... Japheth was enriched by God -- with (special) grace....

"Japheth is the carrier (**also**) of common grace.... From Japheth came the nations of the Greeks and the Romans. From Japheth came the Germans and the Gauls. And everything too which happened in the course of centuries, to get power over nature and art and trade.... All of that, has flowed from the fountain of Japheth.... All that in the course of centuries is great and beautiful in the world of humanity, has been brought to pass. It still represents the glory of our civil life that God gave to Japheth. And God has worked in Japheth's descendants.... Only thus is your life healthy, according to God's ordinances.... Even in our days, one should not at all belatedly look down -- on what flows today in science and art from the fountain of Japheth....

"Shem has now left his own tents. The Jew no longer lives there, neither does the Muslim. We (Japhethites) have not gone and dwelt in his tents with Shem. But Shem has left his tents empty. And the Lord God then led Japheth into the tents of Shem. Japheth now lives in the tents of Shem -- in the hope that Shem too shall again, through God's grace, move back into his own tents" when Shem comes to Christ. All this was foreseen by Noah before he died at the age of 950 years!"

'Shem was 100 years old, and begot Arphaxad two years after the Flood. And Shem lived 500 years, after he begot Arphaxad.... Arphaxad lived 403 years after he begot Salah.... Salah lived 403 years after he begot Eber.... Eber lived 430 years after he begot Peleg.... Peleg lived 209 years after he begot Reu.... Reu lived 207 years after he begot Serug.... Serug lived 200 years after he begot Nahor.... Nahor lived 119 years after he begot Terah.... And Terah begot Abram..., and the days of Terah were 205 years -- and Terah died.' Genesis 11:10-32.

Quite a diminution of longevity, from the 603-year-old Shem to the 205-year-old Terah! Calvin commented: "*These are the generations of Shem'*.... Moses...combines with the names of the men, the term of their several lives - so that we might not be ignorant of the age of the world....

"God made His covenant with Abraham.... God bring it as a charge against the Jews, that their fathers Terah and Nahor served strange gods (Joshua 24:2).... Noah and his sons -- who had been eye-witness of the Deluge -- were yet living.... The father and grandfather of Abraham were apostates.... Yet, because the Church by the election of God was included in that race, and because God had some who worshipped Him in purity and who survived even to the time of Abraham, Moses deduces a continuous line of descent and thus enrolls them in the catalogue of saints....

"Abram, when he saw his father willingly obeying the calling of God, became in return the more obedient.... He (Abraham's father Terah) had left his country, a short time before his death.... Abram departed thence.... He had gone thither, already advanced in age."

As Kuyper too said in his *Twelve Old Patriarchs* (pages 42-45): "When Shem...was blessed by Noah, it was of Shem and not of Japheth that it was said: 'The Lord, that is Jehovah the God of the Covenant, is the God of Shem.' Japheth too would indeed be able to walk in the light of Jehovah, but only by moving into the tents of Shem....

"God called Abraham, the father of all believers, from the tribe of Shem.... Thus, Shem's whole significance for the centuries, runs forth into Abraham.... But just as Shem runs forth into Abraham..., so too everything in turn runs forth from Abraham into Christ.... The holy line runs forth from Shem into Abraham -- in order, from Abraham, to seek Christ.

"Shem means 'the Name.' In all Scripture, the Name of the Lord reveals Him. Christ bears the Name of His Father.... This does not concern Shem according to the flesh -- but the Name which he must interpret."

Since Abraham, who died at the age of 175 years (Genesis 25:7-8), our lifespan has now reduced to 70-80 years (Psalm 90:10). Thus, ever-shrinking lifespans after the Great Flood . Yet some may flourish like the palm tree, which bears good fruit even when 100 (Psalm 92:12)..

May we too then always serve the Lord. Even if we live only till we're 100 years old!

'Do not fear, Abram! I am your shield, and your exceedingly great reward!.... You shall go to your fathers in peace! You shall be buried, in a good old age!' Genesis 15:1-15.

Calvin commented: "God exhorts Abram to be of a tranquil mind.... God cares for us.... Learn to rest in His providence!.... *'I am your shield!'*.... Let us know that the same blessing is promised to us all!.... We ought to regard this promise as a brazen wall, so that we should not be excessively fearful in any dangers.... Men, surrounded with various and innumerable desires of the flesh, are at times unstable and are then too much addicted to the love of the present life.... God declares that He alone is sufficient for the perfection of a happy life to the faithful....

"We shall be truly happy, when God is propitious to us. For He not only pours upon us the abundance of His kindness, but offers Himself to us so that we may enjoy Him.... What is there more which men can desire, when they really enjoy God?.... The Lord calls Himself not simply 'a reward'; but an *'exceeding great reward!'* -- with which we ought to be more than sufficiently contented. This truly furnishes most abundant material and most solid support for confidence. For whosoever shall be fully persuaded that his life is protected by the hand of God..., can never be miserable while God is gracious to him!....

"You shall go to your fathers in peace!" Hitherto, the Lord had respect to the posterity of Abram as well as to himself.... But now, He turns His address to Abram alone.... He would die in peace, after he had attained the utmost limit of old age.... Abram would have not only a long but a placid old age, with a corresponding joyful and peaceful death.... Although through his whole life Abram was to be deprived of the possession of the land, yet he would not be wanting...quiet and joy. So that, having happily finished his life, he would cheerfully depart to his fathers....

"Peace in death, ought justly to be regarded as a singular benefit.... They who live justly and holily, are attended by a sweet hope -- cherishing their hearts and nourishing their old age.... The poet, when he asserts that hope is the reward of a good conscience, calls it 'the nurse of old age'....

"The old are admonished...seriously to reflect that they must depart.... Unless the hope of a better life inspires them, nothing remains for them but miserable fears.... The faithful commit their souls into the hand of God without fear and sadness.... The Lord, in promising a placid and quiet death to his servant Abram, teaches us that it is His Own gift.... Abram willingly and joyfully went forward to his death, seeing that he had in Isaac a certain pledge of the divine benediction and knew that a better life was laid up for him in Heaven!"

Calvin explained in his *Institutes* (II:11:2): "Abraham is not allowed to keep down his thoughts, to the promised land. By a greater promise, his views are carried upward to the Lord.... The Lord is the final reward promised to Abraham, so that he might not seek a fleeting and evanescent reward in the elements of this world -- but look to one which was incorruptible." Going to one's forefathers, in a good old age!

'Sarah was 127 years old. These were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died.... And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her, and spoke to the sons of Heth saying: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you. Give me possession of a burying-place with you, so that I may bury my dead!".... After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah.... And the field and the cave therein were made sure to Abraham for possession of a burying-place, by the sons of Heth.' Genesis 23:1-20.

Calvin comments: "It is remarkable that Moses who relates the death of Sarah in a single word (*'died'*), uses so many in describing her burial... The holy father saw that they, in common with reprobates, were subject to death. Nevertheless, they were not deterred...from advancing with intrepidity toward the goal.... They, being animated by the hope of a better life, did not give way to fatigue....

"Moses does not say that Abraham had paid to his wife, while yet alive, the due attentions of a husband.... He omits it, as a thing indubitably certain.... He speak particularly of the mourning, as a matter connected with the care of sepulture....

"It may be asked -- what end could it answer, to approach the body for the sake of mourning over it? Was not the death of his wife sufficiently sad and bitter to call forth his grief, without this additional means of excitement?.... If Abraham...both privately wept over the death of his wife...exercising self-government..., and also voluntarily mourned over the common curse of mankind -- there is no fault in either of these.... Yet what Moses soon after subjoins, that he rose up from his dead -- is spoken in praise of his moderation....

"How perversely they act, who occupy themselves too much in mourning for the dead!.... The most abundant consolation, is supplied to us in the resurrection of Christ!.... Abraham...had the hope of a resurrection deeply fixed in his heart.... He bought a cave, in order that he might possess for himself and his family, a holy and pure sepulchre....

"The promise of God was not extinguished either by his own death or by that of his family.... It then rather began to flourish!.... Abraham by faith had looked up to Heaven.... He calls the corpse of his wife *'his dead'*.... Nothing but a future restoration, cherishes and preserves the law of mutual connection between the living and the dead.... *'And Abraham stood up'*.... He always kept all his thoughts fixed on God!"

In his *Institutes* III:25:8, Calvin adds: "To what end was the rite of burial..., unless to teach that new life was prepared for the bodies thus deposited?.... The Spirit...raises our eyes from the view of the tomb...to the prospect of renovation.... Nor would Abraham have been so anxious about the burial of his wife..., had not...something superior to any worldly advantage been present to his mind.... By adorning her dead body with the insignia of the resurrection, he confirmed his own faith and that of his family" -- at the death and burial of Sarah!

'Abraham was old, and well stricken in age.... The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.... Abraham said to his eldest servant: "Swear by the Lord, the God of Heaven and the God of Earth, that you shall not take a wife to my son from the daughters of the Canaanites!".... And he (the servant went and said to Abraham's kin): "The Lord has blessed my master greatly.... He has become great. And He has given him flocks and herds and silver and gold and menservants and maidservants and camels and asses. And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old. And to him, he has given all that he has!".... (The servant brought the bride to Isaac), and Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent and took Rebekah and she became his wife. And he loved her. And Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.' Genesis 24:1-3, 25-36,67.

Calvin commented: "Moses passes onward to...Isaac's marriage. Because indeed Abraham, perceiving himself to be worn down by old age, would take care that his son should not marry a wife in the land of Canaan...."

"Moses expressly describes Abraham as an old man, in order that we may learn that he had been admonished -- by his very age -- to seek a wife for his son. For old age itself which at the most is not far distant from death ought to induce us so to order the affairs of our family, that when we die -- peace may be preserved among our posterity; the fear of the Lord may flourish; and rightly constituted order may prevail.

"The old age of Abraham was indeed yet green!.... But when he reckoned up his own years, he deemed it time to consult for the welfare of his son.... Abraham...fears lest, after his own death, the inhabitants of the land should captivate Isaac by their allurements.... Isaac himself, the heir and successor of Abraham, submitted.... It here appears what great veneration he cherished toward his father. Because Abraham, relying on Isaac's obedience, confidently calls his servant to him."

After journeying to Nahor the city of Abraham's grandfather, there, "the servant...first commemorates Abraham's riches so that they might not hesitate to connect their daughter with a husband so wealthy. He secondly explains that Isaac was born of his mother in her old age..., so that they might infer that he had been divinely appointed to this greatness and eminence..... In the third place, he affirms that Isaac would be the sole heir of his father.... He thus modestly and suppliantly asks them to consent to the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah."

Permission being given, the servant returned with Rebekah to Isaac. *'And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent'....* Isaac was not compelled by the tyrannical command of his father to marry. But, after he had given his mind to her, he took her freely -- and cordially gave her the assurance of conjugal fidelity.

'And Isaac was comforted after his mother's death'.... His grief for the death of his mother was now...assuaged." Abraham was old and well stricken in age; but Isaac loved his wife Rebekah!

'These are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, 175 years. Then Abraham gave up his spirit, and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah.... There was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.' Genesis 25:7-10

Calvin commented: Moses now bring us down to the death of Abraham.... Notice concerning his age...the number of years during which he lived as a pilgrim.... He deserves the praise of wonderful and incomparable patience, for having wandered through the space of a hundred years while God led him about in various directions. Contented, both in life and death, with the bare promise of God....

"Moses expressly shows that the Lord had fulfilled His promise. *'You shall die in a good old age!'* For although he fought a hard and severe battle, yet his consolation was neither light nor small. Because he knew that, amidst so many sufferings, his life was the object of divine care.

"But if this sole looking to God sustained him through his whole life, amidst the most boisterous waves, amidst many bitter griefs, amidst tormenting cares, and in short an accumulated mass of evils -- let us also learn that we may not become weary in our course to rely on this support.... The Lord has promised us a happy outcome of life and one truly far more glorious than that of our father Abraham!

"Then Abraham gave up his spirit'.... The father of the faithful was not exempt from the common lot of men.... Our minds may not languish, when the outward man is perishing.... By meditating on that renovation which is laid up as the object of our hope, we may with tranquil minds permit this frail tabernacle to be dissolved. There is therefore no reason why a feeble emaciated body, failing eyes, tremulous hands, and the lost use of all our members -- should so dishearten us that we should not hasten, after the example of our father, with joy and alacrity to our death....

"Abraham...would *'die in a good old age, and satisfied with life'....* The chief part of a good old age, consists in a good conscience and in a serene and tranquil mind.... What God promises to Abraham, can only apply to those who truly cultivate righteousness.... A good hope, is the nutriment of old age.... It is godliness which causes a good old age to attend us even to the grave, because faith is the preserver of a tranquil mind....

"He was full of days'.... He did not desire a prolongation of life.... *'And (Abraham) was gathered to his people'....* The state of our future life...be pointed out in this form of expression.... Understand by it, that mankind are associate together in death, as well as in life.... To be gathered to his fathers...would be inconsistent with fact, if human life vanished and men were reduced to annihilation (at death).... The Scripture...shows that another state of life remains after death!"

'Abraham died in a good old age.... And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him.'

'Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. Which were a grief of mind to Isaac, and to Rebekah.... It came to pass that when Isaac was old..., his eyes were dim so that he could not see.... He said...: "I am old. I do not know the day of my death".... Rebekah said to Isaac: "I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as those which are of the daughters of the land -- what good shall my life do me?"' Genesis 26:34f & 27:1,2,46.

Calvin commented: "Esau...mingled himself with the inhabitants of the land, from whom the holy race of Abraham was separated -- and contracted affinities by which he became entangled. This was a kind of prelude of his rejection.... These daughters-in-law were grievous and troublesome to the holy patriarch Isaac and his wife.... It was not lawful for those to be bound together in marriage, whom God designed to be perpetual enemies....

"The holy man (Isaac) justly regarded his son's wives with aversion, and his mind was exasperated against them. (Yet) he never failed to act with the greatest kindness towards his son..., a man addicted to the flesh (who) indulged his appetite by taking two wives....

"Isaac was old'.... Isaac now, being worn down with age, imagines himself to be shortly about to depart this life -- and wishes to bless his first-born son (Esau)." He said: "'I am old. I do not know the day of my death!"....

"Death was every moment pressing so closely upon him, a decrepid and failing man -- that he dared not promise himself life any longer.... Every one, even in the full vigour of age, carries with him a thousand deaths.... But as it urges the old more closely..., they ought to place it more constantly before their eyes -- and should pass...through the world...as those who have already one foot in the grave....

"Rebekah...truly affirms that she was tormented, even to weariness of life -- on account of her Hittite daughters-in-law. But she prudently conceals (this)...., lest she should inflict a mortal wound on her husband. And also, lest she should the more influence the rage of Esau. For the wicked often, when their crime is detected -- are the more carried away with desperation.

"Now, although in consequence of the evil manners of her daughters-in-law, affinity with the whole race (of the Hittites) became hateful to Rebekah -- yet in this again the wonderful providence of God is conspicuous.... Jacob neither blended nor entangled himself with the future enemies of the Church." Rebekah, however, did!

'What good shall my life do me?' -- she asked. Her husband Isaac too was grieved in his mind by Esau's polygamous marriages to strangers. But Rebekah voiced her concerns to Isaac. And then, 'Isaac called Jacob and blessed him...and said to him: "You shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan!"' (Genesis 28:1). Thus Rebekah influenced her husband -- even in their old age!

'Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took each man his sword and came upon the city...and slew all the males.... God said to Jacob: "Arise, go up to Beth-El, and dwell there; and make there an altar to God!"... The Jacob said to his household...: "Put away the strange gods that are among you!.... Let us arise, and go up to Beth-El, and I will make there an altar to God!".... They gave to Jacob all the strange gods..., and Jacob hid them under the oak at Shechem.... And he built...an altar and called the place 'El Beth-El'.... But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died. And she was buried beneath Beth-El under an oak"' -- 'the oak of weeping.' Genesis 34:25 & 25:1-8.

Calvin commented: "The violation of one maid (Dinah) was avenged by the horrible massacre of a whole city!... Jacob was then most miserable.... He would be surrounded with...many deaths.... God permitted the holy man to be thus tossed with cares and tormented with troubles, until by a kind of resurrection He restored him as one half-dead.... He had been very greatly perplexed, when the Lord thus revived him...

"Go up to Beth-El!".... It is God's design, to raise His servant from death to life.... As he was commanded, he quickly prepared himself for his journey.... He not only collected his goods, but also purified his house from idols.... Jacob did not approve of these superstitions.... It was not owing to him, that the pure worship of God had...gradually been subverted....

"They gave unto Jacob (their idols)".... The hand of God urg'd them, and with ready minds they quickly repented.... Jacob...buried the idols under an oak.... God accepted his obedience..., knowing that it was the design of the holy man to remove idols from his family and...to bury them in the earth....

'He built there an altar'.... To make it manifest, that they did not worship goods of various kinds.... They had a God peculiar to themselves....

"Jacob always adhered to the Word of God.... In calling the name of the place 'The God of Beth-El' ('*El Beth-'El*)..., this very title commends the faith of the holy man.... He confines himself within the divinely-prescribed bounds....

'But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died'.... Deborah...we may conclude to have been a holy matron...whom the family of Jacob venerated as a mother.... She was buried with peculiar honour, and with no common mourning (at '*the oak of weeping*')..... It is probable that she was held by all in the place of a grandmother....

"It may be asked, how she then happened to be in Jacob's company?.... The age of a decrepid old woman (at least 170), rendered her unfit for so long a journey.... Perhaps she had loved Jacob from a boy, because she had nursed him.... She followed him, from her regard for religion.

Thus Deborah's burial -- at 'the oak of weeping.'

'God appeared to Jacob again.... God...talked with him, and Jacob set up a pillar (of stone) in the place where He talked with him.... And he poured a drink-offering out on it.... And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke to him, 'Beth-El'.... They journeyed from Beth-El, and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath.... Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.... The midwife said to her...: 'You shall have this son!'.... As her soul was departing -- for she died -- she called his name Benoni.... His father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried on the way to Ephrath which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave.' Genesis 35:9-20.

Calvin commented: "Jacob was confirmed -- after his return to Beth-El.... God had appeared to him.... The same promise was repeated to him -- that he, as one who had returned from captivity to his own country and had gathered new strength to his faith, might accomplish with greater courage the remaining course of his life....

"The death of his beloved wife (Rachel) is next related.... A little later, Isaac his father dies. Then his son Joseph is snatched away, whom he supposed to have been torn into pieces by wild beasts.... He is almost consumed, with perpetual mourning. We see therefore by what a severe conflict and by what a continued succession of evils he was trained to the hope of a better life....

"Rachel died in childbirth...before they reached a resting-place. This would prove no small accession to his grief..., being bereaved of his most beloved wife.... The Lord intended to correct the exorbitance of his affection for her.... Jacob...highly appreciated Rachel's beauty.... His wife was taken away from him.... The Lord often deprives the faithful of His Own gifts....

"Rachel...was...oppressed with pain. She therefore died in agonies, thinking of nothing but her sad childbirth and her own sorrows -- from the feeling of which she gave a name to her son (Benoni, 'son of my sorrow').... (Jacob's) change of the name (to Benjamin, 'son of my right hand') -- sufficiently shows that...the excess of sorrow in his wife, was wrong....

"Her burial is mentioned. To which the...fathers could not have attended with such religious care, except on account of their hope of the future resurrection.... It was...a lively symbol of the...resurrection.... The Lord caused that this rite should remain...among His Own people....

"To bury the dead, was...the office of piety. Nature had clearly dictated to them that the human body is formed for immortality.... By sinking into death, it does not utterly perish.... (Jacob) took care to raise...a sepulchre, which might...witness to all ages...he was...devoted to the life to come."

In his *Tracts and Treatises* (III:421), Calvin adds: "We say in ordinary language that the soul is 'breathed out' and 'expires'.... It is said of Rachel.... Her soul was departing."

Her soul has departed -- to a better place! So Jacob then erected a pillar (pointing upwards!) -- on Rachel's grave.

'Jacob came to Isaac his father, to Mamre -- to the city of Arbah which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. And the days of Isaac were 180 years. And Isaac gave up the spirit and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.' Genesis 35:27-29

Isaac is the comfort of ordinary believers. His life history, compared to that of Abraham and Jacob, is quickly described. At his death, the struggle between his two sons -- grips you more than does Isaac.

Isaac was in every respect weaker. In Abraham, the priest was represented; in Isaac, the lamb to be offered. When bound by his father as the lamb to be offered, he did not cry out. Yet that silence mightily spoke so powerfully of the faith God had worked in him (Genesis 22:1-12)..

Just like Abraham and Jacob, Isaac too built an altar to the Lord -- at Beer-Sheba. Indeed, Isaac in Gerar became a rich man -- even richer than Abraham!

Isaac too was counted among those who sought a better fatherland (Hebrews 11:8-20). Yet later, we see Isaac sinking, when his strength dwindled. And Isaac died -- 'old, and full of days'

Calvin commented: "On the death of Isaac, the fountain of the holy race became divided...into two streams.... It is said that 'he died old' and 'full of days'.... Having fulfilled the course of his life, he departed by a mature death. This, therefore, is ascribed to the blessing of God....

"I refer these words not merely to the duration of his life, but also to the state of his feelings. Implying that Isaac, being satisfied with life, willingly and placidly departed out of the world....

"We may see certain decrepid old men who are not less desirous of life than they were in the flower of their age.... With one foot in the grave, they still have a horror of death.... Though long life is reckoned among the blessings of God, yet it is not enough for men to be able to count up a great number of years. Unless they feel that they have lived long -- and, being satisfied with the favour of God and with their own age, prepare themselves for their departure....

"In order that old men may have their minds formed to this kind of moderation, it behooves them to have a good conscience...that they may not flee from the presence of God. For an evil conscience pursues and agitates the wicked with terror....

"Isaac was buried by his two sons.... The resurrection's...first-fruits had not yet appeared. It behooved the holy fathers to be so much the more diligently trained in significant ceremonies, in order that they might correct the impression produced by the semblance of destruction which is presented in death." Thus Isaac died, at the good old age of 180!

'Jacob (or Israel) lived in the land of Egypt, 17 years. So the whole age of Jacob, was 147 years. And the time drew nigh, that Israel must die. And he called his son Joseph, and said to him...: "Please do not bury me in Egypt!.... I wish to lie with my fathers.... You shall carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place!"... And Israel bowed himself, upon the bed's head.' Genesis 47:28-31.

Calvin commented: " It was no common source of temptation to the holy old man, to be an exile from the land of Canaan for so many years.... However sweet might be the delights of Egypt, yet he was more than miserable to be deprived of the sight of that land which was the lively figure of his celestial county....

"He was more deeply wounded, when he saw his death approaching.... He was leaving his sons..., at least of feeble faith, buried in Egypt -- as in a sepulchre.... His example is proposed to us, so that our minds may not languish or become enfeebled by the weariness of a protracted warfare. Yes, the more Satan attempts to depress them to the earth -- the more fervently let them look and soar towards Heaven!....

"He called his son Joseph'.... He (Jacob), commanding his dead body to be carried back to Canaan, encouraged his sons to hope for deliverance (from Egypt). Thus it happened that he, being dead, animated those who were alive.... For to what purpose was this great care respecting his sepulture -- except that the promise of God might be confirmed to his posterity?....

"It was of great importance that his body should be carried to the sepulchre of his fathers.... He knew that this choice of his sepulchre would be by no means gratifying to the Egyptians.... This stranger..., as if he could find no fit place for his body in this splendid and noble country (of Egypt), wishes to be buried in the land of Canaan!...

"I will lie with my fathers!".... 'I will sleep' (with them).... The word 'sleep' -- whenever it is put for 'die' -- does not refer to the soul but to the body. For what did it concern him to be buried with his fathers in the double cave (of Machpelah), unless to testify that he was associated with them after death?.... Not even death itself could extinguish the power of their faith! This would seem to utter this voice from the same sepulchre -- 'Now, also, we have a common inheritance!'....

"Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head'.... Jacob esteemed it a singular kindness, that his son (Joseph) should have promised to do what he had required, respecting his burial.... He is said to have worshipped towards the head of his bed..., seeing he was quite unable to rise from the bed on which he lay. He yet composed himself with a solemn air -- in the attitude of one who was praying....

"He bowed his head, leaning of the top of his staff.... By this ceremony, he openly manifested the greatness of his joy!" For the time drew near, that Israel must die!

"It came to pass after these things, that someone told Joseph: "Behold your father is sick!".... He took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And someone told Jacob and said: "Behold, your son Joseph is coming to you!" And Israel (or Jacob) strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed." Genesis 48:1-2.

Calvin commented: "Moses now passes to the last acts of Jacob's life.... In being made the father of the fathers of the Church, he fulfilled -- in the immediate prospect of death -- the prophetic office respecting the future state of the Church which had been enjoined upon him.... With this holy man..., God had establish His Covenant..., so that the succession of grace would flow down....

"Joseph, being informed of his father's sickness, immediately went to see him.... Jacob, having heard of his arrival, attempted to raise his feeble and trembling body...to do him honour....

"The reasons why Joseph was so desirous of seeing his father and so prompt to discharge all the other duties of filial piety, was that he regarded it as a greater privilege to be a son of Jacob than to preside over a hundred kingdoms.... In bringing his sons with him, he acted as if he would emancipate them from the country (Egypt) in which they had been born -- and restore them to their own stock....

"His father, however, rising before him -- pays him becoming honour for the kindness received at his hand.... By so doing, he fulfils his part in the prediction....

(Said Jacob;) *"As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died...in the land of Canaan.... I buried her there, on the way to Ephrath (Bethlehem)!....* He mentions the death and burial of his wife Rachel, in order that the name of his mother might prove a stimulus to the mind of Joseph....

"And he blessed Joseph, and said...: "God Who fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel Who redeemed me from all evil -- bless the lads (Ephraim and Manasseh)!.... Jacob knew that a dispensation of the grace of God was committed to him, in order that he might effectually bless his grandchildren.... They were not only called witness of celestial grace, but were also entrusted with the dispensation of spiritual gifts....

"God...fed me all my life...; the Angel redeemed me!".... He (Jacob) so joins 'the Angel' to God, as to make Him His equal. Truly, he offers Him divine worship, and asks the same things from Him as from God.... It is necessary that Christ should here be meant, Who does not bear in vain the title of 'Angel'....

"And let my name, be named on them!".... Ephraim and Manasseh....be added to the society of the patriarchs!.... The Lord would complete in them, what he had promised to the patriarchs!"

Thus, the end drew near -- of Jacob's blessed sickness unto death.

'And Israel (or Jacob) said to Joseph: "Behold, I die! But God shall be with you, and bring you back again to the land of your fathers!'" Genesis 48:21.

Calvin commented: "*And Israel said to Joseph: "Behold, I die!"*" Jacob repeated what he had said. And truly, all his sons -- and especially Joseph and his sons -- required something more than one simple confirmation. In order that they might not fix their abode in Egypt -- but might dwell, in their minds, in the land of Canaan.

"He mentions his own death, for the purpose of teaching them that the eternal truth of God by no means depended on the life of men. As if he had said: 'My life, seeing it is short and fading, passes away. But the promise of God, which has no limit, will flourish also when I am dead!'

"No vision had appeared to his sons.... God had ordained the holy old man as the intermediate sponsor of his covenant. He therefore sedulously fulfils the office enjoined upon him, taking timely precaution that their faith should not be shaken by his death.

"So, when the Lord delivers His Word to the world by mortal men..., they die -- having finished their course of life according to the flesh. Yet the voice of God is not extinguished with them, but quickens us even at the present day.

"Therefore Peter writes that he will endeavour, that after his decease -- the Church may be mindful of the doctrine committed unto him. Second Peter 1:15

"('But God shall be with you, and bring you back again) to the land of your fathers!' It is not without reason that he (Jacob) claims for himself and his fathers, the dominion over that land in which they had always wandered.... He excites his sons to a good hope, and pronounces with a courageous spirit that land to be his own -- in which at length he scarcely obtained a sepulchre!...

"Whence then was this great confidence? Except that he would accustom his sons by his example to have faith in the Word of God!

"Now this doctrine is also common to us. Because we never rely with sufficient firmness on the Word of God, so long as we are led by our own feelings.

"Nay, until our faith rises to lay hold on those things which are removed afar off! We do not know what it is, to set our seal to the Word of God!"

But the dying Jacob knew two things for sure. First, "Behold I die!" He knew his own life was fast coming to a close. But he also knew it would thereafter immediately continue for ever in the presence of God. And second, he also knew his sons must live. Both here and now on Earth, and thereafter with God and with Jacob in glory!

'And Jacob called to his sons and said: "Gather yourselves together, so that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days!.... Hear, you sons of Jacob, and hearken to Israel your father!".... 'Judah -- you are he whom your brethren shall praise!.... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah..., until Shiloh comes. And to Him, the gathering of the peoples shall be!'" Genesis 49:1-10.

Calvin commented: "In the former chapter (Genesis 48:1-2), the blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh was related.... Now, as if carried above the Heavens, he (the dying Jacob) announces...as from the mouth of God what shall be the condition of them all....

"Jacob begins with inviting their attention..., and claims for himself the authority of a Prophet.... In this prophecy, is comprised the whole period from the departure out of Egypt, to the reign of Christ.... Jacob...arranges a settled order and course, until Christ should appear....

"'Judah -- you are he whom your brethren shall praise!' It is certain that the Messiah, Who was to spring from the tribe of Judah, is here promised.... A King would come, under Whom...promised happiness would be complete The Messiah is the sole Author of full and solid happiness and glory....

"'(The sceptre shall not depart from Judah...,) until Shiloh comes.' (Until then,) he (Jacob) says, the sceptre or the dominion *'shall remain in Judah'....* Correctly and consistently..., interpreters take this expression (*Shiloh*) to mean 'his son' (-- the son of Judah). For among the Hebrews, a son is called *shiy'l*." Gesenius renders *Shiloh*, Tranquillity. Still more approved renderings, are the Peaceable One or the Pacifier.

"The origin of the kingdom is David, is not here promised -- but its absolute perfection in the Messiah.... The word 'depart' -- means nothing else than to cease." So the hegemony of Judah over the other sons or tribes of Jacob, would not depart or cease -- till the Messiah comes. Until then, "although the royal majesty did not shine brightly from David until Christ -- yet some pre-eminence remained in the tribe of Judah.... The sceptre was to be preserved (in Judah) by the Lord, until it would come into the hands of Christ....

"(True,) the majesty of the kingdom was to be almost trodden under foot -- till the manifestation of Christ.... The dominion of which Jacob had prophesied, ceased from the time of Herod.... The nation was grievously harassed and...under servile oppression, some years before....

"Know that Christ had been not only promised, but that His Origin had been pointed out...two thousand years before He appeared!... *'To Him, the gathering of the peoples would be!'*.... Christ would be a King not only over one people -- but under His authority, various nations shall be gathered so that they might coalesce.... At length, He shall...subject other '*peoples*' to Himself.... In Christ...was promised the inheritance of the world -- under Whose yoke the nations are brought, and at Whose will they...are gathered together!" These were among the dying Jacob's last words.

"I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord!" Genesis 49:18. Thus uttered the then dying Jacob, to his gathered children. Genesis 49:18

Calvin commented: "What occasion induced the holy man to break the connection of his discourse (blessing his family) -- and suddenly to burst forth in this expression?... When he (Jacob) perceived...the condition of his offspring continually exposed to various changes and...tossed by storms which would almost overwhelm them -- he was moved with solicitude and fear....

"In order that he might rise against every kind of temptation, with victorious constancy of mind -- he commits himself to the Lord Who had promised that He would be the guardian of His people.... He waited for the salvation of the Lord.... His best remedy, was to oppose to it this shield....

"I doubt not also, that he would advise his sons to rise with him to the exercise of the same confidence.... He could not be the author of his own salvation. It was necessary for him to repose upon the promise of God.

"In the same manner also, we must today hope for the salvation of the Church. For although it seems to be tossed on a turbulent sea and almost sunken in the waves, and though still greater storms are to be feared in the future -- yet amidst manifold destructions, salvation is to be hoped for in that deliverance which the Lord has promised.....

"Jacob, foreseeing by the Spirit..., was contending against these temptations (or trials).... He expected salvation not for himself alone, but for all his posterity.... He exhibits the life-giving covenant of God to many generations, so as to prove his own confidence that after his death God would be faithful to His promise....

"With his last breath, and as if in the midst of death, he laid hold of eternal life.... He, amidst obscure shadows relying on a redemption seen afar off, boldly went forth to meet death.

"What ought we to do, on whom the clear day has shined? Or what excuse remains for us, if our minds fail amidst similar agitations?"

In his *Institutes* II:10:14, Calvin adds: "In the whole course of their lives, they (Jacob and his sons) had an eye to future blessedness.... He (Jacob) declared in one of the last sentences he uttered: 'I have waited for Thy salvation, O God!' (Genesis 49:18). What salvation could he have waited for, when he felt himself breathing his last -- if he did not see in death the beginning of a new life?....

"If death were the goal and ultimate limit -- no distinction could be observed between the righteous and the wicked! The true distinction, is the different lot which awaits them -- after death!"

I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord!

'He (Jacob)...said to them (his sons)... "Bury me with my fathers...in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah!... There -- they buried Abraham, and Sarah.... There -- they buried Isaac and Rebekah.... And there -- I buried Leah".... When Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons -- he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the spirit -- and was gathered unto his people.'
Genesis 49:29-33.

Calvin commented: "Jacob especially commanded his son Joseph to take care that his body should be buried in the land of Canaan.... The same command was given to all his sons....

"We have stated elsewhere why he made such a point of conscience of his sepulture.... Truly, he did not wish to be carried into the land of Canaan -- as if he would be the nearer Heaven for being buried there! But so that, being dead, he might claim possession of a land which he had held during his life only by a precarious tenure....

"He had already fulfilled his course.... It was probable that the memory of the promise should be renewed by this symbol among his surviving sons, in order that they (too) might aspire to it.

"Meanwhile, we gather that his mind did not cleave to the Earth.... Unless he had been an heir of Heaven, he would never have hoped that God, for the sake of one who was dead, would prove so bountiful towards his children....

"'Abraham,' he says, 'bought that sepulchre for himself and his family.... You must therefore take care not to isolate it -- in order that after my death too some token of the favour of God may continue with us!'

"He gathered up his feet'.... Moses wished thereby to describe the placid death of the holy man.... The aged saint gave directions respecting the disposal of his body, as easily as healthy and vigorous men are wont to compose themselves to sleep.... While death was in his countenance, he thus courageously fulfilled the prophetic office enjoined upon him....

"It is the effect of a good conscience, to be able to depart out of the world without terror.... In order that a good conscience may lead us peacefully and quietly to the grave, it is necessary to rely upon the resurrection of Christ. For we then go willingly to God, when we have confidence respecting a better life. We shall not deem it grievous to leave this failing tabernacle, when we reflect on the everlasting abode which is prepared for us!"

As Calvin adds in his *Institutes* III:25:8: "Jacob..., to testify to his posterity that even death did not destroy the hope of the promised land, orders his bones to be carried there. Had he (however first) needed to be clothed with a new body -- would it not have been ridiculous for him to give commands concerning a dust which was to be reduced to nothing?" Indeed! The dying Jacob took a long time to die -- from Genesis 47:28 to 49:33. Then, he was gathered unto his people!

'Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father..., and forty days were fulfilled for him.... The Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.... Then Joseph went up to bury his father...; and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren.... They came to the threshingfloor of Atad..., beyond Jordan.... There they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation. He made a mourning for his father, seven days.... His sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah.' Genesis 50:1-13.

Calvin commented: "What happened after the death of Jacob, is briefly related.... That Joseph falls upon his father's face and sheds tears, flows from true and pure affection. That the Egyptians mourn for him seventy days, since it was done for the sake of honour and in compliance with custom, is more from ostentation and vain pomp than from true grief....

"With respect to the genuine grief which is not unnaturally excited but which breaks forth from the depth of our hearts, it is not in itself to be censured -- if it be kept within due bounds.... Joseph is not here reprov'd because he manifests his grief by weeping. But his filial piety is rather commended.... The mitigation of sorrow is chiefly to be sought for, in the hope of a future life....

"Formerly, more labour was expended on funerals...than has been deemed right subsequently since the time that Jesus Christ has give us a clear demonstration of the resurrection of the dead.... Among the Egyptians, there was greater expense and pomp than among the Jews.... The sacred rite of burial descended from the holy fathers to be a kind of mirror of the future resurrection.... They who have declined from the true faith, assume a far more ostentatious appearance than the faithful.... The Heathen scarcely knew why they incurred so much labour and expense.... To embalm corpses with aromatic spices..., was done as a public symbol of future incorruption....

"At this day, the resurrection of Christ is a sufficient support for us, against yielding to this temptation.... They, however, whose minds were not raised to the hope of a better life -- did nothing else than trifle.... Unless we wish to subvert the glory of Christ, we must cultivate greater sobriety....

"Joseph...pleads necessity.... The burying of his father was not left to his own choice, because Jacob had laid him under obligation as to the mode of doing it.... He says that the desire to be buried in the land of Canaan was not one which had recently entered into his father's mind, because he had dug his grave there long before.... Moses...relates...the renewed mourning of Joseph and his brethren.... The Lord caused this funeral to be...honourably celebrated.... A kind of sublime trophy would be raised, which might transmit to posterity the memory of Jacob's faith.... We are not here to consider the honour of the deceased, so much as the benefit of the living." The whole of the circumstances of Jacob's funeral were divinely ordered to perpetuate his memory.

For the various mournings at the burial of Jacob -- all presuppose his future resurrection through Jesus Christ our Lord!

'Joseph dwelt in Egypt..., and lived 110 years.... Then Joseph said to his brothers: "I die! But God will surely...bring you out of this land -- to the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob!" So Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying: "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here!" So Joseph died.... And they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin.' Genesis 50:22-26.

Calvin commented: "Moses relates how long Joseph lived.... The time shows the more clearly his unfailling constancy.... He gradually took his leave of the treasures of the court..., lest earthly dignity should separate him from the Kingdom of God....

"He now counts it necessary to...wean his own sons from the hope of succeeding to his worldly rank.... Joseph, during sixty years, employed all his efforts to bring himself and his children into a state of submission -- lest his earthly greatness should alienate them from the little flock of the Lord.... Being stripped of their old age, they may gather new strength! In a numerous offspring, during his own life, the Lord afforded him (Joseph) some taste of His benediction. From which he might conceive the hope of future deliverance....

"It is uncertain whether Joseph died the first, or the last, of the brethren. Or whether a part of them survived him.... Certain of the chiefs of each family were called at his command.... The other Patriarchs also gave the same command respecting themselves -- since the bones of them all were in like manner conveyed into the land of Canaan. Yet special mention is made of Joseph alone....

"I die!" This expression had the force of a command to his (Joseph's) brethren, to be of good courage after his death -- because the truth of God is immortal.... He does not wish them to depend upon his life, or that of another man.... He would have them patiently to rest, till the suitable time should arrive. But whence had he this great certainty, that he should be a witness and a surety of future redemption -- except from his having been so taught by his father?....

"What God pronounces through men, He seals on our hearts by His Spirit.... This restraint is put upon the rash curiosity of those men who, eagerly desiring 'visions' -- despise the ordinary Ministry of the Church.... If they would reflect how gloriously He once descended to us in the Person of His only-begotten Son -- they would not so importunately desire that Heaven should daily be opened unto them!....

"God will surely visit you!" (-- said Joseph).... Joseph does not cease to fix the eyes of his mind on God.... The design of this anxious choice of his sepulchre...was a seal of redemption.... He immediately adjures his brethren to carry away his bones.... By the death of men, the eternal covenant in which Joseph commands his posterity safely to rest, had by no means become extinct!"

In his *Institutes* II:10:14, Calvin added: "Joseph wished that his bones should some ages later, long after they had mouldered into dust, be carried thither (Genesis 50:25) -- to Canaan!"

'The Sabaeans fell upon (Job's sons and daughters) and took them, (and) slew the servants.... The fire of God fell from the sky, and burned up the sheep and the servants.... The Chaldeans...fell upon the camels and carried them off..., and slew the servants.... A great wind came...and...fell upon the young men (Job's sons and daughters), and they are dead.... Then Job...fell down on the ground, and worshipped!' Job:1:14-20.

Job was an upright man around 1520 B.C., who feared God. He must have been well advanced in years. For he had seven sons and three daughters, and had amassed much wealth. Job 1:1-3.

In his Sermons on Job 1:1-8, Calvin says: "The story here written, shows us how we are in the hand of God.... It lies in Him to determine our life, and to dispose of the same according to His good pleasure..., and especially...when it pleases Him to lay His hand upon us.... Yet notwithstanding, we must hold our peace and not grudge, but rather confess that He is righteous....

"Consider not only the patience of Job.... Job continued in misery.... There is nothing better than to submit ourselves to God, and to suffer peaceably whatsoever He sends us.... God does not ever punish men according to the measure of their sins, but has His secret judgments....

"Job...was of great antiquity.... A man may perceive from the book of Ezekiel (14:14-20), that the name of Job was renowned among the people of Israel." And James too (5:11) perceives him to have been very enduring and patient.

"Touching the name of Job, some interpret it to signify *Weeping* or *Wailing*.... The records of Ezekiel and...James show right well that there was indeed a Job....

"Job, then, had an upright and a sound heart.... He feared God. Yes, he was a man who feared God and withdrew himself from evil.... When he says that Job feared God, he means to set out the religion that was in him.... If we will frame our life aright, we must first have an eye to God, and then to our neighbours.... This fearing of God...comprehended all religion....

"Job was an exceeding rich man.... It is no small thing to have seven thousand head of small cattle, five hundred yoke of oxen, as many she-asses, and as many camels.... Here is great substance for one man....

"His patience was so much the more praiseworthy. For he, being bereft of such great goods and brought to extreme poverty, did notwithstanding continue quietly, as if he had lost little or nothing!.... It was an incomparable virtue in Job, to bear patiently God's taking away all the things which He had put into his hand" -- his servants, his sheep, his camels, and his sons and daughters. But Job then simply fell down upon the ground, and worshipped God.

Think of it! An upright old man lost all he had -- and then he worshipped God!

'And (Job) said: "Naked I came forth from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return!... The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!"' Job 1:21.

Calvin remarked in his *Institutes* I:17:8 & I:18:1,3 & II:4:2: "Had Job turned to the Chaldeans by whom he was plundered, he would instantly have been fired with revenge. But, recognizing the work of the Lord, he solaces himself with this most beautiful sentiment: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!' (Job 1:21)...."

"Job acknowledge that he was deprived of all his property, and brought to poverty. Because such was the pleasure of God.... The Holy Spirit...certainly dictated this confession to that holy man Job, 'The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away' -- when, after being plundered by robbers, he acknowledges that their injustice and mischief was a just chastisement from God....."

"Let us refer to the calamities brought upon holy Job by the Chaldeans. They, having slain his shepherds, carry off his flocks.... Job, however, recognizes it as the work of God. Saying that what the Chaldeans had plundered -- 'the Lord' had 'taken away!'"

The first three messengers Job had heard silently, and while sitting. But at the news of the death of his children brought by the fourth, he could no longer overcome his grief.

When the messenger finished telling Job how the tornado had wiped out all his children, Job arose and gave way to the liveliest expressions of grief. He rent his mantle, as his heart was torn with sorrow. He shaved his head unto nakedness, removing every adornment. He cast himself on the ground -- laying his forehead in the dust, in deep submission before God. And finally, he spoke.

He said: *'Naked I came forth from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return!'* He describes his later return to a condition of life similar to what had preceded his birth -- put back into a state of unconsciousness and seclusion from the light and turmoil of this world similar to his former state in his mother's womb, and returning to the bosom of mother earth.

'We brought nothing into the world, and we can carry nothing out of it!' (First Timothy 6:7). All that a man has, is a gift of God -- which He at death recalls. Job blesses God alike -- Who both gave, and Who takes away.

Job did not act like someone in despair. Humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, he fell to the ground and prostrated himself -- worshipping God. And then, Job spoke again, saying: *'Blessed be the name of the Lord!'*

Here Job does not merely approach God in general, but God the Saviour in particular. Job calls Him blessed. For Job prays: 'Blessed be the name of *Jehovah*' -- Job's Saviour God! Blessed be the Lord Who gives and takes away!

'Satan answered the Lord and said..."All that a man has, he will give for his life! But put forth Your hand now and touch his bones and his flesh -- and he will curse you to Your face!".... So Satan went...and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown.... Then his wife said to him...: "Curse God, and die!" But he said to her...: "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God -- and shall we not also accept evil?!" In all this, Job did not sin.' Job 2:4-10.

Satan then told God Job's trials involving the loss of his possessions and his children, were not sufficiently close. 'Just touch his own skin! He will then give all that he has, for himself!' So Satan then went and smote Job with sore boils, from head to toe.

Probably, this disease of Job was the leprosy called *elephantiasis*,. It starts with tubercular boils, and ends up resembling cancer. It swells up the limbs and blackens and corrugates the skin. It first breaks out below the knees, and then spreads over the whole body. The ulcers result in an itching so intolerable, that Job used a broken piece of pot to scrape the sores which bred worms (7:12), and to remove the pus. Apparently incurably ill, Job's own friends could not recognize him (2:12). His breath turned fetid, and emitted a stench which drove everyone away.

The patient was haunted with horrible nightmares (7:4-14), unearthly terrors (3:25), a sense of choking (7:15), and weariness (7:1-4). His bones felt like fire was in them (30:30). His limbs felt like he was being tortured in the stocks (13:27,), or wrenched off of him (30:17).

Job's wife now told him to call upon God for the last time, and then die. Her words are not recorded for her sake, but show how those surrounding Job behaved. They show the strain to which his faith was put. But Job simply commented that here she spoke like one of the foolish women.

Mrs. Job wondered how he could still maintain his piety. She counselled him call upon God and then die -- for nothing but pain and death now awaited him. Call upon God, and die! Bring down His final stroke of death at once -- to end all the suffering!

But Job replied: 'We receive good from God. Shall we not also accept the pain He sends?' We receive good from God, not due to us! Shall we not also worship Him, whenever He brings pain upon us? In all this, under all these severe afflictions of his body, Job did not sinfully murmur!

Not one but several successive and diverse waves of feeling passed over Job, in regard to his afflictions. If suffering be the trial of righteousness -- the trial, if borne patiently, must bring an accumulation of spiritual gain.

"Call upon God for the last time, and die!" -- said Mrs. Job foolishly. But in all this, Job did not sin. Instead, he committed himself more deeply to the care of God -- Who finally restored his health; gave him another ten children; and extended his life another 140 years! Job 42:12-16.

'When Job's three friends heard of all these afflictions that had come upon him, they came...to mourn with him and to comfort him.... When they, far off, lifted up their eyes -- they did not recognize him. They lifted up their voice, and wept.... They sat down on the ground with him, seven days and nights. None of them spoke a word. For they saw his grief was very great.' Job 2:11-13.

Job's three friends heard about him, and came from the east (Genesis 26:2-6). Eliphaz came from Teman in Edom (Genesis 36:9-11); he was a descendant of Esau (Genesis 36:15). Bildad was a descendant of Abraham's son Shuah by Keturah (Genesis 25:2-6). And Zophar came from Naamah, east of the Jordan.

Did they come speedily (thus the Jewish *Talmud*)? Or did they arrive only after Job had been in pain for many months (Job 7:3)? Perhaps the three first met to discuss when they should go, and what they should then do.

When they did arrive, to show Job their sympathy in his sufferings -- he was so disfigured by his disease that they could not recognize him. Was this then the same Job, they thought, whom they had previously known in the very flower of his youth? But even when they saw him from afar, they lifted up their voices, and wept.

So great was their distress in seeing him, that every one of them tore his own mantle. They sprinkled dust on their heads -- an outward sign of their own great suffering in seeing him. This should have comforted Job in his pain. But so great was his distress, it apparently did not.

Yet they thus gestured that they themselves were laid in the dust by this calamity. Then they all sat down with him upon the ground. They sat there with Job, for seven days and seven nights. That was the length of time one then mourned for the dead (Genesis 50:10). It also shows the force of the impression produced on the three friends, and their fear of annoying the sufferer.

Not one of them then spoke a single word. For his three friends were all overwhelmed by the moving sight in front of them. They all saw his grief.

They had come to comfort him. But they were so overwhelmed with grief, that this is not what then happened.

Yet their long silence shows their discomfort. Their feeling was overpowered by reflection, and their sympathy by dismay. No doubt, they should then have consoled him, during that time. Instead, they then rather remained silent.

They saw that Job's grief was great. It made a profound impression on them. For, despite soon cursing not God but his own birthday (3:1f), old Job received even his diseases from God!

'(Eliphaz said:) "Please remember -- who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off?.... I have seen that those that plow iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the Blast of God, they perish; and by the Breath of His nostrils, they are consumed!"' Job 4:7-9

Job, filled with pain, had just cursed not God but his own birthday (Job 3:1-16). Then his friend Eliphaz, still believing Job to be a righteous and a God-fearing man, replied that Job should remember the afflictions of the righteous are disciplinary. They are not designed for his destruction. For whatever innocent person, ever perished?

The righteous do not perish under affliction. It is the wicked that so perish. For it is those who plough iniquity, who reap it.

When I, Eliphaz, saw those who ploughed iniquity -- they reaped it. Eliphaz recognizes that affliction may affect both the righteous and the unrighteous. The righteous may no doubt sin, and be chastised for their sin. But they do not perish under their chastisements.

The wicked, however, for whom sinning is a business, keep sinning unto their own perdition. For they practise that business, like a tiller plows and sows his field. And their harvest of destruction, is unailing.

As often as Eliphaz saw those who planned and worked out evil, he also saw that they reaped it. 'He who sows iniquity, shall reap vanity; and the rod of his anger, shall fail' (Proverbs 22:8).

That which the wicked plough and cast into the ground, is iniquity and wickedness. They reap it, in the form of affliction and trouble. 'They have sown the wind; and they shall reap the whirlwind' (Hosea 8:7). 'You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity!' (Hosea 10:13).

'By the Breath of God, they perish; and by the Blast of His anger, they are consumed' (Job 4:9). The destructive judgment of God upon the wicked, is described as a fiery Breath coming forth from His mouth -- like the hot wind of the desert which withers and burns up the grass. 'The grass withers, the flower fades; because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it' (Isaiah 40:7). 'The Lord will roar from Zion..., and the top of Carmel shall wither' (Amos 1:2).

That the ungodly, and they alone, perish -- is shown also by lions. 'The teeth of the young lions are broken; the old lion perishes' (Job 4:10-11). The sudden destruction of the wicked is described by Eliphaz as the break-up and dispersion of a den of lions.

Yes, both the lions and the wicked are strong and violent. But by a sudden stroke, the lion's roar and tearing of his prey is silenced. His teeth are dashed out. He perishes, for lack of prey. And his whelps get scattered abroad. That is the way the home of the wicked gets broken up! However, does the blast of God cut off the righteous? No!

'Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Look, He puts no trust in his servants; and His (fallen) angels, He charges with folly. How much less, in them that dwell in houses of clay; whose foundation is in the dust which is crushed before the moth? They are destroyed, from morning to evening. They perish for ever.... Doesn't their excellence which is in them, go away? They die!' Job 4:17-21.

Did Job strive to make God unrighteous? No! How can fallen man be righteous before God? How can a man be pure before his Maker? Can man be in the right, in his plea against God?

In his *Institutes* III:12:1 & III:17:9, Calvin remarked: "All must immediately perish, as Job declares (4:17-20).... I would go still further, and ask whether there be any work which may not justly be convicted of impurity or imperfection? How then will it appear to that Eye before which even the Heavens are not clean, and angels are chargeable with folly? (Job 4:18)."

In his *Tracts and Treatises* III:425, Calvin adds: "In the history of Job (4:19), we read (of) 'those who dwell in houses of clay'.... This, if you attend to it, you must see to apply to the soul -- which dwells in a clay body. He did not call man a vessel of clay, but says that he inhabits a vessel of clay -- as if the good part of man which is the soul, were contained in that earthly abode." Men's 'houses of clay' are their bodies, which are made from and return to dust (Genesis 2:7 & 3:19).

Men's bodies being compared to houses, are now spoken of -- like houses -- as having a foundation. They are not only of earth. They are founded on earth -- of the earth, earthy. They are built of earth; derived from earth; limited to earth. Men dwell in clay-houses of fragile material.

And men's very foundation, is ultimately crushed before the moth. Crushed by the moth which destroys, and crushed before the moth itself gets crushed by God. 'And He consumes it like a rotten thing; like a moth-eaten garment' (Job 13:28).

Men are destroyed, 'from morning to evening' -- in the course of a single day. Like may-flies. Thus the wicked pass away unobserved, like ephemeral insects. Such men are destroyed easily, and soon.

Their excellence then goes away -- gets pulled out like the pin of a gate-post (Judges 16:3-14); or like the stake of a tent gets extracted (Isaiah 33:20). Like an encampment gets broken up (Numbers 33:1-6). Plucked up, or torn out. The death of ungodly men is here compared to the pulling down of a tent -- the removal of their habitation (Isaiah 38:12). Their tent-cord is torn away. Does their excellence in them, then not go away? For they die (Job 4:21).

Die! The moment their tent falls, through the tearing-away of its pole or cord, the ungodly inhabitants perish. And their un wisdom cleaves to them, to the very end. Thus the destruction of the ungodly, who merely dwell in clay-houses.

'But Job answered and said...: "Oh, that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid together in the balances! For then, it would be heavier than the sand of the sea.... The arrows of the Almighty are within me -- the poison of which, my spirit drinks up. The terrors of God set themselves in array against me!'" Job 6:1-4.

Vexation is what Eliphaz had reproached Job with (5:2). Job, however, wished that his feelings should be evaluated in connection with his sufferings -- so that he could be understood in his complaints.

Job wished his vexation were placed in one scale of the balances, and his grief and calamities in the other -- and thoroughly weighed out together. His grief and calamities represent a dreadful yawning gulf. For his suffering was heavier than the unmeasurable weight of the sand of the sea.

So keenly did Job realize the misery and loathsomeness of his state, that he here broke out into a passionate cry for death. His mind passed into a momentary frenzy, and he said he would leap for joy in the midst of unsparing pain -- if only it brought death with it!

'The arrows of the Almighty are within me,' says Job. The fiery arrows of God's wrath stuck into Job, so that he felt he was being destroyed by that burning pain.

Job sounded delirious. But he said it is not His afflictions in themselves that terrified him. It was that they came from the God whom Job loved. The arrows of God -- all in battle array against him -- were the plagues, diseases and pains with which He assailed Job and assails men (Job 16:12).

God's arrows were felt by Job to be poisoned. His spirit sucked that poison in, and he became enervated and paralyzed..

The 'terrors of God' Job perceived as setting themselves in array against him. He saw them as a beleaguering army, composed of 'terrors' from God. This refers not merely to Job's physical pains, but to the perplexing thoughts and fears which they produced in him.

The terrors of God strike down all defence. The wrath of the Almighty is irresistible. The sting of Job's suffering was the anger of the Lord, which Job's spirit drank in as if a draught of poison (21:20).

This wrung from him, even from the depth of his soul, the incorrect thought that God has become his enemy. This would then mean Job's was an endless suffering. That is why he spoke so despondingly.

Job complained: 'My grief is heavier than the sand of the sea! The arrows of the Almighty are in me!' But the faithful God had, least of all even then, not deserted him!

'Oh, that...God would grant me the thing I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me -- that He would let loose His hand and cut me off! Then I would still have comfort. Yes, I would harden myself in sorrow. Let Him not spare!' Job 6:8-10.

It was the deepest wish of Job's heart, to be liberated from that awful sickness. Even if only by means of death!

Job now expected nothing more from this present life. He then had no other thought, than that death should take him. And the sooner, the better!

So keenly did Job realize the loathsomeness of his sufferings, that he broke out into a passionate cry for death -- which he called the thing he longed for. His comfort or consolation that he would have in death, is the only thing he then sought.

Job felt that nothing would then impair his comfort or mar his joy. After death, he could rejoice again. For he had never denied or disobeyed the words or commands of the Holy God.

Perhaps Job thought his friends suspected him of acting from some ulterior motive. But his words here emphatically show how fearlessly he looked at death.

Job had never denied God. It was his consolation, in death, that he had never disobeyed the words of the Almighty.

The Patriarch Job was rightly referring to death as the end of his suffering. He desired and even expected it. He asked of God: 'Let Him loosen His hand -- and cut me off!'

Let God cut off my thread of life! Let Him stretch out His hand, and loosen what was hitherto bound!

Not having disowned the words of the Holy God, would be Job's consolation in the midst of death. This consciousness of his integrity -- is throughout the whole book Job's shield and defence. 'My comfort that I would exult, is that I have not disowned the words of the Holy One.'

Yet Job did not for one moment believe that 'Random rules!' God alone had life and death in His hand. Job trusted his hope would still be fulfilled -- by God withdrawing His hand, cutting off his soul from his body, and being his desire even after his death. Job may well have been miserable. But he was not guilty!

Job desired to die. Yet that death was not his consolation. In his death, it was his comfort that he could die with a good conscience. 'I would still have comfort!' For, jumping with joy in all his pain -- Job would still rejoice he had not denied the Lord's Commandments when He cut him off!

'Is there not an appointed time to man, upon Earth? Are not his days also like those of a hireling?.... A slave earnestly desires a shadow.... I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me! When I lie down, I say: "When shall I arise, and the night be gone?".... I am full of tossings to and fro, until the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms, and clods of dust. My skin is broken, and has become loathsome. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are getting spent!' Job 7:1-6.

In his *Tracts and Treatises* III:433, Calvin remarks that "believers have...peace, on receiving the Gospel. When they see that God, Whom they dreaded as their Judge, has become their Father.... But since human life on Earth is a warfare (Job 7:1) -- those who feel both the stings of sin and the remains of the flesh, must feel depression in the world, though with consolation from God. Such consolation...does not leave the mind perfectly calm and undisturbed. But when they shall be divested of flesh and the desires of the flesh..., then at length will they rest and recline with God."

Human life is short, and evil. It is a time of heavy, forced toil in which one longs for discharge -- the release and the night of death. Job chiefly describes the regrets that accompany having lived, and ceasing to live. He waits for death as refreshing rest, after hard labour.

Job throws his eye over all mankind, and sees them too as doomed by an inexorable destiny to a life that is brief and filled with pain. The phrase 'an appointed time' refers to the hard service of a soldier in which there are two elements -- the fixed period, and the hard toil of the campaign. The 'hireling' might be a mercenary soldier whose fate, far from home and at the disposal of an alien power, might be thought harder even than that of an ordinary soldier.

A slave in the heat, and under his hard toil, pants for the shadow of evening. Job is one of the afflicted human race. But the universal misery, increases his own. The point of comparison between Job's life and the day of the hireling, lies in their common toil and longing for the end of it. Job describes his time as 'months of vanity' and 'nights of trouble' and weariness -- indicating that his disease had already endured for a long period. Months, one after the other, disappoint the sick.

At evening, Job longs for the morning. But the night seems to him to prolong itself, and he tosses restlessly till daybreak. His ulcers bred worms. And the hard earth-like crust of his sores, Job calls lumps of dust. His skin is broken, and has become loathsome. It closed, and then broke open afresh. His sores constantly gathered, and then ran continually. Such is deadly elephantiasis!

This describes Job's life and its pains -- as well as its brevity, and extinction in death. By his 'days,' he means his life as a whole -- which was far from passing away quickly. His days were being 'spent' -- and seemed to be coming to an end. Job regarded his life as near to a close. For his disease -- elephantiasis -- was incurable, and without hope of recovery or relief.

Such, he then felt, is man's appointed time on Earth!

'O, remember that my life is wind (-- but a breath)! My eye shall see good no more !.... See me, no more!.... I am not!.... The cloud is consumed, and vanishes away. So is he who goes down to the grave.... He shall return no more to his house; neither shall his place know him any more.... I will speak in the anguish of my spirit. I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.... When I say: "My bed shall comfort me; my couch shall ease my complaint" -- then You scare me with nightmares, and terrify me through visions!' Job 7:7-14.

In his *Tracts and Treatises* III:488, Calvin remarks: "In these words Job, deploring his calamity before God, exaggerated...that no hope of escape is mentioned. He only saw his calamities, which were pursuing him to the grave. Then it occurred to him that a miserable death would be the termination of a calamitous life. For he who feels the hand of God opposed to him, cannot think otherwise. From this amplification, he excited commiseration -- and lamented his case before God."

This feeling of the hopeless brevity of life, was overwhelming. Job turned in supplication to God -- beseeching Him, the Everlasting, to think how swiftly his mortal life was passing.

We see good only in the present life -- ending with death. By 'my eye shall see good no more,' Job meant his happiness or prosperity. Then, the state of the dead -- though not extinction -- was not to be called life. It was but a dreary shadow of life, having no contact with the living.

By 'I am not!' -- Job meant God would look for him, enquiring after the work of His hands. But Job would be gone.

By 'he who goes down to the grave' or *sh'e'ool*, is meant the place of departed persons. It is the appointed and inexorable demanding of everything earthly, and a place of shadowy duration.

Sh'e'ool is not to be confounded with one's own tombstone. It means the area where the good and the wicked are consciously segregated from one another, till Judgment Day. Luke 16:22-26.

Job heaps image upon image, to set before himself and the eye of God the brevity of human life. He mentions: the weaver's shuttle (v. 6); the wind (v. 7); the morning cloud (v. 9); and ends with a pathetic reference to his home, which would see him no more (v. 10). His impatience of the iron restraints of human existence, hurry him forward.

When I say: "My bed shall comfort me; my couch shall ease my complaint" -- then You scare me with nightmares, and terrify me through visions!' When he looks for sleep, instead of finding it, he is scared with nightmares, and terrified through visions.

Elephantiasis! Such distressing nightmares and terrors in sleep, are one of its symptoms. Job desired death. He wished his difficulty of breathing would suffocate him -- its usual end. That is why he says: "O, remember that my life is wind -- or but a breath!"

'My soul chooses strangling! And death, rather than this skeleton (or "life")! I loathe it! I would not keep on living always! Leave me alone! For my days are empty (or "breath")!' Job 7:15-16.

Job felt he was being strangled. And he himself welcomed it. For he himself in his own soul chose it.

A sense of choking, is one of the accompaniments of elephantiasis. Sometimes it ends in actual suffocation.

Job here referred to this symptom. He said he was being driven to desire that it might indeed really be fatal. For in the very next sentence, he went on to say he wanted death rather than life.

Indeed, he selected death by choking and being strangled, as the form of dying incidental to his disease. For this was the form of death with which he had perhaps more than once been threatened.

Job said he wanted death more than life -- death, more than those bones of his. For here he was describing the emaciated skeleton to which he had been reduced.

He said he then loathed his life. So keenly did he realize the misery of his condition and the intolerable painfulness of his life, that he broke out into the passionate cry that he hated it. He said he was weary of life.

He said he loathed it. He loathed life in general. The next words, 'I would not keep on living always,' indicate he did not want to keep alive what he called his 'bones' or his miserable skeleton.

He did not emphasize the word 'always.' But his phrase 'I would not keep on living always' is rather an exclamation of revulsion. It simply means that he did not desire to keep on living.

'Leave me alone!' -- Job continued to plead with God. Cease paining me with such afflictions! Job, just like his friends, here regarded his sufferings as inflicted directly by the hand of God. He wrongly assumed that if God would leave him, his pains would cease.

These words of Job are hardly a prayer. They are rather something like an imperious command to God. For to such a height of boldness, the sufferer was being driven -- by the keenness of his pains.

His last words here, were 'for my days are vanity' or emptiness. They are meant to support Job's demand that God leave him alone, and let him die. This refers to the shortness of his life. He did, however, seek a little respite -- before he might die (Job 10:20). For he referred to his life as 'vanity' -- or still one more empty breath. And 'my soul chooses...death, rather than life!'

'What is man, that You should magnify him -- and that You should set Your heart on him? And that You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment? How long will You not depart from me, or leave me alone till I swallow down my spittle (quickly, for the last time)? I have sinned. What shall I do to You, O You Preserver of men? Why have You set me up as a mark against Yourself -- so that I am a burden to myself?' Job 7:17-20.

Job now asks if man is not too insignificant a thing for God to occupy Himself with. Or even to bother persecuting!

True, David would later inspiredly remark that God had from the very beginning put all things under man's feet, and even stilled the enemy out of the mouth of babes and sucklings (Psalm 8:2-6). There, it is said that God exalts puny man to a kingly position among all His creatures, and distinguished him continually with new tokens of His favour. But here, instead of ignoring man, God makes too much of him -- by selecting him as the object of ever new and ceaseless sufferings.

But would God constantly dwell on engaging Himself with such a slight thing as Job, and make him the object of His unceasing correction? Would the Lord really continue to visit Job every day, and test him every second?

'How long will it be before You look away from me, and ignore me?' -- asked Job. How much longer will You keep looking at me in Your anger? When will You depart from me? How long before You leave me, till I swallow down my spittle quickly, in the twinkling of an eye -- till You give me a moment's respite? How long before I draw my breath (Job 9:18) for the last time?

Yes, I have sinned. But how can such a thing affect You, O God? But even if it does -- why don't You rather take away my sin, than plague me unto death because of it? What shall I ever be able to do to You, O You Watcher of men? And have I really thus sinned against You?

Even if my sin should so affect You -- ought that to be reason enough to justify You to load me with such unsparing pains as I am suffering? True, all men are sinners (Job 14:1-4). But then, why pick on me? Especially since I have striven to serve You alone, my whole life? How could I ever harm You? What could I ever do to You, O Preserver of men -- or, at least, of all other men?

Why have You set me up as your mark? Am I then your target, against whom you keep on discharging Your arrows? For the arrows of the Almighty stick into me (Job 6:4). Am I really only a stumbling-block You keep on striking against? Am I continually in Your way, as an obstacle constantly impeding Your progress? Am I a burden to You too, and not just to myself?

I am weary of myself, and of my life. Is it only to myself that I am a burden? Or am I a burden also to others -- and, above all, to You? How long will it still be, Lord, before You really depart from me?

'Why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity? For now, I am about to sleep in the dust. Then You shall seek me in the morning. But I shall not be!' Job 7:21.

Calvin's *Psychopannychia* is "a refutation of the error entertained by some unskilful persons, who ignorantly imagine that in the interval between death and judgment, the soul sleeps." It is also "an explanation of the condition and life of the soul, after this present life." *Tracts and Treatises* III:413.

Calvin remarked in his *Psychopannychia*, in his *Tracts and Treatises* III:459: "When Job said: 'Behold, I now sleep in the dust -- and if You seek me in the morning, I shall not subsist' (Job 7:21) -- did he think that his soul was to be overwhelmed with sleep?" No! Also despite his grave suffering, Job still knew that "his soul was not to be thrown into the dust, and therefore was not to sleep in the dust" -- even after the death of his body!

Job turns directly to God with his complaints and desponding inquiries. He longs for the alleviation of his sufferings, before what he thought was then the approaching end of his earthly life.

Even in the midst of his exhaustion of body and soul, Job still knew and felt God to be merciful -- and could yet regard Him as his own God (*cf.* Job 7:20).... In an incurable disease, imploring God to hasten death, and rejoicing at the thought of approaching dissolution -- is not a sin. It is not to be called despair -- inasmuch as one does not call giving up all hope of recovery, despair!

In Job, the fundamental nature of man is indeed sanctified -- but not yet subdued. The Spirit shines forth, as a Light in a dark place. But the day, the ever constant consciousness of favour and life, has not yet dawned.

When Job here declares to God: 'I am about to sleep in the dust....; then You shall seek me..., but I shall not be' -- he is not denying his own conscious existence after death, but only that he would then no longer be in this present world. For Job still believed in the resurrection of the dead (Job 19:25-27).

He then knew that after death, the end of the present life, there is no second life in this world. Then, after death, 'I shall not be' where I now am (Job 7:21)! Yet even then before his death, Job knew his Redeemer lives! Therefore, after his skin-worms destroyed his body -- yet in his flesh he would see God for himself. Job's own eyes would behold Him -- even after his reins or kidneys were consumed!

The more Job's friends exasperated him, the more he was urged on in his longing for a future life. His faith, once so heroic, only smouldered on under ashes -- until at last it was set free from its bondage by Jehovah Himself. Meanwhile, consciously, Job says: 'I shall now sleep in the dust!'

'Bildad...then said....: "Does the Almighty pervert justice?.... If you would seek God betimes..., surely now He would awaken for you, and make the habitation of your righteousness prosperous! Though your beginning was small, yet your latter end would greatly increase!"' Job 8:3-7.

Calamity is no proof of guilt in those on whom it falls. Bildad is enabled to hope the best for Job -- if he would rightly take his trials to heart.

In his *Sermons on Job*, Calvin rightly remarks: "With God, we indeed distinguish His wisdom and His goodness, His righteousness and His power. But these all similarly belong to His essence. Even though God has unlimited power over all creatures -- He nevertheless does not rule the world as a tyrant, but according to His holiness and His righteousness. This righteousness is partly hidden from us, so that we do not comprehend it. But the same is the case also with His power."

Bildad said Job's beginning was small. That is correct, looking at Job's present condition. Yet Bildad rightly predicted that Job's latter end would greatly increase. This was said of his future condition of prosperity (Job 42).

The verse Job 8:7 means that Job's then estate would seem small in comparison with the splendour of his renewed prosperity. God here allowed Bildad to utter a prophecy, the literal fulfilment of which He took care expressly to get chronicled!

So there is still hope for Job if, turning humbly to God, he showed that he was nevertheless upright in his innermost mind. God would restore the habitation of Job's righteousness. Indeed, God would not only restore -- but increase beyond measure!

As far as you, Job, are concerned -- if you seek the Lord from your heart, and pray for grace -- He shall indeed again help you, and restore you in your earlier prosperity. He shall then raise you up again, as formerly!

The underlying conviction of Bildad that God is never unjust, was perfectly true. No charge was made against Job.

Bildad certainly still wanted to suppose that Job was essentially a pious man. If he would then humble himself and ask for mercy -- it would also appear that his suffering was of a passing nature.

The end is always good for God's children -- either in this life, or after this life. In God's fellowship, the latter days are always more glorious than the former. The stream which flows forth from the sanctuary, constantly becomes broader and deeper (Ezekiel 47). And God keeps the good wine for later (John 2:10). For, as Bildad reminded Job: 'Your latter end would greatly increase!'

'We are but of yesterday.... Our days on Earth are a shadow.... Whilst it (the rush) is yet in its greenness and not cut down, it withers.... Behold, that is its joy (or course of life)!... Out of the Earth, others shall grow!' Job 8:9-19.

Our ephemeral and shadowy life, is not sufficient for passing judgment on the dealings of God. Even if we go back just a little further, we are but of yesterday -- and do not really know. Being from but yesterday, we do not truly understand. For our days are but like a shadow on the ground.

So, Bildad now came with the words of the fathers. He used history and tradition to his advantage, to add weight and authority to his pronouncements. This way of doing things may at times develop problems, but is nevertheless not completely to be disapproved of.

It is not just the present generation alone which possesses wisdom. If one wishes to understand the essence of things, one must also accept the wisdom which has been gained in the struggles of the centuries which is transmitted from one generation to the next. All wisdom, is traditional wisdom! He who does not wish to stand on the shoulders of predecessors, is erecting a building without a foundation.

It is nothing short of revolutionary, when we do not wish to keep account of history. As if the world was created only yesterday!

Yet, true wisdom does not either consists only of relating what is past. For we must not reprimand!

Think of the rush, the papyrus or the paper-plant. It grows even up to fifteen feet above water level. But once it lacks water -- even in its greenness, it quickly dries out, withering more quickly than any other herb.

So too is the joy of the godless. It does not endure, but indeed ends unexpectedly -- just like the rush suddenly withers. The ungodly suddenly sink down and perish like the water-reeds. Just like the papyrus and the reed cannot grow without water -- so too can those who forget God not keep on continuing to live.

It is the same with the luxuriant and climbing creeper -- which too is compared to the godless. It springs forth in the sun, and its branches shoot forth in the garden. Its suckers spread out, and run forth everywhere.

But in the days of its sudden drought, even its supports withdraw from it. Then, it is finished, and others take its place -- whose fate, when they have no better ground of confidence than the creeper, share the same end. The creeper leaves behind it no trace, and no memory. So too, as far as humanity is concerned, our days upon Earth are but a shadow!

'Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man! Neither will He help evil-doers! While He fills your mouth with laughing, and your lips with rejoicing -- they that hate you, shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling-place of the wicked shall come to nought!' Job 8:20-22.

Bildad again augurs a happy and a brilliant future for Job. As did God in Job 1:1, Bildad too here calls Job 'perfect' (Job 8:10 *cf.* 9:20f).

God indeed ultimately helps those whom He regards as perfect. But He does not help or take evil-doers by the hand. He does not help them, in the way He indeed stands ready to help His Own.

Job is here assured that God would yet fill his mouth with laughter, and his lips with rejoicing. He is told those who hate him, would be ashamed. And that the dwelling-place of the wicked would be nullified.

Thus Job should know that his friends were not among his haters. And that his friends regarded him quite differently to those whom they regarded as his haters.

Bildad comforted Job with God's promises. Here he gives the insuperable truth of the permanent divine righteousness, which would be a great comfort to Job. If he continued to trust the Lord, all good and joy would come to him!

Bildad defended the justice of God. For the Lord indeed never swerves from doing whatever is right.

Bildad rightly used this truth, when he promised a glorious outcome to Job's suffering as a substantial proof that God was not dealing unjustly toward him. For God does not act hostilely toward the godly, neither does He promote the evil-doer.

So Job's friends really regarded Job as a pious man. Other men did so, too. And Bildad clearly saw that mankind everywhere perceives that a Moral Law governs the universe.

But unfortunately, he did not also see that this is not the only principle by which God operates. Nor does God not have also other purposes in His ways -- such as promoting His almightiness and His sovereignty too over all of His creatures.

It is true that nothing God sends to man proceeds from injustice. But it is not true that everything He sends to him proceeds only from His justice. For Bildad, however, there were no mysteries in God's ways with men!

Yet there was one truth Job and his friends all agreed on. That truth should have comforted Job then, and us today even in the aches of old age -- God will not cast away a perfect man!

'Then Job...said: "My soul is weary of my life.... I will say to God: 'Are Your days like the days of man? Are Your years like man's days?.... You know I am not wicked; and there is nobody that can deliver out of Your hand. Your hands have made me.... Yet, You destroy me!'"' Job 10:1-8.

Job breaks out perplexed and baffled -- 'my soul is weary of my life!' What is it in God's nature, that is the secret of Job's sufferings? God's hands once shaped him like a precious vessel. And now, He reduces him back to dust again!

Job was now weary of life. He had renounced all claim for its continuance. He prayed to the Author of his sufferings, that He would not permit him to die the death of the wicked. Indeed, Job's soul was disgusted with his life.

Job was groping after the discovery of some characteristic or quality in God, to account for his own afflictions. For Job asked God if His life be brief -- such as human life is? 'Are Your days like the days of man? Are Your years like man's days?'

Job asked God if His days are short, like those of men -- so that He must hurry to punish the wicked. No, God is the Eternal One, and can therefore be patient and longsuffering!

Job continued: 'You know that I am not wicked.' Yes, God knew that Job was godly. But then, why was God now crushing Job in His hand? Job therefore objects: 'Your hands have fashioned me, and made me! Yet, You are destroying me!'

Mention of God's hand and even of His hands -- suggests how, from of old, God's hand made Job with lavish expenditure of skill in all his parts. Yet Job now brings the contradiction of God's present dealing with him before the Lord -- exclaiming 'You destroy me!'

Does it give God pleasure, when He oppresses? Man is called the makings of the divine hands -- as though he were elaborated by them. Because at his origin (Genesis 2:7), the continuation of which is the development in the womb (Psalm 139:15), he came into existence in a remarkable manner by the directly personal working of God.

Is God's life like the brevity of man's life? To God belongs absolute knowledge and absolute power. God knows even from the first, that Job will not appear as a guilty person. The Lord is at all events sure of Job, for nothing escapes the hand of God.

Yet all this still puzzled Job. For he said: 'Your hands have formed and perfected me. Yet You have now swallowed me up!

Would You then gulp me down, and cause me to go back to dust? Would You terminate my existence? My soul is weary of my life. For You now destroy me -- but You do not annihilate me!

'Remember, I beseech You, that You have made me like the clay! But will You bring me back to dust again?.... Your visitation has preserved my spirit!.... Are my days not few?.... Before I go whence I shall not return -- even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death!' Job 10:9-21.

In his *Tracts and Treatises* III:454, Calvin remarks: "He who is dust, will return to dust.... But not the spirit, which God derived from another quarter, and gave to man!... We read in the book of Job (10:9), 'Remember how You made me from clay, and will You reduce me to dust?'.... This is said of the body. A little after, he adds: 'Life and mercy You have given me, and Your visitation has preserved my spirit!' (Job 10:12). That life, then, was not to return to dust!"

Job begs for a little easing of his pain, before he departs to the land of darkness. But even after that, God's essence and personality were things Job could not doubt. For yes, 'my soul is weary of my life' (Job 10:1). But 'I will say to God: "Do not condemn me!"' (Job 10:2); and 'Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him!' (Job 13:15).

God had taken care of Job, since he was an embryo similar to the dust of the ground from which the Lord made Adam (Genesis 2:7). Since then, he had grown up. 'You have clothed me with skin and flesh, and have fenced me with bones and sinews. You have granted me life..., and Your visitation has preserved my spirit!' (Job 10:11-12).

'Are my days not few?.... May I take a little comfort, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death?' (Job 10:20-21). For Job was dust, and unto dust he would return (Genesis 3:19). 'Then, the dust shall return to the earth -- as it was. But the spirit shall return to God, Who gave it' (Ecclesiastes 12:7). 'The spirit of man, goes upward!' (Ecclesiastes 3:21). 'For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing!' (Ecclesiastes 13:14).

God had given Job life, and sustained that life amidst constant proofs of favour. His care, had guarded the spirit by which Job's frame became a living and self-conscious creature. Job says: 'You have perfected me as clay' -- as a perfected adult human being. 'Will You again turn me into dust?' (Job 10:9). 'Your care has guarded my breath' or spirit! (Job 10:12). 'Why have You brought me forth out of the womb?.... Are my days not a few? Before I go to return no more, into the land of darkness and of the shadow of death!' (Job 10:18-21).

Job desired some alleviation of his sufferings, before he descended to the grave as a land of darkness. Yet it was not a land of final extinction, but only a land of the shadow of death – until he would rise again from that shadow at the latter day when his own eyes would see his Redeemer (Job 19:25-26)! Job nowhere turns against God, but inclines to Him in prayer. The dark cloud needed only to be removed, when Job would again stand before God as His saint!

Will you again bring me back to dust? Yes, when Job's spirit returned to God Who gave it!

'Surely, I would speak to the Almighty!.... I desire to reason with God.... Let come on me what will!... Why...do I put my life into my hand? Though He slays me -- yet will I trust in Him!... He shall also be my salvation!' Job13:3-16.

Calvin remarks in his *Institutes* II:10:19 & III:2:21: "To those who think only of the present life, death is the extremity of despair. But it could not destroy the hope of Job! 'Though He slay me,' said he, 'yet will I trust in Him!' (Job 13:15).... Job thus declares the strength of his confidence: 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!' (Job 13:15)."

And Calvin further adds in his *Tracts and Treatises* III:461: "If all things are kept uncertain in regard to the future -- shall the believer, to whom all things work together for good, regard affliction as an evidence of divine hatred? By no means!... Supported by this consideration, they not only endure whatever befalls them with unshaken magnanimity, but even glory in tribulation! Acknowledging with blessed Job (13:15) -- 'Though He slay us, we will hope in Him!'"

It is as if Job here says: 'Why should I anxiously seek to preserve my life?' The phrase properly means to commit one's life to His hand to carry it through. 'Why should I painfully strive to preserve my life? I am ready to risk my life! Behold, He will slay me! I will not wait for a more distant death. I wait for His final stroke!'

I will not eagerly make my flesh safe. I will take my soul into my own hand. I will calmly and bravely expose myself to the danger of death. I hope in Him. Though the Lord should slay me, yet will I hope in Him! I await no other happier outcome!

Many in the hour of their death, have adopted this utterance of Job as the expression of their faith and consolation. It is also, according to its most evident meaning, an expression of perfect resignation.

Luther is true to it, when he translates: 'Behold, He will destroy me' -- but not annihilate me! I will not wait to justify myself!

The meaning then, which agrees both with the context and with the reality, is: 'Behold, He will slay me! I wait for Him! I wait for whatever He may do -- even to smite with death!'

Job resigns himself even to death. He waits for Him to Whom he resigns himself, whatever He may do to him.

Job is prepared to render God an account of the ways in which he has walked. And in verse 15, he adds what will prove a triumph for him -- 'He shall also be my salvation!' It here means salvation, as victory in a contest for the right. Job means he has already as good as won the contest before God. 'Though He slays me -- yet will I trust in Him!'

'Man that is born of a woman, is of few days -- and full of trouble! He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down! He also flees like a shadow.... Do You open your eyes to such a one?'
Job 14:1-5.

In his *Tracts and Treatises* III:476, Calvin observes that "Job 14:1 says of man: 'He is a flower which comes forth, and is cut down and flees like a shadow.' What more did he mean, than just to say that man is fleeting and frail and like a fading flower?"

After the intensity and excitement of chapter thirteen, Job sinks back into discouraged complaints. Man is the offspring of one herself weak -- and doomed to sorrow. He too must therefore be weak, and destined for trouble. He comes forth like a flower; then withers.

Here we once again have to deal with a sad view of human life, which is so short and painful. What is man, and what is that which descends from man?

Man born of woman, is of few and troublesome days. Oh, that a clean child might come out of an unclean woman! There is not one! *'Do You open your eyes to such a one?'* Yes, in Christ!

Born of a weak woman, man comes into the world with pain. Powerlessly, he moves through life. In his coming and in his going, man is like a flower that opens -- and then soon withers. Rather than a rising sun, man is a lengthening and a dying shadow.

If the race of men were not universally infected with sin which each individual inherits by belonging to the race, God's stringent treatment of the individual would be hard to understand. Yet similar ideas of the universality of the sinfulness of mankind are also found in other Scriptures too.

Thus, 'God saw that the wickedness of man was great..., and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually' (Genesis 6:5). 'Man's heart is evil from his youth' (Genesis 8:21). 'I was shaped in iniquity -- and in sin my mother conceived me!' (Psalm 51:5). 'Woe is me!.... Because I am a man of unclean lips!' (Isaiah 6:5). 'Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?' (Job 4:7).

But how can God pass so strict a judgment on man whose life is so short and full of sorrow, and which cannot possibly be pure from sin? Woman-born man is short-lived, full of unrest, and opens out like a flower. Woman is weak during her lying-in. Therefore weakness, suffering and impurity is the portion of man even from birth. He is mown down; cut off from above; lopped off.

Would that perfect sinlessness were possible to man! But since that which is born of the flesh, is flesh -- there is not a single human being who is pure. Except the divine and virgin-born Christ!

Yes, Christ the perfect Saviour! For man, born of woman, is of few and troublesome days!

Job 14:5

Man's days are determined, and his months are with God Mar. 2

Man...is of few days...and is cut down.... His days are determined. The number of his months are with You! Job 14:5.

In his *Institutes* I:16:9, Calvin remarks: "Let us suppose...a merchant...falls into a den of robbers, and is murdered. His death was not only foreseen by the eye of God, but had been fixed by His decree. For it is said not that He foresaw how far the life of each individual should extend, but that He determined and fixed the bounds which could not be passed (Job 14:5)!"

Man's day are all determined. Not by man himself, but by God. In fact, pre-determined! For it is with God that the number of man's months are. Even the month of his death, is pre-determined.

So too, also man's physical boundaries -- both locally, and nationally. Man cannot pass over any of the boundaries of days or months. Nor can he at will ignore any of the physical boundaries which God has determined for him.

Job now immediately turned back to the fact of short human longevity. Man's days are determined. His months have been fixed. And all his boundaries limited (Acts 17:36).

Man being of few days and full of trouble, Job pleads that God would not load him with uncommon afflictions. But rather leave him oppressed with no more than those natural to his short and suffering life.

The time of his life is determined. Even his months. And God has made His decisions, which may not be transgressed. Namely, as regards the continuation and end of his life.

The days of all humans have been closed. Namely in connection with the internal creatureliness of man described in the previous verses.

Man's days are cut off. The number of his months is with God, and known by Him alone -- because fixed by Him. He has set fixed bounds for him. Man cannot go beyond them!

The life of man is ever transitory, and full of trouble. Job affirmed God should pity him, and allow him to work out the brief period of its duration in quietness.

So, then -- our total environment is pre-determined by God. For the Lord has appointed our boundaries, over which we cannot pass without His permission.

The total number of the months of the last year of our life, are with the Lord. And every single day of our life, is numbered!

Yes, man's days are determined. And the very number of his months, are safe with God!

'(O Lord,) turn from him, so that man may rest! Till he shall accomplish his day, like a hireling. For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again -- and that its tender branch will not cease, even though its root grows old in the earth and its trunk dies in the ground. Still, through the scent of water, it will bud -- and bring forth boughs like a plant!' Job 14:6-9.

Lord, look away from man -- so that he may rest from unwanted affliction! So that he may enjoy and have pleasure in his brief life -- which is nothing more than that of the hired labourer during his hot and toilsome day.

That destiny of extant man, is compared to that of a tree. Though it may get cut down, it shall sprout again. Its branch shall not cease, even after its root ages in the earth and its trunk dies in the ground. For when it smells water, it shall bud again and bring forth new life like a fresh plant!

When God looks away from man or turns His strict watch from him -- he may, like one hired for but a day, enjoy his life. Job desires God would grant him the rest of the hireling, who must toil in sorrow and eat his bread in the sweat of his brow but is still free from any special suffering -- by not laying extraordinary affliction on him in addition to the infirmities beneath which he sighs.

The context treats of freedom from special suffering, by not laying extraordinary affliction on him in addition to the common infirmities beneath which he sighs. The context treats of freedom from special suffering in life.

So God would at least permit man the rest of a hireling who, though vexed with heavy toil, cheerfully reconciles himself to it -- in prospect of the reward he hopes to obtain at evening time. However, Job does not claim for man the toil which the hireling gladly undergoes in expectation of complete rest later, but the toil of the hireling seems to him to be rest in comparison with the possibility of having still greater toil to undergo.

Man's life, which is only a handbreadth (Psalm 39:6), is not to be overburdened. He may, like the hireling enjoy his day -- until he shall have accomplished it. And, even after having accomplished his day's work, the hireling still lives on to work elsewhere! For if a tree is hewn down, the stump left in the ground puts forth new shoots. The young branches or the juicy suckers do not cease.

The stump is the remnant that survives the judgment. And this remnant becomes the seed from which a renewed man springs up after the old is destroyed. Even after the root of a tree becomes old and its trunk dies away in the dust -- when it catches the scent of water, it puts forth buds for both leaves and flowers, and brings forth branches again.

At the end of man's day, God gives him rest. And then, man later once again brings forth leaves and branches!

'Man dies, and wastes away. Yes, man gives up the spirit -- and where is he? Like the waters fail from the sea and the flood decays and dries up, so man lies down and does not rise -- till the Heavens grow old! They shall not awake -- until Your wrath be past!' Job 14:10-13.

Having pursued the destiny of man through all its steps down to its lowest -- Job, with a revulsion created by the instinctive demands of the human spirit, rises to the thought that there is another life after this one! Death was not an end of personal existence!

The dead person subsists. He descends into the abode of deceased humans. His existence then is a dreamy shadow of his past. He has no communication with the living.

With death, the existence of man here on Earth ends. But the inspired Job says that once he has descended to the underworld, he must stay there. For all the dead are conveyed to that dark place, the valley of the shadow of death.

Who is to say, how long they must stay there? The Heavens must pass away, before they wake up from the sleep of death. Indeed, Job still believed in a life after this life! Even though Jesus still had to appear; to abolish death; and to bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel (Second Timothy 1:10).

The communion with God enjoyed by the pious in this life, shall not be interrupted in death. The state of the abode of deceased humans shall be overleaped. For the believing soul is taken by God in death -- unto Himself (Psalm 16:10 & 49:15 & 73:24).

There is for dead man, no rising -- no waking up for a while. But, indeed, not for ever! Yet it does not happen until the Heavens are no more. In Psalm 102:27, the world's history closes with a change in all these things -- but not in their annihilation!

'Oh, that You would hide me in the realm of the dead! That You would conceal me -- till Your anger changes! That You would appoint me a set time -- and then remember me!'

So the inspired Job here wished that the realm of the dead into which he believed the wrath of God would soon precipitate him, may only be a temporary place of safety for him -- until the wrath of God turns away. He wished that God would appoint for him, when there, a terminus. And when this limit would be reached -- that God would again remember Job in mercy.

Yes, also the Heavens grow old (Psalm 102:25-26 and Isaiah 34:4 and Hebrews 1:10-12). But do they ever die and disappear? No! Are they then not rather, ultimately, changed? Yes!

After death, no resurrection of man -- till the end of history! But when the Heavens grow old and finally change -- man rises! When God's wrath has past -- man and the Heavens awaken again!

'O, that You would hide me in the grave; that You would keep me in secret until Your wrath be past; that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time, I will wait -- until my change comes! You shall call, and I will answer You!' Job 14:13-15.

Amid his misery, Job longed for the grave. On the condition, however, that it be regarded as a place where he would have to remain for only a limited time.

This conception allowed Job to rise and get out of the very extremity of his despair. In the following chapters, especially in Job 19:25-27, he rises to that assurance.

The feeling forces itself upon Job's mind, that it implies nothing less than that a man, when dead, should live again. He will not allow himself to be arrested, in his pursuit of that glorious vision. For he describes how he would wait all the period appointed to him, until his release came.

Job dwells on the joy with which he would answer the voice of his Creator calling him to His fellowship again. He longed after the work of His hands, long estranged and hidden.

Job asks: 'If a man dies, shall he live again?' It was a craving of his heart that gave rise to that wish. For that would comfort him, under all the present suffering. 'All the days of my appointed time (or "warfare") would I wait -- until my change comes!'

"Warfare" is the name Job gave to the whole of this toilsome and sorrowful interval between the present and the wished-for goal. But he knows that even in the realm of the dead, this life continues in a shadowy form.

It is not destruction, but change which he awaits. Oh, that such a change awaited him! What a blessed future would it be, when it came to pass!

Then God would call to him in the depth of the realm of the dead -- and Job would then answer Him from the deep. After God's anger was spent, He would again yearn after the human work of His hands -- the natural loving relationship between the Creator and His creature would again prevail.

It would then become manifest that God's wrath is only a waning power (Isaiah 54:8). And love His true and everlasting attribute.

Job must have had a keen perception of the profound relationship between the Creator and His creature in the past. Only then would he be able to give utterance to such a wonderful expectation respecting the future!

For man would answer God from the grave, at the set time!

'God has delivered me!.... I was at ease, but He has broken me asunder!.... Oh Earth, don't you cover my blood!.... Also now -- behold, my witness is in Heaven!.... My record is on high!' Job 16:11-19.

Job's previous prayer (14:13-15) for a second life hereafter, was now supported. It is a martyr's death he thought he should die. This faith sent forth a bright confidence beyond death.

He rose to the assurance that he could not remain unrecognized for ever. His innocent blood would appeal to Heaven with an unceasing cry, till it found a response (16:18).

Even now, he had a Witness Who would testify for him -- God Himself as He is in Heaven. And to this Witness, he now made his appeal. In God Himself, Job yet hoped to find a Witness. Even this side of death, Job appealed from God -- to God.

Job lifted his face to God -- God as He is in truth, and as He must reveal Himself in the future. Job begged that God would uphold his right, as he now felt he was being brought to death.

He beseeched God to give him a pledge then -- that, after his death, He would make his vindication apparent. Fate, which Job thought was bringing him to death, could not always prevail.

He would die, but his blood would cry out for reparation -- filling Heaven and Earth with its voice, until he be vindicated. He had a Witness in Heaven Who would testify for him. And he appealed to God, to do justice to him. Job would die. But his hope was in the grave, and beyond.

Job reached out his hand to the distinction between the God Who presently pursued him unto death -- and the same God of the future, Who would yearn again toward His creature as the work of His Own hands. This God of the future, was God as He truly is.

God would not allow obloquy to overwhelm His creature for ever. Job's blood would utter a ceaseless cry for reparation. And he had, in Heaven, One Who would witness for him.

Yes, Job's present afflictions -- so he then thought -- would bring him to the grave. But he appealed to Heaven for vindication. He cried out for reparation.

If Job's blood was to cry out for reparation until it found it -- there must be Someone to take up the cry and see reparation made. Job was assured he already has such a Witness in Heaven.

'Even now, behold my Witness is in Heaven -- and He Who vouches for me, is on high!' (Job 16:19). Jesus Christ, my Advocate and my Sponsor (First John 2:1). For 'the righteous...shall hold on to his way; and he who has clean hands, shall be stronger and stronger (Job 17:9). Yes, God had broken Job asunder. But the Son of God would soon fix him!

'The answered Bildad...: "His (Job's) confidence...shall dwell in His tabernacle. His roots shall be dried up beneath -- and above, shall his branch be cut off. His remembrance shall perish from the Earth!" Job 18:1,15-17.

Job's confidence would dwell in God's tabernacle! But would Job's remembrance indeed perish from the Earth? No!

In his *Institutes* II:11:2, Calvin assures us: "Those who can venture to speak..., assuredly declare that their hope rises beyond the world and worldly blessings.... In this way, are to be understood the many passages in Job (18:17)."

Yes, his root would be dried up beneath, and his branches would wither above (18:16). His remembrance would perish from the land (18:17). But Job himself would never be annihilated!

Bildad concluded: 'This is the place of him who does not know God' (18:21). But on the other hand, Job did!

Death itself was called 'the king of terrors' (Job 18:14). It seemed to have brought a disease on Job, which looked fatal.

But it could not go further, than to bring him only to the brink of the abyss. For Job himself, and even his friends, traced that mysterious affliction not to Satan, but directly back to God.

Death is represented under the figure of a plant. 'Its roots shall be dried up beneath -- and above, its branch shall be cut off' (Job 18:16). To Biblical comparisons taken from plants, root and branch often became familiar in the sense of ancestors and descendants. This became common not in hopeless Pagan but in hopeful Christian circles, with their faith in the resurrection.

For Christians not only pin their hopes on the resurrection and their lives therebeyond. But they also know that part of the immortality of the righteous is also found in the continuance of his posterity and his works in this world, even before its everlasting preservation on the New Earth.

In reality, Job is not an example of punishment -- but an example for consolation to posterity. What posterity has to relate, is not Job's ruin -- but his wondrous deliverance.

Job is no mere personification. He has, in himself, brought forth to view an idea connected with the history of redemption.

Will man's remembrance perish from the Earth? No. For in Job, we behold the image of Christ. As his answer to Bildad, in the next chapter, abundantly makes clear!

'Then Job answered....: "I know my Redeemer lives!.... He shall stand at the latter day upon the Earth -- and though after my skin-worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God...for myself. My eyes, and not another's, shall behold!'" Job 19:1,25-27.

Luther translated this: "I shall, after death, be re-clothed with my flesh. And I shall see God!" Job does not here speak of the immortality of the soul, but of the resurrection of the flesh!

Calvin remarks in his *Institutes* II:10:3,19 & III:25:4: "The Apostle Paul demonstrates that the Old Testament has special reference to the future life.... The most remarkable passage...is that of Job -- 'I know that my Redeemer lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the Earth; and though after my skin-worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God Whom...my eye shall behold and not another'.... He who saw that the Redeemer would be present with him when lying in the grave, must have raised his eyes to a future immortality.... Job..., when more like a dead body than a living being, trusting to the power of God, hesitates not: as if in full vigour to rise to that day!"

In his *Sermons on Job*, Calvin adds that Job 'knows that his Redeemer lives.... I know that my God is alive, and that in the end He will rise up upon the dust!'.... Meanwhile, we should perish. But He intends to make us partakers of His strength.... He makes the dust to awaken out of hand, and sets it up again.... Job intends to declare that God does not hold the said power enclosed only in His Own Being, but also spreads it out upon men.... Job says...that the worms...will also gnaw and fret away the rest of him.... Yet...he says that he trusted to see God...in his flesh -- that is to say, by being restored again.... I shall see him, and none other.... Although...the remnant of me...be eaten away under my skin -- yet shall I see my God.... When my body is laid in the grave, and there consumed as it were to nothing -- yet...it shall be restored again at the last day!...

"Meanwhile, my soul shall be in safe and sure keeping. Because..., when I am dead, God will have it in His protection.... Then I shall behold much better than I do now, the life that our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased for us by His blood.... He says that his skin was worm-eaten and consumed.... He was as good as dead.... Yet he protests that he will not cease looking to his God.... When Job says 'that he shall see his Redeemer in his flesh' -- his meaning is...that he shall be restored to a new state, though his skin were so eaten.... He says expressly that his bone shall be consumed, and nothing of him shall remain whole....

"Afterward, he adds -- 'I shall see God in my flesh.' And how shall he see Him in his flesh?.... I shall be set in my former state, and see my God yet again!.... God has assured me that He will make me strong again.... My eyes shall then behold Him, and none other.... Job then means that he shall see God...by being set again in his former state!"

Job knew his Redeemer lives and would arise after his skin was again made whole. Job would behold God and see Him with his own eyes. They, after decomposing, would yet see God!

'Why do the wicked live, (and) become old?... They spend their days..., and in a moment go down to the grave!.... God lays up...for His children. He rewards them, and they shall know it.... One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet...; and another dies in the bitterness of his soul.... They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.... The wicked are reserved to the day of destruction! They shall be brought forth, to the day of wrath!' Job 21:7-30.

Calvin remarks in his *Institutes* II:10:17 that "the holy fathers under the Old Testament were not ignorant that in this world, God seldom or never gives His servants the fulfilment of what is promised them.... They doubted not that...a time would at length arrive, when the divine promises would be fulfilled....

"Lifting their eyes to the eternal world, they despised the momentary hardships and calamities of the present life and confidently broke out into these exclamations: 'He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved! But...bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days' (Psalm 55:22-23).

"Where in this world is there a pit of eternal destruction to swallow up the wicked ? Of whose happiness it is elsewhere said: 'They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave!' (Job 21:13)?"

In his *Tracts and Treatises* III:459, Calvin adds: "When Job said, 'Yet they shall sleep in the dust and the worms shall cover them' (Job 21:26)..., do you think that they put (their) souls down before worms to be gnawed by them?" No!

For a long time in this present life, the godless looks happy. He reaches old age, and then still looks powerful. He is fortunate in his descendants, for his children grow up prosperously by his side.

His home life seems to be satisfactory, for there is peace in his dwelling. And his cattle seem content, for their herds break forth in multitudes. At least, such is the view of Job's three friends.

But Job answers these objections of his three friends. He says that the good of the wicked is not in their hand -- and they cannot retain it. It will speedily desert them. Often is it seen to desert them. 'How oft their destruction comes upon them!'

For the ungodly get swept away, before their time. And God punishes the guilt of the godless. Their thoughts, are those of evil-doers who reap the reward of their deeds.

They too get overwhelmed in the middle of all their wishes and expectations. For death makes them too a prey for the worms. Indeed, *'the wicked are reserved to the day of destruction! They shall be brought forth, to the day of wrath!'* In just a moment, the wicked go down to the grave!

'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!.... Will He plead against me with His great power? No!.... He would put strength in me!.... Behold, I go forward!.... He knows the way I am taking! When He has tried me -- I shall come forth as gold! My foot has held His steps. His way I have kept. Neither have I gone back from the Commandment of His lips. I have esteemed the words of His mouth, more than my necessary food!' Job 23:3-12.

Job cannot find God. If He tried him, he would come forth as gold -- for all his life long, he had kept His way and not departed from the Commandments of His lips. What confounds and paralyses Job's mind, are not his calamities -- or even his death in itself.

Job ardently desired that he could come to God's judgment-seat, to plead his cause. He wished that God would give heed to him, and answer him.

Would He plead against Job, in the greatness of His power? Nay! But He would give heed to Job!

For He would then listen to Job! The latter's wish, was that God would hear his arguments, and answer him.

Behold, I go forward! God knew Job's sincerity. The Lord knew the way Job would take. God knew the conduct Job was pursuing. And God also knew the thoughts Job cherished.

If God were to try him, Job knew that he would come forth as gold. Job would pass that test, like burnished metal in a crucible.

Job rightly said that he had kept God's way. That man had not gone back from the Commandment of God's lips!

In the course of the discussion, Job had gradually acquired now confidence in God -- which once more breaks through. He knows that God, if He could be found, would hear him.

God would then pay attention of Job. Towards all quarters of the Heavens, Job turns with his eyes and the longing of his whole nature, to see if he may by any means find God. Job would then come forth like tried gold. His foot had held firmly to the steps of God, so that Job was always close behind Him. Job guarded His way, and did not turn aside.

He kept the words of His mouth, and esteemed them high and precious After the manner of silver and other costly metals.

God shall investigate Job's case in depth. Then, Job has nothing to fear. For Job has not walked his own way, but that of the Lord. He knows the way Job takes, and makes him pure gold!

'Job continued....: 'As God lives...and the Almighty -- the Spirit of God is in my nostrils, all the while my breath is in me.... My lips shall not speak wickedness.... Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me!' Job 27:1-5.

The friends of Job were silent. Job himself remained master of the discourse. And his continued speech was introduced with almost proverbial certainty, as the final proof at the conclusion of his speech.

Job was conscious of God, and could praise Him for His exalted and awe-inspiring majesty. From the world below, Job's contemplation rises to the clouds above and even to the divine throne. Job 26:7-14.

The patriarch begins, with an asseveration of his truthfulness. For he asserts the agreement of what he confesses with his consciousness of the very life of God Himself. He concludes that God is the highest manifestation of Truth. For God never lies, but is indeed the living God. Job 27:1.

Job, with the solemnity of an oath by God, here declares he speaks in sincerity. He even claims he knows the Spirit of God is in him, also while making these claims. It is as though Job here asserts that as long as his breath is in him, his lips would speak no wrong. For his full life was still in him.

He still cleaves to God. Job still swears by the name of God Almighty. And he claims he knows the Spirit of God is in him, while so swearing. Job 27:1-3.

He does so, while his breath and his life were yet wholly in him. Though reduced by disease, Job was still in possession of all his powers, and flung the whole force of his existence into what he then affirmed.

Job still possessed his full consciousness. It was in his human nostrils. For the breath which passed in and out through them, was the outward and visible form of his existence which was in every respect the condition of his life.

Job's lips did not speak wickedness. He swore that he was sincere, and was speaking truly. Till Job died, he would not sacrifice his integrity, nor refrain from asserting his sincerity.

Because he still lived -- and, living, could not deny his own existence -- he swore that his own testimony was perfect truth. He said: 'My lips shall never speak that which is false.' His confession remained unalterable.

Job would speak the truth, and nothing but the truth. He still possessed all of the faculties to be able to swear a binding oath. What a privilege! He says: 'Till I die, I'll not remove my integrity!'

'I hold fast to my righteousness. I will not let it go! My heart shall not reproach me -- as long as I live! Let my enemy be like the wicked!... For what is the hope of the hypocrite..., when God takes away his soul?... Will God hear his cry?... Will he delight himself in the Almighty?' No!
Job 27:6-10.

Job declared he held fast to his righteousness. He would never let go of it. For he would hold onto it, even till his death -- and beyond death, too! Unto all eternity!

He said, assuredly and assuringly, that even his own heart would not reproach him. It would not reproach a single one of his days -- throughout his whole life. For his Redeemer lived and lives!

The heart, in Hebrew, is the conscience -- or consciousness. Luther expressed the meaning vigorously, when he translated it: 'My conscience does not bite me, in respect of my whole life!'

For Job's whole life had been righteous. He knew that, consciously and conscientiously, even in his heart. His heart itself would not bite or reproach him -- to the very last day of his earthly life!

On the other hand -- not so, the wicked! Job rightly abhorred him, especially when also hypocritical. He says his enemy was an evil-doer -- because he charged Job falsely.

He repudiated the idea of himself ever being one of the wicked. For the wicked have no hope in God -- but Job did!

Job's condition of mind, was very different to that of the wicked. He would never cease to maintain his own righteousness. He had a God, Who did not leave him unheard; in Whom he delighted himself; and to Whom he could at all times draw near!

But how comfortless in calamity, is the condition of the wicked! Job would never cease holding on to the way of righteousness. However, comfortless in affliction is the wicked man -- having no hope in God!

What is the hope of the godless man, when God cuts him off by taking away his soul? First, throughout his whole life? Second, when calamity overtakes him? Third, especially at his moment of death? And fourth, particularly for all eternity thereafter?

The wicked have no consolatory resource in the manifold conditions of life, when men need higher help than just their own. They have no pleasure in God; nor fellowship with Him; and cannot appeal to Him!

But Job had hope in God -- in trouble, and in death! For he delighted himself in God at all times. Indeed, he even said: 'My heart shan't reproach me, as long as I live!'

'Job continued...and said...: "In months past..., God preserved me.... His candle shone upon my head.... By His light, I walked through darkness.... In the days of my youth..., God was upon my tent.... The Almighty was still with me!'" Job 29:1-5.

In his Sermons on Job, Calvin remarked: "Beset with many troubles and dangers..., if our Lord provided not for us -- we could not step one pace forward! No, nor so much as stir one finger -- but we would stumble into many miseries. But God remedies all things, by showing us His lamp -- and by making it to shine upon us!

"Therefore, let us learn to yield Him the praise that He deserves!.... We cannot hold out in this transitory life, unless He always looks upon us and guides us....

"What does He deserve, in respect of the instruction which He gives us by His Word? So long as we live here below, we live as it were in darkness.... We would fall into confusion at every step, if we were not enlightened by the lamp of God's Word....

"I do not doubt but Job meant to say -- 'When I was in my riches; when God had given me so great abundance of goods that they flowed into my house'.... Therefore [the meaning of it is] when I had the providence of God upon my tent -- that is to say, when God watched over me, to guide all my affairs....

"Job still directs himself unto God -- and glorifies Him by confessing that the benefits which he had received in times past, fell not to him by casual adventure.... 'It is God (he says), Who had lit His lamp upon me!'... Let us then learn to glory God for all things, after the example of Job -- both in prosperity, and adversity!"

God's light was a figure for His favourable enlightening and prospering of Job during the joyful fruit-gathering period of his previous life. That was the time God intimately watched over his tent. Then, his happiness overflowed.

Those were the olden times, which Job now wished back. The time when God's light shone above his head, when he otherwise walked in darkness. God's light, which then preserved Job from straying and falling. God then ruled over his tent. But God was even now still with Job, blessing him wonderfully -- beyond desire and comprehension. For the Almighty was still with Job!

He had lived well previously -- and he still lived! Right down till his death, Job would hold onto his convictions -- and to his gratitude to God. He would never leave the Lord, faithlessly!

What a privilege; what a grace -- to be able to give such a witness! Yet oh, that he were as in the previous days when God had so preserved him! Nevertheless, there were better days yet, ahead!

'I said: "I shall die in my nest! I shall multiply my days, like the sand!" My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand!' Job 29:18-20.

So Job had previously thought! Now, however, everything had changed for him dramatically. For all of those earlier comforts, had now left him.

Job had enjoyed a very prosperous past (Job 29:5-17). At that time, he also had a calm and sure outlook into the future too (Job 29:18-20).

His life had been benevolent and active. Then, he anticipated length of days and continuing prosperity.

So he then said: 'I shall die in my nest!' – like an old bird, surrounded by his lively children. Little did he then suspect that they would all suddenly be wiped out, long before he died!

He also thought that he in his nest would be comfortably surrounded by all the things he possessed. Little did he then suspect that he himself would suddenly be ejected from his nest!

The next verses continue the description of Job's previous outlook on the future of those happy days. He thought that he would multiply his days as the sand -- sand being an image of countless number. He said his root was then spread out by the waters, and that the dew lay all night on his branch. The dew lying on the branch all night, would keep it fresh and green.

That was his branch of a palm-tree. Job considered himself to be like the phoenix -- compare the Septuagint's *phoinikos* or 'branch of the palm.' The palm grew vigorously till it was 100 (Psalm 92:12-14). And the mythical phoenix bird was fabled to live for 500 years, before consuming itself and its nest with fire -- and before it thereafter rose again to life from the ashes.

Phoinix signifies both the immortal bird, and the inexhaustibly youthful palm-tree. Both figures, that of the phoenix and of the palm-tree, are equally appropriate and pleasing in the mouth of Job.

Job said his glory was fresh in him. His 'glory' was his high respect and rank, which would continue to be 'fresh.' His bow was the symbol of his strength and power. He anticipated it would like a tree renew its freshness and suppleness in his hand -- as if he had said: 'My bow would become young again, in my hand!'

Job had previously thought: 'I shall die in my nest and multiply my days like sand!' Yet, ultimately, even better days for him still lay some distance ahead -- both before and after his death!

'But now, they that are younger than I, hold me in derision -- whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock! Yes, whereunto might the strength of their hands profit me -- in whom old age has perished!' Job 30:1-2.

What a change now, since the last prosperous chapter! In that chapter, Job's past felicity, the brightest part -- was the high respect he enjoyed among men. In this chapter, however, the darkest part -- is the contumely and indignity he now suffers from even the basest and most abject of mankind.

In the previous chapter, the young men saw Job, and hid themselves; and the aged arose, and stood up (Job 29:8). In this subsequent chapter, those who were younger than Job held him in derision. Yet Job would previously have disdained to have set even their fathers with the dogs of his flock!

For those fathers' younger sons were enfeebled. They had fallen into premature decay, and were really unworthy of a treatment even equal to that of Job's shepherd dogs.

Yet those very young ones, the children of their miserable fathers, now held Job in derision. In the Orient, the 'dogs of the flock' had only one use -- viz. humbly to guard the flock and the encampment from attacks by night.

But these young people, the 'children of fools' (Job 30:8), now came to spit in Job's face (Job 30:10)! These youth rose up on his right hand, and pushed away his feet (Job 30:12)! They marred or broke up his path (Job 30:13)! They came upon him, like a wide breaking-in of waters; and they even rolled themselves upon him (Job 30:14)!

Job here begins to bewail the sad turn which his former prosperity had taken. He was now an object of derision to the young good-for-nothing vagabonds of a miserable class of men. Those who had meanly hated him before, because he was rich -- now rejoiced at the destruction of his prosperity.

They were the children of fools -- profane and insane persons! If they ever came up to him, it was only for the sake of showing him still deeper scorn. For they then spat in his face! Just as also did those who despised Job's Redeemer Jesus Christ (Isaiah 50:6)!

This young rabble rose up on Job's right hand -- which is the place of one who followed him up closely, and oppressed him. They contended one foot's-breadth after another with him. They denied him the very ground under his feet. They came upon him, like a tidal wave or an overwhelming flood. And they then rolled themselves all over Job!

Job thought old age itself was perishing with him. But he was wrong! For it would not be long before God would turn his condition, and give him twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10)!

'And now, my soul is poured out!... The days of affliction have taken hold of me! My bones have pierced into me!... My sinews get no rest!... By the great force of my disease, my clothes have altered -- binding me about, like the collar of my coat! He has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes!... I know that You will bring me to death!' Job 30:16-23.

The soul is poured out within a man -- when, yielding itself without resistance to sadness, it is dejected to the very bottom, and all its organization flows together. The life of the soul flows in the blood, and the anguish of the soul in tears and lamentations.

Since the outward man is as it were dissolved in tears, his soul flows away as it were in itself. For the outward incident is but the manifestation and result of an inward action.

Note the condition of despondency to which Job had now been reduced. And his tormenting pains. Especially at night, his bones seemed pierced, and his limbs to be wrenched from him.

Leprosy terminates with an eating away of the limbs. The disease feeds on the bones, and destroys the body in such a way that single limbs get completely detached. And worms were produced in the wounds. On the terrible wasting away in elephantiasis, compare Job 7:15 & 19:20.

His awful disease had also disfigured his clothes. They clung round his neck, even like a closely-fitting or strangling tunic. Job writhed under his pains, until his clothes got twisted tightly round him.

Job said too that the Lord had cast him into the mire. This probably refers to the appearance which Job's body presented, in its leprous condition.

The skin of a sufferer with elephantiasis, first becomes an intense red. Then it assumes a black colour. Next, scales like those of a fish are formed on it. And finally, the brittle and dark-coloured surface of the body looks like a lump of earth.

Job (30:22) felt God was dissolving his substance. He thought God was unbinding him in a tempest, in the roar of a storm. God had lifted him up, and hurled him forth. Job felt he was being carried away and dissipated in a whirlwind. For he felt that his very life was then vanishing away from him.

He felt that in the storm itself, which was increasing in fury to the howling of a tempest, Job was dissolving away. Job thought his affliction could end in nothing but his death.

'I know You will bring me to death' or dust! Job felt he was being carried to the grave as the place of the dead appointed for all living human beings. But not -- to a place of non-existence!

'[Elihu now responded to Job (32:2f). He said:] "The Spirit of God has made me, and the Breath of the Almighty has given me life.... I too was formed out of the clay.... God is greater than man!... He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction -- so that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from him. He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing!"' Job 33:3-18.

Elihu shows in these verses that he was well acquainted with the creational history of man. Our body was formed out of the clay or the dust. God blew His Spirit of life into our nostrils. And thus we became a living soul.

Even in this, there is a particular work of the Holy Spirit. What Elihu is as a man, as a human personality -- that he is by the Holy Spirit. For Elihu has both his spiritual and his material existence in common with Job.

Elihu here gives Job the truthful statement that 'God is greater than man.' He means that the moral loftiness of God's nature, made it impossible that He should act in an arbitrary and hostile manner.

Elihu says that God speaks to man in many ways. In ways appropriate to His greatness; ways that show that His goodness is over all His works.

By this, God instructs men. For He seeks to turn them away from doing evil that would destroy them.

God also "seals" man's instruction -- seals what man hears from God; confirms it; and gives it abiding efficacy. After giving the instruction, God then closes up man's ear and seals it -- thus enclosing the instruction given so that it cannot be lost.

The object of this sealing intervention of God on man, is the gracious end of the Lord's anticipating the sinner in his evil, and hindering it. God does this by withdrawing man from his proud and sinful purpose.

Thus God keeps man's soul back from falling into the pit. God even uses the sword to withhold man's life from perishing.

For God would deliver man from sin. At the same time, He would stop his life from perishing. For God would deliver man from an early death, whether natural or violent. This is the disciplinary design God has in view for man.

God's purpose in all this, is not just to withhold man from the sin of pride. It is to preserve him from perishing. Thus God keeps back man's soul from the pit!

'He (viz. man) is chastened also with pain upon his bed -- and the multitude of his bones with strong pain. So that his life abhors bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, so that it cannot be seen. And his bones, that were not seen -- stick out!' Job 33:19-21.

God also chastens man with pain on his sickbed. The affliction is graphically presented. There is strong pain in man's many bones. Continual strife. Even while the multitude of his bones are still strong.

Live but sick, man's desire or appetite makes him abhor even bread. His flesh is being so eaten away, that it cannot be seen.

The sick man's bones, which previously could not be seen at all -- now stick out of his body. Job's elephantiasis now raged, loud and clear!

Thus, another and a more severe lesson by which God teaches man, is by painful sickness. He get chastens with pain even on his sickbed. -- even in his previously vigorous bones.

For he now has unceasing pain in all his many limbs, where there is constant tumult. Disease consists of a disturbance of the equilibrium; in the dissolution of their harmony and in the excitement of one against another.

Sick man's stinking life causes him to loathe even simple bread as dirty and stenching! He now feels disgust even at dainty meat!

It is very clearly expressed, that when it is inwardly consumed by disease, the vital psychic power gives one a loathing for that which it otherwise likes -- namely bread and meat. Even though such were necessary conditions of one's very existence.

For health produces an appetite. Sickness, however, causes nausea.. The soul that is in an uninjured normal state, longs for food. That which is severely weakened by sickness, turns the desire for dainties into loathing and aversion!

Flesh now vanishes from sight. It is seen no longer. For flesh and bone are now being consumed, and are wasting away. By being scraped and scratched and constantly rubbed. -- they are now shrivelling up. They have now lost their former pleasing form. The wasting limbs are diminished, until they become invisible.

Awful was Job's elephantiasis! His soul drew near to the grave, and his life to destruction. His flesh just kept on being consumed away. But God, Who is rich in mercy, had by no means yet finished speaking to Job!

'Yes, his soul draws near to the grave -- and his life to the destroyers. If there be a Messenger with him, an Interpreter, One among a thousand -- to show to man His uprightness.... He is gracious to him!' Job 33:22-24.

Job's affliction is here presented very graphically. It was said that he was chastened with pain upon his sickbed, and that his soul drew near to the grave. 'The destroyers' may even refer to the created angels that bring death to dying humans.

The sick man's soul -- the bearer of the life of his body -- at last succumbs to decay. It comes near to the pit of the grave. His life comes to the destroyers -- the destroying angels commissioned by God to slay the man (Second Samuel 24:16 and Psalm 78:49f).

Deliverance, says Elihu, requires a Mediator. So, the Messenger appears! The Messenger comes not merely as a declarer of the conditions of the deliverance, but as the Mediator of this deliverance itself. The Messenger Who comes forward here for Job who was upon the very brink of the abyss, cannot just be a man or an angel. He is the Messenger, the Angel of the Covenant, the Angel of the Lord, the uncreated Angel Who later appeared in the flesh as the Son of God Who is instrumental in effecting the progress of redemption.

As Calvin declares in his *Sermons on Job*, He is called God, and even calls Himself God. He is Christ the Beginning, Middle and End -- through Whom God has atoned for us with Himself!

He is the One Whom Jacob meant when blessing Joseph (Genesis 48:15f) -- God, before Whom Abraham and Isaac walked; the Angel, Who redeemed him from all evil! It is the Angel Who, according to Psalm 34:7, encamps round about those that fear God, and delivers them; and "'the Angel of the presence' Whom Isaiah (63:7-10 & 63:16) places beside Jehovah and His Holy Spirit.

So, in the very nick of time, along comes the Messenger! That particular Messenger is also the Interpreter. For He is the One Who not only brings an important message from God, but Who also infallibly interprets the whole life of the one who dies. That Messenger and Interpreter is truly 'One among a thousand!' Indeed, the Lord Himself is among the thousands of created angels (Psalm 68:17). For He, the Church's Beloved, is Himself the Lily of the valley and the Fairest of ten thousand (Song 6:2f & 8:11f and Luke 14:31).

Elihu demands, for the deliverance of man from death, a superhuman angelic Mediator. The 'Angel of Jehovah' of primeval history is the oldest prefigurement in redemption of the future incarnation -- without Whom the Old Testament would be only a confused collection of radiuses without a centre or a conclusion. The angelic form is accordingly the oldest which gives the hope of a Deliverer. It recurs, according to the law of the connection between beginning and end, also in Malachi 3:1-2 & 4:4-6. He shows man His uprightness. Not man's uprightness, for fallen man has none. But His uprightness (Job 33:23) -- that of the unfallen and infallible Messenger Himself!

'Then He is gracious to him, and says: "Deliver him from going down to the pit! I have found a Ransom! His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth.... For he will render to man, His righteousness!... He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the Light. Look, God works all these things oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the Light of the living!'" Job 22:24-30.

Christ the Divine Mediator and Messenger is gracious to man. For He Himself is full of grace. But man has none, and needs it all as a free gift from that Messenger!

Such is the intervention of the Divine Messenger. He interprets to the sufferer what he should do, with God's gracious pardon of him. For God commands that he be delivered from his affliction, and be saved from death.

So God pardons, and says to His Angel: 'Deliver him from descent to the pit; for I have found for him a Ransom!' One is here reminded of Hebrews 9:12. 'Not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His Own blood He...once and for all obtained eternal redemption for us!' For Christ makes us good -- and He Himself, as our Ransom, covers our sin.

It is just this Mediatorship that is meant here. Inasmuch as it put to right, him who by his sin had worked death. He who has so come into a reconciled relationship with God through the Mediator, experiences also the blessed consequences. His sickness disappears, and his youthful vigour returns to him.

If we connect the mediating Angel, like the Angel of Jehovah of the primeval history, with God Himself -- then, the Logos or Word or Backbone of this mediating Angel to man can also be God's Own Logos communicated by Him. He therefore is the Divine Logos Himself.

God was in Christ, and reconciled the world unto Himself (Job 16:21 *cf.* Colossians 1:20). For the deliverance of man can only be effected by a superhuman Being!

Among the results of the favour wrought for man by the mediatorial Angel and Interpreter, are that man's 'flesh shall be fresher than a child's' and that 'he shall return to the days of his youth.' For 'He will render to man His righteousness' -- God's Own righteousness, which He donates or gives to needy man! God restores to man, fallen man's lost righteousness -- by restoring to him His Own righteousness in Christ!

For God will deliver man's soul from going into the pit -- and man, alive, shall then see the Light. Look, God works all these things oftentimes with man -- to bring back his soul from the pit; to be enlightened with Jesus the Light of the living!' For Christ is our Ransom from the darkness of death.

'Then the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed.... The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before..., (and) blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.... No women were found so fair as his daughters..., and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this, Job lived 140 years.... Then Job died, being old and full of days!' Job 42:10-17.

Calvin remarked in his *Sermons on Job*: "The Lord received...and...blessed the latter state of Job more than the first'.... Men...need...a Mediator, to make their way to Him and to cause them to find favour.... Without a Mediator to go in unto God on our behalf, it would never be lawful for us to pray to Him!.... Job...could not himself come there, without a Mediator...like Jesus....

"Christ...gives us access, and...opens us the gate..., so that the throne of His Majesty may...be...amiable to us.... Christ is the only Advocate Who makes intercession for us..., so that our suits may be well received.... As oft as we pray before God, we must have our recourse to the death and passion of our Lord Jesus..., by coming to Him with the Sacrifice that was offered by...Christ....

"It is added immediately, 'that God received...Job and turned his captivity..., when he prayed'.... Our everlasting Advocate...Christ, shall never be refused -- nor we neither, if we come to God His Father by His means.... We have...Christ for our Spokesman!... God has taken the charge of us Himself, and has given us a good Shepherd -- even...Christ Who has promised to keep us....

"'God looked mercifully upon Job, when he had prayed'.... The afflictions...God sends upon His children, last but a while.... The end of them, is right happy.... 'God blessed his later state more than his first'; He doubled his goods and substance which were very great before; 'He gave him sons and daughters and...lengthened his life so that he saw the children that came of his own race unto the fourth generation'.... That was not for his instruction, but for ours!....

"In all our adversities, we are shaped to the image of our Lord Jesus.... When we join His resurrection to His death..., all of us should understand that the Son of God will make us partakers of His life -- if we die with Him. And partakers of His glory!... We should always have an eye to the end which God has promised to His children....

"Affliction...brings us to the glory of our Lord Jesus.... When we be taken out of this world, we shall be in company with the Son of God.... Christ has opened the gate of paradise by His coming.... God has prepared...an heritage in Heaven.... Job and Abraham...died old men and full satisfied with days.... But neither Job nor Abraham...would ever have been satisfied with living in this world, if they had not aimed at a better and more excellent end....

"It behooves us...to dispose ourselves to die when it shall please God, so that we may go hence with a glad heart.... Let us always be ready to die, assuring ourselves that He has adopted us for His children.... Let us...pray Him, that having guided us...with His Holy Spirit, He will draw us to Himself.... May we come there full satisfied!" Job died, doubly-blessed when old and full of days!

"I AM the God of your father -- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob!.... I AM THAT I AM!.... Say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent Me to you!'" Exodus 3:6-14.

After Job, Calvin says in his *Institutes* I:13:23 regarding the later time of Moses: "The Spirit belongs to the Father.... The primary Essence...is proper to...the Father.... Christ is God.... He differs from the Father.... The Father certainly cannot differ from the Son, unless He has something peculiar to Himself.... The whole entire Essence must therefore be common to the Father and the Son.... In respect of Essence, there is no distinction between Them.... No property can be more peculiar to God, than Essence. According to the words 'I AM has sent me to you' (Exodus 3:4)."

Commenting on Exodus 3:6, Calvin adds that the Lord had not set Moses' "hopes in vain on the God whom Abraham and the other Patriarchs had worshipped." For God "expressly asserts that His faithfulness still held good, by calling Himself 'the God of your father.'"

God then told Moses: 'I AM THAT I AM!' (Exodus 3:14). Calvin comments: "The verb in the Hebrew, is in the future tense -- 'I will be what I will be!'.... It is of the same force as the present, except that it designates the perpetual duration of time.... God attributes to Himself alone divine glory, because He is Self-existent and therefore eternal -- and...gives...existence to every creature.... He claims for Himself eternity, as peculiar to God alone..., so that our minds may be filled with admiration as often as His incomprehensible Essence is mentioned.... This one and only Being of God, absorbs all imaginable essences" or existences. "All things in Heaven and Earth derive at His will their essence or subsistence from One Who alone truly is."

In Exodus 6:2-3, God said to Moses: 'I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.' Calvin comments: "It would be tedious to recount the various opinions as to the name 'Jehovah'.... Without controversy, it is derived from the word *haayaah* or *haavaah*.... It is rightly said...to be the essential name of God.... Nothing is more peculiar to God than eternity. He is called 'Jehovah' because He has existence from Himself, and sustains all things by His secret Inspiration" or In-Spirit-ation. "Moses is awakened to activity, whilst God is setting before him a magnificent and singular means of showing forth His glory!"

'I AM the God of your father -- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' I AM the God of each one of your fathers -- even Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. 'Before Abraham was, I AM!' (John 8:58).

'I will be, that I will be!' 'I am He that is -- the essential One.' I AM 'Him Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come' (Revelation 1:4).

Do you know God thus? "I AM" is the Living God also of the dead Abraham-Isaac-Jacob! Is He also your God -- both now, and when you die, and for all eternity?

'You shall not make for yourself any graven image.... You shall now bow yourselves down to them, nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, AM...God -- visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy to thousands (of generations) of them that love Me and keep My Commandments!' Exodus 20:4-6.

Calvin comments: "It is necessary...to remember what God is -- lest we should form any gross or earthly ideas respecting Him.... It is wrong for men to seek the presence of God in any visible image, because He cannot be represented to our eyes.... A true image of God is not to be found in all the world.... His glory is defiled and his truth corrupted by the lie, whenever He is set before our eyes in a visible form....

"There are two parts in the Commandment. The first, forbids the erection of a graven image or any likeness. The second, prohibits transferring...the worship which God claims for Himself alone, to any of these phantoms.... To devise any image of God, is in itself impious.... As soon as anyone has permitted himself to devise an image of God, he immediately falls into false worship.... God is insulted not only when His worship is transferred to idols, but when we try to represent Him by any outward similitude.... He declares that He will be merciful even to a thousand generations; whilst He only denounces punishment on the thirds and fourths."

Calvin says in his *Institutes* I:11:1-2,6 & II:8:17-21: "As often as any form is assigned to God, His glory is corrupted by an impious lie.... 'You shall not make for yourself any graven image...of anything that is in Heaven'.... By these words, He curbs any licentious attempt we might make to represent Him by a visible shape.... He rejects, without exception, all shapes and pictures...by which the superstitious imagine they can bring Him near to them.... Whatever statues are set up or pictures painted to represent God, are utterly displeasing to Him.... There must be no pictures used in churches." Jesus is God. Therefore, to depict Him in a picture – is forbidden!

Calvin adds in his *Tracts and Treatises* III:232,319 & 369 that in Exodus 20:5-6..., "the merits of deceased Abraham profited his son Isaac -- and Jacob, instructing his grandchildren in religion.... The Lord, I acknowledge, visits man with His favour to the thousandth generation, as He has promised.... It superabounds in all manner of ways -- so that, after freely stretching out a saving hand to fathers, it extends it also to posterity....

"When the Lord, by His Law, forbade idols to be revered or worshipped -- He, under that head, comprehended the whole of the external worship.... The Lord therefore by His interdict does not simply prohibit His people from standing in stupid amazement...before wood and stone, but forbids any imitation of their profane stolidity in any form by prostrating themselves before images for the purpose of paying honour to them or giving any...indication of religious reverence."

Yet the multigenerational God blesses 1000s who love Him – and keep His Commandments!

'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy!... On it, you shall not do any work -- you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your male servant or your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your city-gates! For...the Lord made Heaven..., and rested!' Exodus 20:8-11.

In his *Institutes* II:8:28-34, Calvin remarks: "The Commandment is, that being dead to our own...works, we meditate on God's Kingdom.... It (is) typical, as containing the external observance of a day...abolished with the other types on the advent of Christ.... True..., a type of the spiritual rest by which believers were to cease from their own works and allow God to work in them....

"The Lord intended....the Sabbath never...be completed, before the arrival of the Last Day.... The Lord delineated to His people the future perfection of His Sabbath on the Last Day, so that by continual meditation...they might throughout their whole lives aspire to this perfection.... Christ...is the true completion of the Sabbath (Colossians 2:16f).... This is not contented with one day, but requires the whole course of our lives....

"The Corinthians (16:1-2, and the churches of Galatia, were) to set the first day apart, for collecting contributions for the relief of their brethren.... Early Christians substituted what we call the Lord's Day for the Sabbath, the resurrection of our Lord being the end...of that true rest which the ancient Sabbath typified (Matthew 28:1f and Mark 16:1,2,9 and Luke 23:56 to 24:1,13,33,46 and John 20:1,19,26 and Acts 2:1f & 20:6f & Revelation 1:10).... Be careful...to observe the general doctrine..., so that religion may neither be lost nor languish among us!... Diligently attend on our religious assemblies...which tend to promote the worship of God!"

On Exodus 20:8f, Calvin comments: "Believers should exercise themselves in the worship of God.... God has appointed a special place to the Sabbath..., (which) Paul declares to be in Christ.... Spiritual rest is nothing else than the truly desirable and blessed death of man, which contains in it the life of God.... Hebrews (4:3-10)...retains the genuine reason of the Commandment, *viz.* that we should rest from our works 'even as God from His!'"

All Ten Commandments are future-orientated. His first, reminds us He has brought us out of the house of bondage. His second, threatens punishment to the third and fourth generation of those hating Him -- and shows mercy to thousands of generations of those that love Him. His third, warns all never guiltily to take His name in vain. His fourth, reminds His people of how hard they laboured servilely in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15) -- before He redeemed them on their way to Heaven; *etc.*

So do not slouch, but labour! Not just for four-and-a-half or five, but for fully six days every week! But then, rest on the seventh -- and sanctify it! For in six days God too laboured. But, after making Heaven and Earth for man, He then rested. Therefore also man and all in his home should rest on one day each week, and keep it holy. Rest from all earthly labours, on the way to Heaven! For God's heaven-foreshadowing sabbath is for you, and also for all of your family!

'Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you!' Exodus 20:12.

In his *Institutes* II:8:35-38, Calvin remarks: "Look up to those whom the Lord has set over us! Our earthly father possesses something of a 'divine' nature in him -- because...he..., our prince and ruler, is admitted to some communion of honour with God....

"They are monsters and not men, who petulantly and contumeliously violate the paternal authority.... The honour here referred to, consists of three parts -- reverence, obedience, and gratitude. Our Saviour declares that God requires us to do good to our parents (Matthew 15:4). And wherever Paul mentions this Commandment, he interprets it as enjoining obedience (Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:20)....

"The Lord was pleased to testify His favour (to subjected dependents), by bestowing long life.... The meaning, therefore, is: Honour your father and your mother -- so that you may be able during the course of a long life to enjoy the possession of the land which is to be given you.... As the whole Earth is blessed to believers, we justly class the present life among the number of divine blessings....

"The duration of the present life, is a proof of the divine benevolence to us.... If any one who is obedient to parents happens to be cut off before mature age..., the Lord nevertheless adheres to His promise as steadily as when He bestows a hundred acres of land where He had promised only one.... This...He testifies and truly manifests to His servants more richly and substantially, by death!....

"We are ordered to obey parents, only in the Lord.... Submission yielded to them, should be a step in our ascent to the Supreme Parent.... The same holds in the case of rulers, masters, and superiors of every description.... The honour of God...ought to lead us up to Him -- and ought to augment rather than diminish; to confirm rather than violate it!"

Calvin comments: "Human society cannot be maintained in its integrity, unless children modestly submit to their parents, and unless those who are set over others by God's ordinance are even reverently honoured.... Since therefore the name of Father is a sacred one and is transferred to men by the peculiar goodness of God, the dishonouring of parents redounds to the dishonour of God Himself. Nor can anyone despise his father, without being guilty of an offence against God.... People should honour the king. Every soul should be subject to the higher powers. Servants should obey their masters.... Proverbs 24:21; Romans 13:1; Ephesians 6:5; First Peter 2:13-18....

"Children should take care of their parents, and be ready and diligent in all their duties towards them.... Storks supply food to their parents when they are feeble and worn out with old age.... The days of children who have behaved themselves piously to their parents, shall be prolonged." Deuteronomy 5:16 adds an additional reason why we should honour our parents. 'So that it may go well with you in the land which...God gives you!'

'You shall not kill! (That is to say, you shall not unrighteously harm or hurt or put anyone to death)!' Exodus 20:13.

Calvin remarks in his *Institutes* II:8:7-9 & 39-40: "We are following Christ, the best Interpreter of the Law (Matthew 5:22,38-44). The Pharisees having instilled into the people the erroneous idea that the Law was fulfilled by every one who did not in external act do anything against the Law -- He pronounces this a most dangerous delusion, and declares...that hatred of a brother is murder!

"Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment!' Whosoever by a whispering or murmuring gives indication of being offended, 'shall be danger of the Council!' Whosoever by reproaches and evil-speaking gives way to open anger, 'shall be in danger of hell-fire!'....

"To despise and rebel against...persons, is offensive to Him.... The Commandment 'You shall not kill!' -- the generality of men will merely consider as an injunction to abstain from all injury and all wish to inflict injury.... It moreover means that we are to aid our neighbour's life by every means in our power.... God forbids us to injure or hurt a brother, because He would have his life to be dear and precious to us.... Therefore, when He so forbids, He at the same time demands all the offices of charity which can contribute to his preservation....

"Since the Lord had bound the whole human race by a kind of unity, the safety of all ought to be considered as entrusted to each.... All violence and injustice and every kind of harm from which our neighbour's body suffers, is prohibited.... We are required faithfully to do what in us lies to defend the life our neighbour; to promote whatever tends to his tranquillity; to be vigilant in warding off harm; and, when danger comes, to assist in removing it....

"This Commandment...requires a sincere desire to preserve our brother's life. The hand indeed commits the murder -- but the mind, under the influence of wrath and hatred, conceives it. How can you be angry with your brother, without passionately longing to do him harm?... 'Whosoever hates his brother, is a murderer' (First John 3:15)....

"Man is both the image of God, and our flesh. Therefore, if we would not violate the image of God -- we must hold the person of man sacred. If we would not divest ourselves of humanity, we must cherish our own flesh.... How much care and exertion is due to the safety of the soul, which is of immeasurably higher value in the sight of God?!"

Calvin comments: "We should not unjustly do violence to anyone.... Aid, as far as we can, the miserable who are unjustly oppressed!.... With Him..., anger is accounted murder!" So too suicide, abortion, genocide, and euthanasia. For not just the first six Commandments would prolong human life. Indirectly, also the last four. For 'You shall not kill' -- means look after yourself, too!

'The Lord descended in the cloud..., and proclaimed the name of the Lord.... "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity...but by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children to the third and the fourth generation!'" Exodus 34:5-7.

In his *Institutes* I:10:2, Calvin remarks: "Moses...seems to have intended briefly to comprehend whatever may be known of God by man. When he said: 'The Lord...God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin but Who will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and to the fourth generation!' (Exodus 34:6-7).

"Here we may observe first, that His Eternity and Self-Existence are declared by His magnificent name.... Secondly, that in the enumeration of His perfections, He is described not as He is in Himself but in relation to us -- in order that our acknowledgment of Him may be more a vivid actual impression than empty visionary speculation. Moreover, the perfections thus enumerated are just those which we saw shining in the Heavens and on the Earth -- compassion, goodness, mercy, justice, judgment and truth. For power and energy are comprehended under the name Jehovah."

The cloud's descending, was the Lord's descending. The divine presence was intimately though mysteriously united with it -- so that it was God manifested to the outward senses as a shadow and pre-intimation of 'God subsequently manifested in the flesh'.... The Most High descended thus, and accordingly proclaimed in an audible voice His name -- that is, the character and perfections denoted thereby.

The Lord made His *Shekinah* glory to pass before Moses. The *Shekinah* or Divine Majesty called "I" passed by. The Lord passed by before Moses, and proclaimed: 'Jehovah, Jehovah! -- God, merciful and gracious!' To this, the name 'God' (*Eel*) is subjoined -- of which the leading idea is that of strength, might, and potency alias all-sufficient protection to His people and formidableness to their enemies. His mercies are not those of a frail feeble creature like ourselves!

God 'keeps mercy for thousands.' To a thousand generations -- or at least 60,000 years! He does so, by continually showing it in all its various forms to thousands of sinners in all ages -- and to the very end of time. God forgives sins more in number than all the grains of sand on the sea-shores -- any one sin of which would be sufficient to cast the entire human race into perdition. And did (Genesis 3:6 and Romans 5:12)! For He visits the iniquity of the fathers unto the third and fourth generation of the wicked -- but shows mercy to thousands of generations of those who love Him and keep His Commandments (Exodus 20:5-6) -- for at least 60,000 years!

Yes, God is merciful to thousands of generations -- from fathers, to descendant children!

'If you walk contrary to Me..., I will bring seven times more plagues upon you.... I will send wild beast among you, which shall rob you of your children and destroy your cattle.... I will bring a sword upon you.... I will send the pestilence among you.... You shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.... And you shall eat the flesh of your sons...and daughters!' Leviticus 26:21-29.

Calvin states in his *Institutes* I:17:8 & III:20:44 that when His wayward children need correcting, "God arms the devil as well as all the wicked for conflict.... If the disasters and miseries which press us happen without the agency of men, let us call to mind the doctrine of the Law..., that all...adversity is His curse....

"Let us tremble at the dreadful denunciation 'And if you will not be reformed by these things but will walk contrary to Me, then will I also walk contrary to you!' (Leviticus 16:23-24). These words condemn our torpor, when, according to our carnal sense, deeming that whatever happens in any way is fortuitous -- we are not animated...by His scourge..., to repentance!...

"Howsoever great our abundance many be; however well-filled our cellars and granaries -- we must still always ask for daily bread. For we must feel assured that all substance, is nothing -- unless insofar as the Lord, by pouring out His blessing, make it fruitful.... Whenever it so pleases, He gives us a proof of an opposite description -- by breaking the strength...of bread (Leviticus 26:26) and leaving us even while eating to pine with hunger and while drinking to be parched with thirst."

First, God would withhold rain and harvests from His disobedient people. Second, He would send wild beasts to devour their children and their cattle. Third, He would send the sword of their enemies. Fourth, He would send disease or pestilence. Fifth, He would send famine. And sixth, if that did not move them to repent, He would cause them as cannibals to eat even their own children.

'If you walk contrary to Me' -- means going counter to God. 'I will bring...plagues' or pestilence 'upon you' -- includes the very worst, and implying the cutting off by death of man and beast. When God threatens to 'deliver...bread...by weight' -- it means people would be severely rationed even in their basic necessities of bread and water. Compare Ezekiel 4:16-17: 'They shall eat bread by weight and with care, and they shall drink water by measure and with astonishment -- so that they may lack bread and water and be astonished with one another and consume away, because of their iniquity.'

Worst of all, God threatens: 'You shall eat the flesh of your sons!' This was fulfilled literally, at the siege of Samaria in Second Kings 6:29 in the days of Jehoram. Jeremiah later bemoaned at the siege of Jerusalem in Lamentations 4:10: "The hands of the pitiful women had sodden their own children; they were their meat, in the destruction of...My people!" And also in the siege of Jerusalem under Titus, Josephus in his *Jewish Wars* VII:2 describes how a woman at the height of the famine killed her own infant child, roasted it, and ate part of it.

Make no mistake, children suffer because of the sins of their parents! So, parents -- repent!

'(Balaam said:) "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"' Numbers 23:10.

Calvin remarked in his *Institutes* II:10:14: "Why talk of saints and the children of God -- when even one who otherwise strove to resist the truth, was not devoid of some similar impression? For what did Balaam mean when he said 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!' (Numbers 23:20)? Unless he felt convinced of what David afterward declares, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints!' (Psalm 116:15).... If death were the goal and ultimate limit, no distinction could be observed between the righteous and the wicked. The true distinction is the different lot which awaits them, after death!"

Balaam was a false-prophet -- or, rather, a true Prophet who had lapsed. Calvin commented on Numbers 23:1-20: "This degenerate Prophet had been by no means wont to prophesy in accordance with pure revelations from God.... Still, this did not prevent him from being sometimes a true Prophet -- by the inspiration of God's Spirit....

"It is wonderful that God should have determined to have anything in common with the pollutions of Balaam.... But as He well knows how to apply corrupt instruments to His use -- so by the mouth of this false-prophet!.... He...controls their tongues.... Balaam was compelled...to proclaim the revelation suggested to him by God.... Balaam declares, in the spirit of prophecy, that he sees far more in the people of God than their distance from him would allow....

"'Who can count the dust of Jacob?' Hence it is plain that what Balaam was to say, was suggested to him by God -- since he quotes the words of God's solemn promise... Although that multitude was reduced to a small number by the sin of the people, nevertheless this was not declared in vain -- inasmuch as that little body at length expanded itself so as to fill the whole world.... He says that their offspring would be infinite.... 'I would that I might share with them, their last end!'....

"Balaam confesses himself unworthy to be reckoned among the elect people of God.... In these words, he refers to everlasting felicity -- as much as to say that (Israel) would be blessed in death as in life. At the same time, he is a witness to our future immortality....

"He exclaimed that God so persevered in the extension of His paternal favour towards His people, that He did not cease to be gracious to them even in their death. Hence it follows, that the grace of God extends beyond the bounds of this perishing life....

"This declaration contains a remarkable testimony to our future immortality. For although Balaam perhaps did not thoroughly consider what he desired -- still, there is no doubt but that he truly professed that he wished it for himself!... As far as [these] his words went, he acted the part of a true Prophet -- although his feelings were altogether on the other side." Reader, may you and I really mean it, when we say: 'Let me die the death of the righteous!'

'Love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His Commandments!... Choose life, so that both you and your seed may live! So that you may love the Lord your God, and so that you may obey His Voice and so that you may cleave to Him! For He is your life, and the length of your days!' Deuteronomy 30:16-20.

In his *Tracts and Treatises* III:157, Calvin wrote: "We deny that Christ as a Lawgiver delivered new laws to the world.... Neither did Moses testify...that the Law which he had brought, was the way of life.... Deuteronomy 30:19." For to sin-weakened man, not the Law but only Christ is life! He, and He alone, is your life -- and the length of your days!

Calvin also commented: "Paul justly teaches that the Law ministers death.... Moses commands us to 'choose life'.... Moses did...testify and proclaim the gratuitous mercy of God, and directed his disciples to Christ -- in order to seek salvation from Him!"

In his *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, Calvin adds: "As touching life and good..., all manner of happiness...is meant.... Likewise by death!... This present life is not the full measure..of the blessings.... The life to come is the perfection...of weal -- and woe!....

"What is it...that I have enjoined you? It is that you should love the Lord your God!.... This word 'love' imports yet more.... He begins at love, to the intent to draw us to Him after a loving manner, and not by force.... It ought to win and possess our hearts, so that we...come...to offer ourselves to God, to be altogether His.... We must love God.... We must bear such reverence toward Him, as to covet nothing but to frame ourselves to His good pleasure in all things...in all our life.... So that we follow the will of our God and endeavour to obey Him by keeping His Commandments....

"If you turn away and rebel and be carried to serve strange gods -- I tell you, you shall perish!... We ought to worship and serve Him!... "This day I call Heaven and Earth to witness, that I have set before you life and death!"... After we have once received the grace which He offers to us, we may not doubt that we shall be deceived.... We must go and yield ourselves to Him -- to pray Him to receive us to His mercy!....

"Shall we live, when we be parted away from God Who is the Fountain of life and of all manner of happiness?... He is the wellspring of virtue, of joy, of felicity, and of glory.... The fullness of all goodness lies in Him.... He puts down...a likeness and conformity betwixt God and His Word....

"Do we then desire to live? Let us abide under the wings of our God, and cleave to Him!... Moses did not mean to hold the people to this earthly life.... He laid before their eyes both life and death.... The Law is called the messenger of death. Because life is not there so largely known, as our Lord Jesus Christ does show it.... He comes to offer Himself to us as the lively image of His Father, to the intent that we should be transfigured into His glory." That is how to have long life for oneself, and one's descendants!

'See now that I, even I, am He!... There is no god, with Me! I kill, and I make alive! I wound, and I heal! Neither is there any, that can deliver out of My hand!' Deuteronomy 32:39.

Calvin comments: "God...Himself comes forward.... He addresses Himself to the faithful.... He always remains the same -- whether He kills, or makes alive.... He alone is pre-eminent.... Our faith is then truly fixed in Him..., so as not to cease to hope in Him -- even when He seems to 'slay' us.... God would have His promises to quicken us -- in death itself.... None can deliver...out of His hand!"

And Calvin adds in his *Sermons on Deuteronomy*: "Behold how it is I Myself, and there is no other god with Me!'... We must...return to God.... It is to no purpose to know..., without the warrant of God's Word.... There is but only one God, and that...is He to Whom we must turn again....

"The chief point, is to know God -- to do Him homage; to walk in His fear.... We must taste of His mercy to return freely to Him -- being thoroughly persuaded and resolved that we shall find mercy at His hand.... That is the reason why he (Moses) says that it is 'He Who kills and makes alive'.... When we have done amiss, and God warns us of our faults -- then we have need to resort to His infinite goodness....

"God seems not to play the Physician toward us when have we been as it were dead and laid in our graves. Neither does this seem to be agreeable to His nature, to put us to death.... But, as I said before, He must...do both the one and the other.... His goodness is ready to utter itself towards those who return to Him with repentance....

"When we fall through infirmity, let us not be afraid to turn again to our God! Neither let us think that He has quite cast us off. Although His hand be sore upon us, and He smite us as though He meant to use wrath and vengeance against us -- yet, let that not make us to shrink from Him but rather let us understand that as He has made the wound so He is at hand to heal it....

"Moses says that God having put to death, makes alive again.... God first kills and lays in the grave, before He restores to life again.... It is needful for us that our Lord should put us as it were to death -- to the intent to make us...taste that life which He gives to those that return to Him....

"He adds that 'no one can deliver out of His hand'.... We must always understand that there is no deliverance.... We must make our account to Him -- until He of His Own infinite goodness has received us and become an atonement with us....

"We ought to weigh well the words of Moses -- 'It is I..., it is I Myself that am everlasting, and there is not any other god'.... It is He on Whom we must wholly rest.... It behooves all of us to know that each of us has need to hold himself...by force in the pure singleness of God's Word." For the Lord kills, and the Lord keeps alive!

"Moses the servant of the Lord died..., according to the Word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab..., but no man knows of his sepulchre.... And Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated!" Deuteronomy 34:5-7.

Commented Calvin: "So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died'.... Moses was buried by divine means, for it is said that his sepulchre is unknown.... God buried him.... It appears to have been God's intention, to prevent superstition.... 'Moses was 120 years old'.... All the senses of Moses remained unimpaired to extreme old age, in order that he might be fit for the performance of his duties.... God did not permit him to fail. He showed wonderful consideration for the people's welfare. Mention is specially made of his eyes.... He was neither imbecile nor feeble, for neither were the faculties of his mind exhausted nor his body dried up.... Our dead are...to be buried...so that our grief may be restrained, by the hope of resurrection...revealed by the coming of Christ!"

In his *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, Calvin added: "Look what our life is! Although we have been strong, yet do we decay in the twinkling of an eye when we once pass threescore years.... But now, whereas it is reported that Moses attained to double those years -- thereby it appears that God strengthened him above the common rate of men.... Here we see a wonderful goodness in God. For seeing that the people...were condemned to die in the wilderness, it had been a great discomfort to them if Moses should have died out of hand. But God reserved him!..."

"Whereas in such old age men are wont to be drooping and half dead, or at least in such case as they can scarcely crawl and are half doted -- yet Moses continued still in his perfect state.... We must acknowledge such a benefit -- unless we wish to be condemned for unthankfulness!... "We know that the life and death of men is in God's hand. Now, if He calls us away -- it behoves us to go without any gainsaying...."

"They that outlive us, must not sorrow for our death.... When we seen any man dead, God shows us...that we be all of us cursed...because of Adam's sin.... When God takes away a man that was able to do service in His Church..., we ought to be sorry for it.... If there be a good shepherd, a good prince, a good magistrate, a man of counsel or any other that is fit to serve the whole body -- and God takes him away -- we ought to be sorry for him, and not without cause.... Our Lord takes away the righteous.... He calls away His servants, to rest...."

"Paul tells us that when we mourn...for the death of our friends and kinsfolk or of such as served in the Church, we must not resemble the unbelievers who...have no hope (First Thessalonians 4:13).... Paul does not say that it is sin to weep..., but he shows that our sorrowing must be moderated. Because God gives us comfort, by calling us to the hope of heavenly life wherein we shall be renewed.... God of His infinite goodness pities us still, and will not have us to perish in death but rather that it be to us a passage into everlasting life.... This hope is enough to comfort us in the middle of all our heaviness.... Our Lord Jesus Christ shows us that as He Himself is risen to glory, so we also shall be made like His image." Moses died when 120, in his full strength!

'(Caleb said to Joshua:) "40 years old was I, when Moses...sent me...to spy out the land.... Now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive...these 45 years.... I am today 85 years old.... Yet I am as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me!'" Joshua 14:7-11.

Calvin comments: "Caleb requested Mount Hebron to be given to him, as he had been promised by Moses (*cf.* Numbers 14:24 & 32:11-12).... When the ten spies made mention of the names of the (gigantic) *Anakim*, with a view of terrifying the people -- Caleb...answered with truth that when he beheld them on Mount Hebron they were so far from being terrible that he would attack them with his own hand.... On these conditions, Moses ceded to him a habitation in that locality which he would acquire by his own prowess.

"Forty years old was I.... He followed God with inflexible perseverance, feeling perfectly assured.... Learn from this...that unless the last part corresponds to the first -- good beginnings vanish away! Secondly, that constancy is deserving of praise -- only when we follow God!

"Long life is justly accounted one of the mercies of God. The end proposed by it, is here added -- *viz.*, that Caleb may obtain the inheritance.... He next extols the faithfulness of God in having prolonged his life and...supplied vigour and strength.... Though he was now above eighty years of age, he was not a whit feebler than when in the flower of his youth.... A manly vigour, remaining wholly unimpaired up to the...eighty-fifth year!...

"Caleb...demands it as his task, to assail and expel the giants. He...hopes for a prosperous event -- from the assistance of God.... Knowing then that the children of Israel trembled and were in terror at the very name of the giants, he speaks.... As regards himself, the words clearly demonstrate how far he was from viewing that which had been said to him with a dubious or vacillating mind. 'I shall drive them out,' he says -- 'as the Lord has declared!'

"It was just as if he had gained an eminence, from which he could look down upon the giants.... It is not the mountain itself that is meant, but the principal city.... It is said to have received the surname from a giant famous for his stature....

"Caleb...had not been looking to present ease, or private advantage.... He does not aspire to the place that had been given him, till many years after.... It was no less the interest of the whole people than of one private family, that that which as yet depended on the incomprehensible grace of God and was treasured up merely in hope -- should be bestowed as a special favour....

"No small praise is due to the moderation of Caleb. Who, in a locality made his own by extraordinary privilege, did not refuse a hospitable reception!"

Caleb, at 85, still followed the Lord wholeheartedly! May we too, by God's grace, do exactly the same!

'It came to pass a long time after the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age. And Joshua called for all Israel and for their Elders and for their Heads and for their Judges and for their Officers, and said to them, "I am old and stricken in age!"... Behold, this day I am going the way of all the Earth!' Joshua 23:1-2,14.

Calvin comments: "Here we have a narrative of the solemn protestation which Joshua used towards the time of his death, so that he might leave the pure worship of God surviving him.... Thanks are justly rendered, to God....

"The pious solicitude of Joshua is here also set forth, for the imitation of all who are in authority.... The father of a family will not be considered sufficiently provident if he thinks of his children only till the end of his own life and does not extend his care farther, studying as much as in him lies to do them good even when he is dead.

"So, good Magistrates and Rulers ought carefully to provide that the well-arranged condition of affairs as they leave them, be confirmed and prolonged to a distant period. For this reason, Peter writes (Second Peter 1:15) that he will endeavour after he has departed out of the world, to keep the Church in remembrance of his admonition and able to derive benefit from them....

"He (Joshua) invited all Israel -- and, it...being immediately after added, that he invited their Elders and Heads and Judges.... Joshua briefly animates the people, and exhorts them to sure confidence in the continued and unwearied grace of God....

"Seeing they had experienced that God is true in all things, they could have no doubt for the future.... They might safely hope for the same success in vanquishing and destroying the enemy....

"Behold, this day I am going (the way of all the Earth)!' As it has been appointed unto all men once to die (Hebrews 9:27), Joshua says that in regard to himself the common end of all is at hand -- inasmuch as he too was born mortal....

"There cannot be a doubt that his loss filled the people with the deepest regret.... He therefore admonished them that since the race of life is ended by having reached the goal, they were not to ask that his condition should be different from that of the whole human race.

"Meanwhile, he does not intimate that the form of dying is the same in all. Because the believers of heavenly doctrine are distinguished from unbelievers by an incorruptible seed -- not allowing them in like manner to perish." It "only adverts to that which is common -- namely, departure from the world after the course of life is ended."

Joshua was old, and stricken with age. But, certain of his own heavenly destination, he still planned for the future welfare of his people here on Earth after his own demise! May we do so!

'Joshua gathered all the tribes...and called for the Elders...and for their Heads and for their Judges and for their Officers.... They presented themselves, before God. And Joshua said to all the people...: "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time -- even Terah the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods!"... And Joshua said to all the people...: "If it seems evil to you to serve the Lord -- you must today choose whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house -- we will serve the Lord!"'
Joshua 24:1,2,15.

Jacob had settled in Shechem, where he purified his house from strange gods and buried their idols (Genesis 33:19 & 35:2-4). This place had already been consecrated by Abraham as a sanctuary of God. So Joshua chose the same place for the renewal of the covenant -- because this act involved a practical renunciation on the part of Israel from all idolatry.

Calvin comments that Joshua "now states what he had not formerly observed -- that they were all standing before the Lord. An expression which designates the more sacred dignity and solemnity of the meeting....

"Joshua, in a regular and solemn manner, invoked the name of Jehovah. And, as in His presence, addressed the people....

"He begins his address by referring to their gratuitous adoption.... He leads them back to their origin, and reminds them how their fathers had dwelt in Chaldea worshipping idols in common with others....

"Hence it is inferred that Abraham, when he was plunged in idolatry, was raised up as it were from the lowest deep.... While Noah was yet alive, idolatry had not only spread everywhere...but even penetrated into the family of Shem in which at least a purer religion ought to have flourished....

"Joshua were paying little regard to what behoves an honest and right-hearted leader. If the people had forsaken God and gone after idols, it was his duty to inflict punishment on their impious and abominable revolt....

"There is no doubt that his tongue was guided by the inspiration of the Spirit, in stirring up and disclosing their feelings.... When the Lord brings men under His authority, they are usually willing enough to profess zeal for piety.... There is need, therefore, of serious examination....

"The real object of Joshua was...to renew and confirm the covenant which had already been made with God.... He declares that he and his house will persevere in the worship of God" -- even in their old age! You too?

'Joshua the...servant of the Lord, died -- being 110 years old.... They buried him on the border of his inheritance.... Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the Elders that outlived Joshua and which had known all the works of the Lord that He had done.'
Joshua 24:29-31.

With the renewal of the covenant, Joshua had ended his vocation. He did not formally lay down his Office, because there was no immediate successor who had been appointed by God. The ordinary Rulers of the congregation were enough, when once they were settled in Canaan -- viz. the Elders as Heads and Judges.

In order therefore to bring the history of Joshua and his times to a close, nothing further remained than to give an account of his death. Joshua died, at the age of 110 -- like his ancestor Joseph (Genesis 50:26).

Joshua's labours had not remained without effect. During his own lifetime and that of the Elders who outlived him and who had seen all that the Lord did for Israel, all that people served the Lord. With the death of Eleazar the high priest, the contemporary of Joshua, the times of Joshua came to a close.

Calvin comments: "The honour of sepulture was a mark of reverence, which of itself bore testimony to the affectionate regard of the people.... The title by which Joshua is distinguished after his death, when he is called 'the servant of the Lord' -- took away all excuse from those...abandoned men....

"They served the Lord while Joshua survived, and till the more aged (Elders) had died out.... In the present day also, when God furnishes any of His servants with distinguished and excellent gifts -- their authority protects and preserves the order and state of the Church. But when they are dead..., impiety breaks forth."

The last words of Joshua were not remarkable in themselves. They were: a succinct summary of past history; a stern warning against backsliding; and the posing of a definite choice between continuing to serve the Lord -- or a backsliding into idolatry.

Joshua had no history of others to read. Instead, he just went right ahead, and made his own history!

This leader was buried in Timnath-serah, which is in Mount Ephraim. His grave, like that of Moses, no man has yet found.

Joshua died and was buried, when 110. Then he went straight to Heaven! You too?

'Then he (Gideon) said to Zebah and Zalmunna: "What kind of men were they whom you slew at Tabor?" And they answered: "As you are, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king!" Then he said: "They were my brothers, even the sons of my mother! As the Lord lives, if you had saved them alive -- I would not slay you!" And he said to Jether his firstborn: "Up, and slay them!" But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid.... So Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna.... Then Gideon...died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre.'
Judges 8:18-32.

Gideon returned victorious from the war. He repaid Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian who had been taken prisoner -- according to what they had done.

These kings had put the brothers of Gideon to death -- and apparently not in open fight. They had murdered them in an unrighteous and cruel manner.

So Gideon punished them appropriately. He took their own lives -- according to the strict law of retribution.

First, however, he asked them: "Of what form, were the men whom you slew at Tabor?" The kings replied: "They were all just as stately as you are -- every one of them like king's sons!"

As the slain men were Gideon's very own brothers, he then swore an oath to the two kings. He said: "As truly as Jehovah lives -- if you had let them live, I would not need to put you to death!"

Gideon then commanded his remaining son Jether to slay the two kings. That would have added to their disgrace, by being slain by one who was only a youth.

However, out of fear, the youth did not draw his sword in order to kill the kings. For he was still but a youth.

So the kings then justly said to Gideon: "You, then, rise up and stab us!" Thereupon Gideon slew them.

The Midianites had been so humiliated in battle, that they did not lift up their heads any longer. The land of Israel then had rest for forty years "in the days of Gideon" -- for as long as he himself continued to live. For Gideon lived by faith (Hebrews 11:31-32)!

Gideon then died "at a good old age" -- perhaps when about 175 (*cf.* Genesis 15:15 & 25:7-8). He died a peaceful death, and was buried in his father's grave where he had grown up (Judges 6:11).

So Gideon was a great man of war. With only three hundred men, he slew vast numbers of Midianites (Judges 7:12 & 7:22). He also slew their two cruel kings, and then died in peace!

'Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the temple stood and on which it was borne up -- of the one pillar with his right hand, and of the other with his left. Then Samson said: "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he bowed himself with all his might. And the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were there. So the dead which he slew at his own death, were more than they which he slew in his life! Then his brothers and all the house of his father came down and took him..., and buried him.' Judges 16:28-31.

Samson had already slain many of God's enemies the Philistines (Judges 14:3-19 & 15:9-16). So the Philistines ensnared him; put out his eyes; and dragged him into their temple which was full of all their lords with three thousand Philistines on its roof alone (Judges 16:21-27). Then Samson grabbed the two main pillars of that temple, prayed, and brought the house down (Judges 16:28-30)!

Calvin remarks in his *Institutes* III:20:15: "Fervour....seized Samson when he prayed. (He then reverently pleaded:) 'Strengthen me please just this once, O God, so that I may at once be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes!' (Judges 16:28)...."

"There was some mixture of good zeal.... God assented.... Prayers are effectual!" For Samson, despite all his sins, lived by faith (Hebrews 11:31-32)!

The Philistines had seized him while asleep, put out his eyes, and led him to Gaza fettered with double brass-chains. There, Samson was obliged to turn the handmill in the prison, and grind corn. Grinding a handmill was the hardest and lowest kind of slave labour. The capture of this hero was regarded by the Philistines as a great victory, which their princes resolved to celebrate in their temple with a joyous festival in honour of their god Dagon to whom they ascribed this victory.

All the Philistines took part in this festival, and sang songs of praise to their idol-god whom they believed had given into their hands their enemy who had laid waste their fields and slain many of their countrymen. They had Samson fetched out of prison, so that he might make sport before them -- and they put him between the pillars of their temple.

But there, Samson prayed to the Lord for strength. He embraced the two central pillars of the temple, and leaned on them. Then he said: "Let my soul die with the Philistines!" Samson's deed was not suicide but the act of a hero who saw the necessity for him to plunge into the midst of his enemies with the inevitable certainty of death -- in order to effect the deliverance of his people.

Thus Samson gained the greatest victory over his foes, in the moment of his own death. The terror of the Philistines when alive, he became a destroyer of their temple of the idol Dagon when he died. Through this last act of his, he vindicated the honour of Jehovah the true God -- against Dagon the idol of the Philistines.

Thus, by faith, Samson slew more of his enemies at his death -- than when alive!

'Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife.... The Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.... The women said to (Ruth's mother-in-law) Naomi...: "He shall be a restorer of your life, and a nourished of your old age! For your daughter-in-law who loves you -- which is better for you than seven sons! -- has born him!" And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom, and became his nurse. And her women neighbours gave him a name, saying: "There is a son born to Naomi!" And they called his name "Obed." He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.' Ruth 4:13-17.

The Elders desired for Ruth's fiancé Boaz the blessing of the Lord upon his marriage. This blessing began to be fulfilled very speedily. When Boaz married Ruth, Jehovah gave her conception, and she bore a son.

At his birth, the women said to Naomi: "Blessed be the Lord Who has not let a redeemer be wanting to you today!" They called that son Obed -- a 'redeemer' of Naomi. Because as the son of Ruth, he was also the son of Naomi -- and as such, would take away the reproach of childlessness from her. For he would comfort her in her old age, and thereby become her true deliverer.

They added: "May the boy be to you a refresher of the soul and a nourisher of your old age! For your daughter-in-law who loves you, has born him. She is better to you than seven sons!"

A mother of so many sons was to be congratulated, inasmuch as she not only possessed in these sons a powerful support for her old age -- but also had the prospect of the permanent continuance of her family. But Naomi had a still more valuable treasure, in her daughter-in-law!

For the loss of Naomi's own sons -- through Ruth, had now been supplied in Naomi's old age. Indeed, the prospect was now also present to her -- of becoming in her own childless old-age, the tribal mother of a numerous and flourishing family!

Naomi therefore adopted this grandson, as her own child. She took the boy into her bosom, and became his nurse.

The name of Obed -- 'Servant' -- was given to the boy. For he would later become a servant to his own grandmother, when she became very old.

He would then live entirely for her and take care of her and rejoice her heart. And later, he would become the grandfather of King David himself -- the earthly ancestor of Jesus Christ!

The passage in Ruth is also in Matthew 1:5-18 given word for word in the genealogy of Jesus. Thus we see that this history looks not so much to David as to Christ Himself Who was proclaimed by all as the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, so that we may learn with what wonderful compassion the Lord raises up the lowly. Thus Naomi was restored and nourished, in her old age!

'Hannah prayed and said..."She that is rich in children, pines away. The Lord kills, and makes alive! He brings down to the grave -- and brings up! The Lord makes poor -- and makes rich! He brings low -- and lifts up! He raises up the poor, out of the dust...to set them among princes and to make them inherit the throne of glory!... He will keep the feet of His saints -- and the wicked shall be silent in darkness! For by strength, no man shall prevail... And He shall give strength to His King and exalt the horn of His Anointed!'" First Samuel 2:6-10.

Calvin remarks in his *Institutes* III:20:52 & II:10:18 & II:6:2: "Believers have always need of being supported.... They could not stand long, if they did not lean.... The trials by which the Lord proves and exercises us, are severe. Nay, He often drives us to extremes -- and when driven, allows us long to stick fast in the mire before He gives us any taste of His sweetness. As Hannah says -- 'The Lord kills, and makes alive; He brings down to the grave, and brings up!' (First Samuel 2:6)....

"'The Lord will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness' (First Samuel 2:9). Showing they know well that however much the righteous might be tossed about, their latter end is life and peace.... Howsoever pleasant the delights of the wicked, they gradually lead down to the chambers of death.... Before a king was appointed over the Israelites, Hannah the mother of Samuel, describing the happiness of the righteous, spake thus in her song -- 'He shall give strength to His King, and exalt the horn of His Anointed.' Meaning by these words -- that God would bless His Church.... First Samuel 2:10."

The mother of many children pines away, because she has lost all her sons -- and, with them, her support in her old age. This comes from the Lord, Who kills. Death is from Him, and by His appointment. God hurls down into and also rescues from death -- for the same persons God removes by death, He ultimately restores to life again. The Lord does all this, for He is the Creator and Upholder of the world. As Jehovah, He governs the world with His almighty power.

The Lord keeps the feet of the righteous, so that they do not tremble and stumble. Christ is their Keeper. But the wicked who oppress and persecute the righteous, will perish in darkness when God withdraws the light of His grace so that they fall into distress. No man can be strong through his own power, so as to meet the storms of life. All who fight against the Lord, get destroyed. The adversaries of the Lord Jehovah -- Father, Son and Spirit -- shall be broken into pieces!

In the world, 'the Lord will judge the ends of the Earth.' Hannah's prayer rises to the consummation. He will judge the whole world, and hurl down all His foes and perfect the Kingdom He had founded. The Kingdom can only attain its perfection in the King Whom the Lord will give -- the King which culminates in the Messiah, the King of the saints. It goes on in the advancing spread of the Kingdom of Christ, and will eventually attain to its eternal consummation in the judgment of the Last Day through which all the enemies of Christ will be made His footstool.

As Hannah truly remarked -- the Lord kills, buries, resurrects, and re-enlivens! You too?

'Samuel died. And all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him -- and buried him in his home at Ramah. Then David arose!' First Samuel 25:1.

Samuel was by far the greatest Prophet between Moses and David. He had urged his people always to put God first in their lives -- even politically. He had crowned their initial kings -- first Saul, and then David.

Since Moses, no man had arisen to whom the covenant nation owed so much as to Samuel. For he had justly been called the Reformer and Restorer of the Theocracy.

And now, after accomplishing all his many achievements, 'Samuel died.' The death of Samuel occurred at the very time Saul saw his kingship ebbing away, and David standing in the wing to replace it.

At Samuel's death, 'all the Israelites were gathered together.' And well they might! For without Samuel, there would never have been a kingdom of Israel.

And 'all the Israelites...lamented him' (First Samuel 25:1). Even later, long after 'Samuel was dead...', all Israel had lamented him' (First Samuel 28:3). This was a sign that all his labours as a Prophet were reverently recognized by the whole nation as being a great blessing for Israel.

Samuel died, was lamented, and then buried in his home at Ramah. This does not mean that Samuel was interred inside his own house, but probably in its courtyard -- in a tomb, then erected especially for Samuel.

'All the Israelites...buried him in his home at Ramah' (First Samuel 25:1). 'All Israel...buried him in Ramah, even in his own city' (First Samuel 28:3).

Great were the lamentations at his funeral. For 'all Israel' -- representatives of the totality of the entire nation -- carried him to Ramah, and buried him there!

What would now happen to the nation? Would it too die and get buried like Samuel who had built it? Would it too now pass away into oblivion?

No! For then, 'David arose' (First Samuel 25:1)! And if the death of Samuel had predicted the later death of Christ to the nation -- the fact that 'David arose' would now prefigure to the nation that Christ would rise up from the dead, and transform His aging nation into the international Christian Church! With Samuel the kingmaker dead, David the future king now arose!

Samuel died and was lamented and buried in Ramah. Then, the great Messiah's ancestor David now arose!

'The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare to David.... David besought God for the child.... On the seventh day..., the child died.... David arose...and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped.... And he said..."He is dead.... I shall go to him!".... And David comforted Bathsheba his wife.' Second Samuel 12:15-24.

In a series of very serious sins, good King David committed adultery with a married woman; had her husband made drunk and then murdered; and then married the woman (Second Samuel 11:2f,5,15,27). Before David married Bathsheba, she first mourned for her husband (Second Samuel 11:26). However, all David's sins greatly displeased the Lord (Second Samuel 11:27) -- so that in spite of David's repentance, when their son was born, that son then lived for but seven days and then died (Second Samuel 12:14-18). The son thus died uncircumcised or unbaptized (Genesis 17:12-14 cf. Colossians 2:11-13).

In *Institutes* III:4:31-33, Calvin remarked: "David..., when upbraided by Nathan the Prophet for adultery and murder, received pardon for the sin -- but yet, by the death of the son born of adultery, is afterwards punished (Second Samuel 12:13-14).... When He (God) deprived David of his child, He chastised for amendment (Second Samuel 12:18)."

In his *Sermons on Second Samuel* 12:15-31, Calvin declared that "David, having heard of the death of the little child, got up.... Moreover, when he said 'he shall not return to me' but rather 'I must go to him' -- he was showing here the hope that he had of life after death.... There, is a better life for our souls....

"David clearly knew that although he had life in this world, he had to await another life even more certain than this one.... He was always aware that after his death, he would without doubt contemplate the glory of God.... Let us learn to be joined with the faithful who have gone on before us by faith, and with a true obedience and holiness -- so that we may be received into their ranks and into their company!"

The latter sentence clearly implies both David and his deceased infant son were faithful believers. Calvin's statement a few paragraphs further, implies also David's wife Bathsheba too was a believer -- so that the previously-backslidden and adulterous believers David and Bathsheba as well as their illegitimate dead baby had all by the grace of God constituted a family each of whom, before the death of any of them, trusted in his or her Saviour.

"David, having lost his son, recognized...that God was a just Judge.... He...(had) come before God to worship Him and give Him thanks.... He 'consoled Bathsheba his wife'.... They rejoiced in the grace that God bestowed on them." Thus Calvin.

'David arose...and anointed himself..., and came into the house of the lord, and worshipped.' For he and his illegitimate uncircumcised son, for Christ's sake, were both saved before their deaths!

'Barzillai...came down...and went over Jordan with the king.... Barzillai was a very aged man, even 80 years old.... He had provided the king sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man.... The king said to Barzillai, "Come over with me, and I will feed you!".... But Barzillai said to the king, "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king?.... I am today 80 years old, and can I discern?... Let your servant please turn back again, so that I may die in my own city and be buried by the grave of my father!... But behold your servant Chimham!... Let him go...with my lord the king!' Second Samuel 19:31-37.

Barzillai the octogenarian had come down and gone across the Jordan with King David. Barzillai was very wealthy, and had earlier fed the king. So David would now gladly have taken him with him to Jerusalem, to repay him there for his kindnesses to him which Barzillai had then done at considerable risk to himself when David had fled from Absalom. Second Samuel 17:27-29.

Deeply did King David appreciate Barzillai's loyalty and generosity. So he later welcomed his aged subject, and accordingly desired he should participate in the feast which was to mark his own restoration to his throne.

But Barzillai had other thoughts. He felt, and rightly so, that one as near to death as he -- should rather be engaged in more serious and solemn exercises, than festive jollifications. Such was hardly a suitable occupation for a man so close to the brink of eternity as he. The aged should be done with such pleasures, and set their thoughts and affections on something more enduring and satisfying than even the best this Earth has to offer!

So he replied: 'How long shall I have to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am now 80 years old. Can I still distinguish things? Why should your servant still be a burden to my lord the king? Let your servant return, so that I may die in my own city at the grave of my parents! But behold your servant (my own son or grandson) Chimham! Let him go with the king, and do to him whatever seems good to you!'

Then the king answered 'Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him whatever seems good to you; and whatever you shall require of me, that I will do -- for you!' (Second Samuel 19:38). David at once fell in with Barzillai's suggestion, for he was anxious to repay his kindness. For it is our duty to do what we can in assisting the children of those who befriend us.

When the aged David much later was giving instruction to Solomon, he made special mention of the descendants of Barzillai. 'Show kindness to the sons of Barzillai..., and let them be of those that eat at my table! For they came to me, when I fled because of Absalom!' (First Kings 2:7).

So the king kissed Barzillai, and took leave of him. And Barzillai blessed the king, and then returned home -- where he died in peace, and was buried by the grave of his father and his mother!

'The days of David drew nigh, that he should die.... So he charged Solomon his son, saying: "I go the way of all the Earth!"... So David fell asleep with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.' First Kings 2:1-10.

'When David was old and full of days, he made his son Solomon king over Israel' (First Chronicles 23:1). In First Kings 2, are found the last words David gave to Solomon immediately before his death. Such were his last personal admonitions. When David saw his life was drawing to a close, he instructed Solomon to be valiant in observing the Commandments of God. Then David said: 'I go the way of all the world!' -- and died.

David warned Solomon to punish Joab for his wickedness in killing David's generals Abner (Second Samuel 3:27-37) and Amasa (Second Samuel 20:9-12). Joab had murdered both of them out of jealousy, in a treacherous and malicious manner. Especially his murder of Abner had exposed David to suspicion in the eyes of the people, as if David himself had instigated the crime.

In the time of peace, Joab shed blood that ought not to have flowed save only in the time of war. For Joab, while saluting them, had stabbed both of them with the sword. David should possibly even then have punished those two crimes. But when Abner was murdered, David felt too weak to punish Joab (Second Samuel 3:29). And when Amasa was slain, the rebellion of Absalom had again crippled the power of David too much. Yet as king of God's people, it was not right for David to allow such crimes to go unpunished.

So, in dying, David now transferred the punishment of Joab -- for which he had lacked the requisite power, to his son Solomon 'Mark the proper opportunity of punishing him, and do not let his grey hairs go down into the place of the dead unpunished!' For the demands of justice required that the popular and powerful Joab should still be punished.

Calvin states in his *Institutes* IV:20:10: "David...towards the end of his life...ordered his son Solomon to put Joab and Shimei to death.... How is it that David who during his whole life showed so much mildness, almost at his last breath leaves with his son the bloody testament not to allow the grey hairs of Joab and Shimei to go to the grave in peace (First Kings 2:5-8)?"

Shimei had shown great hostility to David (Second Samuel 16:5-8). He had cursed the king when the latter fled from Absalom. The insult which Shimei had offered in his person to the anointed of the Lord, as king and representative of the rights of God, David could not forgive. The instruction given by the dying David to Solomon for Shimei not to remain unpunished, did not spring from personal vengeance but was the duty of the king as judge and administrator of the divine right.

After these instructions to Solomon, David fell asleep with his fathers and died -- and was buried on Mount Zion where his sepulchre still existed in the later times of Christ (Acts 2:29). Thus did David encourage Solomon, just before he died and went to glory!

'David blessed the Lord...and...said: "Be blessed, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever! Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty! For all that is in Heaven and on the Earth, is Yours. Yours is the Kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as Head above all! Both riches and honour, come from You. And You reign over all; and in Your hand is power and might; and in Your hand it is to make great.... But who am I?.... For all things come from You.... For we are strangers before You, and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on the Earth are like a shadow, and there is none abiding!'"... David...reigned over Israel...forty years. Seven years he reigned in Hebron, and thirty-three years he reigned in Jerusalem. Then he died in a good old age -- full of days, riches, and honour.' First Chronicles 29:10-28.

King David was old, and stricken in years. The king was very old. The days of David drew near that he would die. Then, David fell asleep with his fathers. First Kings 1:1,15 & 2:1,10.

But before he did, David first praised God for His unlimited kingship; for man's need of help; and for God's omniscience. 'When David was old and weary with life, he made his son Solomon king over Israel' (First Chronicles 23:1). David had already become bed-ridden, and was 'full of days.'

David gives fitting expression to his joy on the success of the deepest wish of his heart, in a prayer with which he closes the last session of his reign. In this, the pious and grey-haired servant of the Lord saw a special proof of the divine favour -- for which he must thank the Lord God. He praises Jehovah, 'the God of Israel, our Father.' The Lord God had not only by David made His people great, but He had also awakened in their hearts such love for and trust in their God -- that the assembled dignitaries of the kingdom showed themselves perfectly willing to assist in furthering the building of His temple.

But "who am I, and what is my people?," asked David. "For we are strangers!" (Ps. 39:12). We have no property; no enduring possession here on Earth! Our present life is but a pilgrimage (Hebrews 11:12-14). It is brief. Like a shadow, our days here on Earth swiftly pass away (Psalm 90:9). There is no trust, in the continuance of our present life!

Just like the dying Moses did not step into Canaan, neither did the dying David step into the temple. He died, when his successor Solomon was ready to accept the great task of kingship. But David died when he had acquired a long life, great possessions, the respect of the world, and a son as his successor.

David, the son of Jesse, had been king over all Israel. He had been king at Hebron for seven years, and then king in Jerusalem for a further thirty-three years. King for forty years, altogether.

So, David died. He died in good old age, full of days and riches -- on his way to Heaven!

'Then King Asa made a proclamation.... The rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built -- are they not written in the book of Chronicles?.... Nevertheless, in the time of his old age, he was diseased in his feet. And Asa fell asleep with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David.' First Kings 15:22-24.

Asa reigned for fully 41 years. His own grandmother Maacah, the mother of his father King Abijam, continued to retain her post of Queen-Mother under Asa. Until he deposed her on account of her idolatry, and had the idol of Ashera hewn into pieces and burned in the valley of the Kidron.

Asa's heart was wholly given to the Lord, even though he was unable thoroughly to carry out the total abolition of the unlawful images of Jehovah. Yet he brought the sacred offerings of his father and also his own sacred offerings into the house of Jehovah.

The state of hostility between Asa's Judah and Baasa's Israel continued during his reign. However, after the great victory over Israel's Jeroboam, Judah enjoyed rest for ten years (Second Chronicles 14:1).

How did Asa employ that time? He exterminated idolatry, fortified different cities, and equipped his army (Second Chronicles 14:2-7).

Zerah's Ethiopians then invaded Judah with an innumerable army of a million soldiers and three hundred chariots. But it was totally defeated, with the help of the Lord God (Second Chronicles 15:9-14).

Thereupon Asa, encouraged by the Prophet Azariah, proceeded with fresh zeal to exterminate such traces of idolatry as still remained in Judah. He then held, with the whole nation, a great festival of thanksgiving and rejoicing to the Lord at Jerusalem (Second Chronicles 15:1-15).

The disease in Asa's feet during his old age, commenced -- according to Second Chronicles 16:12 -- in the 39th year of his reign. He did indeed seek the help of physicians, but the disease in his feet continued to worsen until it became exceedingly great.

Apparently, that disease resulted in his death. For Asa then fell asleep, with his fathers -- and died in the 41st year of his reign Second Chronicles 16:13.

He was then buried in his own tomb, which he himself had earlier made in Jerusalem. His grave was perfumed with sweet odours and various kinds of spices, all prepared by the art of the apothecaries. And he was given a very great funeral. Second Chronicles 16:14.

May we, like Asa, destroy even all idolatrous pictures of Jehovah-Jesus! The godly Asa was diseased in his feet in his old age. Very much diseased. But then he died, and went to glory!

'(Elijah)...went a day's journey into the wilderness.... He requested...that he might die, and said: "It is enough! Now, O Lord, take away my life!"... As he lay and slept..., an angel touched him and said to him: "Arise and eat!"... And he ate and drank, and laid himself down again.... The angel of the Lord came again...and said: "Arise and eat!"... And he arose, and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food 40 days and 40 nights to...the Mount of God.... He came...to a cave, and lodged there.... The Word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And he said..."I, even I alone am left; and they are seeking my life, to take it away!" But He said: "Go forth, and stand upon the Mount before the Lord!"' First Kings 19:4-11.

God through Elijah had destroyed the false-prophets of Baal (First Kings 18). Queen Jezebel then threatened Elijah with death, and he fled dejectedly into the wilderness (First Kings 19:1-4).

Elijah was weary of life, and wished to die in the Lord. He said: 'Lord, I have worked and endured enough, and deserve no longer a life than my fathers.' This shows Elijah was already of a great age. So, disturbed, he now just lay down and fell asleep under a tree.

But God then sent His angel to wake him up and feed him. Even when he had eaten and drank and laid himself down again, the angel woke him up again -- and told him to get up and eat again, because otherwise his unexpected journey to Mount Sinai would be too much for him.

Elijah, in the support imparted by the angel, saw an indication he was to follow in the footsteps of God's divine grace still further into the desert -- and end up by making a unexpected pilgrimage to Horeb or Sinai. Such was the Mount of God where the Lord had confirmed the covenant already made with the Patriarchs, to their descendants -- and adopted the tribes of Israel as His people.

It was about 200 miles away. In the strength of the food provided by the angel, Elijah was to perform the journey to Horeb for 40 days and 40 nights. So that just as Moses had formerly wandered with all Israel for 40 years, Elijah too might know that the Lord was still the same God Who had nourished His whole nation in the desert with manna from Heaven for 40 years.

When Elijah arrived at Horeb, he went into the cave obviously connected with the former appearance of God to Moses in Exodus 33:12-23. Elijah said: "I have zealously striven for Jehovah. But the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant and killed Your Prophets with the sword.... I alone am left, and they are seeking my life!" The Lord replied by the manifestation of His control over nature, and then by telling Elijah to go back where he came from. For there were still 7000 in Israel who had not bowed to Baal!

As Calvin observed in his *Tracts and Treatises* III:369, when God "describes His pure worshippers, the mark by which He distinguishes them, is this -- 'I have preserved to Myself 7000 men!'.... Those also whose knees have never been bent to Baal!' (First Kings 19:18)." Thus God revived the old Elijah, when he wished he were dead!

'When the Lord wanted to take up Elijah into Heaven..., Elijah went with Elisha.... Elijah said to Elisha: "Ask what I should do for you, before I be taken away?"... Elisha said: "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me!".... He (Elijah) said: "You have asked a hard thing! Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you -- it shall be so!" As they went...and talked..., there appeared a chariot...and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven!' Second Kings 2:1-11.

Elisha, whom the Lord had appointed as Elijah's successor (First Kings 19:16), was to be prepared for carrying on his work. Elisha resolved, certainly also from an inward impulse of the Spirit of God, to be an eye-witness of Elijah's glorification -- so that Elisha might receive the spiritual inheritance of the first-born son from his departing spiritual father.

After crossing the Jordan, Elijah allowed Elisha to make one more request, before Elijah was taken away. Elisha asked: 'Let a double portion of your spirit be granted to me!'

The request of Elisha is evidently based on Deuteronomy 21:17, where it denotes the double portion which the first-born heir received of the father's inheritance. Elisha as a 'first-born son' resting his foot upon this law, requested from Elijah the double portion of his spirit -- as Elisha's inheritance.

Elisha looked upon himself as the 'first-born son' of Elijah in relation to the other 'sons of the Prophets.' For Elijah by the command of God had called Elisha to be his successor and to carry on his work. Elijah's answer agrees with this. 'You have asked a hard thing' -- because the granting of this request was not in Elijah's power, but God's. Elijah therefore made its fulfilment dependent upon a condition which did not rest with himself but was under the control of God. 'If you shall see me taken from you, let it be so to you!' Thus, Elijah left the matter with the Lord.

While they were walking on and talking to each other -- 'behold, a fiery chariot and fiery horses (suddenly appeared), and separated the two. Elijah went up to Heaven. As God had formerly taken Enoch away without dying, so did He now also take Elijah away.

The disappearance of Elijah has been compared to that of Moses at his death. This parallel has a real foundation in the appearance of Moses and Elijah with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Yet unlike Moses, Elijah was taken to Heaven without tasting death, to predict the ascension of Christ (Malachi 4:2-5). As Elijah was an unparalleled champion of the honour of the Lord, a fiery war-chariot was the symbol of his triumphal procession into Heaven.

Elijah's prophetic mantle then fell to Elisha, pledging that the latter's request was fulfilled. And as a visible sign to others that Elisha was Elijah's divinely-appointed successor who thenceforth also bore Elijah's prophetic spirit (Second Kings 2:13-15). For thus did Elijah blessedly depart from this world!

'Elisha had fallen sick of the illness from which he died.... And Elisha died, and they buried him.... The bands of the Moabites invaded.... As they (the Israelites) were burying a man..., they spied a band of men.... They cast the man into the tomb of Elisha. And when the man, let down, touched the bones of Elisha -- he revived and stood up on his feet!' Second Kings 13:21,4,0-21.

Unlike Elijah who was taken up into Heaven without dying, his successor Elisha the Prophet died. He became sick of a mortal illness. Then, after his death, he was buried here on Earth.

Elisha fell sick of a mortal disease, and died at a great age. He had been called by Elijah to be a Prophet in the reign of Ahab, and did not die till that of Joash. 41 years elapsed between the year that Ahab died and the commencement of the reign of Joash, so Elisha must have held his prophetic office for at least fifty years and have attained the age of 80.

They buried Elisha just as marauding bands of Moabites then entered the land. It came to pass, that at the burial of a man by the Israelites, they saw the marauding bands coming. So, in the greatest haste, the Israelites then placed the dead man in the grave of Elisha who had just been buried -- for the purpose of escaping from the Moabites, and properly burying the dead man later.

Elisha was buried at the very time these yearly-returning Moabite marauders invaded the land. However, when another dead man was let down into the Prophet's grave and touched the bones of the dead and buried Elisha, that other dead man revived and stood up on his feet. The body of the dead man, then, went and touched the dead and buried Elisha. But as soon as the dead man made contact with the dead Prophet, the dead man came back to life.

The earlier Israelites did not bury their dead in coffins, but just wrapped them in linen and then laid them in tombs hewn out of the rock. The tomb was then covered with a large stone, which could easily be removed. The dead man might therefore, on being let down, very easily have come into contact with the bones of the dead Elisha.

The purpose of this miracle of the restoration of the dead man back to life, was not to show how even in his grave Elisha surpassed his predecessor Elijah in miraculous power. It was rather to impress the seal of divine attestation upon the prophecies of Elisha when dead, concerning the then-future victory of Joash over the Syrians (Second Kings 13:14-18).

The Lord thereby bore witness that He was not only the God of the dead, but also of the living. For His Spirit was thereby seen to have been raised above death and corruptibility.

The prophecy which Elisha uttered before his death, was here soon followed by the account of its fulfilment (Second Kings 13:22-25). For Joash then again took from the Syrian Hazael the cities which the latter had earlier taken from Israel. All these revivals, then, followed the death of Elisha!

'Hezekiah was sick unto death.... He...prayed.... The Word...came to him (Isaiah), saying: "Turn back, and tell Hezekiah...'I have heard your prayer!... I will heal you!'... and...add to your days 15 years!'"... (Thereafter,) Hezekiah fell asleep with his fathers.' Second Kings 20:1-21.

Calvin said in his *Institutes* IV:14:18 & I:16:2 & 17:12, that God "made the shadow go back 10 degrees on the (sun)dial, to assure Hezekiah of his recovery.... As a favour..., its (the sun's) shadow receded ten degrees (Second Kings 20:9-11).... After He had...given Hezekiah intimation of his death, He was moved by his...prayers to defer it (Second Kings 20:15)" for another 15 years.

In his commentary on Isaiah 38:1-21, Calvin says Hezekiah was sick "'even unto death'.... Mortal disease brings along with it sharp pains.... As soon as he had been rescued from (being overrun by the Assyrians in Isaiah 36 and 37)...., he was immediately dragged to death. He had no children, and there was reason to believe that his death would be followed by a great disorder....

"'You shall die, and shall not live!'.. There would be no hope of remedy.... Hezekiah...was twice informed that he must die.... 'Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall'.... He does not break out into rage or indignation like unbelievers -- but bears this affliction patiently. He does not debate with God..., but...bows to the judgments of God in calm silence.... It is a remarkable pattern of piety that, when he had received the sentence of death, he did not cease to call upon God....

"God...supported him by secret influence, when he appeared to have been slain.... He strengthened and fortified himself.... He concluded that, although he (thought he then) must die -- still his services had not been displeasing to God....

"'Then came the word of Jehovah'.... It is certain that the glad tidings of life were not brought until, after long and severe struggles, he perceived that he was utterly ruined.... While death was threatened against Hezekiah, still, God had not decreed it -- but determined in this manner to put to the test the faith of Hezekiah....

"Having opened the door of hope..., Hezekiah (was told) that God 'had heard his prayers'.... 'Behold, I add to your days 15 years!'.... Hezekiah...had been excluded from the hope of life, and therefore must justly have reckoned to be gain, what was afterward added -- as if he had been raised up from the grave to a second life....

"'Look, I bring back the shadow of degrees!' The sign which is here given to Hezekiah, is the going back of the shadow on the sundial -- along with the sun -- 'ten degrees'.... It is as if He (the Lord God) had said: 'As it is in My power to change the hours of the day and to make the sun go backwards, so it is in My power to lengthen your life!'

After those 15 extra years, 'Hezekiah fell asleep with his fathers.' Such was Hezekiah's reprieve, in his sickness unto death!

'16 years old was Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned 52 years.... He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.... But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up -- to his destruction. For he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar.... Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him 80 priests of the Lord that were valiant men.... They withstood Uzziah the king, and said to him: "It does not appertain to you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord -- but to the priests...that are consecrated to burn incense! Get out of the sanctuary!"... Then Uzziah was wroth..., and while he was wroth with the priests..., leprosy...rose up on his forehead.... And Uzziah the king was a leper to the day of his death.... So Uzziah fell asleep with his fathers, and they buried him....in the field.... For they said: "He is a leper!"' Second Chronicles 26:3-23.

Uzziah died when 68. He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. And in the days when he sought Jehovah, God gave him success (Second Chronicles 26:5).

King Uzziah raised the Kingdom of Judah to greater worldly power and prosperity. This is confirmed by the portrayal of the might and greatness of Judah in the prophecies of Isaiah (1:1f), which date from the time of Uzziah. He designed catapults to propel great stones in defence of Jerusalem. For he was marvellously helped, when strong (Second Chronicles 26:15).

But when Uzziah had become mighty, his heart was lifted up in pride unto destructive deeds. He transgressed against Jehovah his God, and came into the sanctuary to offer incense upon the altar. With a lofty feeling of his power, he wished to make himself also High Priest of his kingdom!

David and Solomon had never interfered in any way with the official duties reserved for the priests. King Uzziah's purpose was consequently opposed by the High Priest Azariah and 80 valiant priests, who had the courage to represent to Uzziah that to burn incense to the Lord in His temple did not appertain to the king but only to the sanctified priests.

But the king was angry -- until leprosy suddenly broke out on his forehead. When the priests saw the leprosy, they removed the king immediately from the holy place. And Uzziah himself also hurried to go forth, because Jehovah had smitten him. For he recognized in the sudden breaking out of the leprosy, the punishment of God.

Uzziah had to bear this punishment till his death. He dwelt the rest of his life in a separate house, while his son conducted the government for him. The reason for the separation of the king from intercourse with others by his dwelling in hospital, is given in the words 'for he was shut out from the house of Jehovah.'

At his death, Uzziah -- having died of leprosy -- was not buried in the graves of the kings, but only in a field in their neighbourhood. So that his body might not defile the royal graves. Yes, the once godly Uzziah sinned -- and died of leprosy. But Christ healed lepers, and took him to glory!

'Hezekiah the king...cried out to Heaven.... Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria.... In those days, Hezekiah was sick unto death. But he prayed to the Lord.... Hezekiah humbled himself.... And Hezekiah fell asleep with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the tombs of the sons of David. And all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death.' Second Chronicles 32:20-33.

The Chronicler stressed the religious activities of Hezekiah, to which he devoted two chapters. He did not deal so curtly with the political events, as his predecessor had done.

Sennacherib invaded Judah in the 14th year of Hezekiah (*circa* 701 B.C.). Sennacherib took 46 cities and a huge number of prisoners. He gave some of Hezekiah's territory to the neighbouring kings of Ashdod, Ekron and Gaza -- and he laid a heavy tribute on Hezekiah.

What was it that Hezekiah then went and cried out to Heaven? 'O Lord God of Israel!... You are the God, even You alone, of all the kingdoms of the Earth! You have made Heaven and Earth! Lord, bow down your ear! Hear the words of Sennacherib...to reproach the living God!... O Lord our God, please, save us out of his hand -- so that all the kingdoms of the Earth may know thou You, and You alone, are the Lord!' (Second Kings 19:14-19 *cf.* Isaiah 37:15-20).

Thereupon, the Lord cut off these attackers. The whole Assyrian army was annihilated. 'Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria.' Sennacherib had to return with disgrace to his own land, where his own sons slew him in the temple of his idol.

However, 'in those days, Hezekiah was sick unto death. But when he prayed to the Lord, God responded and spoke to him.' Then Hezekiah humbled himself. The threatened judgment was postponed -- because of this humiliation.

Finally, years later, Hezekiah died. 'Hezekiah fell asleep with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the tombs of the sons of David. And all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death.'

Hezekiah was buried 'on the heights of the graves of the sons of David.' There was no longer room for burial in the hereditary burying-place of the kings. So that for Hezekiah and the succeeding kings, special graves had to be prepared in the higher place of the graves of the kings.

'All Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death.' Everyone in the capital city and indeed also the surrounding kingdom of Judah then came and burnt many spices at his funeral.

Thus were the prayers, sickness, humbling, and death and burial -- of the godly Hezekiah!.

'The archers shot at King Josiah. Then the king said to his servants: "Take me away; for I have been wounded sorely!" His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had.... They brought him to Jerusalem, and he died.... He was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah.... All the singing-men and the singing-women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel. And behold, they are written in the lamentations!' Second Chronicles 35:23-25.

This describes the catastrophe in which the pious King Josiah found his death. Second Kings 23:25 says: 'Like him, there was no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might according to all the Law.... Neither after him did any arise like him!'

The pious king was dedicated to the tasks of his reign. These he followed out so zealously, in order to lead his people back to the Lord.

Pharaoh Necho sent messengers to Josiah, saying: 'What have I to do with you, king of Judah? Not against you (do I come) today!... (But) God has said that I must make haste!' Second Chronicles 35:21.

Pharaoh came up to fight against Carchemish of the Babylonians by the Euphrates. And Josiah went out against him. Yet it was God's will that Josiah, as a probable ally of the Babylonians, should not thus hinder Pharaoh and strive against him.

However, his opponents' archers then shot at Josiah -- and mortally wounded him with their arrows. So his servants took him from his war-chariot, and placed him in a second chariot which belonged to him and which was probably more comfortable for a wounded man. They then brought him to Jerusalem, where he died.

The death of this pious king was deeply lamented by his people. The prophet Jeremiah composed a lamentation for Josiah. 'And all the singing-men and singing-women spoke in their lamentations of Josiah,' from then onward.

In their lamentations which they were wont to sing on certain fixed days, they sung also the lamentation for Josiah. 'And they made these lamentations an ordinance or a standing custom in Israel. They are written in the lamentations.' That is, in a collection of lamentations in which among others also that composed by Jeremiah on the death of Josiah was contained.

During his whole reign, Josiah had endeavoured to carry out the will of God. The pious king was then taken away before the judgment fell -- at the destruction of his kingdom of Judah. So occurred the war-death and burial of godly Josiah, who then went straight to Heaven! Shall you?

'Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly!... He shall be like a tree.... His leaf also, shall not wither.... Whatever he does, shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.... The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment.... The way of the ungodly, shall perish!' Psalm 1:1-6.

O, the blessednesses of the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly! Calvin comments: "It shall always be well with God's devout servants, whose constant endeavour it is to make progress in the study of His Law.... From His characterizing the godly as 'delighting' in the Law of the Lord, we may learn...that those only are worthy students of the Law who come to it with a cheerful mind and are...delighted with its instruction....

"There is...an implied contrast between the vigour of a tree planted in a situation well watered, and the decayed appearance of one which...soon withers on account of the barrenness of the soil in which it is placed.... The children of God constantly flourish.... The ungodly are carried away by the sudden tempest, or consumed by the scorching heat....

"The ungodly...are like the chaff which the wind drives away'.... He will be even as chaff or refuse, whenever God chooses to cast him down...with the Breath of His mouth.... Ungodly persons shall be entirely deprived of their pleasures....

"The Lord daily executes judgment.... But because this is done only partially in this life, we must look higher.... Even in this world, the prosperity of the ungodly begins to pass away as often as God manifests the tokens of His judgment.... They have no part with the assembly of the righteous.... We must patiently wait for the day of final revelation, in which Christ will separate the sheep from the goats....

"God is the Judge of the world.... It follows that it cannot but be well with the upright and the just. While, on the other hand, the most terrible destruction must impend over the ungodly.... He is the certain Avenger of wickedness.... At length, He will visit them with destruction."

Calvin remarks in his *Institutes* III:17:10 & II:7:13: "Blessed is the man that does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly!... Psalm 1:1....

"There are not various rules for life, but one perpetual and inflexible rule.... Therefore, when David describes the righteous as spending their whole lives in meditating on the Law (Psalm 1:2), we must not confine to a single age an employment which is most appropriate for all ages -- even to the end of the world!...

"It is well if we thus press onward! Our whole life is a race.... After we have finished our course, the Lord will enable us to reach that goal to which at present we can only aspire!" The godly flourish, but the ungodly shall perish! And you?

'How long will You forget me, O Lord? For ever?!... O Lord my God, lighten my eyes -- lest I sleep the sleep of death!... But I have trusted in Your mercy! My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation!... Because He has dealt bountifully with me!' Psalm 13:1-6.

Calvin comments: "David, being afflicted not only with the deepest distress, but also feeling himself...overwhelmed by a long succession of calamities and multiplied afflictions, implores the aid and succour of God.... In the close, taking courage, he entertains the assured hope of life from the promise of God -- even amidst the terrors of death....

"It seems to David, so far as could be judged from beholding the actual state of his affairs, that he was forsaken by God. At the same time, however, the eyes of his mind -- guided by the light of faith -- penetrated even to the grace of God, although it was hidden in darkness.... The infirmity of the flesh could not hinder David from seeking God, and having recourse to Him....

"The words 'How long' (and) 'For ever?!'..., give us to understand that for the purpose of cherishing his hope and encouraging himself in the exercise of patience, he extended his view to a distance.... He teaches us therefore, by his example, to stretch our view as far as possible into the future -- so that our present grief may not entirely deprive us of hope....

"O Jehovah my God, enlighten my eyes -- lest I sleep in death!... He had put the mercy of God in the first place.... To 'enlighten the eyes' signifies...to give the Breath of life.... The word 'sleep' -- as it is used in this passage -- is...being put for death.... David confesses that unless God cause the light of life to shine upon him, he will immediately be overwhelmed with the darkness of death.... Certainly, our confidence of life depends on this!... Although the world may threaten us with a thousand deaths, yet God is possessed of numberless means of restoring us to life....

"I trust in Your goodness! My heart shall exult in Your salvation!... The Psalmist...makes use of this hope as a shield to repel those temptations -- with the terror of which he might greatly be distressed.... He...declares it to be his resolution to continue firm in his reliance upon the grace of God, and in the hope of salvation. With the very same confidence, all the godly ought to be furnished and sustained!... We may not be wholly free from sorrow, but it is nevertheless necessary that this cheerfulness of faith rise above it -- and put into our mouth a song, on account of the joy which is reserved for us in the future!"

In his *Psychopannychia*, Calvin adds: "When you hear that the wicked man sleeps, do you think of a sleep of his soul?" No! "How can there be sleep, amid such anguish? 'The wicked are like the tempestuous sea which cannot rest!'... Isaiah 57:20.... When David wished to describe the bitterest pang of conscience, he says (Psalm 13:3): 'Lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death!'"

But David's eyes were enlightened! So, when he fell asleep and died, he would not enter 'the sleep of death' -- but the sleep of life! Of life, everlasting! Will that be your lot, when you die?

'Preserve me, O God!... I have set the Lord always before me!... My flesh too shall rest in hope, for You will not leave my soul in the grave!... You will show me the path of life..., fullness of joy! At Your right hand, there are pleasures for evermore!' Psalm 16:1-11.

Calvin comments: "The Psalmist...explains...he is not afraid of death. There is nothing wanting which is requisite to the completion of his joy.... It follows, that no one truly trusts in God but he who takes such hold of the salvation which God has promised him -- as to despise death!...

"David...entertains the...assurance of eternal salvation, which freed him from all anxiety.... As if he had said: 'There will always be ready for me a way of escape from the grave, so that I may not remain in corruption!...' If therefore Christ, Who is the Firstfruits of those who rise again, did not come forth from the grave -- they would remain for ever under the bondage of corruption!...

"This however did not prevent David from assuring himself of exemption from the dominion of death by right -- seeing Christ, by His rising from the dead, obtained immortality not for Himself individually but for us all.... He was wholly and perfectly exempted from the corruption of the grave, so that He might call His members into His fellowship and make them partakers of this blessing....

"David after death was, in the course of time, reduced to dust.... He was not exempted from corruption. It is the same with respect to all the faithful, not one of whom becomes a partaker of incorruptible life without first being subjected to corruption....

"The question however may be asked -- 'As Christ descended into the grave, was not He also subject to corruption?...' The life of Christ would be exempted from the dominion of the grave, inasmuch as His body even when dead would not be subject to corruption....

(Calvin adds in his *Institutes* III:25:3: "It would not be proper to be made equal to Him in all respects. It is said in the Psalm (16:10), 'Neither would You permit your Holy One to see corruption'.... A portion of this confidence appertains to us, according to the measure bestowed on us. Yet the full effect appeared only in Christ Who -- free from all corruption -- resumed a spotless body!")

"The Psalmist...explains the way in which God would exempt him from the bondage of death -- namely, by...bringing him at length safely to the possession of eternal life.... This passage touches upon the difference...between true believers and aliens...with respect to their everlasting state.... David here speaks of 'the path of life'.... It means the prolongation of his natural life.... The way of life...must undoubtedly be viewed as extending to a blessed immortality.... None but the faithful who are contented with His grace alone, can be truly and perfectly happy."

As David declared: 'Preserve me, O God!... You won't leave me in the grave!' You too?

'Keep me...from the wicked that oppress me -- from my deadly enemies who surround me!... As for me..., I shall be satisfied when I awake, with Your likeness!' Psalm 17:8-15.

Calvin comments: "David triumphs.... God...assured him...that one day, he will enjoy the privilege of...beholding Him.... 'To behold God's face' is nothing else than to have a sense of His fatherly favour, with which He...causes us to rejoice by removing our sorrow but also transports us even to Heaven.... Although He may hide His face...for a time, He causes...again in due season to behold His bright countenance...."

"I shall be satisfied!" Some interpreters...restrict this -- to the resurrection at the last day.... I readily admit that this satisfaction of which he speaks, will not in all respects be perfect before the last coming of Christ...

"(But) to me, it seems...suitable to refer the word 'awake' to David.... When the favour of God shall again have arisen and shone brightly upon him, he declares that then he will recover spiritual strength and enjoy tranquillity of mind...."

"So long as we continue in this state of earthly pilgrimage, 'we walk by faith -- not by sight'.... Let each of us awaken...from his lethargy, so that we may now be satisfied with spiritual felicity -- until God in due time brings us to His Own immediate presence and causes us to enjoy Him!"

Also in his *Institutes* II:10:17 & III:25:9-10, Calvin adds: "The holy fathers under the Old Testament were not ignorant that in this world, God...never gives His servants the fulfilment of what is promised them.... They doubted not then..., a time would at length arrive when the divine promises would be fulfilled. This is attested by such expressions as these: 'As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Your likeness!' (Psalm 17:15)...."

"There shall be a resurrection of the dead'...(Acts 24:15).... The prophecy that death shall be swallowed up in victory (Hosea 13:14) will only then be completed..., (in) the day...on which He will manifest His glory to us...(First Corinthians 15:54).... With this accords David's sentiment..., 'I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness!' (Psalm 17:15)."

Finally, in his *Psychopannychia*, Calvin concludes: "Rest is not yet full and perfect.... (It) has no end, till it has arrived where it was tending.... The eyes of the elect look to the supreme glory of God as their final good. Their desire is always moving onward, till the glory of God is complete.... This completion awaits the Judgment Day. Then will be verified the saying: 'I will be satisfied when I awake with beholding Your countenance!' (Psalm 17:15)...."

"We will celebrate our triumph and enjoy the fruits of victory, when our head shall be raised above death in glory -- that is, when death shall be swallowed up in victory. This is our aim.... It has been written: 'I shall be satisfied, when I awake with beholding Your glory!' (Psalm 17:15)."

'The sorrows of death surrounded me.... The sorrows of the grave compassed me about; the snares of death overtook me.... In my distress, I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God. He heard my voice.... He sent from above; He took me; He drew me out!' Psalm 18:3-16.

Calvin comments: "David...begins to recount the undoubted and illustrious proofs by which he had experienced that the hand of God is sufficiently strong and powerful to repel all the dangers and calamities with which he may be assailed.... When in his distresses he had been reduced to extremity, he had betaken himself to God for help -- and had wonderfully been preserved....

"The Hebrew word *chebleey* means 'cords' or 'sorrows' or any deadly evil which consumes a man's health and strength, and which tends to his destruction.... 'Cords' (or 'snares') agrees better with the verb 'compass about' (or 'surround') -- the import of which is that David was on all sides involved and entangled in the perils of death....

"What follows concerning 'torrents' (or 'sorrows'), implies that he had been almost overwhelmed by the violence and impetuosity of his enemies against him -- even as a man who is covered over the head with floods of water, is almost lost. He calls them 'the torrents of Belial' (or 'wickedness'), because it was wicked and perverse men who had conspired against him.

"The Hebrew word *Belial* has a wide signification.... The more generally received opinion is that it is compounded from these two words *beli* ('not') and *yaäl* ('to gain advantageously') -- to denote that the wicked...obtain no advantage....

"The Jews...employed this word to designate every kind of detestable wickedness.... David by it, meant to describe his enemies who basely and wickedly plotted his destruction....

"In the following verse, he again repeats 'that the corruptions or cords' (or 'sorrows') 'of the grave had compassed him about'.... He uses a verb which signifies 'to beset,' 'to enclose' or 'to surround'.... He adds immediately after -- 'the snares of death'....

"This, then, is the description of the dangerous circumstances into which he was brought... It enhances and magnifies so much the more, the glory of his deliverance!...

"'In my distress'.... It was a very evident proof of uncommon faith in David -- when, being almost plunged into the gulf of death, he lifted up his heart to Heaven by prayer.... In saying that he 'cried (out)' -- he means...the ardour and earnestness...which he had in prayer.... By calling God 'his' God, he separates himself from...the despisers of God.... When David was forsaken and abandoned in the world and all men shut their ears to his cry for help, God stretched forth His hand from Heaven to save him!" For 'He heard!'

'He sent down from above!' The sorrows of the grave surrounded me, but He drew me out!

'The Lord lives!... Let the God of my salvation be exalted!... He delivers me from my enemies!... You lift me up!... You have delivered me.... Great deliverance He gives to His king...and to His Seed for evermore!' Psalm 18:46-50.

Calvin comments: "David declares...'God lives!'... He is endued with Sovereign Power. Further..., His works...manifest to us that He lives!... He is therefore said to 'live' -- inasmuch as He shows, by evident proofs of His power, that it is He Who preserves and upholds the world....

"Jehovah lives!' -- and therefore, 'blessed be my Strength!'... God does not simply live in Himself..., but displays His vital energy in the government of the whole world.... 'My Strength' is here to be understood...(as) 'Him' Who bestows strength!"

David, "if...not...preserved by the hand of God..., could not...have escaped in safety. 'My Deliverer from my enemies..., You have lifted me up from those who had risen up against me!'... We are to understand the lifting up of which he speaks, in that he was wonderfully raised up above the power and malice of his enemies -- so that he might not sink under their violence....

'Therefore will I praise You, O Jehovah, (among the Heathen)!' In this verse, he (David) teaches us that the blessings God had conferred upon him..., are worthy of being celebrated...so that the fame of them might reach even the Heathen!... The meaning therefore is: 'O Lord, I will not only give You thanks in the assembly of Your people..., but Your praises shall extend to a greater distance...through the whole world!'...

"This passage contains a prophecy concerning the Kingdom of Christ.... Paul very properly and suitably proves from this text...the calling of the Gentiles.... Romans 15:9.... The ears of the Gentiles were opened...when God adopted them, and called them to Himself by the Gospel....

"David here does not so much recount by way of history the singular and varied instances of the grace of God which he personally had experienced -- as predict the everlasting duration of His Kingdom.... By the word 'Seed' we are...to understand...that Successor of David of Whom God had spoke in Second Samuel 7:12, promising that He would be a Father to Him.

"His Kingdom would continue as long as the sun and the moon would shine.... The prophecy must necessarily be viewed as descending to Him Who was to be King not for a time, but for ever. David therefore commends his Seed to us..., which fully applies...to the Only-begotten Son of God.... We shall then only duly profit in the study of this Psalm, when we are led by the contemplation of the shadow and type -- to Him Who is the Substance!"

Only in Christ the son of David, is there any lasting continuance. Christ alone is the 'Seed.' The praise of Jehovah the God of David -- His Anointed One -- is ultimately a praising of the Father of Jesus Christ through Whom the Lord lives and keeps on delivering me!

'You have brought Me into the dust of death!... The wicked...pierced My hands and My feet... They...cast lots upon My vesture.... Save Me!... I will declare Your name!... In the midst of the Congregation, I will praise You!... They that seek Him, shall praise the Lord.... All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn to the Lord!... The nations shall worship before You! For...the Lord...is the Governor among the nations!...'... Their seed shall serve Him!... They shall come and shall declare His righteousness to a people that shall be born -- because He has done it!' Psalm 22:15-31.

Calvin comments: "Our Saviour Jesus Christ, when hanging on the cross..., made use of these very words (Matthew 27:46).... The Son of God...descended even to Hell.... 'You have brought Me to the dust of death!...'... The dreadful encounter of our Redeemer with death...was forced from His body.... (By) His descent into Hell..., He tasted the wrath of God...due to sinners...

"In this Psalm, Christ is described to us by the Spirit of prophecy. The heavenly Father intended that in the Person of His Son, those things should visibly be accomplished.... How can this be applied to Christ?... He was more mightily delivered, than if God had prevented Him from falling a victim to death.... It is a much greater deliverance to rise again from the dead, than to be healed of a grievous malady. Death, therefore, did not prevent Christ's resurrection!...

"All the ends of the Earth shall remember!...'... David stops not at his own person, but...under himself as a type he describes the promised Messiah.... David's name, I admit, was great and renowned among the neighbouring nations. But what was the territory which they occupied, in comparison to the whole world?... The foreign nations whom he had subdued, had never been converted by him to the true worship of God!.... (Through Christ,) the Gentiles...would again come to embrace the true religion from which they had fallen away....

"The Kingdom is Jehovah's, so that He may rule over the nations!...'... This passage I have no doubt agrees with many other prophecies which represent the throne of God as erected, on which Christ may sit to superintend and govern the world.... This conversion was effected only under the management and government of Christ.... Christ we know penetrates with amazing speed from the East to the West..., in order to bring into the Church the Gentiles from all parts of the world.

"Their seed shall serve Him!... They shall come and shall declare His righteousness to a people that shall be born -- because He has done it!...'... The perpetuity of the Church is here abundantly proved.... God begets and multiplies His Church.... Christ is here expressly invested with authority over the Church.... Our heavenly Father has committed all His chosen ones to the protection and guardianship of His Own Son.... The Holy Spirit...commends to us the publication of Christ's resurrection!"

As Christ Himself exclaimed: 'I will praise God for saving Me from all distresses' -- unto absolute victory, beyond the grave! Is that also your expectation?

'The Lord is my Shepherd.... He restores my soul.... Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.... You prepare a table before me.... Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the House of the Lord -- for ever!' Psalm 23:1-6.

Calvin comments: "It is the duty of a good shepherd to cherish his sheep -- and when they are diseased or weak, to nurse and support them. David declares...this was the manner in which he was treated by God. 'The restoring of the soul'...is of the same import as 'to make anew' or 'to recover'...

"True believers, although they dwell safely under the protection of God, are notwithstanding exposed to many dangers.... As a sheep, when it wanders up and down through a dark valley, is preserved safe from the attacks of wild beasts and from harm in other ways by the presence of the shepherd alone -- so David now declares that as often as he shall be exposed to any danger, he will have sufficient defence and protection in being under the pastoral care of God....

He says...'I will fear no evil..., for Your staff and Your crook comfort me!'.... When David reflected on the adversities which might befall him, he became victorious over fear and temptations in no other way than by casting himself on the protection of God.... It is not against the common and ordinary calamities of life only, that he opposes the protection of God. But against those which distract and confound the minds of men with the darkness of death....

"David here makes an allusion to the dark...dens of wild beasts.... When an individual approaches, he is suddenly seized...with an apprehension and fear of death.... God, in the Person of His Only-begotten Son, had exhibited Himself to us as our Shepherd.... Lift our eyes to behold it! And, keeping them fixed upon it, tread all fears and terrors under our feet!...

"David...now repeats...what he has...declared concerning the beneficence of God.... By His liberality, he is supplied with all that is necessary for the maintenance of this life. When he says 'You prepare a table before me' -- he means that God furnished him with sustenance.... Although many malicious persons envy his happiness and desire his ruin..., yet God does not desist from showing Himself liberal towards him....

"'Surely goodness and mercy!' Having recounted the blessings which God had bestowed upon him, he now expresses his undoubted persuasion of the continuance of them to the end of his life.... When he said to himself before that even amidst the darkness of death he would keep his eyes fixed in beholding the providence of God, he sufficiently testified that he...continued shut up in the Word of God.... He entertains the hope that as the goodness of God never fails, He will be favourable towards him even to the end!

"'I will dwell in the House of Jehovah (for ever)!'.... He does not confine his thoughts to earthly pleasures or comforts.... The mark at which he aims, is fixed in Heaven.... To reach this, was his great object in all things!" For God is with me, even in the valley of the shadow of death!

'O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave! You have kept me alive, so that I should not go down to the pit!... For His anger endures but a moment. In His favour, is life... When I go down to the pit, shall the dust praise You?... O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You for ever!' Psalm 30:2-12.

Calvin comments: "In this Psalm, he (David) celebrates God's favour to him -- in restoring him.... Under this word, seems to be denoted a double blessing -- both his restoration to life, and to his kingdom.... David had been brought as it were from the grave to the life-giving air.... He was preserved by the favour of God... When he was at the very point of death, he directed his supplications to God alone....

"The life of man is in danger in many other ways than merely from disease.... David was restored to life, whenever the Lord delivered him from any grievous and extreme danger.... 'You have brought up my soul from the grave!'... He compared the darkness of that period, to a grave and pit into which he had been forced to throw himself hastily -- to protect his life.... As one restored to life..., he proclaims that he had marvellously been delivered from present death -- as if he had been restored to life after he had been dead....

"'Life' is opposed here to 'for a moment' -- and consequently signifies long continuance.... God's anger is but of short duration, while His favour is continued towards us during the whole course of our life.... Whoever therefore directs his mind to meditation upon the heavenly life, will never faint under his afflictions -- however long continued!...

"Deaths innumerable continually hover before our eyes.... 'What profit is there in my blood?'.... The term 'blood' here signifies death, not life. As if David had said, 'What profit will Your derive from my death?'... It would be unsuitable to the character of God to take him out of the world by an untimely death....

"By enquiring in the end of the verse 'Shall the dust raise You?' -- he does not mean that the dead are altogether deprived of power to praise God.... If the faithful, while encumbered with a burden of flesh, exercise themselves in this pious duty -- how should they desist from it, when they are disencumbered and set free from the restraints of the body?....

"'My glory may sing praise to You!' In this verse, he more fully expressed his acknowledgment of the purpose for which God had preserved him from death.... David adds immediately after, 'I will celebrate Your praise for ever!'... His meaning therefore is -- 'O Lord, as I know that You have preserved me for this purpose -- that Your praises may resound from my tongue. I will faithfully discharge this service to You, and perform my part even unto death!'"

After weeping, comes joy to those who live in God's favour! Do you?

'Have mercy upon me, O Lord!... My strength fails...and my bones are consumed.... I am forgotten like a dead man.... Many...devised to take away my life.... My times are in Your hand.... Save me, for the sake of Your mercies!... Let the wicked...be silent in the grave!' Psalm 31:9-17.

Calvin comments about David's "misery.... He says that 'his eyes, his soul and his belly were consumed with grief'.... He was thus tormented and vexed by these calamities.... He had for a long time been inured to the endurance of troubles.... His afflictions were incredibly severe....

"Saints often have a severe and arduous conflict.... Yet...no accumulation of troubles has overwhelmed them.... Being consumed with grief, he felt his life and his years sliding away and failing.... David bewails...the grievousness of his calamities....

"I am forgotten as one dead!...' He was as completely blotted out of all men's remembrance, as if he had been dead. The memory of some men after their death, flourishes for a time among survivors. But it more frequently vanishes. For there is no longer any intercourse between the quick and the dead, nor can the living be of any further service to the dead....

"David, seeing the steadfastness of his faith in opposition to the assaults of the temptations..., denies that he had ever fainted.... He stood firm in his hope of deliverance, by God.... While he pines away with grief and is deprived of all strength, he is nevertheless supported by so strong a hope that he ceases not to call upon God....

"Let us mark his manner of speech: 'I have said, "You are my God!"...' Certainly it is an undoubted proof of genuine faith when, however fierce the waves are which beat against us, and however sore the assaults by which we are shaken, we hold fast this as a fixed principle that we are constantly under the protection of God and can say to Him freely: 'You are our God!'

"My times are in Your hand!'... Lord, it is Your prerogative.... You alone have the power to dispose of both my life and my death!... He mused on the various revolutions and manifold dangers which continually hang over us.... He nevertheless confidently reposed upon the providence of God.... He not only denominates God the Governor of the world in general, but also affirms that his life is in His hand.... Whatever trials...might befall him, he was safe under His protection....

"He encourages himself to hope..., by setting before him 'God's goodness'.... To be 'silent in the grave' implies that death, when it befall the ungodly, restrains...them from doing further injury."

As Calvin says in his *Institutes* I:17:11: "David, considering the various turns which human life undergoes as it rolls..., betakes himself to this...: 'My times are in Your hand!' (Psalms 31:15).... By 'times' he meant to express that howsoever unstable the condition man may be, the vicissitudes which are ever and anon taking place, are under Divine regulation!" Till God's face shines again on those who have been wasting away! What shall your lot be?

'Blessed be the Lord! For He has shown me His marvellous kindness.... For I said, in my haste: "I am cut off from before Your eyes!" Nevertheless, You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried to You!' Psalm 31:21-22.

Calvin comments: "The Psalmist...declares that the goodness of God in preserving his life, was wondrously displayed.... David lay open to every blow, and had been exposed to every sort of injury. He boasts that in his nakedness and destitution, the assistance of God had been of greater service to him than...an impregnable fortress would have been!..."

"I said, in my haste: "I am cut off from before Your eyes!"... David here confesses that for his distrust, he deserved to be deserted by God and left to perish.... But...he hesitates not to publish the shame of his fault.... It means that he had been...carried headlong to entertain the thought that he was neglected by God.... Although David was stricken with fear, he did not faint under the trial.... This persuasion did not continue (to be) fixed in his mind!..."

"David's faith had never been overthrown by this temptation.... For he immediately adds that God 'had heard the voice of his supplications'.... If his faith had been extinguished, he could not have brought his mind earnestly to engage in prayer!... Therefore this complaint was only a lapse of the tongue, uttered in haste...."

"This confession of David...serves to magnify the grace of God.... His faith, although severely shaken, had not altogether been eradicated -- because he ceased not, meanwhile, to pray!"

"The saints often wrestle in this manner with their distrust -- that partly they may not despond, and that partly they may gather courage and stimulate themselves to prayer. Nor does the weakness of the flesh, even when they are almost overthrown, hinder them from showing that they are unwearied and invincible champions before God...."

"David had been preserved without any deservings of his own.... God's immeasurable goodness, strove with his unbelief!"

Calvin adds in his *Institutes* III:2:17: "Faith must be certain and secure.... Believers...are...far from thinking that their consciences possess a placid quiet -- uninterrupted by perturbation.... Whatever be the mode in which they are assailed, we deny that they fall off and abandon that sure confidence which they have formed of the mercy of God...."

"How far his (David's) mind was from being always at peace, is declared by innumerable complaints.... 'I said, in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes!' (Psalm 31:22)."

But God! For the Lord hears and blesses those who pray, when they feel cut off! And you?

'The Angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.... What man is he that desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?... The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the Earth!' Psalm 34:7-16.

Calvin comments: "The Angel of God, armed with invincible power, constantly watches over us...on every side -- to aid and deliver us from all evil.... God takes care of the godly....

"The hand of God is stretched out to succour them in due season, when they are reduced to the greatest straits and know not to what side to turn. So that the issue always shows that we seek not in vain from Him, whatever is necessary to the sustenance of life....

"All men...desire to live in the enjoyment of happiness. But He censures severely the blindness...which men exhibit, in the forwardness of their desires and the vanity of their endeavours to obtain happiness.... A happy life...God bestows only upon the sincere and upright in heart....

"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous'.... In saying that 'the ears of the Lord are open to their cry' -- He teaches that the man who is wantonly and unjustly persecuted will find a ready and suitable remedy in all affliction, by calling upon God as his Avenger....

"The wicked...by reason of their impunity harden themselves in sin. God is watching -- so that He may 'cut off their remembrance from the Earth' (First Peter 5:10).

"He speaks particularly of this kind of punishment, because the ungodly not only expect that they shall be happy during their whole life, but also imagine that they shall enjoy immortality in this world.... If it is objected that good men experience the contrary...(and) after having long been afflicted at length find no help or comfort -- I reply that the aid which God affords to the righteous is not always made manifest..., but yet He so alleviates their troubles as never to forsake them....

"As soon as they fall..., God chastises them -- and often...more severely than the reprobates whom He spares to utter destruction (to destroy them everlastingly).... Yet...good men will find that God has not promised them help in vain against...the wicked."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:16:7 & III:3:8 & III:20:40 "that 'the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the Earth' (Psalm 34:16).... 'Depart from evil, and do good!' (Psalm 34:14)....

"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry' (Psalm 34:15).... (But) doubt and perplexity hang over the prayers of those in whose minds the belief is not firmly seated that 'the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous' (Psalm 34:15)." So then, desire life and love many days -- in order to see good!

'Many are the afflictions of the righteous. But the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones.... Evil shall slay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.... The Lord redeems the soul of His servants. And none of them that trust in Him, shall be desolate!' Psalm 34:19-22.

Calvin comments: "God is the Deliverer of His people, even when they are brought very low -- and when they are as it were half-dead.... Our spirits begin to fail.... (But) God is nigh to the faithful, even when their hearts faint and fail them -- and they are ready to die....

"By this means, His power shines forth more clearly -- when He raises us up again, from the grave!... The faithful should thus utterly be cast down and afflicted -- so that they may breathe again in God alone.... Having prostrated ourselves in the dust before Him -- may He raise us up!... God departs not from us, even when we are...almost deprived of life.

"'Many are the afflictions of the righteous.' The Psalmist here anticipates the thought:...'How can it be that God has a care about the righteous, who are continually harassed with so many calamities and trials?'.... We ought to remember...that although God governs the righteous and provides for their safety, they are yet subject and exposed to many miseries.... If they were exempted from every kind of trial, their faith would languish!...

"It is therefore necessary that they should be exercised with various trials -- and especially for this end, so that they may acknowledge that they have been preserved wonderfully by God amidst numberless deaths.... God, Who can as easily deliver them a thousand times, as once from death -- will never disappoint their expectation!

"What he adds concerning their 'bones' -- seems not a little to illustrate the truth of this doctrine and to teach us that those who are protected by God shall be free from all danger.... Christ also says that 'the very hairs of our head are all numbered!' (Luke 12:7)....

"But 'malice shall slay the wicked!'... Their wickedness...shall fall upon their own heads.... All the wicked enterprises of the wicked..., shall turn to their own destruction.... Those, says he, who hate the righteous -- shall be destroyed.... The same thing David confirms in the last verse, in which he says that 'Jehovah redeems the soul of His servants'.... By the word 'redeem' there is expressed a kind of preservation.... It is necessary that we should first be adjudged or doomed to death, before God should appear as our Redeemer.... David specifies this as a principal mark by which they may be known -- that they trust in God on Whom also their salvation depends."

Calvin also adds in his *Institutes* II:10:16: "Nor can those things...said as to the prosperous success of believers, be understood in any other sense than as referring to the manifestation of celestial glory.... 'The Lord redeems the soul of His servants' (Psalm 34:12)." None who trust the Lord, shall be left desolate! Do you so trust?

'Lord, You preserve man!... Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.... For with You is the fountain of life. In Your light, we shall see light!.... The workers of iniquity are fallen. They are cast down, and shall not be able to rise!' Psalm 36:6-12.

Calvin comments: "David...maintains that the world is full of the goodness and righteousness of God.... In saying that the goodness of God is 'unto the Heavens' -- David's meaning is that, in its greatness, it is as high as the Heavens....

"When it is added in the end of the verse: 'O Jehovah, You preserve man!'..., God vouchsafes to extend His providential care.... He provides for the wants of men.... God condescends to gather together under His wings the mortal offspring of Adam....

"'With You is the fountain of life'.... He means that there is not a drop of life to be found without Him, or which flows not from His grace.... Men are altogether destitute of light, except in so far as the Lord shines upon them....

"This is true of the light of this life. How shall we be able to behold the light of the heavenly world, unless the Spirit of God enlightens us?... We must maintain that the measure of understanding with which men are by nature endued, is such that 'the light shines in darkness, but the darkness does not comprehend it' (John 1:5)!...

"Men are enlightened only by a supernatural gift. But it is the godly alone who perceive that they derive their light from God....

"As the wicked rush boldly to the destruction of good men, lifting up their feet to tread upon them and having their hands ready to do them wrong -- David entreats God to restrain their hands and their feet.... 'The workers of iniquity are fallen!'....

"David beholds by the eye of faith, as if from a watch-tower, their destruction. He speaks of it with as much confidence -- as if he had already seen it realized....

"When it is said 'they are thrust down' -- the meaning is that they are agitated with doubt, and totter as in a slippery place, so that in the midst of their prosperity they have no security. Finally, it is added that they shall fall into utter destruction, so that it can never be expected that they shall rise again!"

Calvin also adds in his *Institutes* II:2:20: "Human nature possesses none of the gifts which the elect receive from their heavenly Father through the Spirit of regeneration.... For thus speaks the congregation of the faithful by the mouth of the Prophet: 'With You is the fountain of life; in Your light, we shall see light' (Psalm 36:9)." With God is the fountain of life, but the wicked are cast down! Do you see that light?

'Evildoers shall be cut off. But those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the Earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.... But the meek shall inherit the Earth!' Psalm 37:9-11.

Calvin comments: "The wicked shall be cut off!... The happiness and prosperity which the ungodly enjoy, is only a mask or phantom....

"First, in saying that 'the wicked shall be cut off' -- He intimates that they shall flourish fresh and green, till the time of their destruction shall arrive.... Secondly, in allotting the Earth to the godly -- saying 'they shall inherit the Earth' -- He means that they shall live in such a manner as that the blessing of God shall follow them, even to the grave!...

"The present condition of men is to be estimated by the state in which it will terminate.... The children of God...are exercised by a severe conflict for the trial of their faith.... He speak of them...as those that 'wait upon the Lord'....

"The possession of the Earth which He promises to the children of God, is not always realized to them. Because it is the will of the Lord that they should live as strangers and pilgrims in it. Neither does He permit them to have any fixed abode in it -- bur rather tries them with frequent troubles, so that they may desire with greater alacrity the everlasting dwelling-place of Heaven....

"Yet, in the midst of this disquietude, the possession of the Earth of which David here speaks is not taken away from the children of God. For they know most certainly that they are the rightful heirs of the world.... Our reason is so dull, that we cannot comprehend what it is -- to possess the Earth!... Yet the faithful truly feel and understand that this promise is not made to them in vain.... Having fixed the anchor of their faith in God, they pass their life every day in peace....

"'Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be!...'... David..., wishing to guard us against a rash and hasty judgment, exhorts us to be quiet for a little while -- till the Lord cuts off the wicked entirely.... True believers...should suspend their judgment for a time.... But exercise their thoughts in meditation upon divine providence, until God shows out of Heaven that the full time has come....

"He now speaks of them, as 'the meek'.... This He does, not without good reason.... God preserves His Own people in a wonderful manner.... It is hope alone therefore which of itself produces meekness.... From this passage..., Christ has taken that which is written in Matthew 5:5....

"While the ungodly shall be agitated with inward trouble and God shall encompass them on every side with terror, the faithful shall rejoice in the abundance of peace.... They are sustained by the tranquillity of their minds -- so that, accounting all the trials which they endure to be only temporary, they now rejoice in hope of the promised rest!" For those that keep on waiting upon God, shall inherit the Earth! Shall you?

'The Lord knows the days of the upright!... Their inheritance shall be for ever! They shall not be ashamed in the evil time!... But the wicked shall perish!... The enemies of the Lord...shall consume into smoke!' Psalm 37:18-20.

Calvin comments: "Nothing...is more profitable for us, than to have our eyes continually set upon the providence of God, which alone can best provide for us everything we need. On this account, David now says that 'God knows the days of the righteous'....

"This doctrine we ought to improve, as a source of consolation under every vicissitude.... We may be harassed in various ways and distracted by many dangers which every moment threaten us with death. But this consideration ought to prove to us -- a sufficient ground of comfort!...

"Our days are numbered by God.... We ought to enjoy, in this pilgrimage of ours on Earth, as much peace and satisfaction as if we were put in full possession of our paternal inheritance and home! Because we are regarded by God -- David from this concludes that our inheritance is everlasting!...

"They shall not be ashamed in the season of adversity!... The faithful have no right to expect such exemption as the flesh would desire, from affliction and trial -- but they are assured of deliverance, in the end.... Even in famine and want..., He nourishes us graciously and liberally....

"But the wicked shall perish!... The righteous are satisfied in the time of famine, whereas the ungodly shall perish in the midst of their affluence....

"God brings them to nought.... In calling them 'the enemies of Jehovah' -- He teaches us that they are justly overwhelmed by His vengeance, which they bring upon themselves by their own wickedness....

"He says that they 'shall be consumed...into smoke!' This is...the same...as 'to vanish away quickly'....

"There is no stability or substance in them.... The wicked are consumed into smoke, as fat melts or wastes away."

The doctrine taught here, is that as their fat melts away and gets wholly and rapidly consumed by the fire on the altar of the burnt offering -- so the wicked shall melt away and be quickly consumed in the fire of Jehovah's wrath. The Chaldee translation paraphrases the last clause thus: 'They shall be consumed in the smoke of Gehenna' or Hell!

So the ungodly shall be burnt up in everlasting fire. But the inheritance of the upright, shall be for ever! Which of the two are you?

'Such...blessed by Him, shall inherit the Earth.... They that be cursed by Him, shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.... Though he falls, he shall not be cast down utterly; for the Lord upholds him.... I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed.... Do good; and dwell for evermore!' Psalm 37:22-27.

Calvin comments: "The footsteps of the godly, are ordered by the grace of God.... God favours...His Own.... Whatever they undertake, always has a favourable and happy result.... Because the way of the godly is acceptable to God, He directs their footsteps to a happy outcome.... As God sees that the faithful act conscientiously and do not turn aside from the way which He has appointed -- He blesses their efforts....

"Though he falls, he shall not be cast down utterly!".... The miseries of the godly are so tempered with God's fatherly mercy, that they do not fail under their burdens. And even when they fall, they do not sink into destruction.... We know that if God smites the reprobate, though it be but very slightly, it becomes the cause of their final destruction." But if "a just man falls seven times -- he rises up again!" (Proverbs 24:16).... The godly are not only subjected to frequent afflictions in this life, but...are visited with daily trials -- and yet, are never forsaken by the Lord!...

"I have been young; I have also become old!" The meaning of these words is not in the least doubtful -- namely that David, even when he had become an old man, had not seen any of the righteous or any of their children begging for their bread....

"He leads them, by a variety of afflictions, to fix their thoughts in meditation upon the heavenly life.... An abundance of earthly blessings, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, is promised to the godly. This, however, is always to be understood...that God will bestow these blessings only in so far as He shall consider it expedient....

"They should lift up their minds on high, to that blessed state in which God will largely recompense them for all that is now wanting in the blessings of this transitory life.... We are however certain of this, that God makes such provision for His Own people that, being contented with their lot, they are never in want....

"God's blessing does not terminate with the death of the righteous.... It extends even to his children.... There is...no inheritance more certain to which our children may succeed us than when God, receiving them in like manner into His fatherly favour, makes them partakers of His blessing....

"Depart from evil, and do good!"... If the meek possess the Earth, then everyone...ought also to endeavour to walk uprightly.... Daily experience shows us that the children of God do not as yet inherit the Earth. Yet...we feel how efficacious the blessing of God is -- which, like a spring that cannot be drained, flows continually.... The righteous have at present this reward!" For God upholds good men, and is merciful to their descendants. And to you?

The Lord loves judgment, and does not forsake His saints. They are preserved for ever. But the seed of the wicked, shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.... The Law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.... The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him.... Wait on the Lord, and keep His way; and He shall exalt you to inherit the land! When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it!' Psalm 37:28-34.

Calvin comments: "'The Lord loves judgment'.... Righteousness and truth are pleasing to God.... All who lead an upright and blameless life among men, shall be happy.... Everything, at length, must in regard to them -- have a happy and successful result....

"Jehovah does not forsake His meek ones' -- is, tacitly, very emphatic... The Prophet entreats the faithful to suspend their judgment, until God manifests His displeasure after the death of the wicked.... 'The seed of the wicked shall be cut off'.... The punishment justly due to them, will extend to their children....

"'The righteous shall inherit the Earth'.... This everlasting habitation upon the Earth which is here promised to the righteous, is to be understood!... Although they are surrounded by the troubles and changes which occur in this world, yet God preserves them under His wings....

"He keeps them in safety, as if they were sheltered in a secure haven.... They enjoy in addition to this, that inward peace of mind which is better than a hundred lives.... (It is) a privilege surpassing in value and importance, all others!

"'The Law of the Lord is in his heart'.... It is it alone which prescribes the best rule of life.... 'His steps shall not slide'... This is a promise!... Because the Law of God rules and reigns in their hearts, they 'do not slide' -- but stand to their purpose with firm and determined resolution....

"Many of the children of God, after having been condemned, have suffered a cruel and bitter death. I answer, that their Avenger is nevertheless in Heaven!.... Holy martyrs, after they have been condemned, may also be put to death.... But this is only because it is better for themselves.... God...makes their ashes yield a sweet and pleasant odour....

"'Wait upon Jehovah, and keep His way!... Persevere steadfastly in the service of God!... Hope..., amidst the tumults and troubles of life!... Trust in God!...

"('He shall exalt you to inherit the land!'...) David makes use of the word 'exalt' -- so that we may know that God often stretches forth His hand to the faithful.... He then adds that 'the wicked' shall perish before the eyes of the godly." For 'the wicked are cut off!'

Thus the Lord preserves His saints for ever, and they inherit the land! And you?

'O Lord, do not rebuke me!... Your arrows stick fast in me.... There is no soundness in my flesh..., neither is there any rest in my bones.... My wounds stink, and are corrupt.... I go mourning, all the day long.... My loins are filled with a loathsome disease.... I am feeble, and sorely broken.... My strength fails me.... The light of my eyes...has gone from me.... In You, Lord, do I hope!... Make haste to help me, O Lord of my salvation!' Psalm 38:1-22.

Calvin comments: "David lays a restraint upon his desires.... As if he had said: 'Lord, I am not unwilling to be chastised by You -- but I entreat You...not to afflict me beyond what I am able to bear!'... This prayer...was framed according to the rule of godliness. For it contains nothing but what God promises to all His children....

"David very properly describes the malady under which he laboured, by the term 'the arrows...of God'.... In his sickness..., David views the hand of God.... David's words are as if he had said: 'I have not to do with a mortal man who can shoot his arrows with a force only in proportion to his own strength, but I have to do with God Who can discharge the arrows that come from His hand with a force altogether overwhelming!'...

"He again confirms...he suffered deservedly...in a manner so severe and dreadful.... He was afflicted by the just judgment of God. He has here attributed to his own sins...the weight...which he felt.... The object...which David has in view...is that when he had endured the punishment which he had merited, he might at length obtain deliverance....

"I go mourning ['black'], all day long!...'... The word *qooder*..., I have translated 'black'... Black...has always been a token of grief.... Grief renders men's countenances lean...and black.... The natural colour of his face had faded.... He was like a corpse -- already withered and shrunk....

"Between the thighs and flanks..., there had been a sore.... The word *nikleeh*..., I have rendered 'burning' or 'to consume with fire'.... His...thighs were filled with an inflammatory disease, or...were covered over with putrid sores.... His sufferings were severe, and painful in the extreme....

"What will be the case when we are agitated by violent storms and tempests which threaten a thousand deaths..., when there is no way to escape them? It is...not a great wonder...they carried away the heart of David!... He adds that 'this strength had failed him' -- as if he had compared himself to a dead man.... The light of life was taken away from him." Yet he still prays: "'On You, O Jehovah, do I wait!... Makes haste to come to my aid, O Lord my salvation!'

Calvin adds in his *Institutes* III:4:16: "David...had honestly pondered with himself.... 'My iniquities went over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me!' (Psalm 38:4).... From the depth of his distress, he cried to the Lord: 'I am overwhelmed and buried.... The gates of the grave have encircled me! Let Your right hand deliver me from the abyss into which I have plunged, and from the death which I am ready to die!'" Though smashed, David kept his hope in the Lord!

'Lord, make me to know my end and the measure of my days..., so that I may know how frail I am! Behold, You have made my days like a handbreadth, and my age is nothing before You.... Every man at his best state, is altogether vanity!... Every man walks in a vain show (or "image").... And now, Lord, what am I waiting for? My hope is in You!' Psalm 39:4-7.

Calvin comments David indicates he is "a mortal man whose life is frail.... 'God..., at least make me to know how long You have appointed me to live!... Is...my life...but a moment?... Why do You accumulate upon my head such a load of miseries, as if I had yet many ages to live?'...

"Behold, You have made my days like a handbreadth!' A handbreadth is the measure of four fingers..., a very small measure.... The life of man flies away swiftly, and the end of it...touches the beginning.... Let us count the number of the years, which still remain to me on Earth!...

"Some render the word *chedel* 'mundane' -- and others, 'temporal'; that is to say, that which endures only for a time. If the world 'mundane' is adopted, the sense will be: 'Show me whether You will prolong my life to the end of the world'...

It may...properly be taken for an age.... But in my judgment, the translation ('handbreadth') which I have followed, is much more appropriate....

"He says that 'his age is...nothing before God'.... It is not a thing unknown to him how transitory and passing the life of man is.... David...does not continue to indulge in rash...lamentations but, lifting up his soul in the exercise of faith, he attains heavenly consolation!

'Surely, man walks in a shadow (or a "vain show")'.... He means that there is nothing substantial in man.... David simply declares of every man individually what Paul extends to the whole world, when he says: 'The fashion of this world passes away!' (First Corinthians 7:31)....

The appearance of strength which displays itself in them for a time, soon passes away.... They are only a shadow... Worldly men...admit not that they are mortal, much less do they consider that their life is bounded by the narrow limits of a handbreadth!...

"Now, O Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is toward You!'... Let us learn to press forward, and make still further progress -- in order that, being as it were dead, we may be quickened by God!"

Finally, Calvin states in his *Psychopannychia*: "They (the soul-sleeping Anabaptists) insist on making David our opponent.... He says (Psalm 39:11) that man, if the Lord withdraws His mercy from him, falls away.... We teach that he is supported by the kindness and power of God!"

My age is as nothing before God. Yet I keep hoping upon Him! Do you?

'Remove Your stroke from me! I am consumed by the blow of Your hand! When You with rebukes...correct man..., You make his beauty to consume away like a moth!... O Lord..., I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner!... O spare me, so that I may recover strength -- before I go hence, and be (here) no more!' Psalm 39:10-13.

Calvin comments David means "that God would mitigate the punishment (of the 'stroke') which He had inflicted upon him.... For 'I have fainted by the blow of Your hand'.... If God should begin to deal with us according to the...demands of the Law..., all would perish....

"By the term 'rebukes' -- David means severe punishments.... When God makes this rigour to be felt, there is no man who does not forthwith consume or pine away.... Just as the moth...wastes by its secret gnawing a piece of cloth or wood" (*cf.* Isaiah 1:9).

"He alludes to the 'excellency' (or 'beauty') of man, which He says is destroyed...by corruption when God is offended, even as the moth destroys the most precious cloths.... We are overcome by the power of God and...humbled in the dust!...

"'Hear my prayer, O Jehovah!' David gradually increases his vehemence in prayer. He speaks first of 'prayer'; in the second place, of 'crying'; and in the third place, of 'tears'.... David bewailed his condition sincerely, and from the bottom of his heart.... When he calls himself a 'stranger' and a 'sojourner' -- he again shows how miserable his condition was.... He formerly said: 'My days are before You like nothing!' (Psalm 39:5).... God...knows...that men have only a short journey to perform in the world, the end of which is soon reached....

"David entreats God to grant him a little relaxation from his trouble. So that he might recover strength...before he departs from this world.... To ask that -- at least time might be granted to him to die.... There is no hope of his being restored to health....

"'Lord, as it will not be possible for me to endure Your stroke any longer, but I must indeed miserably perish if You continue to afflict me severely -- at least grant me relief for a little season, so that in calmness and peace I may commit my soul into Your hands before I depart and be no more.... **Not** that David could regard death as the entire annihilation of man -- or that, renouncing all hope of his salvation, he resigned himself to destruction!"

Calvin also adds in his *Institutes* II:10:15: "The value he (David) put upon his earthly habitation, is attested by these words: 'I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner!'... Every man at his best estate, is altogether vanity. Surely every man walks in a vain show. And now, Lord, what am I waiting for? My hope is in You!' (Psalm 39:5-7,12). ('Spare me..., before I go hence and be no more!') He who confesses that there is nothing solid or stable on the Earth, and yet firmly retains his hope in God -- undoubtedly contemplates a happiness reserved for him elsewhere!" To be 'no more' **on Earth**. But elsewhere, in **Heaven!** Lord, hear the prayer of a sojourner here on Earth!

'God is our refuge!... Therefore we will not fear, though the Earth be removed!... The Heathen raged; the kingdoms were moved. He uttered His Voice -- the Earth melted!... What desolations He has made on the Earth!... The Lord of hosts is with us! The God of Jacob is our refuge!' Psalm 46:1-11.

Calvin comments: "God is sufficiently able to protect His Own people.... He gives them sufficient ground to expect it...."

"The faithful have no reason to be afraid, since God is always ready to deliver them. Nay, (He) is also armed with invincible power...."

"When things are so confused that the Heavens seem...to fall with great violence; the Earth to remove out of its place; and the mountains to be torn up from their very foundations -- we nevertheless continue to preserve and maintain calmness and tranquillity of heart!... 'Though the Earth be moved and the mountains fall into the midst of the sea'..., denote a revolution and turning upside down of the whole world!..."

"The peoples (or Heathen) raged!... The Church of God is never without enemies, and these are very powerful.... It belongs to God continually to restrain.... His arm is strong enough to break all the efforts of the enemy.... The enemies of the Church came with a dreadful host to waste and destroy it.... Immediately, by 'the Voice of God' -- they...'melted' and vanished away.... Although the whole world rise up against us and confound all things by their increased madness, they can be brought to nought in a moment -- as soon as God shows Himself favourable toward us!..."

"Jehovah of armies is with us!... That our faith may rest truly and firmly in God, we must take into consideration at the same time these two parts of His character -- His immeasurable power, by which He is able to subject the whole world under Him; and His fatherly love, which He has manifested in His Word.... There is nothing which can hinder our faith from defying all the enemies which may rise up against us!..."

"He therefore sets before them the desolations of countries, and marvellous devastations.... We should look for peace from Him -- even when the whole world is in uproar.... The Psalmist exhorts the world to subdue and restrain their turbulent affections, and to yield to...God...the glory which He deserves.... If they proceed to act like madmen..., it will be no difficult matter for Him to stretch forth His arm afar to the Gentiles and Heathen nations, so that He may glorify Himself in every land!"

Calvin adds in his *Institutes* III:2:37 & IV:1:3: "Faith finds...protection in the words of...Psalm 46:1-5 -- 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore we will not fear, though the Earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea!... God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved!'" He is our refuge, even when the Earth melts down!"

'Why should I fear in the days of evil?... They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches -- none of them can by any means redeem his brother! Nor give to God a Ransom for him! For the redemption of their soul is too precious, and it ceases (or continues) for ever -- so that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption!' Psalm 49:6-9.

Calvin comments: "The people of God must not yield to despondency, even in the most distressing circumstance when their enemies may seem to have enclosed them on every side -- but must rest assured that God...is awake to their condition...."

"Should I fear in the days of evil..., when the hour of my death comes?" No! "The Psalmist...intimates that he would not fear, though crafty and treacherous men laid snares for him.... He would have no fear when his enemies surrounded him -- and in pursuing him, trod as it were upon his heel...."

"They trust in their wealth!...'... Any boasted power which they possess, is fleeting and evanescent.... It were as reasonable to startle at a shadow or a spectre!..."

"None can redeem the life of another.... Their conduct is nothing less than insanity. Some read: 'A man shall not be able to redeem his brother' -- which amounts to the same meaning...."

"None can give a price to God for the Ransom of another!'.... He adverts to the truth that men's lives are absolutely at the disposal of God, and that they never can be extended by any human arrangement one moment beyond the period which God has fixed.

"He enforces the same lesson in the verse which follows, where he states that 'the redemption of their soul is precious'.... The Psalmist would assert that no man can hope to purchase an immortality either for himself or others in this world."

'The redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceases for ever' (Psalm 49:8). "I have rendered the close of verse 8: 'And their continuance for ever'.... The words in verse 9, 'That he should still live for ever,' more fully express the truth."

Calvin also adds in his *Institutes* II:10:17: "Where...is the great stability of the saints who...are not only disturbed but everywhere utterly bruised and oppressed?.... 'They that trust in their wealth and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches -- none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a Ransom for him!'.... Psalm 49:6-7."

No! For only Christ, Who never boasted about the multitude of His riches but instead became poor for our sakes, could redeem His brother and give Himself for him as a Ransom to God!

None of the greedy can ever redeem his brother! But Christ the Ransom came, and did!

'Wise men die.... The fool and the brutish person perish.... Man, having been in honour, does not abide. He is like the beasts that perish.... Like sheep, they are laid in the grave.... Death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.... Their beauty shall consume in the grave.... But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave! For He shall receive me!' Psalm 49:10-15.

Calvin comments: "'Wise men die'.... It is the intention of the Psalmist to censure the folly of those who dream of spending an eternity in this world..., though they cannot but see their fellow creatures cut down daily before their eyes by the stroke of death.... They will not lay to heart their mortality, when surrounded by so many convincing illustrations of it!... All, without exception of discrimination, are involved in the common mortality....

"There is a great difference, so far as the soul is concerned, between man and the brute.... But the Psalmist...was warranted to say of the ungodly, that they die as the beasts. His subject does not lead him to speak of the world to come. He put them (the ungodly) on a level with the meanest of the lower creatures.... The Psalmist's great aim is to show the vanity of the boasting of the wicked -- from the nearness of death, which must join them in one common fate with the beasts of the field.... The ungodly may be compare to the beasts -- 'they perish'!... They go down into the grave, as sheep are gathered into the fold by the shepherd.... The Psalmist...hands them over to death....

"A different fate...awaits the children of God.... Infidel worldlings reject a better life to come.... We may expect a happy outcome..., by coming to that everlasting inheritance which awaits us in Heaven.... The wicked must all be prostrated before...Christ and made His footstool. His members will share in the victory.... The coming of the Lord will resemble the morning, when both the elect and reprobate will wake. The former will then cast aside their lethargy.... Freed from the darkness which rested upon them, they will behold Christ the Sun of Righteousness.... There will dawn ere long, a new morning which will introduce us to a better and an eternal existence!...

"The righteous shall have dominion.... The Prophet does not deny his liability to death; but he looks to God as He Who would defend and redeem him from it.... The saints under the Law lived and died (and)...were directed to another and a higher life to which the present was only preparatory.... The Prophet...hoped for a life beyond the grave...in Heaven.... Our soul, though it appears to vanish upon its separation from the body, is in reality only gathered to the bosom of God -- there to be kept until...resurrection." 'God will redeem my soul from...the grave!' (Psalm 49:15).

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:10:17: "'Wise men die; likewise, the fool and the brutish person perish.... He is like the beasts that perish.... The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.... Psalm 49:10-15.... He more clearly unfolds the hidden doctrine of the resurrection, when He sets up a Kingdom for the righteous -- after the wicked are cast down and destroyed. For what...are we to understand by the 'morning' -- unless it be the revelation of a new life, commencing when the present comes to an end?" Even wise men don't abide but die; yet God redeems my soul!

'Why, O man, do you boast yourself in mischief?... You love evil.... You love all devouring words.... God shall destroy you for ever!... He shall...root you out of the land of the living.... The righteous too shall see.... I am like a green olive-tree in the House of God. I trust in the mercy of God, for ever and ever! I will praise You for ever!' Psalm 52:1-9.

Doeg had greatly wronged David. Calvin comments: "The treachery of Doeg must have tended considerably to stagger David's faith.... 'Your tongue reckons up mischiefs'.... David(s)...object in dwelling upon the aggravated guilt of Doeg, was to prove the certainty of his approaching doom.... 'God shall...destroy you forever!'..."

"God shall 'destroy you'; 'take you away'; 'root you out'" -- lay you prostrate; dissolve you by fire; sweep you away; and totally extirpate you, root and branch! "In adding...God would root him out of his 'dwelling-place' or 'tent' and 'out of the land of the living' -- he insinuates...the wicked will be destroyed by God, however securely they...repose...in the vain hope of living on Earth for ever...."

"The righteous too shall see'.... The ruin of Doeg might be expected.... It would promote religion in the hearts of the Lord's people.... The wicked are incapable of profiting by the judgments of God, being blind.... It was therefore only the righteous who could see it.... They are led to reverence Him the more, when they see that He is the Avenger of cruelty and injustice...."

"But I am like a green olive-tree!'.... David was enabled by the exercise of faith to look down upon...Doeg with a holy contempt.... Now we find him rising superior to all.... He compares himself, in the confidence of coming prosperity, to a green olive.... The destruction of Doeg could only communicate comfort to his mind..., convincing him that God was the avenging Judge of human cruelty.... He would advance him to renewed measures of prosperity!"

I am like a vigorous olive-tree! David "hoped in the goodness of God" -- for ever! "His confidence would extend itself far into futurity. He declares...that his hopes were stretched unto eternity!.... He surrenders himself entirely to God, in all that regarded this life -- or his death. The passage puts...the grand distinction between the genuine children of God, and those who are hypocrites.... The one class abides for ever in the steadfastness of a well-founded hope -- while the other is driven away in the vanity of its false confidences."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:20:26 & !!:10:17: "David was repeatedly delivered by the power of God.... 'The righteous...shall see'...(Psalm 52:6).... David calls upon God to give him what he asks..., so that the righteous may...be...encouraged to hope.... 'I am like a green olive-tree in the House of God!' (Psalm 52:8)."

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*, of the ungodly: "The Lord will pluck...your root from the land of the living!'...(Psalm...52:7)." And of the godly: "'I will confess to (or 'praise') You for ever!'...(Psalm...72:9)." Like a green olive-tree, I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever!

'He has delivered my soul in peace from the battle...against me.... There were many!... God shall...afflict them!... War was in...(their) heart!... God shall bring them down into the pit of destruction!... Deceitful men shall not live out half their days!... Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved!... I will trust in You!'
Psalm 55:18-23.

Calvin comments that God "has redeemed my soul in peace'.... He (David) was so confident of being delivered, that he speaks as if he actually were so -- already!... He says that he had been 'redeemed into peace'....

"What is added, 'they were in great numbers'..., is referring to enemies.... He represent himself as having been beset by a host of adversaries.... David would appear...to speak of enemies, and to refer to the number of them with the view of magnifying the deliverance which he had received....

"God shall...afflict them!"... The word signifies....'to afflict' or 'punish'.... The longer the wicked are left in the enjoyment of their pleasures, they are only hardened the more in their evil courses.... How insignificant is the course of human life, when compared to the eternity of God!...

"His heart (was) war!"... He accuses him (the wicked) of waging war in the midst of peace, and thus of being guilty of a breach of faith....

"You, O God, shall cast them into the pit of corruption!"... He...speaks of his enemies..., to show the...end which awaits them.... The Hebrew word *shaachath* signifies 'the grave'.... They are cast into...'the pit of corruption' -- the word being derived from *shaachath*, to corrupt or destroy.... David means to assert that they would be overtaken not only by a temporary but an everlasting destruction.

"He points to a distinction between them and the righteous. **These** may sink into many a deep pit of worldly calamity; but they arise again! The ruin which awaits their enemies, is here declared to be deadly.... God will cast them into the grave, so that they may rot...(in) death rather than life....

"God shall establish the righteous, so that he shall never fall!... None can be said to have reached his goal, but such as have lived and died in the Lord. For to them, and them alone, death as well as life is gain!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:17:6: "A special providence watches over the safety of believers.... 'Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved!...Psalm 55:22.... 'But You, O God, shall bring them (the wicked) down into the pit of destruction; bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days!' (Psalm 55:23). Where in this world is there a pit of eternal destruction to swallow up the wicked?!" God delivers my soul both before and after death, but brings the deceitful into the pit! What of you?

'I will abide in Your Tabernacle for ever!... You will prolong the King's life, and His years like many generations! He shall abide before (the face of) God, for ever! O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve Him! So I will sing praise to Your name for ever, so that I may daily perform my vows!' Psalm 61:4-8.

Calvin comments: "David..., it is true..., lived to an extreme old age -- and died full of days.... But he did not exceed the period of one man's life.... Therefore...the series of years and even ages of which he speaks, extends prospectively to the coming of Christ....

"Christ must be viewed as living in His members to the end of the world! To this Isaiah (*cf.* 9:7) alludes, when he says 'Who shall declare His generation or age?' -- words in which he predicts that the Church would survive through all ages, notwithstanding the incessant danger of destruction to which it is exposed through the attacks of its enemies and the many storms assailing it. So here, David foretells the uninterrupted succession of the kingdom -- down to the time of Christ....

"'He shall abide before the face of God for ever!...' A simpler way of expressing what he had said before, 'I will abide in Your Tabernacle for ever'.... He refers to the security and peace which he would enjoy under the protection of God, Who would effectually preserve his life.

"By 'the face of God' must be meant the fatherly care and providence which He extends to His people.... We could not stand a single moment, if His eye did not watch over our preservation....

"The true security for a happy life, lies in being persuaded that we are under divine government.... God would appoint 'mercy and truth' for preserving the king....

"God would gird Himself with clemency and truth, in order to...preserve...the king.... The true defence of the kingdom, was only to be found in the mercy and faithfulness of God.... How easily God can provide the means necessary for preserving His people!"

'So will I sing praise to Your name -- for ever!' "In the concluding words, he expressed his resolution to persevere in the constant celebration of the praises of God -- with a view to fulfilling the vows which he had contracted.... For David, while he applied to God for help..., showed himself uniformly grateful -- when he had experienced deliverance!"

Calvin also says in his *Psychopannychia* that the annihilationistic Anabaptists argue that 'I will praise the Lord in my life...as long as I have being' (Psalm 146:2), means that if David "is to praise the Lord in life and while he has being -- he will not praise him after life...when he has no being!" But Calvin replied: "'I will sing praise to Your name for ever!'...(Psalm 61:8)."

God prolongs the king's life and years, like many generations! And yours?

'My prayer is to You, O Lord -- in an acceptable time.... Deliver me out of the mire, and do not let me sink! Let me be delivered...out of the deep waters! Do not let the waterflood overflow me; neither let the deep swallow me up!... Do not let the pit shut its mouth upon me! Hear me, O Lord!... Turn to me!' Psalm 69:13-16.

Calvin comments: "David... 'wept, and...his soul fasted, and...he was clothed with sackcloth' -- which were the tokens of mourning among the Jews.... When he saw things in such a state of confusion, he voluntarily engaged in this sorrowful exercise....

"But as for me, my prayer is to You, O Jehovah!...' Even...hard treatment could not shake his mind and sink him into despondency....

"Although the faithful in the present day may be unable to make any impression upon the wicked -- yet they will ultimately triumph, provided they...go directly to God to present their prayers before Him.... Although it was now a time of trouble with him (David), and although his prayers seemed to be altogether unavailing -- yet God's favour would have its turn also....

"The only means by which in our affliction we can obtain the victory, is by our having hope shining in us in the midst of darkness. And by our having the sustaining influence which arises from waiting for the favour of God....

"The darkness in which he (David) was now involved, would in due time be dispelled.... A serene and unclouded season of God's favour would succeed....

"Deliver me from the mire, so that I may not sink!...' He had previously said that he was sunk in the mire.... Now he prays that he may not sink in it (further).... Now, looking to the outcome, although living in the midst of death -- he cherishes the hope of deliverance.

"This is expressed still more clearly in the...15th verse, where he prays: 'Let not the pit close its mouth on me!' Which is as if he had said: 'Let not the great multitude and weight of my afflictions overwhelm me, and do not let sorrow swallow me up!'

"Answer me, O Jehovah! For Your mercy is good!...' There can be no doubt that he sustained a dreadful conflict.... David...shows that the only consideration which inspired him with hope, was the benignant and merciful character of God....

"He declares both the bitterness of his grief, and the ardour of his desires.... God, in a peculiar manner, invites His servants to him. David...depends on the gratuitous election of God." So too, should we!

Lord, don't let me sink in the mire -- but deliver me! Have you yet prayed like this?

'Deliver me, because of my enemies! Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see! Let Your wrathful anger take hold of them!... Let their habitation be desolate!... Let them not come into Your righteousness! Let them be blotted out of the book of the living!' Psalm 69:18-28.

Calvin comments: "By calling upon God 'to draw near to his life' -- which...seemed to have (been) forsaken -- he (David) exhibits a striking proof of the strength of his faith.... God will appear, to deliver him!..."

"Let their eyes be darkened, so that they may not see!..." I have no hesitation in considering his language as a prayer that God would deprive his (David's) enemies of reason and understanding.... God, whenever He pleases, can strike them suddenly with blindness -- so that they may see nothing....

"Let their habitation be desolate!..." He desires that...God would not spare them, even after their death.... He employs the expression...in the same sense in which Isaiah (26:14) speaks of 'the dead'..., thereby denoting those who continue...even in death itself....

"Let them not come into Your righteousness!..." Let their wickedness increase more and more!... The wicked are plunged into a deep gulf of wickedness by the just vengeance of Heaven, so that they may never return to a sound understanding -- and so that he who is filthy may become still more filthy (Revelation 22:11)....

"Let them be blotted out from the book of the living!..." This...imprecation...is...most dreadful.... He denounces against them eternal destruction..., so that they might be blotted out of the book of the living (Revelation 22:19). For all those must inevitably perish, who are not found written or enrolled in the Book of Life....

"Those whom God openly rejects and casts out of His Church are...said to 'be blotted out'.... (But) none who have once really been the children of God, will ever finally fall away or wholly be cut off!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:10:18 & III:24:9: "'The wicked shall be silent in darkness' (First Samuel 2:9).... Howsoever pleasant the delights of the wicked, they gradually lead down to the chambers of death.... The death of such persons (is) the death of...persons cut off from the hope of resurrection.... 'Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous!' (Psalm 69:28)....

"The words...indicate the abandonment of those who seemed to have a...place among the elect. As is said in the Psalm (69:28), 'Let them be blotted out of the Book of the Living, and not be written with the righteous!'" Let not the wicked be written up in the book of the living!

'Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high!... I will praise the name of God!... The humble shall see this, and be glad!... You that seek God, your heart shall live!' Psalm 69:29-32.

Calvin comments: "David...adds immediately afterward, 'Your salvation shall exalt me!'... There is here a mutual relationship stated -- between the sorrow with which he was oppressed, and the help of God by which he hoped to be lifted up....

"He assures himself that the very thing which others considered as a ground for despair, would prove to him the cause of his salvation.... 'Although I now mourn under the pressure of affliction -- yet shall Your salvation, O Lord, exalt me!'....

"Nor does he simply say that he will be raised up. But he expressly speaks of 'being exalted!' And in this, he alludes to fortresses which are set upon high places....

"I will celebrate the name of God in a song!' The Psalmist, now elevated with joy and sustained by the confident hope of deliverance, sings the triumphant strains of victory....

"He laid hold upon the grace of God by assured faith.... God is said here 'to be magnified by our praises'..., because by our praises His name is exalted among men....

"The afflicted have seen it!' ('The humble shall see this!') He here shows that the blessed effects of his deliverance, will extend to others as well as to himself....

"His object in doing this, is partly to commend the goodness and grace of God to true believers, and partly so that...he may prevail with God to succour him.... In the deliverance of one man, a pledge would be given to others, affording them also assurance of salvation....

"Whoever sees God, says he...will nevertheless take courage from my example.... The example of David would afford a ground of rejoicing to all the faithful servants of God, when they should seek a remedy for their afflictions....

"In the concluding part of this verse, there is a change of person -- 'And your heart shall live!'... This apostrophe...expresses the sense the more forcibly....

"In addressing those who were so much under the pressure of affliction as to be laid prostrate like dead men -- he exhibits to their view a kind of image of the resurrection. As if he had said: 'O you who are dead, unto you new vigour shall be restored!'...

"The light which was quenched, is rekindled! And thus, so to speak, recovers life anew!"
The humble who seek God shall be glad, and keep on living! Shall you?

Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked!... For You are my hope, O Lord God! You are my trust, from my youth. By You, I have been held up from the womb. You are He Who took me out of my mother's bowels.... You are my strong refuge.... Do not cast me off in the time of old age! Do not forsake me, when my strength fails!' Psalm 71:4-9.

Calvin comments: "O my God! Deliver me from the hand of the wicked man!"... It is highly probable that he (David) comprehends the whole host of the enemies who assaulted him.... 'For You are my expectation, O Lord Jehovah!"... He does not here simply declare that he hoped in God.... Even from his youth, he had received tokens of the Divine favour....

"Upon You I have been sustained from the womb!"... David...not only celebrates the goodness of God which he had experienced from his childhood, but also those proofs of it which he had received previous to his birth...by which is magnified the wonderful power and inestimable goodness of God in the generation of men....

"Moses declares (Genesis 8:13) that Noah and his household lived ten months amidst the offensive nuisance produced by so many living creatures (within the ark), when he could not draw the breath of life. Have we not equal reason to marvel that the infant, shut up (nine months) within (the ark of) its mother..., can live in such a condition as would suffocate the strongest man?...

"The Spirit therefore justly...commends to our consideration this memorable instance of the grace of God, which is exhibited in our birth and (even in our earlir) generation. When we were born into the world..., did not God -- putting so to speak His hand under us, receive us into His bosom -- what would become of us?... What hope would there be of the continuance of our life? Yes, were it not for this, our very birth would be an entrance into a thousand deaths! God therefore, with the highest propriety, is said to take us out of our mother's bowels....

"The remembrance of the blessings which God had conferred upon him, could not be extinguished by the deepest shades of darkness which surrounded him.... His spirit was neither broken nor enfeebled with shame -- but reposed in God with the stronger confidence, the more he was cast off by the world..... To encourage himself to hope with the greater confidence for a happy outcome to his present troubles, he promises loudly to celebrate the praises of God -- and to do this not only on one occasion, but to persevere in the exercise without intermission....

"David, having just now declared that God had been the protector of his life at his birth and afterwards his Foster-father in his childhood and the guardian of his welfare during the whole course of his past existence, being now worn out with age, casts himself anew into the fatherly bosom of God..... David's prayer, in short, amounts to this: 'O Lord, You Who have sustained me vigorously and strongly in the flower of my youth -- do not forsake me now when I am decayed and almost withered! But the more I stand in need of Your help, let the decrepitude and infirmities of age move You to have compassion on me the more!'" You are my God, from the womb till my old age!

'I saw the prosperity of the wicked.... There are no bands in their death.... I have been plagued all day long, and chastened every morning.... It was too painful for me -- until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I understood their end! Surely, You set them on slippery places! You cast them down into destruction! How they are brought into desolation, in a moment! They are utterly consumed!' Psalm 73:3-19.

Calvin commented: "He (David) saw the present prosperous state of the wicked.... Some explain 'bands to death' as meaning...that the wicked die suddenly.... Diseases...are so many messengers of death, warning us of the frailty and short duration of our life....

"He tells us that he was 'scourged daily'.... As often as the sun rose, some affliction or other was prepared for him.... It is assuredly nothing less than a divine miracle that the Church which is so furiously assaulted by Satan and innumerable hosts of enemies, continues safe."

'It was too painful for me -- until I went into the sanctuary of God! Then, I understood their end!' "I came to acknowledge in good earnest, that men are not created to flourish for a short time in this world..., but that their condition here is that of pilgrims whose aspirations during their earthly pilgrimage should be towards Heaven.... David very properly puts 'entering into the sanctuaries' for 'coming to the school of God'.... His meaning, were this: 'Until God become my Schoolmaster, and until I learn by His Word!'....

"By the 'end' of the wicked, is not meant their exit from the world or their departure from the present life.... But the world 'end' is to be regarded as referring to the judgments of God.... The ungodly...suddenly decay.... All the wicked shall perish miserably.... The end or the last day has not yet arrived!....

"The ungodly continue to stand for a brief season. Yet they are as it were perched on slippery places -- so that they may fall, ere long, into destruction!...

"How they have been destroyed, as it were in a moment!'... Their destruction, being sudden and unlooked for, tends the more effectually to awaken us.... It is said, 'They are consumed'.... God thunders upon them.... He...brings them to nothing, solely by the terror of His Breath.... He inflicts upon the ungodly, judgments of a very severe kind and pursues them with unusual tokens of His wrath -- as if He would make the Earth to tremble, in order thereby to correct our dullness of apprehension!"

Calvin also added in his *Institutes* II:10:16: "Nor can those things...said as to the prosperous success of believers, be understood in any other sense than as referring to the manifestation of celestial glory.... The Psalmist (73:2-17) says...'As for me, my feet were almost gone!'... At length...he concludes...: 'Until I went into the sanctuary of God! Then I understood their end!'" For I have been plagued; but the wicked shall be destroyed!

'I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless, I am continually with You. You have held me by my right hand. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me into glory! Whom do I have in Heaven, but You? There is none on Earth that I desire, beside You! My flesh and my heart fail. But God is the Strength (or Rock) of my heart, and my Portion for ever!' Psalm 73:23-26.

Calvin comments: "David had said -- Lord, although I have seemed in this world to be endured with superior judgment and reason, yet in respect of Your celestial wisdom I have been like one of the lower animals!... 'Nevertheless, I was continually with You!'..."

"The Psalmist declares...that he was with God. He gives Him thanks for having kept him from utterly falling.... He was bereft of judgment, and as it were a brute beast....

"(But) God is always near His chosen ones.... The Psalmist speaks of God as 'holding him by the right hand.' He means that he was by the wonderful power of God drawn back from that deep gulf into which the reprobate cast themselves....

"God...stretched out His hand to hold him up, and prevent him from a fall which would have involved him in destruction.... He upholds us when we stumble, and even lifts us up when we have fallen.

"You shall guide me with Your counsel!"... The Psalmist assured himself that the Lord, since by His leading He had now brought him back into the right way, would continue henceforth to guide him -- until at length He receive him into His glorious presence in Heaven....

"David...gives thanks to God, to look forward with confidence to the future.... He now cherishes the hope that the Divine assistance will continue to be extended to him hereafter....

"To 'counsel' -- there is added 'glory'.... It comprehends the whole course of our happiness from the commencement...upon Earth, even to the consummation which we expect to realize in Heaven. David then assures himself of eternal glory.... Yet he does not exclude the blessings which God bestows upon His people here below, with the view of affording them even in this life some foretaste of that felicity."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:11:2: "David rises from temporal blessings to the last and highest of all. 'My flesh and my heart fail. But God is the Strength of my heart -- and my Portion, for ever!' (Psalm 73:26).... Those who can venture to speak thus, assuredly declare that their hope rises beyond the world and worldly blessings.... All these things obviously apply not to the land of our pilgrimage...but to...the heavenly city of believers." My flesh fails, but God is my strength -- for ever! Is He also yours?

'My soul longs...for the courts of the Lord! My heart... cries out for the living God!... They that dwell in Your House..., praise You!... They go from strength to strength.... A day in Your courts, is better than a thousand!... For the Lord God...will give grace and glory!' Psalm 84:2-11.

Calvin comments: "David complains of his being deprived of liberty of access to the Church.... Some would understand by 'the tabernacles of God' the Kingdom of Heaven, as if David mourned over his continuance in this state of earthly pilgrimage.... In the second verse..., the first verb *kaasaf* signifies 'vehemently to desire'.... David adds 'his soul faints after the courts of the Lord' -- which is equivalent to our pining away.... He was convinced he needed steps...to rise up to Heaven....

"The godly were directed...to the heavenly model.... 'Blessed are they who dwell in Your House!'.... David...testifies that the true worshippers of God offer to Him the sacrifice of praise.... Never will a man praise God from the heart, unless...a partaker of spiritual peace....

"They will go from strength to strength'.... The people of God will come to Zion.... The saints are continually acquiring fresh strength for going up to Mount Zion, and continue to prosecute their journey without weariness or fatigue until they reach the wished-for place and behold the countenance of God.... No visible image of God was there to be seen; but...genuine worshippers found from experience that...they were greatly aided in approaching Him.... The only way in which God becomes reconciled to us, is through the mediation of Christ!...

"For better is one day in Your courts, than a thousand elsewhere!' Unlike the greater part of mankind who desire to live without knowing why, wishing simply that their life may be prolonged -- David here testifies not only that the end which he proposed to himself in living was to serve God, but that in addition to this he set a higher value on one day which he could spend in the Divine Service than upon a long time passed among the men of the world....

"Jehovah God is our sun and shield! (The Lord will give grace and glory!)'.... As the sun by its light vivifies, nourishes and rejoiced the world -- so the benign countenance of God fills with joy the hearts of His people.... They neither live nor breathe, except in so far as He shines upon them.... The sentence immediate succeeding -- 'He will give grace and glory' -- might be viewed as meaning that those whom God has distinguished by His grace in this world, will at length be crowned with everlasting glory in His heavenly Kingdom.... After God has once taken the faithful into His favour, He will advance them to high honour and never cease to enrich them!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:11:2 & IV:1:5 that "David rises from temporal blessings to the last and highest of all.... 'My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God!'...(Psalm 84:2).... Those who can venture to speak thus, assuredly declare that their hope rises beyond the world.... David complains...that by...his enemies he was prevented from entering the Tabernacle (Psalm 84).... There is nothing on which believers set a higher value, than on this aid by which God gradually raises His people to Heaven!" Consequently, my soul longs and keeps on crying out for the living God!

'O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You! Let my prayer come to You!... For my...life draws nigh to the grave. I am counted with them that go down to the pit. I am...free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave.... Shall the dead arise and praise You?... But to You I have cried out, O Lord!' Psalm 88:1-13.

Calvin comments: "The Spirit of God by the mouth of Heman has here furnished us...with a form of prayer...not (to) faint under any adversities, however severe, which might befall.... He (Heman) continued crying out, 'days and nights'.... He (God) particularly affirms that his life was not far from the grave.... He (Heman) complains that he was, as it were, dead. Although he breathed still among the living, yet the many deaths with which he was threatened on all sides -- were to him so many graves by which he expected to be swallowed up in a moment....

"The Prophet intended to express something more distressing and grievous than common death.... He says that 'he was free among the dead' -- because he was...as it were cut off from the world.... Augustine (says) that Christ is here described, and that He is said to be free among the dead because He obtained the victory over death...so that it might not have dominion over Him....

"He (Heman) bewails his condition as worse than if...he were going down to death by little and little. For we are naturally inspired with horror at the prospect of a violent death.... It is certain that the dead are no less under the divine protection than the living. Even wicked Balaam...was nevertheless constrained to cry out -- 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!' (Numbers 23:10). To say then that God is no longer mindful of man after he is dead, might seem to be the language of a Heathen....

"Faith in the truth that God extends His care both to the living and the dead, is deeply rooted in the hearts of all His genuine servants.... The Prophet, then, was persuaded that the dead too are under the divine protection.... 'Will You perform a miracle for the dead?'... If God did not make haste to succour him, it would be too late -- there being scarcely anything betwixt him and death.... He asks how long God meant to delay -- if He meant to do so till death intervened, so that He might raise the dead by a miracle?...

"When the Psalmist asks: 'Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave?' -- he does not mean that the dead are devoid of consciousness.... Succour men while they are still crying out in the midst of danger, than...raise them up from their graves when they are dead!.... It is not God's usual way to bring the dead out of their graves to be witnesses and publishers of His goodness. When the Prophet affirms that the divine faithfulness...and righteousness 'are not known in the land of forgetfulness' -- some deluded persons foolishly wrest the statement to support a gross error, as if it taught that men were annihilated by death.... God...had designed this world to be...a stage on which to display his goodness towards mankind!"

Let us then now seek the Lord! You too! Before life is drawing nigh unto the grave!

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord, for ever!... Mercy will I keep..., for evermore!.... I will make...his (the king's) throne to endure like the days of Heaven!"... But You have cast off and abhorred.... You have made his glory to cease.... The days of his youth, You have shortened! You have covered him with shame!... Lord, will You hide Yourself for ever?... Remember how short my time is!... What man is he that lives, who shall not see death? Shall he deliver his (own) soul from...the grave?.... Blessed be the Lord, for evermore! Psalm 89:1-52.

Calvin comments: "I will sing of the mercies of Jehovah, for ever!... The design of the Prophet...was to fortify the minds of the godly..., so that...they might with confidence hope for the...establishment of the Kingdom.... 'I will keep My mercy to him, for ever!... God frequently repeats that He had set up the Kingdom of David with the express design of establishing it for ever.... There being nothing under Heaven of long continuance, 'the days of Heaven' is an expression employed to denote everlasting duration.... This prophecy cannot have its full accomplishment in any, till we come to Christ....

"But You have abhorred and rejected him.' Here the Prophet complains, that in consequence of the decayed state of the Kingdom, the prophecy appeared to have failed.... 'You have shortened the days of his youth'.... The Prophet...does not speak exclusively of any one individual, but compares the state of the Kingdom to the life of man.... God caused the Kingdom to wax old and finally to decay, before it reached a state of complete maturity.... Resembling that of a young man who, while yet increasing in strength and vigour, is carried away by a violent death before his time....

"O Jehovah, will You hide Yourself for ever?'"... He tacitly intimates that all will be well, as soon as God is pleased to look upon His chosen people with a benignant countenance.... 'Remember how short my time is!'"... The Prophet, the more effectually to move God to commiseration, lays before him the brevity of human life.... If we receive no taste of the divine goodness, it will seem that we have been created in vain....

"God has created men, and placed them in the world.... As His goodness extends itself even to the cattle and lower animals of every kind, it cannot for a moment be supposed that we who hold a higher rank in the scale of being than the brute creation, should wholly be deprived of it.... The course of our life...is so brief.... The end for which men were created, was that they should enjoy God's bounty in the present world.... If God does not make haste to bless them, the opportunity will no longer be afforded when their life shall have run out.... 'What man shall live, and shall not see death?' This verse contains a confirmation...concerning the brevity of human life.... No man is privileged with exemption, from the dominion of death....

'Blessed be Jehovah, for ever!'"... The Prophet, after having freely bewailed the calamities of the Church, now...breaks forth into the language of praise.... The design of the writer was to assuage the greatness of his grief..., so that he might entertain the livelier hope of deliverance!" I will sing of the mercies of the Lord unto all generations! Will you too? Blessed be the Lord, for evermore!

'A prayer of Moses.... Lord, You have been our dwelling-place, in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or You did ever form the Earth..., even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God! You turn man to destruction!... A thousand years in Your sight are but like yesterday when it is past.... You carry them (men) away.... They are as if asleep. In the morning, they are like grass which grows up.... In the evening, it is cut down, and withers. For we are consumed!' Psalm 90:1-7.

Calvin comments: "Moses is about to treat...of the brevity and miseries of human life.... This Psalm was composed by Moses.... I have no doubt that he was its author.... God would now renew the grace which He had displayed in old times toward the holy Patriarchs....

"God remains unchangeably the same. God is here contrasted with created being, which...is subject to continual changes.... We mistake, if we measure God by our own understanding.... We must mount above the Earth -- yes, even above Heaven itself -- whenever we think of Him!...

"'You shall turn man to destruction!' Moses...mentions how frail and transitory is the life of men.... He considers what they are made of, and remembers that they are but dust.... Our life...is...a short revolution, in which we quickly complete our circle....

"God...may at length gather them together, into His everlasting inheritance.... Men, when they have completed their circle, are forthwith taken out of the world....

"We foolishly imagine that we shall nestle in this world for ever!... Nor does Moses simply contrast a thousand years with one day. But he contrasts them with 'yesterday' -- which is already gone!...

"'You carry them (men) away, like a flood'.... Men, as long as they are sojourners in this world, perform...a revolution which lasts only for a moment.... Death is simply compared...to a flood. For when we have stayed a little while in the world, we forthwith fall into the grave.... This death, which is common to all, is with propriety called an inundation (or 'a flood'). While we are breathing the breath of life, the Lord overflows us by death -- just as those who perish in a shipwreck are engulfed in the ocean....

"Men come forth in the morning, like grass.... They...pass away within a short time.... They wither and decay.... Nothing is more transitory, than our life.... Each of us is soon carried away.... We should not dream of a thousand lives instead of one which is but...a shadow that quickly vanishes away.... Men are by nature so transitory.... Our frail natures...speedily vanish away!"

Lord, we are consumed by Your anger; troubled by Your wrath! 'You turn man to destruction!... You carry men away.... In the morning, they are like grass which grows up.... In the evening, it is cut down, and withers. For we are consumed!' Therefore, repent -- now!

'All our days have passed away!... We spend our years.... The days of our years are seventy.... If by reason of strength they be eighty, their strength is still labour and sorrow. For it is soon cut off, and we fly away!' Psalm 90:9-10.

Calvin comments: "Moses, after having briefly taught that men by nature vanish away like smoke -- gathers from thence that it is not to be wondered at, if God exanimates and consumes those whom He pursues with His wrath.... Moses intimates that men hide themselves in darkness....

"For all our days have passed away in Your indignation'.... The whole course of man's life is suddenly brought to an end.... Moses...asserts that this..., which God brought upon His people, was not only for a short time -- but that it was extended without intermission even to death.... Their years passed away....

"The days of our years are seventy'.... What...is the duration of life? Truly, if we reckon all our years, we will at length come to seventy. Or, if there be some who are stronger and more vigorous, they will bring us even to eighty.

"Moses used the expression 'the days of our years'.... When the time is divided into small portions, the very number itself deceives us -- so that we flatter ourselves that life is long.... He permits men to sum up the many thousand days, which are...few years.... He at the same time affirms that this great heap, is soon brought to nothing.

"Let men then extend the space of their life as much as they please, by calculating that each year contains 365 days! Yet assuredly, they will find that the term of seventy years is short.... (Even) he who has reached the age of eighty years, hastens to the grave.... Even then, those were accounted old men and in a manner decrepit -- who attained to the age of eighty years....

"Before men decline and come to old age, even in the very bloom of youth they are involved in many troubles.... This is to be referred to the whole course of our existence in the present state....

"He who considers what is the condition of our life from our infancy until we descend into the grave, will find troubles and turmoil in every part of it.... 'For it swiftly passes by, and we fly away!'....

"As soon as they open their eyes, they see that they are dragged and carried forward to death with rapid haste.... Their excellence is every moment vanishing away!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:4:34: "Moses says...'We are consumed.... All our days have passed away.... We spend our years!'.... Psalm 90:7-9."

The days of our years are seventy, and soon cut off! So, once again -- repent now!

'So, teach us to number our days -- so that we may apply our hearts to wisdom!... O Lord, how long?... Satisfy us early with Your mercy, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days!'
Psalm 90:12-14.

Calvin comments: "It indeed seems at first sight absurd to pray, that we may know the number of our years!... Since even the strongest scarcely reach the age of eighty years -- is there any difficulty in reckoning up so small a sum?"

"Children learn numbers, as soon as they begin to prattle.... We do not need a teacher in arithmetic, to enable us to count the length of a hundred -- upon our fingers. So much the fouler and more shameful, is our stupidity in never comprehending the short term of our life!"

"Even he who is most skilful in arithmetic, and who can precisely and accurately understand and investigate millions of millions -- is nevertheless unable to count eighty years in his own life. It is surely a monstrous thing that men can measure all distances outside themselves; that they know how many feet the moon is distant from the centre of the Earth; what space there is between the different planets; and, in short, that they can measure all the dimensions both of Heaven and Earth -- while yet, they cannot number seventy years in their own case" or life!

"It is therefore evident that Moses had good reason to beseech God, for ability to perform what requires a wisdom which is very rare among mankind. The last clause of the verse...teaches us that we then truly apply our hearts to wisdom, when we comprehend the shortness of human life..."

"What can be a greater proof of madness -- than to ramble about, without proposing to one's self any end? True believers alone, who know the difference between this transitory state and a blessed eternity for which they were created -- know what ought to be the aim of their life. No man then can regulate his life with a settled mind, but he who -- knowing the end of it, that is to say death itself -- is led to consider the great purpose of man's existence in this world, so that he may aspire after the prize of the heavenly calling!"

"O Jehovah -- how long?..." Moses adds a prayer that God, Who had not ceased for a long time severely to punish His people, would at length be inclined to deal gently with them..."

"They could not fail...to remember that dreadful oath, which He had thundered out against them: 'Surely they shall not see the land...I swore to their fathers! But as for you, your carcasses...shall fall in this wilderness!' (Numbers 14:23,32)..... Moses...bemoans their protracted languishing, in the words 'how long?'"

"Satisfy (or satisfy) us early with Your good (mercy), and we will be glad and rejoice all our days!" So, then, Lord -- teach us to count our days, so that we may acquire wisdom! And you too!

'The Lord...shall deliver you!... You shall not be afraid of...the destruction that wastes!... You shall behold, and see the reward of the wicked!... No evil shall befall you, nor any plague come near your dwelling! For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways!'
Psalm 91:2-11.

Calvin comments: "God would prove, at all times, the delivery of His people.... (From) all different kinds of evil..., God is willing and able to deliver us....

"Mention is made of 'the fear of the night'.... The 'arrow'...is instanced..., for the reason...it shoots...with such swiftness that we can with difficulty escape it.... There is no kind of calamity which the shield of the Almighty cannot ward off and repel....

"The believer has the special privilege of being exempted from evils of an imminent and impending nature.... It might be objected that he was but man, and as such exposed with others to death in its thousand different forms.... When universal ruin prevails around, the Lord's children are the objects of His distinguishing care -- and are preserved amidst the general destruction!...

"It behoves us also to be satisfied with apprehending the judgments of God only in some imperfect measure while we remain upon Earth. And leaving Him to defer the fuller disclosure of them, to the Day of complete revelation.

"'You, Lord, protect me!... (No evil shall befall you!... No plague...comes near you!)'.... He speaks of accounting God to be his...refuge.... He defends us from every evil.... It is added, 'no evil shall befall you'.... How are coming evils averted?... Just by our resting with confidence in the protection of God!

"It is true troubles of various kinds assail the believer as well as others. But the Psalmist means that God stands between him and the violence of every assault, so as to preserve him from being overwhelmed.... Those who choose God for their refuge, will dwell safely....

"When...He finds that we still linger and hesitate to approach Him..., He next makes mention of the angels, and proffers them as guardians of our safety.... He does not assign one solitary angel to each saint, but commissions the whole armies of Heaven to keep watch over every individual believer.... The Psalmist adds '(in) all your ways'..., to convey to us...that wherever we go -- we may expect that the angels shall always extend their guardianship to us!"

Calvin also adds in his *Institutes* I:17:11 & I:14:6: "Neither fire, nor water, nor sword can do him harm.... For thus sings the Psalm (91:3-7): 'Surely, He shall deliver you!'.... Angels are the ministers of the divine bounty towards us.... We are told how they watch for our safety.... Christ, the Head of the Church..., 'shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways!' (Psalm 91:11f)." Lest you dash your foot against a stone! Do you so believe?

'You shall tread upon the lion and adder!... Because He has set His love upon me, therefore I will deliver him! I will set him on high!... I will be with him, in trouble! I will deliver him, and honour him! With long life, I will satisfy him -- and show him My salvation!' Psalm 91:13-16.

Calvin comments: "He had already spoken of the obstacles which Satan throws in our course, under the figure of a 'stone.' Now he speaks of the formidable troubles to which we are exposed in the world -- under the figures of the 'asp'; 'lion'; 'young lion'; and 'dragon.'

"So long as we are here, we may truly be said to walk amongst wild beasts and such as threaten us with destruction. And in this case, what would become of us -- did God not promise to make us victorious?...

"Because he has trusted in Me, I will deliver him!"... As we are upon the approach of danger..., (we) exercise a due reliance upon the providence of God!...

"We must continually be surrounded by death and destruction in this world, unless His hand is stretched out for our preservation. Occasionally, He assists even unbelievers; but it is only to His believing people that His help is vouchsafed in the sense of His being...their Saviour -- to the end!...

"The expression to 'exalt' or 'lift up on high' -- means...to keep in a state of safety.... God preserves His people..., raising them...to some high and impregnable fortress....

"He shall call upon Me!"... Prayer is properly grounded upon the Word of God.... Believers will never be exempt from troubles and embarrassments. God does not promise them a life of ease and luxury, but deliverance from their tribulations.

"Mention is made of His 'glorifying' them -- intimating that the deliverance which God extends..., is not of a mere temporary nature but will issue at last in their being advanced to perfect happiness! He puts much honour upon them in the world, and glorifies Himself in them conspicuously -- but it is not till the completion of their course, that He affords them ground for triumph....

"Length of days' (or) long life...would be bestowed by God upon all His children, were it not for their advantage that they should be taken early out of the world.... Longevity is never to be compared with eternity. The salvation of God extends far beyond the narrow boundary of earthly existence.... It is to this -- whether we live, or come to die -- that we should principally look!"

Calvin also adds in his *Institutes* II:8:42 & III:20:14: "The help of God is present only with those who walk in His ways (Psalm 91:11); that is, in His calling.... I will be with him, in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him! (Psalm 91:15)." For the Lord delivers those who call upon Him, when troubled! Do you?

'A Song for the Sabbath Day. It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord...; to sing praises to Your name...; to show forth Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night!... I will triumph in the works of Your hands!' Psalm 92:1-4.

Calvin comments: "This Psalm contains an exhortation to praise God..., insisting especially upon His justice displayed in the protection of His people and the destruction of the wicked. By such truth, it encourages to the practice of righteousness -- and preserves us from fainting under the cross of Christ....

"There is no reason to doubt ...the...singing (of) this Psalm, as the inscription bears, upon the Sabbath Day.... It was good to have a certain day set apart, for singing the praises of God....

"The reason why the Psalmist appropriated this Psalm to the Sabbath, is sufficiently obvious.... We need to be disentangled from all cares, if we would seriously apply ourselves to the praises of God.... The right observance of the Sabbath does not consist in idleness..., but in the celebration of the Divine name....

"He adverts to the grounds which we have for praising God..., in remembrance of His 'goodness' and 'faithfulness' which should inflame our hearts to such exercise. If we had any proper sense and experience of them!...

"The Psalmist...speaks of our announcing God's goodness in the 'morning' -- and His faithfulness 'at night'.... He means, that beginning to praise the Lord from earliest dawn -- we should continue His praises to the latest hour of the night....

"Christ has appeared, and the Church has reached full age.... The Psalmist repeats the truth that the Sabbath was not prescribed as a day of idleness, but a season when we should collect our whole energies -- for meditation upon the works of God....

"Those are best qualified for celebrating the praises of God, who recognize and feel His fatherly goodness and can undertake this service with willing and joyful minds. His language implies that the goodness and faithfulness of God...are apparent in His works....

"What produces joy in our hearts, is the exhibition which God gives of Himself as a Father. And of His deep and watchful anxiety for our welfare....

"The cause of our brutish indifference, is our inability to savour or relish the end designed in the works of God! As the universe proclaims throughout that God is faithful and good, it behoves us to be diligently observant of these tokens -- and to be excited by a holy joy to the celebration of His praise!" So, then -- it's good to thank the Lord on the Sabbath, morning and evening! You too!

'When the wicked spring up like grass..., it is so that they shall be destroyed for ever!... But You, Lord, are most high for evermore.... Lo, Your enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered!' Psalm 92:7-9.

Calvin comments: "He points out and exposes...the folly of imagining that the wicked obtain a triumph over God when He does not...immediately bring them under restraint.... He grants that they spring up and flourish. But adds immediately...that they flourish, like the grass, only for a moment -- their prosperity being brief and evanescent....

"It would be ridiculous to envy the happiness of men who are doomed to be speedily destroyed -- that today...flourish, and tomorrow...are cut down and wither (Psalm 129:6).... The herbs to which the wicked are compared, are such as grow on the roofs of houses -- which want depth of soil, and die of themselves from lack of nourishment.... The prosperity of the wicked draws after it the speedier destruction -- like the grass, when it is full grown, is ready for the scythe.

"There is an antithesis drawn too, between the shortness of their continuance and the everlasting destruction which awaits them. For they are not said to be cut down, so that they may flourish again like withered plants (which) will recover their vigour -- but to be condemned to eternal perdition.

"Where he says of God that He sits 'exalted for evermore' -- some understand him to mean that God holds the power and office of governing the world and that we may be certain nothing can happen by chance, when such a righteous Governor and Judge administers the affairs of the world.... It seems to me that the Psalmist compares the stability of God's throne with the fluctuating and changeable character of this world.... We must not judge of Him by what we see in the world where there is nothing of a fixed and enduring nature. God looks down undisturbed from the altitude of Heaven upon all the changes of this earthly scene which neither affect nor have any relation to Him....

This the Psalmist brings forward with another view, than simply to teach us to distinguish God from His creature and put due honour upon His majesty. He would have us learn in our contemplations upon the wonderful and mysterious providence of God, to lift our conceptions about ourselves and this world....

"The Psalmist...would remind us that He does not work according to our ideas, but in a manner corresponding to His Own Eternal Being.... We are taught here to lift our eyes unto that eternal and unchangeable throne on which God sits, and in wisdom defers the execution of His judgments....

"The Psalmist concludes it to be impossible that God should not overthrow His enemies.... The Psalmist...declares the destruction of God's enemies to be as certain as if it had already taken place.... His enemies cannot long continue to triumph.... The Lord...can no more fail to punish them, than deny Himself!" Thus the wicked shall be destroyed for ever! And you?

'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree! He shall grow, like a cedar in Lebanon!... They shall flourish in the courts of our God! They shall still bring forth fruit in old age!' Psalm 92:12-14.

The righteous are here compared to palm-trees and cedars of Lebanon. The palm-tree frequently rises to more than a hundred feet; grows strongly for about one hundred years; and every year produces four hundredweight of dates. The Lebanon cedar is prodigiously enormous; lives for more than a thousand years; and its wood is so durable it is reputed to be incorruptible.

The date-palm when mature bears even as many as six hundred pounds of fruit. Side by side with the palm, is the cedar -- the prince of trees. It is gracefully lofty; intense in its vegetative strength; and also perpetual in the verdure of its foliage and the perfume it exhales.

Calvin comments: "Nothing is more difficult than for the saints of God to entertain expectations of being raised up and delivered, when they have been reduced almost to the state of the dead.... Though the righteous may appear for a time to be withered or to have been cut down, they will again spring up with renewed vigour and flourish...like the stateliest trees upon Lebanon...."

"He who was a hundred years old, should be a child. Meaning, that though old age naturally tends to death, and (that) one who had lived a hundred years is upon the very borders of it -- yet in the Kingdom of Christ a man would be reckoned as being merely in his childhood and starting in life, who entered upon a new century! This could only be verified in the sense that, after death, we have another existence -- in Heaven!"

Calvin also adds in his *Institutes* II:10:17 "that the Holy Fathers under the Old Testament were not ignorant that...God...directed their minds to His sanctuary...as the Final Judgment of God.... They doubted not that...a time would at length arrive, when the divine promises would be fulfilled...."

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing' (Psalm 92:12-14)!"

Calvin declares in his *Psychopannychia*: "Brethren, let no man rob you of this faith, though all the gates of Hell should resist!... You have the assurance of God, Who cannot deny His truth! There is not the least obscurity in His language to the Church while still a pilgrim on the Earth...."

"Let us ever call to mind what the Spirit has taught by the mouth of David (Psalm 92:12-14): 'The just shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall be multiplied like the cedar on Lebanon. Those who have been planted in the House of the Lord, will flourish in the courts of our God! They will still bud forth in their old age! They will be fat and flourishing!'" Even till the end of their life!

'Today, if you will hear His Voice -- do not harden your heart, as in the provocation and in the day of temptation in the wilderness -- when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work! Forty years long, I was grieved with this generation! I said: "This is a people that err in their heart, and they have not known my ways!" Unto whom I swore in my wrath, that they should not enter into My rest!' Psalm 95:8-11.

Calvin commented: "The Greek version joins it (verse 7) with the verse that follows (verse 8) -- 'today, if you will hear His Voice, do not harden your hearts!' It reads well, in this connection.... The posterity of Abraham were the flock of God.... He had placed His Law in the midst of them....

"The expression 'today' intimates how emphatically the(y)...., in hearing God's Voice, were His people.... He bids them recognize God as their Shepherd, inasmuch as they heard His Voice....

"Harden not your heart!'... The Psalmist, having extolled and commended the kindness of God their Shepherd, takes occasion -- as they were stiffnecked and disobedient -- to remind them of their duty as His flock...to yield a pliable and meek submission....

"He enlarges in several expressions upon the hardness of heart evinced by the people.... By hardness of heart, he no doubt means any kind of contempt shown to the Word of God.... Some fastidiously put it away from them, after they had received it.... Others proudly reject it. While again, there are men who openly vent their rage against it with...spite and blasphemy....

"What an execrable thing contempt of God's Word is!... The man who simply treats the Word of God with neglect and fails to obey it, is said here to have a hard and stony heart.... The man who will not permit himself to be ruled by God's Word, makes that heart which was hard before -- harder still.... Every man who disobeys God therein, hardens himself....

"The Jews were...most liable to be deceived..., ever accustomed as they were to boast of their fathers! The Psalmist, accordingly, would detach them from the(ir) fathers.... The Psalmist, considering that they wandered in error under so much light as they enjoyed, speaks of their stupidity as amounting to madness....

"As they multiplied their provocations, it became the more evident that -- being incorrigible -- they had justly been cut off from God's rest.... The land of Canaan is called God's 'rest' -- in reference to the promise.... God...has revealed His Son ('His Voice' in the wilderness!), and is daily inviting us to come to Him.... The Apostle (Hebrews 4:1-11)...takes occasion to compare the old Sabbath or 'rest' under the Law..., with the newness of spiritual life."

Calvin also said in his *Institutes* II:5:11: "The Psalmist...exhorts the men of his time, 'Do not harden your heart!' (Psalm 95:8).... The rebellion lies in human depravity!" For the wicked shall never enter into the rest of God! Shall you?

'The Lord reigns!... The Heavens declare His righteousness!... Confounded be all they that serve graven images!... You that love the Lord, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints! He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked! Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart!' Psalm 97:1-11.

Calvin comments: "'Jehovah reigns!'... The reign of God is inseparably connected with the salvation, and the best happiness of mankind....

"'The Heavens have declared His righteousness!'... The spiritual righteousness of God should be so signally manifested under the reign of Christ, as to fill both Heaven and Earth....

"'Confounded be all those who serve graven images!'... The truth of God is effectual when revealed in dispelling and dissipating superstitions.... We need not wonder...that the Psalmist, in predicting the Kingdom of God, triumphs over the ungodly nations!

"The knowledge of the true doctrine is extinguished amongst the Turks, the Jews, and Papists.... They cannot possibly return to a sound mind or repent of their errors, when they are ignorant of the true God.."

To love God, also implies its very opposite -- namely to hate evil. Just as to hate God, implies that one loves evil.

Calvin comments: "We cannot be...acknowledged to be His (God's) servants, unless we depart from sin!... God is in Himself the fountain of righteousness, and He must necessarily hate all iniquity.... We have fellowship with Him, only on the terms of separation from unrighteousness.... God is the Keeper and Protector of His people. If...under the Divine guardianship, we will not...retaliate injury upon those who have wronged us!"

God therefore preserves His saints, and their souls. He not only protects them. But He also saves them from the hand of those who are wicked.

Calvin comments: 'Light has been sown for the righteous'... By 'light' is meant joy, or a prosperous outcome.... Though the righteous may almost be banished out of the world..., God will spread abroad their joy -- like seed."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:10:16: "Nor can those things...said as to the prosperous success of believers, be understood in any other sense than as referring to the manifestation of celestial glory.... 'He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart'.... Psalm 97:10-11."

The Lord preserves His saints who love Him, and hate evil! Do you?

'I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping, because of Your indignation.... For You have lifted me up, and cast me down.... My days are like a shadow that declines, and I am withered like grass! But You, O Lord, shall endure for ever!... You shall arise, and have mercy on Zion! For the time to favour her...has come!' Psalm 102:9-13.

Calvin comments: "Lying prostrate on the ground, they licked as it were the Earth -- 'and so, did eat ashes'... The same sentiment is expressed in the last part of the verse, 'I have mingled my drink with weeping'.... He declares that his mourning, was without intermission....

"The last clause...(is): 'You have lifted me up, and cast me down!'.... The sentence may denote a violent method of casting down.... When we consider that the image of God which distinguished Adam was the brightness of the celestial glory, and when on the contrary we now see the ignominy and degradation to which God has subjected us in token of His wrath -- this contrast cannot surely fail of making us feel more deeply the wretchedness of our condition....

"My days are like the shadow which declines' when the sun...begins to slope down toward the west.... What he (the holy writer) attributes to the afflicted Church, seems indeed to be equally applicable to all men.... As soon as we advance towards old age, we speedily fall into decay....

"By the term 'days' is to be understood the whole course of...life.... The captivity was to the godly, as the setting of the sun -- because they quickly failed....

"In the end of the verse, the similitude of 'withered grass'...is repeated, to intimate that their life...was involved in many sorrows which dried up in them the very sap of life.... To live in that condition, would have been worse than a hundred deaths -- had they not been sustained by the hope of future deliverance!...

"But You, O Jehovah, shall dwell (or endure) for ever!'... When the Prophet...sets before himself the eternity of God..., what benefit will accrue to us from the fact that...our frail and perishing condition does not permit us to continue unmoved for a single moment?... Our life is a mere illusion!

"But the inspired writer, calling to remembrance...(that) God has declared that He would make the Church the object of His special care..., has no hesitation in representing all the godly...as partakers of this celestial glory in which God dwells.... We are like withered grass; we are decaying every moment; we are not far from death; yes, we are rather as it were already dwelling in the grave. But since You, O God, have made a covenant with us...that You will always dwell in the midst of us..., we must be of good courage!...

"Whenever we are besieged with death..., we should reason thus.... God continues unchangeably the same.... Nothing can hinder Him from aiding us!" Do you so believe?

'The Lord beheld the Earth..., to loosen those that were appointed to death.... He weakened my strength.... He shortened my days.... From of old, You have laid the foundation of the Earth and the Heavens.... They shall perish!... All of them shall get old!... But You are the same, and Your years shall have no end! The children of Your servants shall continue!' Psalm 102:19-28.

Calvin comments: "'Jehovah has looked down from the Heavens!'... The Prophet contemplates the deliverance.... The people...long before...were dragged into captivity.... At the same time, deliverance had been promised them -- and the time specified to be, after the lapse of seventy years....

'(Jehovah looked down) to hear the groaning of the prisoner'.... The godly, he calls...'prisoners'... Yes, he affirms a little after, 'that they were devoted to death' -- to give them to understand that their life and safety would altogether have been hopeless, had they not been delivered from death by the extraordinary power of God....

"The inspired bard...does not lay hold on merely a part of the subject, but carries forward the grace of God even to its consummation.... The manifestation of Christ was the goal of the race which God's ancient people were running.... As if they had said: 'Lord, You have promised us life not for a few days or for a month or for a few years -- but until You should renew the whole world and gather all nations together under the dominion of Your Anointed One!'....

"The comparison between His eternal existence and the brief duration of human life, is introduced.... Yet, when He sees that men pass away as it were in a moment and speedily vanish, it moves Him to compassion.... The brief span of human life...falls away so swiftly! How many generations of men have passed away since the creation, while the Heavens still continue?... And yet, neither the long period during which the Heavens have existed...will exempt them from perishing!... To whatever quarter we turn our eyes, we will see everywhere nothing but ground for despair -- till we come to God!...

"True believers, as they are regenerated by the incorruptible seed, shall continue to live after death.... Let us not hesitate, although we may be environed with innumerable deaths, to cast the anchor of our faith in Heaven -- so that the stability of our welfare may rest in God!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:10:15: "'The Heavens...shall perish.... They shall be changed. But You are the same, and Your years shall have no end. The children of Your servants shall continue!'...(Psalm 102:25-28). If, notwithstanding the destruction of the Heavens..., the godly cease not to be established before God..., their salvation is connected with His eternity!"

Finally, Calvin says in his *Psychopannychia*: "Let us...listen to a Prophet!... 'He has shortened my days'.... The Heavens...too are verging on destruction.... 'But You are, and Your years shall not end! The sons of Your servants shall...be established before You!' (Psalm 102:24-28)." The Lord changes not, and His years have no end! Therefore, His children too shall live for ever! And you?

'Bless the Lord..., Who redeems Your life from destruction!... Your youth is renewed like the eagle's!... The Lord...knows our frame..., that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass. Like a flower of the field, so he flourishes.... The wind passes over it, and it is gone! But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear Him!' Psalm 103 1-17.

Calvin comments that "the Lord 'redeems your life from the grave'.... Previous to God's curing our maladies..., we are dead and adjudged to the grave!... That the mercy of God delivers us from death and destruction, ought therefore to lead us to prize it the more highly. The resurrection of the soul from the grave is the first step of spiritual life....

"The Psalmist...adds...God was...infusing into him new vigour, so that his strength continued unimpaired. Even as the Prophet Isaiah (65:20), in discoursing on the restoration of the Church, says that a man of a hundred years old shall be like a child.... His strength was, as it were, continually renewed.... The eagle...continues fresh and vigorous, even to extreme old age.... As eagles always retain their vigour and even in their old age are still youthful, so the godly are sustained by a secret influence derived from God, by which they continue in the possession of unimpaired strength....

"They have been brought out of the grave, and have experienced God to be bountiful to them.... When our outward man decays, we are renewed to a better life.... He sustains us by His Spirit, under the weakness and languishing of our mortal frames."

The Lord 'knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.... Man's days are like grass.... The wind passes over it, and it is gone!' Comments Calvin: "All the excellency of man withers away like a fading flower, at the first blast of the wind.... David grants that he flourishes like the grass.... Yet...our life is only a show or phantom that passes away.

"The subject here...is...the brevity of life.... David...declares us to be dust and clay.... Although the soul, after it has departed from...the body, remains alive -- yet its doing so does not arise from any inherent power of its own. Were God to withdraw His grace, the soul would be nothing more than a puff or blast, even as the body is dust!...

"'But the goodness of Jehovah (is from everlasting to everlasting)!' The Psalmist leaves nothing to men to rely on, but the mercy of God.... Although they have no intrinsic excellence which does not vanish into smoke, yet God is an inexhaustible fountain of life to supply their wants.... As the Divine goodness is everlasting, the weakness and frailty of the faithful does not prevent them from boasting of eternal salvation to the close of life, and even in death itself!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:10:15: "He who confesses...there is nothing...stable on the Earth..., undoubtedly contemplates a happiness reserved for him elsewhere!... After speaking of human life as...fleeting..., he adds: "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him!" (Psalm 103:17)." God, Who knows that we are dust, is everlasting -- to us!

'Unto the upright, there arises light in the darkness!... The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance!... His righteousness endures for ever!... The wicked shall see it, and be grieved! He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away!... The wicked, shall perish!' Psalm 112:4-10.

Calvin comments: "When the whole world is overwhelmed with troubles, God's grace shines upon the faithful.... The ungodly...are...blind.... They are plunged into the darkness of death.... The godly...are never overwhelmed with darkness.... Light arises to them, in darkness!...

"His righteousness endures for ever!... It is a uniform course of liberality which is here praised by the Prophet.... The righteous manage their affairs with discretion.... Refer it to the fruit of righteousness!...

"The Prophet shows how God by His benefits preserves the glory of that righteousness which is due to their liberality, and does not disappoint them of their reward.... He exalts...their power or their prosperous condition....

"The wicked shall see it (and be grieved! He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away!... The wicked, shall perish)!..."

"The wicked...shall yet be made to feel...that the righteous...do not vainly devote themselves to the cultivation of charity and mercy. Let them (the wicked) harden themselves as they choose!... The honour which God confers upon His children, shall be exhibited to them (the wicked). The sight of which shall make them gnash with their teeth, and shall excite an envy that shall consume them!...

"The wicked shall be disappointed. (The wicked shall perish)!... The Prophet tells them that God will snatch from them what they imagined was already in their possession -- so that they shall always depart destitute and famishing!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:10:16: "Nor can those things...said as to the prosperous success of believers, be understood in any other sense than as referring to the manifestation of celestial glory.... 'Light is sown for the righteous.... His righteousness endures for ever! His horn shall be exalted with honour! The desire of the wicked shall perish!... The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance!' (Psalm 112:4,6,9,10)."

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "'The just will be in eternal remembrance' (Psalm 112:6). They have not...fallen from the hand of the Lord, nor escaped His remembrance.... 'The sinner will see and be angry! He will gnash with his teeth and pine away! The desire of the sinner, will perish! (Psalm 112:10)."

God and His children endure for ever! The wicked shall melt away! What will occur to you?

'The dead do not praise the Lord, neither any that go down into silence! But we will bless the Lord -- from this time further, and for evermore!' Psalm 115:17-18.

Calvin comments: "The faithful...mock at the madness of all who are addicted to the worship of idols.... They (the faithful) magnify their own happiness, in that they have been adopted by God....

"O God! The (ungodly) dead shall not praise you!... The Prophet goes on to beseech God to show Himself propitious towards His Church -- were there no other object to be gained, than the preventing mankind from being utterly cut off.... 'Lord, if You should allow us to perish -- what would be the result, but that Your name would become extinct and would be entombed with us?!"

"From His appearing to deprive the dead of all sensibility, a question occurs. Do souls, after they have departed from their corporeal prison, still survive?"

"It is certain that they are then more vigorous and active! And therefore it must inevitably follow, that God is praised also by the dead....

"Moreover, in appointing mankind their abode upon Earth..., He leaves them a life -- such as they enjoy in common with the brutal tribes. For the Earth was not given exclusively to men.

"(The Earth was not given exclusively to men) -- but also to oxen, swine, dogs, lions and bears. And, what is more, to every sort of reptile and insect. For there is not a fly nor a creeping thing, however mean, which the Earth does not supply with an abode."

The present text of Scripture is not to be understood as implying the Ancient Hebrews had no idea of a future state of human existence beyond death and the grave. Such an interpretation would be at variance with many passages of the Old Testament -- such as Psalms 16:10 & 49:15 & 73:24 and Proverbs 14:32 and Ecclesiastes 8:11-13 & 11:9 & 12:14; and Hebrews 11 and Luke 20:37 too.

Calvin goes on: "The Prophet says that the Earth was given to mankind, so that they might employ themselves in God's service until they be put in possession of everlasting felicity.... The Prophet concludes that the whole course of nature would be subverted, unless God saved His Church!"

Calvin also says in his *Psychopannychia*: "When will the resurrection be?... The just...have not...fallen from the hand of the Lord, nor escaped His remembrance!... 'The dead will not praise You, O Lord, nor all who descend into the lower parts. But we who live, bless the Lord from this time. Yes, even for ever!' (Psalm 115:18)."

The ungodly dead don't. But we will praise the Lord for evermore! And you?

'I will call upon Him as long as I live!... The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of the grave got hold of me!... Return to your rest, o my soul!... You have delivered my soul from death!... I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living!' Psalm 116:2-9.

Calvin comments: "'During my days I will call upon Him' is uniformly understood...to mean I who have been so successful in addressing God will pursue the same course all my life long.... Because He has bowed His ear to me when I called upon him in the time of my adversity.... With the design of magnifying God's glory according to its desert, he (David) says that there was no way of his escaping from death.... He declares that he was 'bound by the cords of death'....

"Return, O my soul, to your rest!...' By the term 'rest'...is (meant)...a calm and composed state of mind.... David confesses himself...sorely agitated...when the terrors of death encompass....

"David declares that...he would, for the future, be at rest.... What is the import of this 'returning to rest'? I answer..., the children of God...cannot totally and finally fall away!... They are supplied with grounds for joy and gladness....

"The term *gaamal*...in Hebrew...signifies to confer a favour, as well as to give a recompense.... He says that 'his soul was delivered from death.' This, then..., is the recompense.... That God, in delivering him from death, had wiped away the tears....

"We would rather have said, 'He has delivered my feet from falling and my eyes from tears' -- and then 'He has delivered my soul from death'.... (But) God has not only rescued me from present death, but also treated me with farther kindness.... The grace of God is enhanced, in that He restored to life one who had almost been dead.

"I will walk in the presence of Jehovah (in the land of the living!)'... David expects to enjoy his safety continually.... Nothing is more desirable, than that God should be upon the watch for us, so that our life may be surrounded by His protecting care.... God, being the Preserver of his life, David declares that he shall live.

"In adding 'in the land of the living' -- he mean to point out to us the course...we are expected to pursue.... Almost every moment of time, fresh destructions press upon us -- if He overlooks us!"

Calvin also said in his *Institutes* III:2:17: "After having been tossed among tumultuous waves, it is not without reason he (David) exhorts his soul to return to her quiet rest (Psalm 116:7).... Faith sustains the believer's heart.... David, when he seemed to be overwhelmed, ceased not -- by urging himself forward to ascend to God!... He who...has recourse to faith, is already in a great measure victorious!"

I was brought low. But the Lord delivered me from death! And you?

'I believed!... I was greatly afflicted... What shall I render unto the Lord, for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation!... Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints!' Psalm 116:10-15.

John Calvin tersely comments: "I have believed!... His wonderful deliverance may appear...conspicuous.... 'I believe...that He Who...once raised Christ from the dead, will also extend Christ's life to us!'"

"What shall I render unto Jehovah for all His benefits towards me?..." He was laid under such obligations not by one series of benefits only, but by a variety of innumerable benefits!...

"(I will take) the cup of salvation!..." God deals so kindly and mercifully with us.... They are unworthy of the enjoyment...of the light of the sun and the air by which we breathe and live, who would rob the Author of them of the small return which so legitimately belongs to Him!...

"Precious in the eyes of Jehovah is the death of His meek ones!" He goes on now to...God's providential care for the godly..., their lives being precious in His sight....

"In these times, when innocent blood is shed and the wicked contemners of God furiously exalt themselves..., let us hold fast...that the death of the faithful...is so valuable in God's sight that even after their death He stretches out His hand towards them.... He holds in abhorrence the cruelty of those who unjustly persecute the good!"

Calvin also said in his *Institutes* III:20:28 & II:10:14,28 & III:5:3: "David lays down a general rule for all believers in these words -- 'What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation!...' Psalm 116:12-13.... 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints!' (Psalm 116:15)....

"If death were the goal and ultimate limit, no distinction could be observed between the righteous and the wicked. The true distinction, is the different lot which awaits them after death!..."

"Looking to Heaven..., the period during which the Lord afflicted His saints was but a moment; and...the mercies with which He gather them, are everlasting.... 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints!...' The death of many saints, is precious in the sight of the Lord! (Psalm 116:15)."

Calvin further remarked in his *Psychopannychia*: "The Law which the Spirit of God gives to all the pious is: 'I believed!...' Psalm 116:10."

Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints! How will God view your death?

"I shall not die, but keep on living -- and declare the Lord's works!... The Lord has...not given me over to death!... Open to me the gates of righteousness!... You have heard me, and...become my salvation! The Stone...the builders refused, has become the Headstone!... This is the day...the Lord has made!... We will rejoice!... Send now prosperity!" Psalm 118:17-25.

Calvin comments: "It was the design of the Spirit...to describe the eternal and spiritual Kingdom of God's Son.... David speaks like one emerging from the sepulchre! The very same person who says 'I shall not die!' -- acknowledges that he was rescued from death.... He declares that 'he would not die' -- because he regained life, all hope of which he had entirely abandoned.

"We whose life is hid with Christ in God, ought to meditate upon this song!... Colossians 3:3.... We who were surrounded with death, have risen to newness of life.... His chastisements, so far from being deadly, serve the purpose of a medicine which....renders us healthy and vigorous!...

"The Stone Which the builders rejected, has become the Head!... 'This is the day which Jehovah made!' He...speaks of that (day of Christ's resurrection), as a happy and pleasant day on which He was at last established King.... David., by way of eminence, calls that 'the day of God' -- which, after a long period of darkness, had dawned for the weal of the Church....

"David was a type of Christ.... When David was constituted king -- the foundation of that everlasting Kingdom which was eventually manifested in the advent of Christ, was then laid.... The eternal Kingdom given to Christ by God His Father, in consequence of which He obtained all power both in Heaven and on Earth.... All that is here stated, properly relates to the Person of Christ....

"The Prophet designates those 'master-builders' -- who, so far from wishing the protection of the Church, aim at nothing so much as the demolition of the entire structure.... In our day also, the Pope and his filthy clergy who usurp the title of the priesthood, nevertheless continue....

"By the expression 'has become the Headstone' we are to understand the Real Foundation of the Church!... All that was accomplished in the Person of Christ, extends to the gradual development of His Kingdom -- even until the end of the world.... 'This is the day that God has made' -- reminds us that there will be nothing but the reign of moral darkness, until Christ the Sun of Righteousness illumines us!".

Calvin also said in his *Institutes* III:4:32: "The Lord chastens his servants.... But does not give them over unto death (Psalm 118:18)!"

Calvin further said in his *Psychopannychia*: "They (the Anabaptists) act erroneously, in concluding...that saints after death desist from the praises of God!... To be in Paradise and live with God...is only to enjoy God; to feel His good will; and rest in Him.... 'They shall not die, but live; and show forth the works of the Lord!'.... Psalm 118:17." So, I shall not stay dead; but keep on living!

'If it had not been the Lord Who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quickly...; then the water had overwhelmed us!... Blessed be the Lord, Who has not given us as a prey to their teeth! Our soul has escaped!... Our help is in the name of the Lord!'
Psalm 124:2-8.

Calvin comments: "It is indeed true that the heathen nations often waged war against the people of God, armed with such power as to come rushing upon them with the impetuosity of a deluge... David...represents...the uncertain and changeable condition of the Church..., to teach the faithful...it has been preserved by the wonderful grace of God....

"David...affirms that the deliverance and the salvation of the people, proceeded from nothing else than God's succour.... The Lord had been at hand, to afford aid to His servants -- and had taken their part.... They could not by help from any other quarter...have escaped from danger....

"When he says...'They had swallowed us up alive' -- he not only expresses barbarous cruelty, but also disproportion of strength.... How violent was the onset of the enemy!... These cruel beasts had no need of swords for slaughter. But, without a battle or an effort of strength, could easily devour that unwarlike and defenceless flock....

"The waters had then overwhelmed us!.... Comparing the dreadful impetuosity of the enemies...to an inundation which swallows up whatever it meets with, in its overflowing course..., he names 'the waters'; next, 'the torrent'; thirdly, 'the proud' or 'impetuous waters.' He says 'over us' and 'over our soul' -- as if...he intended to strike terror into the people.... This impassioned language ought to have all...the faithful...the better feel from what a profound gulf they had been rescued by the hand of God.... He...acknowledges himself to have been lost, before he was delivered....

"Blessed be Jehovah, (Who has not given us as a prey to their teeth)!... They were delivered not otherwise, than if some one had plucked the prey from the teeth of a wild and cruel beast.... They were on all sides entrapped and entangled in the snares of their enemies.... The people of God -- feeble, without counsel, and destitute of aid -- had not only to deal with bloodthirsty and furious beasts, but were also ensnared by...stratagems; so that, being greatly inferior to their enemies as well in policy as in open force, they were besieged by many deaths....

"Our help is in the name of Jehovah!" David here extends to the state of the Church in all ages, that which the faithful had already experienced.... He not only gives thanks to God for one benefit, but affirms that the Church cannot continue safe -- except insofar as she is protected by the hand of God. His object is to animate the children of God with the assured hope, that their life is in perfect safety under the divine guardianship."

If the Lord hadn't sided with us, we would all have been drowned!

'Many a time have they afflicted me, from my youth! Yet, they have not prevailed against me!... The Lord is righteous; He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked! Let them all be confounded and turned back, that hate Zion! Let them be like the grass upon the housetops, which withers before it grows up!... They which go by, say: "The blessing of the Lord be upon you! We bless you, in the name of the Lord!"' Psalm 129:2-8.

Calvin comments: "When God's faithful ones are with difficulty drawing their breath..., it is a seasonable time for them to reflect on the manner in which He has exercised His people from the beginning and from age to age.... History certainly bears ample testimony that the people of God had to deal with not a few enemies.... They were assaulted by almost the whole world.... They were molested not only by external foes, but also by...such as professed to belong to the Church!"

'They have afflicted me from my youth.' Comments Calvin: "The term 'youth' here...refers...to the time when God...wearied Abraham and the Patriarchs...almost their whole life.... The lot of their descendants, was still worse.... Troubles and even defeats arose, which threatened the people of God with total destruction.... The Church would have been consumed a thousand times, had not God...preserved her, raising her as it were from the dead....

"All who hate Zion shall be confounded.... They shall be like the grass of the house-tops, which is withered (even) before it comes forth'.... The Prophet has...respect to the time to come.... It is certainly...very appropriate...to understand him as deriving...instruction...for...the end....

"The grass which grows upon the house-tops, is not...more valuable than the blade of corn which in the low ground is trampled under foot.... It is...unprofitable.... It quickly withers away.... Without the hand or labour of man, the grass on the house-tops is dried up.... The grass on the house-tops...wITHERS and perishes at its first springing up, because it has no root under it nor earth to supply it with sap or moisture for its nourishment.

"Whenever then the splendour or greatness of our enemies strikes us with fear, let us bring to our recollection this comparison!... The grass which grows upon the house-tops...is yet without root, and consequently of brief duration. So these enemies, the nearer they approach the sun by the height of their pride -- shall the sooner be consumed by the burning heat.... Although the wicked mount high..., yet they continue mere grass -- not bringing forth any good fruit, nor reaching a state of ripeness.... They serve to be hated or despised by all....

"Whenever there is a hopeful respect of a good harvest, we ought to beseech God Whose...province it is to impart fertility to the Earth that He would give full effect to His blessing.... Provided we not only dwell in the Church of the Lord, but also labour to have a place among the number of her genuine citizens -- we will be able fearlessly to despise all the might of our enemies.... Although they may flourish...for a time, yet they are but barren grass on which the curse of Heaven rests!" For, though much afflicted by the ungodly -- true believers are never prevailed against!

'Behold! How good...it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like...the dew...that descends upon the mountains.... For there, the Lord commands the blessing -- even life for evermore!' Psalm 133:1-3.

Calvin comments: "David in this Psalm renders thanks to God, for the peace and harmony which had succeeded a long and melancholy state of confusion and division in the kingdom.... There was ample ground to praise the goodness of God in the highest terms, for uniting in one a people which had been so deplorably divided...."

"(There have been) interpreters who have considered that David merely passes a general commendation upon brotherly union.... (Yet) we who were naturally brethren..., how well it is that we should cultivate a spirit of brotherly concord!...

"The Holy Ghost is to be viewed as commending in this passage that mutual harmony which should subsist amongst all God's children.... As we are one in God the Father and in Christ, the union must be ratified amongst us by reciprocal harmony and fraternal love.... Any concord...which may prevail amongst men, is insipid -- if not pervaded by a sweet savour of God's worship...."

"The 'dew' distilling upon Mount Zion and Hermon, denotes that a holy unity has not only a sweet savour before God -- but is productive of good effects, as the dew moistens the earth and supplies it with sap and freshness.... David suggests that the life of man would be sapless, unprofitable, and wretched -- unless sustained by brotherly harmony.... Mountains depend principally for fertility, upon the dews.... David adds...that God commands his blessing where...He is pleased with concord amongst men, by showering down blessings upon them!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:11:2: "The righteous shall inherit the Earth.... The wicked shall be driven out of it.... Jerusalem will abound in all kinds of riches. And Zion overflow with every species of abundance...."

"All these things obviously apply not to the land of our pilgrimage nor to the earthly Jerusalem, but to the true country. The heavenly city of believers, in which the Lord has commanded blessing and life for evermore (Psalm 133:3)!"

Calvin further declares in his *Psychopannychia*: "Those are said to live, and to be about to live, whom the Lord visits in kindness. 'For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, and life even for evermore!'.... Psalm 133:3."

Brothers united unto everlasting life, are like refreshing dew! Are you?

'In the day when I cried out, You did answer me!... All the kings of the Earth shall praise You, O Lord -- when they hear the words of Your Mouth!... Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me!... Your right hand shall save me!... Your mercy, O Lord, endures for ever! Do not forsake the work of Your Own hands!' Psalm 138:3-8.

Calvin comments: "God...commonly...stirs us up to prayer by the influence of His Spirit. And this -- to illustrate His goodness the more, by our finding that He crowns our prayers with success... Our prayers more nearly disclose His goodness to us!... 'Let all kings of the Earth praise You!' He declares that the goodness he had experienced, would extensively be known and the report of it spread over all the world....

"' Though I walk in the midst of trouble, (You will revive me)!' Here David declares the sense in which he looked, that God would act the part of his preserver -- by giving him life from the dead!... This is faith's true office -- to see life in the midst of death, and to trust the mercy of God. Not as that which will procure us universal exemption from evil, but as that which will quicken us in the midst of death.... It is God's method to exercise His children with a continual conflict. So that, having one foot as it were in the grave, they may flee...to hide themselves under His wings where they may abide in peace....

"'Jehovah will recompense...me!'... It is added as a reason 'that Jehovah's mercy is everlasting' -- and 'that He will not forsake the work of His hands'.... 'Jehovah will perform for me' -- that is, will continue to show that He cares for my safety and will fully perfect what He has begun.... Having once been delivered by an act of divine mercy -- he concludes that what had been done would be perfect.... God's nature is unchangeable, and He cannot divest Himself of that goodness which belongs to Him. There can be no doubt that the way to maintain good hope in danger, is to fix our eyes upon the divine goodness on which our deliverance rests.... He promises to interest Himself on our behalf.

"David concludes with the best reason, from the eternity of the divine goodness, that the salvation granted him would be of no limited and merely evanescent character.... It is impossible God should leave His work...in an imperfect or unfinished state.... Nothing of this kind can happen with God.... We have no occasion to apprehend that our hopes will be disappointed in their course towards fulfilment.... God will never take from us, or allow to pass out of our hands!... 'He Who has begun the good work, will perform it till the Day of Christ Jesus!' (Philippians 1:6).... Since God had wrought the beginning of our salvation in us, He will carry it forward to its termination!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:2:7: "'I will praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth!' (Psalm 138).... Christ is the only pledge of love.... We shall...have a full definition of faith, if we say...it is a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour toward us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds and sealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit!"
Though I walk through the midst of trouble, God will revive me!

'O God..., the Strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle!... As for the head of those that compass me about -- let the mischief of their own lips cover them! Let burning coals fall on them! Let them be cast into the fire, into deep pits -- so that they do not rise up again!... I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted!... Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name! The upright shall dwell in Your presence!' Psalm 140:7-13.

Calvin comments: "Some read the words in the future tense -- 'You will cover my head in the day of battle.' But it is evident David speaks of protection formerly experienced from the hand of God.... He comes forth...as a soldier, well tried in previous engagements.... David is to be considered as censuring the security of his enemies....

"As for the head (of those that compass me about -- let the mischief of their own lips cover them)!... There follows an imprecation upon the whole company of his enemies.... 'May coals fall upon them' -- alluding to the awful fate of Sodom and Gomorrha!

"We find this...set forth by the Spirit of God, as an example of divine vengeance to terrify the wicked.... God testified by this example of everlasting significance, that He would be the Judge of all the ungodly....

"You will cast them down by fire' or 'with fire' -- as God sent it forth against Sodom and Gomorrha. He prays they may be sunk into 'deep pits' -- when they may never rise!... David cuts off the reprobate from the hope of pardon, as knowing them to be beyond recovery....

"I have know that God (will maintain the cause of the afflicted)!... David here seals or corroborates his prayers, by turning his thoughts and discourse to the providential judgements of God....

"God cannot but deliver the afflicted.... He says in express words that He will be 'the Judge of the poor and the afflicted.' In this way, does he (David) encourage both others and himself under continued troubles -- till the time proper for deliverance arrives....

"He infers...that the righteous would give thanks to God, and be safe under His help.... The godly..., David expresses..., would speedily be restored.... We must endeavour...to rise to a confident persuasion that however low they may be brought, the Lord's people will be restored to prosperity!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:10:16: "Nor can those things...said as to the prosperous success of believers, be understood in any other sense than as referring to the manifestation of celestial glory.... 'Surely, the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your presence!' (Psalm 140:13)."

God maintains the afflicted and the upright in His presence! And you?

'I cried out to the Lord with my voice!... I showed before Him, my trouble! When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path!... I looked...and beheld, but there was no man that wanted to know me!... I cried out to You, O Lord! I said: "You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living!"... I am brought very low!... Deliver me from my persecutors!... Bring forth my soul..., so that I may praise Your name! The righteous shall surround me! For You shall deal bountifully with me!' Psalm 142:1-7.

Calvin comments: "When Saul came into the cave where David lay concealed, this saint of God might...have been...thrown into consternation.... David retained his composure....

"I cried (out) to Jehovah!"... David ...was not paralyzed with fear.... He was not actuated by despair to take away his life -- but composedly addressed himself to the exercise of prayer.... David had good grounds for...how he commended himself to God.... The repetition he makes use of, indicates his having prayed with earnestness....

"He tells us...in the next verse, that he disburdened his cares to God.... He...made known his griefs with unsuspecting confidence, to the Lord....

"The words teach us, when we have tried every remedy and know not what to do -- to rest satisfied with the conviction that God is acquainted with our afflictions and condescends to care for us. As Abraham said: 'The Lord will provide!' (Genesis 22:8)....

"On looking to the right hand..., (there was no man that wanted to know me)!"... No human aid or comfort was to be expected.... Destruction seemed inevitable.... It was God's purpose that he (David) should be abandoned of all assistance from man, so that his deliverance from destruction should...appear more extraordinary....

"I cried (out) to You, O Jehovah!"... David complains...of his extremity.... He speaks of deliverance as plainly being needed, since he was now held a prisoner. By 'prison'..., he alludes to the cave where he was lodged....

"(Bring forth my soul [from this cave, so that I may praise Your name -- and so that]) the righteous shall compass {or surround} me!"... The righteous would not only congratulate him, but place a crown upon his head in token of victory.... "They will assemble to congratulate me, and will stand round me on every side, like a crown".... The words literally read, 'they will crown...me!'"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:11:2 & III:20:26: "David rises from temporal blessings to the last and highest of all.... 'I cried out to You, O Lord! I said: "You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living!"' (Psalm 142:5).... 'The righteous shall (surround or) compass me about! For You shall deal bountifully with me!' (Psalm 142:7)." Indeed, the Lord is my refuge, in the land of the living! Is that also your experience?

'My son, if sinners entice you -- don't you consent, if they say..."Come with us, let us lay in wait for blood!... Let us swallow them up alive, like the grave; and whole, like those that go down into the pit!"... (But) Wisdom cries out loud, (saying:) "Turn yourself at My reproof! Behold, I will pour out My Spirit for you; I will make known My words to you!... Whosoever hearkens to Me, shall dwell safely; and shall be quiet from fear of evil!"' Proverbs 1:10-33.

The word 'sinners' here seems to mean rough and rude bands of robbers. For 'blood' signifies violent robbery.

'Let us swallow them up!' The destruction which the robbers plot, is to be as thorough as the grave or *sh'ool*. For *sh'ool* swallows up alive those who die. It swallows them up 'whole.' Men who at one moment are in their full strength, are the next in the realm of death.

However -- Wisdom is 'a Breath of the power of God; a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty; an effulgency from everlasting Light' (Wisdom 7:25-26). Wisdom is given creative functions, and is clearly linked to the idea of God's *Logos* or Son and Word (Proverbs 8:12-30 & 30:3-5). Christ was Himself the embodiment of Wisdom (First Corinthians 1:24 and Colossians 2:2-3). And 'Wisdom cries out loud' – in all the areas of human inhabitation (Proverbs 1:20-21)!

Repent! -- says Wisdom. The Son of God so commands, in all the plenitude of His Divinity. 'Turn yourself at My reproof!... I will pour out My Spirit for you; I will make known My words to you!' The Bible, previously a dark book to sinners, would then be made clear to them. For God through His Son would offer to them both His Word outwardly to their ears, and a plentiful measure of His Spirit inwardly to their hearts, to make that Word effectual to them.

However -- 'I have called; but you refused!... Your destruction comes like a whirlwind... The turning away of the simple, shall slay...and...destroy them!'

The Last Judgment too shall come! The very outer court of Hell! To have Wisdom's countenance not only turned from but turned against unbelievers, will be Hell instead of Heaven. When a sinner 'turns away' from Wisdom's Voice, he turns away from his own eternal interests!

'But whosoever hearkens to Me, shall dwell safely.... And shall be quiet from fear of evil!' (Proverbs 1:33).

Reader, are you hearkening to Him? Then you are under His cover, where no evil can reach you. Then you are dwelling safely. Then you are in quietness -- even from the very fear of evil.

Your last day, and The Last Day, will then be a day of unclouded sunshine to you -- when you enter into everlasting joy! For whoever listens to God, shall keep on dwelling safely! Do you?

'Happy is the man that finds Wisdom!... Wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver, and...fine gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies.... Length of days is in Wisdom's right hand.... Wisdom is a tree of life to them that lay hold!... Happy is everyone that retains Wisdom!... By Wisdom, the Lord founded the Earth...(and) established the Heavens!... By His knowledge..., the clouds drop down the dew.... My son..., keep sound Wisdom!' Proverbs 3:13-21.

When God here says that Wisdom is better than 'merchandise' -- He signifies both the wealth that Wisdom wins, as well as the wealth derived from the proper use of Wisdom (*cf.* Matthew 11:19 & 12:42 & 13:45-46,54). Too, "rubies" may also be translated 'coral' (Job 28:18), which was highly esteemed in the ancient world.

All the world's show, all of Paul's former valuable 'gain' -- he counted as dung and dross.' For 'the true Wisdom' of 'the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord' (Philippians 3:4-8)!

In Wisdom's right hand are 'length of days' -- and in the left hand, 'riches and honour.' 'Length of days' means all eternity -- both past and future. And, after Proverbs 3:16 -- the Septuagint adds that out of Wisdom's "mouth proceeds righteousness, and law and mercy."

'Wisdom is a tree of life to them that lay hold' of Him! This is clearly derived from Genesis 2:9. This 'tree of life' further occurs at Proverbs 11:30 & 13:12 & 15:4 -- which evidences that early Genesis was much studied by the later writers who wrote about Wisdom, as too in the last book of the Bible at Revelation 2:7 & 22:2,14,19.

Indeed, to the glory and beauty and fruitfulness of Wisdom, only the Paradise of God can furnish the full counterpart. The 'tree of life' was the means ordained by God for the preservation of lasting life and man's continual vigour and health. Wisdom maintains man in the spiritual life of God's grace, and the communion of His Spirit. Christ is this Wisdom of God. He, the eternal Son of the Father, was there before and at the very beginning of the world -- and since then, for ever!

The ways of Wisdom, are the ways of Christ -- the ways on which the Word of God gives leadership to the feet of those who submit to Him. Such ways are indeed pleasant ways, 'ways of pleasantness' -- and all the paths of Wisdom are 'peace.'

'By Wisdom, the Lord founded the Earth...(and) established the Heavens!... By His knowledge..., the clouds drop down the dew.' Proverbs 3:19-20. God possessed Wisdom "in the beginning" and indeed "from everlasting" (Proverbs 8:11-23). "The clouds drop down the dew" in Proverbs 3:20, is to be compared to His establishment of 'the clouds' in 8:28 as the Master Workman by or alongside of the Father in 8:30.

'My son..., keep sound Wisdom!' (Proverbs 3:21). At all costs, cling to Christ the Wisdom of God! Length of days -- is for the wise who find Wisdom! Have you yet found that Wisdom?

'Sound Wisdom...shall be life to your soul!... You shall walk in your way safely!... Your foot shall not stumble! When you lie down, you shall not be afraid! Yes, you shall lie down and your sleep shall be sweet! Don't be afraid of sudden fear!... For the Lord shall be your confidence, and shall keep your foot from being taken!... The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked; but He blesses the habitation of the just!... He gives grace to the lowly!... The wise, shall inherit glory!'
Proverbs 3:21-35.

Christ or 'Sound Wisdom...shall be life to your soul!' It's not enough that we hold on the Wisdom! Wisdom must hold on to us! And Christ or Wisdom does hold on to His children! He is life to their souls! He keeps them walking safely! He keeps their foot from stumbling! Rest and refreshment are both the part of all who keep feeding on the Word of God!

'When you lie down, you shall not be afraid! Yes, you shall lie down and your sleep shall be sweet! Don't be afraid of sudden fear!... For the Lord shall be your confidence!' Underneath, are the Everlasting Arms! (Deuteronomy 33:27). The Lord will give peace! You shall lie down, and nobody shall make you afraid! (Leviticus 26:6).

David did 'sleep in God...in a state of salvation' amid tumultuous warfare (Psalm 3:5 & 4:8). Peter in jail, awaiting execution, 'laid down and slept' in peace between two soldiers (Acts 12:6-7).

'The Lord shall be your confidence, and shall keep your foot from being taken!' (Proverbs 3:26). Noah found this, in the flood over the ungodly (Genesis 8:23). Lot found it, during the destruction of Sodom (Second Peter 2:5-9). And Luther sang his song in confidence, while being threatened during the Reformation. A mighty fortress is our God! 'God is our refuge and strength!' (Psalm 46:1).

'The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked; but He blesses the habitation of the just!' (Proverbs 3:33). The curse or blessing of the Lord follows us into our homes! But bright is the sunshine of the just! For God blesses both them, and their habitation! Is your home under the curse of the Lord? Or under His blessing?!

God 'gives grace to the lowly' (Proverbs 3:34) -- to those who humble themselves before Him! God pours His grace out plentifully, on humble hearts. His sweet dews and showers fall on the humble, and make them pleasant and fertile. Their hearts, are His dwelling-place.

'The wise, shall inherit glory!' (Proverbs 3:35). Those whom God's Wisdom anoints, receive glory -- and, after their deaths, go to glory! The glory of that glory, shall be to be with the Lord -- and to behold His glory! And then, both His and our duration -- shall be for all endless eternity!

The wise shall inherit glory; but fools get promoted to shame! What shall be your end?

'Get Wisdom!... Wisdom is the Principal Thing; therefore, get Wisdom!... I have taught you in the way of Wisdom; I have led you in right paths!... The path of the just, is like the Shining Light That shines more and more, till the perfect Day! The way of the wicked is like darkness! My son, give attention to My words!... Let them not depart from your eyes! Keep them in the midst of your heart! For they are life to those that find them, and health to all their flesh!' Proverbs 4:5-22.

Here we are once and yet again instructed to get Wisdom. Three times! For Wisdom is the Principal Thing Which all men need to get. The Hebrew original has the common phrase 'the beginning of Wisdom.'

Indeed, the divine Son was there at the beginning. He, Wisdom, began everything. He was always there, even before the beginning. And He structured everything wisely.

God the Father adds, speaking to all His human sons (Proverbs 4:1): 'I have taught you in the way of Wisdom; I have led you in right paths! When you go, your steps shall not be straitened! And if you run, you shall not stumble ' (Proverbs 4:11-12).

Here we learn that God's Wisdom or Eternal Word teaches all human beings everything! He, the divine Christ, teaches man the right way! He leads man in the right paths! He teaches men how to walk! He prevents men from stumbling, when they run! Truly, One Who does all this for man -- deserves to be worshipped every day!

When men walk in Wisdom's right paths, they walk more and more toward Him and become like Him. Such men are said to be just, and even their path becomes like the Shining Light of Wisdom Who leads them! Christ-ians thus become more and more like Christ. That Shining Light keeps on leading them more and more, till the Perfect Day at the end of the world. And they themselves thus become more and more illuminated, as they keep on walking on that path.

The wicked, however, walk in a dark way. They stumble. And they do not even know why they so stumble.

God then again urges His child to give attention to His words, and to open his ears to what God says. For those sayings of God need to be kept before the eyes at all times. Indeed, they are to be kept and preserved in the very midst of the human heart.

For the words of God are life for those that find them. Indeed, they give health also to their flesh -- as long as they live. And also after that, even for ever! When wise men return for ever to the divine Wisdom Who created and sustains them throughout their lives!

Thus, the path of the just keeps on shining -- more and more! For you too?

'Righteousness, delivers from death! The Lord will not permit the soul of the righteous to famish; but He casts away the substance of the wicked!... But the hand of the diligent, (He) makes rich.... Blessings are on the head of the (righteous) just!... The memory of the just, is blessed; but the name of the wicked, shall rot!' Proverbs 10:2-7.

No man in himself is righteous! Yet righteousness is necessary, in order to deliver man from death. Not our own righteousness, but Christ's perfect righteousness -- graciously imputed to us. Then, and only then, His 'righteousness delivers from death' (Proverbs 10:2).

Once we have been clothed with Christ's own righteousness, 'the Lord will not permit the soul of the righteous to famish' (Proverbs 10:3). For Christ's righteousness alone is the pathway to everlasting life -- as God lays the foundation of our acceptance deeply and closely on the imputed righteousness of Christ. Christ's imputed righteousness then satisfies both God and us. Then, our rectified soul will never famish!

On the other hand, the Lord 'casts away the substance of the wicked..' For in God's eyes, the wicked really have no substance! On the other hand, after being clothed with Christ's righteousness, the believer is made diligent and rich by God -- and then, also 'the hand of the diligent makes rich.' For then, he himself diligently makes himself richer and richer -- finally in the eyes of the wicked; and immediately in the eyes of God!

Then, and only then, 'blessings are on the head of the just' who have been made righteous (Proverbs 10:6). For the believers, then made righteous and just by Christ's imputed righteousness and justness, are then blessed by God.

And when the righteous die, their justness is commemorated. For 'the memory of the just, is blessed' (Proverbs 10:7). Blessings both temporal and spiritual are then heaped upon them -- by both man and God (Proverbs 16:7 and Psalm 5:12). The then-commemorated memory of the righteous, is a blessing both to his family and to the Church (Psalm 112:6-9).

On the other hand, especially after death, 'the memory of...the wicked shall rot!' They shall not only rot, but also be cursed for ever. Rot immediately in Hell, as they await their final day of retribution (Romans 3:19). And then, keep on rotting for ever thereafter -- in the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:12-14).

Calvin says in his *Institutes* II:18:10: "Believers..., looking to Heaven..., saw that the period during which the Lord afflicted His saints was but a moment -- and that the mercies with which He gathers them, are everlasting.... 'The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot' (Proverbs 10:7)" -- for ever and ever!

The memory of the just, is blessed -- while that of the wicked, rots! Which shall yours be?

'The wise in heart, will receive Commandments! But a prating fool, shall fall! He that walks uprightly, walks surely! But he that perverts his ways, shall become known!... A prating fool, shall fall!... The mouth of a righteous man, is a well of life.... (The wicked's) hatred stirs up strifes; but love covers all sins! On the lips of him that has understanding, Wisdom is found!... Wise men lay up knowledge!... The labour of the righteous keeps on tending to life!' Proverbs 10:8-16.

'The wise in heart' -- means those who have received Christ the Wisdom of God in their hearts. After this occurs, they gladly shall and will receive His Commandments and keep His Decalogue.

On the other hand, those wise in heart may indeed patiently listen to the ravings of a 'prating fool' who goes on talking and talking but not acting well. However, that prating fool -- shall fall!

For the wise doesn't just talk. He particularly walks the walk. 'He that walks uprightly, walks surely.' He moves on, with sure confidence and deliberation.

However, the wicked prating fool perverts his ways. An evil man who persists in his evil course, will twist up his own ways more and more. Eventually, he shall come to grief -- and his folly 'shall be known.' And then, the wicked shall smart for it (Proverbs 2:12-15).

For the 'prating fool shall fall' (Proverbs 10:8). The wicked, who are all talk, fall. And they fall forever -- into utter darkness.

On the other hand, the less loquacious 'mouth of a righteous man is a well of life' (Proverbs 10:11). He thinks carefully before he speaks at all, so that all his words manifest well-considered and deep thoughts. Indeed, his 'mouth' then becomes a 'well of life' not only to himself but also to all careful listeners.

However, 'violence covers the mouth of the wicked.' Hatred stirs up contentions. For when he talks loquaciously, the wicked's 'hatred stirs up strifes' (Proverbs 10:12a).

The righteous talks far less, but first thinks much more deeply -- and then speaks lovingly. For 'love covers all sins' (Proverbs 10:12b).

Calvin says in his *Institutes* III:4:31,36 that "David..., when upbraided by Nathan the Prophet for adultery and murder, receives pardon.... 'Love covers all sins!' (Proverbs 10:12)... Here, after his manner, he (Solomon) contrasts the evils produced by hatred -- with the fruits of charity.... Not that one approves the vices of the other, but tolerates and cures by admonishing" -- and indeed, by admonishing with only a few words; and not by wickedly burbling on endlessly!

For the righteous doesn't talk endlessly. But his labour...keeps on tending to life' (10:17)! Is that also your desire?

'Fools die for lack of Wisdom...; but a man of understanding, has Wisdom!... When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more; but the righteous has an everlasting Foundation!... The fear of the Lord, prolongs days; but the years of the wicked, shall be shortened! The hope of the righteous, shall be gladness; but the expectation of the wicked, shall perish! The way of the Lord is strength to the upright; but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity! The righteous shall never be removed; but the wicked shall not keep on inhabiting the Earth! The mouth of the just, keeps bringing forth Wisdom!' Proverbs 10:21-31.

'Fools die for lack of Wisdom' (Proverbs 10:21). Those who are foolish, die -- and die everlastingly. For they have rejected and lack Christ the Son and Word and Wisdom of God.

However, 'a man of understanding has Wisdom' (10:23)! For he has understood that the Son is the everlasting Wisdom of God -- and that Wisdom had come and lodged in his brain and heart.

For when at death 'the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more; but the righteous has an everlasting Foundation' (10:25)! The unwise wicked dies without Wisdom; but the righteous has Wisdom as his own everlasting Foundation. This verse may have been in the mind of Jesus, when He uttered His parable of the wise man who built his house on the Rock as his own everlasting Foundation (Matthew 7:24-27).

Indeed, 'the fear of the Lord prolongs days' or adds to them; 'but the years of the wicked shall be shortened' (10:27). On the whole, God-fearing people seem to outlive the God-hating. In Puritan England, some often reached 100 years old; whereas till recently, the average lifespan of a pagan Eskimo amounted to but 29 years!

After death, the expectations are even deepened. 'The hope of the righteous, shall be gladness; but the expectation of the wicked, shall perish!' (10:28). Even before death, gladness is the hope of the righteous thereafter. But at their death, the wicked perish in their sins everlastingly!

'The way of the Lord is strength to the upright; but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity' (10:29). Even before death, the righteous remain strong -- by uprightly keeping the way of the Lord. The Lord is a Stronghold to the man who is upright in his way. But those who ignore that way and who work iniquity, are on their way to destruction.

'The righteous shall never be removed.' No, never! 'But the wicked shall not keep on inhabiting the Earth!' (10:30). In the end, they shall be cut off even from this Earth, for ever!

Why? Because 'the mouth of the just, keeps bringing forth Wisdom' (10:31). What the just talk about with their mouths, is Wisdom the Son of God! More and more, whenever they talk -- that is what their mouths keep on bringing forth! For the mouth of the just, keeps bringing forth Wisdom' -- for ever and ever! The righteous or the just, shall never be removed from the Earth!

'The perverseness of transgressors, shall destroy them.... The wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.... When a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish.... To him who sows righteousness, shall be a sure reward.... Righteousness tends to life.... He who pursues evil, pursues it to his own death.... The righteous shall flourish like a branch!... The fruit of the righteous, is a tree of life!... Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed on the Earth!' Proverbs 11:3-31.

God does not destroy people merely because of His Own sovereign choice. He destroys only the perverse, who have kept on transgressing His Holy Law. For it is only the wicked who fall. And they do so, by their own wickedness.

It is they who act treacherously, who are taken in their own mischief. As a result, when a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish. For the hope of iniquity, perishes. That is, all of his boasts fade away -- and he becomes the permanent inheritor of trouble.

On the other hand, the integrity of the upright -- shall guide them. The righteousness of the perfect, shall direct his way. That is, when perfected by the imputation of Christ's goodness, those thus made righteous shall have their way directed for them.

It is the uprights' imputed righteousness which shall deliver them! When a righteous man dies, his hope does not perish. He is delivered out of trouble. And by knowing the Lord, he is delivered.

'To him who sows righteousness, shall be a sure reward.... Righteousness tends to life' -- yes, to everlasting life! But 'he who pursues evil, pursues it to his own death' -- yes, to his own everlasting death!

'The righteous shall flourish like a branch' -- like the green leaf. He shall keep on being full of life, and shall never wither.

'The fruit of the righteous, is a tree of life.' For the righteous keep on bearing fruit for the Lord. That fruit is a tree of life. It is by eating of that tree that man would have passed from losable life to unlosable and everlasting life (Genesis 3:22 and Revelation 22:2,14,19).

For 'the righteous shall be recompensed on the Earth!' Right here on Earth, when it is renewed into the New Earth!.

'He that is righteous, let him become still more righteous!... Blessed are they that do His Commandments, so that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter...into the city! But outside are...sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes lies!' (Revelation 22:11-15). So then -- a tree of life is the fruit and reward of the righteous!

'The wicked are overthrown.... But the house of the righteous, shall keep on standing.... The wicked gets snared, by the transgression of his lips.... But the just shall come out of trouble.... True lips shall be established for ever.... But a lying tongue, is but for a moment.... In the way of righteousness, is life; and in its pathway, there is no death!' Proverbs 12:7-28.

Calvin says in his *Institutes* III:17:15: "Solomon says...'In the way of righteousness, is life; and in the pathway thereof, there is no death!' (Proverbs 12:28).... But let one of the sons of Adam come forward, with such integrity! If there is none, they must perish from the presence of God -- or betake themselves to the asylum of mercy! Still, we deny not that the integrity of believers -- though partial and imperfect -- is a step to immortality!"

Meanwhile, 'the wicked are overthrown' (Proverbs 12:7). They are utterly uprooted, and then hurled down into Hell. Every human soul will one day have to acknowledge that God is righteous, even in overthrowing the wicked for ever..

However, 'the house of the righteous, shall keep on standing.' It is unoverthrowable -- both now, in this present life; and beyond, everlastingly!

On the other hand -- 'the wicked gets snared, by the transgression of his lips.' His own speech breaks the Law of God, and ensnares him more and more closely. Yet 'the just shall come out of trouble.' Though he goes through it, in the end he emerges from it -- as a free man! He puts his trust in God, and bears fruit to His glory!

For his lips do not keep on transgressing! His lips are true! And 'the lip of truth, shall be established for ever!' (Proverbs 12:19). On the other hand, as regards the wicked, his 'lying tongue is but for a moment.' It ceases to do damage the moment he dies, and sinks into Hell.

The bottom line, then, is this. 'In the way of righteousness is life; and in its pathway, is no death' (Proverbs 12:28).

Those who seek life, and especially everlasting life, need to seek it in the way of righteousness. They need to walk and to keep on walking along that way. Though that path leads through this present land of death, it finally leads to the land of life -- of everlasting life. For then, there is no death -- but death is then merely a doorway at the end of our present life which passes straight into life everlasting.

On the other hand -- the way of unrighteousness leads to death. Yes, the unrighteous way of constantly breaking God's Commandments leads to death. To everlasting death!

In the way of righteousness is life -- and no death! In which of the two ways, do you walk?

'The lamp of the wicked, shall be put out.... But with the well-advised, is Wisdom!... Whosoever despises the Word, shall be destroyed; but he who fears the Commandment, shall be rewarded. The Law of the wise is a Fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.... He who walks with the wise, shall be wise; but a companion of fools, shall be destroyed! (For) evil keeps on pursuing sinners. But to the righteous, good shall be repaid!' Proverbs 13:9-21.

'The lamp of the wicked, shall be put out -- but with the well-advised, is Wisdom.' Only those who have received the good advice to embrace Wisdom alias God's Eternal Son and Word, shall not be extinguished like the lamp of the wicked. For 'whosoever despises the Word, shall be destroyed. But he who fears the Commandment, shall be rewarded.'

Calvin says in his *Institutes* III:18:1: "Let us now proceed to those passages which affirm that God will render to every one according to his deeds..., the passages which describe eternal life as the reward of works.... 'He that fears the Commandment, shall be rewarded!' (Proverbs 13:13)....

"Though it is by mercy alone that God admits His people to life -- yet, as He leads them into possession of it by the course of good works so that He may complete His work in them in the order which He has destined -- it is not strange that they are said to be crowned according to their works, since by these doubtless they are prepared for receiving the crown of immortality.... The moment they are admitted to fellowship with Christ by the knowledge of the Gospel and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, their eternal life is begun -- and then, He Who has begun a good work in them, 'will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ' (Philippians 1:6)!"

'The Law of the wise is a Fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.' It is by graciously keeping God's Law, that believers more and more drink from the Fountain of life. And that enables them to depart from the snares of death which entrap law-breaking unbelievers.

'He who walks with the wise, shall be wise.' He who associates with those who have become wise through meeting God's Wisdom and Son and Word, shall themselves become wise by themselves becoming more and more associated with that Wisdom.

On the other hand, 'a companion of fools, shall be destroyed!' He who keeps associating with fools who keep on rejecting God's Wisdom and Son and Word, shall themselves be destroyed. For they all unwisely keep plodding on in their unwisdom, till their miserable deaths!

For 'evil keeps on pursuing sinners. But to the righteous, good shall be repaid!' Evil keeps on pursuing those who keep on sinning, till they die in their sins. But to the righteous who keep on doing good, their good shall be repayed a thousand times both here and now and especially in the better life yet to come!

For the light of the righteous keeps on rejoicing -- unto reward! And yours?

'Among the righteous, is favour.... The house of the wicked, shall be overthrown; but the tent of the upright, shall flourish!... A good man, shall be satisfied.... In the fear of the Lord, is strong confidence; and His children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the Lord, is a Fountain of life -- to depart from the snares of death.... A sound heart, is the life of the flesh; but envy, the rottenness of the bones.... The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous has hope in his death!' Proverbs 14:9-32.

'Among the righteous, is favour' -- the favour of God! For God certainly favours all those who by His grace observe His Law!

The house of the wicked, shall indeed be overthrown. But the tent or dwelling of the upright -- of him who loves righteousness and who gladly keeps God's Law -- instead, shall flourish!

A good man shall indeed be satisfied -- in, and then from, himself. Indeed, in the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.

Calvin says in his *Institutes* III:14:19: "When believers...feel their faith strengthened by a consciousness of integrity and entertain sentiments of exultation, it is just because the fruits of their calling convince them that the Lord has admitted them to a place among His children. Accordingly..., Solomon says: 'In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence!' (Proverbs 14:26)."

Too, also the children of God-fearing people, shall have a place of refuge. That is, those of their children that themselves have strong confidence in the Lord.

For the fear of the Lord, is a Fountain of life. Such as fear God, shall depart from the snares of death when they die.

A sound (or tranquil) heart, is the life of the flesh -- while we are still alive. But envy (or jealousy), is the rottenness of the bones -- and brings about the death and decomposition of the wicked.

For 'the wicked is driven away in his wickedness.' He is driven away from life, and from God -- for ever. The righteous, however, 'has hope in his death.' Hope in his own death, and also hope that thereafter he will never again encounter the wicked.

'The wicked is driven away in his wickedness (or calamity); but the righteous has hope (or a refuge) in his death.' In the death of the wicked, who then gets removed from the Earth. But also in the righteous's own death, when he too gets release from this Earth and starts on his way to a yet better New Earth still to come!

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, departing from death! Do you fear the Lord?

'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord (Wisdom). But the prayer of the upright, is His (Wisdom's) delight. The way of the wicked, is an abomination to the Lord; but He (Wisdom) loves him that follows after righteousness. Correction is grievous to him that forsakes the way; and he that hates reproof, shall die -- hell and destruction!' Proverbs 15:9-10.

The first four sentences above have many parallels in the Prophets. It is always interesting to trace connections between the latter -- and Proverbs's frequent mention of "Wisdom."

Not only 'the sacrifice' but the very 'way' of the wicked, is an abomination. His common course, natural as well as moral. Such is the course of a rebel against God. All his doings are the corrupt stream flowing from a corrupt fountain. Then, every step of life is hateful to God!

The second sentence above may also be translated: 'But those who pursue righteousness, He shall love.' This indicates that God's righteousness must not only be nodded at, but actively pursued in our lives. Only then, do we realize that God indeed delights in us and truly loves us.

It is of the greatest significance for the sinner to put before his eyes very clearly, that as long as he does not walk in the right way -- he can establish nothing worthwhile. The Lord does not ask of him and cannot either accept anything from him -- unless he first receives the gift from Heaven offered to him in God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ is received by faith, the whole of life is changed. Then alone the service of love is pleasant for God, and lovable in His eyes.

'Correction is grievous to him that forsakes the way; and he that hates reproof, shall die!' Here God says that whoever resists being corrected, shall die. Shall die in his sins, and go to Hell.

There is no surer step to ruin, than this hatred of reproof. But correction turns back the one who had forsaken the way.

'Hell and destruction are before!' *Sh'ool* and *A:baddoon*. In Wisdom literature such as the Proverbs, these two proper names are combined as synonymous with the region of death. And Jehovah exercises control over them -- hence 'Hell and destruction are before the Lord.'

Once more, we here behold an Omniscient and Omnipresent God. Every recess of Hades, the state of the dead and the place of the damned, are before the Lord -- before His eye; open to His cognizance. There is no depth within, that He cannot fathom.

Would men dare to indulge their vain thoughts -- their light notions, their trifles, their impurities -- if they really believed the Lord searched their hearts? Would they not rather be afraid even to think before God, what they would shrink from doing before men?

On the other hand, the Lord loves him who keeps on following after righteousness! Do you?

'A scorner does not love one that reproves him; neither will he go to the wise. A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance.... He that is of a merry heart, has a continual feast!... A wise son, makes a glad father; but...folly is joy, to him that is destitute of Wisdom! However, a man of understanding -- walks uprightly!' Proverbs 15:12-21.

The basic problem of a scorner is, that he will not go to the wise. He won't go to the wise who have been made wise after their encounter with Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ!

Still less will the scorner go to the Wisdom, Who makes people wise. He stays as far away from God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ, as is humanly possible!

On the other hand, 'a merry heart makes a cheerful countenance.' For 'he that is of a merry heart, has a continual feast!'

Such is the soul who has found Christ to be not only a Saviour, but indeed his daily life. He who casts all his cares upon God; he who had learned to give all of his cares over into His hand -- shall always have a merry heart and a cheerful countenance! Whenever the heart is merry, all of the days are light -- and the soul has a continual feast. That is holy joy, which arises when one leads everything back to God Who is the Origin of all!

As Robert Louis Stevenson once prayed: 'Give us courage and gaiety, and a quiet mind! Give us to go blithely on our business, all this day! Give us to awake with smiles! Give us to labour, smiling! Renew in us the sense of joy!'

Only those are made merry thus, who have first become wise. Only when they have met and enthroned Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ in their hearts, do they become wise!

Then, 'a wise son makes a glad father.' For every true father becomes glad, when he knows his son has become wise and continually serves the Lord Christ as his one and only Wisdom!

On the other hand, 'folly is joy -- to him that is destitute of Wisdom!' As Paul later wrote in Ephesians 5:15: 'See, then, that you walk circumspectly -- not as fools, but as wise!'

For the truly wise have been given understanding by God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ. And 'a man of understanding -- walks uprightly!' The man of a pure heart who submits himself to the fear of the Lord, walks uprightly.

He refuses to allow himself to be seduced by sinful tendencies. For he lives righteously, according to God's righteous Son!

Indeed, a merry heart makes a countenance cheerful! Is your heart thus merry?

'The way of life, is above -- to the wise! So that he may depart from the grave beneath! The Lord will destroy the house of the proud. But He will establish...the widow!' Proverbs 15:24-25.

'The way of life, is above -- to the wise!' Or: 'To the wise, the way of life goes upward!' If one has savingly encountered God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ, one has become wise. Then, one's way of life is above, toward the Lord -- and one's way of life goes upward, toward Heaven!

In that way, the wise man is able to 'depart from the grave beneath!' It is true that when he dies, the wise man too goes to the grave or *sh'ool*. But the wise man not only avoids a precipitate journey thereto. Indeed, as soon as he arrives there at death -- his soul right then goes straight to a glorious immortality; upward, and to be with the Lord!

'The grave' is here the world of spirits, after death -- the land of dismal darkness on the other side of life. Whereas a long life was a blessing promised to the believer -- so too was being early cut off from the land of the living, a calamity to be feared.

Thus the way of life points away from the grave beneath. Those who walk that way, have until they attain a great age -- a place in the land that the Lord God gives to His earthly people.

On the other hand, the Lord will destroy or root up the house of the proud. He often does this, even in this present life. And He certainly does so at the moment of death, as soon as the proud die.

However, 'though the Lord be high -- yet He has respect to the lowly. But the proud, He knows from afar!' (Psalm 138:6).

God's face is always turned against those who proudly elevate themselves. Yet from of old, He was and still is the support of orphans and widows who trust in His love and care. Consider all the help He gave to the widow of Zarephath (First Kings 17:9-16)!

What about widows, all too often left alone with hardly a mite when their husbands die? Even if the husband had owned but one square inch of land -- after his death, the Lord Himself will establish and protect its borders for his widow!

For 'you shall not remove your neighbour's landmark which those from old time have set in inheritance! You shall inherit in the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess it!' (Deuteronomy 19:14).

As Proverbs itself later insists: 'Don't remove the ancient landmark, which your fathers have set!' Proverbs 22:28.

The way of life is above to the wise -- and it strengthens widows! Is that your way?

'The ear that hears the reproof of life, abides among the wise.... The fear of the Lord, is the instruction of Wisdom!' Proverbs 15:31-33.

'The ear that hears the reproof of life, abides among the wise.' Among the wise who have been made wise by God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ, are ears that hear the reproofs of life!

Such ears accept reproofs experienced during this present life. As a result, such people abide among the wise -- they stay with God's wise people; and they adhere to God's Wisdom Christ the Lord.

For their very teachableness is the key that unlocks the door for them. So that they become wiser and wiser. What a contrast to the 'scorner' who does not go to the wise -- nor to God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ (Proverbs 15:12)!

He who is humble enough gratefully to accept reproof when he has strayed, shall rejoice among those regarded by God as wise. But the learned in the world are often too proud to receive a warning, because they regard themselves as exalted above those who in the fear of the Lord would correct them. Beautiful indeed is the impact of a Wise Reprover upon an obedient ear (Proverbs 25:12).

Only those, who after hearing reproof, obtain wisdom -- and who obtain God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ! Remaining in the fear of the Lord, they know that the better part of wisdom is to acknowledge their faults and sins -- and to accept the punishment, as coming from Him Himself.

Those who accept their lowest place, shall in time be lifted up. Think about the remarkable history of Joseph (Genesis 37 to 50)!

'The fear of the Lord, is the instruction of Wisdom.' He who fears God, does so because God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ has so instructed him.

For God-fearers need and heed God's Wisdom. They need quickly and constantly to learn all these wise things, which they need to know.

Indeed, 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.' The knowledge derived from Wisdom (Proverbs 1:7).

'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' -- acquired from Wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). That is 'the instruction of Wisdom' (Proverbs 15:33) -- the instruction which is acquired from and imparted by Wisdom. Do you have it? The ear that heeds reproof, abides among the wise!

'The thoughts of the diligent, tend only to plenteousness; but...a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro by them that seek death. The robbery of the wicked, shall destroy them!... When the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge. The righteous man wisely considers the house of the wicked; and God overthrows the wicked for their wickedness.... The man that wanders out of the way of understanding, shall remain in the congregation of the dead.... There is treasure to be desired, and oil; in the dwelling of the wise.... He that follows after righteousness..., finds life.... The upright...directs his way. There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord!'
Proverbs 21:5-30.

'The thoughts of the diligent, tend only to plenteousness' -- that is: 'Even when the diligent merely thinks or develops methods, it tends only to plenteousness; but that of the hasty who are slothful, tends only to want.' When one is diligent, plenteous success is ultimately inevitable. But when one is either too slothful or too hasty, one ends up in want.

One such hasty way to try to acquire plenteousness, is by lying. But the attempt to get 'treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro by them that seek death.' Those who fib and lie through life, end up with the devil as the father of lies in everlasting death (John 8:44). Such actually 'seek death.' And, sure enough, they find it!

'The robbery of the wicked, shall destroy them!' Their sheer violence, sweeps them away. And the reason for this, is that the wicked 'refuse to do judgment' -- or deny doing what is right.

On the other hand -- 'the wise is instructed; he receives knowledge!' For he who has been made wise through contact with God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ, keeps on receiving Wisdom and acquiring knowledge -- and becomes more and more righteous!

Thus, the righteous man wisely considers the house of the wicked. And he sees that God overthrows the wicked, for their wickedness.

Indeed, the righteous often themselves help overthrow the wicked! It is actually God as the Righteous One who does this (Job 34:16-17) -- but those who follow Him, are part of His actions.

However, those men who wander away from Wisdom, shall remain in the congregation of the dead. They remain in the land of shades, and die prematurely -- and everlastingly.

Meanwhile, the wise desire and amass treasure in their dwellings. And both here and hereafter -- 'he that follows after righteousness and mercy, finds life.' For 'the upright...directs his way.'

On the other hand, 'there is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord!' For he who counsels against God, lacks Wisdom altogether! But he who keeps following righteousness, finds life and honour. Which counsel do you follow?

'Withhold not correction from the child! For if you beat him with the rod, he shall not die! You shall beat him with the rod -- and shall deliver his soul from Hell! My son, if your heart be wise -- my heart shall rejoice!... Be in the fear of the Lord, all the day long! For surely, there is an end! And your expectation shall not be cut off!' Proverbs 23:13-18.

Don't withhold correction -- for though you beat your child with the rod, he shall not die! 'Chasten your son while there is hope, and don't let your soul spare him or cause him to die!' (Proverbs 19:18).

'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him!' (Proverbs 22:15). 'If you beat him with the rod..., you shall deliver his soul from Hell!' (Proverbs 23:14). 'Remove sorrow!... Put away evil!... For childhood and youth -- are vanity!' (Ecclesiastes 11:10).

Corrective discipline, exercised with understand and not vigorously or with excessive strictness, is necessary for a child. By this way of immediate rectification, he shall be preserved from decline and extermination as the unavoidable consequences of a life of selfish disobedience and self-will.

'Hell' is used here, to indicate that to which a life of vice leads. Chastisement would improve those evil tendencies. It would be good, if all parents had the interest in the discipline of their children -- which Manoah had (Judges 13:3-14)!

Chastening with the rod, especially with the rod of God's Word, is one of the ways to make one's son wise -- to teach him to flee to God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ! And then, the parent's heart shall indeed rejoice!

'My son..., be in the fear of the Lord -- all the day long!' (Proverbs 12:15-17). Fear the Lord! We may in these words directed by a father to his son, observe the desire of our God and Father that His children should walk in truth. It is indeed a great privilege to be able to give joy to His heart, by rejoicing when our own son's 'lips speak right things' (Proverbs 23:16)!

'My son..., surely there is an end' -- or reward (Proverbs 12:15-18). Yes, surely! And that 'end' is the reward and sure hope of everlasting life! 'Thoughts of peace and not of evil..., give you a latter end and hope' (Jeremiah 29:11) -- as indeed was and is to be expected!

Truly, there is an afterlife! For the time shall come, in which present relationships shall be changed -- and righteousness shall conquer. Then, he who has lived in sincerity and in the fear of God -- shall be rewarded (Matthew 5:10-12)!

So, parents -- don't withhold correcting your child, if you would save him from Hell!

'My son, if your heart be wise -- my heart shall rejoice!... Hearken to your father who begot you! Do not despise your mother, when she is old!... The father of the righteous, shall greatly rejoice! And he who begets a wise child, shall receive joy from him! Your father and your mother shall be glad; and she who bare you, shall rejoice! My son give Me your heart, and let your eyes observe My ways!' Proverbs 23:15-26.

'My son..., be wise!' One greater than Solomon, is here speaking! God, the wise Father! He says to us: "My son, be wise and give your heart to My Wisdom -- the Lord Jesus Christ!"

'Hearken to your father!' He is the one who begot and who raised you! And 'do not despise your mother' -- especially when she is old! For we are to be kind to our elders. Esther's obedience to her aged uncle Mordecai, is a precious example of what is here ordered. "For Esther did the commandment of Mordecai; just like when she was brought up by him!" (Esther 2:20).

Even the Apocrypha says: "My son, help your father in his age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives!... If his understanding fails, be indulgent towards (or have patience with) him; and do not despise him!... For kindness toward (the relieving of) your father shall not be forgotten; and in spite of sins, your prosperity shall bloom again.... He that forsakes his father, is like a blasphemer; and he that angers his mother, is cursed by the Lord!" (Ecclesiasticus or Jesus Sirach 3:12-16).

'The father of the righteous, shall greatly rejoice.' Because his son is righteous, and desires to do that which is right.

For 'he who begets a wise child' -- he who begets a child that has been made wise by God's Wisdom the Lord Jesus Christ -- shall receive joy from him! And what greater joy can a good parent ever receive, than seeing and knowing that his own child has found God's Wisdom Christ, and been made wise by Him?!

Then, both the father and the mother of the child shall be glad! Then, especially she who bare the child -- shall rejoice!

So -- 'my son, give me your heart! And let your eyes delight in my ways!' This is true when also the father of the son is himself righteous. But it is particularly true when God the righteous Father Himself says: 'My son, give Me your heart! And let your eyes delight in My ways!' Give attention to My teaching!

Here, God Himself speaks and commands men as their Wisdom. He says: 'My son, give your heart to Me as your true Wisdom! And let your eyes delight in My ways' -- which are wise indeed!

So, hearken to your father who begot you; and do not despise your mother when she is old!

'To everything, there is a season -- and a time to every purpose under Heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die! A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted! A time to kill, and a time to heal! A time to break down, and a time to build up!' Ecclesiastes 3:1-3.

God has set His limits on all human life. Therefore, all the experiences of human life are transient.. All last for but a while -- and transient is everything under the sky.

'There is a time to be born -- and a time to die!' The moment is predetermined of every man's entering into the world. And the moment is also fixed by the same Sovereign Purpose at which he is to leave it. When a child is born, no one can affirm how long he or she is to continue here.

The time and the circumstances of his or her future departure, are known to God alone -- the Author and the Supporter of his or her existence. And we can with certainty say:'There is a time to die.' To all, the event is equally sure.

When that period arrives, the wish and attempt to evade it -- are to all equally vain. No man has power over the spirit, to retain the spirit -- no, not for one moment!

His days are determined. The number of his months, is with God. God has appointed his boundaries, which he cannot pass.

There is also 'a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.' The planter himself may undo his own work. A period of growth arrives at which wood is either cut down for profit, or rooted out for fruitlessness.

No man, when he plants, can be sure how soon the blasting influences of an unpropitious season may oblige him to pluck up what he has planted. And some one else may later convert a forest into an arable land, or may even waste his plantations to discharge his own debts.

There is also 'a time to kill, and a time to heal!' There is a time when God kills, and a time when He keeps alive. There is a time when He brings down to the grave; and there is also a time when He heals and bring back from the very verge of it.

There is a time when all the means that men can devise and employ, will prove ineffectual for the preservation of life. And there is a time, according to the unknown purpose of God, when the same means will check and turn the ebbing tide of life -- and bring back the exhausted and despaired-of patient from the last extremity.

All depends on the purpose and appointment of God! For there is indeed also a time to break down -- and to die! Are you and I ready, when that time comes?

Ecclesiastes 3:18-21 Man is not a beast; for (at death) the spirit of man goes upward! Jul. 11

'(The words of the Preacher Solomon, the son of David:) "I said...'God shall judge the righteous and the wicked!'... I said...concerning...the sons of men..., that they might see that they themselves are beasts!... That which befalls the sons of men, befalls beasts!... As the one dies, so does the other die!... All are from the dust, and all turn back to dust again!" (But) who knows the spirit of man (at death) goes upward; and the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth?' Ecclesiastes 1:1 & 3:18-21.

In Genesis 2:7, the 'breath of life' bestowed upon man was something different in character from that which the animal world enjoyed. There, we are simply told that 'every living creature...moves...and...multiplies' (Genesis 2:21-22). Whereas when God created His 'image' man to 'have dominion' over the animals (1:26), God 'breathed...the Breath of life' into him so that he became 'a living soul' or *nephesh chaayaah* who could only die if he ate the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17).

In Genesis 1 & 2, it is not the fallible Adam -- but the infallible God speaking. In Ecclesiastes 3:18-21, it is not the infallible God -- but the fallible Solomon speaking. While men grovel in their worldly pleasures, they degrade their immortal nature and sink themselves to the level of beasts that perish -- said and wrote Solomon, then.

Calvin says in his *Institutes* III:2:38: "Solomon had said...'That which befalls the sons of men, befalls beasts!... As the one dies, so does the other die!' (Ecclesiastes 3:19). Were anyone thence to infer that we hold the immortality of the (human) soul by conjecture merely -- would he not justly be deemed insane?" For Solomon's view then, while it lasted, was an indignant protest against the Genesis 2:7 truth that the immortal God's 'Breath of life' was given to man alone!

Calvin also says in his *Psychopannychia*: "'Who knows...the spirit of the sons of Adam ascends upwards, and the spirit of beasts descends downwards?' (Ecclesiastes 3:21). The Wisdom of God explains, assuring us that the spirit of the sons of Adam ascends upwards!... The object of Ecclesiastes is not to show that the souls of the dead perish, but...to confess God! He at the same time teaches that there is no time of confessing -- after death.... There is then -- no time for repentance!"

Solomon was temporarily agnostic about this; but God corrected him. Thus Solomon, now corrected, soon professed: 'I perceive...there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works!' (Ecclesiastes 3:22). 'Remember now your Creator, in the days of your youth!... The dust shall return to the earth, as it was; and the spirit shall return to God Who gave it.... Fear God, and keep His Commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work, into judgment!' (Ecclesiastes 12:1-14). At the close of life, the spirit of man survives his mortal frame -- while that of animals, perishes with them. The soul of man is destined unto immortality.

Man is not a beast; for (at death) the spirit of man goes upward! Is that your belief?

'Riches perish!... He begets a son; but there is nothing in his hand!... As he came forth from his mother's womb, naked shall he return -- to go, as he came; and shall take nothing...which he may carry away!... This too is a sore evil -- that he shall go, in all points as he came! What profit does he have -- he who has laboured (only) for the wind? All his days too, he eats in darkness; and he has much sorrow and wrath with his sickness!' Ecclesiastes 5:14-17.

These verses contain a clearly written and powerful picture of the man who has heaped up wealth, and has been deprived of it all -- so that the son for whom he had hoarded it up, is left penniless.... The man himself returns to the grave nakedly, taking nothing with him.

Riches stir up envy. Riches are a lure to thieves, to robbers, to murderers -- and have many a time cost the proprietor his life. And worst of all, what is more than any external calamity -- even than death itself. In many instances, they are also a too successful temptation to their owners to forget God and to neglect their own spiritual and everlasting interests. They thus endanger their souls, and put their eternal welfare itself into jeopardy.

The riches are reserved for a son and heir as their planned owner. But these riches often perish, by some extravagant speculation -- and then, the hoping son gets nothing in his hand! Riches are thus a commodity which at its best ceases at death. But man himself continues after death, and his previous treasure can then no longer serve him. If he was an unbeliever, death then deprives him of his riches -- and casts him into an eternal and suffering-filled night.

Here, we can think of the parable of the rich man in Luke 16. Before he died, he lacked healthful sleep which preserves and lengthens human life. His riches were hurtful to his health. His son, who built his future on his father's riches, himself became a victim. And at the rich man's death, he took nothing with him of what he had amassed. Just as he had come forth naked from the womb of his mother, he now moved on -- into everlasting and flaming torments.

'This too is a sore evil -- that he shall go in all points as he came. What profit does he have -- he who has laboured, for the wind? All his days too, he eats in darkness; and he has much sorrow and wrath with his sickness!'

The possession of riches is, at the very longest, bounded by the present life. His remaining days on Earth, are miserable; and his departure from the world, fearful!

How miserable an existence is this life of labour, if it all leads to nothing in the end! All his life long, the rich man ate the bread of sorrow. He who by his labour and cares aims at nothing but becoming rich, will endure privations and have many sorrows. Many of his plans fail. He becomes morbidly disposed, diseased in mind and body, and increasingly dissatisfied!.

Naked shall man return -- even as he came forth from the womb! You too!

Ecclesiastes 6:1-6 The long-lived who are not good, are worse off than those aborted! Jul. 13

'There is an evil which I have seen.... A man to whom God has given riches..., is not given the power to eat it.... If a man...lives many years...but his soul not be filled with good..., an untimely birth is better than he.... He has not seen the sun...; this one has more rest than the other! Yes, though he lives 2000 years, he has seen no good! Don't all go to one place?!' Ecclesiastes 6:1-6.

There is a man to whom God had given riches. But alas, with all this bounty, God does not give him the power of eat it! The very idea of having the means of enjoyment in the most profuse abundance, and yet being excluded from the capacity of using it -- is itself enough to prey upon the human spirit and to sink it into dust.

Every man desires and hopes to live long upon the Earth. But when he comes to die and to number the last of his "many days" in life -- he sometimes "has no burial"; or no respect and honour in his death.

Neebel is the fetus which comes forth lifelessly from the mother's womb. It is carried away, in all quietness. The fetus is also happy -- happy not to have seen the sun, or to have named it.

Then, "an untimely birth" or one aborted who dies before birth -- has a better life than had the rich man who died miserably without being mourned. True, it is a wicked sin to abort one's offspring. It is also true that the person aborted had very little enjoyment. But neither did he or she have subsequent suffering after coming into the world, as the rich man had.

I say that an untimely birth is better than he! An 'untimely birth' is an unripe fruit (Psalm 58:8). But the fruit that falls when unripe, is better than the riper fruit which rots on the tree.

'Why didn't I die in the womb?... For now, I would have laid still and been quiet.... I would have been at rest.... As a hidden untimely birth, I would have been like infants which never saw light!' (Job 3:11-16).

What, then, is the use of a long life? For such, must just as much head for the grave -- as do those who never live, or who only live just for a little while. 'Why then have You brought me forth out of the womb? Oh, that I had given up the ghost, when no eye had seen me!... I would have been carried from the womb, to the grave!' (Job 10:18-19).

'If a man begets a hundred children and lives many years..., but his soul not be filled with good, and he also gets no burial..., an untimely birth is better than he!' For one born untimely, never knew desire. So his rest is greater than that of someone who lived from desire! After all, he then knew neither desire nor hunger -- which cannot be satiated!

If one has lived even 2000 years, but has not seen good -- do not all go to the same place? The long-lived who are not good, are then worse off than those aborted! Have you seen good?!

Ecclesiastes 8:12-13 The God-fearing shall fare well; but not the long-lived wicked! Jul. 14

'Though a sinner do evil a hundred times and his days be prolonged -- yet surely, I know that it shall be well with them that fear God!... But it shall not be well with the wicked!... Neither shall he prolong his days, which are like a shadow. Because he does not fear before God!' Ecclesiastes 8:12-13.

Sometimes a sinner's days may be prolonged. But even where the life of a sinful man be long, it is still in reality only a fleeting shadow. It shall not go well with him, even if he succeeds in prolonging his days. For he does not fear God!

Even if an sinner do evil an hundred times -- very frequently, always, day and night, for his whole life, and incessantly -- he is deceiving himself! His punishment shall not melt away, but become great.

Even if God prolongs his days so that he becomes as old as a stick in his sin! The longer he lives, the greater shall be his punishment. Even if he might live to a great age, he will still be like a shadow which disappears at sunset.

Meanwhile, the sinner is not judged immediately for his evil work. That is why the evil heart remains full, in order to do evil. God does not directly punish sin, and postpones the judgment.

'A sinner does evil a hundred times, and becomes old therein.' The sinner thereby encourages himself to keep on sinning. He does evil again and again -- but still enjoys himself in all the pleasures of a long life. He sins wantonly, and becomes old in it -- and all, in good health..

Now -- men try out their things. They grow in their evil. They act as if there shall be no judgment -- as if God never punishes evil. The sinner may grow in his evil. He may do as he wishes. He may even become old in his sin.

Nevertheless, judgment comes! Solomon knew very well that there is a moral government in the world, and that this must finally prevail.

The shadow does not survive the day. The unfearing wicked nevertheless has his life shortened by his sin inciting its own punishment -- as an act of God. For the reality of the world's moral government, is an inalienable fact of human consciousness; and even of his own!

So the righteous -- even with a short earthly life -- has one with the promise of a joyous eternity in it. It will only go well -- with those that fear the Lord. This verse is one of the strongest passages in favour of the doctrine of the resurrection!

So the God-fearing shall fare well. But not the long-lived wicked! Which are you?

'There is one event, for all. Yes, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil...; madness is in their heart while they live; but after that, they go to the dead.... To him that is joined to all the living, there is hope. For a living dog is better than a dead lion.... For...the dead...have no more reward.... Their love and their hatred and their envy has now perished. Neither do they any more have a portion...in anything that is done under the sun!' Ecclesiastes 9:3-6.

In the Ancient East, a dog was despised. So the comparison here is between the lion as the greatest of animals, even when dead -- and the dog as the least worthy animal, even when alive. It is better to be a serf among the living, than a king among the dead. It is better to look forward even to death, than to have no memory at all after death (until the resurrection unto judgment)!

Every level of existence, however humble and even miserable, is far more to be chosen than the state of death. To be a living dog may have little attractiveness, but it is better than a dead lion. All the living have full confidence and joy. It is better to be a dog which lives, than a lion which is dead. The dog is the proverbial emblem of that which is contemptible. The lion is the king among beasts. But if the lion be dead, then all is over with its dignity and its strength. The existence of a living dog is to be preferred to that of a dead lion!

Calvin says in his *Institutes* III:25:5 & III:20:24: "Although the minds of men ought to be perpetually occupied with this pursuit (of man's resurrection), yet -- as if they actually resolved to banish all remembrance of the resurrection -- they have called death the end of all things, the extinction of man.... Solomon certainly expresses the commonly received opinion, when he says 'A living dog is better than a dead lion' (Ecclesiastes 9:4)."

However, "while men are alive upon the Earth, they can mutually commend themselves to each other's prayers.... This they do, by the command of the Lord -- and not without a promise!... But all such reasons are inapplicable to the dead, with whom the Lord in withdrawing them from our society has left us no means of intercourse (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6)."

In his *Psychopannychia*, Calvin adds: "(In) Ecclesiastes 9:1(-5)..., shall the believers to whom all things work together for good, regard affliction as an evidence of divine hatred? By no means!... They not only endure whatever befalls them with unshaken magnanimity, but even glory in tribulation -- acknowledging with blessed Job: 'Though He slays us, we will hope in Him!' (Job 13:15 [and 19:25-27]).... The object of Ecclesiastes is not to show that the souls of the dead perish, but...to confess God.... There is no time of confessing, after death.... No time for repentance!"

Even if you feel like a dog -- while you are still alive, there is hope! But if you should feel even like a lion as the king of all beasts -- once you are dead, you are dead indeed!

While there's life, there's always hope. But not so, if one dies in one's sins! And you?

Ecclesiastes 11:7 - 12:2a Though one lives for years, let him remember the dark days! Jul. 16

The light, is sweet.... A pleasant thing it is, for the eyes to behold the sun. But if a man lives many years and rejoices in them all -- yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many! Rejoice, O young man, in your youth!.... Let your heart cheer you, in the days of your youth.... But you should know that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment!... Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth -- while the evil days do not come, nor the years draw nigh when you shall say: "I have no pleasure in them!" While the sun or the light or the moon or the stars be not darkened!' Ecclesiastes 11:7 to12:2a.

Yes, the light of life is indeed pleasant and sweet. Indeed, if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all! But remember too the many days of darkness that still lie ahead!

What are those days of darkness? First, the days of old age. And second, the days of even greater darkness thereafter -- if one should die without remembering one's Creator!

When one is still young, one should rejoice. *Gaudeamus igitur, juvenes dum sumus!* Let your heart then cheer you! Walk then in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes! But know, that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment!

Therefore remove vexation from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh! For youth and the prime of life, are vanity.

So remember too your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw nigh when you shall say "I have no pleasure in them!" Before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars be darkened!

Be firmly rooted in religious faith in early life, as a safeguard against the hopeless pessimism of an old age that knows none of the strengths or consolations of true religion. When still young, one should find the Creator -- and continue to thank Him for all His many blessings, lifelong! This is very important -- before the sudden and violent storm ahead which prefigures the darkness and gloom of old age without the Creator!

Youth should indeed enjoy itself. Give God your joy, O youngster! Enjoy yourself! But always in such a way that you don't keep sinning! Get used to seeing God and heeding His Word in your youth!

For that will lead to a happy old age. Enjoy yourself in such a way that you keep mindful in everything that you will have to give an account to God -- even from your youth onward. For youth dawns, but does not last long. Speedily the day comes; soon too the evening; and then it is night! The shadowy condition of the dead and the darkness of the grave awaits us all!

Though a man lives for years -- let him remember His Creator, before the dark days begin!

Ecclesiastes 12:2b-14 Remember the Creator before you get old, die, and face judgment! Jul. 17

'After the rain, the clouds return! The keepers of the house (or the arms) shall tremble.... The strong men (or the legs) shall bow themselves.... The grinders (or the teeth) cease, because they are few.... Those that look out of the windows (or the eyes) become darkened.... The doors (or the ears) shall be shut..., when the sound of the grinding (or the heart) is low.... Man goes..., and the mourners go about the streets.... Then the dust shall return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God Who gave it.... Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter -- fear God, and keep His Commandments!... For God shall bring every work into judgment!' Ecclesiastes 12:2b-14.

After youth's bright sun and light and moon or stars turn dark -- the clouds return! In old age, the arms and legs and teeth and eyes and ears and heart all weaken, before man goes forth in death.

The mourners then gather. The dust returns to the earth -- and the spirit returns to God Who gave it!

Calvin says in his *Institutes* I:15:2 of man that "when he was formed out of the dust of the ground..., God...not only deigned to animate a vessel of clay but...made it the habitation of an immortal spirit.... There can be no question that man consists of a body and a soul -- meaning by soul, an immortal though created essence.... Solomon, speaking of death, says that the spirit returns to God Who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7)."

Also in his *Psychopannychia*, Calvin says: "Solomon when describing man's death...makes a wide difference between the soul and the body. He says (Ecclesiastes 12:7)...: 'The dust returns to the earth whence it was, and the spirit returns to God Who gave it.... Let us therefore conclude with Solomon that...no one...who has heard the Word of the Lord have any doubt that the spirit of the children of Adam ascends upwards. By 'ascending upwards' (Ecclesiastes 3:21)..., I understand simply -- subsisting and retaining immortality. Just as 'descending downwards' seems to me to mean lapsing, falling, becoming lost."

So then, 'Fear God and keep His Commandments!' Here, an orthodox conclusion is given to the whole matter. A universal law of conduct is laid down. For the last words of the verse means 'This is every man's duty!'

'For God shall bring every work into judgment -- with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil!' Ecclesiastes ends after death, with the final judgment of every man. The object of the Final Judgment will be not just societies, but also persons.

This lies in the future, beyond the present time. And not without prophesying resurrection in an expanded glorified form as the religion of all humanity. Nobody can escape from it. Small and great, living and dead, shall all be judged according to their works! Every man goes there (Ecclesiastes 12:5). There is no escape (Ecclesiastes 12:14)! Are you ready?

"I AM -- the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys!"... (The bride replies:) "My Beloved spoke and said to me, 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away! For look, the winter has past; the rain is over and gone!'... My Beloved is mine, and I am His.... Until the Day breaks, and the shadows flee away!" Song of Songs 2:1-17.

Here, right at the start of chapter two, it is not easy to determine whether it is the Bridegroom or the bride speaking -- not easy to see whether the Bridegroom here addresses the bride, or the bride her Bridegroom. If it is the Bridegroom Who speaks, He commences by identifying Himself as Jehovah -- 'I AM!' This agrees with the common chorus interpretation: 'He's the Lily of the valley!'

First, He then calls Himself 'the Rose of Sharon' -- the meadow saffron, a kind of crocus or perhaps narcissus. I am 'the Rose of Sharon' is Christ presenting Himself to the delight of His bride. The 'Lily of the valleys' seems to be the bright red scarlet anemone, which then might have some reference to the colour of the Saviour's blood He would shed to purchase His bride. It is only through Christ that these symbols afford real joy to the soul. He would then go on to compare His bride to the lily among thorns whom He came to save.

The bride replies in verses eight to ten. 'My beloved..., He comes leaping upon the mountains!... He stands behind our wall! He looks forth at the windows!... My beloved spoke, and said to me, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away! For look, the winter has past -- the rain is over and gone!"

Here, the bride sees her Shepherd eagerly hastening to meet her. She now turns to relate a love-song that her Lover had sung to her. 'My beloved spoke and said to me, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away! For look, the winter has past; the rain is over and gone!"' When once Christ has embraced His loving bride, the rain is over -- and the winter has past forever!

After meeting His bride, the Bridegroom as it were said to her: 'Come on out! It's a beautiful day! Spring has come!'

When we start following Him, we realize He has gone away -- to His heavenly glory. Yet, in His heavenly absence, we keep reminding ourselves: 'My beloved is mine, and I am His!'

For how long? For ever! Right down till His second coming, and beyond! 'Until the Day breaks, and the shadows flee away!' While He has gone, the world for us is necessarily a place of some shadows. But when He comes again, the Day will break and the shadows shall flee away -- at our sunset, right before our final and everlasting sunrise!

Some blessed daybreak, Jesus shall come! Even so, come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20). Meanwhile, He feeds His earthly flock -- as both await that Day when all the shadows shall have gone forever! Till then -- I am His! Until that Day breaks, when all the shadows flee away!

'I have come..., my spouse!... The Voice...that knocks, says: "Open to Me..., my undefiled!".... (The bride replies:) "I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?!... Set me as a seal upon Your heart!... For love is (as) strong as death..., like the grave!.... Its coals, are coals of fire which have a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench (such) love, neither can the floods drown it!"' Song of Songs 5:1-3 & 8:6-7.

Calvin says in his *Institutes* III:16:4: "Justification...is gratuitous to us, but not also to Christ Who paid so dearly for it.... Our pollution is so great, that it can never be washed away, save in the fountain of His pure blood.... How can they [the members of His bride], after being once purified, avoid shuddering at the thought of again wallowing in the mire?... 'I have washed my feet' (says the believing soul in the Song of Solomon 5:3), 'how shall I [thereafter again] defile them?!'"

The bride is of those who have turned to God from idols, and who wait for His Son from Heaven. For the love she bare to Him, and for the infinitely greater love He bare to her, she is asked by Jesus to open the door of her heart to give Him entrance. She had already washed her feet, and was undefiled from the very moment she first trusted the One Who became her Bridegroom.

We are told that the love between this Bridegroom and His bride is as strong as death, and as hard as the grave. In other words, nothing either in life or death or even the grave can ever break that love. No misfortune can slay it. This is the high-water mark of all true and loyal devotion. It outlasts life, death, and the grave – and remains alive for all eternity.

That love keeps on burning like coals of fire which have a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench such love, nor can all the floods ever drown it!

The bride shall be upborne by the Bridegroom Who is alike her Prophet, Priest and King. For love is as strong as death. Ardent love remains as retentive as the grave. And the flashes of love are flashes of fire, a very flame from the Lord!

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. The love which grace has begotten in the heart of the bride, is itself divine and persistent. Many waters cannot quench it, nor the floods submerge it forever. Bereavement and loss may test its constancy, but they will not quench it. Death is strong, but love is stronger. For death cannot conquer love!

What or 'who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us!... Neither death nor life...nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!' (Romans 8:35-39). Nothing can ever quench His love for us who believe in Him! Such is the immortal and unquenchable seal of God's ardent love for His bride! Do you believe?

'In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw...the LORD sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it, stood the seraphims. Each one had six wings. With two he covered his face; and with two he covered his feet; and with two he did fly. And one cried out to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy -- is the Lord of hosts! The whole Earth is full of His glory!'
Isaiah 6:1-3.

Calvin comments: "'King Uzziah died'.... But...Isaiah...ought not to be thought...that he was so completely overpowered by this extraordinary vision, as to forget that he was a Prophet! For there was no feeling in him, which was not overpowered by the presence of God -- so that like one who had lost his senses, he willingly plunged himself in darkness...like one who despaired of life...(and) of his own accord chose to die.... Besides, it is probable that he had long performed the office of a Teacher under King Uzziah -- who...was dead before this prediction was published....

"I...take death in its literal sense.... Isaiah uttered the former predictions during the reign of Uzziah even after he had been struck with leprosy.... When he had died..., this vision was presented to Isaiah....

"I saw the Lord'.... How could Isaiah see God, Who is a Spirit (John 4:24) -- and therefore cannot be seen with bodily eyes?.... We ought to be aware that when God exhibited Himself to the view of the fathers, He never appeared such as He actually is -- but such as the capacity of men could receive....

"There is no absurdity in supposing that God comes down to them in such a manner as to cause some kind of mirror to reflect the rays of His glory.... He does not amuse us by unmeaning shapes -- as men wickedly disfigure Him by their contrivances! Since therefore that exhibition was no deceitful representation of the presence of God, Isaiah justly declares that he saw Him. In like manner...it is said that John saw the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove (John 1:32)...., yet he did not see the essence of the Spirit....

"Who was that LORD? John tells us that it was Christ (John 12:41f).... God never revealed Himself to the fathers but in His eternal Word and only-begotten Son.... It is correctly said that Isaiah saw the glory of Christ. For at that very time, He was the Image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15)....

"Holy, holy, holy -- is Jehovah of hosts!'... There are three Persons in one essence in the Godhead.... I have no doubt that the angels (or *seraphim* with their thrice-mentioned wings) here describe One God in Three Persons.... It is impossible to praise God without also uttering the praises of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit." Holy, holy, holy! Yes, thrice holy!

'The whole Earth is full of His glory!'.... The fruits and animals and manifold riches...; the ornaments and great variety of furniture in the world! Thus was the thrice-holy Jehovah seen!

"Then I said: "Woe is me!.... For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"... Then one of the seraphims flew to me, having a live coal in his hand..., and said: "Look, this has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away!"... I also heard the Voice of the Lord, saying: "Who shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said: "Here am I; send me!" And He said: "Go, and tell this people!... They shall return...like an oak whose substance is in them when they cast off their leaves. So, the holy seed shall be its substance!" Isaiah 6:5-13.

Calvin comments: "'Woe to me!'... The Prophet...was so terrified by seeing God, that he expected immediate destruction.... Jerome renders it, 'because I was silent'.... In the Scriptures, silence is often taken for death.... The Prophet therefore means that he was so terrified, as to resemble a dead man.... 'My eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts!'.... Death is within us. But we do not perceive it, unless when it is compared with the life of God!...

"Then flew one of the *seraphim* to me!" The Prophet shows what kind of relief was brought to him, when he was so terrified as to think that he was a dead man.... The angel..., bringing forward the sacred pledge [of a live coal] which he had received from God, laid it...on the lips of the Prophet....

"Afterward I heard the Voice of the Lord." The Prophet now begins to discourse about the design of this vision. Why did God appear to him with such glorious majesty?... It was because he was called to deliver an incredible message!...

"Who will go for Us?"... This passage points to Three Persons in the Godhead. Just as we elsewhere read, 'Let Us create man in Our likeness!' (Genesis 1:26). For God talks with Himself, and in the plural number.... Unquestionably, he (the Father) now hold a consultation with His eternal Wisdom and His eternal Power -- that is, with the Son and the Holy Spirit....

"Then He said, "Go and tell that people!"... 'And I said, "How long, O Lord?" And He answered, "Until the cities be wasted!... (But yet) it shall return!" That is, a change will take place for the better.... The destruction will not be complete, but such as happens to trees when their leaves fall off in the Winter and nothing appears but dead timber. But when Spring returns, they bud forth anew. And so, also will this people!"

"In it, shall be substance!"... Isaiah in this passage describes the restoration of the Church, by taking a metaphor from trees which wither at the end of Autumn but again blossom at the return of Spring and put forth new leaves. Which could not happen, did they not retain some vigour during the Winter -- though to outward appearance they were dead....

"The holy seed'...is that 'substance'.... He means the elect, who would be preserved by the free mercy of God.... For 'the holy seed is the substance' of the Church! The holy seed is solid, even when oaks shed their leaves!

'Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given! And the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting...Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His Kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever!' Isaiah 9:6-7.

Calvin comments: "'Unto us a Child is born'.... God will bring back the people from captivity.... He will place Christ on His royal throne....

"He is called the 'Son' of God.... 'Son' -- without any addition -- can mean none Else than 'the Son of God'..., now ascribed to Christ.... 'You are My Son!'...(Psalm 2:7).... The excellence of Christ exalts Him above all the angels (Hebrews 1:5).... Salvation, and that of the whole Church, is contained in the Person of Christ!...

"The government has been laid upon His shoulder'.... The Messiah...will be able to bear the burden.... By His Own power, Christ will obtain homage to Himself....

"His name shall be called...'Wonderful'.... The Prophet describes what Christ will show Himself to be, towards believers....

"The Prophet calls Him 'Counsellor'.... Because, proceeding from the bosom of the Father (John 1:18), He is in every respect the highest and most perfect Teacher....

"(He shall also be called) 'The mighty God'.... 'El is one of the names of God..., derived from 'Strength'.... Here, it is evidently a proper name.... If Christ had not been God -- it would have been unlawful to glory in Him.... We must therefore meet with the majesty of God in Him -- so that there truly dwells in Him that which cannot without sacrilege be attributed to a creature.... Christ...is 'God' Who is pleased to show Himself strong on our behalf."

He is 'The everlasting.' "It denotes eternity..., 'perpetual duration' or 'an endless succession of ages'.... The Prophet...even declares that Christ would come, in order to bestow immortality on His people.... Believers, even in this world, pass from death to life (John 5:24 and First John 3:14)....

"Christ is 'the Prince of Peace'.... His government is extended to every age, and is perpetual.... 'There will be no end to the government, or to peace'.... God...extends its boundaries far and wide, and then preserves and carries it forward in uninterrupted progression -- to eternity!...

"Christ's Kingdom is everlasting, because He dies no more (Romans 6:9).... Righteousness and judgment will be everlasting, for they cannot be changed by any length of time." For such -- is the unending increase of the government of the Saviour-Son!

Isaiah 24:5 & 25:4-8 Some of Earth's inhabitants saved, from transgressing the Covenant Jul. 23

'The Earth too is defiled, under its inhabitants -- because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting Covenant!... But You have been a strength...to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat when the blast of the terrible ones is like a storm.... You shall bring down the noise.... And on this mountain, the LORD of hosts shall make a feast for all people.... He will destroy...the veil...spread over all nations. He will swallow up death, in victory!' Isaiah 24:5 & 25:4-8.

Calvin comments: "The Earth also is defiled!... It is owing to our fault, that it does not nourish us or bring forth fruit -- as God appointed to be done by the regular order of nature.... We ought to attribute it, to our sins -- since we ourselves have reversed the order which God had appointed." Hosea 6:7.

"They have transgressed the laws.' He immediately assigns the reason why the Earth...deceives her inhabitants. It is because...it was...less excusable than all the transgressions of those who had never been taught.... 'They have broken the everlasting Covenant!...' He...charges them with ingratitude because, when the Lord revealed Himself by all these methods and gave proofs of His love -- they were disobedient and...'transgressed the laws' and 'broke the holy covenant'.... He calls it 'the covenant of eternity' or 'the everlasting covenant' because...perpetual and...in force in every age....

"But You have been a strength to the poor!' Hence we see the fruit of conversion -- namely, that the Lord raises us from the dead and brings us...out of the grave...to rescue us even from Hell.... Isaiah...says that God will be 'a strength to the poor, a refuge from the storms, and a shadow from the heat.'.... Whatever may be the nature of the dangers and assaults which threaten them, the Lord will protect His people against them!... '(You shall bring down...) the heat in a dry place'.... Wicked men will be consumed by God's indignation, in the same manner as the violence of the heat burns up the fields which are...barren...

'The LORD of hosts shall make (unto all people a feast)'..., to invite various nations to a banquet... He describes the Kingdom of Christ, and says that the poor and the rich will sit down at this feast.... All nations, which formerly were buried in every kind of error and superstition, are invited to this banquet.... 'He has destroyed death eternally!' He will swallow up death in victory!

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:9:6: "Once they have raised their head above all earthly objects..., they will turn their eye to that Day (Isaiah 25:8)...on which the Lord will receive His faithful servants...and...admit them to a participation in His happiness."

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "Such death as the soul endures, Christ underwent on our account.... His victory over death, He performed by His death.... Isaiah 25:8." Thus -- some of Earth's inhabitants are saved -- from transgressing the Covenant! Shall you be?

'Your dead men shall live! Together with my dead body, they shall arise! Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust! For your dew, is like the dew of herbs; and the Earth shall cast out the dead!... The LORD comes!... The Earth...shall no more cover her slain!' Isaiah 26:19-21.

Calvin comments: "God guards believers. They 'shall live' amidst death.... The reprobate, even while they live, are dead.... But believers, by fleeing to God, obtain life in the midst of afflictions and even in death itself.... Because they have in prospect, that day of the resurrection!..."

"Isaiah includes the whole reign of Christ.... We begin to receive the fruit of this consolation, when we are admitted into the Church. Yet we shall not enjoy it fully, till that last day of the resurrection has come...(Acts 3:21).... All who are ingrafted into Christ, are justly said to live -- in dying!... Out of the depths of death, they always come forth conquerors...."

"My dead body...shall arise!... The long-continued putrefaction...will not hinder the power of God from causing...to rise entire!... The Prophet...joins himself to the whole Church...in the number of 'God's dead men' -- in the hope of the resurrection.... He willingly ranks himself...with those...he firmly believes will be restored to life..., provided...accounted a member of the Church...."

"Wicked men...'shall not live!'... Isaiah does not speak merely of the resurrection, but of the happiness which believers will enjoy. Wicked men will indeed rise again..., to eternal destruction...."

"He gives the name 'inhabitants of the dust' to believers.... They enjoy God's blessings in this life.... God's elect..., whom the corruption of the grave and the 'habitation in the dust' will not deprive of that heavenly vigour by which they shall rise again.... The reprobate..., separated from God...and from Christ, fade away...while they live -- until they are...swallowed up by death...."

'(God tells His elect:) Your dew, is the dew of herbs!..' Herbs'.., dried up in winter..., appear to be wholly dead.... Yet...when they have imbibed the 'dew' at the return of spring, (they)...grow green again.... We also revive, when watered.... Why shall not our bodies, though dead and rotten, revive? Does not God take more care of us, than of herbs?... 'The Earth shall cast out the dead!'"

Calvin also says, in his *Institutes* II:10:21 & III:25:4,8: "'Your dead men shall live!... The Earth shall cast out the dead!'...(Isaiah 26:19-21).... None is truly persuaded of the future resurrection -- save he who, carried away with admiration, gives God the glory...(Isaiah 26:19).... 'The Lord comes!... The Earth also...shall no more cover her slain!' (Isaiah 26:21)."

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "There is...a rest!... The God of peace gives Himself to be seen by His peacemakers, according to the promise of Christ.... 'Your dead shall live; your slain shall rise again.... Awake and praise, you dwellers in the dust!'...(Isaiah 26:19)." For the dead arise and live -- when God's indignation has passed!

"This is the rest, with which you may cause the weary to rest!... Yet they would not hear!... Because you have said: 'We have made a covenant with death, and with Hell we are at agreement!'"... Therefore, thus says the Lord God...: "I lay in Zion for a Foundation -- a Stone!... I will also lay judgment to the line!... Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand!... For the Lord shall rise up!" Isaiah 28:12-21.

Calvin comments: "God testifies...assured rest.... (Here,) the Prophet corresponds nearly to the words of Christ: 'Come to Me..., and I will give you rest!' (Matthew 11:28)....

"You have said...: "We have struck a league with death, and with Hell we have made a compact!" This is what he means, by the league into which they had entered with death and the grave.... Whoever then flatters himself and his vices and fearlessly despises God's threatenings, declares that he has 'entered into a league with death.'" That is what Adam did, when he turned his life away from God -- to the devil his death!

But :Behold, (says God,) I lay in Zion -- a Stone!'... He calls it a 'Corner-Stone' -- because it supports the whole weight of the building.... He calls it a 'Foundation'.... On it alone must the whole Church and every part of it rest and be built (First Corinthians 3:11).... The Apostles and Evangelists show that this 'Stone' is Christ.... The salvation of men rests on Him alone.... Therefore, if Christ be taken away -- the Church would fall down and be ruined....

"Zion' is everywhere; for the Church has spread to the ends of the world.... 'I will lay judgment to the line.' The ruinous condition of the (Old Testament) Church being...that believers hardly ventured to hope that it would be improved, he shows that God had in His hand the ready means for forming the Church entirely anew.... (He) describes what will be the Reformation!...

"Your covenant with death shall be disannulled!'.... They had made a covenant with death... But the Lord immediately lays His hand on them.... 'Jehovah shall rise up!' By the words 'rise up' -- he points out the power of God.... He 'rises up' or stands erect, when He openly exhibits to us proofs of His power, and such as especially manifest the great care which He takes of His Church."

Calvin also say in his *Institutes* I:13:13: "If outside of God there is no salvation, no righteousness, no life -- Christ, having all these in Himself, is certainly God.... Paul (Romans 10:11)...interprets...Isaiah (28:16): 'Whosoever believes in Him, shall not be confounded!'... The name of Christ is invoked for salvation, and therefore it follows that He is Jehovah!"

Calvin further states in his *Psychopannychia*: "They (the wicked) think they are to reign without end; not looking to the end by which...they must go elsewhere! Of such persons, the Prophet also says (Isaiah 28:15): 'We have stipulated with death, and made a compact with Hell!'... He does not account as life, that which is to them the beginning of the worst death!" Yet saved man's covenant with death and the grave, shall not stand! Shall yours?

Isaiah 46:4 I will carry you from the womb to your old age when your hair is white! Jul. 26

'Hearken to Me..., all the remnant of the house of Israel which are borne by Me from the belly, which are carried from the womb!... Even to your old age -- I AM!... And even to hoar hairs (quite white), I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear! Even I will carry, and will deliver you!'
Isaiah 46:3-4.

Calvin comments: "The God of Israel...'carries' His people like a mother who carries the child in her womb, and afterwards carries it in her bosom.... They actually felt that He bore them....

"He therefore makes use of a highly appropriate contrast, and concludes from the preceding statements: 'Acknowledge that I am the true God!... For you have known and experienced My power by constant benefits which I have not ceased to confer upon you from the womb!'

"God compares Himself to a mother who carries a child in her womb. He speaks of the past time, when He began to give them testimonies of His grace.... God kindly nourished that people, like an infant taken from its mother's womb and carried...in His bosom....

"God did not only begin to act as the father and nurse of His people from the time when they were born, but also 'begat them' spiritually (James 1:18). I do not object to extending the words so far as to mean that they were brought as it were out of the bowels of God into a new life and the hope of an eternal inheritance....

"God, from the time that He begat them, gently carried and nourished them in His bosom.... God, Who has manifested Himself to be both their Father and their 'Mother' -- will always assist them....

"He demands from them a hearing!... God bids them consider how wonderfully they have hitherto been preserved, so that they may not doubt that He will henceforth act towards them as He has hitherto acted the part of both father and mother...'even to old age!'

"He argues thus: 'I have begotten and brought you forth.... Even when you were little children, I carried you in My arms. And therefore, I will be the guardian of your life till the end!'

"He therefore promises that He will always be a Father.... We ought to cherish assured confidence of salvation from the time that the Lord has once begun it in us. For He wishes to continue His work, till the end....

"I AM -- the same!... Even to old age!... I have made, and will carry!... You did create us not only so that we might be human beings, but so that we might be Your children. And therefore You will continue till the end to exercise continually toward us the care of a father and of a mother!" For I will carry you from the womb -- even to your old age, when your hair is white! You too?

'Look to Abraham...and to Sarah that bore you!... The LORD shall comfort Zion.... I will make My judgment to rest for a light of the people!... My salvation has gone forth!... Look!... Heaven shall vanish away like smoke; and the Earth shall become old like a garment; and they that dwell there shall die in like manner. But My salvation shall be for ever!' Isaiah 51:2-6.

Calvin comments: "Their father Abraham...grew to a vast number.... God, Who in so short a period had multiplied their fathers, would in future multiply them also.... 'I called him'...to dwell in the land of Canaan, without children, up to a worn-out old age -- so that he had no hope of having children.... Yet the Lord increased and enriched him with a great number of children!...

"To us...in the present day, amidst this distracted condition of the Church, it is highly necessary that we...not be discouraged.... We may hope that God will increase His Church by unexpected methods.... The Lord increased even to extreme old age the posterity of Abraham who was childless and solitary.... The Lord suddenly produced from one man so numerous an offspring! So He will also people His Church by wonderful and unknown methods -- and not only once, but whenever she shall be thought to be childless and solitary....

"Paul, after having spoken of the faith of Abraham and praised his excellence, applies that doctrine to each of us.... 'He believed, in hope -- against hope!... His mind was not driven hither and thither.... He was fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was able also to perform -- though it appeared to be incredible and at variance with all reason' (Romans 4:18-21).... 'For the Law shall go forth from Me!'.... This will be 'for a light of the peoples.' Because, when God begins to reign, miserable men are rescued from darkness, and enlightened by the doctrine of the Word....

"Lift up your eyes toward Heaven...and look upon the Earth beneath!... Though Heaven and Earth hasten to decay, it is impossible that the Church shall fail -- the stability of which is founded on God. As if He had said: 'A thousand times rather shall Heaven mingle with the Earth -- than the promise on which your salvation rests, shall fail of its accomplishment!'

"My salvation shall endure for ever!... 'The Heavens shall become old and vanish away. But You, Lord, are always the same -- and Your years are not changed' (Psalm 102:26-27).... The grace of God which He displays in the preservation of His Church, surpasses all His other works. Everything that is contained in Heaven and Earth is frail and fading. But God's salvation by which He guards the Church, is eternal -- and therefore cannot be liable to these dangers!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:10:15: "Notwithstanding...the destruction of the Heavens and the Earth, the godly cease not to be established before God.... Their salvation is connected with His eternity.... 'The Heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the Earth shall become old ..., and they that dwell therein shall die.... But My salvation shall be for ever...(Isaiah 51:6).... Perpetuity is here attributed to righteousness and salvation...as they are experienced by men!" The dead and even Heaven shall vanish away like smoke; but My salvation shall be for ever! Is that your belief?

'He shall grow up...like a root out of dry ground.... He was despised and rejected by men..., and we did not esteem Him.... He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows.... He was wounded for our transgressions.... The chastisement of our peace, was upon Him; and with His stripes, we are healed!... The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.... He was cut off, out of the land of the living.... He made His grave with the wicked.... It pleased the LORD to bruise Him.... When His soul was made an offering for sin, He would see His seed.... Therefore, I will divide Him a portion with the great!' Isaiah 53:2-12.

Calvin comments: "'He shall grow up...like a root out of dry ground'.... Christ will at first have no magnificence or outward display among men.... Christ's power of springing up will not be derived from the sap of the earth as in trees, but contrary to the ordinary course of nature....

"'He was despised and rejected by men'.... In order to know His glory, we must proceed from His death to His resurrection!... ('He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows'). Christ...carried our sicknesses.... We thought Him to be smitten, wounded by God, and afflicted.... He was wounded for our iniquities.... All offence is removed, when we know that by His death our sins have been expiated and salvation has been obtained for us!...

"(' With His stripes, we are healed!') In us, nothing can be found but destruction and death. In Christ alone is life.... He alone brought medicine to us, and even procures...life by His death.... Our sins are a heavy load; but they are laid on Christ, by Whom we are freed from the load.... We were ruined, and...were hastening to Hell. Christ took upon Him the filthiness of our iniquities, in order to rescue us from everlasting destruction....

"The Prophet...declares that He was 'taken away'.... 'He was cut off'.... The death of Christ is the cause and source of our life.... ('He made His grave with the wicked.') God the Father delivered Christ into the hands of wicked men.... 'Jehovah was pleased to bruise Him'.... In Christ there was no fault. Why, then, was the Lord pleased that He should suffer? Because He stood in our place, and in no other way than by His death could the justice of God be satisfied!...

"'He shall see His seed'!.... Christ's death...will be the cause of His having offspring!... Quickening the dead, He will procure a people...whom He will afterwards multiply.... 'He shall prolong His days'!.... Christ shall not be hindered by His death...from living eternally!...

"Therefore I will divide Him a portion (with the great)!... The victory which Christ obtained by His death!.... Christ, as a valiant and illustrious general, triumphed!... A triumphal procession...after having obtained a signal victory!... And adorned with great pomp and splendour!"

Calvin also has some ten similar references to Isaiah 53 in his *Institutes*. And three in his *Treatises*, including the following: "God laid our iniquities upon Him, so that He might bear our sins in His Own body, nailing them to the tree." And thereafter, God exalted His suffering Servant!

'I create new Heavens and a new Earth!... There shall be no more...an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his days!... The child shall die 100 years old!... As the days of a tree are the days of my people.... My elect shall long enjoy their hands' work!' Isaiah 65:17-22.

Calvin comments: "God had...both the inclination and the power not only to restore His Church, but to restore it in such a manner that it shall appear to gain new life and to dwell in a new world.... The greatness of such a blessing, which was to be manifested at the coming of Christ, could not be described in any other way.

"Nor does he mean only the first coming, but the whole reign -- which must be extended as far as to the last coming.... The Prophet has in his eye the whole reign of Christ down to its final close, which is also called 'the day of renovation and restoration' (Acts 3:21)....

"There shall be no more...an infant of days!... The Gospel leads us on to mature age.... There will no longer be any distinction of age. Because, where life is eternal, no line is drawn between the child and the old man....

"Whether they are children or old men, they shall arrive at mature age so as always to be vigorous.... They shall always be healthful and robust.... Christ comes to repair our strength, and to restore and preserve our original condition....

"The son of a hundred years, shall die young!.... No one shall be taken out of the world, till he has reached mature age.... Even in old age, they shall be robust....

"If Christ reigned truly and perfectly in us, His strength would undoubtedly flourish in us and would invigorate both body and soul. To our sins therefore it ought to be imputed that we are liable to diseases, pains, old age, and other inconveniences....

We do not permit Christ to possess us fully, and have not advanced so far in newness of life as to lay aside all that is old.... To the Church which has been renewed, and which rests on nothing but God's good pleasure and undeserved favour -- is justly promised the enjoyment of those blessings of which unbelievers had deprived themselves....

(As the days of a tree are the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands! Trees have a long life.) This is a promise of eternal life.... You shall not be removed from this life, before receiving the fruit which shall be enjoyed not only by yourselves but by your children and posterity!...

"This peaceful condition shall last, as long as the life of a tree.... Parents together with their offspring shall be free from dread.... Because they shall be convinced that they shall always be safe and sound, through the favour of God!" No more weeping, when children shall die at age 100!

"As the new Heavens and the new Earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "so shall your seed and your name remain!... It shall come to pass that from one new moon to another and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me".... The men that have transgressed against Me..., their worm shall not die -- neither shall their fire be quenched!" Isaiah 66:22-24.

The Prophet here thinks of the future Church being upon a new Earth and under a new Heaven. But he cannot conceive of the eternal, in the form of eternity! So he conceives of it as the endless continuance of the history of time. The Prophet is speaking of the future state, in figures drawn from the present world. He depicts both this life and the life to come, as an endless extension of life. The self-sacrifice of Jehovah-Jesus lays the foundation for a new Heaven and a new Earth!

Calvin comments: "He speaks of 'new Heavens' and a 'new Earth'.... He looks to...Christ, by Whom all things have been renewed.... The Church may always continue to be prosperous and happy. What is old, tends to decay; what is restored and renewed, must be of longer continuance....

"God has promised...the sun and moon, so long as they remained in the sky, should be witnesses of the eternal succession -- so that the posterity of David might not be cut off.... As God will establish the world so that it may never perish..., the Church shall be perpetual -- so that it may be prolonged through all ages.... They extend as far as to that (Last) Judgment!...

"Under the reign of Christ, there shall be a constant and uninterrupted solemnity.... There is...here a contrast between the Sabbath...which was celebrated under the Law, and the perpetual Sabbath which we have at the present day (Hebrews 4:9-10)" -- and Hebrews 4:11-14!

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:8:30 & II:10:22: "The Lord intends that the Sabbath never should be completed before the arrival of the Last Day. We here begin our blessed rest in Him, and daily make new progress in it.... It shall not be consummated until the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah (66:23). In other words, when God shall be 'all in all' (First Corinthians 15:28)....

"The passages...are several -- which point...to the future immortality.... One is in Isaiah (66:22-23): 'As the new Heavens and the new Earth which I will make, shall remain before Me,' says the Lord -- 'so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another and from one sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me.'"

Calvin also says in his *Treatises* III:195: "Man..., so long as nature...continues and is not renewed by grace..., crowns the original sin...from his parents.... If he dies in this...condition, being...thrown into Hell by the just judgment of God -- he there suffers eternal punishment.... As...written by Isaiah (66:24), neither is his fire extinguished -- nor does his worm die!"

Yet God certainly assures His children: 'You and your seed shall remain on the new Earth!'

"Behold, the days come," says the LORD, "that I will make a New Covenant!... This shall be the Covenant that I will make.... After those days," says the LORD, "I will put My Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts.... And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.... And I will remember their sin no more!" Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Calvin comments: "This passage necessarily refers to the Kingdom of Christ. For without Christ, nothing could or ought to have been hoped for by the people superior to the Law (Romans 11:27 and Hebrews 8:8-10 & 10:16).... The 'New Covenant'...is not so called because it is contrary to the first Covenant. For God is never inconsistent with Himself.... He, then, Who once made a Covenant..., has not changed His purpose.... The first Covenant was inviolable [Hosea 6:7]....

"He already made His Covenant with Abraham; and the Law was a confirmation of that Covenant.... God could never make a...contrary...Covenant.... Whence do we derive our hope of salvation, except from that blessed Seed promised to Abraham?... The Covenant which God made at first, is perpetual.... God in the Gospel brings forward nothing but what the Law contains....

"The fathers who formerly were regenerated, obtained this favour through Christ.... The power then to penetrate into the heart, was not inherent in the Law -- but it was a benefit transferred to the Law from the Gospel.... God does not here say, 'I will give you another Law!'; but 'I will write My Law (in the heart)!' That is the same Law which had formerly been delivered to the fathers.... To write the Law in the heart imports nothing less than so to form it so that the Law should rule there!...

"I will forgive their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more!" The Prophet...shows here...God's kindness..., that He would receive the people into favour by not imputing to them their sins.... The Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews...dwells on the word 'more'.... Under the New Testament, He remembers them (our sins) no more!... We have been so expiated by the blood of Christ and so reconciled to God, that confidence as to our salvation ought to give us an entire rest!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:5:9 & II:11:7: "Nor can any cavil evade the declaration in Jeremiah (31:32), that the Covenant which God made...was broken.... To make it effectual, it was necessary for the Spirit to interpose and train the heart to obedience.... The Apostle took occasion to institute a comparison between the Law and the Gospel, calling the one a doctrine of the letter; the other a doctrine of the Spirit -- describing the one as formed on tables of stone; the other on tables of the heart."

Calvin further says in his *Treatises* III:224: "Christ...had not come to destroy the Law (Matthew 5:17)...., but rather to fulfil it -- on bringing into the world His new Law of which He had already given a promise by Jeremiah (31). So that He might not leave it alone, maimed or imperfect in this respect!" For the days when the Lord would make a New Covenant by putting precisely His Law -- in the heart! Is God's Law in your heart?

'I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath! He has led me and brought me...not into light! Surely, He has turned against me! He turns his hand against me, all the day! My flesh and my skin, He has made old! He has broken my bones!... He has set me in dark places, like they that are dead!' Lamentations 3:1-6.

Calvin comments: "This chapter...is full of rich instruction.... The Prophet...says that he was...a man who saw affliction. This mode of speaking, we know, is common in Scripture -- to see...good and evil -- to see life and death....

"He shows the cause or the manner of his affliction -- for he had been led into darkness, and not into light.... There was not even a spark of light in that darkness, it being so thick and obscure.

"Surely, against me He has turned!... Now he says that God is an adversary to him!... 'He turns,' he says, 'against me His hand daily' -- or all the day!... 'My flesh and my skin, He has made old! He has broken my bones!... Illness often makes people to look old. For from pain, proceeds leanness. Thus the skin is contracted, and the wrinkles of old age appear.... Hence he is said to grow old, who pines away in mourning. This is what the Prophet now means. 'God,' he says, 'has made my flesh and my skin to grow old' -- that is, He has worn me out, within and without, so that I am almost wasted away!

"He then adds, 'He has broken my bones'.... David says at one time, that his bones wasted away; at another, that they were broken; and at another, that they were reduced to ashes.... The Prophet...did not only regard outward calamities as the evidence of God's vengeance.... This then was the reason why the Prophet said that God had broken his bones....

"He has set me in dark places, like they that are dead'.... In darkness. Not so that he might be there for a little while, but remain there for a long time.... The comparison which follows..., clearly explains the Prophet's meaning -- 'as the dead of ages'.... The Scripture elsewhere calls those 'the dead of ages' who have long been buried and have decayed, and whose memory has become nearly extinct.... When it is reduced to ashes; when no bone appears; when the whole skin and nerves and blood have perished and no likeness to man remains -- there can then be no hope of life. The Scripture then calls those 'the dead of ages' who have wholly decayed.... The Prophet...dwelt there, as though he had been long dead and his body had now become putrid....

"Grant, Almighty God, that...we may...patiently submit to all Your scourges, and in a humble and meek spirit permit ourselves to be chastised, as we deserve!... May we not meanwhile cease to call on You!... However slowly You may seem to hear our prayers, may we yet persevere continually to the end -- until at length we shall really find that salvation is not promised in vain to all those who in sincerity of heart call on You. Through Christ our Lord. Amen!"

We have affliction and aging, in flesh and skin and bones! Let us then call on the Lord!

I said: "My strength and my hope has perished, from the LORD" -- remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall! My soul still has them in remembrance -- and is humbled in me.... I have hope! It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions do not fail! They are new every morning! Great is Your faithfulness!
Lamentations 3:18-23.

Calvin comments: "The Prophet does not here speak as though he was divested of every sin.... But, on the contrary, in order to animate the faithful to seek God -- he sets before them here an instance of infirmity which everyone finds true as to himself....

"It is evident that his faith was not slightly shaken, but had wholly failed.... The Prophet was then fully persuaded that he was forsaken by God.... Faith is sometimes so stifled, that even the children of God think that they are lost -- and that it is all over with their salvation....

"The Prophet also expressly reminded the faithful that they ought not to despair -- though despair laid hold of their minds, or though the devil tempted them to despair..... They ought then especially to struggle against it.... The faithful ought not to faint, even...when it seems to be all over for them, and no hope remains.... They ought nevertheless to go on hoping....

"The faithful are not free from despair.... Yet there is no reason why they should indulge despair!.... They ought courageously and firmly to resist it!... The Prophet...meant that he was as if were overwhelmed, for a short time.... The remedy is immediately to flee to God, and to complain of this misery -- so that He may succour and raise up those who thus have fallen....

"The Prophet now shows...: 'I will hope!'... He would recall this to mind. He says that he would then have new ground of hope..., when he had recourse to God.... He who is conscious of his own infirmity and directs his prayer to God -- will at length find a ground of hope!'... So hope will then arise, and aid us!... God bring light out of darkness, when He restores His faithful people from despair to a good hope!...

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not!'... It ought to be ascribed to God's mercy that the faithful have not often been consumed.... The 'mercies of God were not consumed, and...His compassion had not failed.... They are new every morning! Great is Your faithfulness!'... They were 'new' -- or renewed every day!...

"Grant, Almighty God..., O grant that we may be sustained by Your invincible power!... When You would humble us, may we loathe ourselves on account of our sins, and thus perseveringly contend -- until, having gained the victory, we shall give You the glory for Your perpetual aid in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen!"

We are not consumed, because of God's great faithfulness! Is that too your belief?

'The Lord will not cast off for ever!... Though He causes grief, yet He will have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies! For He does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men, to crush under His feet all the prisoners of the Earth!' Lamentations 3:31-34.

Calvin comments: "The Lord will not cast off for ever!"... There will be no patience, except there be hope!... As then patience cherishes hope, so hope is the foundation of patience....

"This is the doctrine which the Prophet now handles -- that the faithful bear the yoke with meek and calm minds.... The faithful are persuaded that all adversities are temporary, and that there will be a happy end -- because God will...be reconciled to them!...

"'Though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion -- according to the multitude of His mercies'.... God has promised this to His Own Church.... All things turn out for good and for salvation to the children of God, when they embrace this truth.... They restrain themselves and do not despond; nor are they overwhelmed with despair....

"God...will again show us compassion, even 'according to the multitude of His mercies!'... The Prophet...set before them...(God's) mercies, in the plural!... It could not be that God should deny Himself.... Thus, He would always be merciful to His people.... Otherwise, His mercy would be obliterated.... That mercy which is inseparable from His eternal essence and divinity....

"We shall never lose the hope of salvation!.... 'For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve'.... God takes no delight in the evils or miseries of men.... God does 'not afflict -- from His heart!'... If a father desires to benefit his own children and deals kindly with them -- what ought we to think of our heavenly Father?... God never punishes men, except when He is constrained.... The Prophet here addresses only the faithful.... This privilege peculiarly belongs to God's children (alone)!...

"Grant, Almighty God, that as it is expedient for us to be daily chastised by Your hand -- we may willingly submit to You and not doubt but that You will be faithful and not (re)prove us with too much rigour! But that You will consider our weakness, so that we may thus calmly bear all Your chastisements -- until we shall at length enjoy that perfect blessedness which is now hidden to us under hope...until Christ Your Son shall reveal it at His coming!...

"As we are at this day tossed here and there by so many troubles, and almost all things in the world are in confusion so that wherever we turn our eyes nothing but thick darkness meets us -- O grant that we may learn to surmount all obstacles and to raise our eyes by faith about the world, so that we may acknowledge that...we may seek You and know that help will be ready for us through Your mercy whenever we humbly seek the pardon of our sins through Christ Jesus our Lord!"

The Lord will not cut us off for ever, but show compassion! To you too?

'None of all the trees by the waters, exalt themselves for their height; neither do they shoot up their tops among the thick boughs; neither do their trees stand up in their height.... For they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the Earth in the midst of the children of men that go down with them to the pit. Thus says the Lord GOD: "In the day when he went down to the grave..., I caused Lebanon to mourn for him.... I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to Hell with them that descend into the pit!"' Ezekiel 31:14-16.

Here, God is speaking about Pharaoh king of Egypt (Ezekiel 31:2). But, by implication, also about all other ungodly men.

Egypt had always boasted in her greatness. There were formerly at least fifteen ptolemies. The wide-branched cedar, was a striking image of Egypt with her equally wide-branched net of streams.

In order to cause Egypt to see her pride, Ezekiel likened her to the great Assyria which God has brought down somewhat earlier. The downfall of Pharaoh is a chastisement of his pride -- and a warning. It is not merely pride of heart because of the height. It is the height itself, the shooting up of their tops among the clouds, aspiring to a greatness belonging only to Heaven -- that is sin.

The divine judgment which has come upon Egypt, grasps deeply into life. The cedars lived from water. Now that they had fallen, there was mourning. The cedars (Ezekiel 31:8) stood on the Lebanon, in the land of cedars! Their fall is an irrecoverable loss to the Lebanon. It is no wonder that the nations fear and tremble. For now that the strongest fall, what shall the lot of the weaker ones be? Thus even Pharaoh, that mightiest of the cedars, descends into the pit!

Yet mighty Egypt was not the Creator! She only existed among other lofty creatures. Egypt would die. She would go down to the place of the dead where other nations too had descended. Egypt should have learned from the downfall of Assyria. But she did not.

All die, the wise as well as the foolish and the brutish. The 'mighty ones' have no privilege over common men, in that respect. The deep which had nourished the great cedar, was covered with mourning and paralysed by his fall.

Is it not so, that all the high trees -- all the rulers, are mortal? Divested of all glory and power, they must soon take their place among the ordinary men -- above whom they presently see themselves so much elevated during life. But soon, they too will find their place in the grave!

'(I cast him down) to Hell, into the pit' -- to Sh^eool, with them that have gone down to the pit!
The nations living on the Earth, shake with terror at the noise of his fall!

God casts ungodly men down into the grave! But God also resurrects -- the godly! And you?

'When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people...take a man...and set him for their watchmen -- if when he sees the sword coming..., he blows the trumpet and warns the people -- then, whosoever hears the sound and the trumpet and does not take warning..., his blood shall be upon his own head!... If our...sins be upon us and we pine away in them, how should we then live?... The Lord GOD says: "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live!... Turn from your evil ways!... Why will you die?"' Ezekiel 33:2-11.

God was reminding Egypt that though Jerusalem had fallen, God had not yet finished. The announcement of the judgment upon Egypt, was delivered to the exiles about six months later. The exiles in Babylon were very concerned. So God now answered their cry.

Why had Assyria, Elam, Meshek, Tubal, Edom, Sidon and Egypt all gone down to the grave? Each of them had caused terror in the land of the living. So Jehovah now sets His terror on Earth!

Shall we keep on wasting away in our sins? This includes especially our physical wasting away, ending in complete dissolution. He who hears the trumpet and does not take warning -- his blood shall be on his own head. He is responsible for his own death.

'Turn from your evil ways!' This is Jehovah's answer to the people's despondency about their life. These verses must be estimated from the point of view of the people's despair.

God's desire is, that men should live! The past, is not irrevocable. God will judge them, not according to what men have been -- but according to what they shall become.

As long as Jerusalem stood, the Prophet had to speak of its then-coming demise. Now that this became a reality and its report had now reached the exiles -- he had to speak of regeneration and rebuilding. This fact proves that the Lord's mercy would again triumph against His judgment.

Ezekiel was to do nothing else than listen, and warn! If he did not do that -- then, from his own hand would the blood be demanded of those who would have met death without being warned.

That was then the moment when the Lord intervened. New vital grace streamed through the exiles, and would be a commencement of the regeneration of the people. The demise of the city and its temple would help bring this about. For this would place before the people that the wages of sin is death -- and that whoever wishes to live, must let go of unrighteousness.

The Lord wants life, not death! Whenever He brings death, that only occurs because the life which proceeds from Him is resisted and rejected. What He wants, is conversion -- *i.e.* repentance, turning round, and the going back to Him of all those that walked in their own bad ways.

God desires that the wicked repent, and not die in their sins! Have you yet repented?

"The LORD...carried me out...and set me down in...the valley...full of bones.... He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?... Behold, I will cause Breath (or Spirit) to enter into you, and you shall live!"... So, I prophesied, as I was commanded.... And the Spirit came into them, and they lived!... Thus says the Lord GOD: "O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up..., and shall put My Spirit in you -- and you shall live!"" Ezekiel 37:1-14.

This is a view of resurrection from the dead! Buried folk are here brought up alive, out of their graves. Cf. Job 14:13 & 19:25-27 and Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2-4.

The Lord of spirits, the Source and origin of all motorist powers revealed in creation, shall cause a motorist vital power or spirit to go into their dead bones. He shall here recreate through His Own 'vital breath' which filled the entire cosmos as His Brooding Spirit in Genesis 1:2; which fills all living creatures in Psalm 104:29-30; and which made man a 'living soul' in Genesis 2:7. Thus, God's Spirit and Word similarly work in Ezekiel 37:5-14 -- when the Lord would bring forth His people out of their graves!

The Breath in Ezekiel 37:14 needed to bring life into the vast multitude here being resurrected, must be furnished by the Spirit coming from Heaven. What is needed to make living men out of them, is God's Breath in their nostrils. That which God Himself did to the first individual man when created (Genesis 2:7), is here accomplished by the universal life-giving Spirit of God. Throughout, it is the Breath or Spirit of God Who brings life back to those who are dead (Ezekiel 37:5,6,8,9,10,14).

The symbol of the wind breathing into the slain, is here explained. It is the Spirit of Jehovah Who gives life (Psalm 104:30). The Spirit of the Lord is here the life-giving Spirit and the regenerating Spirit -- as in Ezekiel 36:27 & 37:14.

The hope that exists, is hope only in Jehovah. Jehovah is the true and living God, and there is none other. The work of redemption, is the work of Jehovah. Here, His restoration -- is reanimation of the dead through His life-giving Spirit!

Calvin says in his *Institutes* II:6:3: "After discoursing...(on) this wondrous renovation, He says: 'David My servant shall be king!... And they shall all have one Shepherd!'...(Ezekiel 37:24-26).

Calvin also says in his *Psychopannychia*: "It is not...difficult to refute their (the soulsleep Anabaptists') objection, taken from Ezekiel 37:9 where the Prophet...calls the Spirit...to breathe upon the dry bones.... They think themselves entitled to infer that the soul of man is nothing else than the power...of motion without substance -- a power...which may become evanescent at death.... But...it is easy to give the solution.... Ezekiel wished to give a distinct...bodily representation!"

God is to open the graves -- and put His Spirit into dead people! Do you too so believe?

'The Ancient of days did sit Whose garment was white as snow and the hair of His head like the pure wool.... I saw...One like the Son of man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of days.... There was given Him dominion and glory and a Kingdom -- so that all people, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away!' Daniel 7:9-14.

Calvin comments: "This form of speech was very appropriate for denoting the coming of Christ. For God chiefly then displayed His supreme power..., (when) Paul cites a passage from...Psalm...68:8 in Ephesians 4:8, 'You have ascended on high!'.... The subject treated is the first coming of Christ. It ought not to be restricted to the thirty-three years of His sojourn in the world, but it embraces His Ascension and that preaching of the Gospel which ushered in His Kingdom....

"Daniel appropriately relates how God was seated, when the first advent of Christ is depicted.... The majesty of God shone in the Person of Christ.... 'The Ancient of days,' therefore, 'was seated'.... His raiment was white like snow: the hair of His head was like pure wool.... God appeared 'with a white garment' -- which is characteristic of Heaven....

"After Daniel had narrated how he saw God on the throne of judgment..., he now adds the second part of the vision. As it were 'the Son of man appeared in the clouds' (Acts 1:11)... It afterwards follows, 'He came to the Ancient of days'.... This, in my judgment, ought to be explained of Christ's Ascension. For He then commenced His reign.... He really appeared...'in the clouds'.... When He ascended to Heaven, He...put on a new life....

"He now 'arrives at the Ancient of days.' That is, when He ascended to Heaven." Christ then came not from the Ancient of days (as He shall do at His second coming). But He then 'came to the Ancient of Days' (as He did after His Resurrection and at His Ascension). "Christ came as the Son of man...'to the Ancient of days'!... He ascended into Heaven....

"Christ truly ascended into Heaven (Matthew 28:18). Yet we ought clearly to weigh the purpose of His doing so.... Christ left the world and ascended to the Father. First, to subdue all powers to Himself.... Next, to restrain the devil -- and to protect and preserve the Church....

"The Prophet adds, 'power was given to Him'.... It was given to Him as Mediator...with respect to His human nature.... For this reason, therefore, 'all power, honour and kingdom' was given to Christ....; so that all nations, people and tongues should serve Him....

"The events which the Prophet here narrates, are not yet complete.... He does not here speak of the Last Judgment, but is only teaching us the object of His Ascension into Heaven.... But when the Prophet says Christ's dominion is eternal, he doubtless signifies the constant endurance of His Monarchy -- even to the end of the world!" For the Kingdom of the Son shall never be destroyed!

'Messiah shall be cut off -- but not for Himself!... And He shall confirm the covenant with many, for one week. And in the midst of the week, He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease! For the overspreading of abominations, He shall make it desolate -- even until the consummation, and that which is determined shall be poured upon the desolate.' Daniel 9:26-27.

Calvin comments: "Daniel treats of the..weeks which elapsed between the sixth year of Darius, and the baptism of Christ when the Gospel began.... Christ would then be manifested to undertake the government of His people. Then, the angel here asserts, Christ would die....

"The leader of the coming people shall destroy the city and the sanctuary'.... Although the Roman army which would destroy the city and sanctuary did not immediately appear, yet the Prophet assures them of the arrival of a leader with an army which would occasion the destruction of both the city and the sanctuary.... Titus...would overthrow the city and national polity, and utterly put an end to the priesthood and the race [in 70 A.D.]....

"God's covenant is established with us. Because we have once been reconciled by the death of Christ.... At the same time, the effect of the Holy Spirit is added -- because God inscribes the Law upon our hearts....

"Christ is correctly said 'to have confirmed the covenant with many'.... Christ is said not only to have renewed God's covenant with a single nation, but generally with the world at large....

"While Christ passed through the period of His life on Earth, He did not put an end to the sacrifices. But after He had offered Himself up as a victim, then all the rites...came to a close.... God testified by His Prophet the cessation of sacrifices after Christ's resurrection....

"We are now treating of a profanation of the temple.... Without the slightest doubt, this prophecy was fulfilled when the city was captured and overthrown and the temple utterly destroyed by Titus the son of Vespasian....

"The passages marks...the change which took place...after Christ's resurrection.... After the grace of Christ had obstinately been rejected (by Judaists), the 'extension of abomination' followed. That is, God overwhelmed the temple...and caused its sanctity and glory to pass away utterly....

"Grant, Almighty God, since...Your Only-begotten Son appeared..., that we may not deprive ourselves of such important blessings by our ingratitude! May we embrace Your Son with true faith, and enjoy the benefit of the redemption which He has procured for us! Being cleansed and purged by His blood, may we be acceptable in Your sight and venture with full and certain confidence to call You 'Father!'"

For the Messiah was cut off -- but not for Himself! For you too?

'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the Earth, shall awake -- some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.... They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars -- for ever!' Daniel 12:2-3.

Calvin comments that God "regenerates His elect by His Holy Spirit.... God, when regenerating us by His Spirit..., is able to acknowledge us as His real children....

"Many who sleep in the earth of dust, or who are in earth and dust, (shall awake).... Though it may be read as if in opposition with the former word 'sleep' -- meaning, those who are reduced to earth and dust.

"The angel seems here to mark a transition from the commencement of the preaching of the Gospel, to the final day of the resurrection.... He unites these two subjects very fitly and properly, connecting the salvation of the Church with the final resurrection and with the second coming of Christ... The word 'many' seems here clearly put for 'all'....

"Some shall rise to life, and others to disgrace and contempt'.... This shows the angel to be treating of the last resurrection, which is common to all and allows of no exceptions.... Our minds must necessarily be raised upwards -- and gain the victory!...

"Those who sleep in the Earth and the dust'...shall rise -- implying the hope of a resurrection not founded on natural causes but depending upon the inestimable power of God which surpasses all our senses. Hence, although the elect as well as the wicked shall be reduced to earth and dust -- this shall by no means form an obstacle to God's raising them up again....

"Although they are only putrid carcases, yet they shall be reduced to dust.... God, then, is endued with sufficient power to call forth the dead to newness of life.... The Prophets do not contain any clearer testimony than this, to the last resurrection -- particularly as the angel distinctly asserts the future rising again of both the righteous and the wicked.... Eternal life awaits the elect; and eternal disgrace and condemnation will be the lot of the ungodly!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:10:22 & III:25:7,10: "There are (passages)...which point without any veil to the future immortality which awaits believers in the Kingdom of Heaven... 'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake -- some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt' (Daniel 12:1-2).... There is no ambiguity in the words of Daniel..., since he...calls forth the dead from their graves.... The renewal produced by Christ, must be in the same body which began to be mortal.... Daniel (12:3) says 'They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars -- for ever!'... The Scriptures...not only...promise eternal life to believers, but a special reward to each!"

So then, there is resurrection from the dust -- unto everlasting life, or death! For you too!

'And He said: "Go your way, Daniel! For the words are...sealed till the time of the end.... From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be 1290 days. Blessed is he that waits, and comes to the 1335 days!... Go on your way, till the end be! For you shall rest, and stand up in your lot at the end of the days!'"
Daniel 12:9-13.

Calvin comments that Daniel "says 'the words were closed up and sealed'.... The full blaze of light has not yet been thrown upon the prediction.... He then says, 'until the time of the end'....

"For what purpose was this prediction delivered?... Remember that neither Daniel nor the rest of the faithful were deprived...of this prophecy. For God explained to them whatever was sufficient for the necessities of their own time....

'From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be 1290 days'.... The time now treated by the angel, begins at the last destruction of the temple (in 70 A.D.). That devastation happened, as soon as the Gospel began to be promulgated....

"I have no hesitation in referring this language...to the profanation of the temple which happened after the manifestation of Christ -- when sacrifices ceased, and the shadows of the Law were abolished.... From that period, 'there shall be 1290 days'.... The angel then purposely puts days for years (till Wycliffe in 1360 A.D. [and after that for another 1335 days or years])... That time may seem immeasurably prolonged..., yet it must be endured.... The faithful ought constantly to persist in the hope of deliverance....

'But go on your way, till the end be! For you shall rest, and stand up in your lot at the end of the days!'... You shall rest' -- meaning, you shall die. But then, you shall stand (up again)!... Your death shall not be complete destruction! For God shall cause you to stand (up again) in your lot with the rest of the elect. And that, too, at the end of the days.... That is, after God has sufficiently proved the patience of His people -- and by long and numerous...contests has humbled His Church and purged it -- until the end shall arrive....

"Grant, Almighty God, since You propose to us no other end than that of constant warfare during our whole life, and subject us to many cares until we arrive at the goal of this temporary racecourse -- grant...that we may never grow fatigued! May we ever be armed and equipped for battle! And whatever the trials by which You prove us, may we never be found deficient!

"May we always aspire towards Heaven with upright souls, and strive with all our endeavours to attain that blessed rest which is laid up for us in Heaven! In Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!"

For at death, believers go into rest -- before resurrection, at the end of the days!

'Come, and let us return to the Lord! For He has torn, and He will heal!... He has smitten, and He will bind us up! After two days, He will revive us! On the third day, He will raise us up! And we shall live in His sight!... He shall come to us like the rain.... Like Adam, they have transgressed the Covenant.... (But) He has set a harvest for you!' Hosea 6:1-11.

The two days refers to Christ's time in the grave. Luther says this is what Paul refers to in the words of First Corinthians 15:4 -- that Christ "rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." He was raised the third day. So too shall we be -- we who, like Adam, transgressed the Covenant of works. For God has nevertheless 'set a harvest' for us!

Calvin says in his *Institutes* III:3:2: "God, in tolerating and pardoning our iniquities..., (gives us)...paternal favour.... Clear too from the exhortation in Hosea (6:1)...: 'Let us return to the Lord! For He has torn, but He will heal us! He has smitten, but He will bind us up!'"

Calvin also comments: "'Come and let us return to the Lord! For He has torn; and He will heal!...' This mode of speaking, is very emphatic.... 'After two days, He will revive us! On the third day, He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight!'"....

"This place, is usually referred to Christ -- as declaring that God would after two days and on the third raise up His Church.... This sense, then, does not seem unsuitable.... The Prophet here encourages the faithful to entertain hope of salvation.... God would raise up His Only-begotten Son, Whose resurrection would be the common life of the whole Church....

"After two days, God will revive us'.... Let the two days pass, and the Lord will revive us!.... The Lord will, by His ineffable power, overcome whatever may seem to obstruct our restoration!....

"We are represented thus in Christ our Head.... Hence, let us gather material of confidence!... God's face will shine again, after long darkness.... The faithful...may not doubt but that He will again look on them....

"(Formerly,) 'they have transgressed the Covenant, as Adam'.... The word 'Adam'...is taken indefinitely for men.... They had followed or imitated the example of their father Adam, who immediately at the beginning transgressed God's Commandment.... (But) 'He has set a harvest for you!.... I am seeking to restore the scattering of My people!..."

"Grant, Almighty God, that...we, being renewed by Your Spirit, may...advance more and more -- and be established!... May we ever aspire to that life which is hidden for us in Heaven!... Grant that, being strengthened by the help of Your Spirit, we may continue in purity of faith...and never turn aside!... May we so devote our souls and bodies to You, that our life may in every part of it testify...to You in Christ Jesus our Lord! Amen!" God has smitten -- but He will also resurrect us!

'Hear this, you old men, and give ear!... Has this been...even in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation!' Joel 1:2-3.

The Prophet describes a terrible plague of locusts, accompanied by a strong drought. By both the one and the other, a complete destruction had already been inflicted on the rural areas. Joel applies this plague as a presage of the Day of the Lord -- and calls upon the people to repent!

The word *z^eqeeniyim* in Joel 1:2, seems to mean 'old men' in contrast to the 'children' and grandchildren and great-grandchildren in 1:3. The same word in 1:14 and 2:16 seems to corroborate this. Indeed, the thought in 1:2-3 runs from 'your fathers' through 'you old men' to 'your children' and 'their children' and even to 'another generation.'

Calvin comments: "'Hear, you old men!' -- he says. He expressly addresses the old -- because experience teaches men much. And the old, when they see anything new or unusual, must know that it is not according to the ordinary course of things. He who has past his fiftieth or sixtieth years and sees something new happening which he had never thought of, doubtless acknowledges it as the unusual work of God.

"This is the reason why the Prophet here directs his discourse to the old. As though he said: 'I will not terrify you about nothing.

"But let the old hear, who have been accustomed for many years to many revolutions! Let them now answer me, whether in their life -- which has been an age on the Earth -- they have seen any such thing!....

"He then adds: 'Tell it to your children; your children to their children; their children to the next generation!' In this verse, the Prophet shows that the matter deserved to be remembered and was not to be despised by posterity even for many generations....

"*Oliyh* means no other thing than 'tell or declare this thing to your children!' And further, 'your children to their children!....

"The Prophet here shows that such was the judgment of God of which he speaks -- that it ought not to have been overlooked. No, not even by posterity!

" 'Let your children,' he says, 'declare it' to those after them -- and their children to the fourth generation! It was always to be remembered."

You old men -- tell your children's children! Have you yet told your grandchildren?

'Gather the people! Sanctify the congregation! Assemble the Elders! Gather the children, and those that suck the breasts!.... Afterward, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh! And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams!' Joel 2:16,28.

Joel specially mentions the grey-headed, children and sucklings. To express that the entire people, from the oldest to the youngest, must assemble! Also the grey-headed, even if they can then do little but dread -- shall constantly dream fresh dreams of things previously experienced. The older ones, however, weak, must come! And so too all the sucklings must be there!

Calvin comments: "'Proclaim,' he says, 'a meeting!... Sanctify the Assembly!... The Prophet...afterwards adds: 'Bring together the old; gather the young, sucking the breasts!'... The Prophet bids here 'the old' to be called. For it behoved them to be the leaders of others....

"But...He would have the young, sucking the breasts, to be assembled. Why are these brought in?... Children ought to have been brought together!... For the wrath of God...reached to the very infants!...

"The Prophet promises not what the faithful had before found.... This may easily be gathered from the word here used, 'pour out'...; to pour forth in great abundance.... The gift of the Spirit was more copiously given to the Church after the advent of Christ....

"Your old men shall dream dreams!".... Prophecy would be common...to the old and those of middle age.... This prophecy must be referred to the advent of Christ.... The Prophet now preaches...the new restoration of the Church.... Peter, in the second chapter of the Acts, says that this prophecy was fulfilled when the Spirit was sent."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* IV:12:17 & II:15:2 & III:1:2: "When He says 'Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly!' &c (Joel 2:15) --.He speaks as of things received by common custom.... As Joel has foretold, 'Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams!... Joel 2:28....

"The Spirit would be poured out in richer abundance. One of the most remarkable passages, is that of Joel (2:28): 'It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh'... The Prophet...intimates...that God will by the illumination of His Spirit provide Himself with disciples who had previously been altogether ignorant of heavenly doctrine!"

Calvin further states in his *Psychopannychia*: "Be not alarmed, because all the powers of nature are thought to fail at the very time when you hear of a budding and flourishing old age!... Leave the rest to the Lord, Who guards our entrance and our exit -- from this time forth, even for evermore! He it is Who sends the early and the latter rain upon His elect!... Joel 2:23." For even your old men shall then still dream dreams!

'I have overthrown some of you, like God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah!... Therefore, this is what I will do to you!... Prepare to meet your God!' Amos 4:11-12.

The disaster spoken of in Amos 4:11, may well be the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1 & 2:13 & 8:8. Yet that overthrowal had not been so utter and complete, as in the earlier case of Sodom and Gomorrah!

For in the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1, apparently, some had nevertheless been like a firebrand plucked from the fire. Yet God still warned them that if they would not repent, they must prepare to meet God in judgment! The Lord would come with His fearful wrath, and they would then meet Him in judgment!

That punishment would be far more dreadful than any previous calamity. The people are told to get set to meet God, Whose patience had been exhausted!

Calvin comments: "God had used a severity towards...Sodom and Gomorrah. That, we know, was a memorable evidence of God's wrath -- which ought to have filled all ages with dread. As it ought also, at this day...."

"Scripture, whenever it graphically paints the wrath of God, sets Sodom and Gomorrah before our eyes. It was indeed a dreadful judgment -- when God destroyed those cities with fire from Heaven; when they were consumed; and when the Earth, cleaving asunder, swallowed up the five cities...."

"But He says that nearly the same ruin had taken place (later) among the people of Israel -- only that a few escaped, as when anyone snatches a brand from the burning.... Had Amos only said that they had been overthrown as Sodom and Gomorrah -- he would have said too much.... But in the meantime, they ought at least to have been moved by punishments so grievous and dreadful. Since God had manifested His displeasure to them, as He formerly did to Sodom and Gomorrah...."

"Amos here declares...that the people in vain hoped for pardon.... For God had made the attempt in vain, by many scourges and chastisements, to subdue their extreme arrogance. 'Therefore,' He says, 'thus will I do to you!'...."

"The Prophet...now removes the exception which he lately mentioned. As though he had said that God would execute extreme punishment on this reprobate people, without any mitigation.... 'I will now deal more severely with you. For your obstinacy, compels Me. Since then I have hitherto produced no effect on you -- I will now bring the last punishment!..."

"'Because I will do this to you -- prepare to meet your God!'... See at last, that you 'meet your God' -- so that you may anticipate the final ruin which is impending!... 'Prepare...to meet your God!'"

'The end has come upon My people of Israel! I will not again pass by them, any more!... The songs of the temple shall be howlings, in that day!... There shall be many dead bodies, in every place! They shall cast them forth -- with silence!' Amos 8:2-3.

Calvin comments: "Come had the end on My people Israel!" We perceive...that the people had hitherto been warned by moderate punishments. But that as they had become hardened, extreme vengeance was nigh at hand when God would no longer perform the part of a Father...but would utterly destroy those whom He had long borne with....

"We indeed know that the most grievous calamities had happened to the people of Israel, even before this time. But whenever God showed forbearance, He ever allured them to true penitence.

"Lest then they should promise such a treatment to themselves hereafter and by self-flatteries protract time as hypocrites are wont to do, the Prophet here expressly declares that the end had come. As though he said, 'Your iniquity is ripe. Now then, gather the fruit! For you cannot proceed farther..., ever for one day!'....

"The end,' then, 'is come!... I will no more add to pass by them!' To 'pass by'...is to be referred to punishment. For why does God chastise His people, except that He is solicitous for their salvation?

"He says, then, that He would make an end. That He would not spend labour hereafter in correcting the people, for He says that nothing availed.

"Hence, 'I will not pass by them (any more)!' That is, I will execute My extreme vengeance. *Il n'y faudra plus retourner'* -- as we commonly say....

"A special vice is here noticed by the Prophet, namely that the people of Israel sang songs in their temples. In the same way, the Papists act in the present day.... While they bellow and chant, they think that God is two or three times pacified!....

"For many a carcase shall be cast down in every place!'.... He intimates that there would be such a slaughter, as would prevent them from burying the dead bodies.... When then dead bodies are thrown down in silence -- it is an evidence of a most grievous calamity....

"The Prophet distinctly expresses here that many a dead body would be cast down in every place in silence; that is, that there would be no burying of the dead.... God did not deal cruelly with them.... Though He would consume and obliterate the whole people -- it would yet be for just reasons. Inasmuch as they had reached the very extremity of wickedness!"

Yes, there shall be many dead bodies! God grant that we, however, may go to Heaven!

"Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom.... "Though you exalt yourself like the eagle and...set your nest among the stars -- I will bring you down!... Shall I not in that day...even destroy the wise men out of Edom -- and (the men of) understanding out of the mount of Esau?... But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance!... And the Kingdom, shall be the LORD's!" Obadiah 1-21.

Even if the 'wise' ungodly who think they have 'understanding' soar up to the stars -- God will bring them down and destroy them! And even if the humble godly stay in the lowlands -- God will lift them up everlastingly!

Calvin comments: "This prophecy...denounced on the Idumeans a near destruction. And then promises a restoration to the chosen people of God!...

"The Prophet now laughs to scorn the Idumeans, because they relied on their own fortresses.... You 'dwell,' he says...'in the clefts of the stone'..., between the windings of the rock...within the ranges of mountains....

"Though their region was exceedingly well fortified, yet the Idumeans were great deceived and indulged themselves in vain delusions. 'If you should raise up your seat...like the eagle..., and if you should set your nest among the clouds (or even among the stars) -- I will drag you down,' says Jehovah!...

"He at length concludes thus: 'There is no intelligence in him!'.... The Prophet...derides in an indirect way the foolish confidence with which the Idumeans were blinded....

"They thought themselves to be in a superlative degree wary, so that they had no reason to fear -- as they could see afar off, and arrange their concerns with the utmost 'prudence'.... They thought that they excelled in 'wisdom'!.... The Prophet says here, that there would be no 'understanding' in them!....

"He immediately subjoins the reason. 'Shall I not in that day,' says Jehovah, 'destroy' or extinguish 'the "wise" from Edom?'.... The Idumeans...could thus in a moment be overthrown....

"Can I not,' He says, 'put an end to whatever there is of 'wisdom' in the Idumeans? Can I not destroy all their 'prudent' men? This will I do!'...

"But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance!... Obadiah clearly promises that there would be a restoration of the Church!... Christ came...and became our Saviour in a special manner.... It was God's purpose to rule among His people..., after having restored them in no other way than by the power of Christ.... The Kingdom of Christ, would be Jehovah's!"

The Lord destroys those who think they are wise; but Christ saves His Church that trusts Him!

'Jonah prayed...from out of the fish...and said: "Out of the belly of the grave, I cried out.... You have brought back my life from corruption!... Salvation is from the LORD!'" Jonah 2:1-9.

Jonah did not die when thrown from the ship into the sea. Nor when swallowed by the big fish. Nor thereafter when at the bottom of the ocean. Though he did not then die, He was then resurrected, and deposited on the dry land -- in order to continue His work for God there!

Calvin comments: "Jonah...was indeed cast into the sea by the hands of men. But God...presided!.... 'The Lord...prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish, three days and three nights'....

"A fish was prepared by the Lord!.... The Lord caused the fish to meet him..., to the preservation of Jonah.... There are some fishes which can swallow men whole and entire.... Jonah...was received into the inside of the fish, as though it were into a hospital.... He was as safe...as though he were walking on land!... Jonah says that he 'prayed from the bowels of the fish'.... Jonah (felt he) was...doomed The bowels of the fish...were...to him...the grave... He does not simply say that he prayed to 'Jehovah,' but he adds that He was his God'.... For he was persuaded that God would be propitious to him!

"I cried (out),' he says..., 'to Jehovah! I cried out from the grave's bowels! You have heard my voice!.... The bowels of the fish...were like the bowels of the grave. *Sh'e'ool*, derived from 'corruption'; is called the grave.... The fish was like the grave.... He was...shut up in the grave...

"When Jonah was in this state, he says that he was heard by the Lord!... He did not howl, as the unbelieving are wont to do.... He cried, and cried aloud -- to God!... 'You have cast me into the deep.... All Your billows and Your waves passed over me!'...

"His mind was fixed on God.... As though he said..., 'To You do I come!... I seek You!... Far is it, that these terrors drive me to a distance from You!... I come willingly to You! For nowhere else is there for me any hope of deliverance!'...

"He was 'surrounded by the deep.' But at length he adds that God 'made his life to ascend'.... He had so sunk, as to be fixed in the deep under the roots of the mountains.... He afterwards comes to thanksgiving: 'And You, Jehovah my God, have made my life to ascend from the grave!'"...

"I will sacrifice to You!... Salvation is from the Lord!'" This shows Jonah knew God would spare him, so he could then bring a sacrifice to Him. 'And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land!'... This deliverance of Jonah, is an image of the resurrection!"

Though Jonah did not then die, he was indeed inside the belly of the great fish -- possibly in a comatose condition. But God heard his conscious outcry, even from the belly of the grave!

'Jonah...prayed to the LORD, and said: "O LORD, take...my life from me! For it is better for me to die, than to live!"... Jonah went...and...made him a booth and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city [of Nineveh].... So the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah -- so that it might be a shadow over his head to deliver him from his grief.... But, God prepared a worm..., and it smote the gourd!... God prepared a vehement east wind! And the sun beat on the head of Jonah, so that he fainted and wished in himself to die.... But God said to Jonah...: "Do you well, to be angry because of the gourd?... Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city?!"' Jonah 4:1-11.

Calvin comments: "This prayer proceeded from a pious and holy zeal. But Jonah sinned, as to its measure or excess. For he had...forgotten himself, when he 'preferred death to life'....

"He says: 'Jehovah, take me away!' He was...not free from blame, in hastily wishing to die. For it is not in our power, to quit this world.... Jonah...says, 'Take away my life!' This was one fault. But the other was that he wished to die, because God spared the Ninevites!...

"Let us then learn...to love this life!. Let us also learn...so...to live to the Lord and to proceed in the race set before us, until He Himself leads us to its end!....

"'Jonah went...and...made him a booth'.... He thought that...the ruin of the city was at hand.... 'So the Lord God prepared a gourd'.... It was a shrub.... It soon grew into...a great size.... Jonah...had the booth as an additional cover....

"But it is said afterward that 'a worm was prepared'...by the hidden providence of God.... The gnawings even of worms are directed by the counsel of God.... 'When the sun arose the day following, a wind was prepared'.... It was not usual.... God wrought then...beyond the usual course of nature....

"('The sun beat upon the head of Jonah...; he fainted, and wished...to die' --) when the shrub withered.... He was so much grieved for the withered shrub, that through weariness of life he instantly desired death.... 'He desired,' it is said, 'for his soul -- that he might die!' It is hence probable that Jonah was so overwhelmed with grief, that he did not lift up his heart to God. And yet, we see that he was not neglected by God. For it immediately follows -- 'And God said to Jonah: "Do you well, to be angry because of the gourd?... Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city?!"'...

"Here God explains the design He had, in suddenly raising up the gourd and then in causing it to perish or wither through the gnawing of a worm. It was to teach Jonah that his conduct towards the Ninevites, was very inhuman.... God preserves men, for the purpose for which He has designed them.... God does not create men in vain. Is it then no wonder, that He wishes them to be saved?!"

God's spares Jonah -- and also the city of Nineveh!

"The Word of the LORD...came to Micah..., which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.... "I will make Samaria like a heap of the field!.... All the graven images thereof...shall be burned with the fire... For her wound is incurable.... It has come to Judah!" Micah 1:1-9.

Calvin comments: "Micah...discharged his office as a Prophet for thirty years.... This vision...was given him against two cities, Samaria and Jerusalem.... He threatens destruction to Samaria and the whole kingdom of Israel, on account of their corrupted forms of worship. We may hence learn how displeasing to God is superstition.... Whenever then we deviate in anything from the rule which He has prescribed, we manifest...our rebellion and obstinacy.... He says, 'I will set Samaria as a heap of the field!'.... Such shall be the ruins, that they shall differ nothing from the heaps.... He adds...'I will uncover her foundations' -- that is, I will entirely demolish it....

"All the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and...be burned with the fire'... Its idols would be broken, and...its wealth would be destroyed.... Samaria had abandoned itself to ungodly forms of worship, and had departed from the Law.... The Israelites might then understand the cause for which God would so severely punish them.... The graven images of Samaria would be broken into pieces.... Its idols would be destroyed....

"For her wound is incurable'.... The Prophet here assumes the character of a mourner, so that he might more deeply impress the Israelites.... They were almost insensible in their torpidity. It was therefore necessary that they should be brought to view the scene itself -- so that, seeing their destruction before their eyes, they might be touched both with grief and fear...

"We ought yet to apply this to ourselves. For we are not much unlike the ancient people. For however God may terrify us with dreadful threatenings, we still remain quiet in our filth. It is therefore needful that we should be treated severely, for we are almost void of feeling....

"The Prophets sometimes assumed mourning.... They transferred to themselves the sorrows of others.... When the discourse was respecting the Church and the faithful..., the Prophet was in real mourning -- when he saw that a dreadful ruin was impending.... The Prophet therefore could not refrain from mourning unfeignedly for them....

"This lamentation was...the mirror in which he sets before them the vengeance of God toward men so extremely torpid. He therefore exhibits to them this representation, so that they might perceive that God was by no means trifling with men when He thus denounced punishment on the wicked and such as were apostates....

"He...subjoins that the wounds would be grievous.... 'Grievous' means...full of grief.... Desperate, or incurable!"

Incurable wounds? Yes. But (First John 1:7), the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin!

"The women of My people, you have cast out from their pleasant houses! From their children, you had taken away My glory for ever! You must arise, and depart! For this is not your rest!... It shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction!" Micah 2:9-10.

Calvin comments that the people "refrained from no acts of injustice! It was indeed a proof of extreme barbarity not to spare women and children, for they are both weak and helpless. Their sex exempts women from violence. And their age, children.

"Even in wars, women and also children escape in safety.... The Prophet...proves here that the people had addicted themselves to cruelty really barbarous! They were not restrained from exercising it -- no, not even on women and children....

"('The women of My people, you have cast out from their pleasant houses' or) 'house of delights'.... The women..., being the weaker sex, prefer being at home and in the shade -- rather than going abroad. The more necessary it was, that their recesses should remain safe to them!

"('From their children, you have taken away My glory for ever!') Now, what was taken away from the children -- God calls...'His ornament.' For His blessing, poured forth on children, is the mirror of His glory. He therefore condemns this plunder, as a sacrilege.

"The word *laa'oolaam* (or 'for ever'), designates the continuance of their crimes (-- the crimes of the fathers of their children). As though He had said that they were cruel without ever showing any repentance....

"'This is not your rest!'... The land of Canaan...had been honoured by God with the distinction of being a rest. Yet, God called it not only the rest of the people, but also His Own rest. 'I have sworn in My wrath, (I would not longer be God) if they shall enter into My rest!' (Psalm 95:12).

"The land of Canaan, then, was a sort of nest -- hidden under the wings of God. For the Lord had assigned it as an inheritance of His chosen people.... God then dwelt in that land, and had also given it to the children of Abraham so that they might rest there in safety....

"Hypocrites said...that they could not be expelled thence, and that...Prophets were falsifiers!... This is the reason why the Prophet now says: 'Arise, depart! This is not your rest!'

"False confidence...deceives you! As you think that you are inseparably fixed in your habitation!... Now, you have become covenant-breakers!... God will now thrust you out!... God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath... Have not your pollutions obliterated that holy rest?"

This is not your rest! Your only rest, is in the Lord of the Sabbath, the Messiah Jesus!

'God is jealous!... The LORD avenges, and is furious! The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies! The LORD...will not at all acquit the wicked!.. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide, in the fierceness of His anger?... They shall be devoured like fully dry stubble!... I will make your grave!... There is a multitude of slain; and a great number of carcasses.... There is no end of their corpses!... There is no healing of Your bruise! Your wound is grievous!' Nahum 1:2 to 3:19.

Calvin comments: "Nahum begins with the nature of God.... He shows, in a general way, what sort of Being God is.... He says first, that 'God is jealous'.... He calls Him...the Avenger -- and he repeats this three times.... This awful description of God, is to be applied to the present case!...

"God means that He would cleanse the filth and defilement of His Church.... But...He will not clear...the reprobate.... 'Who can stand before His indignation?... His fury is poured out like fire!.... To be poured forth here, is nothing else than to be scattered far and wide.... It advances every moment, as when a fire seizes a whole forest....

"They shall be devoured as fully dry stubble!.... There would be nothing to prevent God from consuming the enemies of His Church. For He would make dry their whole vigour.... They would differ nothing from stubble; and that very dry..., so that it will easily take fire.... 'I will appoint your sepulchre (or make your grave)!... For you are execrable (or vile)!....

"There is a multitude of slain; and a great number of carcasses.... There is no end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses!... All the roads would be full of dead bodies.... The enemies could not enter, without treading on them everywhere!...

"There is no healing!... Your wound is grievous!... An incurable evil.... Every hope of a remedy, would be taken away.... He compares the ruin..., to a wound which cannot be...healed!...

"Grant, Almighty God, that inasmuch as You see Your enemies at this day raging with cruel...diabolic fury against Your Church, we may find You to be the same as the faithful in all former ages had found You -- even a Defender of the safety of those who truly and with a sincere heart call on You!... Do...this day...so restrain the fury..., that the wicked may at length really find even to their ruin that they fight not with miserable mortals...but with Your ineffable power.... There is nothing permanent in this world.... The things which seem the firmest, tend to ruin and instantly fall and of themselves vanish away when by Your Breath You shake that strength in which men trust.... By Your awful judgments, You...show Your displeasure at the pride of this world.... May we not experience Your dreadful power in our destruction..., until we at length be gathered into that celestial Kingdom where we shall triumph together with Your Son when His glory shall shine in us -- and all the wicked shall be destroyed!"

For there is no healing of your bruise! Except through the blood of Jesus as your Saviour!

'Look, I raise up the Chaldeans -- that bitter and hasty nation which shall march through the breadth of the land to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs! They are terrible and dreadful!... They shall come for violence!... Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my God my Holy One? We shall not die!' Habakkuk 1:6-12.

Calvin comments: "Destructions by the Chaldeans was nigh at hand.... God indeed testifies that He would be the Author of this war, and that the Chaldeans would fight...under His auspices.... When therefore we read that the Chaldeans were bitter and also hasty, God thus intimates that He can employ the vices of men in executing His judgments and yet contract hence no spot nor blemish.... The Chaldeans...would spread themselves over the whole Earth, and occupy regions far remote.... God...meant to show how terrible the Chaldeans would be....

"The Chaldeans would be terrible and dreadful.... The worst of men are in God's hand -- as Satan is, who is their head.... God ever remains just, whatever use He may make of instruments -- yes, the very worst!... The Chaldeans would act according to their own will.... The Chaldeans would be their own judges.... The Chaldeans would exceed them (God's people) in power and number.... Wherever the Chaldeans saw a prey, they would instantly come like an eagle to any carcass it may observe.... God's judgment ought to have been feared.... He purposed to employ the Chaldeans as His servants, whose cruel disposition and inhumanity would be dreadful....

"The Prophet...intimates...the Chaldeans would from a distance observe their prey. Like the eagles, which are endued with incredible quickness of sight, see from mid-air every carcass lying on the ground -- so also would the Chaldeans quickly discover a prey, and instantly come upon it....

"They would come to the prey.... They would be victorious before they had any contest.... They would only come for the booty.... The Chaldeans would only come for the prey. For all would become subject to them.... The east wind was very injurious.... The violence of that wind was also very great.... Whenever the Prophets wished to express a violent impetuosity, they added this comparison of the east wind.... As soon as they perceived the blowing of the east wind, they would flee away -- knowing that they would be wholly unable to stand against it....

"Yet the faithful derive a holy confidence from God's Word!... This then is what the Prophet means, when he adds -- 'Are You not our God?'.... He then subjoins -- 'We shall not die!'... We shall not die; for we are under the protection of God!.... The protection of God alone is that which can deliver us from the danger of death.... The Lord will deliver us from a thousand deaths!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:10:8: "'Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God?... We shall not die!'...(Habakkuk 1:12).... Souls..., if not united to God by righteousness -- remain estranged from Him in death. But that union...will bring perpetual salvation with it!"

God is from everlasting! We shall not stay dead! After death, believers shall live forever!

'When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself -- so that I might rest in the day of trouble.... Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls -- yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation! The LORD God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon my high places!'
Habakkuk 3:16-19.

Calvin comments: "The Prophet...returns again to that dread...he had entertained on account of God's voice in those terrific threatenings.... His purpose also was to animate them with strong hope, so that they might nevertheless look for deliverance.... He recited those histories by which God had proved...He was armed with invincible power to save His Church....

"He...says, 'I have heard.' What had he heard?... God had threatened His people with a horrible destruction. The Prophet says now that he had heard and trembled.... The Prophet here undertakes the cause of the whole Church.... He says, 'Quiver did my lips!'... What is meant, is that motion in the lips which fear or trembling produces.... The whole body shakes with trembling. Not only a noise is made by the clashing of the teeth, but an agitation is also observed in the lips.... 'Enter,' he says, 'did rottenness into my bones!'.... The Prophet describes here the dread which could not have been produced otherwise than by the dreadful vengeance of God....

He now adds...'May I rest in the day of affliction!'... He who anticipates the wrath of God in time, and is touched with fear -- as soon as he hears that God the Judge is at hand, provides for himself the most secure rest in the day of affliction.... The right way of seeking rest is set forth here by the Prophet.... The design of the Prophet...was to exhort the faithful to repentance....

"This exhortation is also very necessary for us, in the present day.... Let us then know that no rest can be to us in the day of distress -- except we tremble within ourselves; except dread lays hold of all our faculties.... He intimates that they who had been moved and really terrified by God's vengeance, would be in a quiet state when God executed His judgments....

"The Prophet declares now at large what that rest would be, of which he had spoken. It would be even this -- that he would not cease to rejoice in God, even in the greatest afflictions.... He shows that though they might cease a hundred times, they would yet not perish! For the Lord would ever supply them with occasions of joy.... Habakkuk sets the desolation of the land -- and...the inward joy which the faithful never fail to possess. For they are upheld by the perpetual favour of God.... He sought no strength, but in God alone.... God would give His people 'feet like those of hinds' -- so that they could climb the precipices of mountains and dread no difficulties.... God would make His faithful people to advance boldly and without fear along high places!"

So, though all collapses -- I will rejoice in the Lord! Do you?

"I will utterly consume all things from off the land," says the LORD. "I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the sky, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked! And I will cut off man from off the land," says the LORD!... (Yet) from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, my suppliants...shall bring My offering!... I will get...praise and fame in every hand!... At that time, I will bring you back again! For I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the Earth!" Zephaniah 1:2 to 3:20.

Calvin comments: "The Prophet denounces ruin, and shows...why God was so...displeased with the people.... Since the benefit was so small, what could he have hoped for after...death?..."

"It may now be asked, why God denounces His vengeance on 'the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the fishes of the sea'?... Howsoever much the Jews may have provoked Him by their sins -- innocent animals ought to have been spared? If...the soul that has sinned is to die -- why did God turn His wrath against fishes and other animals?..."

"Animals were created for man's use. They must undergo a lot in common with him. For God made subservient to man -- both the birds of the sky, and the fishes of the sea, and all other animals. It is then no matter of wonder, that the condemnation of him who enjoys a sovereignty over the whole Earth -- should reach animals.... The world was not made subject to corruption willingly..., but because the contagion from Adam's fall diffused itself through Heaven and Earth.... All the animals...and the whole world bear marks of God's wrath -- not because they have provoked it through their own fault, but because the whole world is involved in man's curse.... Because all things were created for the sake of man...."

"He says...'I will remove all things from the face of the land'... His sole purpose, was to punish the wicked.... Do not think that God's controversy is with...creatures which are void of reason!... He also adds, 'I will remove man from the face of the land.' He...refers to men only...."

"(Nevertheless, later,) from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, my suppliants...shall bring My offering!' ... The Kingdom would be enlarged! For the Church was to be gathered from all nations!... Some would come to God from the utmost parts of Ethiopia...."

"('I will bring you back again!') Though the Church would be maimed and torn, there would yet be nothing that could hinder God to restore her.... He declares that nothing could possibly prevent God from gathering His Church, and restoring it to its full vigour and strength.... The restoration of the Church, would be a kind of resurrection.... The Lord would humble His people.... But He would at length gather them..., so...that they would not only breathe but be replenished with such new vigour -- as though they had received no loss!"

God consumes man and beast! But God shall also bring His people back again, and make them a praise among all people of the Earth! Shall you too then be among God's people?

"Thus says the LORD....: "Consider your ways! You have sown much, but bring in little! You eat, but you do not have enough! You drink, but you are not filled!... You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm! And he who earns wages, earns wages to put it into a bag with holes!... (Yet) I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this House with glory! The glory of this latter House, shall be greater than...the former!" Haggai 1:5f & 2:7-9.

Calvin comments: "We may hence..see, how kindly God has provided for His Church.... 'Now therefore,' thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Consider your ways!'.... If the authority of God or a regard for Him is of no importance among you -- at least consider how God deals with you!'... How comes it, that you are famished -- that both Heaven and Earth deny food to you? Besides, though you consume much food -- it still does not satisfy you! In a word, how is it -- that all things fade away and vanish in your hands? How is this? You cannot otherwise account for it, but that God is displeased with you!.... He says that they had 'sown much' -- and that 'small was the produce'.... They 'ate' -- and were 'not satisfied'.... They 'drank' -- but had not their 'thirst quenched'.... They 'clothed themselves' -- but were 'not warmed'....

"God...does punish men in these two ways. Either by withdrawing His blessings, by rendering the Earth arid and the Heavens dry. Or by making the abundant produce unsatisfying and even useless.... When therefore fruit, and whatever the earth produces for the necessities of man, give no support -- God proves...by an outstretched arm that He is an Avenger!... He says...'he who gains wages, gains them for a perforated bag!'.... The vengeance of God could not only be seen in the sterility of the earth and in the very hunger of men who by eating were not satisfied. But also in their work! For they wearied themselves much without any profit -- as even the money cast into the bag disappeared! Hence He says -- even your work is in vain! It was indeed a most manifest proof of God's wrath, when their money -- though laid up -- yet vanished away.... Whether they did eat or abstained from food, they were hungry. And when they diligently laboured and gathered wages, their wages vanished as though they cast them into a perforated bag!....

"(But) He would arrest the attention of all mortals.... 'Come,' He says, 'shall all nations!.... I will shake all nations, and they shall come!'... There will indeed be a wonderful conversion -- when the nations which previously despised God and regarded true religion and piety with the utmost hatred, shall habituate themselves to the ruling power of God....

"He afterward adds, 'The Desire of all nations (shall come)!.... He says of Christ, 'Come shall the Desire of all nations -- and I will fill this House with glory!' ... Christ was the expectation of the whole world.... The nations would come, bringing with them all their riches, so that they might offer themselves and all their possessions as a sacrifice to God.... The glory of the second Temple would be greater than that of the first.... The time would come...when the Lord would fill that House with glory..., when Christ would bring with Him all fullness of glory!"

Consider! The glory of God's new House (the Church), shall be greater than the former!

'You must ask for rain from the LORD, in the time of the latter rain!... The LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain -- to everyone...in the field!' Zechariah 10:1.

Even in the season in which rain may naturally be expected, Jehovah is to be acknowledged as its Sender -- and prayer is to be made for it. Rain is the natural requisite of agricultural and national prosperity essential to a country's welfare. The weather gives heavy rain for some three weeks till the end of the first week in April. These were the 'latter rains' of Scripture, resulting in very abundant crops of winter grain.

When the Church pours out a fullness of prayer, God will pour out a fullness of His Spirit. The drought-stricken Old Testament Church finally learned to plead with God for rain. And God then answered, with the plenteous outpouring of His Spirit on the New Testament Day of Pentecost (Luke 24:49 and Acts 2:1-4,17-21).

Calvin comments: "He bids them to 'ask rain of Jehovah.' They ought indeed to have done this of themselves, without being reminded. For though Christ has delivered to His Church a form of prayer, it ought yet to be as it were the dictate of nature to seek from God our daily bread...."

"The Prophet then does here reprove the Jews for their brutal stupidity -- that they did not ask for rain from the Lord. He adds, 'at the late season'.... For rains at two seasons were necessary for the corn -- after sowing, and before harvest.... Whenever Scripture speaks of fruitfulness or of a large produce, it mentions rain at these two seasons.

"Zechariah in this place only refers to the vernal (rain), before harvest. For in that hot country, the earth wanted new moisture. 'Ask,' he says, (for) 'rain' -- at the beginning of summer!

'Jehovah,' he adds, 'will give' it! 'He will make clouds' or storms or boisterous winds.... It is evident...that *cheziyziym* means clouds, which are...preparations for rain. He then says that 'a shower would come with the rain'.... The Prophet...had said that the rains would be continued until the ground was saturated and the dryness removed...."

"He will give rain -- a shower!' That is, abundant rain! 'To everyone!'... So that there may be moisture enough for the ground.... He promises a plentiful irrigation, so that drought might not deprive them of the hope of food and support...."

"Grant, Almighty God, that...we may learn to recumb on that help which You have promised...in Your only-begotten Son!... May we look upward and seek the aid of Your Spirit, so that we may...be equal to our enemies and even be victorious over them until...we shall reach that blessed rest which has been obtained for us by the blood of Your only Son. Amen!"

Ask God for refreshing rain, after the drought of sin! Have you yet so asked?

'In that day, the LORD shall defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.... He that is feeble among them at that day, shall be like David... Like God; like the Angel of the Lord!... It shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.... And I will pour upon the House of David...the Spirit of grace.... And they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced...Who shall be...for Him like One that is...His Firstborn!' Zechariah 12:8-10.

Calvin comments that Zechariah here "says that God would be like a shield....under...protection.... The Prophet then no doubt claims here for God a power which in opposition to the whole world...would be found sufficient to subdue all enemies and to save His people.... The Prophet...names the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and...at another time, he includes generally all....

"He now adds -- 'The feeble among them, shall be like David'.... The Prophet...considers David as a king.... After he attained the kingdom, he became more eminent...in every way, than all the kings of the Earth. It is then this eminence which the Prophet has in view, when he says that the least and the most despised among them would be like David....

"Without Christ, we are wholly lost.... Christ was not to come forth, except from the house of David.... The Prophet compares here...the posterity of David, to the Angel Who had been the Leader of the people and the Minister of redemption. That Angel, we conclude, was Christ. For though God then appointed many angels to His people, yet Christ...was their Prince and Head.... God had exercised His power through an Angel -- so now He had set over them a Mediator....

"When was this prophecy fulfilled?... Christ was to arise!... Jerusalem was to be the mother of all churches.... From thence, the Law was to go forth.... From thence, God had determined to send forth the royal sceptre -- so that the Son of David might rule over the whole world.... The condition of that miserable people would become happier and more glorious than under the rich and flourishing kingdom of David. For Christ would at length come, in Whom complete happiness was to be found.... Few...Jews embraced the favour of Christ..., and thus gave place to the Gentiles....

"I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem'.... This promise...extends far wider than to the Jews. For he prophesies here concerning the Kingdom of Christ.... Here then is promised a perpetual defence to the Church.... 'I will pour upon...the inhabitants...the Spirit of grace'.... The Spirit of God (would) penetrate into our hearts.... The Spirit would inwardly so touch...hearts, as to lead them to deplore their state before God.... We then see here...an internal Light of faith, the Author of which is the Spirit. For He it is Who illuminates our minds....

They 'shall' then 'look to Me Whom they have pierced!'... The Jews...had crucified their God when they grieved His Spirit; but Christ was also as to His flesh pierced by them!... The Jews, after having despised Christ -- would at length acknowledge Him to be a precious and invaluable Treasure!" Then, they shall mourn for the One they have pierced! Have you done so yet?

'Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther...: "If you altogether hold your peace at this time..., you and your father's house shall be destroyed!... Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom (of Persia), for such a time as this?" Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer: "Go, gather together all...that are present in Shusan and fast for me, and neither eat nor drink night or day for three days. I also...will fast likewise; and then I will go in to the king (of Persia), which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish!" Esther 4:13-16.

Esther of Shusan is the beautiful heroine of that book of the Bible bearing her name. Living in exile in the Persian empire after the Babylonian captivity, she was adopted by her cousin Mordecai -- and rose to become the wife and queen of Ahasuerus or Xerxes the Persian monarch (485-65 B.C.). Her name "Esther" is said to be associated with the Persian word *stara* or 'star.' Her original Hebrew name was "Hadassah" (meaning 'myrtle').

Esther used her influence to save her people from a general massacre which the grand vizier Haman had prepared for them. In memory of this deliverance, the fast of *Puriym* was instituted. The Fast of Esther is observed on the 13th of *Adar* in commemoration of the three days' fast observed at her request before her interview with Ahasuerus at which she pleaded successfully for the cause of her condemned people. Her heroism won for her a place beside Deborah and Judith. *Puriym* celebrates this wonderful and unexpected redemption, which the Lord God gave His people when He saved them from the hands of their enemies at a time it seemed there was no more hope.

The combined wisdom of Mordecai and the courage of Esther, became the means of doing a great service to the very large number of their people living under Persian rule. Owing to the hatred of Haman, the chief court favourite, they were in danger of being massacred *en bloc*. But Esther revealed her nationality to the king. Her action brought about an entire reversal of the decree. Haman was put to death, and Mordecai was honoured by the king -- while Esther's position was strengthened still further.

Mordecai told Esther that if she were then silent, the Lord would then punish her smallness of heart. But Esther replied that she was well willing to place her own life in danger of death for the sake of her people. On the third day of the fast, Esther went to the king (Esther 5:1). Compare the same manner of speech in Matthew 12:40 in connection with the remaining of Jonah in the belly of the great fish, and of Christ in His grave when He redeemed His people!

Esther shows us that God spared her people, from whom Christ would be born according to His humanity. For God so preserved His people, even in such a dark period of history. During the three days' fast, doubtless there were prayers to God for His help.

Calvin says in his *Institutes* IV:12:17: "When pestilence begins to stalk abroad or famine or war or when any other disaster seems to impend over a province and people (Esther 4:16), then also it is the duty...to exhort the Church to fasting." Esther did -- and so she did not perish!

'The Elders...built, and they prospered.... And they built (God's House), and finished it, according to the commandment of God.' Ezra 6:14.

Ezra the Scribe was a Leader of the people and a Teacher of the Law. With Artaxerxes' consent, together with Nehemiah he led a migration of his people from Babylon back to Palestine, and organized life there. Everything was then restored and ordained according to the Law of God, which was completed by Ezra with much zeal and faithfulness.

Ezra must have been held in esteem at Artaxerxes' court. For that king entrusted him with authority to appoint Magistrates and Judges, with the power of life and death in Jerusalem (Ezra 7:12-26). At the River Ahava (Ezra 8:15), he gathered together the members of the expedition and ordered a fast and prayer for divine protection. Arriving in Jerusalem, he delivered up the gifts the king had sent to the Temple (Ezra 8:36). He then returned to Persia, elevated the Mosaic Law, and surrounded himself with a corps of supporters with whose aid he read and expounded the Law.

Accompanied by 1500 exiles, he arrived in Jerusalem in 450 B.C. He then had the Law of Moses read to the entire people, and appointed it as the lawbook of the community. He is considered to be the first Scribe and the Founder of the Great Assembly (*K^enesset haa-G^edolaah*). Indeed, he is described as the Scribe (or *Soofeer*) -- the Scribe, *par excellence*.

Ezra was a diligent student of the Law. He conceived the idea of infusing new life and ideals into the community. The Law of God was to be enforced. In B.C. 444, the Book of the Law was read by Ezra before the people in solemn assembly, who pledged themselves to obey it. Within the same month, the first of its injunctions were carried out.

Ezra is an austere and commanding figure. He left a lasting impression upon the religious life of his people. He made God's Law the possession of the entire community, calling the Pentateuch the "Canon of Ezra." And he endowed the people with a cohesive power which was proof against all attacks from without.

He was President of the Great Synagogue, and the Collector and Editor of the Canon. The latter is indeed very probable, remembering the interest he aroused in the Law. And in this interest, a desire to have also the writings of the Historians and Prophets, would certainly be begotten

After Cyrus, Darius commanded the Temple to be rebuilt. Then 'the Elders...built, and they prospered -- through the prophesying of Haggai the Prophet and Zechariah.... And they built and finished (God's House)..., according to the commandment of God' (Ezra 6:14).

May we likewise build and expand the New Testament Church according to the commandment of God! And may our "Elders" too build -- and prosper!

"The words of Nehemiah.... "I sat down and wept...certain days and fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven and said: 'I beseech You, O LORD God of Heaven, the great and terrible God that keeps Covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His Commandments!'"... And I said: "Should such a man as I, flee? And who is there that, being (a non-priest) as I am, would go into the Temple to save his life? I will not go in!" Nehemiah 1:1-5 & 6:11.

The Book of Nehemiah narrates the experiences of that cup-bearer of the Persian king Artaxerxes. Nehemiah was sent twice as Governor to Jerusalem in 445 and 433 B.C. He zealously endeavoured to restore the ruined city, to rebuild its fallen walls and gateways, to restore his fathers' sepulchres, and to practise public religion with exceptional religiosity and fasting and prayer. His Book was compiled from the memoirs of Nehemiah by the author of Chronicles (apparently Ezra).

Nehemiah was at Susa in Elam at the winter residence of the Persian court. There, a report reached him regarding the ruined condition of Jerusalem and its people. He, on his own initiative, was appointed Governor of the province of Judaea by the king. He was granted a royal rescript to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forests, commanding that Nehemiah be furnished with sufficient supplies of timber. On arriving in Jerusalem, having satisfied himself as to the ruinous condition of the city walls, he began the task of rebuilding them. With the aid of the entire population drawn from the outlying villages, he successfully accomplished his undertaking within two months.

Nehemiah was in vain threatened by his enemies and their false rumours about his so-called rebellion against the king -- and also plagued by hired false-prophets. But he remained unmoveable. When threatened with death, should he proceed -- he replied (Nehemiah 6:11): "Should such a man as I, flee? And who is there that -- being (a non-priest) as I am -- would go into the Temple to save his life? I will not go in!" For the gates of the city walls had not yet been attached (Nehemiah 7:1), thus inviting his assassination -- should he proceed.. Yet he said that if he should enter the Temple to save his life -- that would be against God's will. So he said: "I will not go in!" For he was a man of action! As a non-priest not allowed to enter the Temple, Nehemiah refused to do so. His answer testifies to his pride before man, and his humility before God.

The Book of the Law was read by Ezra in the presence of Nehemiah, before the people in solemn assembly. The Covenant was sealed, and the people pledged themselves to observe its obligations. Nehemiah had an attractive personality. He was a gifted and accomplished man, endowed with religious zeal. He was of good and righteous character, and very ambitious to make his nation happy. He left behind him the walls of Jerusalem, as a long-lasting monument to himself.

Calvin says in his *Institutes* IV:12:16: "Fasting...is a sign of humiliation and has a more frequent use in public than among private individuals.... Whenever supplication is to be made to God on any important occasion, it is befitting to appoint a period for fasting and prayer... Such was the fast of Nehemiah (1:4), when with...intense zeal he prayed to God." Indeed, the non-priest Nehemiah would not go into the temple -- even to save his life!

"A 'Book of Remembrance' was written...for them that feared the LORD.... They shall be Mine," said the LORD of hosts, "in that Day when I make up My jewels! And I will spare them, as a man spares his own son who serves him!" Malachi 3:16-17.

God promises that those who repent shall be remembered in that Day when He makes up His jewels. Calvin says in his *Institutes* III:19:5 that God "declares to us by the Prophet: 'I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him' (Malachi 3:17). There, the word 'spare' evidently means indulgence...; while at the same time, service is remembered."

Calvin also comments: "The Prophet...says that individuals were touched with repentance.... They 'spoke among themselves' (or 'talked together').... Our efforts ought to be extended to our brethren.... It is an evidence of true repentance, when each one endeavours as much as he can to unite to himself as many friends as possible..., so that they may return to God...."

"There was a 'Book of Remembrance' written.... The faithful might be convinced that their reward would be certain.... 'And they shall be mine,' says the Lord of hosts, 'in the day when I make up My jewels'.... In the case of the godly..., there is a 'Book of Memorial' written before Him.... 'They shall be in the Day I make'...; that is, complete.... He had...promised to restore the Church.... 'They shall be to me a peculiar treasure' (when 'I make up My jewels').... In the Day then when He shall gather His Church, it will then appear that we are His peculiar treasure.... By the words 'peculiar treasure' (or 'make up My jewels'), God intimates that the lot of the godly will be different from that of the world.... We know that we have been chosen by God, before the foundation of the world, for this end -- so that we might be to Him a peculiar treasure!...

"He adds, 'And I will spare them as a man spares (his own son who serves him)!.... God would forgive them.... The Spirit of regeneration is included in the words 'the son who serves him'.... God promises an increase of grace.... 'I will gather to Myself the people who faithfully and sincerely worship Me'.... He speaks here not of the beginning of a religious and holy life,' (but rather of its end)...."

"God in His mercy would approve of the obedience of the godly!... They who understand that no man can stand before God's tribunal, do not dream of any merits nor...believe that they can bring anything before God by which they can conciliate His favour.... Their only refuge is what the Prophet here teaches us -- that God 'spares' them!...

"Grant, Almighty God, that...we know that we are reconciled to You in Your Only-begotten Son!.... May we know that...our sins which justly deserve condemnation are forgiven, and...that we shall at length receive the reward which You have promised...through the sanctification of Your Spirit and through the sprinkling with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen!"

Is your name in the 'Book of Remembrance' -- for the Day in which God collects His jewels?

"Behold, the Day comes that shall burn like an oven!... All the proud...who act wickedly, shall be stubble!... The Day that comes shall burn them up," says the LORD of hosts.... "It shall leave them neither root nor branch! But, unto you that fear My name, the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow!" Malachi 4:1-2.

Calvin comments: "He denounces ruin on all the reprobate and the despisers of God.... 'Behold, come shall the Day which shall consume all the ungodly -- as a burning over the stubble!'... The ungodly, shall be like stubble.... When the Prophet then says that 'the Day would come,' he refers...to the...coming of Christ.... He now adds, 'And it will leave neither root nor branch!'..."

"The Prophet...turns his discourse to the godly.... Malachi calls Christ 'the Sun of righteousness'.... Christ brought the full light.... The Father has given...clearer light in the Person of Christ.... When...the Heavens became at length opened and clear by means of the Gospel, it was through the rising of the Sun Who brought the full day.... Christ is...called light with regard to the faithful, whom He delivers from...blindness...and whom He undertakes to guide by His Spirit....

"We must observe that this is not to be confined to the Person of Christ, but extended to the Gospel. Hence, Paul says -- 'Awake you who sleep!... Rise from darkness, and Christ shall illuminate you!' (Ephesians 5:14). Christ then daily illuminated us, by His doctrine and His Spirit....

"He is a Sun!... Christ performs towards us the office of a sun, not to guide our feet and hands as to what is earthly.... He brings light to us, to show the way to Heaven.... By its means, we may come to the enjoyment of a blessed and eternal life....

"A clear sun in a serene sky, brings healing.... Malachi now says that there would be 'healings in the wings' of Christ.... If we consider the history of those times, it will appear that the condition of that people was most grievous. He now promises a change to them. For the restoration of the Church, would bring them joy. See, then, in what way he meant there would be healing in the wings of Christ!.... The darkness would be dissipated, and the Heavens would be free from clouds, so as to exhilarate the minds of the godly....

"Grant, Almighty God, that as You have appointed Your Only-begotten Son to be like a sun to us -- we may not be blind so as not to see His brightness!... Since He is pleased to guide us daily into the way of salvation, may we follow Him and never be detained by any of the impediments of this world so as not to pursue after that celestial life to which You invite us!... You have promised that He is to come and gather us into the eternal inheritance. May we...watch with diligence and be ever attentively looking for Him..., until we shall at length obtain the fruit of our faith and piety when He shall appear again for our final redemption.... Might we...hold on our way in the midst of darkness -- even the way which leads us to Heaven. Amen!"

The Sun of righteousness shall rise -- with healing in His wings! For you too?

'Says the LORD of hosts: "Behold, I will send you 'Elijah the Prophet' (as John the Baptizer)!... And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers -- lest I come, and smite the Earth with a curse!'" Malachi 4:3-6.

Calvin comments: "The Prophet declares that prophetic teaching would again be renewed.... When God showed mercy to His people, He would open His mouth.... Christ Who is the Light of the world and the Sun of righteousness..., Himself...said that John the Baptizer was the Elijah who had been promised (Matthew 11:10).... God intended to raise up John the Baptizer for the purpose of restoring His worship, as formerly He had raised up Elijah.... John, then, was a true successor of Elijah. Nor were any of the Prophets so much like John, as Elijah. Hence, justly might his name (Elijah's) be transferred to him (John)....

"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers'.... God reminds...for what purpose He would send John -- even to turn the hearts of men, and to restore them to a holy unity of faith.... Not only the Redeemer would come, but...the doctrine of salvation would again have its own course and would be commenced by John....

"John then here seems to be...highly extolled.... When God thus speaks highly of His Ministers, the power of His Spirit is not excluded.... He shows how great is the power of truth, when He works through it by the secret influence of His Spirit....

"By saying that he (John) would 'turn the hearts of fathers to sons and of sons to fathers'..., the Prophet here has in view the origins of the people -- even Abraham and other holy Patriarchs.... It is no wonder that he mentions it as an instance of the ineffable kindness of God that they were all to be gathered and restored from discord to unity, so as to become united in one faith....

"Malachi takes it for granted, that there was formerly true religion.... He now recalls them to their first condition, so that sons might unite in sentiment with their fathers -- and fathers also with their sons, and become one.... There have been some converted young men, who have show the right way to their fathers and have carried light before them.... If we wish to derive benefit from what the Prophet teaches us, we ought especially to welcome Christ.... We learn that the sin of not embracing Christ when He offers Himself to us, shall not go unpunished!....

"Almighty God..., we hardly advance one step, though stimulated by You! O, grant that we may strive to profit more by the various helps which You have provided for us!... (Viz.) the Law, the Prophets, the voice of John the Baptizer, and especially the doctrine of Your Only-begotten Son!... May we not only hasten to Him, but also proceed constantly on our course and persevere in it, until we shall at length obtain the victory.... You have promised -- an eternal inheritance in Heaven to all who faint not, but wait for the coming of the great Redeemer! Amen!"

Fathers, sons and families -- repent! Before God comes to punish!

(Jesus said:) "You have heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall not kill!' and 'Whoever shall kill shall be in danger of judgment!' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of judgment! And whoever shall say to his brother 'Raca!' (or 'Vain fellow!'), shall be in danger of the Council! But whoever shall say 'You fool!' -- shall be in danger of the fire of Hell!" Matthew 5:21-22.

Coming now to the Newer Testament, Calvin comments: "It is a mistake...to suppose...that Christ raises His disciples to a higher degree of perfection.... Nothing was farther from the design of Christ, than to alter or innovate anything in the Commandments of the Law! There, God has once fixed the Rule of Life -- which He will never retract. But as the Law had been corrupted by false expositions and turned to a profane meaning, Christ vindicates it against such corruptions and points out its true meaning from which the Jews had departed....

"That Christ...intended to make no correction in the precepts of the Law, is very clear.... To those who desire to enter into life..., He gives no other injunction than to 'keep the Commandments' of the Law (Matthew 19:17). From no other source do the Apostles as well as Christ Himself draw the rules for a devout and holy life.... We must not imagine Christ to be a New Legislator who adds anything to the eternal righteousness of His Father. We must listen to Him as a faithful Expounder, so that we may know what is the nature of the Law -- what is its object, and what is its extent....

"The Pharisees...had changed the doctrine of the Law.... Hence it came, that he who had not slain a man with his hand -- was pronounced (by them) to be free from the guilt of murder.... This was an intolerable profanation of the Law.... Our Lord quotes the very words of the Law.... His reply is not opposed to the command of Moses..., but to the interpretation usually put upon it by the Scribes....

"This precept of the Law restrains...all...that are opposed to brother love.... The word '*Racha!*' occupies a...place between anger and openly reproachful language.... God will judge and punish even concealed anger.... That man will be held guilty by 'the...Council' -- so that he may receive severer punishment.

"Those, again, who break out into reproaches -- are adjudged to 'the hell of fire.' This implies that hatred and everything that is contrary to love, is enough to expose them to eternal death.... The very name might be dreaded by the people, as shocking and alarming."

Calvin says in his *Institutes* II:8:7.39: "In saying that this is the meaning of the Law, we are not introducing a new interpretation of our...own. We are following Christ, the best Interpreter of the Law (Matthew 5:22).... 'Whoever hates his brother, is a murderer' (First John 3:15).... Our Saviour has declared:... 'Whoever shall say, 'You fool!' -- shall be in danger of hell.'"

O, note most carefully that not only murderers -- but also angry men are in danger of hell!

'Love your enemies; bless them who curse you; do good to them that hate you!.... So that you may be the children of your Father Who is in Heaven.... Therefore, be perfect! Even as your Father Who is in Heaven -- is perfect!' Matthew 5:44-48.

Calvin comments: "He who shall bring his mind to love those who hate him -- will naturally refrain from all revenge; will patiently endure evils; will be much more prone to assist the wretched.... 'You shall love your neighbour, as yourself!' (Matthew 22:39)....

"No man will ever come to obey this precept, till he shall have given up self-love.... Till men, all of whom God had declared to be connected to Him, shall be held by him in such estimation that he shall even proceed to love those by whom he is regarded with hatred....

"Believers ought...to 'bless their enemies'.... They do not fail to commit their cause to God, till He takes vengeance on the reprobate.... They desire, as far as lies in them, that the wicked should return to a sound mind.... And thus, they endeavour to promote their salvation....

"He expressly declares that no man will be a child of God, unless he 'loves those who hate him'.... Whoever shall wish to be accounted a Christian -- let him 'love his enemies!'.... The example of God is held out for our imitation.... It is His will, that we should imitate His fatherly goodness and liberality.... Christ therefore proves from the effect, that none are the children of God but those who resemble Him in gentleness and kindness....

"'You shall be the children of the Highest!' Not that any man acquires this honour for himself or begins to be a 'child of God' when he 'loves his enemies.' But because...Scripture...represents as a reward, the free gifts of God....

"He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust'.... The divine kindness toward us...are...common to all.... This very participation, excites us the more powerfully to act in a similar manner toward each other....

"'You, therefore, shall be perfect!' This 'perfection' does not mean equality [with God], but relates solely to resemblance. However distant we are from the perfection of God, we are said to be 'perfect as He is perfect' -- when we aim at the same object which He presents to us in Himself.... The 'perfection' of God means first that free and pure kindness which is not induced by the expectation of gain -- and secondly that remarkable goodness which contends with the malice and ingratitude of men."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:8:57: "'Love your enemies; bless them that curse you!'...(Matthew 4:44-45).... This...makes it plain that these are not exhortations -- but precepts!"

Be perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect! You too!

'A [Roman] centurion came to Him [Jesus]..., saying: "Lord, my servant is laying at home afflicted with palsy!"... Jesus said to him: "When I shall come, I will heal him!"... The centurion answered...: "Lord, I do not deserve that You should come under my roof!"... Jesus...said...'Not even in Israel have I found such great faith!... Many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham...in the Kingdom of Heaven. But...(some) shall be cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth!' Matthew 8:5-12.

Calvin comments: "The centurion...had embraced the worship of one God.... He had been healed by the Lord.... Luke (8:2) says that this 'servant was very dear to him'..., a faithful servant...highly esteemed by his master.... It is evident...sudden palsy...took away all hope of life.... Matthew says that he was 'grievously tormented'; and Luke that he was 'near death'...

"'He loves our nation!' This was...a commendation given him (the centurion) by the Jews.... His 'love'...could proceed only...from reverence for God. By 'building a synagogue' he showed plainly that he favoured the doctrine of the Law. The Jews therefore had good grounds for saying that, as a devout worshipper of God, he had claims on Christ for receiving such a favour.... (He said:) 'Lord, I do not deserve that You should come under my roof!... Only say the Word, and my servant will be healed!'... He had...acknowledged Christ to be the Son of God.... Christ finds no fault with his words, but declares that they proceeded from faith.... He (the centurion) is convinced that the power of God is manifested in Him (Jesus)....

"Jesus wondered...: "Not even in Israel have I found such great faith!"... Unless we yield such authority to the Word as to believe that...our sins are undoubtedly forgiven and we are restored to life -- all confidence of salvation is overthrown!....

"Many will come from the east and west!'... Christ gave to the Gentiles a taste and a kind of first-fruits of His grace. He...shows that the Master is an example of the future calling of the Gentiles, and of the spread of faith throughout the whole world.... He says that 'they will come' not only from the neighbouring countries, but from the farthest bounds of the world!...

"He declares that the Gentiles who shall come to the faith, will be partakers of the same salvation 'with Abraham'.... Christ does not now speak of individuals, but of the whole nation.... The Jews themselves would be driven out, to make way for their being succeeded by the Gentiles.... God will admit strangers into the bosom of Abraham, but...He will exclude 'the children (of Israel)!'"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* IV:16:12 & III:25:12: "Believers were collected from all quarters, to sit down with Abraham...in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 8:11)... Language cannot describe the severity of the divine vengeance on the reprobate.... Their pains and torments are figured...by...darkness, wailing and gnashing of teeth...(Matthew 8:12)!"

Such are the pains of those in Hell! But many shall come from all quarters into Heaven!

'Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul! But rather fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell! (There are) two sparrows!... One of them shall not fall on the ground, without (the will of) your Father!' Matthew 10:28-29.

Calvin comments: "When the Apostles saw the Gospel so greatly despised, and recollected the small number of believers -- they might be apt to throw away hope even for the future. Christ now meets this doubt -- by declaring that the Gospel would be widely spread; would at length rise superior to all the hindrances which might arise from men; and would become generally known....

"To excite His Disciples to despise death, Christ employs the...argument that this frail and perishing life ought to be little regarded by men who have been created for a heavenly immortality.... The 'fear' of God is extinguished by the dread of men...when we have abandoned...eternal life. We (then) reserve nothing more for ourselves than to be 'like the beasts that perish' (Psalm 49:12)!

"God alone has the power of bestowing eternal life, or of inflicting eternal death.... Christ ought therefore to be explained in this manner: 'Acknowledge that you have received immortal souls, which are subject to the disposal of God alone!'... In order to instruct us to bear with composure the loss of the bodily life, He bids us contemplate both eternal life and eternal death....

"There is hardly anything of less value than 'sparrows'!... And yet God has His eye upon them to protect them.... Would He Who is careful about the 'sparrows' -- disregard the life of men?... 'You are of more value!'

"This is true in general of all men. For the 'sparrows' were created for their advantage. But this discourse relates peculiarly to the sons of God who possess a far higher right than what they derive from creation!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:25:7 & I:16:5: "The saying of our Saviour...is worthy of observation. 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell!' (Matthew 10:28). Here, there would be no ground for fear -- were not the body which we now have, liable to punishment.... Christ says without reservation, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the will of His Father (Matthew 10:29). Surely, if the flight of birds is regulated by the counsel of God -- we must acknowledge...that while He 'dwells on high,' He 'humbles Himself to behold things that are in Heaven and on the Earth!' (Psalm 113:5-6)."

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "When Christ exhorts...to fear Him Who...is able to cast the soul into the fire...(Matthew 10:28) -- does He not intimate that the soul survives death?... It is God alone who has power over the soul, and can send it into Hellfire!"

Fear Him then, Who can destroy both soul and body in Hell!

'Jesus began to show to His Disciples how He must...be killed and be raised again the third day.... For whoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world -- and lose his own soul?'
Matthew 16:21-26.

Calvin commented: "Christ reminds His Disciples of what He must suffer.... It was necessary to inform them.... Christ must commence His reign not with gaudy display..., but with...death....

"He presently heals the wound -- by saying that on the third day, He will rise again from the dead!... There is nothing to be seen in the cross, but the weakness of the flesh -- till we come to His resurrection, in which the power of the Spirit shines brightly.... All Ministers of the Word who desire that their preaching may be profitable, ought to be exceedingly careful that the glory of His resurrection should always be exhibited by them, in connection with the ignominy of His death!...

"Peter views it as absurd that the Son of God, Who was to be the Redeemer..., should be crucified by the Elders -- and that He Who was the Author of life, should be condemned to die. He therefore endeavours to restrain Christ from exposing Himself to death....

"Christ saw that Peter had a dread of the cross, and that all the rest were affected in the same way. He enters into a general discourse about bearing the cross.... 'If any man would be My Disciple, let him follow Me by...taking up his cross!...'... None can be reckoned to be the disciples of Christ, unless they are true imitators of Him...willing to pursue the same course....

"The patience of the saints...consists in bearing willingly the cross which has been laid on them. Luke adds the word 'daily' -- 'let him take up his cross daily' -- which is very emphatic.... Christ's meaning is that there will be no end to our warfare, till we leave the world....

"For he that would save his life, shall lose it!' It is a most appropriate consolation, that they who willingly suffer death for the sake of Christ -- do actually obtain life.... He reminds men who are desirous of the present life -- that the only advantage which they reap, is to lose life. There is a contrast intended here, between temporal and eternal death....

"For what does it profit a man (if he shall gain the whole world -- and lose his own soul)?'... Christ reminds them that the soul of man was not created merely to enjoy the world for a few days, but to obtain at length its immortality in Heaven. What carelessness and what brutal stupidity is this, that men are so strongly attached to the world and so much occupied with its affairs as not to consider why they were born?... God gave them an immortal soul, in order that when the course of the earthly life is finished -- they might live eternally in Heaven!"

Reader, deny yourself, then! Take up your cross, and follow Jesus!

'Jesus took Peter, James and John...and brought them up into a high mountain.... He was transfigured before them.... His face shone like the sun, and His raiment was white as light.... There appeared to them Moses and Elijah.... Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them.... A Voice out of the cloud...said: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased! Hear...Him!".... Jesus charged them, saying: "Don't tell the vision to any man, until the Son of man has risen again from the dead!"' Matthew 17:1-9.

Calvin comments: "Inquire for what purpose Christ clothed Himself with heavenly glory for a short time!... Christ intended to show that He was not dragged unwillingly to death, but that He came forward of His Own accord.... He was subjected to death, because He wished it to be so.... That same flesh...had already partaken of the heavenly glory....

"His transfiguration did not altogether enable His disciples to see Christ as He now is, in Heaven -- but gave them a taste of His boundless glory such as they were able to comprehend. Then, His face shone like the sun. But now, He is far beyond the sun in brightness! In His raiment, an unusual and dazzling whiteness appeared. But now..., a divine majesty shines.... John declares that not until they are like Him, will they see Him as He is (First John 3:2)....

"Look, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah!.... It was intended to demonstrate that Christ alone is the End of the Law and of the Prophets.... 'They conversed with Jesus'.... The subject on which they conversed, is stated only by Luke (9:31) -- they talked of the decease which awaited Christ at Jerusalem.... Our Lord intended once more to ratify by their voice...that the same salvation through the sacrifice of Christ is held out to us in common with the holy fathers....

"Look, a bright cloud overshadowed them.... And look, a Voice from the cloud!... The Voice of God was heard..., but...neither a body nor a face was seen....

"This is My beloved Son!... There is an implied contrast of Moses and Elijah, with Christ.... The disciples of God's Own Son are here charged to seek no other Teacher. The word 'Son' is emphatic, and raises Him above servants....

"Hear Him!... These words were intended to draw the attention of the Church to Christ as the only Teacher.... He is the Sun of righteousness, Whose arrival brought the full light of day.... The Apostle says (Hebrews 1:1) that 'God, Who at sundry times and in various ways spoke formerly by the Prophets -- has in these last days spoken...by His beloved Son'....

"The time for making know the vision, was not yet fully come.... Christ had not (yet) given a more striking proof of His glory in His resurrection.... There are good reasons, therefore, why He enjoins His disciples to keep silence -- till He be risen from the dead."

This, then, is a preview of Christ's glory -- when risen from the dead! Do you so believe?

'One came and said to Him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do -- so that I may have eternal life?" And He said to him...: "If you will enter into life, keep the Commandments!... You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honour your father and your mother!... If you will be perfect..., come and follow Me!"'
Matthew 19:16-21.

Who was this man? Calvin comments: "He was 'a ruler' (Luke 18:18)...., a man of very high authority.... A good man.... By 'kneeling' (Mark 10:17), he testifies his reverence for Christ.... He...asks..what good thing he should do in order to obtain it (life). He therefore dreams of (his) merits, on account of which he may receive eternal life as a reward due!...

"Christ has no other intention, than to maintain the truth of His doctrine.... 'Keep the Commandments!.... You shall not murder!... Honour...parents!... You shall love your neighbour! (Which) contain nothing different from the former Commandments, but is a general explanation of them all...

"The Law must have been dead to him (the ruler).... He...imagined...he was...righteous.... He fearlessly boasts...he had discharged his duty properly, from his childhood!...

"Yet Christ does not demand anything beyond the Commandments of the Law.... I confess that we are nowhere commanded in the Law to 'sell all.' But as the design of the Law is to bring men to self-denial, and as it expressly condemns covetousness -- we see that Christ had no other object in view than to correct the false convictions of the young man....

"'One thing you want (or lack)'...in the very keeping of the Law!... The Law...represses all sinful desires, and teaches us to bear the cross.... The young man...is attached to his riches, and burns with covetousness.... He (Christ) does not only enjoin him to sell, but...to give to the poor.... Christ applauds not simply the selling, but liberality in assisting the poor....

"Christ...says: 'Follow Me!' He enjoined him not only to become His disciple, but to submit His shoulders to bear the cross -- as Mark expressly states.... Christ does not command all...to sell all that they have. For the husbandman, who had been accustomed to live by his labour and to support his children, would do wrong in selling his possessions if he were not constrained to it by any necessity. To keep what God has put in our power, provided that by maintaining ourselves and our family in a sober and frugal manner we bestow some portion on the poor -- is a greater virtue than to squander all....

"The young man...withdraws from the school of Christ.... He finds it uneasy to be stripped of his riches.... But if we are not prepared to endure poverty, it is manifest...covetousness reigns!"

What must you do to get eternal life? Keep the Commandments, and keep following Jesus!

"Then Peter answered and said to Him: "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed You!"... Then Jesus said...: "You who have followed Me in the regeneration -- when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, you too shall sit on twelve thrones.... And everyone who has forsaken houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or land, for My name's sake -- shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life!" Matthew 19:27-29.

Calvin comments: "Peter...compares himself and the other disciples to the rich man whom the world had turned aside from Christ.... They had led a poor...life.... He properly inquires if it be to no purpose that they have left all their property, and devoted themselves to Christ....

"But what were those all things?... Being mean and very poor men, they scarcely had a home to leave.... Though their wealth was not magnificent, they subsisted at home by their manual labours not less cheerfully than the richest man.... Certainly, if some reward had not been reserved for the disciples -- it would have been foolish in them to have changed their course of life.... Let us learn...to...elevate our minds to the hope of the heavenly life!...

"Christ warned...that the glory of His Kingdom...was about to be revealed.... 'I...will at length ascend to My throne.... Endure, then, for a little!'" The disciples partake of the same glory. 'You too shall sit on twelve thrones!'.... He compares them to assessors or...judges -- who occupy the highest seats in the royal council.... Christ holds their wishes in suspense, till the latest revelation of His Kingdom.... There is no doubt, that Christ here speaks of the Last Day....

"'Regeneration' would be nothing else than the renovation which shall follow our restoration.... Life shall swallow up what is mortal..., when our mean body..be transformed into the heavenly glory of Christ.... 'Regeneration'...(also) refers to the first coming of Christ.... Then the world began to be renewed, and arose out of the darkness of death into the light of life.... The renovation of the Church...had raised an expectation of wonderful happiness, as soon as the Messiah would appear....

"'Whoever...forsakes (houses or brethren...or wife or children or land, for My name's sake -- shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life)!'... Those who shall willingly 'lose all' for the sake of Christ -- will be more happy even in this life than if they had retained the full possession of them.... He promises about recompensing them 'a hundredfold'.... If any man estimate aright the immediate grace of God by which He relieves the sorrows of His people -- he will acknowledge that it is justly preferred to all the riches of the world.... God gladdens His people!... Their condition is more desirable, than the luxuries of kings!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:25:10: "Our Saviour...promised that they 'shall receive a hundredfold -- and shall inherit everlasting life!' (Matthew 19:28)... Christ...begins the glory of His Body (the Church) in this world and gradually increases it.... He will complete it, in Heaven!"

Forsake everything, then -- to inherit Heaven and its riches! You too!

'Behold..., the Son of man shall be betrayed to the chief priests!... And they shall condemn Him to death! And they shall deliver Him to the Gentiles..., to crucify Him! But the third day, He shall rise again!' Matthew 20:18-19.

Calvin comments: "The Apostles had been informed previously what kind of death awaited our Lord. Yet, as they had not sufficiently profited by it -- He now repeats anew what He had frequently said.

"He sees that the day of His death is at hand. Nay more, He is already in a state of readiness to offer Himself to be sacrificed....

"On the other hand, He sees the disciples not only afraid but overwhelmed by blind alarm. He therefore exhorts them to steadiness....

"He confirms them.... He...meets the offence of the cross, by a proof of His divinity.... When they are convinced that He is the Son of God..., (they) therefore (will see that He) will be victorious over death....

"Mark states what is omitted by the other two Evangelists.... Before our Lord explained to His disciples in private that He was going straight to the sacrifice of death, not only they but also the rest of His followers were sorrowful and trembling....

"The reason why He did not publish His death..., (was so) that the report might not spread too widely before the time.... If He had admitted all indiscriminately to this discourse, it was possible that many persons seized with alarm might flee and fill the ears of the public with this report.... Thus the death of Christ would have lost its glory....

"He gives a still more evident proof of His divinity. For He could not -- as man -- have foreseen that, after having been condemned by the chief priests and scribes, He would be delivered up to the Gentiles and spat on and mocked in various ways and scourged and at length dragged to the punishment of the cross....

"Yet He..., candidly declaring the whole matter, points out the way to overcome temptation. Namely by looking forward with certainty to His resurrection!"

O Christian! Also when we might fear persecution and even death -- let us resolutely look forward to our resurrection thereafter! May we realize that our own resurrection is certain, through the resurrection of Christ in our place!

For Christ was not only crucified, but also rose from the dead -- for us! And for you?

'Hear another parable! There was a certain Householder who...dug a winepress...and let it out to farmers and went into a far country.... He sent His servants to the farmers, so that they might receive the fruits.... But the farmers took His servants, and beat one...and stoned another.... Last of all, He sent to them His Son.... But when the farmers saw the Son, they said...'This is the heir! Come, let's kill Him, and...seize...His inheritance!''.... And they...slew Him.... When the Lord...of the vineyard comes..., He will miserably destroy those wicked men!... Jesus said...: "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The Stone which the builders rejected...has become the Head Cornerstone?'... I say to you: 'The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof! And whosoever shall fall on this Stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever the Stone shall fall, shall be ground to powder!'" Matthew 21:33-44.

Calvin comments: "The substance of this parable is...the priests and the other rulers...wickedly endeavour to defraud God of His right.... They practised the same kind of robbery towards the Prophets, and they are now ready to slay the Son. But they will not go unpunished!....

"While God appoints Pastors of His Church, He...acts in the same manner as if a Proprietor were to let a vineyard or field to a farmer, who would labour in the cultivation of it and make an annual return.... In this passage, He accuses the vinedressers themselves -- who like base swindlers, appropriate to themselves the produce of the vineyard....

"God planted a vineyard..., and let it to farmers'.... Of old, He appointed priests to be...cultivators of the vineyard.... As they neglected the work assigned them..., the Prophets were sent...to bring back the worship of God.... 'But (the priests) wounded one, and killed another'....

"The Jews would dare to act towards the Son, in the same manner as they had repeatedly done towards the Prophets.... They rose in diabolical rage against the Son.... It was the crowning point of all their crimes, to slay the Son -- so that they might reign as in a house which wanted an heir....

""Have you never read in the Scriptures?!""... Christ confirms His statement by the testimony of Scripture.... Did the Scripture (Psalm 118:22) foretell that He would be received with joy and favour and applause? Or did in not to the contrary foretell that the rulers themselves would oppose Him?...

"Christ...proves from the Psalm that He would be placed on His throne by the wonderful power of God.... Christ...is justly called the 'Cornerstone'.... The Kingdom of God would be founded on a Stone which the builders themselves would reject.... Though the ungodly destroyed the worship of God among themselves, they would never cause the name of Christ to be abolished or true religion to perish! For God, in Whose hand are all the ends of the Earth, would find elsewhere a dwelling and habitation for His Kingdom...that it may yield fruit!"

Thus the killing of God's Son. But He was resurrected. And so too shall His believers be!

The Sadducees, who say...there is no resurrection, came to Him.... "If a man die, having no children -- his brother shall marry his wife and raise up seed to his brother. Now, there were...seven brothers.... The first, when he had married a wife, deceased..., having no children.... Like the second also...; unto the seventh.... In the 'resurrection' -- whose wife shall she be?!"... Jesus answered...them: "You err, not knowing the Scriptures!... Have you not read...: 'I am the God of Abraham?'... God is not the God of the dead, but of the living!" Matthew 22:23-32.

Calvin comments: "The Sadducees...denied...the final resurrection of the body and also the immortality of the soul (Acts 23:8).... God does not declare that immediately after the death of the body, souls live as if their glory and happiness were already enjoyed by them in perfection -- but delays the expectation..., till the last day.... The Scriptures inform us that the spiritual life depends on the hope of the resurrection; and that souls, when separated from the bodies, look forward to it....

"(In) the Jewish 'Church'...part of the chief leaders in religion...took away the expectation of a future life, so that after the death of the body men differed in no respect from brute beasts.... Experience plainly shows that they were chargeable with the grossest stupidity. Since it is manifest that the reward which is laid up for the good, is left incomplete till another life....

"It is impossible to conceive anything more absurd than this dream -- that men, formed after the image of God, are extinguished by death like the beasts.... The holy fathers earnestly aspired to the heavenly life.... The covenant which God had made with them, was spiritual and eternal. They who remained blind in the midst of such clear light, must have been worse than stupid!...

"Those men form and express just and wise sentiments respecting the mysteries of the heavenly Kingdom, who join the power of God with the Scriptures.... The (dead) children of God...will no longer be exposed to the wants of a frail and perishing life.... The dead shall rise!.... Christ confirms, by the testimony of Scripture, the doctrine of the final resurrection.... Christ seized on...Exodus 3:6..., because it ought to have been well-known and distinctly remembered by the Jews -- being a declaration that they were redeemed by God because they were the children of Abraham.... He assigns the first rank of honour to the fathers.... In what respect would they have the preference, if they had been extinguished by death?... No man can be a father, without children.... So...the Lord cannot be called the God of any -- but the living.... Since therefore the Lord promises salvation to all to whom He declares that He is their God, and since he says this respecting (the dead) Abraham..., it follows that there remains for the dead a hope of life!"

Calvin says in his *Treatises* III:347 and in his *Psychopannychia*: "Abraham survives death.... He Who is the God not of the dead but of the living declares that He is the God of Abraham.... If...Abraham...and Jacob had departed this life when God spoke to Moses, calling Himself their God..., they were living another life! Those must surely exist..., of whom God say that He is their God.... Abraham...and Jacob are alive!" God is not the God of the dead, but of the living!

'A woman came...having a...box of very precious perfume, and poured it on His head.... His disciples...were indignant, saying...: "This perfume might have been sold for much; and that, given to the poor!" Jesus...said to them: "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work to Me!... You always have the poor with you; but you don't always have Me!... She has poured this perfume on My body..., for My burial!" Matthew 26:7-12.

Calvin comments: "John says that His feet were anointed, while the other two Evangelists say she anointed His head. This involves no contradiction.... It was then poured, in greater abundance than usual. John, by way of amplification, informs us that Christ's very feet were moistened with the oil. Mark too relates that she broke the alabaster box, and poured the whole of the ointment on His head.... It agrees very well with this, to say that it flowed down to His feet....

"When the disciples saw it, (they were indignant)!... John says...the murmur proceeded from Judas, who betrayed Christ.... The others would never have dared to murmur, if the wicked slander of Judas had not served for a torch.... We act improperly when we form our opinion without paying regard to the Word of God.. For, as Paul informs us, 'None of us lives or dies for himself; but all must stand before the judgment seat of Christ!'...(Romans 14:7,10 and Second Corinthians 5:10)....

"Why do you trouble the woman?!" It is wonderful that Christ, Whose whole life was a rule and pattern of temperance and frugality, now approves of immoderate expense!.... He does not maintain that the woman did right, in such manner as if He wished that the same thing should be done every day -- but maintains that what she had done in a single instance was agreeable to God because it must have been done for a good reason.... Christ had no desire for the use...; yet this anointing pleased Him on account of the circumstances in which it happened....

"(Martha's sister) Mary was led by a secret movement of the Spirit to anoint Christ.... 'For she has performed a good action towards Me!'... Christ here settles the distinction between what is good and evil, by His Own solitary decision.... By affirming that what the woman had done was a good action, when that action had already been condemned by the disciples -- He repressed by this Word the rashness of men who freely allow themselves to pronounce judgment....

"For you always have the poor with you!" Christ does not simply defend the anointing..., but assures us that it pleased God.... By saying that the poor will always be in the world, He distinguishes between the ordinary service which ought to be maintained among believers, and that extraordinary service which ceased after His ascension to Heaven....

"She has done it, to bury Me!..." Christ confirms...that the precious ointment was...valued by Him...solely in reference to His burial.... He wished to testify by this symbol that His grave would yield a sweet odour, as it breathed life and salvation through the whole world!"

Thus, Jesus was perfumed with a view to His burial – to sanctify all believers when they die!

"My blood of the New Testament...is shed for many, for the remission of sins!... I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine -- until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom!" Matthew 26:28-29.

Calvin comments: "While they were eating..., Christ took bread to invite them to partake of a new supper -- that is, of the Lord's Supper...in which the disciples partake...with each other....

"He bids His disciples take.... It is He alone Who offers.... It is an...inversion when a mortal man (like a papist priest)...commanded to take the body of Christ, claims the office of offering it.... That bread is not consecrated by whispering and breathing, but by the clear doctrine of faith.... It is a piece of magic and sorcery, when the consecration is addressed to the dead element....

"Christ consecrates the bread when He declares to us that it is 'His body.' We must not suppose that there is any change of the substance.... When...transubstantiation had once been introduced, it would not now admit any light of true interpretation of these words.... They (the Romanists) are delighted with the...literal sense. Why, then?.... They do not admit that the Rock was actually Christ (*cf.* First Corinthians 10:1-4)!...

"The bread is called His body, because it is a symbol of the body of Christ.... The Papists...maintain that what we see is not bread.... But their absurd fancy is refuted by Paul, who asserts that the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ (First Corinthians 10:16).... Christ does not say 'This (wine) is My blood' -- but 'this cup in the New Testament is My blood!'... The words related by Matthew -- 'I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine' -- plainly show that what He delivered to the disciples to drink, was wine (rather than blood)....

"The body of Christ did not, by clothing itself with an incorruptible life, lay aside its own nature.... It follows that it is finite. It is not infinite, but remains in some particular spot.... Nothing could be more unreasonable than to draw down Christ to the Earth -- when, on the contrary, He calls us upwards to Himself.... 'For I say to you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine -- until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom!'

"He intended to place His death before their eyes in the Holy Supper.... He was now leaving the world.... They had no occasion for shrinking from the thought of His death, which would be followed by a better life.... 'I am now hastening to My death..., in order that I may pass from it to a blessed immortality -- not to live alone without you in the Kingdom of God, but to have you associated with Me in the same life!'... Since Christ has died and been received into Heaven -- we ought to be led from the contemplation of the cross, to Heaven.... Death and the restoration of life...agree.... Our Lord promises to His disciples that, having hitherto lived with them on Earth as a mortal man, He will hereafter make them His associates in a blessed and immortal life!"

For Jesus' blood was shed for the remission of the sins of many! And for yours too?

"They...reviled Him..., saying....: "If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross!"... Jesus, when He had cried out...with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit.... The veil of the temple was rent into two, from top to bottom.... The Earth quaked.... The graves were opened.... Bodies of the dead saints arose.... When the centurion and those that were with him...saw the earthquake..., they were very afraid -- saying: "Truly, this was the Son of God!"" Matthew 27:39-54.

Calvin comments: "Nothing...inflicts a more painful wound on pious minds than when ungodly men, in order to shake...faith, upbraid them with being deprived of the assistance and favour of God..... There never will be wanting wicked men who are disposed to insult our distresses!...

"If you are the Son of God!' Wicked men demand from Christ such a proof of His power -- so that, by proving Himself to be the Son of God, He may cease to be the Son of God!... In order to prove himself to be the Son of God, it was necessary that He should hang on the cross.... The Son of God determined to remain nailed to the cross for the sake of our salvation, until He had endured most cruel torments of the flesh and dreadful anguish of soul and even death itself....

"Jesus...again cried out with a loud voice.' Luke...says that Jesus cried out: 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!.' In his *Psychopannychia*, Calvin says: "Christ admits that the body is killed, but...that the soul is safe.... In dying, He commends it into His Father's hands, as Luke writes (23:46)." Calvin comments: "His faith was unshaken, and always kept its ground unvanquished.... Christ boldly expresses His assurance that God is the faithful Guardian of His soul.... He [died and] betook Himself directly to God, and committed to His bosom the assurance of His confidence....

"The Lord guards the souls of His people, even in death.... Christ...hastens cheerfully to death, and desires to be preserved beyond the world.... The chief reason why God receives our soul into His keeping, is so that our faith may rise beyond this transitory life.... It was not in reference to Himself alone that Christ committed His soul to the Father.... He included...in one bundle all the souls of those who believe in Him, so that they may be preserved along with His Own.... Everyone who when he comes to die...shall believe in Christ, will not breathe his soul at random into the air -- but will resort to a faithful Guardian Who keeps in safety whatever has been delivered to Him by the Father....

"Look, the veil of the temple was rent!'... Luke blends the rending of the veil with the eclipse of the sun.... The sacrifice of expiation, had been completed.... Christ, the true and everlasting Priest..., opened up for us by His blood the way to the heavenly sanctuary.... 'The Earth trembled'.... The Earth did bear the testimony to its Creator.... 'Graves were opened'.... The fabric of the world shook and trembled!"

'If you're the Son of God,' said the unbelievers, 'save yourself from the cross!' But Jesus didn't. Why not? So that we who believe can be saved! And you?

"There was a great earthquake. For the angel of the Lord descended from Heaven.... The angel...said to the women...: "I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified! He is not here! For He has risen!... Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead!"" Matthew 28:2-7.

Calvin comments: "The Son of God had obtained a victory over death.... It was necessary to remove all doubts, so that the divine majesty might openly and manifestly be presented to the eyes of the women. Matthew says...there was an earthquake....

"Through fear, the guards trembled! The Lord struck the guards with terror!... The terror had...the effect of hindering them from treating with careless mockery the report of the resurrection which was to be spread abroad shortly afterwards.... When they were at liberty to talk freely among their acquaintances, they frankly admitted what they did not dare openly to avow in consequence of having been gained over by money (paid to them by the Judaistic priests and elders to say that Jesus' disciples came and stole Him away while they were asleep, Matthew 28:11-15)....

"A similar terror seized the women. But their minds...were restored by the consolation which immediately followed, so as to begin...to entertain some better hope....

"It is proper that the majesty of God should strike both terror and fear indiscriminately into the godly as well as the reprobate, so that all flesh may be silent before His face. But when the Lord has humbled and subdued His elect, He immediately mitigates their dread so that they may not sink under its oppressive influence....

"The reprobate, on the other hand, He either overwhelms by sudden dread -- or suffers to languish in slow torment. As to the soldiers themselves, there were no doubt like dead men.... Though they as well as the women were afraid, no medicine was applied to soothe their terror.

"For to the women alone, did the angel say: 'Fear not!' He held out to them a ground of joy and assurance, in the resurrection of Christ.

"Luke adds...: 'Why do you seek "The Living" among the dead?!... Go quickly, and tell His disciples!'....

"They were expressly enjoined to carry this message to Peter..., to assure him that Christ had not cast him off.... He had already entered into the sepulchre, and beheld the traces of the resurrection of Christ. But God denied him the honour which He shortly afterwards conferred on the women, of hearing from the lips of the angel that Christ was risen!"

The crucified Jesus is not here, but risen! Is that too your belief?

'(Jesus said:) "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem! And the Son of man shall be delivered to the chief priests and to the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock Him and shall scourge Him and shall spit on Him and shall kill Him. But the third day, He shall rise again!... Can you drink of the cup that I drink of?... You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of!"' Mark 10:33-39.

Calvin comments: "Mark represents (Zebedee's sons) themselves as making the request (that they should sit at His right hand in His glory).... Christ replied to them..., when themselves according to Mark applying for a general engagement that whatever they ask, shall be granted to them....

"(Asked Jesus:) 'Can you drink the cup which I shall drink?'... He holds out to them the cross!...

"Our Lord indeed enjoins His followers to feel assured of victory and to sing a triumphal song in the midst of death.... For none but Him who has fought lawfully, is the crown prepared....

"Especially..., none will be a partaker of the life and Kingdom of Christ. (None but he) who had not previously shared in His sufferings and death....

"It is uncertain if, by the word 'cup,' our Lord alluded to the mystery of the Holy Supper.... As it had not yet come into use, I choose to interpret it more simply as denoting more simply the measure of afflictions which God appoints to everyone....

"It is His right to lay on every one his own burden, according to His pleasure.... He is said to give them a cup to drink....

"The words contain no ordinary consolation, for alleviating the bitterness of the cross. When in 'the cross' Christ associates Himself with us....

"You shall indeed drink My cup!'... Christ warns them of what will take place, so that they may be prepared to endure it with patience....

"Many believers die a natural death...without violence or shedding of blood. Yet it is common to all of them...to be conformed to the image of Christ. And therefore, 'during their whole life, they are sheep appointed to the slaughter' (Romans 8:36)."

But after that, follows life everlasting, for evermore! As Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:18:3: "As the very words of Christ express it -- 'in the world to come, eternal life!' (Mark 10:30).

Yes, Christ is indeed to be killed. But to rise again, the third day! For us who believe!

'There was a certain rich man..., and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus who was laid at his gate full of sores and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.... The beggar died, and was carried...into "Abraham's bosom." The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hell he lifted up his eyes -- being in torments. He saw Abraham far off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and he cried out and said...: "Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am being tormented in this flame!" But Abraham said...: "You in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things. But now, he is comforted; and you, are tormented!... There is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from here to you, cannot; neither can they that would come from there, pass to us!"' Luke 16:19-26.

The rich man lived sumptuously, every day -- and when he died, was buried. Poor Lazarus desired only to be fed with crumbs from the rich man's table -- and died without being buried. But thereafter, he was carried straight to glory, into Abraham's bosom. Calvin comments: "The chief accusation brought against this (rich) man, is his cruelty in permitting Lazarus -- poor, (hungry) and full of sores -- to lie out of doors at his gate....

'The beggar died.' Christ here points out the vast change which death effected in the condition of the two men.... To be after death carried by angels in Abraham's bosom, was a happiness.... On the other hand, to be sentenced to everlasting torments, is a dreadful thing....

"Abraham is called the father of believers.... To him was committed the covenant of...life, so that he might...preserve it faithfully for his own children and afterwards transmit it to all nations.... The children of God...follow the faith of their father Abraham, so they are received at death into that blessed rest into which he awaits their arrival... They enjoy the same habitation in Heaven....

""(After death, the unbelieving rich man went to) Hell'.... For the reprobate...are prepared dreadful torments..., cut off from hope.... You, (rich man)..., did choose to resemble a sow.... You therefore receive a reward which befits brutal pleasures.... It is said of Lazarus, on the other hand, that he enjoys comfort.... They who have patiently endured the burden of the cross laid upon them and...have cherished the hope of a better life, have a rest laid up for them in Heaven.... Wicked despisers of God..., wholly engrossed in the pleasures of the flesh..., will experience immediately after death...torments.... The wicked are tormented by the apprehension of future judgment!"

Calvin also says in his *Psychopannychia*: "In the New Testament, where the Evangelists use the term *hadees*, the translator had rendered it by *infernus*. Thus it is said of the rich man, 'When he was in Hell' (*Infernus*) &c (Luke 16:23)."

The selfish rich man in Hell -- and the blessed Lazarus in "Abraham's bosom"! Which of the two are you? Where shall you spend eternity?!

'One of the malefactors..., railed on Him.... The other... rebuked him (the first), saying: "Do you not fear God?... We are receiving the due reward for our deeds; but this man (Jesus), has done nothing amiss!" Then he said to Jesus: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom!" And Jesus said...: "Truly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise!"' Luke 23:39-43.

Calvin comments: "One of the malefactors (railed on Him)'.... An example of furious obstinacy is held out...in this wretch.... 'But the other, answering, (rebuked the first), saying: "Do you not fear God?"... In this..., a striking mirror of the unexpected and incredible grace of God is held out.... (He was) suddenly changed into a new man, when he was near death.... Who would ever have thought that a robber, in...death, would become not only a devout worshipper of God -- but a distinguished teacher of faith and piety?... He severely reproved and restrained the wicked forwardness of his companion..., ascribing to Christ the praise due to His righteousness!...

"Lord, remember me!'... A robber...(after) giving himself up to execrable murders..., suddenly rises higher than all the Apostles!... While on the gallows, he adores Christ as a King; celebrate His Kingdom in the midst of shocking and worse than revolting abasement; and declares Him, when dying, to be the Author of life!... That a person ignorant...and whose mind was altogether corrupted, should all at once...perceive salvation and heavenly glory in the accursed cross, was truly astonishing.... This was..., from the depth of Hell, to rise above the Heavens!... Woe to our sloth, if we do not...fix our hope of life on His resurrection; if our aim is not towards Heaven where He has entered!... With a mangled body and almost dead..., yet he (the penitent malefactor) relies on the grace of Christ alone.... Whence came his assurance of pardon, but...in the death of Christ?!...

"Christ had not yet made a public triumph over death. Still...He shows that He never was deprived of the power of His Kingdom.... Nothing more lofty or magnificent belongs to a divine King, than to restore life to the dead.... We ought to observe His inconceivable readiness on so kindly receiving the robber without delay, and promising to make him a partaker of a happy life.... Hence we may conclude with certainty that we shall be saved, provided that He remembers us!.... Whoever then in dying shall commit to Christ in true faith the keeping of his soul, will not long be detained or allowed to languish in suspense.... Christ will meet his prayer, with the same kindness which He exercised toward the robber!... Souls, when they have departed from their bodies, continue!... Those...ingrafted by faith into...Christ..., enjoy after death a blessed and joyful rest until the perfect glory of the heavenly life is fully manifested by the (final) coming of Christ!"

Calvin also said in his *Institutes* III:24:11 & III:25:6: "Was there any germ of righteousness...in the thief who only with his last breath thought of repentance?... Did not the soul when unclothed from the body retain its essence...capable of beatific glory -- our Saviour would not have said to the thief, 'Today you shall be with Me in Paradise!' (Luke 23:42-43)." Calvin further states in his *Psychopannychia*: "The thief...implored mercy.... He (Jesus) calls him to the joys of His Kingdom on that very day!" That same day, the dying penitent robber went to Paradise! And you, when you die?

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?!... It behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead..., and...repentance and remission of sins...be preached in His name among all nations!... And you are witnesses of these things!" Luke 24:26,46-48.

Calvin comments: "Our (risen) Lord discoursed...about the office of Messiah as it is described by the Prophets.... Christ explained at great length that He had been sent...so that He might expiate by the sacrifice of His death the sins of the world." After thus suffering, Christ was preparing to enter into His glory -- to "enter into His Kingdom!... Christ is King!..."

"Christ is made know to us, through the Gospel. It is when light is thrown on the knowledge of Him by the Law and the Prophets.... Never was there a more able...Teacher...than our Lord Himself.... He borrows from the Law and the Prophets the proof of His doctrine....

"In order that Christ may be made known to us through the Gospel, it is therefore necessary that Moses and the Prophets should go before -- as guides, to show us the way.... Fanatics..., by suppressing the Law and the Prophets, wickedly mutilate the Gospel -- as if God intended that any testimony which He had ever given respecting His Son, should become useless!... Fanatics...take upon themselves the liberty of despising the Scriptures.... Christ...by His Spirit...guides us to understand the Scriptures -- and does not hurry us away into the idle raptures of enthusiasm....

"He said to them, 'Thus it is written!'... When the Spirit of Christ Who is the inward Teacher performs His office, the labour of the Minister who speaks is not thrown away.... The words of Christ...are founded on this principle: 'Whatever is written, must be fulfilled -- for God declared nothing by His Prophets, but what He will undoubtedly accomplish'.... By these words we are...taught what it is that we ought chiefly to learn from the Law and the Prophets.... Since Christ is the end and the soul of the Law (Romans 10:4), whatever we learn without Him and apart from Him is idle and unprofitable....

"Christ here places first in order, His death and resurrection.... For whence come repentance and forgiveness of sins, but because our old man is crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6) so that by His grace we may rise to newness of life?... He teaches therefore that in His death and resurrection, we ought to seek the cause and grounds of our salvation.... The grace of the redemption brought by Him, extends alike to all nations.... The Prophets had frequently predicted the calling of the Gentiles.... 'And you are witnesses of these things!'"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:3:19 & IV:17:32: "He said that He behoved 'to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations'.... Christ was received into the glory of the heavenly Kingdom, so as to be exalted above all the circumstances of the world (Luke 24:26,46).... The immortality of our flesh...is now quickened by His immortal flesh!" Christ had to suffer -- before entering His glory!

'In the beginning..., the Word was God.... In Him was life..., the Light of men.... The darkness could not put it out.... John...came...to bear witness of the Light, so that all men through Him might believe.... That was the true Light, which enlightens every man that comes into the world.... The world was made by Him.... The Word was made flesh...and we beheld His glory, the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father.... No man has seen God at any time. The Only-begotten God Who is in the bosom of the Father...has declared Him!' John 1:1-18.

Calvin comments, declaring "Christ's eternal divinity.... He is the (*Logos* or eternal Word).... Christ...was always united with God, before the world existed.... He clearly declares that He is God....

"In Him was life.... The life was the Light of men'.... Life given to men...united with the Light.... Men...were not created in the likeness of beasts, but endowed with reason (or *logos*).... 'The Light shines in the darkness'.... The Son of God had always called men to Himself, by this...Light still left in us.... 'John...came...to bear witness of the Light'....

"Christ is Light, reflecting from Himself and through Himself, and thence shining brightly upon the whole world.... Christ makes us all partakers of His brightness.... Beams from this Light are shed upon the whole race of men.... There is no man to whom some awareness of the Eternal Light does not penetrate....

"('The world was made by Him.... The Word was made flesh...and we beheld His glory, the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father.') Christ..., clothed in our flesh..., showed Himself openly to the world.... 'Flesh' here is...used...for mortal man....

"The unity of His Person, does not prevent His natures from remaining distinct -- so that the divinity retains whatever is proper to it, and the humanity likewise has separately what belongs to it.... He Who is now man...was always very God.... He says that none has seen God.... God dwells in inaccessible Light. He cannot be known, except in Christ.... God, Who was formerly invisible, has now appeared in Christ....

"The Son is in the bosom of the Father.... The breast is the seat of counsel.... The Son knew the most hidden secrets of His Father.... The breast of God (is) laid open to us in the Gospel!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:13:11 & I:15:4 & II:2:12: "The Word was God (John 1:14).... John...says that the Light which was from the beginning in the Eternal Word of God, was the Light of man (John 1:4).... John 1:5...expresses...that in the perverted...nature of man, there are still some sparks which show that he is a rational animal and differs from the brutes."

In Christ was life, and the life was the Light of men! Is that also your belief?

"Destroy this temple!...; in three days, I will raise it up!" The Jews said: "This temple has been built forty-six years; and will you finish rearing it -- in three days?!" But He spoke about the temple of His body. When He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered He had said this.... And they believed the Scripture, and the Word which Jesus had said!' John 2:19-22.

Even right after Jesus had miraculously turned water into wine, unbelieving Judaists demanded of Him to show them another sign! Calvin comments: "Where they went wrong, was in refusing to admit the calling of Christ -- unless He performed a(nother) miracle.... Christ...refused them the sign.... His power would be proved and confirmed by an uncommon sign. For no greater proof of the divine power in Christ could be desired, than His resurrection from the dead...(which) alone was sufficient to shut their mouths.... He spoke...about the glory of His resurrection....

"He shows that all authority over the temple, belongs to Him.... His power is so great in building the true temple of God.... The body of Christ is justly and congruently called a temple.... The body of Christ was the abode of His divinity.... We know that the Son of God so clothed Himself with our nature, that in the flesh (in) which He assumed the eternal majesty of God, dwelt as in His Sanctuary.... In Christ, the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily -- so that He truly is God manifested in the flesh.

"I will raise it (My temple) up!" Here Christ claims for Himself the glory of His resurrection.... Christ particularly proclaims His Own divinity... ("Then the Jews said: "This temple has kept on being built) forty-six years!" Daniel (9:25)...calls it 'seven weeks' -- which makes forty-nine years.... Before the last of these weeks had ended (three years later on Calvary), the Temple was complete.... This new building of the Temple, was regarded as if it were the ancient temple always remaining.... They said that the temple was hardly and with the greatest difficulty built by the fathers in forty-six years.... If they had been ready to obey reverently a Prophet sent by God, they would not have rejected so arrogantly what He had said in confirmation of His office....

"When therefore He was raised from the dead (, His disciples remembered)'.... The disciples did not understand Christ's saying (previously). But the teaching which seemed to have vanished uselessly into thin air, later produced fruit.... Though therefore many of our Lord's actions and sayings are obscure at the time, we must not give up in despair or despise what we do not understand.... 'They believed the Scripture, and the Word of Christ.' By comparing the Scripture with the Word of Christ -- they were helped to progress in faith!"

Calvin says in his *Institutes* II:14:5 & III:25:7: "Christ would not have called His body a 'Temple', had not the Godhead distinctly dwelt in it.... Christ rose again. Was it by forming for Himself a new body? Nay! He had foretold, 'Destroy this Temple -- and in three days I will raise it up!' (John 2:19)." Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "The words of Christ admit that the body is killed, and testify at the same time that the soul is safe.... He was speaking of the Temple of His body." Christ would raise up His dead body in three days -- and, at the end, ours too!

'God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son -- so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!' John 3:16.

Calvin comments: "God so loved.' Christ shows the first cause and...source of our salvation.... There is no calm haven where our minds can rest, until we come to God's free love.... Faith in Christ, quickens all.... The heavenly Father does not wish the human race that He loves, to perish....

"Christ's words mean nothing different, when He says the cause lies in the love of God.... He ascribes the glory for our salvation, entirely to His love.... The Son was given to men, so that they should not perish.... The secret love in which our heavenly Father embraced us to Himself is -- since it flows from His eternal good pleasure -- precedent to all other causes.... God gave His Son to die for us, because He loved is....

"He gave his Only-begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish!...' Faith...is placing Christ before one's eyes, and beholding in Him the heart of God poured out in love.... We are so very dear to God, that for our sakes He did not spare even His Only-begotten Son.... God's love for His Only-begotten Son, is a measure of how precious our salvation was to Him -- that He willed the death of the Only-begotten Himself, should be its price!....

"Whoever believes in Him, should not perish!...' Faith...delivers us from eternal destruction.... Although we seem to have been born for death -- sure deliverance is offered to us by faith in Christ!... We must not fear the death which otherwise threatens us....

"He is favourable to the whole world, when He calls all without exception to faith in Christ which is indeed an entry into life.... Christ is open to all, and displayed to all.... We receive Christ as He is given to us by the Father -- the One Who has freed us from the condemnation of eternal death, and made us heirs of eternal life.... Faith embraces Christ with the efficacy of His death, and the fruit of His resurrection.... We live, because God freely loves us.... Curse and death are destroyed, as well as sins!"

Calvin says in his *Institutes* II:17:2 & III:14:17: "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him might not perish!' (John 3:16)... The first place is assigned to the love of God as the chief cause.... Faith in Christ flows as the second and more proximate cause.... The efficient cause of our eternal salvation, the Scripture uniformly proclaims to be the mercy and free love of the heavenly Father towards us."

Calvin further states in his *Treatises* III:118 & 195: "Whoever believes, has eternal life!' -- as our Saviour...declares (John 3:16).... God, therefore, Who is rich in mercy (John 3) -- being unwilling that those whom He had created should perish -- sent His Son into the world, so that when it was impossible for man to deliver himself he might have redemption in our Lord and Saviour through His blood!" For whoever trusts in Jesus shall not perish, but live forever! You too?

'The Father loves the Son.... He that believes in the Son, has everlasting life.... He that does not believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him!' John 3:35-36.

Calvin comments: "'The Father loves the Son'.... Does He hate all others?... He is not speaking of the common love which God has to all men whom He has created..., but of that unique love which begins at the Son and flows from Him.... This love with which, loving the Son, He embraces us too in Him -- is the cause of His communicating...His benefits to us by Christ's hand....

"He that believes in the Son, (has everlasting life)!.... We must seek all good things from Christ.... May we grasp the way...they are enjoyed!... This enjoying, consist of faith.... By it Christ is possessed Who brings with Himself both righteousness and faith, the fruit of righteousness.... Life is contained in Christ alone.... We become partakers..., only by the grace of Christ....

"The first thing to consider, is the free forgiveness of sins -- through which it comes to pass that we are accepted by God.... On this alone is founded and consists the whole confidence of our salvation. For righteousness cannot be imputed to us before God, in any other way -- than by His not imputing our sins to us.

"But he that does not believe in the Son, shall not see life...; the wrath of God abides on him!... He adjudges to eternal death, all who do not believe in Christ.... Thus he magnifies God's kindness, by warning us that there is no other escape from death but by Christ delivering us. This sentence depends on the fact that in Adam, we are all lost.

"But...it is Christ's office, to save the lost! Those who reject the salvation offered in Him, deservedly remain in death.... This belongs peculiarly to those who reject the Gospel which has been made known to them.... Although the whole human race is involved in the same destruction, a heavier and double vengeance awaits those who refuse to have the Son of God as their Deliverer....

"Moreover, it is plain that all the righteousness which the world thinks it has outside Christ -- is condemned and annihilated. Nor can anyone object that it is unfair for those who perish -- simply because they do not believe. For it is vain to imagine that there is any holiness in men, unless it has been given them by Christ....

"No hope remains for us, unless we are delivered by Christ. He says that the wrath of God abides on unbelievers.... The word 'abides' is used to teach us that we were appointed to death from the womb -- in that we are all born the children of wrath.... Death burdens all unbelievers, and holds them oppressed and overwhelmed in such a way that they can never escape.... Although the reprobate are already naturally condemned, they bring on themselves a new death by their unbelief.... Those who shake off the saving yoke of God..., fetter themselves with the chains of death!"

However, he who keeps on trusting in the Son -- has everlasting life! Do you?

'Jesus answered and said...'Everyone that drinks of this water, shall thirst again.... But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst! But the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life!' John 4:13-14.

Calvin comments: "Everyone that drinks of this water, (shall thirst again)!.... Christ...distinguishes between the use of the two kinds of water.

"The one is for the body, temporarily.... The other, is to quicken the soul -- for ever! For as the body is corruptible, so the aids that support it must needs be perishable and transitory. But that which quickens the soul, cannot but be eternal!....

"Believers to the very end of their lives, ardently desire more abundant grace. For He does not mean that we drink so that we are fully satisfied from the very first day -- but only that the Holy Spirit is a constantly flowing well.

"So there is no danger of these who are renewed by Spiritual grace, becoming dry. And therefore, although we thirst throughout our life, it is nevertheless certain that we have not drunk of the Spirit just for one day or for any short time -- but as of a perennial fountain that will never fail us.

"Thus, believers thirst. And that, keenly -- throughout their life.... Yet they abound with quickening moisture!

"For however little grace they have received, it quickens them continually -- so that they are never completely dry. Therefore, He is contrasting that satisfaction not with desire but only with dryness....

"(Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst! But the water that I shall give him,) shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life!

"These...words...indicate a continual watering. (Such are those) which sustain in believers a heavenly eternity, during this mortal and perishing life!

"Christ's grace therefore does not flow to us only for a little while, but pours on -- into a blessed immortality! For it does not cease to flow, until the incorruptible life that it commences -- is completely perfected!"

Do you yet have such a well inside of you -- which keeps gushing forth water for ever? If not, come to Jesus -- and ask Him to give you that water which shall become within you a well which keeps on springing up unto everlasting life!

'The Son quickens whom He will.... He that hears My Word..., has everlasting life and...has passed from death.... The hour is...now, when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God... They...shall live.... All...in the grave shall hear His Voice, and shall come forth!' John 5:21-29.

Calvin comments: "We must note the way in which Christ bestows life on us. Because He found us all dead, it was necessary to begin with the resurrection.... For it would not have been sufficient for us to be rescued from death, without Christ fully and substantially restoring life to us....

"We would rather perish voluntarily, than surrender in obedience to the Son of God and be saved by His goodness! Christ...came to raise the dead.... He who receives Christ with all His merits, is reconciled to God and acquitted from the condemnation of death.... He who has been given the Holy Spirit, is clothed with heavenly righteousness -- so that he may walk in newness of life.... We are out of death's danger, because we are acquitted through the benefit of Christ....

"(He that hears My Word...has everlasting life and...) has passed (from death to life)'.... The transition from death has already taken place.... The incorruptible seed of life is in the children of God from the time they are called.... They already sit in the heavenly glory.... That they are besieged on every side by death, does not prevent them having peace -- since they know that they are safe enough through Christ's protection.... Believers are now in life.... The Spirit Who dwells in them...is life -- and He will at last destroy the remnants of death....

"This passage does not refer to the complete destruction of death or to the substantial revelation of life. But though life has only made a start in us, Christ says that believers are so sure to obtain it -- that they must not fear death.... The voice of His Gospel...is powerful.... We are all dead, before He quickens us.... By faith, we receive the life...offered us.... The elect...catch the Voice of His Son, which restores them to life.... Christ expressly commends to us this twofold grace, when He says -- 'The dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God; and they that hear, shall live!'...

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:5:19 & III:14:5 & 15:6 & 24:5 & 25:4,7 & IV:16:26: "Our Lord says, 'The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God'.... God 'has raised us up together, and has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ'.... He who believes in Him..., passed from death to life.... When He enlightens us with the knowledge of Himself, He...raises us from the dead and makes us new creatures.... Christ declares that the Voice of the Gospel gives life.... The promise of our Lord is clear -- 'he that hears My Word..., has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but has passed from death to life'.... 'The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His Voice -- and shall come forth!'"

Calvin also says in his *Psychopannychia*: "It would...be easy to understand that eternal life has begun! He Who cannot deceive, promised thus -- 'Whoso(ever) hears My words, has eternal life and does not come into condemnation but has passed from death to life!'" Do you so believe in Him?

'Jesus said... "He that believes in Me, shall never thirst! Him that comes to Me, I will in no way cast out!... This is the Father's will Who sent me, that of all whom He has given Me -- I shall lose nothing, but shall raise them up again on the last day.... Every one that sees the Son and believes in Him, may have everlasting life -- and I will raise him up, on the last day!"' John 6:35-40.

Calvin comments: "He that comes to Me..., shall never thirst!"... Whoever goes to Christ so that he may have life from Him, will lack nothing -- but will be fully satisfied with all that upholds life!... He says that all whom the Father gives Him, come to Him.... God works in His elect by such an efficacy of the Spirit, that none of them falls away.... As soon as they commit themselves to His faithfulness and care, He will receive them kindly.... The teaching of the Gospel, will be beneficial to all the godly.... The Father's purpose is, that believers may find salvation secured in Christ.... The Gospel will always have the power to gather the elect to salvation....

"He is not the Guardian of our salvation for a day or two, but...He will care for it to the end -- and bring us...from the starting point to the finishing post. This is why He mentions the final resurrection.... The salvation of the whole world might be overthrown, did not believers supported by Christ's hand stretch forward boldly towards the day of resurrection.... Christ has stretched out His hand to us, and will not desert us in mid-course.... We may rely on His leading, and boldly dare to raise our eyes to the last day....

"He mentions the resurrection, for another reason too. While our life is hidden, we are like dead men.... Believers...are overwhelmed with miseries and...always have one foot in the grave.... (They) are never far from being swallowed up by death. So, the only prop for our faith and patience, is to disregard the state of our present life -- and direct our minds and senses to the last day....

"God has elected us, to the end!... The election of God carries His calling with it, by an inseparable bond -- so when God has effectually called us to faith in Christ, it should have as much force with us as if He confirmed His decree concerning our salvation with an engraved seal. For the testimony of the Spirit, is nothing but the sealing of our adoption.... If we trust in Christ, we shall perceive what He is -- and what He brings us!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:22:7,10 & 24:6: "The supreme Judge and Master...exclaims: 'All that the Father gives Me, shall come to Me!... Of all whom He has given Me, I shall lose nothing.... Everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him, may have everlasting life.... Him that comes to Me, I will in no way cast out.... Of all whom He has given Me, I shall lose nothing -- but shall raise them up on the last day!' (John 6:37-40).

Calvin further says in his *Treatises* III:118 and *Psychopannychia*: "'Whoever believes, has eternal life' -- as our Saviour...declares.... Everyone who believes in the Son, may not perish but has eternal life.... I will raise him up, on the last day!' (John 6:40)." Christ will raise up all the Father has given Him! You too?

'Jesus spoke again... "I am the Light of the world! He that follows Me, shall not walk in darkness -- but shall have the Light of life!"' John 8:12.

Calvin comments: "I am the Light of the world!... It is a most beautiful title of Christ, when He is called the Light of the world. We are all blind by nature, but a remedy is offered to rescue and free us from darkness, and make us partakers of the true Light....

"This blessing is not offered just to one here or there, for Christ says that He is the Light of the whole world. By this general statement, He wanted to remove the distinction both between...the learned and ignorant, and gentlefolk and the common people.

"But we must first see the need for seeking this Light. For none will ever present themselves to Christ to be enlightened, save those who have known both that this world is darkness and that they themselves are altogether blind.

"Let us know, then, that when the means of obtaining light is shown us in Christ -- we are all condemned with blindness, and everything that we think is light is compared to darkness and thick night.... Outside Him, there is not even a spark of true light....

"The power and function of enlightening, is not confined to the physical presence of Christ. For although He is far from us bodily, He nevertheless daily sheds His Light upon us in the teaching of the Gospel and by the secret power of His Spirit.

"But we do not have a full definition of this Light, until we learn that we are enlightened by the Gospel and the Spirit of Christ. So that we may know that the Fountain of all knowledge and wisdom is hidden in Him....

"Those who look to Christ, are certain that they will have a sure way even through the midst of darkness. And that not for a little while, but until they have reached their goal....

"That is the significance of the words being put in the future tense. 'He shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

"This is also the meaning of the latter clause, which expressly states the perpetuity of light. We must not be afraid, then, that it will fail in the middle of our journey -- for it leads us right to life.... (He is) 'the life-giving Light!'"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:2:1: "Christ must intervene.... He calls Himself 'the Light of the world'.... In the Person of Christ, the glory of God is visibly manifested to us.... We have the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ (First Timothy 6:16 and John 8:12)." Consequently, he who follows Jesus -- shall have the Light of life! Do you?

"If a man keeps My saying, he shall never see death!"... The Jews said to Him.... "Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead?"... Jesus answered..."Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day. And he saw it; and was glad!" John 8:49-56.

Calvin comments: "Christ promises eternal life to His disciples.... He says that they 'shall never see death'.... No believers will see death, because -- having been born again of incorruptible seed -- they live, even when they die.... They are united to Christ their Head, and cannot be extinguished by death.... Death is for them a passing into the heavenly Kingdom.... The Spirit Who dwells in them, is life..., until He shall swallow up the residue of death....

"The (Jews)...try to darken Christ's glory, by the splendour of Abraham.... But they even do an injury to Abraham and the Prophets, by misusing their name against Christ!... Jesus...grants...that Abraham was their father. But he shows them how weak the objection from Abraham's name is.... 'The only object he set himself during his whole life,' He says, 'was to see My Kingdom flourish!' What Christ here says of Abraham, applies to all the saints. But this teaching has more weight in regard to Abraham, in that he is the father of the whole Church. Whoever then wishes to be numbered among the godly, let him...receive with joy the presence of Christ for which Abraham ardently longed.... The word 'rejoice' (or 'was glad') intimates...ardent affection.... Abraham was inflamed by such a strong desire, that he prized its consummation.... How disgusting then is the ingratitude of those who despise and even reject Him, when He is openly revealed to them!...

"But the question now arises -- How, even with the eyes of faith, did Abraham see the revelation of Christ?... I reply, faith has its degrees of seeing Christ. The ancient Prophets beheld Christ afar off, as He had been promised to them.... God did not disappoint Abraham's desire.... Abraham's rejoicing testifies that he looked upon the knowledge of Christ's Kingdom as an incomparable treasure.... He rejoiced to see the day of Christ.... After Abraham was dead, he felt the presence of Christ when He appeared in the world.... The coming of Christ was revealed to the spirits of the saints after death -- when they had been held in expectation of it all through their lives!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:9:2 & 10:4 : "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it; and was glad!" (John 8:56).... He had full assurance, that it would one day be accomplished.... Hence the joy which the holy Patriarch experienced, even to his death.... What Christ here declares of Abraham..., (is) applicable to all believers!"

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia* regarding "Abraham..., 'he saw His day and was glad!'... Here is the peace of Abraham; here, his rest... This peace...opens to it the treasures of heavenly grace and...the Lord's cup.... Abraham possessed this peace.... The elect of God are said to rest in the bosom of Abraham when they have passed from this life to their God.... They are admitted with Abraham, the father of the faithful -- where they enjoy God fully!"

Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day; saw it; and was glad! So also, for believers today!

"The Jews said to Him: "You are not yet fifty years old! And have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them: "Verily, verily, I say to you -- before Abraham was, 'I AM!'" John 8:57-58.

Calvin comments: "(The Jews) try to refute Christ's saying (that Abraham rejoiced and saw His day) -- as impossible! In that He Who was not yet fifty years old, made Himself on a par with Abraham who had died centuries before.

"Christ was not even thirty-four years old. But they allow Him to be somewhat older, so as not to seem too stiff and precise in dealing with Him! (It was as) if they said: 'You cannot make yourself as old as that (Abraham), even if you were to claim to be already fifty years old!'....

"Unbelievers judge only from the appearance of the flesh.... Therefore Christ reminds them that He possessed something greater and higher than human appearance, (something higher) which is hidden from the senses of the flesh and seen only by the eyes of faith....

"In this way, He might be seen by the holy fathers -- before He appeared openly in the flesh.... He uses different verbs. 'Before Abraham was born, "I AM!'"

"By these words, He excluded Himself from the ordinary number of men.... (He) claims for Himself a heavenly and divine power, the perception of which was diffused from the beginning of the world throughout all ages!...

"The words may be explained in two ways.... Some think it simply applies to Christ's eternal divinity, and compare it to that passage of Moses -- "I AM that I AM!" (Exodus 3:14).... I extend it much further!...

"Christ's power and grace -- inasmuch as He is the Redeemer of the world -- were common to all ages (right down to the very end of time and beyond)! It therefore fits in with the saying of the Apostles: 'Christ yesterday and today and for ever!' (Hebrews 13:8)....

"The context seems to demand this interpretation. He had earlier said that Abraham longed with a burning desire for His day. As this seemed unbelievable to the Jews, He adds that He Himself was -- also then!...

"He was even then acknowledged as the Mediator, by Whom God was to be appeased.... That the grace of the Mediator flourished in all ages, depended on His eternal divinity....

"This saying of Christ, contains a remarkable statement of His Divine Essence!... He does not say 'I used to be' or 'I was,' but 'I AM' -- signifying a condition uniformly the same from the beginning to the end!" For Jesus said: "Before Abraham was -- 'I AM!'" Do you believe that?

"The Father knows Me.... I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep which are not of this fold. Them too I must bring...and there shall be one fold.... My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life -- so that I might take it up again!" John 10:15-17.

Calvin comments: "I know My sheep!.... He commends His love towards us.... For knowledge is born of love, and is accompanied by care.... Christ...wants us to be obedient and devoted to Him, just as He wholly is to the Father....

"Other sheep I have'.... He was thinking of the calling of the Gentiles.... He called them 'other sheep'.... They...were of a different kind.... Christ's office as a Shepherd is not restricted to the confines of Judaea, but is far wider.... This passage...refers to the outward aspect of the Church -- in that the Gentiles, who temporarily had been strangers, were afterwards taken into the Kingdom of God.... We are already sheep, before we are aware that He is our Shepherd....

"Nothing will perish, that He wishes to be saved!... The Gentiles could only consent to the faith of Christ, by embracing that everlasting Covenant on which the salvation of the world was founded.... 'Seven men of the Gentiles shall take hold of the cloak of one Jew, and say: 'We will go with you!' (Zechariah 8:23). Again, 'they shall come from afar -- and ascend into Mount Zion!'

"Abraham too was called a father of many nations. Because 'they shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with him in the Kingdom of God' (Matthew 8:11).... 'There shall be one flock'.... All the children of God may be gathered into one body, even as we confess that there is one holy general Church -- and there must be one body with one Head.... There is one God, one faith, and one baptism.... Although the flock seems to be divided into different folds, yet believers who are scattered throughout the world are enclosed within common bounds -- in that the same Word is preached to all, and the same Sacraments are used....

"Observe the way in which the flock of God is collected! It is when there is one Shepherd of all, and His Voice is heard.... Only when the Church submits to Christ alone, obeys His commands, and hears His teaching -- is she in a well-ordered condition.... Our starting point, must always be at the Head.... There is no Church, if God does not reign there -- and no Kingdom of God, but where the title of Shepherd is allowed to Christ....

"Our salvation is dearer to Him, than His Own life!... The death of Christ would give the disciples great sorrow.... He comforts them with the hope of His resurrection.... He would not die to be swallowed up by death, but speedily to rise again as Conqueror.... He is life, because He has conquered magnificently in His conflict with death, and achieved a noble triumph."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:24:6 & II:12:4: "Christ...spontaneously offers Himself as our Shepherd, and declares that we are of the number of His sheep if we hear (and obey) His voice.... 'I lay down My life, so that I might take it up again!'" For the sheep! Are you one of them?

'My sheep hear My Voice...; I know them; and they follow Me! And I give to them eternal life! And they shall never perish; neither shall anybody pluck them out of My hand!' John 10:27-28.

Calvin comments: "They (that) are not sheep..., do not obey the Gospel.... God effectually calls (only) those whom He has elected.... Believers are called 'sheep' -- because they surrender themselves to God.... (They,) putting aside their first fierceness, become leadable and meek.... Christ...has His sheep whom He knows, and by whom He also is known. They must do their utmost to bring the whole world into Christ's fold.... When they do not succeed as they...wish, they must be satisfied...that those who are sheep -- will be collected together by their work....

"They shall never perish!"... Christ bids us be sure and untroubled -- when we are brought by faith into His fold.... He will be the faithful Guardian of our salvation. For He says that it is 'in His hand!'".... This is a remarkable passage, teaching us that the salvation of all the elect is as certain as God's power is invincible! And Christ was not just tossing this word thoughtlessly into the air, but giving a promise which should remain deeply fixed in their minds.

"Christ's saying indicates that the elect are firmly certain of their salvation. We are surrounded by powerful enemies; and so great is our weakness that we are not far from death every moment. But He Who keeps what we have committed unto Him, is 'greater' and more powerful 'than all.' And so we have nothing to be afraid of, as if our life were in danger.... Christ teaches His followers...to remember that in this world they are...in the middle of a forest among innumerable robbers.... What is more, (they) are not only unarmed and exposed as a prey, but know that the cause of death lies within themselves -- so that they can only walk safely when relying on the protection of God.

"Our salvation is certain, because it is in the hand of God. Our faith is weak, and we are given to wavering. But God has taken us into His hand, and is powerful enough to scatter...all...our enemies.... Look at this, so that fear of temptations may not dismay us!"... Christ also meant to show how the sheep live quietly in the midst of wolves.... 'No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand!'"... From the invincible power of God, Christ deduces that the salvation of the godly is not exposed to their enemies' desires -- because God...would first have to be overcome!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:22:7 & 11:10: "Not one of those whom Christ has once ingrafted into His Body, will He ever permit to perish!"... In securing their salvation, He will perform what He had promised.... The Lord declares that our salvation will always be sure and certain..., because it is guarded by the invincible power of God (John 10:28-29)."

Calvin further states in his *Treatises* III:135-36: "The Father Who has placed us under the protection and faith of His Son, is greater than all. The Son will not allow anything to be lost! (John 6:39 & 10:28). These things are said, so that all who are the sons of God may trust in such a Guardian of their salvation -- and feel safe in the midst of danger!" Jesus gives eternal life -- and nobody can take it away! Do you yet have that life?

'A certain man was sick, named Lazarus.... Jesus...said: "This sickness is not unto death!... Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but...I awaken him from sleep!... Lazarus is dead!"... Jesus...found that he had laid in the grave four days already.... Jesus said...: "I am the resurrection and the life! He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet he shall live! And whoever lives and believes in Me, shall never die!"... He cried out with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth!"' John 11:1-43.

Calvin comments: "By raising Lazarus, Christ...set before our eyes...our...resurrection.... Lazarus was in danger of death, when He wanted to manifest His Own...glory....

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep!'... He (Jesus) had said that the sickness was not mortal. But now..., He tells them that Lazarus is dead -- but gives hope of His resurrection.... Christ shows that He is the Lord of death, by saying that He wakens those whom He restores to life....

"(When Jesus came, He found that he had laid in the grave four days already!... Martha said to Him, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day!" Jesus said to her:) "I am the resurrection and the life!"... He calls Himself the resurrection. For restoration from death to life, precedes the state of life (everlasting).... The whole human race, is plunged in death. Therefore, no man will possess life -- unless he is first risen from the dead. Hence, Christ teaches that He is the beginning of life!....

"Plainly..., He is speaking of spiritual life: 'He that believes in Me, though he die, yet he shall live!'.... Those who believe in Christ, although they had before been dead (in their sins), begin to live. For faith is a spiritual resurrection of the soul, and...quickens the soul so that it may live unto God.... It transfuses to us the life of Christ, and thus liberates us from death....

"Whoever lives and believes in Me, (shall never die)!'... Christ...will never allows the life to be lost which He has once given, but keeps it to the end.... He may finish, what He has begun! Believers are said never to die, because their souls..., born again of incorruptible seed, have Christ dwelling in them by Whom they are continually quickened.... Although the body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness (Romans 8:10). The fact that day by day the outward man decays in them -- so far from destructing anything from their true life, in fact aids its progress. Since the inward man is renewed, day by day (Second Corinthians 4:16).... Death is itself a sort of liberating from the bondage of death!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:25:9 & IV:19:29: "Christ has come to be the resurrection and the life (John 11:25).... He said to Lazarus: 'Come forth!'"

Calvin further says in his *Treatises* III:250 and in his *Psychopannychia*: "Faith is the resurrection of the soul.... 'He that believes in Me, though he were dead -- yet he shall live!'... Whosoever lives and believes in Me, shall not die for ever!' (John 11:25-26)." Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life!" Do you so believe?

'Jesus answered...: "Verily, verily, I say to you -- except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit!"' John 12:23-24.

Calvin comments: "Except a grain of wheat shall die or putrefy, it remains dry and sterile. But the death of the seed quickens it -- so that it bears fruit! So, Christ compares His death -- to sowing." This "seems to lead to the destruction of the wheat; but is nevertheless the cause of an abundant increase...."

"Now although this admonition was especially necessary then, it is of continual use in the Church. And first, we ought to begin at the Head. That dreadful appearance of ignominy and malediction which is seen in the death of Christ, not only obscures His glory. But removes it altogether from our sight. We must not then hold to His death alone, but must also consider the fruit which His resurrection bears. In this way, nothing will prevent His glory from shining everywhere.

"From Him, we must then come to His members. For not only do we think that in death we perish, but even our life is a sort of continual death (Colossians 3:3). It is all up with us, then! Unless that consolation which Paul sets up, helps us: 'If our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day' (Second Corinthians 4:16).

"The godly are pressed down by various afflictions. They are held tight in hard straits. They suffer hunger or nakedness or disease. They are worried by reproaches. They seem every moment to be almost swallowed up by death. Let this then be their continual meditation!... It is a sowing, which will yield fruit in its season!

"'He that loves his soul, loses it' If, to bring forth fruit, we must die -- we should patiently permit God to mortify us.... He who despises this life and advances courageously to death..., is justly reckoned among the highest of God's blessings. But believers ought to lay it down cheerfully, when it hinders their access to Christ.... The true way to love life, is when we remain in it as long as God pleases -- and are prepared to change our home as soon as He tells us.... Whoever is overaddicted to the present life, loses his life.... He casts it to everlasting ruin...."

"He who does not look to Heaven, has not yet learned how life is to be saved.... For if we are overwhelmed by the love of the world so that it is not easy to forget it, it is impossible for us to advance to Heaven!... He leads the way before us, to encounter death. The bitterness of death is therefore moderated and made sweet, when we undergo it in common with the Son of God.... He demands that His servants should not refuse to submit to death.... Christ had promised to those who were not unwilling to die with Him, that they should be partakers of His resurrection.... The Father will not leave Christ's servants unrewarded, when they have been His inseparable companions in life and death!"

For, if a seed falls into the ground and dies -- it brings forth much fruit! You too?

'In my Father's house, are many rooms.... I go, to prepare a place for you!... I will come again and receive you to Myself -- so that where I am, there you may be too.... I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life! No man comes to the Father, but by Me!' John 14:2-6.

Calvin comments: "Christ...declares that He is not going away...to remain separate from them, since there is a place for them also in the heavenly Kingdom.... He says that the 'mansions' (or 'rooms' there,) are many.... There are sufficient for a great number.... There is room there, not only for Himself but also for all His disciples....

"Christ signifies that the purpose of His departure was to prepare a place for His Own.... Christ did not ascend to Heaven privately for Himself to dwell there alone, but rather so that it might be the common inheritance of all the godly....

"This place is said to be prepared for the day of resurrection.... In His Person, we already possess Heaven -- by hope.... Christ has prepared a place for...us...(to) enjoy a blessed rest until the redemption is completed....

"(Jesus) said: 'After I have gone, I will return to you again!'.... He is here speaking of the Last Day..., when He will finally come to gather His Own....

"Christ...set out three degrees -- as of saying that He is the Beginning, the Middle, and the End.... We should begin with Him, continue in Him, and end in Him....

""Now 'the Way' of obtain life, is to become new creatures.... He tells us that He is 'the Way' by which alone we can reach it....

"As He is 'the Truth' and 'the Life,' He possesses in Himself what will satisfy even the most perfect.... 'The Truth' is to be taken as the perfection of faith, just as 'the Way' for its beginning and rudiments....

"If any man turns aside from Christ, he can do nothing but go astray.... If any aims beyond Him, he will find death -- instead of 'Life!'...

"He is 'the Way,' because He leads us to the Father. He is 'the Truth' and 'the Life,' because in Him we apprehend the Father.... Christ proves that He is 'the Life' -- inasmuch as God with Whom is the Fountain of Life, can be possessed in no other way than in Him!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:2:1: "Christ must intervene.... He calls Himself... 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' None comes to the Father (Who is the Fountain of Life), except by Him.... John 14:6." Jesus prepares places for His, in His Father's house of many rooms! And for you?

'Greater love has no man than this -- that a man lays down his life for his friends.... When the Comforter has come, Whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father -- He shall testify of Me!' John 15:13-26.

Calvin comments: "Christ sometimes commends the greatness of His love to us, the better to establish assurance of our salvation.... He wants us to perceive by faith, the infinite sweetness of His goodness....

"He persuades us for this reason, to strive after love. This Paul writes in Ephesians 5:2: 'Walk in love! As Christ also loved us, and gave Himself up for us!'... God could have redeemed us, (just) by a word or a wish. Save that another way seemed to Him best, for our sakes....

"By not sparing His Own and Only-begotten Son, He might testify in His Person how much He cares for our salvation.... Those hearts must be harder than iron or stone, which are not softened by the incomparable sweetness of the divine love!...

"Having expiated our sins through the sacrifice of His death, He abolished the enmity between God and us.... There is discord between us and God, until our sins are blotted out by the death of Christ....

"The cause of this grace..., was manifested in Christ.... (That was) the everlasting love of God, with which He loved even His enemies. In the same way, Christ laid down His life for strangers. Yet He already loved them -- otherwise, He would not have died for them."

After Christ died, He would go to Heaven. But He would not leave His earthly disciples alone, without Him. He would soon send them His Spirit -- as the Comforter to guide them!

"'When the Comforter has come'..., they will never give way...'when the Holy Spirit has been given...to establish...His testimony!'... We have received...the Spirit Who is from God, so that we might know the things which are given to us by God (First Corinthians 2:12).... Whoever is endowed with this Spirit, is...far from...danger.... He will be victorious over the whole world....

"The Spirit..., believers know, has been given to them from Heaven.... The Spirit is said to testify of Christ, because He retains and settles our faith in Him alone.... He calls Him the Paraclete (or 'the Advocate') -- so that, relying on His protection, we may never be alarmed.... He also calls Him 'the Spirit of truth'....

"It is Christ Who sends the Spirit...from the heavenly glory.... The Spirit proceeds from the Son.... Christ...names the Father here, to raise our eyes to the contemplation of His divinity!"

For Christ, Who loves -- lays down His life for His friends. Are you His friend?

'If I don't go away, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I depart, I will send Him to you.... When He the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth.... He will show you things to come.... He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you!' John 16:7-15.

Calvin comments: "Christ...explains...that the Holy Spirit could not be given to them in any other way, than by His leaving the world.... That presence of Christ by which He offers Himself to us through the grace and power of His Spirit, is far more useful and desirable than if He were present before our eyes!...

"He had promised His Spirit to the disciples.... The Spirit will not only rule, sustain and protect them individually -- but will shed His power and efficacy more widely....

"When they had received the Spirit, they would be new and very different men.... The Spirit Whom Christ promised..., is said to be the perfect Master of Truth.... That same Spirit led them 'into all truth' -- when they (the Apostles) committed to writing the substance of their teaching. Whoever thinks that anything ought to be added to their doctrine..., blasphemes against the Spirit!...

"The Spirit bestows in us nothing, apart from Christ.... He takes from Christ, what He sheds on us. We should think the same of His teaching.... The Spirit bestows on us no other riches than those of Christ, so that He may bring out His glory in all things....

"Christ...acknowledges that He has from the Father, all that He communicates to us by the Spirit.... When He says that all things belonging to the Father are His..., we must draw from His fullness.... He declares His riches, so that He may invite us to enjoy them -- and reckons the Spirit among the gifts which we receive from the Father by His hand."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:9:1 & II:16:14 & III:25:3 & IV:8:13: "What kind of Spirit did our Saviour promise to send? One Who would...instil the truths which He Himself had delivered through the Word!... The office of the Spirit promised to us, is not to form new and unheard-of revelations....

"Our Lord Himself...declared to His disciples..., 'If I go not away -- the Comforter will not come to you!' (John 16:7).... He tells them that He will not leave them comfortless.... We see how much more abundantly His Spirit was poured out; how much more gloriously His Kingdom was advanced!... By sending the Holy Spirit, He gave a proof of Supreme Power.... Remember the use which God wishes to be derived from His Spirit! 'When He...has come, He will guide you into all truth.... He shall bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I have said to you'.... He forbade that anything should be added to His Word, and that anything should be taken from it. This is the inviolable decree of God and the Holy Spirit!"

It's better for believers, that Jesus went away! So the Spirit might come! To you too?

'A little while, and you shall not see Me! But again a little while, and you shall see Me -- because I go to the Father!... You shall weep.... But your sorrow shall be turned into joy.... I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice. And your joy, no man takes from you!' John 16:16-22.

Calvin comments: "A little while, and you (then) behold Me no more!" Christ had often forewarned the Apostles of His departure. Partly, so that they might bear it with greater courage; and partly, so that they might desire more ardently the grace of the Spirit for which they (then) had no great desire -- while they had Christ present with them physically....

"He declares that He will soon be restored to them, after He had gone away. But in another way -- that is, by the presence of the Holy Spirit....

"He relieves and softens their sorrow for His absence, by the consolation that it will not last long. And so He commends the grace of the Spirit, by which He will be continually with them.... He is seen, when He dwells in the disciples by the Spirit!...

"The grace of the Spirit, is a mirror in which Christ wishes us to see Him.... You will soon see Me. For My death is not a destruction which will separate Me from you, but a passing to the heavenly glory. Whence My divine power will be shed, even to you!'

"'You shall weep and lament.' He shows the reason why He foretold that His departure was at hand.... At the same time, (He) added a promise about His quick return. This was, so that they might the better understand how necessary was the help of the Spirit.... He described the time between His death and the sending of the Spirit. For it was then that their faith lay as it were overwhelmed.

"'Your sorrow shall be turned into joy!' He means the joy with which they would be endued, when they had received the Spirit.... Renewed by the Spirit, they put off their former feeling of weakness.... Their present weakness was compared with the power of the Spirit, Who was soon to be given to them....

"As if Christ said: 'You will lie as it were prostrate, for a while. But when the Spirit has raised you, a new joy will begin -- which will continually increase, until you have been received into the heavenly glory Then, you will have perfect joy!'

"'And your joy, no one takes away from you!' The value of the joy, is greatly increased by its perpetuity. For it follows that the afflictions are light and should be calmly endured, because they are momentary. By these words, Christ tells us what true joy is. The world must needs quickly be deprived of its joys, which it seeks only in fading things.... We must come to Christ's resurrection -- in which there is eternal stability!" Christians shall rejoice, when they see Jesus! You too?

"These words, Jesus spoke....: "Father, the hour has come! Glorify Your Son, so that Your Son too may glorify You! As You have given Him power over all flesh, so that He may give eternal life to as many as You have given Him! And this is life eternal -- that they might know You the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent! I have glorified You on the Earth; I have finished the work which You gave Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me with Your Own Self -- with the glory which I had with You before the world was!" John 17:1-5.

Calvin comments: "When the Lord had...promised the coming of the Spirit, He raised them to a better hope and talked to them about the glory and splendour of His Kingdom. Now, He betakes Himself to prayer.... 'Father, the hour has come!' Christ asks that His Kingdom may be magnified, so that He in His turn might magnify the glory of the Father.... Christ's prayer also asks that His death may, by the power of the heavenly Spirit, bear such fruit as had been decreed by the eternal purpose of God.... It is our duty to ask from Him whatever He has promised....

"(Glorify Your Son, so) that the Son may glorify You!... The shining of His and His Father's glory, is mutual.... It is not only His eternal divinity that we must think of. For He speaks as God manifest in the flesh.... 'You gave Him...authority over all flesh'..., the authority given to Christ when the Father appointed Him King.... The end...is to bestow eternal life on all His Own.... The Kingdom of Christ extends to all men, but it is saving only to the elect who follow the Shepherd's Voice.... He forcibly compels others to obey Him, until at last He utterly destroys them....

"He enlightens the elect in the true knowledge of God.... He is not dealing with the fruition of life that we hope for, but only with the way in which men arrive at life.... We must first understand...we are all in death.... But where He has shone, we possess Him by faith -- and also enter into the possession of life.... We are told to know God, and Christ Whom He sent.... There is no Fountain of life, save in God alone.... All who are alienated from Him, are deprived of life....

"The Father...sends Him, to possess the Kingdom.... Having completed His course, nothing remained for Him to do, but to display by the power of the Spirit the fruit and efficacy of all that He had done on Earth by His Father's command.... '(Father, glorify Me...with) the glory which I had with You (before the world was)!... He declares...He desires...only that He may appear in the flesh such as He was before the creation of the world.... (So) that the divine majesty which He always had, may now shine in the Person of the Mediator and in the human flesh which He had put on.... Christ is not a novel or temporary God.... His glory was eternal. He, too, always was.... He is not only the eternal God, but also the eternal Word of God begotten by the Father before the ages!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:13:8,22: "When God said 'Let there be light!' Genesis 1:3) -- the energy of the Word was...exerted.... It must have existed, long before.... 'Glorify Me...with the glory...I had with You before the world was!'... John...says that 'in the beginning was the Word' (John 1:1).... The Word was eternally begotten by God, and dwelt with Him from everlasting!... That *Logos*...was God! (John 17:5)." The Father gave Him power over all flesh! You too!

'Father, I will that they too whom You have given Me -- be with me where I am, so that they may behold My glory which You have given Me! For You have loved Me, from before the foundation of the world!' John 17:24.

Calvin comments: "Christ prays for all who shall believe in Him!... Our faith is founded on the Gospel taught by the Apostles.... Christ knows us..., and commends us to the Father....

"The human race is...also broken and scattered in itself. Conversely, therefore, its restoration lies in its proper coalescence in one body.... Let us learn that the beginning of a blessed life, is when we are all governed and live by the one Spirit of Christ!...

"The love by which Christ was appointed as the One in Whom we should freely be chosen before we were born and while we were still ruined in Adam, is hidden in the bosom of God. It far exceeds the grasp of the human mind.... There is no danger that we shall be cut off from the love of God. For this foundation cannot be overturned.... We are loved, for the Father has loved Him.

"Father, those whom You have given Me -- I will that, where I am, they also may be with Me!... He wishes the disciples to enjoy His external presence.... God would at last take them into the heavenly Kingdom, to which He goes before them....

"Christ is speaking of the perfect happiness of the godly. As if He said that His desire would not be satisfied, till they have been received into Heaven!...

"Christ now wishes that they shall go on to enjoy the full brightness of Heaven.... He asks that the Father will lead them by uninterrupted progress, to the full view of His glory!

"For You loved Me, (before the foundation of the world)!... The Father loved His Wisdom (-- His Only-begotten Son).... Christ spoke as the Head of the Church, when earlier He prayed that the Apostles might be joined with Him and might see the glory of His Kingdom.

"Now He says that the Father's love is its cause!... Therefore it follows that He was beloved, inasmuch as He was appointed as the Redeemer of the world. With such a love, did the Father embrace Him -- before the creation of the world!"

Calvin also says in his *Psychopannychia*: "Be not alarmed, because all the powers of nature are thought to fail at the very time when you hear of a budding and flourishing old age!... Leave the rest to the Lord, Who guards our entrance and our exit from this time forth -- even for evermore!... Christ expounded this goodness of the Father to us when He said: 'Father, with regard to those whom You have given Me, I will that where I am they too may be with me -- so that they may behold My glory which You have given Me. (For You have loved Me, from...the foundation of the world!)'... (John 17:24.)" Thus, Jesus prays that Christians come where He now is -- in Heaven! And you?

"Thomas...was not with them, when Jesus came. The other disciples...said to him: "We have seen the Lord!" But he said...: "Unless I see in His hands the nailprints..., I will not believe!"... After eight days...came Jesus..., and said to Thomas: "Stretch out your finger here, and behold My hands!"... Thomas answered...Him: "My Lord and my God!"... These (things) are written that you might believe that Jesus is...the Son of God...; that you might have life!" John 20:24-31.

Calvin comments: "Thomas...was not merely slow and reluctant to believe. He was downright obstinate!... Christ again allows them (His disciples) to see and to feel Him as before. This a new help -- testifying...Christ's resurrection was given not only to Thomas, but to us!...

"Stretch out your finger here!"... Christ...readily yields to the wrong request of Thomas, and of His Own accord invites him to feel His hands.... We learn how earnestly thoughtful He was, for our faith.... For it was not of Thomas only, but of us too that He was thinking -- so that there might be nothing lacking to confirm our faith!

"Thomas...was not content with the mere sight of Christ, but wanted to have His hands also as witnesses of Christ's resurrection.... He did not come to his senses, before he was convinced by touching... Thomas wakes up, and...exclaims in wonder: 'My Lord and my God!'... Such...shows that faith was not entirely extinguished in him -- though it had been smothered.... Thomas confesses that Christ is his Lord, and then he goes higher and calls Him also God.... When Thomas had acknowledged Him to be the Lord, he was...carried on to His eternal divinity -- and justly....

"We cannot know Christ aright as our Lord, without the knowledge of His divinity immediately following.... This confession should be common to all believers, when we see that Christ approved it. He certainly would never have allowed honour to be taken from the Father and thoughtlessly transferred to Himself. But He plainly ratifies, what Thomas said....

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!" Here Christ commends faith, on the ground that it acquiesces to the simple Word -- and does not depend at all on the senses and reason of the flesh.... "These (things) are written, so that you may believe!" He (John) means...he committed to writing what should satisfy us.... No other use is here given to miracles, than to be aids...of faith. They serve to prepare men's minds, so that they may give greater reverence to the Word.... Faith does not stick at miracles, but carries us straight to the Word!"

Calvin also said in his *Institutes* I:13:11 & III:2:6: "Thomas, by addressing Him as his Lord and God, certainly professes that He was the only God whom he had ever adored.... John points to this same fountain of faith in the following words: "These are written, so that you might believe!"

Believers have everlasting life – because written, through the name of Jesus! Do you?

'He (Christ) said to him (Peter)...: "Do you love Me?" And he (Peter) said to Him: "Lord, You know everything! You know that I love You!" Jesus said to him...: "When you were young, you girded yourself and walked wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you shall stretch forth your hands -- and another shall gird you and carry you where you don't want to go!" This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him: "Follow Me!"' John 21:17-19.

Calvin comments: "Peter was not yet...aware how deeply the love of Christ had to be fixed in the minds of those who have to overcome innumerable difficulties. Later he learned...that he had not been through such testing for nothing.... After exhorting Peter to feed His sheep, Christ arms him to undertake the impending warfare.... He tells him to be prepared to die, when necessary....

"Not all Pastors are in the same position.... Many the Lord spares and refrains from shedding their blood.... But since Satan is continually making manifold new attacks, all who undertake the office of 'feeding' -- must be prepared for death.... So far as relates to Peter, Christ wanted to forewarn him of his death -- so that he might continually remember that the doctrine of which he was a Minister, would have to be ratified by his own blood in the end....

"Old age seems to be set aside for quiet and rest, and so old men are usually retired from public duties.... But Christ declares that the order of nature will be reversed, so that he who had lived at his own will when he was young -- would be ruled by another, when old....

"In Peter, we have a remarkable mirror of our common lot.... As soon as they have joined His side and been received among His disciples..., they are drawn into...great dangers and sometimes even death itself.... '(When you are old....) another shall gird you!'... I interpret the word 'gird' as...comprehending all the external actions by which a man regulates himself and his whole life. '(When you were young,) you girded yourself' -- that is, you dressed as you liked. But the freedom to choose your dress, will be taken from you (-- when you are old)....

""(Another shall gird you,) and carry you where you would not (be)!" This means that Peter did not die a natural death, but by violence and the sword.... '(This He spoke,) signifying by what manner of death (he would glorify God)!... John wanted to adorn with a special commendation, the death of those who with their blood seal Christ's Gospel and glorify His Name.... It is now for us to reap the harvest, which Peter's death has yielded!...

"Christ...explains...that Peter...must undergo death.... Christ offers Himself as the Leader!... This one consideration greatly soothes all the bitterness in death, when the Son of God presents Himself before our eyes with His blessed resurrection which is our triumph over death!"

We need to be cared for and clothed, when old! But believers await resurrection! And you?

'Jesus...you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain -- Whom God has raised up, having loosened the pangs of death because it was not possible that He should be held down by it! For David speaks concerning Him, "I foresaw the Lord always.... He is on my right hand.... Therefore my heart rejoiced.... Moreover, also my flesh shall rest in hope -- because You will not...permit Your Holy One to see corruption!"' Acts 2:22-27.

Calvin comments: "Peter...does not begin by immediately declaring that Jesus was the Christ, but simply says...that when He had been put to death -- He rose from the dead!... He mentions the death of Christ for this reason especially, so that the resurrection might more assuredly be believed....

"He says that He was killed by them..., because the whole people with one voice demanded His death.... The Just was subjected to death, for our sins.... His blood, was the price of our death.... 'By the hands of the wicked, (you have crucified and slain Him)!... The wicked are very far from obeying God, in whatever way they execute what God in His Own counsels has appointed.... When men commit...murder, they sin in being...murderers.... But God...uses their wickedness!...

"(God has raised [Him] up), having loosened the pangs of death!... Believers ought not now to be afraid of death, for the nature of death is not as it was in Adam. Because, by the victory of Christ, the curse of God is swallowed up (First Corinthians 15:54).... It was not possible for Christ to be mastered by death, inasmuch as He is the Author of life!...

"The resurrection of Christ...was attested by clear and reliable prophecies.... Peter proves by the testimony of David, that it was necessary that Christ should rise.... David's corpse suffered corruption, in the grave.... David...said...he would be delivered from death by the grace of God.... God would not permit Him of whom the Psalm (16:10) speaks (Christ), to rot in the grave!... .

"David promises himself exemption from the grave, on no other grounds than that he is a member of Christ.... God had provided His disciples with listeners who were godly men.... They sought the Messiah in the Old Testament. They knew that...the Messiah was figured by David. There was among them religion, and a reverence for Scripture....

"David...did not take heed to the direction of God, in vain!... 'My heart was glad!... That is the joy which Christ promised in full measure to His disciples..., which He testified could not be taken from them (John 16:22 & 17:13).... 'Because You will not leave (my soul in the grave)!"

Calvin also said in his *Institutes* II:16:11: "Peter says...God raised up Christ, 'having loosened the pangs of death. Because it was not possible He should be held by it.'" Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "Christ could not be extinguished by death, even in respect of His human nature.... The soul never lost its life.... Peter affirms...it was impossible He could be held by death...(Acts 2:27).... His soul...did not fall into perdition, and the body was preserved in the tomb till its resurrection!" Christ was captured, crucified, undecomposed -- and resurrected! And you?

'(You) killed the Prince of life, Whom God has raised from the dead!... God before showed by the mouth of all His Prophets, that Christ should suffer. He has so fulfilled!... Repent therefore, and be converted -- so that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord!... He shall send Jesus Christ Who was before preached to you, Whom Heaven must receive -- until the times of restitution!' Acts 3:15-21.

Calvin comments that the Jewish people had "delivered to death One Whom Pilate desired to set free.... They (had) spared a murderer, and put to death the Prince of life.... They rejected the Just and Holy One.... They made war against God....

"(But) God raised Him up!... God nonetheless restored Him to life!... Christ would redeem you, by His death!... The Jews did all they could to extinguish all hope of life through the Person of Christ.... Yet that death gave life...to the whole world....

"Repent!... When the time of refreshing shall come, you too may enjoy this refreshing!... Our sins are forgiven, with the Day of Final Judgment in view.... The faithful have a twofold stimulus to encourage them, when they hear tell of the Last Judgment.... Our hearts would often be dismayed, if we did not recall that the Day of Rest will come.... The other stimulus...is that the fearful judgment of God shakes us out of our pleasures and sloth.... Peter combines threats and promises....

"The Day of the Lord (is) at one time...dreadful and fearful, and at another time...pleasant and desirable. Peter therefore, in putting the Jews in hope of pardon, rightly presents the Day of Christ to them -- as a day of joy, so that they may desire it!....

"He expressly names Christ as the Judge.... Contempt of the Gospel will not go unpunished.... Christ must be the One to punish that.... Christ is preached to you now, before He comes to judge the world, so that those who now embrace Him may in that Day receive the fruit of their faith -- while others who refuse Him, may receive the punishment for their unbelief.... Christ is not offered to them in vain. Because He shall be sent by the Father a second time, to be a Judge armed to execute vengeance -- unless they receive Him now, as their Redeemer!...

"That restoration (or "restitution"), is still in process of completion.... Perfection...is deferred until the Last Day.... Let us lift up our hearts and be revived by the hope that Christ shall one day come, and restore all things!... The warfare of the Church, is not yet complete!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:3:20: "We must aim at repentance; cultivate it during our whole lives; and continue it to the last! Christ came to call sinners...to repentance.... Repent therefore..., so that your sins may be blotted out!... Acts...3:19."

For Christ brings us -- times of refreshing! Shall you too then be refreshed?

'Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them (Israel's priests, rulers, elders and scribes):...'Be it known unto you all, and to the whole people of Israel, that...Jesus Christ...Whom you crucified..., God raised from the dead!... This is the Stone Who was set at nought by you 'builders' -- Who has become the Cornerhead! Neither is there salvation in anyone else! For there is no other name under Heaven given among men, by Whom we must be saved!'" Acts 4:1-12.

Calvin comments: "Peter did not make such a superb utterance by himself.... He..., before such an assembly..., (was) upheld by the power of the Spirit...come forth from the Holy Spirit.... We are taught to seek from the Lord when we make profession of our faith, the Spirit of fortitude.... The fullness of the Spirit, denotes a full and exceptional measure!...

"'Be it known unto you (that...Jesus Christ...whom you crucified, Whom God raised from the dead..., is the Stone...Who has become the Cornerhead)!'... Peter...testifies that Christ is alive, because God raised Him from the dead even when they had crucified Him!... 'He is the Stone!'... He quotes the passage in Psalm 118:22, where David complained that He would be rejected by the leaders of the people, but yet boasts that He was chosen by God to have the chief place.... He compares the Church...to a building. He calls those who hold the reins of government, the 'master builders.' And he names [Christ] Himself the principal Stone on Whom the whole weight of the building rests. That is what is meant by 'the Cornerhead'....

"Peter was therefore quite in order, in citing this passage in his speech to the Jews as a prediction of Christ -- since they were well aware that it properly referred to Him.... It is evident that the Stone Who was rejected by the 'master builders' -- was placed by the hand of God in the most important position to support the whole house!... As the leaders...are called 'master builders' -- the name itself reminds them of their duty. Let them give themselves therefore wholly to the building of the temple of God!... Let them observe what is the correct method of building aright -- which is to keep Christ as the Foundation!...

"This fact...ought to encourage us, when we see...those...who have the most exalted offices wickedly rebel against Christ to cast Him forth.... We need not hesitate to grant Christ the honour which God gives to Him.... Let it follow as the fruit of this confidence, that we be valiant and fearless in maintaining the Kingdom of Christ!... 'In None Other is there salvation!'.... Christ had offered this single indication of His grace, so that He might be recognized to be the only Author of life.... He is the Source of salvation.... By His resurrection, He has purchased for us eternal life!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:16:1: "We must in Him seek...salvation.... As we are taught by the celebrated words of Peter: 'Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under Heaven..., by which we must be saved!' (Acts 4:12)." Calvin also says in his *Treatises* III:123. "There is no other salvation in the Christian Church, than through the grace of Christ. And there never was any other! (Acts 4:12)."

For Christ is the only Saviour and Healer -- crucified and resurrected! For you too?

'Lord, You are God Who made Heaven and Earth!... Truly, against Your holy child Jesus Whom You have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together.... Now, Lord, behold their threatenings! And grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your Word!' Acts 4:24-29.

Calvin comments: "When the disciples...hear...their enemies are pressing hard...upon them, they do not jest.... Being touched with fear, they fly to seek help at the hands of God.... 'You are God, Who made (Heaven and Earth)!... Their acknowledgment of the power of God in the creation of the whole world, is with a view to its application for their present advantage.... Our prayers are what they should be and acceptable to God, when we rest upon His promises and His power -- and pray with a sure confidence that we shall obtain what we ask....

"We learn here...how we ought to regard the creation of the world -- so that we may know that all things are subject to God and ruled by His will.... When the whole world has attempted all that it can, nothing shall come to pass but what He has decreed.... He holds all things in His hand, and is able to make every part of Heaven and Earth obey Him Who is their Creator!...

"Against the Lord and His Christ (all unbelievers gather together)!" The Spirit here teaches us, that all who refuse to submit to Christ -- are making war against God.... We need not be afraid that those who withstand the Gospel will win the victory over God.... This cautions us against despising godly doctrine, and advancing ourselves against God to our own destruction....

"The wicked thought Christ to have been destroyed by death, and sang their empty songs of triumph.... The faithful were aware that the raging was all in vain.... Jews born in a variety of places, were all banded together to assault Christ's Kingdom. Yet their fury was...without effect....

"The Kingdom of Christ was so far from being overthrown by that conspiracy, that it then began to flourish!... God so orders all things by His Own secret counsel, that He brings to pass what He has determined -- even through the agency of the wicked!...

"He turns back their own plans.... All things come to pass in accordance with His will.... The outcome of things is not only governed by the counsel of God, but is also ordered by...His hand.... Christ...will not be separated from the Gospel!... His members...ask God to restrain the cruelty of their adversaries.... 'Grant unto Your servants, O Lord, that they may speak boldly!'"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:18:1-3 : "The disciples confess in solemn prayer that all the wicked do nothing but what the hand and counsel of God had decreed.... God, to Whom all things are known from the beginning, had determined what the Jews had executed.... The Gospel...declares that Herod and Pontius Pilate conspired 'to do whatsoever Your hand and Your counsel determined before to be done!' (Acts 4:28)." All is pre-determined -- also in your life! Therefore, Lord -- embolden Your servants to keep on speaking Your Word!

"They set them (the disciples) before the council, and the high priest asked them....: "Did we not clearly command you, that you should not teach in this name (of Jesus)?... You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine!"... Then Peter...answered....: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree! God has exalted Him with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour..., to give repentance!... We are His witnesses..., and so too is the Holy Spirit Whom God has given to them that obey Him!"" Acts 5:27-32.

Calvin comments: "The chief priest charges the Apostles.... Since they did not comply with the decision of the council, he accuses them of contumacy....

"He is acting in his own interest, rather than dealing with a public matter in a court of law.... To start with, he makes a pretext of their teaching.... He accuses the Apostles of sedition.... He abuses his power like a tyrant -- as if that power were independent of all laws!...

"Even the form of speech which the chief priest uses, is proof how spiritual tyrants usurp for themselves a power that is unrestricted and is not subject to the Word of God.... 'But Peter...answered and said: "We must obey God rather than men!"'...

"God sets men over us with power in such a way that He keeps His Own authority unimpaired.... If a faithful Pastor orders or forbids from the Word of God, there would be no purpose in inflexible men objecting that God must be obeyed... But as soon as governors lead us away from obedience to God, seeing that they enter into conflict with God impiously and boldly -- they must be put in their place, so that God and His authority may stand supreme!...

"If a father...not content with his own station tries to take from God the highest honour as Father -- then he is a man, and nothing else. If a king or a prince or a magistrate extols himself so much that he minimizes the honour and authority of God, he is nothing but a man.... Anyone who goes beyond his function because he sets himself against God, must be stripped of the title of his office.... The office of a Pastor is honourable.... But yet, not so as to detract from the power of God and the headship of Christ!....

"Peter...expressly refers to the 'God of the fathers'.... They (the Christians) are not bringing in a new kind of religion, or forcing some new God on the people.... '(The God of our fathers) raised (up Jesus)...to be a Prince (and a Saviour)...to give repentance!... And we are His witnesses..., and the Holy Spirit!'... But today...the majority, destitute of the Spirit of God, neither see nor understand anything."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:3:19: "After His resurrection, the Apostles preached 'God has exalted Him with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour...to give repentance'...(Acts 5:31). Repentance is preached in the name of Christ, when men learn...they must be born again!"

God resurrected Jesus -- to give repentance! Have you yet repented? Are you born again?

'Stephen...said...'Moses...said 'A Prophet shall the Lord...raise up.... You shall hear Him!'... Which of the Prophets have your fathers not persecuted?... They have slain them which before showed...the coming of the Just One of Whom you have now been the betrayers and murderers!'"... He, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into Heaven -- and saw the glory of God and Jesus.... Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped up their ears...and...stoned Stephen (who was) calling upon God and saying: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"' Acts 6:9 & 7:2,37,52-59.

Calvin comments: "Stephen...told how...the people wickedly and perversely repulsed the grace of God.... While Moses discharged his own ministry, he also said that other Prophets would come after him.... The worship of God does not properly consist in sacrifices.... All rites do nothing else but foreshadow Christ.... Stephen...says, 'You are like your fathers who were always rebels against the Spirit of God!'..."

"They are...resisting the Spirit, when they stubbornly reject what He says by the Prophets.... It was not out of ignorance that they rebelled against God, but...intentionally. It is evident from that, how highly God values His Word -- and how reverently He wishes us to receive it.... 'Which of the Prophets (have your fathers not persecuted)?'... They are the descendants of wicked men who murdered the Prophets!... He touches on what is set out...clearly in the writings of the Prophets, that they are not the sons of the Prophets but...illegitimate offspring.... It was necessary...to be stripped off (of) them..., the very thing with which they were charging Stephen!..."

"All the Prophets were eager to direct their nation to Christ.... The name the 'Righteous One' is given to Christ.... For it is His property, to establish righteousness in the world.... Stephen...'was filled by the Spirit'.... He was now armed with the unconquerable power of the Spirit, so that nothing would block his visions of the Heavens.... He was full of the Spirit.... 'He saw the glory of God'.... When Stephen raised his eyes to Heaven, Christ appeared to him.... He will reveal Himself within us, so that we may really be aware of His presence.... A new sharpness of vision was given to Stephen, to penetrate past every obstacle right to the invisible glory of the Kingdom of Heaven.... It is as if he had said, 'That Man Whom you think was destroyed by death -- I see in possession of the sovereignty of the Heavens!'...."

"The preaching of the glory of Christ annoyed them so intensely, that they simply had to explode with frenzy.... They stoned...Stephen.... 'Stephen...said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"... He fell asleep. And Saul was consenting to his death!' (Acts 8:1)... The word 'sleep'...brings out the peaceful character of his death.... It ought to be taken as referring to the body, in case anyone might make the ridiculous assumption...that the souls sleep as well."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:25:6: "Let us not doubt...when we come to die...after the example of Stephen, to commit ourselves to the protection of Christ...(Acts 7:59).... To pry curiously into their intermediate state, is neither lawful nor expedient (see Calvin's *Psychopannychia*): "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' (Acts 7:59)." Stephen was stoned to death, while praying to Jesus. He fell asleep, awaiting his resurrection! So too should we, when we die!"

'Peter...said:...''We are witnesses of all things which He did.... The Jews slew and hanged Him on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him...to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.... He commanded us to preach...and to testify that...He...was ordained by God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead!'' Acts 10:34-42.

Calvin comments: "Those whom God has adopted to be His sons, He also regenerates by His Spirit.... Peter shows the purpose for which Christ (the Word) has been revealed to the world, (saying) 'The Word...you know!' (Acts 10:37)....

"He recounts a narrative of past events, and then passes on to the effect of the story.... The coming of Christ into the world, His death and resurrection, are the basis of our salvation.... He was finally fastened to the cross, and raised up from the dead by the power of God....

"The resurrection must be taught! For from it, the effect...of all these things is gathered -- viz. that Christ was emptied, so that He might restore us who were lost to complete blessedness.... Emerging Victor from death, He secured eternal life for us.... He opened Heaven for us, by His Own entry....

"'Jesus of Nazareth'...was 'anointed' with the Spirit.... He was endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit, so that He might do good to the world.... He was consecrated by the Father -- King and Priest....

"'And we are witnesses'.... Particular witnesses were ordained by God.... The Apostles...were, by God -- so that by their preaching they might bring men to the faith of Christ.... Peter...touches briefly on His death, because people knew about it everywhere. He dwells longer on the resurrection....

"The certainty of the resurrection was proved enough, by many and firm testimonies.... Unbelievers...were not deserving that Christ should admit them to see the glory of His resurrection.... The Apostles were chosen..., so that by their testimony to the resurrection of Christ the truth might stand.... Let us learn to be content with the witnesses whom He chose by Himself from before the foundation of the world!...

"Christ...lowered Himself for our sake to such an extent that...He ate and drank as a mortal man.... We have no reason to ask whether there is any obscurity or doubt about the resurrection of Christ.... Christ ate.... Since it had been created out of nothing, so it was easily reduced to nothing by the divine power of Christ.... This food was taken by Christ for nourishing our faith.... Christ rose again, so...that He will be 'the Judge of the living and the dead'....

Christ's resurrection for believers, was real For He ate and drank and fellowshiped with His disciples, even after His death! Are you a believer?

'Herod the king...killed James the brother of John with the sword.... Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne and made an oration.... The people gave a shout, saying: "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!" And immediately, the Angel of the Lord smote him -- because he did not give God the glory.... He was eaten by worms.... But the Word of God grew!' Acts 12:1-24.

Calvin comments: "There follows a fresh persecution instigated by Herod.... This man was incited to trouble the Church not so much out of concern for religion, as to win over the common people to himself by this public spectacle.... It is probable that he shed innocent blood, in order to gratify a furious people....

"'He killed James.' There is no doubt that the cruelty of this insane man (Herod) was kept back and checked by the secret power of God.... He would have piled up huge heaps of martyrs, if God had not intervened to protect His flock.... The Lord spares His sheep, and does not allow those men (like Herod) to do as much harm as they intended....

"He killed James.... The Lord allowed him to be rushed to his death, after He had provided him with steadfastness to be victorious in death as a courageous and unbeaten champion.... God nevertheless chooses sacrifices of a pleasing odour for Himself, in order to confirm the faith of His Gospel....

"('Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne and made an oration.') Josephus says that his garments were covered with gold, so that when they were struck with the rays of the sun -- they glittered back in turn.... This was seized on by the courtiers, as an opportunity to hail him as a god. He says that a wound was suddenly inflicted on him....

"He (Josephus) has no doubt that his sacrilegious insolence was being censured, by this kind of punishment.... He mentions that, even as he was suffering horrible pain, he openly acknowledged it: 'Look at me, the one whom you are honouring as a god! I am being forced to end my life, in the most wretched way!'....

"'Immediately, (the angel of the Lord) smote him'.... The word which Luke has used, means that he (Herod) was consumed by worms. Many conjecture that the disease was lice infestation.... When he was still alive, he was wasting away with rottenness and an offensive smell, so that he was...a living corpse.... The Lord wished to choose a kind of punishment by which He would obliterate the ferocity of a proud man, with extreme ignominy.... When he was infested by lice and worms, and that stinking putrefaction which gnawed at him and consumed him broke out of his body, he was being treated according to his merits and deserts.... 'He gave not God the glory.... But the Word of God (grew)!... The Church always survives its enemies!"

Herod the king killed James, before that king himself died desperately! How shall you die?

"Though they (the Jews) found no cause of death in Him (Jesus), yet they desired of Pilate that He should be slain.... When they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre. But God raised Him from the dead, and He was seen many days by them which came up with Him from Galilee!" Acts 13:28-31.

Calvin comments: "Christ was put to death, without deserving it.... He would not have obtained righteousness for us by His death, if He had suffered for His Own misdeeds.... It was necessary for Him Whose death is an atonement for the sins of the world, to be innocent....

"Paul had made it quite clear, that Pilate did not condemn Christ by virtue of his office as a judge -- but that, when he was prevailed upon by the outrageous demands of the people, he granted permission for Him to be handed over to death.... At the same time, the Jews were driven by wilfulness and not by reason to desire the death of Christ. For his (Paul's) listeners had to be frightened into not associating themselves with such an abominable crime, as accomplices....

"When they (the Jews) had fulfilled all things....which God allowed to be done through them..., they handled Christ in such a way that not one of the prophecies of Scripture was neglected. In this way, the stumbling-block which the carnal mind imagines from the ignominy of the cross is removed -- viz. that the Son of God was not given up to the raging fury of His enemies, but met death in accordance with the Father's decision. Moreover, it is clear from the Scriptures what sort of circumstances were appointed for Him long before....

"He was buried by Pilate's permission.... Guards were placed at the sepulchre, by the decision of the priests.... Joseph and Nicodemus committed Christ to the sepulchre.... Paul's intention here is...to prove the resurrection of Christ....

"God brought Him out of the sepulchre in which His enemies had shut Him up, and on which they kept guard.... They even set a guard over it!... Nevertheless, it was not found. The deduction from that, is the certainty of the resurrection!

"God raised Him (from the dead)!" The death of Christ was certainly the salvation of the godly. But in conjunction with the resurrection.

"Therefore Paul dwells longer on this second aspect. For he would never have convinced his hearers that salvation must be sought from His death -- unless the power of God had been evident in raising Christ up....

"Christ came out of the tomb which was under the eyes of the hired servants of His enemies. He now adds that He was seen by many disciples, who gave faithful testimony to the people!"

So, after the murder and burial of Jesus -- that was followed by His resurrection! For you?

'God...raised up Jesus..., as...is...written in the second Psalm.... He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to corruption. He said..."I will give You the sure mercies of David!"... He says also in another Psalm, "You shall not permit Your Holy One to see corruption!"... David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep and was laid unto his fathers and saw corruption. But He Whom God raised again, saw no corruption!" Acts 13:33-38.

Calvin comments: "Christ rose from the dead...to fulfil the rôle of Messiah.... In sending His Son into the world, God sustained the promise given to His servants long before....

"In the second Psalm..., Paul suitably adapts the testimony...to the present situation.... David...was a figure of the true Messiah.... In his person, there were foreshadowed for us those things which apply in fullness only to the Messiah.... It...applies to...a profounder prophecy!...

"Kings are indeed generally called 'sons of God' (Psalm 82:6). But since it is God's purpose to prefer David to other kings..., this title of honour is pre-eminently ascribed to him above all others.... It was out of regard for Christ whose image he (David) was, that he is distinguished...as if he were His only-begotten Son.... It was openly known at that time, that he was begotten by God -- since he ascended the throne of the kingdom in a wonderful way...and broke innumerable conspiracies by the power of the heavenly Spirit.... He could not reign, without bringing all the neighbouring nations to submission -- as if in a kind of world conquest.

"Now let us come to Christ! Certainly, He did not come forth into the world without evidence to prove Himself the Son of God. For His glory was visible, as behoved the Only-begotten of the Father.... God begot Christ.... He engraved on Him certain marks by which He might be recognized as the true and express likeness of Himself.... Christ was manifested the Son of God in power, when He rose from the dead.... That was the principal proof of His heavenly perfection.... The resurrection was...the perfect and complete raising.... He then emerged as the Conqueror of death and the Lord of life....

"Paul teaches in Romans 6:9-10: 'He dies no more, and death will have no more dominion!... He...entered into the Kingdom of God..., being alive for ever!... The perpetuity of life which the Father conferred on Him, is extended to...us and is ours!...

"David(s)...body was consumed with rottenness in the sepulchre.... David prophesied about Him (Christ).... The godly go down into the pit on this condition, so that rottenness may...consume their bodies.... David and the rest of believers...will be conformed to their Head.... Yet...the Son of God alone will be totally free and immune from corruption.... The body of David lay in the grave, until he would rise again.... David died.... Corruption did not befall him by chance.... It happened by the providence of God, so that the faithful might know that the prophecy must be transferred to Another!"

For Jesus could not decompose, and was resurrected from death both for David and for us!

'Certain Jews from Antioch..., having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city -- supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city.... When they had preached the Gospel..., they returned again to...Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them...that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God!' Acts 14:19-22.

Calvin commented: "Idle rascals have no difficulty in persuading them at once, to stone Paul.... Almost all men cry out against them, and from time to time even riots break out.... Paul., because he serves Christ faithfully..., is stoned.... He was wonderfully saved by the Lord.... But as far as he himself was concerned, he submitted to a very cruel sort of death.... This stoning must be regarded in the same way as he himself describes it in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (11:25) -- as if he had been slain on that occasion!...."

"But...the disciples stood round about him!.... The believers were anxious about his life.... They gave evidence of their love and care, when they stood round him lying stretched out there...."

"Paul was saved only by a miracle. For on the very day after he had been thrown out for dead, he took to the road like a man fresh and vigorous.... He...actually went back to the places where a short while ago he had been badly treated!... Christ commands His Ministers not only to teach, but to exhort.... Believers are not to neglect the Word of God, as if the reading and preaching of it were superfluous!...."

"Exhorting (them)!...was the principal method of confirmation.... Our coldness needs to be warmed up!... The disciples (were) to be prepared to endure tribulations.... If we are to live devoted and holy lives, we have to engage in warfare in this world.... It is because innumerable provocations arise on every side and at every single moment, and tempt us to give up, that difficulty springs up.... Therefore, in order to persist right to the end -- we must be prepared for warfare!...."

"(In his Acts,) Luke does not only have in mind...persecutions which the enemy brings upon us with drawn swords and flaming fires, but under 'tribulations' he includes all the troubles to which the lives of the godly are liable.... God...is austerer and harder in His dealings with His Own children.... They are particularly hard-pressed by many misfortunes.... The Lord humbles them with these experiences.... He keeps them alert, lest they should lie asleep on the ground.... There are, in addition, the reproaches and slanders of the wicked.... Finally, the passion of the wicked breaks out into open violence.... By such a way, difficult and hard though it is, they (believers) pass into the Kingdom of God.... This law...is laid down for us, that we are to suffer many tribulations.... It is through them, that we are brought into God's Kingdom!... For the saints, their sufferings lead to a favourable and joyful end.... Let believers make up their minds that they must persevere through many distresses -- and then let them be prepared not only for one kind of persecution but for different sorts!"

So then -- note the revival of Paul, after being supposed to have been stoned to death!

'When they (the magistrates) had laid many stripes upon them (Paul and Silas), they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them.... Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.... He (after repenting) took them (out)...and washed their stripes.... He...brought them into his house, set meat before them, and rejoiced -- believing in God with all his house!' Acts 16:23-34.

Calvin comments: "When the magistrates gave such strict instructions for Paul and Silas to be kept unharmed, they did so in order that they might make further inquiries about the case. For they had beaten them with rods....

"It is exceedingly beneficial for us to know...the harsh ways in which the witnesses of Christ were treated long ago.... Luke goes on...to record...their courage and endurance.... Although their feet were bound in fetters, he says that they praised God in prayer....

"Neither the abuse which had been inflicted on them; nor the wounds which made their flesh inflamed; nor the stench from the depths of the prison; nor the danger of death which was threatening them -- prevented them from giving thanks to God with eager and joyful hearts.... Although the pain of their wounds was sharp; although the prison was irksome; although the danger was grave -- since Paul and Silas do not cease praising God, we gather from that how they were constantly encouraged to bear the cross....

"'The keeper of the prison...(was) roused'.... God...answers the prayers of Paul and Silas in this way, to show that...nothing at all can prevent Him from penetrating not only into prisons but also into tombs to snatch away His Own from death.... Paul..., when he was freed from his chains..., did not stir a foot from the spot....

"This keeper was constrained by fear, to show obedience to God.... He had become hardened in his superstitions, and would therefore have shown high-minded contempt for anything that Paul and Silas would have said -- particularly when he had disgracefully thrust them into the place in the prison for closer confinement. Fear now makes him docile and obedient...

"He fell down at their feet.... "'Sirs, what must I do (to be saved?)" And they said:) "Believe on the Lord Jesus!"...

"'He was baptized, he and all who belonged to his household.' Luke again commends the godly zeal of the keeper, because he dedicated his whole household to God...; because He suddenly brought a whole family to godly unanimity....

"'He rejoiced, because he had believed'.... Hr received the Apostles hospitably, and...treated them kindly in his home!"

Paul was whipped, jailed, put in stocks -- but then, released and fed by his new brother!

'They came to Thessalonica where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead.... "This Jesus Whom I preach to you, is Christ!" And some of them believed.' Acts 17:1-3.

Calvin comments: "It is evident from...(Paul's) preaching Christ at Thessalonica, after having been beaten and hardly escaping from great danger at Philippi, how unbroken he was in his determination to hold to the course of his calling.... Paul did not labour in human fashion.... He was equipped with the heavenly power of the Spirit....

"Notwithstanding the fact that he had so often experienced the ungovernable obstinacy of the Jews, he did go in among them and continued to be concerned about their salvation.... He commits the outcome of his labour to the Lord.... Straightaway on that first sabbath, there were already some who refused the sound doctrine -- but their perverseness did not prevent him from coming back on other sabbaths!...

"Jesus the Son of Mary is the Christ promised in time past in the Law and the Prophets, Who made atonement for the sins of the world by the sacrifice of His death and brought righteousness and life by His resurrection!... Luke says that he (Paul) argued from the Scriptures....

"Assent must be given to God alone.... Scripture originated from God. The rule of either teaching or learning, was bound to be derived from no other source....

"The Jews admit Paul, and bear with him as he argues from the Scripture.... Today, more light appears in the Scriptures. And the truth of God shines out more clearly in them, than in the Law and the Prophets (alone). For in the Gospel, Christ the Sun of Righteousness shines upon us with full splendour.... Faith can be founded nowhere else than in the Word of the Lord, so in all controversies we must take our stand only on its evidence....

"He (Paul) describes...the subject..., and posits two statements about the Christ -- that it was necessary for Him to die and rise again; and that He is the son of Mary Who had been crucified. When there is a dispute about the Christ, three questions arise -- whether He does exist; Who He is; and what is His nature....

"There was no doubt...among Jews...(that) a Mediator had been promised.... Because there was nothing more difficult than for Jews to acknowledge the crucified Jesus as Redeemer -- Paul therefore begins from this aspect.... There were obvious reasons why Christ had to suffer and rise again.... (Paul) spoke publicly about the ruin of the human race, about sin and its punishment.... Scripture also recalls us to these things, when it foretells the death...and resurrection of Christ....

"Some of them believed!"... Paul...proved...to all that Jesus is the Christ Who reconciled the Father...by His death..., Whose resurrection is the life of the world!" Paul proved this! For you?

'He (Paul) preached Jesus and the resurrection to them (the Epicureans and the Stoics). Paul...said:... "God Who made the world...is Lord of Heaven and Earth, not dwelling in temples...nor worshipped...as though He needed anything.... He gives to all life and breath and all things, and has made all nations of one blood...so that they should seek the Lord.... God...now commands all men everywhere to repent!... He has given assurance to all, in that He has raised Him (Christ) from the dead!'" Acts 17:18-31.

Calvin comments: "The Epicureans'...philosophy was to think that the sun is two feet wide..., and...not governed by the providence of Heaven.... The immortality of souls was like a fairytale to them.... The Stoics...did not acknowledge that God rules the world by His purpose..., (but was) bound by the necessity of fate.... The whole crowd was hostile to the Gospel!..."

"One may divide this speech of Paul's into five parts.... First, Paul charges the Athenians with superstition -- because their worship of their own gods was a haphazard affair. Secondly, he shows...Who God is; what He is like; and how He is to be worshipped properly. In the third place, he inveighs against the stupidity of men who, although they were created for the purpose of knowing their Maker and Creator, yet wander about in the darkness like blind men. In the fourth place, he warns that there is nothing more absurd than making statutes or pictures of God.... Finally, in the fifth place, he passes on to Christ and the resurrection of the dead....

"Paul's intention is to teach what the nature of God is.... For the true rule of godliness is precisely this, to have a clear grasp of Who the God is Whom we worship.... The true God ought to be distinguished from all fabrications.... There is nothing easier than to adulterate the pure worship of God, when men measure God according to their own inclination!..."

"God is Spirit. Therefore the only worshippers He approves of, are those who worship Him spiritually.... God...does not dwell in temples made with hands.... Since it is evident from the creation of the world that the...goodness and power of God are diffused beyond the limits of Heaven and Earth -- it follows that He cannot be confined within any spatial localities!... The only way He is worshipped -- is by faith, a pure conscience, prayers and gratitude.... Men...have nothing -- except from His gracious kindness; yes, men are nothing, except by His sheer grace. For they must soon be reduced to nothing, if He withdraws the Spirit by Whom they live!..."

"Men ought to give careful consideration to the knowledge of God, because it was for this reason that they were made.... Whatever region of the world they inhabit..., there is one Creator...of all.... True knowledge of God, is a special gift of His.... Faith, by which He is properly known, proceeds only from the illumination of the Spirit.... The power of the Spirit is diffused through all parts of the world.... There is no life for us, except in God.... There is not even movement!... In John (1:4), when mentions is made of the creation of all things, there is added...that 'the life was the light of men'!... 'Now He commands all (men everywhere, to repent!)'... We must listen to God!... God is urging us to repent!... Christ has been declared and proved the Judge of the world, by His resurrection!" Thus, Paul preached to scoffers about Jesus and His resurrection! Do you so scoff?

'We...came...to Troas..., where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week..., Paul preached to them...and continued his speech until midnight.... A certain young man named Eutychus..., as Paul was long preaching..., sank down with sleep and fell down from the third loft and was taken up 'dead'.... Paul went down.... Embracing him, (he) said... "There is life in him!"... And they brought the young man alive!' Acts 20:6-12.

Calvin commented: "On one day of the Sabbaths'...means...the first day of the week.... According to custom, that day was most suitable for holding a meeting...(Matthew 28:1f; Luke 24:1f; John 20:1f).... It is also very likely that Paul waited for the Sabbath, so that it would be easier for him to gather all the disciples into one place on the day before his departure....

"Paul draws out his sermon longer than usual.... If the upper room had not been full, those who were present would not have allowed Eutychus to sit on the window...

'He was overpowered by sleep'.... What is strange about his struggling with sleep at the dead of night, and finally succumbing?... He was...overpowered by sleep against his will, and contrary to his expectation.... Just after midnight, he sank into a deep sleep -- and fell down (three stories!).... The Lord wished to awaken the faith of His Own people not only by the sleep but also by the 'death' of this young man, so that they might receive Paul's teaching more eagerly....

"'He (Paul) lay on him'.... That conjunction gave him a greater impetus to pray with all the feeling of his heart for the youth's life from the Lord! Similarly, when he embraced the body of the 'dead' man, he was indicating by this gesture that he was offering it to God to be restored to life.... He did not give up his embrace, until he knew that life was given back....

"The chief cause of Paul's concern, was that this sad event might not shake the faith of the godly and trouble their minds. At the same time, the Lord ratified the last sermon that Paul delivered at Troas, as if with a seal impressed before their eyes.

"When he says that 'his soul is in him' -- he is not denying that he was 'dead.' Because he would be obliterating the glory of the miracle in that way! But the meaning is that life was restored to him, by the grace of God! I do not restrict the subsequent statement that they felt greatly 'comforted' -- to the joy that they had at the young man's recovery.... At the same time, I include the confirmation of their faith -- since God had given them such a remarkable token of His love!"

Calvin also said in his *Psychopannychia*: "Sometimes the word 'soul'...is called the breath which men inhale and respire, and in which the vital motion of the body resides.... Acts 20:10.... Hence we read that the multitude, after the body was raised, glorified God Who had given such power to men (Acts 20:12). This was certainly seen by Cyril, who agrees with us in the exposition of this passage... The soul never lost its life!"

Nevertheless, Paul revived Eutychus -- who was picked up 'dead'!

'Paul...sent to Ephesus, and called the Elders.... He said..."I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there!... None of these things move me! Neither do I count my life dear to me -- so that I might finish my course with joy!... I know that you all...shall see my face no more!'" Acts 20:16-25.

Calvin comments the Ephesians Elders "were never going to see him (Paul) again.... This...should always remain before their eyes -- and the memory of it survive, after his death....

"He denies...he knows what will happen to him at Jerusalem. Yet, because he had been warned by many predictions that bonds were waiting for him there..., he puts an end to the hope of his return -- as if he were already prepared to die....

"(I go) bound in the Spirit (to Jerusalem)!"... It is the inward power and influence of the Holy Spirit that is meant.... He was freely or calmly following the secret leading or inspiration of the Spirit.... He asserts that the Spirit is the Promoter and Guide of his journey.... He had good cause for undertaking a journey that the Spirit ordered.... Let us learn from the example of the holy man, not to kick against the Spirit of God -- but obediently to surrender ourselves to Him to direct us!...

"The same Spirit...warns Paul in advance of bonds and afflictions.... We are not absolved on that account, from obeying the Commandments of God!... Those men are deceiving themselves in vain who put a limit on acting correctly..., who by way of excuse thrust forward inconveniences, injuries and finally the danger of death!

"But I do not care, and life itself is not precious to me!" All the godly...ought to be composed in their minds like this, so that setting aside everything else -- they may hasten to obey God in the right course of action.... Life...ought (not) to be despised, seeing...we have been created as the image of God so we may meditate upon that blessed immortality that is reserved for us in Heaven.... But because it is...arranged for us like a racecourse, it is proper...to make haste to the winning-post and to overcome obstacles -- so that nothing may impede or delay us on the course!

"For it is a shameful thing for us to be so gripped by a blind love of living, that because of life we lose the reasons for living!... Paul...does not...esteem his life as of no value, but he puts consideration of it out of his mind -- so that he may finish his course.... He is not possessed by any desire to live, except to satisfy the call of God.... For that reason...the loss of life will not be a serious thing for him, provided that he is coming near by death to the goal of the function that God had prescribed for him!...

"Notice his words, 'with joy'.... He means...there is no sadness or mourning when the faithful are deprived of life, but that they live and die to the Lord joyfully!... This lays the foundation of the Kingdom..., by the renewal of men as the image of God -- until it is finally completed in the last resurrection!" For Paul expected afflictions, and counted not his life as dear! How dear is your life?

There came...a certain Prophet named Agabus.... He took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet and said...: "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles!"... When we heard these things..., we...besought him not to go up to Jerusalem! Then Paul answered...: "I am ready not only to be bound but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus!" And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased -- saying: "The will of the Lord be done!" Acts 21:10-14.

Calvin comments: "We must see why the threatening persecution was made known...by Agabus.... Paul...had already been given more than enough warning.... This confirmation was added for the sake of others, because the Lord wished to make His servant's bonds famous everywhere...so that they might learn that God had appointed him a champion to fight for the Gospel. It was surely a useful example of invincible steadfastness when, knowingly and willingly, he offered himself to the violence of his enemies...

"(So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind) the man that owns this girdle!" It was common for the Prophets to give a symbolic demonstration of what they were saying.... The same Spirit Who made symbols suit His words, used to touch the hearts of the godly within.... Agabus does not present a spectacle in silence, but links it with the Word, by which he taught the faithful....

"Both we and other besought him (not to go up to Jerusalem)!.... Since those holy men knew that much depended on the life or death of one man, they did not wish him to be exposed to danger rashly.... Their devotion is praiseworthy, because by keeping Paul back -- they wished to have regard to the common safety of the Church....

"But on the other hand, Paul's determination deserves all the more praise, when he continues inflexible in the calling of God.... He was well aware...how much distress could result from his bonds. But yet, because he knows the will of God which was the one and only rule in making up his mind -- in order to follow it, he regards everything else as of no importance.... It is surely right for us to be so fixed to the will of God, that no advantage and no reason of any kind may shift us from simple obedience to Him!...

"The tears of the godly were wounding his heart. But that tenderness did not turn him aside. For he continued to follow God.... Paul once again declares that it is only by contempt of death, that the servants of Christ will be prepared to discharge their duty.... Only those who will freely lay down their own lives as a testimony of the truth, will ever properly be disposed to live for the Lord!...

"We acquiesced'.... If they had thought that in this way he was rushing to his death heedlessly, they would not have acquiesced like this.... They give in, so as not to resist the Holy Spirit by Whom they understood that Paul was directed.... All our feelings must be held in check by this bridle!"

Paul was prepared even to die, for the name of Jesus! Are we too?

"The Jews...stirred up all the people.... The people ran together.... They took Paul and drew him out of the temple.... They went about, to kill him!... But when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left off beating Paul.... The chief captain...took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains.... He commanded him to be carried into the castle." Acts 21:27-34.

Calvin comments: "'(The Jews) who were from Asia (stirred up all the people).'¹ It was not to be wondered at, that the city was in an uproar.... It was a sign of perverted zeal and insane rashness that the people rose up against Paul, without examination of his case....

"It is certainly a bitter situation that the whole world may suddenly be stirred up against us!... Let each one of us prepare himself by this and similar examples, to endure all disturbances!...

"'They were seeking to kill him'.... The power of Satan is apparent, in driving the people on to such a pitch of fury.... Not being content with a moderate punishment, they plot together for the death of Paul. We ought to keep this thought before us, that the enemies of godliness are being urged on by Satan – so that their raging may not disturb us, no matter how furious and turbulent it may be!

"On the other side, the wonderful goodness of God shines out -- when He suddenly brings out the tribune to save Paul's life.... He himself had no such thought in his head, but ran up to stop the tumult of the people.....

"Paul's life was snatched out of such immediate danger, without any human plan! Thus He allows the faithful not only to be afflicted but almost to be overwhelmed, so that He might deliver them...from the midst of death....

"'When they saw the tribune (and the soldiers, they left off beating Paul)!' The men, whose fury neither the majesty of God nor the sanctity of the temple (of the Jews) was able to restrain, are now quietened by fear of an unbeliever!.... The tribune makes it plain enough, by binding him with chains, that he did not come in order to set him free. Unbelievers would have put this down to fortune. But the Spirit has...painted us a picture of the providence of God ruling in the midst of men's confusions and disturbances.... Praise will have to be given to the tribune's fairness, if he is compared with the Jews. He does put chains on him, as if he were a vicious criminal. Yet he has the patience to hear the fettered man, whom they were flogging to death.... There were at one in demanding the death of a man, who had been convicted of no crime. There is no doubt...that they were blinded.... Violence betrays a diabolical madness.

"('He commanded him to be carried into the castle').... A 'fortress' is mentioned.... (The) soldiers who were posted for the defence of the city, had a place which was walled and fortified all round which they could defend like a stronghold.... The more the ferocity of the persecutors burned, the clearer did God show His favour to His servant in sparing his life!" So God again saved Paul -- when the Ephesian Jews threatened him with much bodily harm!

'Lord, they know I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed in You! And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I too was standing by and consenting to his death and kept the raiment of them that slew him. But He said to me: "Depart, for I will send you far hence, to the Gentiles!"... They heard him till this.... Then they lifted up their voices and said: "Away with such a fellow from the Earth! For it is not fitting that he should live!"' Acts 22:19-22.

Calvin comments: "Lord, they themselves (the Jews) know (I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed in You)! Paul makes it known by these words that he was not mentally disturbed....

"Without the shadow of a doubt, he recognized Christ Whom he addressed by the name of 'Lord'.... But Christ gives the definite reply that He had chosen him for another field of service (among the Gentiles)....

"At the same time, the untameable obstinacy of the Jews is exposed by the fact that they remain unmoved.... Such a reproach...drove them into a fury. 'Away with such a fellow from the Earth!'...

"Paul's speech was interrupted by an uproar. For not only do they overwhelm him with their shouting, but they demand his death -- which makes it perfectly plain how frenzied their pride is.

"The Jews used to have such pride in themselves that they not only despised the whole world.... So they were now driven violently against Paul, because he had said that he was sent as the Apostle to the Gentiles!...

"It is no wonder that there was so much ferocity in the Jews at that time.... Today, they are completely trampled upon..., and yet do not cease to be swollen with a servile pride. But those are the consequences of rejection, until God gathers together the remnant according to Paul's prophecy (Romans 11:5[-26])....

"The tribune acted prudently and correctly, in removing Paul from the people's sight. Since his presence might provoke still further, minds that were already inflamed more than enough....

"In this way, he takes care of the life of the holy man -- and partly calms the madness of the people.... It was probable that the whole of the people conspired...for the head of one man....

"'This man is a Roman!'.... There is no doubt that the tribune obtained full knowledge of the truth, before he untied him.... Paul replies that he was 'born' (a Roman citizen)!"

Yet more importantly, since his birth, Paul had also been born again as a Christian! Paul's own people said he didn't deserve to live! But God used the Romans to save him as a Christian!

'When Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council: "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee! Of the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called into question!" And when he had said so, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees -- and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection...nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.... The scribes that were of the Pharisees' part, arose and strove -- saying: "We find no evil in this man!"' Acts 23:6-9.

Calvin comments: "Paul...truly acknowledged that the Sadducees were hostile to him, because he affirmed the resurrection of the dead.... He set his enemies to fight among themselves....

"'One part were Sadducees'.... That was bound to happen, when the Word of God was set aside!... No matter what kind of deformity befalls..., this may be a help and consolation to us.... By His grace, some seed will always be left!...

"The Pharisees were so named from 'separation' -- because they removed themselves from the rest of the flock.... The Sadducees took their name from 'righteousness' -- as if they were *zaddukiym*, 'righteous men'.... The Pharisees were not content with the genuine teaching of the Law and the Prophets, and with it mixed up fabrications of their own.... The Pharisees confessed both...that resurrection awaits the dead, and that human...spirits are immortal.... The Sadducees used to deny the resurrection of the dead....

"It is brute-like stupidity to be satisfied with the life that is changing and transitory, and not to have a taste for what is above the Earth!... The sons of God ought to...raise their eyes to Heaven, and meditate continually upon the glory of the final resurrection.... The Sadducees denied any knowledge of angels; and secondly, of spirits of any kind.... They said that all that Scripture teaches about good and bad angels, sprung from the Heathen.... It is rather the case, that the belief that is accepted throughout the world took its origin from the heavenly teaching!... Even today, certain good-for-nothing fellows suppose that souls vanish at death!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:14:9: "The Sadducees of old maintained that by 'angels' nothing more was meant than the movements which God impresses on men, or manifestations which He gives of His Own power (Acts 23:8). But this dream is contradicted by so many passages of Scripture, that it seems strange how such gross ignorance could have had any countenance among the Jews. To say nothing of the passages...which refer to thousands and legions of angels (Psalm 91:11 & 97:7 *etc.*)."

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "We know how often our Saviour condemned the error of the Sadducees. Which partly consisted...(Acts 23:8) in denying the existence of spirit."

Paul, however, was on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!

'Certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse. Saying that they would neither eat nor drink, till they had killed Paul!' Acts 23:12.

Calvin comments: "It was necessary for Paul to have his confidence renewed..., so as not to be afraid in very great and unexpected danger. For when he had been warned about such desperate fury on the part of his enemies, he might have been quite convinced that it was all over for him.

"The vow that Luke mentions, was a kind of curse. The reason for a vow, was to make it impossible for them to change their plan or retract what they had agreed upon.... Sometimes, in order to lay themselves under a greater obligation, men adopt specific forms of anathema and solemnly vow fearful things for themselves -- which may produce unaccustomed terror.

"Apart from that, this incident teaches that hypocrites have such bloodthirsty zeal that they do not think about what is lawful for them; but they heedlessly rush wherever their passion drives them. Let us grant that Paul was an impious scoundrel deserving to die -- yet who had given permission to private individuals to punish him?!

"Now if anyone had asked why they hatred Paul so much, they certainly had a ready answer that he was an apostate and a schismatic. But that was merely a foolish judgment of his case -- one based on a vague rumour, and one that had rashly taken possession of their minds! Moreover, in this incident -- we see how great the rashness of the ungodly is. Using a curse, they swear that they will take no food -- until they had killed Paul. As if his life were really in their hands! Therefore, those madmen were usurping for themselves what the Lord so often in Scripture arrogates to Himself alone, that He is the Arbiter of life and death of the men whom He has created (Deuteronomy 32:39).

"Besides, we do not find two or three partners in this acts of madness -- but more than forty!... We...learn what a great propensity men have for wrongful action, when they combine in crowds!...

"Moreover, when Satan violently drives them headlong to their own destruction -- how disgraceful is our sloth, in scarcely moving a finger to maintain the glory of God! Indeed, moderation must be preserved -- so that we do not attempt anything except by the Commandment of God. But when God expressly calls us, there is no excuse for inactivity!"

Calvin also said in his *Institutes* IV:13:3: "He who vows what is not within his means or is at variance with his calling, is rash.... Nothing is duly vowed to God, save what we have received from His hand.... Your vows should be adapted to the measure which God by His gifts prescribes to you, lest by attempting more than He permits -- you arrogate too much to yourself and fall headlong.... When the assassins of whom mention is made in the Acts (23:12) vowed 'that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul' -- though it had not been an impious conspiracy, it would still have been intolerably presumptuous as subjecting the life and death of a man to their own power!"

Certain Jews swore not to eat, till they had killed Paul. But God rescued him!

'They came to the chief Priests and Elders, and said: "We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul! Now, therefore, you with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down to you tomorrow, as though you would inquire something more perfectly concerning him -- and we, as he comes near, are ready to kill him!" But when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle and told Paul!' Acts 23:14-16.

Calvin comments: "They (the unbelieving Jews) came to the chief priests (... and said: "We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul)!" By their approval of such an infamous and impious conspiracy, the priests prove that they are neither touched by any fear of God nor endowed with any humane feeling.

"Not only do they approve of the suggestion made about killing the man by an ambush. But they are prepared to take part in fraudulent practice, in order to deliver into the hands of murderers the man whom they wish destroyed by any means whatever!

"For what else were they doing?... Dragging a man out of the hands of a judge to a violent death," they were "raving like brigands in the very court of justice!

"The priests would certainly never have approved such a preposterous plan as this, if there had been a trace of a proper and godly attitude in them. Yes, and humane feeling as well.

"Moreover, it was not owing to them that they did not bring a great disaster both on the whole people and themselves. But the Lord publicly exposed their hopeless impiety, which they were hiding under the disguise of their official standing....

God did it as follows. "'(But when) Paul's sister's son (heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle and told Paul!)' Here we see God counters the plan of the ungodly!...

"Indeed, He allows them to devise many schemes, and He even allows their wicked enterprises to proceed. But in the end He shows, in the nick of time, that He is laughing out of Heaven at all the things that men are busy about on Earth! Solomon says: 'There is no wisdom, there is no counsel -- against the Lord!' (Proverbs 21:30). To that, corresponds this word of Isaiah's: 'Devise your plan, and it will be destroyed! Speak a word, and it will not stand!' (Isaiah 8:10).

"That is set before us in the present story...for our consideration. The matter is almost accomplished, that Paul should come forth on the following day to be slain -- like a victim devoted to a sacrifice. But the Lord shows that his life is faithfully guarded and protected, so that anything that men endeavour to do -- is in vain!"

Some Jews made ready to ambush and to kill Paul. But God intervened -- employing even a young lad to thwart the planned murder!

'I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets -- and have hope toward God.... There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust!' Acts 24:14-15.

Calvin comments: "He means that he was a Pharisee.... Paul was a Roman citizen. Nevertheless, as he was of Jewish descent, he confesses that he was continuing in the religion that he had learnt from the fathers....

"He expressly mentions 'the God of the fathers'.... He is...reproaching his adversaries by whom he was so cruelly attacked.... He says: 'I worship God according to the custom handed down by our forefathers, just as they did!'.... He...was content with the spiritual worship of God....

"But in fact, the apostle did not by any means propose to found religion simply on the authority of ancestors!... At the same time, he was taking it for granted that the fathers from whom the Jewish religion had originated, were honest and true worshippers of God -- so that genuine Jews could justly boast that the God of their fathers whom they were worshipping was the one and only Maker of Heaven and Earth....

"He now explains how he worshipped God.... In the way that we have been taught from the Law and the Gospel!... It is only by faith...that God is worshipped correctly.... The one and only foundation of correct and orthodox faith, is to subject oneself to Scripture and reverently embrace its teaching.... Here Paul divides Scripture into the Law and the Prophets, to prove more clearly that he did not hold anything different from the universal agreement of the Church....

"After professing that he believed in Scripture, he now adds the hope of the future resurrection in order that it may be plain that it is conceived...from the Word of God. Reverence for Scripture therefore takes the leading place, so that its authority may keep us under obligation.... There follows the knowledge of those things that God reveals in it.... To that knowledge, is linked certain hope....

"The general resurrection (of the just and unjust) is asserted here against certain (premillennial) fanatics, who restrict it to the members of Christ.... Paul says in this verse that all will rise again. So (too, also) Christ clearly refers to all without distinction in His word -- 'some to judgment; some to life' (John 5:39)."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:25:9 : "The resurrection...is...common to the ungodly who are lying under the curse of God.... When the devils were first alienated from God the Fountain of Life, they deserved to be destroyed utterly. Yet by the admirable counsel of God, an intermediate state was prepared where without life they might exist in death.... There is to be an adventitious resurrection of the ungodly, which will drag them against their will before the tribunal of Christ.... 'There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust!' (Acts 24:15)."

There shall be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust dead! Which will be yours?

'After many years, I (Paul) came to bring alms to my nation.... Certain Jews from Asia found me...in the temple..., who ought to have been here...and objected if they had anything against me.... Let these here say, if they have found any evildoing in me!... Standing, I cried out...: "Regarding the resurrection of the dead -- I am called into question by you this day!"' Acts 24:17-21.

Calvin comments: "He (Paul) had not been at Jerusalem for a long time, but had been occupied in other countries far away.... After a long interval of time, he had now come to bring alms....

"That also makes plain the inhumanity as well as the ingratitude of those men. Because, when he should have won the goodwill of the whole nation in every way, they recompense him with an unjust reward....

"When he says that he was discovered in the temple..., he is once again turning aside...charges from himself.... The temple was not profaned by him.... Since he behaved quietly, without a crowd of men -- there was no suggestion of a tumult....

"It was...those (Jewish) Asiatics...who raised a tumult, without cause! It is as if he (Paul) said: 'You who heap so many charges on me, cannot affirm what the true state of affairs is -- but...present a rumour that you have rashly believed!'

"After Paul had turned back the charge on others -- now, as if he had recovered his confidence, he challenged his adversaries who were present to be free to make it known if they had definite information against him.... In their Council (*Sunedrio*), he was prepared to give an account of everything....

"On that occasion, they knew nothing of which they could accuse him.... They grew violent only at one statement that he made -- that he was being judged concerning the resurrection of the dead.... The only reason why he endured all this trouble, was that he hoped for the resurrection.

"From that, it is apparent...a fresh accusation was then being made without any justification. Because, if he had committed any offence, they would not have kept quiet about it then!

"Indeed, it is probable that afterwards other disputations were held between the two sides.... They came to closer grips, as if engaged in hand to hand fighting!...

"We shall see elsewhere that they was a contention about Christ (Acts 25:18-19 -- 'When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation.... But they had certain questions against him of their own..., and of one Jesus Who was dead -- Whom Paul affirmed to be alive').

"Luke merely intended to show that Paul had cleared himself of the false calumnies of his accusers." Because Paul was on trial -- for his views about the resurrection of Jesus and the dead!

'(Paul said:) 'If I be an offender or have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die!... When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation..., but had certain questions against him of their own...and of one Jesus Who was dead Whom Paul affirmed to be alive.' Acts 25:11-19.

Calvin comments: "(Paul,) after acknowledging that he should not escape if any blame were to be found in him..., freely made use of human aids.... If ever a similar need overtakes us, we ought not to have any scruples about seeking help from the laws and the political order.... Not for nothing, is it written that the magistrates are appointed by God to give approval to those who are good (Romans 13:3).

"Certainly Paul had no fear of litigating under an unbelieving judge. For an appellant is raising a new action. Let us therefore realize that God Who has instituted courts of law, also allows His Own the legitimate use of them!...

""(When the accusers stood up,) they brought no charge!"... The false accusations were so empty, that they ought not to have come into a court of law -- being more like the insults shouted by some hothead....

“(Festus the judge) said that the essence of the case depended on questions of the Law (of the Hebrew religion).... He distinguished between crimes which usually were punished by the laws of men, and the controversy which was raised between Paul and the Jews. He did so, not because religion ought to be violated with impunity or the impudence of those who corrupt the worship of God with their own fabrications...be tolerated, but because the Law of Moses meant nothing to a Roman (like him)....

"He says that they contended about 'their own superstition' -- although the word...is used in a good sense as well as a bad.... He means that it is of no importance to him what the religion of the Jews was like.... It was...deplorable...that a man who was an unbeliever...was sitting as judge and mediator among Jews.... But the entire blame stuck fast to Paul's adversaries, who cared nothing for the majesty of God so long as they gratified their own madness.... All that remained for Paul to do, was to put an end to the reproaches that were made against him unjustly....

"There is no doubt that Paul spoke seriously...about the resurrection of Christ.... Festus...did not mock openly at Paul... He had said nothing about Christ, and yet this later narrative shows that Paul had serious discussion with the Jews about His death and resurrection.... Paul spoke in such a way that when he had refuted the false accusations of the Jews..., he then began to talk more freely about Christ."

Paul did not refuse to die, if he so deserved. He did not deserve to die for anything he was accused of during that trial -- and was later acquitted!

'Agrippa said to Paul: "You are permitted to speak!"... (Paul said): "O king, I saw...a light from Heaven above the brightness of the sun.... I said, 'Who are You, Lord?'... He said: 'I am Jesus, whom you persecute! But rise, and stand upon your feet!... I send you to the Gentiles, to open their eyes and...turn them from darkness to light!'" Acts 26:1-18.

Calvin comments: "The purpose for which Paul was brought before that gathering..., (was) so that Festus might write to Caesar in accordance with the advice of Agrippa.... (Said Paul:) 'O king, ('I saw...a light from Heaven')!"

"The object of telling this, is that King Agrippa may understand that it was no empty apparition and that it was not such an ecstatic experience as deprived him (Paul) of his sanity and powers of judgment.... Although he was overcome by fear and fell to the ground, yet he heard a Voice....

"He asked Who was speaking. He understood the reply that was given... These are signs of a mind in good order.... He did not undergo a change by accident, but obeyed the heavenly oracle loyally and conscientiously....

"Christ threw Paul to the ground, in order to humble him. He then raised him up, and bode him be of good courage....

"Those whom He casts down, He soon afterwards kindly raises up!... Christ said that He had appeared...as a gracious Lord Who...thought him (Paul) worthy of an honourable ministry.... This was already a memorable vision, for it had taught him that Christ reigns in Heaven....

"We know that Christ is the One...Liberator Who snatches us out of the tyranny of Satan. We know that it is God Alone Who, having destroyed our sins, admits us into the lot of the saints.

"But it is a common thing for God to transfer to His Ministers the honour due to Himself Alone -- not in order to take anything away from Himself, but to commend the efficacy of His Spirit Whom He puts forth in them..., so that He may work powerfully with their assistance.... Therefore Teachers are sent...to bring life-giving light to the blind...and to confirm the grace of salvation... But they do not carry out...these things, except insofar as God works through them....

"Illumination is referred to knowledge of God.... The following phrase to be 'turned from darkness to light' goes further.... That happens when we are 'renewed in the spirit of our mind' (Ephesians 4:23)."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:2:1: "Paul...introduces Christ...as addressing him: 'I have appeared to you...to make you a Minister and a Witness..., delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles...to whom I now send you...so that they may receive forgiveness of sins!'" For Paul was blinded! Till God opened his eyes again! Are your eyes yet fully opened?

'O King Agrippa! I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision..., but showed...to the Gentiles that they should repent.... The Jews caught me..., and went about to kill me.... Christ would suffer.... He would be the first that would rise from the dead, and would show light to the people and to the Gentiles!' Acts 26:19-23.

Calvin comments: "What was his (Paul's) purpose in relating the story of his conversion?... To testify to Agrippa and the rest, that he held God responsible for all those things which the Jews were condemning as sacrilege....

"To 'repentance' there is added 'turning to God'..., so that we may know what repenting means.... Repentance is an inward thing.... The Gospel of Christ now calls all to repentance....

"'(The Jews caught me..., and...) tried to kill me.' Here he (Paul) complains about the injustice of his enemies.... There were pleading a bad case with a bad conscience.... If Paul had committed any offence, they were at liberty to take legal proceedings against him.... Therefore the fury into which they flew, proved that they had no grounds....

"Paul...was saved by the 'help of God'.... He deigned to stretch out His hand to bring help to him....

"As often as we are snatched out of dangers, the Lord is not prolonging our lives so that we may fritter them away through idleness! But so that we may discharge our office with alacrity for the glory of Him Who has preserved us for Himself....

"Paul...here...commends the help of God, to show that ...he would do nothing else but devote the remaining course of his life to Him Who had delivered him....

"Christ gathers all men together into His bosom..., so that those who were previously lying in the dirt and were now raised to such great honour, may glory in his gracious goodness.... Paul...completed his defence..., in which he had acknowledged that Moses and the Prophets were his sources....

"'(Christ...would be the) first (that would rise at His) resurrection!'... Here he calls Him 'first' -- as elsewhere he calls Him 'the Firstfruits' of those who rise again (First Corinthians 15:23)....

"In rising again, Christ came forth as the Conqueror of death and the Lord of life -- to reign forever and make His Own sharers in His blessed immortality.... The word 'light' includes everything that makes for full happiness.... It is plain from a great many oracles, that the Light of life must be diffused...from Judaea to the Gentiles!"

The resurrected Christ is a Light to the Gentiles! Is that also your belief?

'They sailed close by Crete.... Not long after, there arose...a tempestuous wind.... The ship was caught.... We were exceedingly tossed by the tempest.... All hope that we would be saved, was then taken away.... They ran the ship aground.... The hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.... Some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship..., all escaped safely to land!'
Acts 27:13-44.

Calvin comments: "They 'sailed along the coast of Crete' -- until they were swept away.... 'The ship was caught'.... What normally happens in a moment of extreme danger, did happen...; driven by the winds!...

"Having been driven near an island, they are just as afraid of the ship breaking up as they previously were of its overturning.... The storm was so violent and severe and persisted so long, that death was threatening them continually....

"They made strenuous use of all remedies which could ward off shipwreck, and did not spare the cargo and the tackle.... When they had tried everything, they despaired of their safety.... The thick dark sky was like some tomb....

"Meanwhile, He allowed His servant (Paul) to suffer with the others -- until he thought that he was destined to die.... Not only was his body tossed about in the midst of the storms, but his soul was also shaken by severe and violent temptations. Nevertheless..., he stood firm by faith -- and did not give way!...

"('We were exceedingly tossed with a tempest.... When...no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away!')

"Paul...was conscious of the secret direction of the Spirit. So that he who had the Spirit of God guiding him, could confidently assume the rôle.... Paul clearly honours the name of his God before unenlightened men....

"At the same time, we see that Paul triumphs in his bonds.... 'Fear not, Paul! You must be brought before Caesar!... Look, God has given you all them that sail with you!'... It sometimes happens that, when the Lord spares His Own, He preserves the ungodly for a time along with them.... It is a remarkable pledge of God's love towards us, that He makes some drops of His kindness flow from us to others!....

"'They ran the ship aground'.... The ship was wrecked and broken.... It is fitting that we ponder the wonderful purpose of God...in saving Paul, and in fulfilling His promise when He brings to land the very men to whom no thanks were due!"

Paul was in peril of shipwreck on the sea. But God graciously rescued the entire crew!

'His Son Jesus Christ our Lord...was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead' Romans 1:3-4.

Calvin comments: "Paul teaches us that the whole Gospel is contained in Christ.... Since Christ is the living and express image of the Father, it need not surprise us that He Alone is set in front of us as the One Who is both the object and centre of our whole faith...."

"I have translated the words 'Jesus Christ our Lord' which follow, in the same case as 'His Son'.... Any due progress in the knowledge of Christ, brings with it all that can be learned from the Gospel.... To search for wisdom apart from Christ means...utter insanity!

""(Christ) was born' (of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power).' Divinity and humanity are the two requisites which we must look for in Christ.... His divinity contains power, righteousness and life -- which are communicated to us by His humanity...."

"The Apostle has expressly mentioned both in his summary of the Gospel -- in stating that Christ was made manifest in the flesh, and that in the flesh He declared Himself to be the Son of God. So too John (1:14), after saying that 'the Word became flesh' -- adds that there was 'the glory as of the Only-begotten from the Father' in His very flesh.

"The special note which Paul makes of the lineage and descent of Christ from His ancestor David, is quite deliberate.... This particular phrase recalls us to the promise and removes any doubt which we may have of His being the very One Who was previously promised.... The fact of Christ's descent from David, contributes therefore to the confirmation of our faith...."

""(Christ was) declared to be the Son of God'.... Paul is saying that the power of the resurrection represented the decrees by which...Christ was declared to be the Son of God.... Christ was declared to be the Son of God by the open exercise of a truly heavenly power -- *i.e.*, the power of the Spirit when He rose from the dead.... He was God.... Paul elsewhere...extols the power of the Spirit in His resurrection (Second Corinthians 13:4)...."

Paul also includes the evidence...believers experience in their own hearts with the stupendous power of the Spirit Whom Christ manifested by rising from the dead.... Christ gained victory out of death, to which He had yielded by reason of the weakness of His flesh -- not by external aid, but by the heavenly operation of His Own Spirit."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:14:6 & 16:13: "This honour we extend to His whole character of Mediator.... Paul...says...'Christ our Lord...was made of the seed of David...and declared to be the Son of God with power'.... Paul...affirms that He was declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection (Romans 1:3-4)." So Christ was declared to be the Son of God, by His resurrection! Is this what you believe?

'It was not written for his (Abraham's) sake alone.... But for us also..., if we believe in Him Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead!' Romans 4:23-24.

Calvin comments: "Paul expressly affirms that in the person of Abraham, there had been exhibited an example of a common righteousness which applies equally to all. We are reminded in this passage, of the duty of seeking profit from Scriptural examples....

"Scripture alone...prescribes general rules by which we may test all other history, so as to make it serve our advantage.... It clearly distinguishes what actions we ought to follow, and what to avoid..... Paul therefore maintains that the record of Abraham's life was not written for his own sake alone. It...is a description of the way to obtain righteousness, which is one and unchanging among all believers. It is this which is exhibited in (Abraham) 'the father of all the faithful' -- who ought to command universal regard.

"Therefore, if we would make a right and proper use of the sacred histories, we must remember that we ought to use them in such a way as to draw from them the fruit of sound doctrine. They instruct us how to form our life; how to strengthen our faith; and how we are to arouse the fear of the Lord.... The help of God which was always available to them, will contribute to the confirmation of our faith -- and His protection and the fatherly care which He exercised over them, will afford us consolation in time of adversity....

"It was not 'for his sake alone'.... (This) seems to suggest that it was partly written for his sake.... We...take the words 'not for his sake alone'...to mean that it was not on Abraham's account only..., but was related to our instruction -- since we must be justified in the same way....

"(But for us also...) who believe in Him That raised up Jesus our Lord (from the dead)!.... The resurrection of Christ is the most important part of this. For it is the ground of our hope in the life to come. Had he (Paul) simply said that we believe in God, it would not have been so easy for us to gather how this could serve to obtain righteousness. But when Christ comes forth and offers us a sure pledge of life in His Own resurrection -- we see clearly from what Source the imputation of our righteousness flows....

"Our sins were expiated by the death of Christ.... Our righteousness was obtained by His resurrection. The sum is -- that when we possess the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection, righteousness is fulfilled in all its parts.

"Christ...has made known to us how much He had achieved by His death, by rising from the dead.... Our salvation was begun by the sacrifice by which our sins were expiated, and finally completed by His resurrection.... '(He was) raised for our justification!.... The power of justification...which overcame death, is ascribed to His resurrection.... He fully restored life to us, by His resurrection!" So let us believe in God, Who raised up Jesus from the dead! Do you?

'God commends His love toward us -- in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, now being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him!'
Romans 5:8-9.

Calvin comments: "The verb *sunisteesi* ('commends') has more than one meaning. The more suitable here, is that of confirming.

"It is not the Apostle's object to arouse us to give thanks, but to establish the confidence and security of our souls. God, therefore, 'confirms' -- *i.e.*, declares His love toward us to be most certain and true, because He did not spare Christ His Son for the sake of the ungodly.

"Herein is His love manifested. That, without being influenced by any love of ours -- He first loved us of His Own good pleasure. As John (3:16) tells us.

"The word 'sinners'...means those who are wholly corrupt and given to sin.... This appears more clearly from the contrast which immediately follows -- 'being justified by His blood.' Since he (Paul) contrasts these two things, and refers to those who are delivered from the guilt of sin as 'justified' -- it necessarily follows that 'sinners' means those who are condemned for their evil deeds.

"The sum of the whole, is that if Christ has attained righteousness for sinners by His death -- He will now much more protect them from destruction -- when they are justified!...

"It would not have been enough for Christ to have once procured salvation for us, were He not to maintain it safe and secure to the end. This is what the Apostle now asserts, declaring that we have no need to fear that Christ will terminate the bestowal of His grace upon us, before we have come to our appointed end.

"Such is our condition, since He has reconciled us to the Father.... He purposes to extend His grace to us more effectively -- and to increase it, day by day!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:16:4 & III:11:21: "God...has chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world' (Ephesians 1:3-4).... It was 'when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son' (Romans 5:10).... God commends His love toward us -- in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!" (Romans 5:8).

"Therefore, He had this love toward us even when -- exercising enmity toward Him! -- we were the workers of iniquity.... The Apostle shows that man is at enmity with God, until he is restored to favour by Christ (Romans 5:8-10)." For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son -- much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life! (Romans 5:10).

God loved us, in that Christ died for us -- while we were yet sinners! Do you so believe?

'By one man, sin entered into the world; and death by sin.... Death passed upon all men -- for all have sinned.... Death reigned from Adam.... If through the offence of one, many be dead -- much more the grace of God...which is by One man Jesus Christ, has abounded!' Romans 5:12-15.

Calvin comments: "The purpose of Christ's coming, was to redeem us from the calamity into which Adam had fallen.... Realization of what we possess in Christ, can come only when we have been shown what we have lost in Adam...."

"Sin has spread, to all who suffer the punishment of sin.... All Adam's posterity are subject to the dominion of death.... Adam at his first creation had received for his posterity as well as for himself the gifts of divine grace (*divinae gratiae dotes*).... By falling from the Lord, in himself he corrupted...; and ruined our nature. We have therefore all sinned, because we are all imbued with natural corruption...."

"'Death reigned from Adam..., even over them that had not sinned...after the likeness of Adam's transgression'.... Infants are also...included in the universal catalogue...."

"(Yet) Adam was a type of Christ!... We are all lost through Adam's sin, and restored through Christ's righteousness (or sinlessness)!... Christ is much more powerful to save, than Adam was to destroy!.... Christ surpasses Adam!.... The sin of Adam is overcome by the righteousness of Christ.... It is necessary...to be a believer, in order to enjoy the righteousness of Christ!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:1:6,8 & II:13:4 & III:5:4: "By one man, sin entered into the world... So, death passed upon all men.... Romans 5:19-21.... The righteousness of Christ and thereby life, is ours by communication. It follows that both of these were lost in Adam -- so that they might be recovered in Christ.... The Apostle most distinctly testifies that 'death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned' (Romans 5:12).... Even infants bringing their condemnation with them from their mother's womb, suffer not for another's but for their own defect.... They have the seed implanted in them...."

"'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin -- even so by the righteousness of One, the free gift came'.... (Romans 5:12,18).... We do not hold Christ to be free from all taint merely because He was born of a woman unconnected with a man, but because He was sanctified by the Spirit so that the generation was pure and spotless such as it would have been before Adam's fall.... The grace of Christ was poured out in such rich abundance, as far to exceed all the power of sin (Romans 5:15)."

Calvin further says in his *Treatises* III:194-95,118: "He (man) is pressed by hunger, thirst, cold, heat, pain, disease -- and is at last overcome by death itself. For by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.... The inheritance of eternal life, is obtained by faith (Romans 5:14)!" Death reigned from Adam -- who, however, also prefigured Christ the Second Adam!

'Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Don't you know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ has been raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father -- even so we too should keep on walking in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection!' Romans 6:1-5.

Calvin comments: "Christ...will prove to be the destruction of the ungodly. He will likewise be resurrection for the godly.... Believers are never reconciled to God, without the gift of regeneration.... We are justified for this very purpose, so that we may afterwards worship God in purity of life....

"Christ destroys sin in His people.... We are initiated into faith in Him.... We are baptized on this principle, so that we may be one with Him....

"We truly **grow up** into the body of Christ!... Fellowship with His death, is the focal centre of baptism.... The efficacy of Christ's death appears from the moment when we are received into His grace....

"Baptism means that being dead to ourselves, we may become new creatures... Paul, because he is speaking to believers, connects the reality and the effect with the outward sign....

"Whatever the Lord offers by the visible symbol, is confirmed and ratified by their faith.... We never have naked and empty symbols, except when our ingratitude and wickedness hinder the working of the divine beneficence....

"It is of great importance that we should extol, by explicit mention of the incomparable power of God, not only our faith in the last resurrection which far surpasses the perception of the flesh. But also the other benefits which we receive from the resurrection of Christ.... We are ingrafted into the likeness of Christ's death.... His death is inseparable from His resurrection. Our death will therefore be followed by our resurrection.... We die in ourselves, so that we may live in Him.... Notice the analogy between the death of this present life, and our spiritual renewal.... The Apostle desired to point...to...the efficacy of His resurrection, in renewing within us...the Spirit!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* IV:15:5 & 16:20-21: "Baptism...shows us our mortification in Christ, and new life in Him.... 'As many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death'.... (Romans 6:3-4).... We are admonished by baptism...to die to our lusts, and..to rise to righteousness.... Those who receive baptism with true faith, truly feel the efficacy of Christ's death...and the efficacy of His resurrection in the quickening of the Spirit.... He calls it 'the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit' (Titus 3:5).... Children are baptized for...repentance and faith... The seed of both lies hidden in them, by the secret operation of the Spirit!... We are buried with Christ by baptism (Romans 6:4)." Dead to sin, and alive unto righteousness!

The woman who is under a husband, is bound...to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband has died, she is loosened from...her husband.... If her husband has died, she is free...; so that she is no adulteress if she becomes married to another man.... You too have become dead...by the body of Christ, so that you should become married to Another -- even to Him Who has been raised from the dead, so that we should keep bringing forth fruit to God!' Romans 7:2-4.

Calvin comments: "We are freed from the law in such a way, that it no longer properly and by its own right retains any of its power over us.... The example of marriage was very well suited to illustrate.... A woman, after the death of her husband, is freed from the bond of marriage. The law, which take the place of a husband to us, is dead to us" -- as the husband is to the wife, once he has died.

"A woman is subject to her husband by the law, while he is alive. So that she cannot (at that time) become the wife of another. After the death of her husband, however, she is freed from the bond of the law -- so that she may freely marry whom she pleases.

"The law was our 'husband' under whose yoke we were held, until it became dead to us. After the death of the law, Christ took us to Himself -- *i.e.*, He freed us from the law and joined us to Himself. Being therefore united to Christ Who has been raised from the dead, we ought to cleave to Him alone. And as the life of Christ is eternal after His resurrection, so hereafter we shall never be divorced from Him!...

"Paul is referring here only to...part of the law.... We must never imagine that the law is in any way abrogated in regard to the Ten Commandments..., which...must stand for ever! The release here mentioned..., is not from the righteousness which is taught in the law -- but from the rigid demands of the law and from the curse which follows from its demands. What is abrogated, therefore, is not the rule of good living which the law prescribes!...

"Christ raised the standard of His cross, and triumphed over sin.... By the cancelling of this handwriting, therefore, we are delivered in the body of Christ -- even while it was fixed to the cross.... We have now been bound to another Husband! We have passed from one hand to another, from the law to Christ.... Christ is put in place of the law, so that no one should conceive of any freedom apart from Him. Or dare to effect a divorce from the law, if he is not already dead to himself!

"Paul, however, has employed this paraphrase to denote the eternity of that life which Christ has attained by His resurrection. In order that Christians may know that this union with Christ is to be perpetual.... Christ has offered us together with Himself as a sacrifice to the Father.... He regenerates us, in order that we may bring forth fruit to God.... The fruits which our heavenly Father requires from us..., are holiness and righteousness."

We must be dead to sin, so as to bring forth godly fruit!

'If the Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you -- He Who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit Who dwells in you.... We are debtors..., to live!... If you live after the flesh, you shall die! But if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live!' Romans 8:11-13.

Calvin comments: "Paul takes his confirmation...in the following manner. 'If Christ was raised by the power of the Spirit of God, and if the Spirit retains eternal power, He will also exert that power in us'.... He takes it for granted that in the Person of Christ there had been exhibited a specimen of the power which belongs to the whole body of the Church. Since He makes God the Author of the resurrection, he (Paul) attributed to Him the life-giving Spirit.

"(The Spirit of Him Who) raised up Christ Jesus'.... He ascribes to the Father, the glory of having raised up Christ.... When Paul says 'God (the Father) raised up Christ by His Spirit Whom He also communicated to you' -- this cannot be contradicted. Since God has thus made the hope of the resurrection, certain for us!....

"By ('He...shall also quicken your) mortal bodies' -- he (Paul) means all in us that still remains subject to death. Paul's general practice is to apply this name ('mortal bodies') to the grosser part of us.... He is not speaking of the last resurrection which will take place in a moment, but of the continual operation of the Spirit by Whom He gradually mortifies the remains of the flesh and renews in us the heavenly life. 'So then, brethren, we are debtors (...to live)!... The Spirit ought to reign in us.... We are debtors to the Spirit.... 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God in Whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption!' (Ephesians 4:30). So also in Galatians 5:25 -- 'If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk!'....

"For if you live after the flesh, you must die!' He adds a warning, in order to shake off their sluggishness with greater severity. This also provides a useful refutation of those who boast of justification by faith, without the Spirit of Christ.... It is indeed true that we are justified in Christ by the mercy of God alone. But it is equally true and certain that all who are justified, are called by the Lord to live worthy of their vocation!

"Let believers therefore learn to embrace Him not only for justification but also for sanctification!.... He has been given to us for both these purposes, so that they may not rend Him asunder!... 'But if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the body, (you shall live)!... We may still be subject to sin. Nevertheless, He still promises us life -- provided we strive to mortify the flesh!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:2:39 & 25:3,8: "He holds out the hope of a blessed resurrection to those only who feel His Spirit dwelling in them (Romans 8:11).... He says that the Spirit when He dwells in us is life, because the end for which He was given -- is to quicken our mortal body.... 'He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies!' (Romans 8:10-11)." We keep on living through the Spirit, Who raised Jesus -- Who raises us too!

'He Who spared not His Own Son but delivered Him up for us..., how shall He not with Him also freely give us everything?... Christ...died. Yes..., has risen again!... For Your sake, we are killed all the day long.... In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.... I am persuaded that neither death nor life...shall be able to separate us from the love of God!'
Romans 8:32-39.

Calvin comments: "Paul...does not mean that we shall have no opposition, but he promises us victory over every kind of enemy.... If God is not propitious to us, no sure confidence can be conceived.... His favour alone, is a sufficiently great consolation!... That man alone displays true confidence in God, who is content with His protection....

"It is a notable and shining proof of His inestimable love, that the Father did not hesitate to bestow His Son for our salvation.... Since He had nothing dearer, more precious, or more excellent than His Son -- He will neglect nothing which He foresees will be profitable to us!...

"Christ has not only died. He has also come forth as Conqueror of death, and triumphed over its power by His resurrection.... This great security which dares to triumph over the devil, death, sin, and the gates of Hell -- ought to be implanted deeply in all godly hearts.... Christ...appears continually before the Father in His death and resurrection, which...have the efficacy of lively prayer for reconciling the Father....

"We always struggle, and yet emerge!... It sometimes happens that believers seem to have been overcome.... This outcome, however, is always granted to them that they obtain the victory!... The assurance of this, fixed deeply in our hearts, will always draw us from Hell to the Light of life!...

"Should anything in life or death...seem able to tear us away from God, it will not do so!... Neither angels nor any other high powers there may be!...

"No length of time can separate us from the grace of the Lord!... We are not to fear that our faith in our adoption will be destroyed, by the continuance of evils -- however long it may be!... Faith is certainly nothing, if it does not extend to death and beyond!... He Who has begun a good work in us, will accomplish it -- until the Day of the Lord Jesus!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:14:7, III:2:16, 11:3,14:19, 15:8 & 24:6: "God spared not His Own Son!...(Romans 8:32).... 'I am persuaded that neither death nor life...nor things present nor things to come...nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ!...(Romans 8:38)... 'It is Christ Who died; yes rather, Who has risen again; Who...also makes intercession for us'...(Romans 8:33-34)... Believers are victorious in every contest...;through Him Who loved us' (Romans 8:37).... 'Neither death nor life...shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ'...(Romans 8:29,39). Nay, rather all things will work together for our good!... Hence too the magnificent triumph...over life and death, things present, and things to come (Romans 8:38)!" For no distress or death, can ever separate us from God's love! Do you believe?

'Do not say in your heart: "Who shall ascend into Heaven..., to bring Christ down from above?!" Or "Who shall descend into the deep..., to bring up Christ again from the dead?!"... If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead -- you shall be saved!' Romans 10:6-9.

Calvin comments: "Do not say in your heart: "Who shall ascend?"... The words 'Heaven' and 'the Abyss'...suggest places which are...remote...for man to reach. Paul applies these words to the death and resurrection of Christ.... Paul mentioned those (places) which are most hidden from our sight, and yet are visible to our faith.... Acknowledge that his allusion to the words 'Heaven' and 'Abyss' is elegant!...

"The assurance of our salvation, lies on two foundations -- viz. our realization that life has been gained for us; and death has been conquered. Paul therefore teaches us that our faith is supported by both of these, through the Word of the Gospel. For Christ has swallowed up death by dying, and by rising again He received life into His power. The benefit of Christ's death and resurrection, is now communicated to us -- by the Gospel.... 'Who shall descend into the deep?' -- means 'Who knows whether the everlasting destruction of the soul accompanies the death of the body?' Paul teaches us, that both of these doubts are removed by the righteousness of faith (in Christ)!

"The first doubt, would draw Christ down from Heaven; and the other would bring Him back again from death. Christ's ascension into Heaven ought to establish our faith in eternal life is such a way -- that to doubt whether the inheritance of Heaven is prepared for believers in whose name and for whose sake Christ has entered Heaven, is almost to drag Him down from this possession of Heaven!... Since He underwent the horrors of Hell in order to deliver us from them -- to doubt whether believers are still exposed to this misery, is to make His death void and indeed to deny it!...

"If you shall confess with your mouth (the Lord Jesus..., you shall be saved!)'... The Apostle's allusion to the word 'mouth' in this manner, was appropriate. When the Lord sets His Word before our face, He is without doubt calling us to make confession of it. The Word of the Lord ought to bring forth fruit wherever it exists; and our confession of the Word, is the fruit of the mouth....

"Paul's express mention of Christ's resurrection...is..taken to imply that...by His resurrection He completed the whole work of our salvation.... The victory over sin, death and Satan -- was procured by His resurrection. From this also came righteousness, newness of life, and the hope of a blessed immortality.... Paul requires not merely a historical faith, but includes within the resurrection itself the design of Christ's rising. We must remember the purpose for which Christ rose again! It was the Father's design in raising Him, to restore us...to life!"

Calvin says in his *Institutes* III:11:14-17: "The righteousness of faith consists in believing that Christ died and rose again.... 'If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved!' (Romans 10:5-9)." If you believe God resurrected Christ, you shall be saved! Do you so believe?

'God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew! Do you not know what the Scripture says about Elijah..., saying: "Lord, they have killed Your Prophets and dug down Your altars! And I alone am left, and they are seeking my life!" But what does the answer of God say to him? "I have reserved to Myself 7000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal!"' Romans 11:2-4.

Calvin comments: "God did not cast off His people (-- those that formerly were His people, cast themselves off)!... The rejection of the Jews is not of such a character as to render void the promise of God... God has by no means rejected the whole race of Abraham.... The general rejection, was not able to prevent some seed from being saved....

"Outward calling by itself, is ineffectual without faith.... Paul derives the origin of God's steadfastness, from His secret election.... He always reserves His Church, as long as the elect remain....

""(Do you not know) what the Scripture says?!"... There were so few of the Jews who had believed in Christ.... Paul employs the very suitable example of Elijah, in whose time He recalls there had been such a desolation -- that there no longer remained any appearance of a Church. And yet, when no trace of the grace of God was visible, the Church of God was as it were hidden in a tomb -- and in this way, was marvellously preserved!...

"If that distinguished Prophet who was so endowed with the light of the Spirit was deceived in this way when he desired to reckon the number of God's people by his own judgment -- what will be the case with us? For our highest discernment, when compared to his, is nothing but dullness!... The Church...is nourished by the secret providence of God..... God has a way, accessible to Himself but concealed from us, by which He wonderfully preserves His elect -- even when all seems lost!...

"How much Elijah honoured the Lord!... He did not hesitate to oppose his own nation for the glory of God, and to pray for its utter destruction -- because he thought that the religion and worship of God had perished in Israel!.... He considered that he alone was left!

""(But, said God:) "I have left for Myself 7000 men!""... It was quite certainly the will of the Lord to specify a great multitude!... However ungodliness may abound in every part of the world and fearful confusion press us on all sides, yet the salvation of many remains secure under the seal of God!...

"However..., we should again observe that only those who remain sound and undefiled in the faith of God -- are said to be saved.... Only those who did not prostitute their body to the worship of idols, even by an outward act of pretence, remain unharmed.. The writer of the passage grants not only that they have purity of mind, but also that they had kept their body undefiled!"

Wicked Israelites killed God's Prophets and hounded Elijah! But God stood by the latter!

'If the fall of them (the Jews) be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles -- how much more their fullness?... May I by any means provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and save some of them! For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world -- what shall the receiving back of them be, but life from the dead?!' Romans 11:12-15.

Calvin comments: "Paul had taught that the Gentiles had entered into the place of the Jews, after they had been rejected.... Not to make the salvation of the Jews offensive to the Gentiles -- as though their salvation rested on the destruction of the Jews!

"He therefore anticipates this false view, and states that in contradiction...nothing could contribute more to the promotion of the salvation of the Gentiles -- than that the grace of God should flourish and thrive among the Jews to the greatest extent.... If the fall of the Jews could raise up the Gentiles, and their diminution enrich them -- how much more would their fullness?!....

"The latter, would come to pass!... The Word of God extended to the Gentiles, after the Jews had rejected it and cast it from them. Had they received it, their faith would have brought forth much more fruit than their unbelief then occasioned....

"Paul...uses a very strong argument to confirm that the Gentiles lose no benefit, if the Jews return again into favour with God.... The salvation of the Gentiles is so annexed to the salvation of the Jews, that the same means is able to advance both.

"He addresses the Gentiles in the following way. I am peculiarly destined to be your Apostle.... I shall, however, be faithfully performing my duty -- if I shall win to Christ any of my own nation.... This will be for the glory of my ministry, and so for your own good!....

"For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world (-- what shall the receiving back of them be, but life from the dead)?'... If the rejection of the Jews had been able to occasion the reconciliation of the Gentiles -- will not their reception (back again) be much more powerful, and would it not raise them even from the dead?!..."

"Since therefore God has marvellously brought life out of death and light out of darkness -- how much more...ought we to hope that the resurrection of a people virtually dead will bring the Gentiles to life?... Reconciliation is not different from resurrection!

"We understand 'resurrection' here to mean the act by which we are transferred from the kingdom of death to the Kingdom of Life!... God will again reconcile to Himself His former people!"

The reconciling of Jews, shall be life from the dead! How many have you won, for Christ?

'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet, shortly! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!' Romans 16:20.

At Genesis 3:15, Calvin comments: "Men would...proudly triumph... (God) promise(d) them, in their posterity, victory over Satan..., so that they may contend against him with the assured confidence of victory.... To show that he (Satan) would be odious not only to one generation, God expressly says: 'between you and the Seed of the woman'.... Victory is promised to the human race, through a continual succession of ages....

"The human race which Satan was endeavouring to oppress, would at length be victorious.... The whole Church of God, under its Head (Jesus Christ), will gloriously exult over him (Satan). To this, the declaration of Paul refers, 'The Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly!' (Romans 16:20)."

Calvin comments at Romans 16:20: "The expression...'The God of peace shall bruise Satan,' is a promise to strengthen them.... He (Paul) exhorts them to fight against Satan without fear, and promises them a speedy victory.... He not only speaks of the last day when Satan will openly be trodden under foot, but...he promises that the Lord will subdue him and make him to be trodden under foot!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:14:18 & I:13:2: "This trial...is common to all the children of God. But as the promise of bruising Satan's head (Genesis 3:15) applies alike to Christ and to all His members, I deny that believers can ever be oppressed or vanquished by him! They are often indeed thrown into alarm, but never so thoroughly as not to recover themselves. They fall by the violence of the blows, but they get up again. They are wounded, but not mortally....

"Paul elsewhere shows that the promise above quoted, commences in this life where the struggle is carried on.... It is completed, after the struggle is ended. His words are, 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly!' (Romans 16:20). In our Head, indeed, this victory was always perfect.... But in us who are His members, it is now partially obtained and will be perfected when we shall have put off our mortal flesh...and shall have been filled with the energy of the Holy Spirit.... The Kingdom of Christ is raised up and established. That of Satan, falls.... Christ, by dying, overcame Satan!...

"Moses (Genesis 3:15)...says that the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent.... The words there used, refer not to Christ alone -- but to the whole human race, since the victory was to be obtained for us by Christ.... The posterity of the woman, would overcome the devil.... Christ is a descendant of the human race. The purpose of God in thus addressing Eve, being to raise her hopes!"

God shall shortly crush Satan under your feet! Let us then go forth, and trample him down!

'Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosened! Are you loosened from a wife? Do not seek a wife -- but if your (re)marry, you have not sinned.... The wife is bound by the law, as long as her husband lives. But if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be (re)married to whom she will – (but) only in the Lord.... She is happier, if she so abide!' First Corinthians 7:27f,39f.

Calvin comments: "Paul adds...we ought not to be so influenced by the advantages of celibacy, so that people who are united by the marriage bond should break free from it!... Anyone who is impressed by Paul's recommendation, may not consider celibacy seriously and be contemptuous of marriage without giving a thought to his own need.... Not only does he forbid the breaking of the marriage bond by these words, but he seeks to put a stop to those aversions which usually creep in to a marriage -- so that everyone may continue to lead a happy and peaceful life with his wife!...

"(Have you been) loosed from a wife?'... He does not grant...everyone the choice of life-long celibacy.... If a man is free from any compelling need, he should not be so rash as to put himself in bonds.... 'But even if you do (re)marry'..., Paul...allows widowers freedom to (re)marry and says that those who (re)marry are not sinning. The word 'even' seems to be emphatic.... It brings out that...(even) those who are single, are not debarred from marrying whenever they like....

"A wife is bound by the law (-- as long as her husband lives. But if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, [but] only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abides).' What he had said before, applied equally to men and women.... He now teaches that women are as free as men to enter on a second marriage, after the death of their first partner.... The Apostle condemns arbitrariness..., and says that no barrier must be put in the way of widows' marrying -- if they want to do so....

"The law certainly affirms that the union of husband and wife is indissoluble.... If a wife is bound to her husband for the duration of his life, she is set free by his death. After she has been released, she 'may marry anyone she likes.' When the verb...'sleep' is used for dying, the reference is not to the soul but to the body.... Certain (Anabaptist) hotheads therefore are only showing their ignorance when they quibble about this little word, in order to 'prove' that after our souls are separated from our bodies -- they are deprived of feeling....

"(She [the widow] is at liberty to be [re]married to whom she will, but) only in the Lord'.... They (such widows) must not enter on the yoke of marriage with unbelievers.... I acknowledge the truth of that.... They should enter on this second marriage reverently, and in the fear of the Lord....

"But she (the widow) is happier if she remains as she is.' Why?... It will mean fewer distractions, and more freedom from worldly cares."

When a husband dies, his wife is free to remarry. The husband, too. Where will you go, when you die?

'Though I give my body to be burned...,when that which is perfect has come -- then that which is in part shall be done away!... Now we see through a puzzle, darkly! But then, face to face! Now I know in part! But then I shall know, even as I also am known!' First Corinthians 13:3,9-12.

Calvin comments: "If I give my body (to be burned)!... Paul is speaking about martyrdom here..., where a man has no hesitation about pouring out his life for his witness to the Gospel... Nero..., in his madness..., resorting to burning....

"Prophecies pass away. Tongues cease. Knowledge comes to an end.... Love stands...high above them all, because it survives -- after they have ceased to exist... What is to stand in the way of the saints now enjoying their peace and rest, from not making use of lives in the duties they now have to discharge?... Supposing I were to say that...intercession had been entrusted only to the living...on their pilgrimage through this world, and for that reason does not involve the dead?!...

"Since learning, knowledge of languages, and similar gifts serve the needs of this life -- it does not seem to me that they will remain in existence when that time comes.... ('When that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be done away.')

"One day, our imperfection will come to an end.... 'We know in part'..., precisely because we are imperfect.... 'In part -- means that we are not yet made perfect.... We are required to make progress throughout our life..., but we must realize...that the gifts in question are only temporary.... The benefit of them is only effective, so long as we are moving on to the goal -- by making progress every day....

"When that which is perfect has come, (then that which is in part shall be done away)'... When we have reached the winning-post, then the things that helped us on the course will be finished with.... When will that perfection come? It begins, indeed, at death....

'For now we see in a mirror'.... We do not yet enjoy the unclouded vision.... We have not yet scaled such heights.... But when we leave the world behind and depart to Him, faith will look upon Him...at close quarters....

"Even if fullness of vision will be delayed until the day of Christ, we will begin to have a closer view of God as soon as we die. Our souls will then be set free from our bodies."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:2:13,20 that when Paul "says that 'that which is in part, shall be done away' (First Corinthians 13:10)...; we pass from death unto life.... When he says...'Now we see through a glass darkly' (First Corinthians 13:12), he intimates how very minute a portion of...wisdom is given to us in the present life."

I, too, may give my body to be burned! But one day I shall know, even as I am known!

'Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.... He was buried and...rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures!... He was seen by above 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present -- but some have fallen asleep.... Christ...rose from the dead. Why do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?... If, for this life only, we have hope in Christ -- we are the most miserable of all men!' First Corinthians 15:3-19.

Calvin comments: "'Christ died'.... He mentions the death of Christ and...His burial.... He was like us in both of them. The same thing applies in regard to resurrection.... He Himself has entered into death along with us, so that we might rise along with Him.... The death and resurrection of Christ were foretold in many passages of Scripture.... In none more clearly than Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:26, and Psalm 22....

"The appearance to 'more than 500' took place.... Such a great company had been gathered together at Jerusalem, when He showed Himself visibly to them (Luke 24:33).... Not only the twelve [Apostles], but also the disciples to whom He had entrusted the task of preaching the Gospel.... Paul now begins to prove the resurrection of all of us, from the resurrection of Christ.... If Christ has risen, then we shall rise!... Christ did not die or rise again for Himself, but for us.... There would otherwise have been no reason or purpose for His rising again!...

"In Adam, we die. Only in Christ, do we gain life again. It follows from that, that His resurrection is the basis of ours. So that if His is taken away, there will be none for us!... Let us...remember that the main foundation of the whole Gospel, is the death and resurrection of Christ!... We must devote special attention to them!...

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, (we are the most miserable of all men)!... (Then,) we are spending our time and effort in vain when we believe -- in view of the fact that the benefit derived from our faith (then) perishes at death!... (Then,) it is even better not to believe at all!... To believe 'in this life only,' means here to confine the benefits derived from our faith to this world -- so that our faith no longer looks or extends beyond the bounds of this present life.... Resurrection means the completion of our salvation.... The man who says that our resurrection has already taken place -- leaves us with nothing better to hope for, after death....

"This verse...gives no support at all to the nonsense of those who imagine that our souls sleep along with our bodies until the Resurrection Day!... Paul was not dreaming of Elysian fields and silly nonsense of that kind!.... He has taken it as an undoubted fact, that Christians direct their hope entirely to the Day of the Last Judgment!"

Calvin also says in his *Treatises* III:411: "It is indeed a miserable thing to die! O, seven times wretched we -- whom Paul declares (First Corinthians 15:19) to be 'of all men the most miserable' -- if we have confidence in the present life only!"

Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures! But better, He also rose again!

'How are the dead raised up?... The dead (body)...is sown in corruption. It is raised in incorruption.... It is raised in glory!... The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible!... This mortal must put on immortality!... Death is swallowed up, in victory!' First Corinthians 15:35-54.

Calvin comments: "'How will the dead be raised?'... Nobody...except God can convince us that after our bodies which are already subject to corruption have rotted away or been consumed by fire or been torn to pieces by wild animals, will be restored in their wholeness but in a far better nature!... Let us therefore take note that those who are represented as speaking here, are people who want to mock at belief in the resurrection!...

''(The body) is sown in corruption'.... Paul makes himself clear, by setting out the difference between our present state and that which will follow the resurrection.... He says that now our body is...subject to death and dishonour, but then...will be glorious and incorruptible!... Our flesh will share in the glory of God, but only after it has been renewed and restored to life by the Spirit....

''With the last trump..., (the trumpet shall sound)!... In First Thessalonians 4:16, he links the 'Voice of the Archangel' with 'the trump of God'.... Christ will call the dead to Him by His resounding proclamation which will be heard distinctly all over the world.... The whole world is to be summoned to the tribunal of God!... It is not only the living who are to be called together, but the dead are also to be summoned from their graves.... A command will have to be issued to dry bones and dust -- so that, recovering their earlier form and getting back their spirit, they may immediately appear as living men in the presence of Christ.... 'The dead will rise!'.... Everybody will undergo the same change...

''For this corruptible (must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality)!... Our body as well as our soul will share in the life of the Kingdom of God.... Our nature..., when it has shed its corruption and been clothed with incorruption..., will enter into it.... We shall rise in the very same flesh that we have now.... If he had said, 'This corruptible ought to be renewed' -- he would not have so clearly and effectively disposed of the error of those fanatics who invent the notion that men are to be given new bodies! But when he says here that this corruptible is to be clothed in glory, there is no more room left for argument....

''(Then shall be brought) to pass (the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory!")'... What Paul mentions has already begun in us..., also makes daily progress towards completion.... It will not have its proper fulfilment, until the last day!"

Calvin also says in his *Psychopannychia*: "The elect now, are such as Adam was before his sin.... He was created inexterminable. So now have those become, who have been renewed by Christ.... First Corinthians 15:54.... That which has only been begun in the soul, will be fulfilled both in the soul and the body.... Death...is...to the elect a kind of passage to the highest degree of immortality!" For our bodies will rise again! Do you too so believe?

'We have this treasure in earthen vessels.... We are...cast down, but not destroyed -- always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that also the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we who live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake -- so that the life of Jesus might also be made manifest in our mortal flesh.... He Who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall also raise us up! Though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day!' Second Corinthians 4:7-16.

Calvin comments that Paul "uses the metaphor of treasure -- which is not usually stored in a splendid and richly decorated box, but rather in some cheap container worth nothing at all.... Treasure does not become less valuable, through being deposited in a vessel of no value.... It is common practice for great treasures to be stored in earthenware pots!...

"Abject condition, so far from detracting from God's glory, rather serves to advance it!.... We are brought so low, that all seems over with us. Yet, we do not perish!...

"He calls all these things...the 'dying' or 'mortification' of Jesus.... He (Paul) was being made ready, to share in His blessed resurrection!...

"We suffer with Him, in order that we may be glorified with Him.... In Colossians 3:5 and in Romans 6:6..., 'our old man is crucified -- so that we may walk in newness of life'.... All the sons of God have this in common, that they bear about -- the dying of Christ....

"The best cure for adversity, is to know that just as Christ's death was the gate of new life -- so we at the end of all our miseries shall come to a blessed resurrection!... If we submit ourselves to die with Him in this world, we shall share His life!... 'Delivered unto death'...means to have death constantly before our eyes and to live in such a way that our life is really a shadow of death.... It refers to all believers....

"We faint not..., though our outward man is perishing!.... The outward man is the continuance of our earthly life and consists not only of...good health but also of riches, honours, friendships and other such good things.... The Lord takes away from us bit by bit those things that engross our attention, and thus calls us back to meditate on a better life.... The more earthly life declines, the more heavenly life advances...in believers.... God is...stirring us up, to think of the life to come!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:25:3 & IV:1:5 & 3:1 that God is "to teach us that the treasure offered to us in earthen vessels, is of inestimable value... He hides the treasure of His heavenly wisdom, in frail earthen vessels.... We always bear 'about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that also the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh' (Second Corinthians 4:7,10)."

Our bodies are full of treasure, till raised up! Do you too believe in that resurrection?

'We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a...house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.... We groan..., desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven...; so that mortality might be swallowed up by life!... Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.... We are confident..., willing rather to be absent from the body and...present with the Lord!' Second Corinthians 5:1-8.

Calvin comments: "Paul...goes on to the supreme and perfect blessedness that awaits believers after death in Heaven.... Believers depart willingly, because they have a better hope held out to them beyond this world.... Even the heathen had some notion of the immortality of the soul, but...only believers can speak of it with assurance.... The only thing that can bring me to face death with cheerfulness, is the sure conviction that I am departing to a better life...."

"The body...he calls 'the house of our tabernacle'.... The blessed state of the soul after death, is the beginning of this building -- but its completion is the glory of the final resurrection.... The future life to believers...is something that belongs only to them.... Believers who are clothed with Christ and adorned with His righteousness, receive the glorious robe of immortality.... The Apostle is here describing how God clothes us twice -- first with the righteousness of Christ...in this life, and then -- after death, with immortality and glory...."

"The groaning of believers arises from their knowledge that here they are exiles from their...land, and are shut up in the body.... They cannot escape the slavery of sin, except by death -- and so they wish to be elsewhere.... Believers desire death not in order to lose anything, but for the sake of a better life.... 'What is mortal, may be swallowed up by life!'..."

"'We walk by faith'.... We are absent from the Lord.... We do not yet see Him.... Believers...have to hope.... We do indeed, see -- but in a glass, darkly.... 'We are of good courage, (willing rather to be absent from the body and...present with the Lord)!'..."

"The greatest of evils is death, and yet believers long for it -- because it is the beginning of perfect blessedness.... There is nothing better than to leave the body, so that we may share God's dwelling-place.... Believers...willingly battle on at their earthly post for as long as the Lord thinks fit.... Souls loosened from their bodies, live with God.... When they are absent from the body -- they have God present with them.... The holy fathers of the Old (Testament) Church did not...tremble before the messenger of death, but embraced it gladly and with joyful hearts!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:9:5 & 25:6: "Paul admirably enjoins believers to hasten cheerfully to death -- not because they would be unclothed, but clothed upon.... If our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building from God! (Second Corinthians 5:1-6)."

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "'We who are in this tabernacle..., wish to be...clothed upon -- so that mortality may be swallowed up by life!.... We...would rather be absent from the body, and present with the Lord! (Second Corinthians 5:1-8).'" Hallelujah!

'If One died..., then all were dead.... He died..., so that they which live should not henceforth live to themselves but to Him Who died for them and rose again.... Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth we know Him (thus) no more.... Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new!'
Second Corinthians 5:14-17.

Calvin comments: "Unless our hearts are harder than iron, the remembrance of the great love Christ has shown us by submitting to death for our sakes -- is bound to make us devote ourselves entirely to Him.... It is right that we should live to Him, and die to ourselves!..."

"'One died'.... We should note the purpose of Christ's death -- that He died for us, so that we might die to ourselves.... To die to ourselves, is to live to Christ... We are dead in Christ.... We owe to Christ both life and death. So completely has He bound us to Himself!... He (Paul)...has certainly in mind...death or mortification of the flesh.... As if to say: 'Since we should be dead to this present life and be nothing in ourselves, no man can be reckoned a servant of Christ on account of any excellence in the flesh!'..."

"'Though we have know Christ (after the flesh, yet now henceforth we know Him [thus] no more)'.... Though Christ lived for a time in this world...,now He is to be known in a different way.... He (Paul) is not saying that we can no longer know Christ's flesh, but rather that we are not to judge Him after the flesh. The whole of Scripture proclaims that Christ now lives His glorious life in our flesh, just as surely as it was in our flesh that He once suffered..... What ground is there for our hope of immortality, except the evidence that we have now in Christ?..."

"Life is restored to us..., by Christ's opening up to our human nature the Kingdom of God from which it had been banished.... Unless we still recognize Christ's humanity, all the assurance and comfort that we should have in Him -- perishes!... We do in fact know Christ in His flesh as true man and our brother. But we do not know Him carnally.... Not because He has laid aside the body and been changed into a spirit, but because it is by the power of His Spirit (from His body) that He regenerates and governs His Own.

"'Therefore if any man be in Christ (-- he is a new creature! Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new)!... If any man desires to obtain a place in Christ...in His Kingdom or His Church -- let him be a new creature!..."

"'The old things have passed away'.... All things will be changed for the better, till the happiness of the godly is complete. Since the Kingdom of Christ is spiritual, this conversion must take place chiefly in the spirit.... It is only the new man, who can flower and increase in the Kingdom of God!"

So don't live for yourself, but for Christ Who died for us!

'(Paul says:) "I am...abundant in stripes above measure; in prisons...; in deaths often.... From the Jews, five times I received 39 stripes. Thrice I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck.... In perils from robbers; in perils from my own countrymen; in perils from heathen...; in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness...; in cold and nakedness!"' Second Corinthians 11:23-27.

Calvin comments: "To be a servant of Christ, is a far greater honour and dignity than to be (even) the firstborn of all the firstborn of the house of Abraham.... He (Paul) is a more outstanding servant of Christ than they (the Jews).... It is as if he had said: 'I have proved myself in "deaths often" and in "labours" even more often'!...

"The Law of God was that those who did not serve capital punishment should be beaten in the presence of the judge, but that not more than 40 strokes should be inflicted.... It is probable that in the process of time, the custom grew up of stopping at the 39th lash -- in case, in the heat of the moment, they should exceed the number laid down by God. Many such precautions of rabbinic origin are found among the Jews....

"As time passed and things degenerated, they came to think that all criminals should receive that number of strokes -- although what the Lord laid down, was not how far severity was to go but at what point it was to stop.... They exercised greater cruelty upon Paul than upon others.... His mentioning of the number (of strokes he got), implies the extreme severity of the floggings he received....

"'Thrice I was a beaten with rods.' This makes it clear that the Apostle suffered many things.... Luke recounts only one stoning and one shipwreck.... Luke...does not mention everything that happened, but only outstanding events.

"By 'perils from my countrymen,' he means the things that befell him at the hands of his own people as a result of hatred for him felt from all Jews. He also had the 'Gentiles' as his enemies; and from a third direction, snares set by 'false brethren' threatened him.... For the name of Christ, he was hated by all!...

"It may be asked whether anyone can be Christ's servant, without undergoing so many...dangers and vexations? My answer is that all these things are not necessarily required from everyone. But, where they are seen, a greater and more illustrious testimony is given.... Whenever the need arises, he will be able -- following Paul's example -- to exalt over false pretenders and men of no worth, with a holy triumph. Provided he does it for Christ's sake, and not his own!...

"Nothing but pride or selfishness could corrupt or deform all these excellencies!... Yet, when all is said and done, the chief thing is that we should serve Christ with a pure conscience!"

Do you? For Paul suffered many stripes and prisons and deaths -- for Christ's sake!

'In Damascus, the governor under Aretus the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison -- desirous to apprehend me! But through a window in a basket, I was let down by the wall -- and escaped his hands!' Second Corinthians 11:32-33.

Calvin comments: "He (Paul) tells us how he was trapped.... It was only with the greatest difficulty, that he was able to save his life...."

"Some raise the question as to whether it was right for Paul to climb over the town wall.... Since this was a capital crime...."

"My answer is first, that it is not certain if that punishment was in fact sanctioned by law in the east.... Secondly, even if it was, Paul committed no crime. Since he climbed the wall not as an enemy, or for sport -- but from necessity...."

"For the law would not punish a man who threw himself from the wall...to save his life from fire.... What difference is there between a fire, and a fierce attack by rascals?"

"In thinking of the law, we must always have regard to equity and fairness. That consideration will absolve Paul from all blame."

Many years ago, back in 1965, when I visited Damascus -- I asked a Muslim taxi-driver to take me to see the church of Ananias built over the place where the converted Paul received back his eyesight (Acts 9:17). The Muslim tax-driver sat in his vehicle, while I went into the church.

I was unimpressed by what I saw there. The inside was festooned with all kinds of mediaeval accretions -- contrary to the simple house of Ananias where Paul had received back his eyesight!

When I emerged from the church and walked back to the waiting taxi, the driver noted the look of disappointment on my face. So, out of concern, he asked me what I thought of that church.

In all honesty, I then told him I was horrified by all the mediaeval trappings inside that building. My driver then shouted to me in joy: "*Allahu akbar!* Praise God, you're a Muslim!"

After agreeing with him that that "church" was a disgrace, I lifted up my eyes to the city wall. I then asked him to point out the me the spot where Paul had escaped from the city by rope from a high window in that wall. He showed me, and told my that God had then assisted him to escape. I interjected: "Praise God! You sound like a Christian!"

Paul once escaped with his life -- in a basket, on a rope, down from the top of a city wall. May many Judaists, Heathens and Muslims escape as Paul did -- and become true Christians!

Second Corinthians 12:1-10 I take pleasure in infirmities and persecutions, for Christ! Dec 2

'(Paul said:) "I knew a man in Christ more than fourteen years ago..., caught up to the third Heaven.... He was caught up into Paradise.... Of such a one, I will glory!... I will...glory in my infirmities..., lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations...given to me!"' Second Corinthians 12:2-7.

Calvin comments on the words "I know a man in Christ'.... He (Paul) speaks of himself in the third person.... God acted upon him in a way that he himself did not understand.... He says that he does not know whether he was taken up into Heaven entire, soul and body -- or whether only his soul was caught up....

"At the beginning, the Lord showed Himself to Paul in a vision -- when He wished to convert him from Judaism to the faith of the Gospel.... Then, he still needed Ananias to instruct him in the first rudiments of the Gospel (Acts 9:12).... It is possible that he is referring here to the vision mentioned by Luke in Acts 22:17.... Paul himself kept silent for fourteen years, and would never have said a word if he had not been forced to....

"(Paul says that he was then caught up) 'to the third Heaven'.... The number 'three' is used as a perfect number, to indicate what is highest.... The word 'Heaven'...means...God's blessed and glorious Kingdom above...the firmament itself.... (He was caught up) 'into Paradise'..., .the garden of God..., the heavenly glory.... This thing happened for Paul's own sake...

"Of such a one, (I will glory)!.... As if he had said: 'I have good reason to glory; but I do so most unwillingly'..., (as) a man whom God has greatly honoured.... 'I will..glory...in my infirmities!'... 'I could glory with good reason and without any fear of being rightly accused of vanity; for I have something to boast of -- but I abstain!'...

"Even those who have good grounds for their glorying, are foolish and affected -- if they give way to empty bragging and self-seeking.... But the Apostle here takes it as settled that his glorying...is...done in humility.... 'Lest any man should account...me (above that which he sees me to be)'....

"He is content to fill the place that God has assigned him. 'My appearance and my speech, he says, 'give no promise of anything outstanding in me -- and I do not object to being held in low esteem'.... He was in no way put out, by the poorness of appearance and speech that he recognized in himself -- 'in order that I should not be exalted by the excellence of revelations (there was given to me)!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* IV:3:3: "In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (12:1-10)..., Paul...contends...there is nothing in the Church more noble and glorious than the Ministry of the Gospel. Seeing it is the administration of...eternal life!"

Paul concludes: 'I take pleasure in infirmities and persecutions -- for Christ!' Do you?

'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. For it is written: "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree!" -- so that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ!' Galatians 3:13-14.

Calvin comments: "Christ...had made all who are under the law (after sinning), subject to the curse. Hence the great difficulty that the Jews could not free themselves from the curse of the law.

"He (Paul) solves the difficulty, by putting forward the remedy.... This further confirms his purpose. For if we are saved because we have been freed from the curse of the law, then righteousness is not by the law! He next adds the way in which we are made free....

"'Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree!' Christ was hanged. Therefore, He came under the curse. But it is certain that He did not suffer that punishment on His own account. It follows therefore either that He was crucified in vain -- or that our curse was laid upon Him, so that we might be delivered from it.

"Now, he (Paul) does not say that Christ was cursed -- but something more! That He was a curse -- signifying that the curse of all was placed on Him....

"But how does it happen...that a beloved Son is cursed by His Father?... There are two things to be considered.... The one, is that He was the unspotted Lamb of God -- full of blessing and grace! The other is, that He took our place -- and thus became a 'sinner' and subject to the curse -- not in Himself indeed, but in us. Yet in such a way, that it was necessary for Him to act in our name.

"He could not be outside God's grace, and yet He endured His wrath! For how could He (the Father) reconcile Him to us, if He (the Son) regarded the Father as an enemy and was hated by Him?... Again, how could He (the Son) have freed us from the wrath of God -- if He had not transferred it from us to Himself? Therefore, He was smitten for our sins!....

"'(So that the blessing of Abraham might come) upon the Gentiles!'... We are delivered from the curse of (transgressing) the law, by Christ.... The blessing promised to Abraham is founded on this, and proceeds from it to the Gentiles.... What is to hinder the Gentiles from obtaining the...benefit?... It is faith in Christ which makes us partakers of it!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:7:15 & 16:6 & 17:4 & III:4:27: "To redeem us from this curse, Christ was made a curse for us. Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree!..."

"It is especially necessary to attend to the analogy which is drawn by Paul, as to His having been made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13)... The power and curse of sin was destroyed in His flesh, when He was offered as a sacrifice on Whom the whole weight of our sins was laid with their curse...and condemnation to death!" Thus Christ redeemed us, by being made a curse for us!

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!... He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.... In Whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace!' Ephesians 1:3-7.

Calvin comments: "Blessed be God! He (Paul) extols sublimely the grace of God..., to set them all aflame.... Our blessing of God, is the praise when we declare His goodness... Paul therefore blesses God with a confession of praise, because He has blessed us...; has enriched us with all blessing or grace....

"He chose us (in Him before the foundation of the world).' Here, he (Paul) declares that God's eternal election is the foundation and first cause both of our calling and of all the benefits which we receive from God.... He chose us, before the world was!... He adds, 'in Christ'.... If we are chosen in Christ, it is outside ourselves!.... The name of Christ excludes all merit, and everything which men have of themselves!...

"(He has chosen us in Him,) that we should be holy!...' The design of building, is that there should be a house.... But the convenience of dwelling in it, is the ultimate aim.... The glory of God is the highest end, to which our sanctification is subordinate....

"Holiness, innocence and every virtue in men are the fruit of election.... Paul expressly puts aside every consideration of merit.... He means that all our holiness and innocence of life, flow from the election of God.... The cause certainly does not follow the effect!... Election does not depend on the righteousness of works, of which Paul here declares that it is the cause... Election gives no occasion to licentiousness.... Paul tells them plainly that it is wicked to separate holiness of life from the grace of election.... Election shuts their mouth, so that they...cannot claim anything for themselves.... '(He has) predestinated us...according to the good pleasure of His will!'

"The material cause...of eternal election..., is 'Christ'.... By Him, the love of God is poured out to us.... Every man therefore who hides this glory, is endeavouring to overturn the everlasting purpose of God.... "In Whom (Christ) we have redemption (through His blood)!...' He explains how we are reconciled to God through Christ, in that by His death He has appeased the Father towards us.... We ought always to direct our minds to the blood of Christ, if we are seeking grace in Him!... He says that by the blood of Christ we obtain redemption.... We are accepted by God and freed from the bonds of the devil and death!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:22:1 & 24:5: "If they (our enemies) are bent on depriving God of the free right of electing and reprobating -- let them at the same time take away what has been given to Christ!... Paul declares...we were chosen in Christ before...the world!... Those whom God has adopted..., (were) elected not in themselves but in Christ (Ephesians 1:4)!"

In Christ, we are redeemed through His blood! Is this what you too believe?

'God...raised Him (Christ) from the dead, and set Him at His Own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion...not only in this world but also in that which is to come! And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things!... He fills all, in all!' Ephesians 1:17-23.

Calvin comments: "He (God) very rightly enjoins us to contemplate this power in Christ.... Though sin does not reign, it continues to dwell in us -- and death is still strong! Blessedness is shut up in hope!... When our minds are roused to trust in righteousness, salvation and glory -- let us learn to turn them to Christ! We still lie under the power of death. But He, raised from the dead by heavenly power, has the dominion of life!

"We struggle under the bondage of sin -- and, surrounded by endless miseries, we fight a hard warfare. But He, sitting at the right hand of the Father, obtains the highest government in Heaven and Earth and triumphs gloriously over the enemies whom He has subdued.... It is to our good to transfer our thoughts to Christ, so that in Him...we may see the glorious treasures of Divine grace...(Which) made Him to sit at His right hand!... It mean(s)...the power which the Father bestowed on Christ, so that in His name He might administer the government of Heaven and Earth....

"God the Father is said to have raised Christ to His right hand, in that He has made Him to share in His government. For by Him, He exercises all His power.... Since the right hand of God fills Heaven and Earth, it follows that the Kingdom and power of Christ are everywhere diffused.... Christ is raised to the height, to the heavenly glory of God.... He has obtained the highest place in blessed immortality!...

"There is nothing so sublime or excellent, by whatever name it may be called, that is not subject to the majesty of Christ!... 'Above every name.' 'Name' is here taken for 'largeness' or 'excellence'.... The excellence of Christ is not temporal, but eternal!... It is not limited to this world, but flourishes also in the Kingdom of God.... All the glories of men and angels are put in their place, to give way to the glory of Christ -- so that it alone may shine above them all unequalled!...

"He was made the Head of the Church, so that He should have the administration of all things.... There was committed to Him the entire command and government of the universe! The metaphor of 'Head' denotes the highest authority.... He brings all things to pass in us, and in all the creatures!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:20:38: "The zeal...which we feel for our heavenly Parent..., behoves us to extend (friendship) towards His people...and...His heritage which He has honoured so highly as to give them the appellation of the 'fullness' of His Only-begotten Son (Ephesians 1:23)." Calvin further says in his *Treatises* III:253: "Therefore Paul entreats God...that He would open the eyes of their mind..., so that they may be able to apprehend...His calling! (Ephesians 1:17f)." For God raised Christ from the dead, to give us His power! Do you too so believe?

'God...in mercy...when we were dead in sins, quickened us together with Christ. And raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!' Ephesians 2:4-6.

Calvin comments: "Death and resurrection are opposed to one another. To be made partakers of the life of the Son of God so that we are animated by the same Spirit, is an incomparable benefit.... Paul...is never satisfied with proclaiming the richness of grace.... Everything in our salvation, must be ascribed to God....

""(God) made us sit in the heavenly places! What he (Paul) declares of the resurrection and the session (of Christ) in Heaven, is not yet seen with the eyes. Yet, as if those blessings were already in our possession, he states they have been conferred on us -- so that he may declare the change in our condition when we were led from Adam to Christ.

"It is as if he said that we had been transferred from the deepest Hell, to Heaven itself. And certainly, although as respects ourselves, our salvation is still hidden in hope -- yet in Christ, we possess blessed immortality and glory!

"He adds 'in Christ.' Because what he speaks of, does not yet appear in the members. But only in the Head. Yet, because of the secret union, it belongs truly to the members.... 'In Christ' fits the context.... From this we should gather the richest consolation -- that of everything which we now lack, we have a sure pledge and firstfruits in the Person of Christ!...

"God should be glorified.... It was the will of the Lord to hallow in all ages the remembrance of so great goodness.... The mercy of God, Who was pleased to admit our fathers into His people, deserves to be held in everlasting remembrance. The calling of the Gentiles is an astonishing work of divine goodness which ought to be handed down from parents to children and to grandchildren, so that it may never be blotted out of men's minds!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:5:19: "Paul, when he speaks of our redemption, says not that the half-dead are cured (Ephesians 2:5).... But that those who were dead, are raised up! He does not call upon the half-dead to receive the illumination of Christ, but upon those who are...buried!.... 'God,' says he (Paul), 'Who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in sins -- has quickened us together with Christ' (Ephesians 2:4).... Whoso(ever) believes in Him, 'has passed from death to life'.... God 'has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ!'.... Ephesians 2:6."

Calvin further says in his *Treatises* III:195: "Man...crowns the original sin which he drew from his parents, with actual sins. He is...(Ephesians 2), a child of wrath.... If he dies in this his most wretched condition, being at length thrown into Hell by the just judgment of God -- he there suffers eternal punishments!" But God raised us believers from sin, so that we can rule in Heaven!

'You were without Christ, being aliens...and strangers from the covenants of promise; having no hope; and without God in the world! But now, in Christ Jesus you who in previous times were far off, have been made nigh by the blood of Christ!' Ephesians 2:12-13.

Calvin comments: "You were separated from Christ! He now declares that the Ephesians had been banished not only from the outward tokens but from everything necessary to the salvation and happiness of men.... Because Christ is the foundation of all the promises and of hope, he says...that they were separated from Him....

"For him who has not Christ, nothing remains but destruction!... In Whom but in Himself could the people of God be collected into the unity of a holy body? '(Being aliens...from the covenants) of...promise!' On one great promise, all the others depend.... Without it, they become empty. 'In your Seed shall all nations be blessed!' (Genesis 22:18).... Take away the covenant of salvation, and there remains no hope.... God made His covenant with Abraham and his posterity, that He would be their God for ever!....

"(We were) without God in the world!...' Paul spoke quite rightly. For he regarded all the notions about false gods, as nothing. And indeed, all idols must become nothing -- since they are nothing among the godly. Those who do not worship the true God -- however many sorts of worship they may have; however many ceremonies they may tire themselves with -- are without God. For they adore, what they know not!...

"It was those who imagined themselves to be very religious, who are charged with that crime! Seeing that an idol is a forgery and a deception, not the Divinity!... The conclusion will easily be drawn, that outside Christ there are only idols. For he now separates from God those whom he had at first declared to be without Christ.... Let us know therefore that all who do not keep this way -- wander from the true God.... It was not to one age or to one nation that He says: 'I am the Way!' (John 14:6).... He declares that it is through Him, that all come to God....

"But now in Christ Jesus, (you who...were far off -- have been made nigh by the blood of Christ)!...' You have been received...through the blood of Christ!... The meaning is that the Ephesians, when they were far off from God and from salvation, had been reconciled to God through Christ -- so that now they were nigh in His blood. For the blood of Christ has taken away the quarrel which existed between them and God -- and from being enemies, had made them sons!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:24:10 & IV:14:12 & 16:3: "At that (previous) time, you were without Christ -- having no hope, and without God in the world.... He deprives Adam of the gift of immortality.... The Apostle urges the Ephesians to remember that they 'were without Christ..., having no hope and without God in the world'.... Paul, when showing to the Ephesians how great the destruction was from which the Lord had delivered them..., infers that at that time they were aliens..., without God and without hope (Ephesians 2:12)." But we believers have now come near -- through the blood of Christ! You too?

'Husbands, love your wives even as Christ...loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. So that He might sanctify and cleanse it...; so that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle!' Ephesians 5:25-27.

Calvin comments: "From husbands..., is required love.... This should be no ordinary love.... Let husbands imitate Christ in this respect, that He did not hesitate to die for the Church!..."

""(So) that He might sanctify (the Church)'...to Himself.... This is accomplished by the forgiveness of sins and the regeneration of the Spirit...."

"Christ so adorns the Church His bride with holiness, as a pledge of His goodwill.... Christ has reconciled to Himself the Church, so that it may be holy and without blame...."

"Paul implies that the Church ought to be holy.... For he says 'that He might present it to Himself' -- not 'that He might show it to others'...."

"Paul does not state what has been done, but for what purpose Christ has cleansed the Church.... Yet he does not deny that the holiness of the Church is begun already. But they do ill to establish perfection, where there is a daily progress!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:3:11 & IV:1:10,17 & 8:12 : "It is said God purifies His Church, so as to be 'holy and without blemish' (Ephesians 5:26-27).... He promises this cleansing..., and performs it in His elect.... In regenerating His people, God indeed accomplishes this much for them. He destroys the dominion of sin by supplying the agency of the Spirit, Who enables them to come off victorious from the contest...."

"No mean praise is conferred on the Church, when she is said to have been chosen and set apart by Christ as His spouse -- 'not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing' (Ephesians 5:27).... Christ 'loved the Church, and gave Himself for it -- so that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word; so that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church'.... Ephesians 5:25-27. Nevertheless, it is true that the Lord is daily smoothing its wrinkles and wiping away its spots.... Its holiness, is not yet perfect. Such, then, is the holiness of the Church. It makes daily progress, but is not yet perfect. It daily advances, but as yet has not reached the goal...."

"The Church is not left destitute in any part, but always has as much as is sufficient.... To keep her in humility and pious modesty, He bestows no more on her than He knows to be expedient.... Christ daily performs in it.... For if He daily sanctifies all His people -- purifies, refines them and wipes away their stains -- it is certain that they have still some spots and wrinkles and that their sanctification is in some measure defective."

Nevertheless, Christ loved the Church -- and gave Himself for her! And for you?

'In nothing shall I be ashamed!... With all boldness..., Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ -- and to die, is gain!... I am in a strait between the two -- having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better! Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you!' Philippians 1:20-25.

Calvin comments: "'Christ,' he (Paul) says, 'will be magnified in my body -- whether by life or by death!...' If...we give ourselves up to the good pleasure of God and have in our life the same objects as Paul had, we hope...for a prosperous issue and shall no longer have occasion to fear lest any adversity befall us. For if we live and die to Him, we are His in life and death....

"Christ is to be magnified, by full confidence!... Through our fault, He is cast down and lowered...when we give way through fear.... Christ...is declared to be gain to him both in life and in death.... It is indifferent to him...whether he lives or dies. Because, having Christ, he deems both to be 'gain.' And assuredly, it is Christ alone Who makes us happy both in death and in life.... Let Christ be with us, and He will bless our life as well as our death -- so that both will be happy and desirable for us!...

"Men in despair are perplexed as to whether to prolong their life any further in miseries, or to end their troubles by death.... Paul on the other hand says in a spirit of contentment that he is...well prepared for death or for life, because the condition of believers in both cases is blessed.... Paul...reckons that the only value of his life, is the welfare of the brethren.... For himself personally, it would be...better to die soon -- because he would be with Christ.... It is not a question here of earthly advantages, but of spiritual benefit which is on good grounds supremely desirable to the godly. Paul..., as if forgetful of himself..., at length concludes that a regard for them (his earthly fellow believers) preponderates in his mind.... This is truly to live and die in Christ, when with indifference to ourselves we are carried and borne away whithersoever Christ calls us....

"(I have) a desire to be set free, and to be with Christ!...' I desire to die, because by this means I will arrive at union with Christ!' Believers...when they turn their eyes to that life which follows death..., easily overcome their dread (of death).... Everyone that believes in Christ, ought to be so courageous as to lift up his head at the mention of death -- joyful at this messenger of his redemption!... Paul here reminds us that death is the loosening of the soul from the body..., explaining what conditions await believers after death -- that they dwell with Christ!... This passage will refute the mad fancy of those (Anabaptists) who dream that souls sleep when separated from the body. For Paul openly declares that we enjoy Christ's presence, on being set free."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:9:4: "It behoves us to live and die, to the Lord!... Let us ardently long for death!... In comparison with future immortality, let us despise life!" Calvin yet further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "When the Apostle longs to depart and to be with Christ (Philippians 1:23), do they (the Anabaptists) think he wishes to fall asleep so as no longer to feel any desire of Christ?!.... After death, what Paul says of himself...is applicable to all believers. 'For us to die is gain, and to be with Christ is better!'" For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!

'(Christ,) being found in fashion as a man..., humbled Himself and became obedient to death.... Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name...above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee would bow!' Philippians 2:8-10.

Calvin comments: "Christ's divine essence is rightly proved from Christ's majesty, which He possessed equally with the Father.... Christ is one Person, consisting of two natures. It is with right that Paul says that He Who was the Son of God, in reality equal to God, nevertheless refrained from His glory when in the flesh. He manifested Himself in the appearance of a servant....

"God has highly exalted (Him)!... We hear that nothing is better for us, than to be formed to His image. Now, all are happy who, along with Christ, voluntarily humble themselves -- He shows by His example. For from the most abject condition, He was exalted to the sublimest height.

"Everyone therefore that humbles himself, will in like manner be exalted. Who will now refuse submission, by which he will ascend into the glory of the heavenly Kingdom?!...

"(God) gave Him a name (above every name)!... Supreme power was given to Christ.... There is no dignity found either in Heaven or on Earth equal to His.... This name is divine....

"The Prophet, treating of the spreading of the worship of God throughout the world, introduces God as speaking thus -- 'I live; every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall swear to Me,' *etc.* (Isaiah 45:23). Now, it is certain that adoration is meant here!...

"Every knee should bow!... We ought to notice that God (alone) is to be worshipped.... He would describe His genuine worshippers.... This...is affirmed of Christ's entire Person, as He was God manifested in the flesh (First Timothy 3:16).... God exalted His Son in the same flesh in which He had lived in the world abject and obscure, to the highest rank of honour -- so that He may sit at His right hand....

"The nature of the Kingdom of Christ is that it every day grows and improves.... All things are now subject to Christ.... 'Things in Heaven, things on Earth; things of the world below!... Paul subjects to Christ all things, from Heaven to Hell!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:11:12 & 14:3: "Christ did not acknowledge...at the very outset of His ministry, but delayed...until having completed the whole work of redemption in all its parts and finished the period of His humiliation. He (then) received from the Father 'a name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow'.... The Kingdom of God assuredly had no beginning, and will have no end.... He was hid(den) under a humble clothing of flesh, and took upon Himself the form of a servant and humbled Himself.... After undergoing this subjection, (He) was at length...exalted to supreme authority -- so that at His name every knee would bow (Philippians 2:8-10)." Christ obeyed to death; so every knee shall bow! Your knee too?

'Epaphroditus...ministered to my wants (in prison).... He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness because...you had heard that he had been sick.... He was sick, nigh unto death. But God had mercy on him!... When you see him again..., rejoice!... Receive him therefore with all gladness!... For the work of Christ, he was nigh unto death -- not regarding his life, to supply you!'
Philippians 2:25-30.

Calvin comments: "He (Paul) had already sent Epaphroditus, so that...while he awaited the outcome of his own affairs..., they (the Philippians) might not lack a Pastor who would take care that matters were properly managed. He recommends Epaphroditus by many titles.... Paul...might especially boast of his military service, inasmuch as he was exercised to an incredible extent in every kind of contest. He praises Epaphroditus, because he had been the comrade of his conflicts....

"'He (Epaphroditus) had ministered to him (Paul) in prison'.... 'He longed after you.' It is a sign of a true Pastor, that...he was...concerned about his flock and longed for them.... 'He was sick, nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him.' He (Paul) had expressed the severity of the disease (that Epaphroditus had been so ill that his life was despaired of), in order that the goodness of God might shine forth more clearly in his restored health!

"It is...surprising that the Apostle should ascribe to the mercy of God, that Epaphroditus had had his life prolonged -- when he (Paul) had previously declared that he himself preferred death!.... What would be better for us, than to remove to the Kingdom of God -- delivered from the many miseries of this world?... It would be tedious to enumerate all the things which make death better and more desirable than life to believers!.... (Yet) all these things do not prevent this life from being, considered in itself, an excellent gift of God....

"Paul acknowledges...that the death of Epaphroditus would have been a heavy blow to him.... Paul had many other reasons for sadness in the death of Epaphroditus.... It is the case for all believers that, at the death of anyone, they are reminded of the anger of God against sin. But Paul was the more moved by the Church's loss, which he says would be deprived of a good Pastor when the good were so few.... The presence of Epaphroditus was no small comfort to him.. Yet...to such a degree did he prefer the welfare of the Philippians to his own advantage, that he (Paul) says that he rejoiced at his departure -- because it grieved him that...he was taken away from the flock committed to him....

"(When you see him [Epaphroditus] again..., rejoice!)... Receive him (therefore) with all joy!... He...recommends him (Epaphroditus) again to the Philippians.... All who approve themselves as good and faithful Pastors, may be held in the highest estimation!... He reckons the distemper of Epaphroditus among his virtues.... It certainly was a signal token of his ardent zeal... Epaphroditus felt that his health would be in danger, if he applied himself beyond measure. Yet he would rather neglect his health, than fail in his duty!"

So God healed Epaphroditus, when sick nigh unto death!

'I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord! For Whom I have suffered the loss of all things.... So that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection..., being made conformable to His death -- if, by any means, I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead!' Philippians 3:8-11.

Calvin comments: "Paul, having said that he renounced all hindrances so that he might possess Christ, now adds that he continues to be of this mind.... The knowledge of Christ so far surpasses everything else by its sublimity that, compared with it, there is nothing that is not contemptible!...

"For Whom I have suffered the loss of all things'.... It is a similitude taken from seamen who, when pressed by danger of shipwreck, throw everything overboard -- so that, the ship being lightened, they may reach the harbour safely. Paul, then, preferred to lose everything that he had -- rather than be deprived of Christ alone!... Paul therefore divested himself not of works, but of that perverted confidence in works with which he had been puffed up....

"Those who cast their merchandise and other things into the sea so that they may escape in safety, do not despise riches but they prefer to live in misery and want (rather) than to be drowned along with their riches.... Paul, on the contrary, declares that he had...abandoned everything that he formerly reckoned precious..., '(so) that...(he) may gain Christ!'

"By this expression, he intimates that we cannot gain Christ otherwise than by losing everything that we have.... Christ therefore is rightly known, when we feel how powerful His death and resurrection are, and how efficacious they are in us.... All things are there furnished to us -- expiation and destruction of sin; freedom from guilt; satisfaction; victory over death; the attainment of righteousness; and the hope of a blessed immortality....

"Let everyone therefore who has become through faith a partaker of all Christ's benefits, acknowledge that a condition is presented to him that his whole life be conformed to His death!... After comprehending also the power of His resurrection, Christ crucified is set before us so that we may follow Him through tribulations and distresses.... Hence the resurrection of the dead is expressly mentioned, so that we may know that we must die before we live....

"If we die with Him, we shall also live with Him!...(Second Timothy 2:11-12). We must all therefore be ready for our whole life to represent nothing but an image of death, until it produces death itself -- even as the life of Christ is nothing but a prelude to death. We nevertheless enjoy meanwhile the consolation that the end is everlasting blessedness! For the death of Christ, is joined to His resurrection!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:25:2: "None participate in the benefits of Christ, save those who raise their minds to the resurrection..., forgetting everything until they reach it. Philippians 3:8." I suffer the loss of all things, to win Christ and His power! And you too?

'He is the Head of...the Church Who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead.... It pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell..., having made peace through the blood of His cross...to reconcile...you that were previously alienated and enemies!' Colossians 1:18-21.

Calvin comments: "Having discoursed...on Christ's excellence and...sovereign dominion over all creatures, he (Paul) returns to...what relates peculiarly to the Church.... The word 'Head'...serves as the Root from which vital energy flows to all the members.... It is Christ Who alone has authority to govern the Church.... Peter...and the other Apostles were members under one Head!...

"Christ...is 'the Beginning,' because He is the Firstborn from the dead.... In the resurrection there is the restoration of all things, and thus it is 'the Beginning' of the second and new creation.... As then Christ in rising again has inaugurated the Kingdom of God, He is rightly called 'the Beginning'.... He is called 'the First-begotten from the dead.' Not only because He was the first to rise again, but because He has also restored life to others.... He is the Author and Restorer of all things.... All things are subjected to His rule....

"It has been the good pleasure (of the Father)...by Him to reconcile all things to Himself.' This also is a magnificent commendation of Christ, that we cannot be joined to God otherwise than through Him...'making peace through the blood of His cross.' He says of the Father, that He is propitious to His creatures through the blood of Christ.... The Son of God had to become an expiatory victim and endure the punishment of sin, so that we might be the righteousness of God in Him. 'The blood of the cross' therefore means the blood of the sacrifice which was offered upon the cross for appeasing the anger of God.... Men have been reconciled to God, because they were previously alienated from Him by sin....

"And you, being in time past (alienated and enemies..., He has now reconciled)!... You were 'alienated'...from God. You were 'enemies.' Now, you are received into favour! Whence does this come? It is because God, appeased by the death of Christ, has become reconciled to you!... For we are born children of wrath, and every thought of the flesh is enmity against God.... We all, however, need Christ as our Peacemaker. Because we are the slaves of sin. And where sin is, there is enmity between God and men!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:12:7 &:14:5 : "Infer from the words of Paul...that inasmuch as He (the Son) is the eternal Word of God, He is the Firstborn of every creature not because He was created...; but because the entire structure of the world...had no other Beginning! Then, inasmuch as He was made man, He is the Firstborn from the dead...(Colossians 1:15-18).... Christ always was the Head, 'the Firstborn of every creature'.... He existed as the Son of God before...creation!"

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "I would like our (Anabaptist) opponents candidly to tell me on what ground they have any hope of resurrection -- unless it be because Christ rose? He is the First-begotten of the dead, and the Firstfruit of them that rise again. As He died and rose again, so do we too die and rise again...(Colossians 1:18)!" Christ is the Firstborn from the dead!

'In Christ...dwells all the fullness of the Godhead.... In Him...you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of sins...by the circumcision of Christ -- buried with Him in baptism, wherein...you were risen with Him through...God Who has raised Him from the dead.... You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has enlivened together with Him!' Colossians 2:5-13.

Calvin comments: "When he (Paul) says that 'the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ,' he means simply that the whole God is found in Him. So that he who is not satisfied with Christ alone, desires something better and more excellent than God!...

"In Whom also you were circumcised'.... Outward circumcision, is here compared with spiritual.... The circumcision which is made in the heart, is 'the circumcision of Christ'....

"Spiritual circumcision...we obtain...through baptism, so that it may be more clear that there is no practice of circumcision under the reign of Christ.... Christ, he (Paul) says, accomplished in us spiritual circumcision...by baptism....

"When he says 'We are buried with Christ'..., this is done through baptism (as also in Romans 6:4).... 'In which also you were risen'....

"We are not only engrafted into Christ's death,' he says, 'but we also rise to newness of life' – 'by faith'!... What faith?... He means that faith...founded upon the power of God...; that by which He raised Christ from the dead....

"You were,' he says, 'dead in uncircumcision'!... It is...customary in Scripture to denote deprivations of the reality, by deprivations of the sign. As in Genesis 3:22, 'Lest peradventure Adam eat of the fruit of life -- and live!'.... The tree did not confer life, but its removal was a sign of death.... They were sacraments of the grace of God. As Baptism and the Eucharist are to us, today!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* IV:15:5 & 16:20-21: "Baptism...shows us our mortification in Christ, and new life in Him.... We are 'circumcised' and put off the old man, after we are buried in Christ by baptism.... Children are baptized for...repentance and faith.... The seed of both lies hidden in them by the secret operation of the Spirit.... We are buried with Christ by baptism...(Colossians 2:12)."

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "As the Apostle says...'we die to sin' when concupiscence is extinguished in us. So we also die to God, when we become subject to concupiscence living in us (Colossians 2:13)!... Such death as the soul endures, Christ underwent on our account.... His victory over death, He performed by His death!"

Have you been buried and risen and enlivened in baptism, together with Christ?

'If then, you were risen with Christ -- seek those things which are above!... For you are dead, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God! When Christ Who is our life shall appear -- then you too shall appear with Him in glory! Mortify therefore your members which are upon the Earth!' Colossians 3:1-5.

Calvin comments: "Ascension goes along with resurrection. Therefore, if we are members of Christ, we must ascend into Heaven -- because, when He had been raised from the dead, He was received up into Heaven so that He might draw us up with Him.... We ought to think of nothing but what is heavenly, because Christ is in Heaven!..."

"The right hand of God'...is not confined to Heaven, but fills the whole world.... Christ encompasses us by His power, lest we should think that distance is a cause of separation between us and Him...."

"(Set your affection on things above,) not on things that are on the Earth!' He does not mean...riches or fields or houses or any other things of the present life, which we must use.... 'Christ,' he says, 'calls us upwards to Himself!..."

"For you are dead.' No one can rise again with Christ, if he has not first died with Him. Hence he draws the argument from resurrection to death..., meaning that we must be dead to the world so that we may live to Christ...."

"Our life is said to be hidden.... We may not murmur or complain if our life...differs nothing from death.... What is to be desired more, than that our life dwell with the very Fountain of Life?... We are saved by hope.... Being encompassed...with death, we may seek life elsewhere!... Our life is shut up in Christ. It must be hidden, until He appears!"

"Mortify therefore (your members which are upon the Earth)!...' He has been speaking of contempt of the world. He now proceeds further..., on the mortification of the flesh!... That of the faculties and will, and of the whole of our corrupt nature..... He call them also 'earthly'..., not the things that are on Earth!... We are 'earthly' so long as the vices of our flesh flourish in us.... We are made 'heavenly' -- by the renewing of the Spirit!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* II:16:7,13: "In the death and burial of Christ, a twofold blessing is set before us -- viz., deliverance from death to which we were enslaved, and the mortification of our flesh.... 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the Earth!... Seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God!' (Colossians 3:31)."

Calvin further says in his *Psychopannychia*: "Christ our Head did not perish in the shadow of death.... (By) His resurrection..., He constituted Himself the Lord of death -- and raised all of us who have any part in Him, above death.... 'Our life is hidden with Christ in God! When Christ your life shall appear, then you too shall appear with Him -- in glory!' (Colossians 3:3-4)." You too?

'I would not have you...ignorant, brethren!... Don't sorrow like others who have no hope!... We believe that Jesus died and rose again, so that God will bring with Him those who died in Jesus.... The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the Voice of the Archangel!... The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive...shall be caught up together with them in the clouds..., ever to be with the Lord!' First Thessalonians 4:13-17.

Calvin comments: "The Thessalonians" upheld "the hope of the resurrection.... However..., this conviction was insufficiently firm in their minds.... Accordingly, they retained something of their old superstition in mourning the dead....

"We must not grieve inordinately for the dead! Because we are all to be raised again.... He says...'You (should) sorrow not like the rest who have no hope.' He forbids them to mourn after the fashion of unbelievers, who give free reign to grief -- because they look on death as the final destruction.... But since believers know that they depart from the world in order finally to be gathered into the Kingdom of God, they do not have a similar reason for sorrow....

"He speaks of the dead as being 'asleep'.... There is a great difference between sleep and destruction. The reference, however, is not to the soul but to the body. For the dead body rests in the tomb as on a bed, until God raises the person up. Those therefore who conclude from this that it is souls which sleep, lack understanding!...

"Paul...is lifting the minds of believers to consider the resurrection, lest they should indulge in excessive grief on the death of their dear ones.... Let the sorrow of the godly be mingled with comfort!... The hope of blessed immortality...will accomplish this....

"They might...think that only those who remained alive until the coming of Christ, would share in the resurrection -- and that those who had previously died, would have no part in it. 'The order of the resurrection,' he says, 'will begin with them! We therefore shall not rise, without them!'.... Paul gives first place to the dead, and then teaches us that those who at that time will still be alive -- will follow them!...

"He knew...that Christ would come at a somewhat later date.... 'For the Lord Himself (shall...shout with the Voice of the Archangel)!.... 'The dead in Christ (shall rise first)'... Those who are left, will be 'caught up' together with them.... 'So shall we ever be with the Lord'....

"These words more than sufficiently disprove the aberrations...of the Chiliasts. When believers have once been gathered together into one Kingdom, their life will have no end -- any more than Christ's. To allot Christ a thousand years, so that afterwards He would cease to reign -- is too horrible to speak of. Those however who limit the life of believers to a thousand years, commit this absurdity!"

Do you sorrow for the dead, like those who have no hope? Don't! For Christ has risen!

'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel...who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints!' Second Thessalonians 1:7-10.

Calvin comments: "Christ will come from Heaven.... And, indeed..., to judge the whole world. The description which follows has reference to this, so that the godly may understand that God's concern with their afflictions is in proportion to the fearful nature of the judgment which awaits His enemies.... He has therefore mentioned all this, for the consolation of believers....

"Christ will avenge with the strictest severity the wrongs which the wicked inflict upon us.... Fire and flame is very frequent in Scripture, where the writer is dealing with the wrath of God.... He will bring His angels with Him..., 'rendering vengeance' – in order to persuade believers more surely, that the persecution which they endure will not go unpunished.... It is legitimate for us to look forward eagerly to the destruction of the ungodly -- provided that a pure and properly-regulated zeal for God holds sway in our hearts....

"He distinguishes unbelievers by these two marks -- that they 'know not God' and 'obey not the Gospel'.... Unbelief is therefore always blind, not because unbelievers are wholly devoid of light and understanding -- but because their minds are so involved in darkness, that 'seeing they see not' (Matthew 13:13).... The lack of this salutary knowledge gives rise to a contempt for God, and finally death!...

"The nature of the punishment...is eternal punishment and death which has no end. The perpetual duration of this death, is proved from the fact that its opposite is the glory of Christ. This is eternal, and has no end. Hence the violent nature of that death, will never cease....

"To the godly..., Christ will come to be glorified in them.... To what purpose does he (Paul) mention His coming in power, if not that they may leap forward in hope to that blessed resurrection?!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:9:6 & 18:7 & 25:4,10 : "Paul declares 'it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you..., when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven'.... In consoling the Thessalonians under their tribulations, he tells them that these were sent 'so that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God for which you also suffer..., when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire....

"He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe'.... The Apostle made no trivial declaration, when he said that unbelievers shall be 'punished with everlasting destruction from that presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power!' (Second Thessalonians 1:5-10)." When Christ comes back to be glorified in His saints! Do you believe that?

'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord Who has enabled me...who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor.... But I obtained mercy!... This is a faithful saying..., that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief!... Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God -- be honour and glory, for ever and ever!' First Timothy 1:12-17.

Calvin comments: "Paul...confesses his unworthiness, and yet affirms that he is an Apostle by the grace of God.... He...turns the circumstances that seemed to detract from his authority to his advantage, by showing that because of them the grace of God shone in him the more brightly.... He is unworthy of so honourable an office.... It is enough that he has been chosen by Christ....

"The fact that Christ had made him an Apostle, provided proof of his faithfulness.... He...says that He had strengthened...him.... (He says he) 'was before a blasphemer and a persecutor'.... We see how candidly he confesses.... He does not try to extenuate his sins.... By thus willingly acknowledging his own unworthiness, he magnifies the greatness of God's grace....

"When he says that grace...'abounded exceedingly' -- he implies that the memory of the past was effaced and so completely swallowed up, that it did not disadvantage him.... It was profitable for the Church that he had been the kind of man he was, before he was called to the Apostleship.... Christ gave a remarkable example of His grace, which might bring all men to a sure confidence that access to salvation is closed to no man, however serious and outrageous his sins....

"Christ came to save sinners!...' We who are lost in ourselves, should come to Christ to gain our salvation from Him.... The Father a thousand times offers us salvation in Christ.... Whenever any doubt about the forgiveness of sins comes into our mind, we should learn to drive it out!... The more a man feels the burden of his sins, he ought with greater courage to betake himself to Christ....

"(To save sinners,) of whom I am the chief!...' The Apostle...wished to make a confession that was...true and...came from the bottom of his heart.... In these words, we are warned ...how grave and serious a sin unbelief is in God's eyes, especially when accompanied by obstinacy and raging cruelty.... When he says 'chief' -- he is again saying that he is the chief of sinners..., so that no one should doubt that if only he comes to Christ in faith -- he may obtain pardon....

"To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God -- be honour and glory, for ever and ever!...' These sudden outbursts of Paul's come...when the vastness of the subject overpowers him.... He calls Him 'the King eternal' or King of the ages Who never changes. He calls Him 'invisible' because He dwells in light inaccessible.... He calls Him 'only wise' because He makes foolish and condemns as vanity all the wisdom of men.... There is no glory, but in God alone!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:13:24: "Paul affirms that God alone is 'immortal,' 'wise,' and 'true' (First Timothy 1:17)..... Is not He immortal, Who from the beginning had life so as to bestow immortality on angels? Is not He wise, Who is the eternal Wisdom of God? Is not He true, Who is truth itself?!" He is indeed the King eternal, immortal, God only wise! Do you believe that?

'God was manifest(ed) in the flesh; proclaimed just in the Spirit...; believed on in the world; received up into glory!' First Timothy 3:16.

Calvin comments: "The secret of godliness is great.... It does not deal with common themes -- but with the revelation of God's Son in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom (Colossians 2:3).... All the Greek manuscripts...agree on the reading 'God manifested in the flesh'!..."

"The most fitting description of Christ's Person, is contained in the words 'God manifested in the flesh'.... He declares Him to be...true God, and true man.... He asserts the unity of His Person, by declaring that it was one and the same Person Who was God, and Who was manifested in the flesh.... In Christ, we see God's infinite glory joined to our...flesh -- so that the two become one....

""(He was proclaimed) just...in the Spirit'.... The Son of God...took upon Him(self) our flesh.... There appeared in Him a Spirit-ual power that testified that He was God..... By the word 'Spirit' -- he includes everything in Christ that was divine.... Paul now contrasts the Spirit with the flesh, by making clear His glory..... The glory worthy of God's Only-begotten Son...did not consist of outward show or earthly grandeur, but was almost completely Spirit-ual..... (He) 'was...declared to be the Son of God in the power of the Spirit' (Romans 1:3)....

""(He was) believed on in the world.' It was above all things wonderful that God should have given an equal share in His revelation to profane Gentiles.... Christ overcame all obstacles, and brought into the obedience of faith those who seemed quite incapable of being subdued.... By an almost incredible victory, faith conquered!

"Finally, he says that He was 'received into glory'...after this mortal...life.... In the Person of Christ, a wonderful change was wrought.... He was exalted from the...state of a (human) servant, to the Father's right hand -- so that to Him, every knee might bow!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:13:11 & IV:14:2-3 & 29:35-36: "'God was manifest in the flesh' (First Timothy 3:16).... He is God blessed for ever! He therefore it is to Whom alone...all glory and honour is due.... Paul...openly exclaims that...(He was) 'in the form of God'...(and) 'equal with God!' (Philippians 2:6)....

"In the First Epistle to Timothy (3:16): 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh!'... The truth of God is in itself sufficiently stable and certain, and cannot receive a better confirmation from any other quarter than from itself!"

"This was Spirit-ually fulfilled in Christ.... Paul declares...: 'This is a great mystery'.... In the First Epistle to Timothy (3:9.16)...., it is used...in every instance for mystery!"

For God the Son was manifested in the flesh, and received up into glory! Is that your belief?

'We brought nothing into this world; and it is certain we can carry nothing out!... Lay hold on eternal life!... Keep this..., until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ -- Whom...He shall show Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords -- Who alone has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach..., Whom no man has seen nor can see, to Whom be honour and power everlasting!' First Timothy 6:7-16.

Calvin comments: "Godliness is a great and most abundant gain.... Through it, we become not only the heirs of the world -- but are enabled to enjoy Christ and all His riches.... They that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing!... True blessedness consists in godliness, and this sufficiency is as good as an increase of gain...

"We brought nothing into the world.... This...define(s) the limit of what is sufficient for us.... To ensure that a sufficiency will satisfy us, let us learn to control our desires so that we may want no more than is necessary to support or life.... Nature is content with a little; and all that goes beyond natural usage, is superfluous!....

"Lay hold on the life eternal!... God calls you to life eternal -- therefore, despise the world -- and strive to obtain it!... Nothing can fill us with courage, more than the knowledge that we have been called by God.... From that, we may infer that our labour -- which is under God's direction and in which He stretches out His hand to us -- will not be in vain!... Whenever our hearts waver, let us remember immediately to look to the death of Christ for strength!...

"Keep the Commandment...until the appearing of our Lord!... Godly men (are) to have their minds fixed entirely upon the day of Christ.... We know that a time of Christ's appearing has been appointed, and we ought patiently to wait for it.... Paul ascribes to God alone blessing, principality and kingly power.... The powers of this world are subject to His supreme dominion; depend upon Him; and stand or fall at His will. God's authority is beyond all comparison, because all the rest are nothing before His glory.... They fade, and quickly perish. His authority will endure for ever!

"(The blessed and only Potentate) only, has immortality!... There is...no life apart from God.... God alone is immortal.... We and all His creatures do not live of ourselves, but only borrow life from Him.... When we look up to God as the Source of immortality, we should hail this present life as of no worth.... God confers immortality on whatever of His creatures He chooses, but it is still true that only He possesses it (absolutely).... Immortality...does not belong to creatures, except insofar as He imparts to them strength and power....

"(God keeps on) dwelling in light!... God's light is unapproachable to anyone who tries to approach it in his own strength.... By faith we do enter into God's light, but only in part. So that it is still rightly said to be a light unapproachable to man.... '(God,) Whom no man has seen!... Men may learn to look in faith to Him, Whose face they cannot see with their eyes."

We can carry nothing with us out of this world to the King of kings! Are you ready to go?

'Grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.... But is now made manifest, by the appearing of our Saviour...Who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel!... For...which cause...I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day!' Second Timothy 1:9-12.

Calvin comments that Paul "calls the endless series of years from the foundation of the world, times eternal...before the times began to take their course from all past ages.... God has called us through the Gospel, not because He has suddenly taken thought for our salvation -- but because He had so determined from all eternity. Christ has appeared for that salvation now..., because this grace was laid up for us in Him before the creation of the world....

"The reason why Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and all the godly obtained the same salvation as we do -- was that they also placed their faith in Christ's appearing.... He does not exclude the fathers from participation in it! For the same faith gives them a part with us in this appearing. Christ was yesterday the same as He is today (Hebrew 13:8)....

""(He) abolished death!" In ascribing the manifestation of life to the Gospel, he (Paul) does not mean that it has its origin in the Word without reference to Christ's death and resurrection.... He means...the only way in which the fruits of this grace can come to men, is through the Gospel....

"To life, he adds 'immortality' -- as if he had said 'true and immortal life'.... Take 'life' to mean regeneration, on which there follows a blessed immortality which is...the object of hope. For our life does not consist in what we have in common with the brute beasts, but rather in our participation in the image of God.... Since the true nature...of that life does not appear in this world, to explain it he has properly added immortality -- which is the revelation of that life which now lies concealed."

""For...which cause I also suffer these things!"... He (Paul) argues that there is nothing shameful in his imprisonment -- from his hope of a happy outcome. The man who is armed with this defence, can overcome the greatest trials -- whatever they may be!.... When he says that he is 'not ashamed' -- he is by his example encouraging others to show the same courage!...

'For I know Whom I have believed!'... The man who like Paul has this knowledge, will know by experience that our faith is rightly called the victory that overcomes the world.... Christ had good reason to say that 'the gates of Hell shall not prevail (against it)! Matthew 16:18.... In the most desperate plight, we should glorify God -- by not doubting that He will be true and faithful....

"Paul is not philosophizing in the dark, but -- with the reality itself before his eyes -- is solemnly declaring the great value of a confident assurance of eternal life.... Christ, in bidding us be confident, uses this argument: 'The Father Who gave you to Me, is greater than all!' (John 10:29). By this He means that we are in no danger, since the Lord Who has received us into His protection, is abundantly able to resist them all!" Christ abolished death, and brought immortality to light! Do you believe this?

'Remember that Jesus Christ...was raised from the dead, according to my Gospel!... I endure all things for the elect's sakes, so that they too may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.... If we be dead with Him -- we shall also live with Him!' Second Timothy 2:8-11.

Calvin comments: "Remember Jesus!"... Hymenaeus and Philetus...were denying the resurrection, by holding falsely that it was already past.... Christ was born of the seed of David, and...He rose from the dead..... As far as the resurrection is concerned, how many have tried in so many different ways to overthrow our hope of it!...

"In the resurrection of Christ, we all have a sure pledge of our own. For he who confesses that Christ has risen, affirms also that we shall rise. For Christ has risen not for Himself, but for us.... Besides, in Christ's resurrection -- there is contained the completion of our redemption and salvation. For he (Paul) adds that it is resurrection 'from the dead.' Why? For what purpose?... Consider the effect and fruit of His death and His rising!...

"The Gospel can break through all the hindrances the world puts in its way.... Even if we are oppressed by the cruelty of the ungodly, nevertheless the Gospel is extended -- and spread far and wide. All that they may attempt..., can only make it shine more clearly.... God's truth breaks through, and spreads itself far and wide!... (Paul) shows...that his imprisonment...is in fact highly profitable to the elect.... He is ready not only to die, but even to be thought a criminal to promote the welfare of the Church!... It would confirm the godly, in faith....

"Our salvation is to live to God.... This begins with our regeneration, and is completed by our full liberation from the miseries of this mortal life when God takes us...into His Kingdom. To this salvation there is added a participation in...glory.... He (Paul) calls our salvation -- eternal glory!...

"We must die, in order to live.... Death is the entrance into life.... The only way we can share Christ's life and glory, is by sharing first His death.... Neither pains nor torments nor reproaches nor death should dismay us, seeing that we share them with Christ -- and especially since all these things are the forerunners of our triumph....

"Paul put heart into all believers, to bear with a light heart the afflictions in which already they have a foretaste of future glory.... Where Christ is present, there is also life and blessedness. We must hold firmly to this fellowship we have with Christ, so that we do not die by ourselves but with Him -- so that we may be the companions of His glory."

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:5:4 & 15:8: "(Paul)...says: 'I endure all things for the elect's sakes, so that they too may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory' (Second Timothy 2:10).... 'For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with him!' (Second Timothy 2:11)."

Remember, Christ was raised from the dead! Thus, you too will be! Are you ready?

'Christ...shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing.... You must watch in all things! Endure affliction!... I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.... I have finished my course.... Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!' Second Timothy 4:1-8.

Calvin comments: "(Christ) shall judge the quick and the dead (at His appearing)!" That is, those whom He finds still alive at His coming, and also those who have already died.... None shall escape His judgment!... He now rules in Heaven and on Earth. Till now, His Kingdom has not been made clearly manifest.... His Kingdom will be truly established, when He has vanquished His enemies and brought to nought every opposing power....

"Zeal should be tempered with longsuffering gentleness.... When a storm is seen to be coming, we must not take our time at our work -- but hurry with all diligence.... 'I am already being offered'.... As long as I was alive, I could stretch out my hand to help you.... Now, the time is coming when you will have to teach and encourage yourself -- and begin to swim, without support. Take care that nothing in you, may be seen to be changed by my death!...

"Note the expressions he uses to describe his death! By the word 'departure' -- he indicates that when we die, we do not altogether perish. It is only a departing of the soul from the body.... Death is only a passing of the soul from the body.... This definition contains a testimony to the immortality of the soul!

"Offering' or sacrifice, was a term specially suited to Paul's death. Since he was dying, for maintaining the truth of Christ.... Godly men are sacrifices acceptable to God both in the obedience of their lives and in their death.... Paul celebrates his death by commending it as the ratification of his teaching -- so that it might encourage believers to persevere, rather than grow weary....

"The time of my departure'.... By it, he most fittingly removes our excessive dread of death.... The only reason that men should be so greatly disturbed at the merest mention of death, is that they think that in death they completely perish. By calling it a 'departure' he declares than man does not perish, but his soul is only parted from his body.... He fearlessly declares that 'the time is come'.... He could not do that, unless he despised death.... Faith must overcome that fear, and refuse to let it keep us from leaving the world obediently -- whenever God calls us....

"Death is the goal of Christ's athletes.... Having 'kept the faith'...means...he was a faithful soldier to his Captain, right to the end.... His reward is sure. He gains this certainly from turning his eyes to the day of resurrection, and we should do likewise!.... Whenever faith is strong, it does not let our hearts fall asleep in this world -- but raises them up to hope in the final resurrection!"

In his *Treatises* III:317, Calvin argues: "Paul declares that the course of believers is terminated by death (Second Timothy 4:7)." So endure afflictions, right up to the time of departure to Heaven!

'The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me!... I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion!... The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly Kingdom!' Second Timothy 4:17-18.

Calvin comments that Paul said "'But the Lord stood by me!' He adds this, to remove the scandal which he saw could arise from so many having basely deserted him and his cause.... He says that the Gospel suffered no loss because of it -- since he himself alone, depending on heavenly power, was able to bear the whole burden....

"Far from being discouraged by the fear that possessed everyone else, he saw only more clearly that God's grace stands in no need of any support.... He is not boasting of his own fortitude, but giving thanks to the Lord that when he was brought to his extremity -- he did not give way or lose heart at such a dangerous trial.

"He acknowledges that God's hand had supported him.... It was enough for him that the inward grace of the Spirit, was like a shield to him to defend him against the attacks made upon him.

"He adds the reason -- (so) that the proclamation might be confirmed. By 'proclamation' he means the office of publishing the Gospel among the Gentiles that had been entrusted especially to him.... It was no ordinary confirmation of his ministry that at the very time when the whole world was furiously raging against him and all human help was deserting..., he yet remained unshaken!...

"He now adds the manner of the confirmation -- (so) that all the Gentiles might hear that the Lord had so wonderfully helped him. For from this, they could infer that both Paul's calling and their own -- were from the Lord!

"'I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion!'.... He uses the expression for danger in general -- as if he had said 'out of a blazing fire' or 'from the jaws of death.' He means that he escaped only by God's marvellous help, since the danger was so great that otherwise it would at once have swallowed him up.

"He declares that he was hoping for the same help in the future. Not to avoid death, but to avoid...deviating from the right course.... We should rise superior over every trial, so that we may be ready to die a hundred times over -- rather than think of soiling ourselves by one evil work.... The only true salvation is when either by life or by death, the Lord leads us into His Kingdom!.... Paul, in ascribing to God the work of leading us into His Kingdom, openly asserts that we are ruled by God's hand during the whole course of our life -- until with all our warfare completed, we obtain the victory!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:9:5: "In the school of Christ, who does not look forward with joy to the day of death, and final resurrection? (Second Timothy 4:18)." Delivered from danger, and preserved for Heaven!

'Paul, a servant of God...according to the faith of God's elect..., in hope of eternal life which God Who cannot lie promised before the world began!' Titus 1:1-2.

Calvin comments: "If anyone had doubts about his Apostleship, he (Paul) gives very strong reason to believe in it -- by connecting it with the salvation of God's elect. As if he had said: 'There is a mutual relationship between my Apostleship and the faith of God's elect, so that nobody can reject it without being a reprobate and a stranger from the true faith.' By the 'elect' -- he means not only those who were alive at that time, but all that had been -- from the beginning of the world....

"(Paul writes to those who have) 'the hope of eternal life (which God Who cannot lie promised before the world began)'.... Meditation on the life of Heaven, is the beginning both of true religion and of desire for godliness.... Sadducees and those who confine our hope to this world...., can only produce contempt for God -- while they reduce men to the level of animals....

"It should always be the aim of a good teacher, to turn men away from the world -- (so) that they may look up into Heaven.... Men never truly seek God, till they have confidence to approach Him.... They never apply their minds to godliness, till they have been instructed in the hope of a life in Heaven.

'Which God promised'...before eternal times.... 'Eternal'...mean(s)...time that goes beyond all antiquity.... Before the foundation of the world, God determined to give the salvation which He has now manifested through the Gospel.... Eternal life was promised to men many long ages ago -- and not only to those who were alive at that time, but for our own age also. It was not for Abraham's benefit alone that God said 'In your seed shall all nations be blessed!' (Genesis 22:18).... He had in view all who lived after him....

"The Greek word *aioon* means the uninterrupted succession of time from the beginning to the end of the world.... Paul is saying that salvation was given or ordained to God's elect, before the passage of time began.... Many ages have passed, since salvation was first promised.... The act of giving salvation, is put before all ages...from the foundation of the world....

""(Which God) Who cannot lie (promised before the world began)!" The adjective *apseudees* (Who cannot lie), is added not merely to glorify God -- but more to confirm our faith. Whenever the subject of our salvation is dealt with, we should remember that it is founded on the Word of Him Who cannot deceive or lie. Indeed, the only foundation of all religion -- is the unchangeable truth of God!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* III:2:12: "Accordingly, Paul claims faith as the peculiar privilege of the elect. Intimating that many (being non-elect) -- from being not properly rooted -- fall away (Titus 1:1).

Do you have eternal life which God Who cannot lie has promised? Do you?

'The aged men (are to) be sober, grave..., sound in faith.... The aged women likewise...(are to) be in behaviour as behoves holiness..., teachers of good things (so) that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children!' Titus 2:2-4.

Calvin comments: "He (Paul) mentioned 'aged men'.... Here is an indirect reference to the various diseases of old age.... It seems to me to be so...."

"'Aged women likewise!'... Old women...are...to make them (younger women) more attentive to their duties...."

"They also train 'the young women; by their instruction'.... Careful attention to the context, shows clearly that Paul is continuing with his list of the duties of women, which apply to the older women as well...."

"In reminding older women of their duties, he at the same time offers to the younger an example they should follow.... He wants women...to regulate their households soberly, and with moderation."

Calvin also says in his *Second Sermon upon chapter two (in) the Epistle to Titus*: "Faith must carry us up aloft.... Some pine away.... It belongs to God to govern us.... That, (say I), is the true soundness that beseems old folks."

"For according to the length of the time that we have lived in the world, so we have need of patience.... Thus ought an old man to think, when he endures any adversity...."

"Paul speaks here...not only to the men. But also the women have by and by their roll and instruction.... Paul commanded the elder women...to edify, and to give good example to all the world...."

"They should be schoolmistresses of goodness.... Employ yourselves in showing the way of salvation to such as be not yet so well trained as you be, and let them learn by your example!..."

"He says expressly, 'To the end that they may draw the younger sort to stayedness'.... Paul will have young women to learn modesty...."

"Here we see what the wisdom of the faithful wives and their daughters is. It is...to govern their household quietly, to bring up their children (orderly), and to be subject to their husbands obediently.... When they have children, they should have a care to bring them up and to keep them and to teach them the fear of God when they come to age."

The aged are to be sober and sound in faith -- and to teach the younger! Are you doing this?

'Paul, a prisoner of Jesus..., to Philemon...our...fellow-labourer.... I...beseech you, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds...whom I would have retained with me so that in your stead he might have ministered to me in the bonds of the Gospel.... Epaphras my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus salutes you; (and) Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, (and) Lucas my fellow-labourers!'
Philemon 1-24.

Calvin comments: "The sublime quality of Paul's spirit...is also apparent in this epistle.... He is sending back a runaway slave and thief (Onesimus) to his master (Philemon), and asking that he should be forgiven....

"He (Paul) now calls himself His 'prisoner'. Because the chains with which he was bound for the sake of the Gospel, were the ornaments or badges of the commission he exercised on Christ's behalf....

"It is probable that this Philemon held the rank of Pastor. For Paul call him his 'fellow-worker' -- and that is not a title he usually bestows on a private individual....

"He (Paul) claims the right to command on two grounds. Both because he is 'the aged' -- and 'a prisoner of Jesus Christ'....

"I beseech you for my child (Onesimus)!... Note the depths of his condescension, in calling one who is a slave, runaway and thief -- his own 'son'! When he says that Onesimus was 'begotten' by him, he means...it is with this act of spiritual regeneration.... Since a soul is made regenerate by faith..., he who ministers doctrine plays the part of a father.... It is, strictly speaking, God Who regenerates by the power of His Spirit.... It shows only how God acts through men.... He (Paul) has 'begotten' Onesimus 'in his bonds'....

"'(Onesimus) whom I would fain have kept with me!'... Paul would be sending back to him (Philemon), the slave (Onesimus) of those services he himself (Paul) stood in the greatest need.... To have Onesimus sent back to him, would be a welcome gift.... Onesimus was taking his master's place, in providing this service (to Paul)....

"Paul reminds Philemon that he should not be greatly offended by the flight of his slave (Onesimus), for it had brought about something good.... Paul says that he (Onesimus) was a wanderer for a little, so that by changing his place -- he might himself be changed and come back a new man! 'Epaphras my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus salutes you; and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, (and) Luke -- my fellow-workers!'

Paul was an aged prisoner of Jesus Christ! But in his old age, and bonded in jail, he gave life eternal to the runaway slave and thief Onesimus -- who became a faithful brother (Colossians 4:9)!

'God...has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...when He had by Himself purged our sins.... You, Lord, in the beginning had laid the foundation of the Earth. And the Heavens are the works of Your hands. They shall perish.... They all shall become old.... They shall be changed. But You are the same, and Your years shall not fail!' Hebrews 1:1-12.

Calvin comments: "God, Who is always like Himself, and Whose Word is unchanging -- to us..., has given His Own Son.... When He says -- 'has spoken to us at the end of these days' -- He means that there is no further reason why we should be in doubt whether to expect any new revelation. It was not a part of the Word that Christ brought, but the last closing Word.... When He had given salvation to men in the world, He was received into heavenly glory -- so that He might rule over all things..., taken to the very highest pinnacle of empire....

"'You, Lord, in the beginning had laid the foundation of the Earth'.... Christ...is God everlasting, Creator of Heaven and Earth.... His being is eternal, free from all change.... He is removed from the order of all created things.

"What David says about the Heavens perishing, some explain away as a mere possible contingency -- as though there was no firm statement. But what is the need for this forced explanation, when we know that all creatures are subject to vanity? To what purpose is this renewal which the Heavens also await with all expectancy, like that of those in travail -- except that they are now falling to destruction?... They will (thereafter) share in this renewal, that Christ communicates!...

"The Kingdom of Christ seems to be on the verge of ruin. But this promise that Christ will never be dragged from His throne and that rather He will lay low all His enemies -- banishes from us all fear....

"Whatever these enemies do, they will never prevail, because Christ's place at the right hand of the Father is not temporary -- but to the end of the world.... All those who do not submit to His rule, will be trodden down and trampled under His feet.... Christ's Kingdom...will last for ever!"

Calvin also says in his *Institutes* I:13:7,11,26 & 16:4: "The Apostle...tell us that the worlds were created by the Son, and that He sustains all things by His mighty Word (Hebrew 1:2).... Those qualities which in the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:6,10) are applied to the Son -- are the brightest attributes of God.

"'You, Lord, in the beginning had laid the foundation of the Earth!'... Christ...is the eternal God Who founded the Earth.... Hebrews (1:3)...., wishing to prove the divinity of Christ, says that He upholds 'all things by the Word of His power.'"

The Heavens shall perish, but the eternal Lord remains!

"To the angels, He has not put in subjection the world to come.... But one in a certain place testified, saying: 'What is man, that You are mindful of him?'... You crowned him with glory and honour, and did set him over the works of Your hands! You have put all things in subjection, under his feet!" Hebrews 2:5-8.

Calvin comments: "Christ is to be obeyed..., because the Father has conferred on Him sovereignty over the whole world.... In the beginning, man was put in possession of the world -- to have lordship over all the works of God....

"By his rebellion, he deserved the disowning of this dominion.... As soon as Adam cut himself off from God by his sin, he rightly was deprived of all the good things which he had received. Not in losing the use of them, but in forfeiting the legitimate right to them after he left God....

"Sky, air, sea and other elements are often hostile to us.... Even where every creature remains in a state of subjection.... That blessing of God has no application to us -- until what we have lost in Adam, has been restored to us through Christ.... This is the teaching which we found at the beginning of this Epistle (1:2-4), that Christ has been ordained by the Father to be Heir of all things....

"Christ by Whom we are adopted into the family, also admits us into the fellowship of this right -- so that we may enjoy the whole world with God's blessing.... There is no doubt, then, that we ought to look to Him -- whenever reference is made to the primacy of man over all creatures....

"What the Apostle refers to expressly as 'the world to come' -- has relevance here.... It is now clear that 'the world to come' is so described not only as that which we hope for after the resurrection, but as that which begins from the rise of the Kingdom of Christ and...will find its fulfilment in the final redemption....

"Lord, You have raised man to such dignity -- that he is very little distant from divine...honour! Since he is given authority over the whole world..., 'in that He subjected all things to him'....

"But...the premise...is applicable to Christ! All things are not yet subject even to Him, as Paul shows in First Corinthians 15:28.... After he has established the fact that Christ is the Lord of all creatures without exception, he adds...all things do not yet obey the rule of Christ.... He has conquered death, and been raised to the highest honour.... What is still lacking, will be fulfilled in its own time....

"The...purpose was to show an example of that domination in the most outstanding cases..., so that we might know that nothing is ours other than by the goodness of God and our participation in Christ.... You have made all things subject, not only those which bring about eternal blessedness but the very least of those which serve our physical needs. Whatever it be, the inferior lordship over the animals derives from the superior." Jesus was humbled to death, but now crowned gloriously!

'We who have believed, do enter into rest.... There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God. For he who entered into His rest, he too has ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest!' Hebrews 4:3-11.

Calvin comments on Genesis 2:1-3: "The Heaven and the Earth were completed.... An end was only at length put to the work, on the sixth day.... 'And He rested on the seventh day'.... What kind of rest was this?... That saying of Christ is true, that the Father and He Himself had worked from the beginning hitherto (John 5:17).... God claims for Himself...the seventh day. This is indeed the proper business of the whole life, in which men should daily exercise themselves.... God rested. Then He blessed this rest, so that in all ages it might be held sacred among men.... The Sabbath was a figure of this rest.... It was commanded to men from the beginning, so that they might employ themselves in the worship of God. It is right that it should continue, till the end of the world!"

Calvin comments on Exodus 20:8, that "the substance of the Sabbath..., Paul declares to be in Christ.... Spiritual rest is nothing but...the blessed death of man, which contains in it the life of God.... The Apostle in Hebrews (4:3-10) argues...that true rest is brought to us by the Gospel.... He still retains the genuine reason of the Commandment, *viz.* that we should rest from our works 'even as God from His'.... The ordinance of rest was a type of a spiritual and far higher mystery.... We have an equal necessity for the Sabbath, with the ancient people!...

Calvin comments on Hebrews 4:3-11: "After the creation of the world, God rested from His works.... The true rest of the faithful, which lasts to all eternity, is to conform to that of God.... That ought also to be man's blessedness, to which all his plans and actions should be directed.... A long time after, God -- Who is said to have rested -- denies His rest to those who do not believe.... There would be no purpose in His doing this, unless it was His will for the faithful to have rest according to His Own example. Hence he says: 'It remains that some should enter thereinto!'

"Our salvation is...placed in hope.... It leads us straight to Heaven.... There remains a rest for the people of God.... 'For he who entered into His rest (has ceased from his own works).' This is a definition of the perpetual Sabbath, in which the highest human happiness consists -- where there is a likeness between men and God.... What does ceasing from our works mean, but when a man has renounced himself in order to live to God?... Because the completion of this rest is never attained in this life, we must always be striving toward it! Thus believers enter in, but on condition that they continuously run, and press on.... The purpose of the Commandment, is something other than an external rest or an earthly worship.... 'Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest!'

In his *Institutes* 2:8:28-30, Calvin also says that the Sabbath was "a type of the spiritual rest by which believers were to cease from their own works, and allow God to work in them.... We must rest entirely, in order that God may work in us.... We must desist from all the acts of our own mind, so that, God working in us -- we may rest in Him. As the Apostle also teaches (Hebrews 4:3,19).... The Sabbath should never be completed, before the arrival of the Last Day!" How is your Sabbath?

'(The) High Priest, taken from among men..., can have compassion.... He Himself too is compassed with infirmity.... Christ did not glorify Himself to be made...High Priest.... In the days of His flesh, He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong (out)cries and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death.... Being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.' Hebrews 5:1-9.

Calvin commented: "What is clearer than the truth which is in Christ being compared with its types which were prior to it in time, and have now ceased?... The Apostle...says that the priests are taken from among men. Hence it follows that Christ must have been truly man.... He is fitted to reconcile God to us, because He (Christ) is man....

"The Priest does not minister by Himself for Himself, but is appointed for the common good of the people.... The salvation of all of us, is effected by and turns on the Priesthood of Christ.... We would have no dealings with God, unless there is a Priest were present.... 'He is a Priest Who can (have compassion).' The Priest should be fair and of goodwill to sinners, because He is the companion of their infirmities.... The point here...is...the regard for the men among whom He was manifested....

"In the days of His flesh'..., the form of Christ was grossly disfigured by the cross.... His wonderful lovingkindness shines forth in the fact that He submitted Himself to our infirmities, for our good.... Our faith is confirmed and His honour undiminished, because He bore our ills.... By saying 'the days of His flesh,' he indicates that the time of our human miseries is limited -- a fact which affords us no little relief.... Christ was the Son Who was exempted from the common lot of men by His Own dignity, and yet He subjected Himself to it for our sake....

"When we hear that He too endured the bitterest agonies of spirit, the likeness to us is clear. Christ...did not undergo death and all the other tribulations in such a way as to make little of them or not be oppressed by any feeling of trouble. He prayed with tears, thus bearing witness of the supreme anguish of His spirit. By 'tears' and 'strong crying,' the Apostle's intention is to express the strong force of His grief. It is incredible that His eyes were dry, since in the immensity of His agony, bloody drops of sweat flowed from His whole body.... Whenever our troubles press us and torture us, we should cast our minds back to the Son of God Who toiled under the same burdens.... We are warned not to look for our salvation in time of trouble from any other than from God alone.... Christ was heard.... He...did not give way.... Nor was He overcome, by death....

"He...underwent death.... He had to wrestle with the total sum of human guilt, and with the very powers of darkness themselves.... He got what He wanted, inasmuch as He emerged from the pains of death as Conqueror.... After a brief encounter, (He) gained a glorious victory over Satan...and the powers of Hell.... We too should be instructed and guided into obedience by God -- by His example; by various tribulations; and finally, by death itself!"

Christ, surrounded with weakness, had compassion! May we too, by His grace, do the same!

EXTRA!

Hebrews 10:5f

Christ sacrificed Himself for us in His body!

'When He (Jesus Christ) comes into the world, He says: "Sacrifice and offering You would not, but You prepared a body for Me!"... We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once and for all!' Hebrews 10:5-10.

Calvin comments: "This coming into the world, was the manifestation of Christ in the flesh.... He...descended from Heaven. The fortieth Psalm which he (the holy writer) quotes..., applies to Christ.... The sentence 'My iniquities have laid hold on Me'..., fits His Person.... Christ of His Own accord, took on Himself the sins of His members....

"Sacrifices...are not required from godly and honest worshippers of God.... We must come to the Kingdom of Christ for it to be completely true -- that God does not wish sacrifice. There is a similar passage in Psalm 16:10 -- 'neither will You permit Your Holy One to see corruption'.... This was not truly completed, until Christ.... David both here and in Psalm 51:18, so disparaged external sacrifices as to prefer what is the Chief.... There is no doubt that in both places, he looked forward to the Kingdom of Christ....

"'You did prepare a body!'.... He (Christ) indicates that He is obeying His call, when He adds: 'I have come to do Your will!' This has a particular relevance to Christ. Although all the saints aspire after the righteousness of God, it is Christ alone Who is fully fitted to do the will of God....

"'He takes away the first'" -- viz., the Old Testament sacrifices. "The purpose of this quotation (is) namely for us to know that full and firm righteousness in the Kingdom of Christ, does not need legal sacrifices. When they are taken away, the will of God is established as the rule of perfection. It follows therefore that the sacrifices of beasts were removed by the Priesthood of Christ, because they had no place in it.... The accustomed sacrifices are not demanded of any man who is holy and properly instructed.... He bears witness that God is perfectly obeyed, even when sacrifices are omitted....

"David professes not so much in his own person as in that of Christ, that He is prepared to do the will of God. That is extended to include all the members of Christ.... Because it was Christ's example of obedience pre-eminently above all others to give Himself to die on the cross, and because for this particular purpose He took on Himself the form of a servant -- the Apostle says that by offering Himself, Christ fulfilled the command of the Father... Thus, we have been sanctified!

"In adding 'through the offering of the body (of Jesus Christ),' he refers to the sentence in the Psalm (cf. 40:6): 'A body You did prepare'.... Christ found that in Himself He could please God.... If the Levitical priests had had a fit body, the sacrifice of beasts would have been superfluous (for them). But Christ alone was sufficient, and was by Himself capable of performing whatever God requires." Christ sacrificed Himself for us -- once and for all! For you too -- if you believe!

'By faith Abraham...sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country.... He looked for a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.... There sprang even from one...as good as dead, so many as the stars.... These all died in faith.... They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the Earth. For they that say such things, plainly declare that they were seeking a country.... They desired a better country, which is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. For He had prepared a city for them!' Hebrews 11:8-16.

Calvin commented: "Scripture lays down that the right way to seek God is that a man -- prostrate, smitten with the accusation of eternal death, and despairing of himself -- should fly to Christ as the only refuge for salvation.... The sole purpose of a true life, is to serve His glory....

"Abraham himself had no excellence which did not come from faith.... (This) was the reason why he immediately obeyed God when he was ordered to emigrate from his fatherland.... It was due to the same faith, that he held steadily to his calling -- to the very end.... We must learn that this is a thing to be observed through the whole of life -- to attempt nothing, unless God calls....

"By faith, he became a sojourner...with Isaac and Jacob'.... He joins Abraham's son and grandson to him, as companions.... They looked to Heaven.... God had given them, that they would possess the land.... They did not rest even there, but looked further to Heaven.... He calls Heaven 'the city which has foundations.' Because it is fixed for all eternity, and there is nothing in the world except what is transient.... The eternity of heavenly life, fits the nature of God as its Creator.... All weariness is relieved by this expectation, so that we should never grow tired in following God....

"Abraham was almost half dead, and Sarah his wife who had been barren in the flower of her life was now sterile with old age.... 'These all died in faith'.... They...were steadfast to death..., 'having confessed that they were strangers'.... Jacob confessed this.... He answered Pharaoh that the time of his pilgrimage was short.... His mind was not fixed on this world, but was raised above the Heavens.... The fathers have plainly shown that they had a better country, in Heaven. For if they were pilgrims here, their fatherland and their permanent home is elsewhere.... They looked for another country, which was beyond this world....

"There will be no place for us among the sons of God, unless we renounce the world.... There will be no inheritance for us in Heaven, unless we are pilgrims on Earth.... Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...were the heirs of Heaven.... God who speaks is God not of the dead, but of the living!"

In his *Psychopannychia*, Calvin adds: "Abraham and his posterity...dwelt (as) sojourners..., sheltering their bodies by living in poor huts.... God promised them what He had not yet exhibited.... They trusted the promises afar off, and died in the...belief...the promises...would one day be fulfilled.... They confessed...they had no fixed abode on the Earth -- but that...there was a country for which they longed -- viz., Heaven!" Abraham's folk desired the heavenly land! Do we?

'By faith, Abraham...offered up Isaac..., accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.... By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob..., concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed...the sons of Joseph.' Hebrews 11:17-21.

Calvin commented: "The value of the sacrifice of Isaac, rests in the effect on the spirit. Because it was not due to Abraham, that he did not carry out what he was commanded. His willingness had the effect of obedience, as if he had in fact sacrificed his son....

"Abraham was commanded to take...his only-begotten and beloved son Isaac -- to lead him to a place...and there to sacrifice him by his own hand. God had taken pains to pile up such descriptions..., to pierce the depth of the heart of the holy man with as many wounds as possible....

"When they came to the place, Isaac pierced his breast with yet a new wound -- by asking where was the sacrifice? However bitter might have been the death of his son..., a bloody death would have brought still greater grief -- to be ordered to kill him with his own hand, is more terrible than any father's spirit can bear!...

"He was ordered to kill his son Isaac.... To what straits must we imagine the holy man to have been brought, when it occurred to him that the hope of eternal life would be extinguished in the person of his son? And yet, by faith he emerged above these thoughts....

"Isaac is not to be thought of as simply one of the common company of men, but as one who contained Christ.... Abraham ascribed to God the honour of being able to raise his son from the dead!.... It was something like a resurrection, when suddenly his son was released from the midst of death.... It seemed to be a kind of resurrection, when he was snatched back suddenly and miraculously by the unexpected grace of God.... An image of Christ, is depicted in this sacrifice!.... Abraham received his son as one who had been restored to him from death, to new life..

"Ephraim was the younger of the two sons of Joseph.... What did Jacob see in the younger?.... When he did so, his eyes were clouded and dim with old age.... 'By faith Joseph'...despised everything worthwhile in the world.... (He thought) nothing of everything valuable. Except that he...(would) ascend...into Heaven! When he ordered his bones to be carried away, he was not thinking of himself.... But he wanted to sharpen the desire of his people, so that they would look more earnestly for their redemption"

In his *Institutes* II:10:13f, Calvin added: "Jacob set so much value on being buried (in Canaan)..., that he took Joseph -- bound by oath -- to see it done.... In the whole course of their lives, they had an eye to future blessedness.... (Jacob) declared in one of the last sentences he uttered: 'I have waited for Your salvation, O God!' (Genesis 49:18). What salvation could he have waited for, when he felt himself breathing his last -- if he did not see in death the beginning of a new life?" For Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all looked up to Heaven! Do you?

'By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents.... He, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter -- choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.... Through faith, he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood -- lest he that destroyed the firstborn, should touch them. By faith, they passed through the Red Sea as on dry land. Which the Egyptians trying to do, were drowned.' Hebrews 11:23-29.

Calvin commented: "The parents of Moses were moved to save him.... They preferred their infant's safety, to their own....

"Moses, who was the Minister of their redemption, had been snatched from death miraculously -- thanks to faith.... Their faith...was so accepted by God, as to secure the life of Moses on which depended the liberation of the Church....

"Moses..., when he was grown up..., rejected his adoption by Pharaoh's daughter.... He would rather return to his own people, than remain in the royal palace....

"By faith, he (Moses) kept the Passover.' This ought to have great value, in commending faith.... The (Passover) lamb was a type of Christ....

"When he (Moses) sprinkled blood on the doorposts..., Moses set up a few drops of blood as a remedy for the vengeance of God.... He was content with the Word of God alone, and had no doubt that the people would be exempt from the plague which was coming.... The Passover was celebrated by faith, because Moses had Christ in mind....

"By faith, they passed through (the Red Sea)'.... God granted it..., that the whole multitude should cross the sea dry-shod.

"In this same action, there was a great difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians.... The former crossed over in safety, while the latter were drowned a little later....

"The Israelites had accepted the Word of God, which the Egyptians lacked.... The Egyptians were swallowed up....

"The Israelites reach safety, because they relied on the Word of God. And did not refuse to make their way through the middle of the mass of waters!"

Thus Moses was spared from death, in his infancy. By his institution of the Passover, he saved his own people from death -- while every firstborn Egyptian then died. And by his faithful actions at the Red Sea, all of his people were conveyed to safety. While all the persecuting Egyptians, were drowned to death. So Moses avoided destruction at his birth, at the Passover, and at the Red Sea!

'By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down -- after they were surrounded for seven days. By faith, the harlot Rahab did not perish with them that did not believe -- when she had received the spies with peace.' Hebrews 11:30-31

Calvin commented: *'By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down'....* By the same faith, the people gained possession of their promised inheritance.

"The first obstacle to their entrance to the land, was the city of Jericho -- fortified and all but impregnable, which prevented any further advance.... The Lord commanded all the men of war to go round the walls once every day, and seven times on the seventh day....

"They obeyed the command of God, and took it seriously -- so that success followed, as they had been promised. It is certain that the walls did not fall because of the shouts of men or their noise or by the sound of the trumpet, but because the people hoped that God would do what He had promised.

"We can turn this to our own use. Because it is only by faith that we are set free from the tyranny of the devil.... By the same faith..., we overcome our enemies -- and all the strongholds of Hell, fall!

"By faith, Rahab perished not'.... This example seems less outstanding, on account of the low character of the person.... It is nevertheless quoted by the Apostle, fittingly and relevantly....

"He tells us that a foreign woman who was not only of the humblest condition among her people but was also a harlot, was brought by faith into the body of the Church. It follows from this that...those who earlier scarcely had a place among the unbelievers and the heathen, are adopted into the fellowship of the angels!

"James (2:25) also bears testimony to the faith of Rahab.... This woman was endowed with true faith. She professed that she was fully persuaded of what God had promised.... She asked for pardon for herself and her people. In so doing, she looked not to men but to God Himself. The evidence of this faith, is that she received the (Hebrew) spies with hospitality -- at the risk of her own life. Therefore it was thanks to faith, that she escaped safely from the general ruin of her city.

"The name 'harlot' is added, to heighten the grace of God.... In the story of Joshua, the word *ha-zoonaah* is specifically added here. So that we may know that the spies came secretly into the city of Jericho, and there lay low in the harlot's house. It is also certain that this refers to her past life. For her faith, is the evidence of her repentance."

So, by faith, Rahab did not perish -- even when the walls of Jericho fell down!

'And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell about Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David, and Samuel, and the Prophets -- who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens!' Hebrews 11:32-34.

Calvin commented: "God says that there would be no end, if He dwelt on every instance. Since what He has described in the case of a few, refers to the whole Church of God! The Lord raised up judges to govern the people.... He mentions Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah.... Gideon with three hundred men attacked the huge army of his enemies, and smashed the pitchers in their hands....

"Barak was far from being equal to his enemies.... Samson was a countryman who was not trained to use any arms, except farm-tools -- and what could he do, against such proud victors whose power had subdued a whole people?" But God!

"Jephthah...professed that he would be the avenger of his people, when they were already hopeless.... All these followed God as their Guide, and -- encouraged by His promise -- undertook the task that they were commanded.

"They were honoured with the evidence of the Holy Spirit. Everything praiseworthy that they did, the Apostle has attributed to faith.... Though there was none of them, whose faith did not falter. Gideon was slower than he need have been, to take up arms.... Barak hesitated, at the beginning.... Samson...thoughtlessly betrayed the safety of himself and of all his people. Jephthah rushed headlong into making a foolish vow....

"In every saint, there is always to be found something reprehensible. Nevertheless, although faith may be imperfect and incomplete, it does not cease to be approved by God. There is no reason therefore why the fault from which we labour, should break us or discourage us -- provided we go on by faith in the race of our calling!....

"With David, He includes all the good kings. And to them, He adds Samuel and the Prophets.... The many victories which David gained over his enemies, are well known. The uprightness of Samuel and his supreme wisdom in governing the people, was well known.... David returned home many times victorious. Hezekiah recovered from his illness. Daniel emerged safe and sound from the lion's den. His friends walked joyfully in the burning furnace....

"'From weakness, (they) were made strong'.... The Lord stretched out His hand to raise up the saints whenever they were laid low -- and brought help to their weakness, so that they recovered their full strength." Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel -- all escaped! And you?

'Women received their dead, raised back to life again.... Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance -- so that they might obtain a better resurrection.... Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings.... They were stoned; they were sawn asunder.... They were slain with the sword...; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.' Hebrews 11:35-37.

Calvin commented: "Up till now, he has been describing the successful results with which God has rewarded the faith of His people.... Now, he turns to a different argument.... When saints are reduced to extreme misery -- they have struggled by faith to continue unconquered to death....

"Some triumph wonderfully, in overcoming their enemies...; saved by the Lord by all kinds of miracles...; snatched from the midst of death in new and unaccustomed ways.... Others are shamefully treated; despised by almost the whole world; overcome by necessity; and universally hated.... They have to hide in the dens of beasts, and finally are dragged out to...savage torture....

"Yet in both -- faith holds sway. And in both -- it is efficacious! Indeed, its force shines out more clearly in the second group. The victory of faith is more outstanding in the contempt of death, than if life is continued to the fifth generation. It is a more excellent result of faith....

"The fortitude of the saints which has shone clearly in all the ages, is the work of faith. Because our weakness is such, that we are not able to overcome our ills, unless faith sustains us.... All those who trust in God, are furnished with the power which they need to resist Satan....

"*'Etumpanistheesan'*...means that they were stretched on a rack, as a skin is stretched over a drum.... 'Sheepskins' and 'goatskins' mean...the common rough clothing of the saints, with which they were clothed when they fled into the desert....

"There is a tradition that Jeremiah was stoned, and Isaiah sawn asunder.... Sacred history relates that Elijah, Elisha and other Prophets wandered on mountains and in caves....

"We hear Christ saying that if we wish to preserve our lives in this world, we shall lose them for eternity. If therefore there is any real love of a future resurrection occupying a place in our hearts, it will easily lead us to contempt of death. We must only live, so as to live to God.... Whenever we cannot live to God, we must gladly and willingly meet death....

"The saints overcame all the torments, by faith. For unless their spirits had been kept firm by the hope of a blessed resurrection, they would immediately have collapsed.... God is pleased to try our faith today, by the same testing.... We must not think that we are deserted by Him -- when we know that He cared for the holy fathers who underwent the same sufferings!"

Women received back their dead, while others were slain. This is a great cloud of witnesses -- to encourage us to trust in Jesus! Do you?

'What son is he, whom the father does not chasten?.... If you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers -- then you are bastards, and not sons!.... We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?.... No chastening for the present, seems to be joyous, but grievous.... Afterward, it yields the peaceable fruit.... Therefore, lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet!.... Be healed!' Hebrews 12:7-13.

Calvin commented: "It is not fitting for the sons of God to be free from...discipline.... No man...of prudence...can be found, who does not correct his children.... How much less will God, Who is the best and wisest Father, neglect so necessary a remedy?....

"As long as we live, we are no more than children -- in regard to God.... This is the reason why the rod should always be applied to our backs.... We do not value the blessing of adoption as we ought, and...we reject all the grace of God -- when we want to avoid His chastisement....

"Why does He call those who avoid correction, bastards?.... If they withdraw themselves from the discipline of the Father, their profession of Christ would be false and untrue. So that they would be bastards, rather than legitimate children....

"If we give so much reverence to the fathers of whom we are born after the flesh, that we submit to their discipline -- much more honour is due to God, Who is our spiritual Father.... The discipline by which fathers bring up their children, is useful only for this present life; but God looks further to sanctify us for eternal life....

"He is called 'the Father of spirits'.... He alone creates and recreates souls.... God is the Father both of soul and body.... This name (father) is give to men, (only) by way of concession.... He does not use the help of men in creating souls; and renews them miraculously by the power of His Spirit....

"The chastisements of God have the purpose of taming...the flesh, so that we are renewed to a heavenly life.... The chastisements of God bring far greater benefit.... The spiritual holiness of God excels the advantages of the body..., (and) is profitable for participation in his holiness....

"God, even while He chastises us, is concerned for our salvation.... God is with us, and is concerned for us -- even when He afflicts us.... You have hands that hang down.... Your knees are weak.... You do not see the true encouragement in your adversity....

"This teaching ought to encourage you to a new vigour in all your members, so that you are quick and ready to follow the calling of God with your hands and your feet.... The person who is ready to endure evil, goes directly wherever the Lord calls.... Take pains early, to remedy any halting." Endure chastisements, dear reader -- unto eternal life! You too!

'The rich..., like the flower of the grass..., shall pass away.... For the sun...withers the grass, and its flower falls off, and perishes. The rich man fades away in his ways.' James 1:10f.

Calvin comments: "This admonition pertains to all those who excel in honour, or in dignity, or in any other external thing.... Lest then the vain joy of the world should captivate the rich -- they ought to habituate themselves to glory, in the casting down of their carnal excellency!

"As the flower of the grass.' Were anyone to say that James alludes to the words of Isaiah (40:8), I would not much object.... The Prophet...speaks not only of the things of this life and the fading character of the world, but of the whole man -- both body and soul.... Glorifying in riches is foolish and preposterous -- because they pass away in a moment."

Man comes forth like a flower, and is cut down (Job 14:1-2). Evildoers shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither like the green herb (Psalm 37:1-2). When the wicked spring up like grass, it is so that they shall be destroyed for ever (Psalm 92:7). Man, his days are like grass; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone (Psalm 103:15-16). All flesh is grass; the grass withers; the flower fades -- people are grass! (Isaiah 40:6-8).

The rich is like the beast which perishes. Like the flower of the grass, he shall pass away. James predicts the passing away of the rich, and the rusting and perishing of all their possessions. All flesh is like grass, and all the glory of man like the flower of grass (First Peter 2:24).

Let the brother who is rich, rejoice that he is made low! Rejoice that you have seen the danger and escaped the snare of riches, and are no longer a camel too large for the needle's eye! Rejoice that you have found security against destruction, and a better hope than fleeting riches can afford!

It is the curse of all whom the old serpent deceives, to go upon the earth like him -- and to eat dust. Rejoice that you have learned this! Rejoice in your lowliness before God, as a spiritually poor man, so that as a brother of the poor you are also an inheritor of the Kingdom and rich in God!

James means that the Christian who is a true believer, has received grace. To him, he warningly says: "Do not rejoice like a rich man in your riches! Rejoice rather in the Lord! Otherwise, you are rejoicing in your own pride; and all such rejoicing, is evil (James 4:6). Otherwise, in the heat of temptation, even your spiritual branch will fade away -- and you yourself shall perish in your pride."

Let the brother who had been rich, and has not retained his lowliness of heart -- take shame to himself! Let him abase himself, and be clothed again with humility! For God resists the proud, while He gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves under the hand of God, and He will exact you (James 4:6-10)! This makes the high and the rich, the same as the low and the poor. So must it be, in the presence of the Lord. The rich shall pass away like the grass that perishes! And you?

James 1:15

Sin, when it has finished, brings forth death

'When lust has conceived, it brings forth sin. And sin, when it is finished, brings forth death!'
James 1:15.

Calvin comments: "James does not show when sin began to be born, so as to be sin so accounted by God -- but when it breaks forth. For he proceeds gradually, and shows that the consummation of sin is eternal death.... It hence follows that men gather fruit in eternal perdition.... Though death is merited by every sin whatever, yet it is said to be the reward of an ungodly and wicked life.... There is, in us, the root of our own destruction."

In his *Institutes* III.3:15, he adds: "Those who maintain that concupiscence is not sin, are wont to found it on the passage of James 1:15.... But this is easily refuted.... From his calling crimes and wicked deeds the fruits of lust and also giving them the name of sins, it does not follow that the lust itself is not an evil and deserving condemnation in the sight of God."

Consenting to lust, is the first essential sin. God said to Cain: "To you shall its desire be, but you shall rule over it!" (Genesis 4:7). If we rather yield up our will to desire, and become one with it -- then it becomes perfect lust which the conceiving desire thus brings forth. The secret complacency with others' sins, makes us partakers of their guilt.

Our own lust is stirred from the beginning, in earliest infancy. Have you withstood your lust, as in the beginning you might have done? We have all increased for ourselves our original sin. We have for ourselves made it our own actual sin, in the will. Men have corrupted themselves. That they are not God's children, is their own blot. The axe must be laid at the root; the root eradicated. Otherwise, the fruit of evil must continually reappear.

Lust brings forth sin -- the first and proper sin of the heart. Do not say that your consent to lust, is not in itself sin! The spark, if it falls upon the tinder, must kindle fire. The seed is in the soil. How should it not grow? No weed sprouts so strongly and quickly, as sin.

But sin, when it is finished, brings forth death -- sin unto death. The end of these things, is death (Romans 6:16,19,21) -- through dying and perishing. It brings forth death. Death is the wages of sin. You shall surely die! An entire humanity is born which lies in death, and must go on to death -- only to be redeemed by the bitter death of Christ!

Hold that fast in faith, O sinner -- and then your evil shall yet have a good finishing. Every actual sin strengthens the lust, and goes on to new and greater sins -- even to death. All goes back to the original history of sin. All are tempted by their own lust; then the birth of sin; then the growth of sin; and from it, the birth of death.

For sin, when it has finished -- brings forth death. But faith in Christ, when it has finished -- brings us to life everlasting!

'Is any sick among you? Let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him!... And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.... If any of you errs from the truth, and someone converts him -- let him know, that he who converts the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death!' James 5:14-20.

Calvin comments: "As the gift of healing as yet continued (past tense!), he directed the sick to have recourse to this remedy. It is indeed certain that they were not all healed.... The oil was...applied...only when there was some hope of restoration.... For this purpose, he ordered the Presbyters to be sent for.... I include here generally all those who presided over the Church. For Pastors were not alone called Presbyters or Elders.... The custom of praying over one, was intended to show that they stood as it were before God. For when we come as it were to the very scene itself, we utter prayers with more feeling.... James...argues that as their prayers availed so much, we ought in like manner to pray at this day according to their example.... God by our ministry delivers and saves those who seem otherwise to be nigh destruction!"

In his *Institutes* IV:19:18 & III:20:27, Calvin adds: "James...ordered the Presbyters of the Church to be called to anoint the sick.... Our Lord, when about to give sight to the blind man, spat on the ground and made clay (John 9:6 cf. Isaiah 1:6 & 38:21 and Mark 6:13 and Luke 10:34).... The gift of healing disappeared with the other miraculous powers.... It does not pertain to us, to whom no such powers have been committed.... The Scripture often exhorts us to offer up mutual prayers; but says not one syllable concerning the dead. Nay, James (5:16) tacitly excludes the dead -- when he combines the two things to 'confess our sins one to another and to pray for one another.'"

In his *Tracts and Treatises* III:290f & 323f, Calvin concludes: "I willingly assent to the words of James (5:14). But I deny it to have been his intention to prostitute what he knew to be an efficacious sign representing divine grace, to a frigid imitation.... The 'Anointers' of this day (with their Romish 'Extreme Unction'), are no more Ministers of the grace of which James speaks -- than the player who acted Agamemnon on the stage was a king!...."

"It (the anointing with oil) was temporary.... The gift of healing was not perpetual.... It was shortly after, taken away.... After the thing was taken way, it is...vain to retain the sign.... They (the Romish priests) are nothing but apes.... How many recover health by the oil? Scarcely one in a hundred lives after unction! Nay, they do not administer it to cure their sickness, but to send them fatter to the grave!...."

"The Apostle commands us to pray one for another.... James (5:16)...enjoins those only who labour together, to communicate in mutual prayer. The dead, who have already ceased from these labours, are excluded. James...recommends none to our prayers, but those who are still engaged in the struggles of the present life.... The Scripture pronounces those blessed, who have died in the Lord (Revelation 14:13).... They now rest from their labours.... What assistance can our prayers give them?" But know that he who converts the sinner, shall save a soul from death!

'Christ has once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God..., put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.... In the days of Noah..., eight souls were saved by water. The antitype of which, even baptism, also now saves us...as the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' First Peter 3:18-21.

Calvin commented: "It is a...comfort that...we suffer according to the example of Christ.... It thus follows, that we are blessed.... Christ suffered, in order to bring us to God.... We have been consecrated to God by Christ's death, so that we may live and die -- to Him.... Persecutions ought to be borne with equanimity, because the Son of God shows us the way.... It is a great thing for us to be made conformable to the Son of God, when we suffer without cause.... He suffered through the weakness of the flesh. Yet He rose again, through the power of the Spirit.... Christ emerged from death, as the Conqueror!....

"The life-giving power of the Spirit...was not only exerted in the Person of Christ Himself, but is also poured out upon us!... Christ did not rise only for Himself, but to make known to others the same power of His Spirit -- so that it penetrates even to the dead.... Peter ascribes salvation only to the family of Noah -- and gives over to ruin all who were not within the ark.... The Gospel was preached to the 'dead' (in the ark) -- so that they might live according to God in the Spirit....

"The family of Noah alone escaped.... It was a kind of baptism.... Our baptism is an antitype of the baptism of Noah.... Noah obtained life, through death.... He was preserved together with his small family. So today, the death which is set forth in baptism -- is to us an entrance into life....

"(Yet) the external symbol is not sufficient, unless baptism be received really!... Let us learn...not to divorce the thing signified from the sign.... We ought to acknowledge in baptism...the pledge of our renewal -- and yet leave to Christ...His Own honour.... No part of our salvation should be transferred to the sign.... Baptism...is not the putting off of the filth of the flesh.... The outward sign of itself, avails nothing.... Peter had in mind to set forth the effect of baptism....

"We must notice that he says *'through the resurrection of Jesus Christ'*.... We are not to cleave to the element of water!... What is thereby typified, flows from Christ alone.... Christ was raised to life by the Spirit.... We cannot otherwise derive benefit from baptism, except by having all our thoughts fixed on the death and the resurrection of Christ."

In Calvin's *Tracts and Treatises* III:182, he adds: "Sins are effaced by the mere remembrance of baptism..., conjoined with faith and repentance.... We ought to turn our thoughts not only to the sprinkling of water, but to the spiritual reality...by the resurrection of Christ.... We must flee to baptism, and from it seek a confirmation of forgiveness.... The belief and certainty of this reconciliation, which is daily repeated even to the end of life, He seals to us by baptism. We were indeed baptized once. But there is a perpetual testimony of pardon and free propitiation in Christ!" For Christ the just, suffered but once for the unjust -- to bring us to God! Is this what you believe?

'I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up.... Knowing that shortly I must put off this tabernacle of mine.... I will endeavour that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance!' Second Peter 1:13-15.

Calvin commented: "The shorter the span of life which remains to us, the more zealous we ought to be in carrying out our responsibility.... Those who are given intimation of the shortness of their life by such indications as advanced age or failing health, ought to spur themselves on more eagerly to carry out in good time what the Lord has laid upon them!....

"Indeed, even those who are in the most robust health and who flourish at the prime of their years..., ought to provoke themselves to the same kind of solicitude -- by remembering the approach of death. So that they do not miss the opportunity of doing good, by giving only negligent and thoughtless attention to their work....

"Peter's purpose was to gain more weight of authority to his teaching, by saying that it would be his concern to make them remember these things after his death -- which was then imminent. When anyone addresses us shortly before his departure from this life, his words have the force of a kind of last will and testament -- and are usually received by us with a greater reverence.

"Soon is the putting off of this tabernacle.' By this phrase and...the word '*decease*' which comes later, he means death.... We can see from this the difference between dying and perishing. The fear of death disturbs us unduly, because we do not give enough thought to the transience and the impermanence of this life. Nor do we set before ourselves the steadfast eternity of the life to come.... Peter...declares that death is the exit from the world, by which we move on elsewhere...to the Lord. It ought not to be a terrifying event for us -- as if when we die, we perished!

"He says that it is the laying down of a covering, in which we have been clothed for a short time. There is no reason why we should take its removal from us badly. There is an implied antithesis between the failing tabernacle, and the eternal dwelling-place....

"He says that it has been revealed to him by Christ. He is referring not to the kind of death, but to the time. If he received the revelation of his approaching death at Babylon (First Peter 5:13) -- how was he crucified in Rome?... For certain..., he died far from Italy!... Papists...make out that they are the 'Babylonians'(!), and that Rome is called 'Babylon' by Peter -- so as to vindicate their claim to Peter's body!

"What he says about keeping these things in remembrance after his death, is with the intent that those who come after -- should learn from him even when dead. For the Apostles did not look to their own age alone, but intended us also to have the benefit.... Although they are dead, their teaching still lives on and flourishes. It is for us to profit by their writing, as though they themselves were present before our very eyes!" Let us then encourage others while we're alive, and after death!

"There were false-prophets..., even as there shall be false-teachers among you, who...bring upon themselves swift destruction.... Their damnation does not slumber.... God did not spare the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell...into chains of darkness." Second Peter 2:1-4.

Calvin commented: "The condition of the Church under the Gospel, will be no different from what it was under the Law. False-prophets upset the old Church; and we must expect the same....

"There were many who...did not think that the Church would be exposed to any more conflicts.... The trial of faith is common both to us and to our fathers.... Like our fathers, we must fight against unholy doctrines.... Because the truth of God will firmly prevail over all the turbulent upsets, by which Satan has so often tried to overthrow everything....

"Peter mentions no particular time, when he says that '*there shall be false-teachers*' -- but rather includes all ages.... We should apply this teaching to our own time...., when...false-teachers rise up to attack the truth of God.... We must beware of false-teachers...who shall privily bring in...the craftiness of Satan and of all wicked men!... He goes on to say that '*swift destruction*' comes upon them -- so that others do not involve themselves with them....

"The ungodly who corrupt the Church by their wicked teachings, cannot escape the vengeance of God.... He did not even spare the angels.... He once obliterated the whole world, at the Flood.... He reduced Sodom and other neighbouring cities, to ashes....

"The punishments he exacted of old from the ungodly and the wicked, He will also exact nowadays from others of their kind.... In forgiving the sins of the elect, He does so -- because he blots them out, by reason of repentance and faith....

"As far as '*angels*' are concerned..., their dignity did not save them from the hand of God. Much less...will mortal men escape who have followed their impiety.... The devils were originally created to obey God.... They fell from grace through their own fault, because they did not submit to God's rule.... They did not hold to their Origin.... (Fallen) angels...(were) thrust...down to the depths..., '*to chains of darkness*'.... They are held bound in darkness, to the last day....

"What punishment the wicked endure after death!.... Also, what is the condition of the *children of God*? They rest peacefully in the sure hope of blessedness -- even though they do not yet enjoy it.... Others endure terrible torture, at the thought of the vengeance in store for them."

In his *Tracts and Treatises* III:264, Calvin adds: "(Second) Peter (2:1) admonishes us that there will be false-teachers in the Church.... Paul declares that Antichrist will sit in the temple of God (Second Thessalonians 2:4).... The Church resides in the successors of the Apostles. Let us search for successors among those only, who have faithfully handed down their doctrine to posterity!" For God thrusts both the demons and the wicked into Hell!

'Beloved, now we are the sons of God; and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.... And every man that has this hope in Him, keeps on purifying himself.' First John 3:2-3.

Calvin commented: "Our present state is far short of the glory of God's children.... We are dust and a shadow, and death is always before our eyes.... Our senses should be withdrawn from the view of present things.... We act wrongly in estimating, by the present state of things, what God has bestowed on us -- when we ought with undoubting faith to hold to what doesn't yet appear....

"*It not yet appears what we shall be'* -- because the fruit of our adoption is as yet hidden. For our felicity is in Heaven, and we are now far away.... This transient life, constantly exposed to a thousand deaths, is far different from that eternal life which belongs to the children of God.... The verb ('appear')...refers to Christ's being manifested.... Our faith can only stand, if it looks to the coming of Christ....

"We shall be like Him, in that He will conform our lowly body to His glorious body -- as also Paul teaches us in Philippians 3:21.... The ultimate aim of our adoption -- is that what has in order come first in Christ, shall at last be completed in us.... Inasmuch as the image of God is renewed in us, we have eyes prepared for the sight of God. And now, indeed, God begins to restore His image in us....

"*'We now see through a looking-glass, obscurely'* (First Corinthians 13:12).... God presents Himself to be seen by us now, not as He is but as our little capacity can grasp. Thus Moses' words are fulfilled that we only see, as it were, His back (Exodus 33:23). For His face is too bright....

"We shall be partakers of the divine glory because, unless our nature were spiritual and endued with a heavenly and blessed immortality, it could never come so near to God.... The diversity of proportion between us and Him will even then be very great. But when the Apostle says that we shall see Him as He is, he refers to a new and ineffable mode of vision which we do not have now....

"As long as we walk by faith, we are absent from Him. And when He granted the fathers to see Him -- He was always seen not in His Own essence but under symbols.... The majesty of God, now hidden, will only then be seen in itself -- when the veil of this mortal and corruptible nature is removed.... Although yet we have not Christ present before our eyes, it cannot but be that if we hope -- it will stir and stimulate us to the pursuit of purity."

Naturally, even in glory, and even after His final coming to dwell with us on the renewed Earth, we shall never see the Son in His divine nature in the way He has always been with the Father and the Spirit.. But only in His incarnate state as the Lamb (Revelation 21:22-23 & 22:3-5). Yet, when Jesus comes again, we shall be like Him. For our resurrected body will be like His resurrected body! That is, if we are believers. Are you?

'The Elder, unto the elect lady and her children.... Grace be with you; mercy; and peace -- from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ (anointed by the Holy Spirit)!.... The children of your elect sister, greet you.' Second John 1-13.

John was a very old man when he wrote these words. The Church's old Elder! Perhaps then the only surviving Elder, after the death of the other Apostles. In fact, then, 'the Elder' -- of the entire Church!

The Elder wrote 'unto the elect lady.' Those believing this describes an individual person, have vied with one another regarding her identity. The phrase is more likely to be a personification of the Church. Some local church, and 'her children' being the church's individual members.

Even more likely, the 'lady' means the Church as a Presbytery, and 'her children' means her individual congregations. And 'the children of your elect sister' means the individual congregations of your fellow Presbytery, where John then 'greet(ed) you' in their fellow Presbytery of the Church.

John found some of the children of 'the elect lady' walking in the truth (verses 4-5). Yet he warns them all that 'many deceivers have entered the world, who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. This is a deceiver, and an antichrist! Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things which we have wrought!' (Verses 7-8).

In his *Institutes* IV:17:32, Calvin remarks: "The immortality of our flesh..., is now quickened by His immortal flesh.... 'Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is not from God'...(Second John verse 7). These men, though they...do not perceive it, rob Him of His flesh!" And would rob also the churches of their flesh -- the risen Christ!

For John warns those churches: 'Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things..., but that we receive a full reward!' (verse 8). The churches must not lose Christ their flesh -- nor their final 'full reward' of the resurrection of their own flesh through the resurrection of His flesh!

So important is this, that Christians are not to receive in their homes nor bid 'God speed !' to anyone denying the incarnation of Christ. For he who bids him 'God speed!' -- is a partaker of his evil deeds.

The aged Elder still had many things to write to the 'elect lady' in that Presbytery of Churches. But he trusted that, in spite of his age, he might soon come to her, and speak face to face -- so that their joy may be full.

Meantime, he assured 'the elect lady and her children' that 'the children of your elect sister' in the next Presbytery where he then was, greeted her (verses 12-13). Such then was the advice to the Church from her old Elder!

Third John 2

May you prosper, and be in health!

'The Elder to the well-beloved Gaius.... Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health -- even as your soul is prospering!' Third John 1-2.

Third John is more vivid than Second John. In the Second, the Church is warned not to extend hospitality to false-teachers who deny the doctrine of the incarnation. In the Third, the Elder commends Gaius for the hospitality he has shown to teachers of the truth.

The writer again announced himself simply by the title 'the Elder.' The recipient is called Gaius. He had a position of responsibility in the Church. Visiting Evangelists had stayed with him. He was highly respected ('the well-beloved'), and particularly so to John (verses 2, 5 and 11).

The words 'in all respects' refer to Gaius's prosperity. Prosperity means success. 'Be in health' is used by the physician Luke (5:31 & 7:10 & 15:27) to mean 'fit and well.' The concern John thus expressed for Gaius's body, was doubtless sincere. John regarded Gaius as his child, and his joy as a parent was connected to the welfare of his children. He rejoiced that his children were continuing to 'walk in truth' (verse 3). And Gaius, like all true Christians, was 'given to hospitality.'

John was anxious lest the vociferous Diotrephes should succeed in persuading Gaius to stop keeping an open house. So John urges Gaius to continue to entertain visiting Evangelists. Diotrephes was quite different to Gaius. For Diotrephes loved himself more than others, and refused to welcome visitors or to let others do so. John says, 'I wrote to the church; but Diotrephes does not receive us.' Diotrephes was not going to be persuaded by John. He claimed his own authority, even to excommunicate church members who were hospitable!

Diotrephes means 'reared by Zeus' -- a name found only among ancient nobles. Was it social prestige which lay behind his behaviour? Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence (verse 9) which only Christ should have (Colossians 1:18). Nor would he acknowledge the Elder. He refused 'himself (to) receive the brethren' -- and he 'cast them out of the church' that would!

The thought of Diotrephes, led John to write about doing evil. The mention of doing good, now reminded him of Demetrius. Demetrius is given a threefold good testimony. First, he had a 'good report of all men.' Second, this is confirmed by 'the truth itself.' Third, John added: 'We too bear record' with a present and continuing testimony, and went on to write 'you know that our record is true' (verse 12). Indeed, he closed his whole Epistle to Gaius and his church: 'Peace be to you!'

The word 'truth' is used seven times here (verses 1,3,3,4,8,12,12). Are you in the truth? Are you like the Elder, Gaius and Demetrius? Or -- God forbid! -- are you instead like Diotrephes?

Let us examine ourselves in the light of God's Word, and see where we really stand! Hopefully, we are like Gaius! If so -- peace be to you; and may you prosper and be in health!

'The angels which...left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.... Sodom and Gomorrha...are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.... Michael the Archangel..., contending with the devil..., disputed about the body of Moses.... These (dem ons) speak evil..., as brute beasts.... They corrupt themselves.' Jude 6-10.

Calvin commented on "'the angels'...(that) God punished their defection in a dreadful manner.... This punishment inflicted on the inhabitants of Heaven...ought surely to be before our eyes constantly.... At no time may we be led to despise God's grace and...rush...into destruction....

"Jude intimates that they suffered punishment.... He says that they had '*left their own habitation*'.... Like military deserters, they left the station in which they had been placed.... They are now held, bound by perpetual chains.... Now, they are sunk in darkness.... Wherever they go, they drag with them their own chains, and remain involved in darkness. Their extreme punishment, is in the meantime deferred until the great day comes.

"*Even as Sodom and Gomorrha*'.... Jude also mentions...that the fire through which the...cities perished, was a type of the eternal fire.... Jude strikes all ages with terror.... He...shows that they were vessels of wrath, appointed to destruction....

"Moses was buried by the Lord.... His grave was concealed, according to the known purpose of God.... What Jude relates as having been said by Michael," is said in Daniel 12:1 of Christ (Whom Calvin in his *Commentary on Daniel* regards as God the Son).

Too, also in his *Institutes* I:14:8,16 & III:25:6, Calvin insists: "Michael is described by David as a mighty Prince (Psalm 34:7). And by Jude (verse 9) as an Archangel" alias the One and Only Archangel and Leader of all the good angels. Cf. Daniel 10:13,21 & 12:1 and First Thessalonians 4:16. Michael is the exalted Archangel who stand as far above Satan as the Heavens are above Hell.

"With regard to the nature of devils...., at their first creation they were the angels of God. But, by revolting, they both ruined themselves and became the instruments of perdition to others.... 'God,' says Jude 6, 'spared not the angels that sinned -- but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment'....

"There can be no doubt that the reprobate have the same doom as that which Jude (verse 6) assigns to the devils. They are 'reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.'"

The chains are everlasting, because unbreakable. Hence, no angelic restoration! May the punishment of the wicked to be a warning to us!

'Jesus Christ...is...the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the Earth. To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His Own blood, and has made us kings and priests to God and His Father -- be glory and dominion for ever and ever!.... Behold, He comes with clouds! And every eye shall see Him; even they who pierced Him!' Revelation 1:5-7.

In his *Institutes* (IV:18:17 & II:15:6), Calvin stated: "Christ is our Mediator, by Whose intervention we offer ourselves and our all to the Father. He is our High Priest, Who -- having entered into the upper sanctuary -- opens up an access for us. He is the Altar, on which we lay our gifts.... He it is...Who 'has made us kings and priests to God and His Father' (Revelation 1:6)....

"We, though in ourselves polluted, in Him being priests (Revelation 1:6), offer ourselves and our all to God and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary -- so that the sacrifices of prayer and praise which we present, are grateful and of sweet odour before Him."

'Christ...is the faithful Witness, and the First-born from the dead.' He is the faithful Witness, the First-begotten from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the Earth!

The passage before us rests on Colossians 1:18 -- 'He is the Head of the body..., the First-born from the dead, so that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.' Christ was the first, in moving out of the state of the dead. He Who, after the lapse of 4000 years, first actually attained to life -- must have been possessed of an invincible divine power, which flows from Him also to those who are His. He was the Conqueror of bodily death, also for His Church. For death to the Church, since His resurrection, is only a passage to life!

Christ's having been 'the First-begotten of the dead' is the basis for His later 'begetting' or birth of many others. For the sons of resurrection will be far more numerous than the sons of death. A Christlike death is much to be desired and sought after, as the means of gaining a Christlike life over which death is powerless. Christ is the Ruler of those He has made eternal kings everywhere! This is the Christocratic political system which befits Christian nations!

'He Who washed us from our sins with His Own blood' cannot leave us to perish! He Who spared not His Own Son, but gave Him for us all -- how shall He not with Him freely give us everything! *'He has made us a kingdom of priests to God.'* The people of God are, in consequence of their priestly dignity, appointed to govern the world. 'The Kingdom and the dominion...under the whole Heaven, is given to the people of the saints of the Most High' (Daniel 7:28).

It is the supremacy of the world, which Christ has acquired for His people. The Lord does not come merely once at the end of the world -- but through all periods of the world's history. The Lord came upon the clouds unto the judgment of Jerusalem (Matthew 26:62-64) -- but the words do not point to a visible appearing. He comes, and keeps on coming -- from henceforth! Christ is King. The King of those He makes kings, by washing them from their sins with His Own blood!

Revelation 1:17f

Christ was dead, but now keeps on living for ever!

'When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me....: "I am He Who lives! I was dead. But behold, I am alive for evermore!"' Revelation 1:17f.

John, forgetting his prophetic office -- penetrated by the feeling of his personal sinfulness -- sinks overwhelmed to the ground. This Elder, this aged Apostle, was overwhelmed by one look from Christ. John, when he saw Christ, fell down at His feet like one who was dead.

But Christ then laid his right hand on John. In former times, the Lord Jesus had healed much sickness, and strengthened much weakness by the laying on of His hand. In the same manner, He imparts here to John a plentiful supply of living energy. And with His words, Jesus restored John to life.

Jesus said to John: 'Fear not! I am the First and the Last!' Fear not, but rather hope! Be confident, and rejoice!

The expression 'I am the First and the Last' is used of Jehovah three times in Isaiah (41:4 & 44:6 & 48:12). And three times also of Christ in Revelation (1:17 & 2:8 & 22:13). Everything is in Revelation attributed to Christ, which belong in the rest of Scripture to God -- in order to exhibit the truth that He is equal to God in power and glory.

'I am He Who lives!' The 'living' is also a peculiarly divine description. Especially, 'He Who lives for evermore.' The 'living' is at the same time the life-giving. Christ's life is the pledge to His Church that she cannot remain in death!

Christ had been dead. That He is the Living and the Life-giving One, is a security for death. His life has all the more gloriously manifested itself by His victory over death in His resurrection. For His Church, it was through His death and His resurrection that He first properly became the Source of life.

Christ has the keys of death and of hell. He opens, and no one shuts. He shuts, and no one opens. By virtue of His absolute power of the keys, He shuts death and Hell for His people, so that they may not go there. He opens them for Satan and his servants, and thrust them down there. Hell is brought into notice, only in respect of unredeemed dead sinners!

Natural death is here to be thought of not simply in itself, since it may even be a great good and a passage into life -- but only insofar as it is the punishment of sin, and is associated with the second death. Christ keeps His Own, by keeping them steadfast amidst the trials and persecutions which Satan and the world bring upon them -- so that they are not tempted above measure! The General-in-chief of the whole Christian Army, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ was dead, but now keeps on living for ever! Is that what you too believe?

"To him who overcomes, I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of God's Paradise!" These things says the First and the Last; Who was dead, but is alive!' Revelation 2:7f.

Now, we dwell in clay-houses. But John was then in the Spirit (1:9). And only through the medium of the Spirit, could Christ after His departure communicate Himself and His admonitions and promises.

A Christian must overcome, as Jesus Christ has overcome. The expression 'I will give him to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of My God' -- we have in First John 2:25's 'This is the promise He has given us, eternal life.'

Here is a participation in eternal life, eternal blessedness, and eternal salvation. That is what is promised. The expression alludes to Genesis 2:9's 'tree of life...in the midst of the garden' and Genesis 3:22's 'tree of life' which when eaten would enable one to 'live for ever.' In the primeval world, the tree of life stood in the midst of Paradise. The fruit was designed to secure to man the possession of eternal life -- if he continued to be faithful to God.

The first thing promised in the seven epistles of Revelation, is the last and highest in the fulfilment. 'On either side of the river, was the tree of life...for the healing of the nations.... Blessed are they that do His Commandments, so that they may have the right to the tree of life!... If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy -- God shall take away his part out of the tree of life!' Revelation 22:2,14,19.

According to chapter 22, the tree of life belongs to the glorified Earth. In 7:17, it is already said of the provisional Heaven of the dead elect -- 'He will lead them to fountains of waters of life.' According to 22:1-2, the tree of life is inseparable from the waters of life. In Paradise, the blessedness is spoken of belonging to the elect -- when actually already enjoyed by them!

'These things says the First and the Last Who was dead, but is alive again!' Christ is the First and the Last. His true people too, at last conquer with Him -- triumph, and reign! He has been dead, and has risen again to life. Therefore His people must not shun to be faithful even to death. Since He had risen from the dead, and because He has done so -- death can only be for them too a transition to life.

Christ was the life, before His death. Therefore death could inflict but a short sting on Him. His power of life was not in the least injured thereby. But when He was put to death after the flesh, the hidden power of the Spirit from the moment of His death broke forth with more freedom -- as if it had reached the Heavens!

The very moment His elect too die, they go straight to Heaven. For Christ, Who was dead but is now alive, gives the tree of life in Paradise to overcomers! Shall you too overcome?

'A door was opened, into Heaven.... The first voice which I heard..., said: "Come up here, and I will show you things which must be hereafter!"... The 24 Elders fell down before Him Who sat on the throne, and worshipped Him Who lives for ever and ever..., saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power! For You have created all things; and for Your pleasure they are, and were created!"' Revelation 4:1,10f.

The aged but undead John was given a view of Heaven. The words point to the misery of our fallen though redeemed and present condition. Since the Messiah's time, the Heaven has been opened (Matthew 3:16 and John 1:52). Power has been given also to some of His servants to glance into Heaven, and learn there the secrets of God.

No one can easily attain to the understanding of these sacred emblems, except such as -- freed from earthly cares and fleshly desires -- have their mind loosened as it were from their body and who give themselves up wholly to heavenly things. What is shut to man, he cannot of himself discover. But where we find anything 'opened' to us, we must there make use of our eyes! When the Word 'Come up here!' was addressed to John -- then, it is right to proceed. May our minds be filled with such holy admiration, that we shall indeed withdraw ourselves from what is earthly -- and shall direct our thoughts Heavenwards!

'I was in the Spirit; and behold a throne lay in Heaven, and One sat on the throne.' Christ sits on the throne of the Father (Revelation 3:21). 'Holy, holy, holy; is the Lord God Almighty; Who was and Who is and Who comes!' For note that to Christians in Heaven, the One on the throne is Three Persons -- the Holy Father; the Holy Son; and the Holy Spirit. The Triune God!

The four beasts turn away somewhat, out of profound reverence, and say: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord!' But when the 24 Elders fall down -- twelve representing the Old Testament Patriarchs, and twelve representing the New Testament Apostles -- they exclaim: 'You are worthy, O Lord!'

In this last book of the Bible itself, the creation appears as a pledge for the completion of the Kingdom of God (Revelation 4:11 & 10:6 & 14:7). The Elders fall down; they worship; they cast down their crowns. And they say: 'You have created; it is created; and it stays created!'

'24 Elders fell down before Him Who sat on the throne, and worshipped Him Who lives for ever and ever!' In the Elders' song of praise, power might be put instead of thanks. The Elders satisfy themselves with a simple ascription of praise. It is not said the Elders lay aside their crowns, but that they cast them down before the Lord.

If the beings who dwell so near to God around His throne act so reverentially toward Him -- how much more does it behove us to conduct ourselves so! We who dwell in cottages of clay! We who even now need to keep on worshipping Him Who keeps on living for ever and ever! Do you?

'The 24 Elders fell down before the Lamb...and sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the book and to open its seals! For you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; and have made them kings and priests for our God; and we shall reign on the Earth!"' Revelation 5:9f.

In his *Institutes* III:5:8, Calvin remarks: "Every creature which is in Heaven and on the Earth and under the Earth and such as are in the sea, I heard saying: "Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him Who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever!" Revelation 5:13.

"This, I readily admit. But what kinds of creatures...are here enumerated? It is absolutely certain, that both irrational and inanimate creatures are comprehended! All, then, which is affirmed -- is that every part of the Universe, from the highest pinnacle of Heaven to the very centre of the Earth, each in its own way proclaims the glory of the Creator!"

The Elders sing a new song. The subject is the opening of the Book which has been bestowed on the Church for the revival of her hope and confidence. The Elders say to Christ: 'You are worthy to open the Book..., because You were slain and have redeemed us.' The hand of God directs the world according to the decisions written in the written Word in this Book, the Holy Bible!

The reading 'them' for 'us' in Revelation 5:10, corresponds to the 'we shall reign' in the rest of that verse. The 'kindred' and 'tongue' and 'people' -- point to the tables in Genesis ten. This shows that the spiritual territory is co-extensive with the natural one. In Revelation 5:10, the Elders do not say: 'You have made us and we shall reign' -- but: 'You have made them (the redeemed), a kingdom and priests!'

Kings, even now! But kings still more gloriously in the future, when the meek shall inherit the Earth. They shall reign! They shall reign over the Earth or on the Earth. The Earth is the sphere of their government and domain.

The matter at hand, concern the Church on Earth. But everything in Heaven and Earth is summoned to praise Him. It begins in Heaven with the angels -- and through the intermediate regions of the stars, passes to the clouds. The lifeless there, praise God by their simple existence -- as in Psalm 19:1-6 & 103:21 the proclamation of God's glory is attributed to the stars.

Even those 'under the Earth' -- the devil and the lost -- must praise Christ for their existence. There are many creatures on the Earth -- and many in the sea. All are summoned together to praise the Lord -- even such as are in Hell! For the souls of those who die in ignorance and lack of faith in God and His Christ, dwell under the Earth and in Hell together with Satan and his demons! They too shall praise God for ever -- and also remain in Hell for ever!

But Christ has redeemed us believers to God -- and we shall reign on Earth! You too?

'I saw...the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God.... They cried out with a loud voice, saying: "How long, O Lord...do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the Earth?".... White robes were given to every one of them. And it was said to them that they should still rest for a little while, until their fellow-servants and their brethren too should be killed as they were.'" Revelation 6:9-11.

Calvin remarks in his *Tracts and Treatises* III:445f that after death, "the souls of the dead keep on crying out aloud." So they are not subconsciously asleep, but wide awake!

"White robes are given to them.... White robes are not at all adapted for sleep -- and therefore, when thus clothed, they must be awake.... These white robes undoubtedly designate the commencement of glory -- which the Divine Liberality bestows upon martyrs, while waiting for the Day of Judgment!"

The final judgment was not yet come. 'The end is not yet' (Matthew 24:6). The souls of the martyrs under the altar in Revelation 6:9-10, are the souls in the intermediate state after death and before the final judgment.

John sees the souls of the dead martyrs under the altar. On it, a bloody sacrifice was presented. Under it, the blood could be found -- and the souls of those that had been slain.

Christ is the Altar! Under His protection, the souls of the dead martyrs are preserved free from all perils and evils, till the Day of Judgment. In Revelation 7:9, the departed righteous stand before the throne and before the Lamb, again clothed with white garments.

It was very natural to consider those who had yielded up their life for the cause of God and Christ, as having been sacrificed on the Altar. The blood of the slain victims were offered on the Altar. So it was natural to assign the murdered martyrs a place under the Altar Jesus Christ.

Peter was crucified, and Paul was put to death by the sword. The Roman persecution is kept in view, of those who were slain under Nero and onwards. The thought that God avenges the blood of His people on their persecutors, is entirely Scriptural and thoroughly in accordance with the mind of the Saviour (Matthew 7:1-2 & 23:35-36).

A white garment is the clothing of the blessed. They go from this life, immediately into glory. They must be satisfied with that heavenly glory, till the time comes when the Kingdom of glory would be established for ever on the renewed Earth. The white garments denote the heavenly glory conferred on them. A white garment is the glory of pious souls in expectation of the resurrection. They must still continue to enjoy their rest, till they later get their resurrected body back -- to which both their white clothes and their resting point forward., when the Lord shall have finished avenging their blood!

'One of the Elders...answered me: "These arrayed in white robes....are they who came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white.... They are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night.... The Lamb Who is in the middle of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God shall wipe away all their tears!"' Revelation 7:14-17.

John heard the number of the sealed only from every tribe of Israel. However, he beheld too the Christians of Gentile origin before the throne -- apparelled in white. Their number was so great, that nobody was able to count them.

In his *Institutes* III:5:2 & III:9:5, Calvin remarks of dead believers in Heaven that "John says all the saints 'have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (Revelation 7:14).... They will turn their eye to that day...(Revelation 7:17) on which the Lord will receive His faithful servants; wipe away all tears from their eyes; clothe them in a robe of glory and joy; feed them with the ineffable sweetness of His pleasures; exalt them to share with Him in His greatness -- in fine, admit them to a participation in His happiness" especially on the renewed Earth thereafter.

On the 'white robes' as the symbol of glory, see Revelation 6:11. Believers, when made perfect, shall be 'like the angels in Heaven' (Matthew 22:3). The 'palms' of the elect are palms of victory. The elect are in the heavenly Zion, with Christ (Revelation 14:1). Their period of rest began when they rested from their labours, and their works followed them (Revelation 14:13).

One of the Elders said to John: 'Who are these, clothed with white robes?... These are they who come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them bright in the blood of the Lamb.... They are before the throne of God.... They shall hunger and thirst no more!.... For the Lamb...shall feed and lead them!' As Jesus said, He would arrange for His disciples to eat and drink with Him in His Kingdom (Luke 22:29-30).

'Great tribulation' indicates the troubles of human life since the fall of Adam -- hunger; thirst; tears. To this tribulation all men, not excepting the elect, have been subjected. Yet the worst period of oppression began with the first persecution by Nero in 64 A.D., which lasted till the reign of Constantine in 312. But even in that time, new martyrs were continually ascending to Heaven and -- after donning white robes -- were being brought before God's throne.

Filthy garments were a symbol of the state in which anyone is in, in this world. But those John saw, had been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. The 'white' or 'bright' is the colour of clear glory. Now they are clothed; now they do not hunger; now they do not thirst. In Heaven. They have now finished journeying through the world -- and have completed that journey.

Christ shall in Heaven lead His elect to 'living fountains.' This indicates that spiritual fountains are meant. And thus they move forward, from great tribulation -- unto future glory!

'There were great voices in Heaven, saying: "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. And He shall keep on reigning!"' Revelation 11:15f.

The great voices in Heaven proceed from the great multitude which no man could number, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands -- the saints made perfect. They are called to reign with their Lord, and His Anointed One. His entrance on His government, is also theirs.

'The great voice' in Heaven celebrates the completed redemption of Christ, and His right to rule over the world. The saints who here triumph, give thanks. The whole host of the saints made perfect, step forth -- and celebrate in a short speech the victory of their Lord and His Anointed One.

The government is now possessed by our Lord, and His Anointed One. It suits excellently what follows -- He shall reign for ever and ever! He has now come to the government, and shall continue to exercise it for ever.

The time of the world's supremacy, of the oppression of the Church, has at length come to a final end. The Kingdom has become! But since the angel has already sounded, the consequence is anticipated. Such a rejoicing is in prospect of the immediately approaching victory.

The kingdoms of this world become the Lord's and His Christ's, for ever. In Heaven, this takes place immediately. It concerns the dominion of Christ over the Earth. Everything, and consequently also the kingdom of the world, is God's -- at all times. Jesus' Kingdom is not worldly, but the kingdoms of the world become holy and Christian!

The future dominion of the Lord over the world, rests on the solid foundation that He is still Lord -- in the midst of the world's revolt. Obadiah 21 predicts: 'The kingdom shall be the Lord's!' Zechariah 14:9 predicts: 'The Lord will be King over the whole Earth!'

The world-supremacy of Christ is announced in Daniel 7:13-14 -- 'Behold, there came One with the clouds of Heaven like the Son of man, and came to the Ancient of days. And there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom. And all peoples, nations and tongues serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which does not pass away. And His Kingdom has no end!'

The glory of the Lord, passes over also upon His servants! It is a mournful retrogression to have states emancipated from the dominion of Christ. Those who contend for a Christian State in opposition to wanton despisers, have here a rich consolation -- and may laugh at the world when it deems their cause to be lost. Here the twenty-four Elders celebrate the judgment as executed -- the final victory over the world!

A further cause for the joy in Heaven, is that after this last plague -- all those shall be destroyed which destroy the Earth! For Christ is to reign for ever and ever, over this world!

'The woman...brought forth a male child Who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her child was caught up unto God and to His throne.... Michael and His angels fought against the dragon. And the dragon fought..., but did not prevail.... He was cast out, into the Earth.... But they overcame him, by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word.... They did not love their lives unto death!' Revelation 12:4-11.

Herod, the servant of the dragon -- as soon as he heard of the birth of Jesus -- took measures to have the newborn child. despatched. For he killed all the children in Bethlehem under two years old, so that he might make sure of destroying the one hated Saviour Child. Matthew 2:1-16.

However, His mother 'brought forth a Son -- a male -- who was to tend all the nations with a rod of iron.' That tending or bruising of all nations, would be done by that manly Son, Christ. The words 'Who was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron' carry a threat to the Heathen. For in Psalm 2:9, the Lord said to His Anointed Christ: 'You will bruise them into pieces with a rod of iron!'

Even at His birth, Satan planned to devour that male child. But He 'was caught up to God, and to His throne.' This denotes the ascension of Christ (*cf.* Revelation 11:12), resting on Daniel 7:13f where the Son of man comes on the clouds of Heaven to the Ancient of days on the heavenly throne of God. And to Him the Son, a Kingdom and dominion and glory was then given -- so that all peoples, nations and tongues shall serve Him.

Then there was war! *'Michael and His angels fought against the dragon. And the dragon fought..., but did not prevail.... He was cast out!'* Michael is Christ -- the Word Who in the beginning was with God, and Who was and is God (John 1:1). The name 'Michael' (or "Who is like the Triune God?") itself, shows He must not be sought in the finite (Exodus 15:11 and Psalm 89:6). Michael is Christ the Lord of hosts. There, is given the sure pledge of victory. He is supreme over the world. (Daniel 10:5f & 12:1 and Malachi 2:7 & 3:1 and Revelation 1:13-15 & 10:1-3 & 12:7).

Michael opposed Satan in history. In Zechariah 3:1f, the battle is between Satan and the Angel of the Lord Who is Michael. The Latter takes the offensive. As soon as God the Son has become Christ, the battle with Satan begins. The result follows, after the ascension of Christ. 'Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And...if I be lifted up from the Earth, I will draw all to Me!' (John 12:31-32). The complete triumph over Satan is mentioned only after the completion of Christ's work of redemption. Satan's power is broken. The prince of this world has been cast out (Luke 11:21f & John 12:31).

'The accuser...is cast out.... They have overcome him, by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word.... They did not love their lives unto death' (Revelation 12:1-11).

The Church Triumphant rejoices over the salvation obtained by the Church Militant! Having overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by defying death!

'I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying to me: "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!'... 'Yes,' said the Spirit, 'so that they may rest from their labours! And their works follow them!'" Revelation 14:13.

Calvin remarks in his *Institutes* III:5:10: "Death is not destruction, but a passage from this life to another.... Solid comfort is furnished by Scripture, when it declares: 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!' And it adds...: 'For they rest from their labours!' (Revelation 14:13)."

Calvin then adds in his *Tracts and Treatises* III:433: "John has taught...clearly...: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; yes, says the Scripture, so that they may rest from their labours!' (...Revelation...14:13)."

The patience of the saints rests in the eternal blessedness of the faithful. Who, that has his eye fixed on it, would not willingly surrender his poor life on Earth? Who can hang in doubt, when the alternative is placed before him -- between having no rest day or night from the torments of Hell, and a repose from his toils in Heaven?

The 'Voice from Heaven' speaks of those who die in the Lord. That 'Voice' testifies what the true members of the Church Militant here on Earth, have to expect in Heaven.

What then is it, that John was to write? What is of the greatest moment for us poor fallen creatures to know, in life and death! So then, may the Spirit of Jesus Christ Himself write these words which are so true and certain, with His finger on all our hearts and engrave them on our minds -- so that they may no more be overlooked or forgotten!

The blessedness spoken of, does not refer to the great distress of the world which the persons in question have escaped. But to the felicity of Heaven, where they are declared to be blessed on account of their resting from their labours. The blessedness belong to the state after death. To die in the Lord, means to depart in the faith of Jesus Christ.

The dead who died in the Lord, are blessed 'from henceforth.' This means 'even now' -- from the very moment of their departure to Heaven -- and not merely in the New Jerusalem yet to be set up on the Renewed Earth. It begins immediately at death, when life here on Earth has ceased. If the Christian now must die for the faith, he attains 'from henceforth' to an everlasting life.

It is not said their works follow after them only at a subsequent time, but that they follow 'with them' (*cf.* Luke 9:49). By this, the accompanying and immediate consequence is denoted. The expression that their works do follow 'with them' in Revelation 14:13, corresponds to the previous statement 'from henceforth' -- meaning right after their death!

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord -- from henceforth! Do you so believe?

'I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus.... They lived, and reigned with Christ a 1000 years.... But the rest of the dead lived not, until the 1000 years were finished.... I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God.... A book was opened, which is the book of life.... The dead were judged..., every man according to their works. Then death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.... Whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire!' Revelation 20:4-15.

In Calvin's *Tracts and Treatises* III:446, Calvin remarks: "John has described a twofold resurrection, as well as a twofold death. Namely, one of the soul before judgment; and another when the body will be raised up and when the soul (of the righteous) will also be raised up to glory. 'Blessed,' says he, 'are those who have part in the first resurrection. On them, the second death takes no effect!' (Revelation 20:6)."

In his *Institutes* III:25:5 & III:2:41, Calvin adds that in Revelation 20:4..., the 1000 years there mentioned refer not to the eternal blessedness of the Church -- but only to the various troubles which await the Church Militant in this world.... There will be no end -- either to the happiness of the elect, or the punishment of the reprobate." Not "until the last day, will the books be opened...(Revelation 20:12)."

The godless are declared to be destitute of the glorious privileges enjoyed by believers. Believers live during the 1000 years, at the end of which they go into perfect bliss.

The ungodly do not live during the 1000 years. They are in Hell and in torment! And at the end of the 1000 years, they pass out of their provisional state of misery into the final one, and shall be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:5 & 20:12-15).

Revelation points also to the double stage of blessedness. The one awaiting believers immediately after their departure out of this present life. The other, as to what they are to receive when they enter the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1 to 22:5).

In Revelation 20:12-14, the 'dead' can only be the ungodly. In contrast to the book of life of the godly in 20:15 & 21:27 & 22:19. Death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire at the second death (21:14). And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire (21:15).

Satan dies two deaths. His first, is his millennial imprisonment. His second, is his everlasting imprisonment in the lake of fire. John very clearly discriminates between the first resurrection of the saints and the second universal resurrection of all the dead. Such, then, is the resurrection of the dead at the final judgment -- of the ungodly, unto the lake of fire; and of the godly, unto life everlasting. O, may we be found in the Lamb's book of life!

'I saw a renewed Heaven and a renewed Earth, for the first Heaven and Earth had passed away. I, John, saw the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of Heaven.... I heard a great Voice out of Heaven, saying: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples!.... There shall be no more death!"' Revelation 21:1-4.

Everything is now prepared for the entrance of the last phase of the Kingdom of God -- for the foundation of the New Earth, in which righteousness dwells. A Church which has such hope, can never faint under tribulations!

Not just regenerated or elect men are then renewed. For regeneration ultimately involves the renewing of the whole world (Matthew 19:28). Then, also the Earth shall be renewed, so that the works of the elect can then easily be found there (Second Peter 3:10-13). Only the desolations of the Earth then vanish. The kernel, remains. For the Earth and nature itself will not be annihilated, but purified and set free from its dross.

'I, John, saw the holy city New Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven.' The 'holy city' is the Church of the future world of the renewed or New Earth. The 'Jerusalem above' comes down to the Jerusalem below, altogether purifying it. The New Jerusalem never once denotes the Church Militant and much less the lifeless corpse of the old Jerusalem -- but it renews and re-enlivens it!

The New Jerusalem now still in Heaven, is the glorified old Jerusalem previously here on Earth. It is the New Jerusalem, only insofar as it comes in place of the old.

All is not new in Heaven! The coming down from Heaven, here corresponds to the previous ascending up to Heaven (Revelation 11:12 & 20:5).

The New Jerusalem, is the Last Jerusalem. According to Revelation 22:5, there believers 'shall reign for ever and ever.' There can be no doubt, that this form of the Church is the last. The glory of the description, excludes all further advance.

'They shall be His peoples' (Revelation 22:3). There is nothing absolutely new that is promised here, for the very 'peoples' or 'nations' get saved (Revelation 21:24-26). If they had no foundation in the past, they could have no reality in the future! But there, they dwell for ever!

Believers now dwell with God, though still in the Church Militant. He who has the fullness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Him -- promised to be with them always, to the end of the world.

And 'there shall be no more death' (Revelation 21:4). Human death came into the world through sin (Genesis 2:17). It must again cease, through the complete victory over sin (First Corinthians 15:54). Where the destruction of death precedes, the ceasing of death follows (Isaiah 25:8). For then, death shall have wholly ceased. Death shall be no more!

'The city had no need of the sun.... The Lamb is its Light.... The nations of them which are saved, shall walk in its Light.... There shall no way enter into it anything that defiles nor whatever works abomination or makes a lie. But (only) they who are written in the Lamb's book of life.'
Revelation 21:23-27.

In his *Institutes* IV:16:17, Calvin remarks that even "infants who are to be saved -- and that some are saved at this age is certain (Second Samuel 12:23 and First Corinthians 7:14)! -- must without question previously be regenerated by the Lord.... They must be purified, before they can be admitted into the Kingdom of God into which nothing shall enter that defiles (Revelation 21:27)."

This is also suggested in the previous verses Revelation 21:24-26. For 'the nations' too include infants (Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38-39 & 10:2 & 11:14 & 16:31).

All who are not written in the Lamb's book of life, remain addicted to their sins. While such as have been atoned for by the blood of the Lamb and have accordingly been written in His book of life, are free from them.

The elect alone shall be preserved. The book of life is defined as belonging to the Lamb that was slain. The ground of our salvation is not our good deeds, but Christ's and His sacrifice for us -- the atonement made by His blood (Revelation 12:11). Whatever name was not written by Him in the book of life from all eternity past -- that name shall never be found there!

Since the book of life is unreservedly ascribed to the Lamb that was slain, all salvation is thus represented as depending on the one sacrifice of Christ. Those who have been reconciled through the blood of this Lamb and have their names written in His book of life, overcome Satan.

Especially as regards the salvation of infants -- election precedes their existence. For their election was from before the foundation of the world, whereas their existence must necessarily be subsequent thereto.

And not just elect infants, but also the rest of the elect nations as well. The New Earth will be full of inhabitants!

Many nations will dwell in it, ruled by God-fearing men who submit to God's will as they bring glory and honour into His holy city. All the inhabitants of the Earth who are written in the Lamb's book of life will enjoy the privilege of access into the city to worship God. He Who has so wisely assembled the various members, will also marshal the nations of the saved in His Own city -- so that all may partake of its life and blessedness.

Thus even the Heathen, sanctified by Christ, shall be brought into the New Jerusalem! But is your name in the Lamb's book of life? Is it?

'A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeded out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.... On either side of the river, there was the tree of life..., and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.... His name (that of the Triune God) shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle nor sunlight. For the Lord God gives them light, and they shall keep on reigning for ever and ever!' Revelation 22:1-5.

There are not two lives, but only one life -- which begins the moment we attain to faith in Christ, and continues throughout all eternity. Even though this present life is still interwoven with manifold troubles and interruptions. In the future state of being alone, will the germ of present life fully develop itself. The pure river of water proceeds from the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

The river of life here pours itself forth only for those who have died to themselves in the Lord, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The river goes forth from the throne of God and the Lamb. Christ is called the Lamb, because through His labours and blood He has won for believers the crown of all His gifts.

Life or salvation is here portrayed as the fruit of a tree. The tree should be called the tree of life, because the participation of its fruit imports life (Genesis 3:22).

The tree yielding new fruits every month, indicates that in the New Jerusalem the enjoyment of life shall be without interruption. Otherwise than in the present world, where death is constantly breaking in anew -- with violence against life.

The power of life which descends from the New Jerusalem onto this Earth for healing people, is a foretaste of the surpassing blessedness which may be expected in the New Jerusalem by the just made perfect. Indeed, those of the elect who die in infancy -- or those nations saved at a low level of their development -- will in the New Jerusalem constantly be 'healed' or advanced.

In the New Jerusalem, the name of God and the Lamb shall be on the foreheads of the elect. That is the new name (Revelation 2:17). It is the name of the Triune God (3:12). It had been sealed onto their foreheads (7:3). It includes the name of the Father of the Lamb, which was written on their foreheads by the Spirit when they were baptized (14:1). And now, on the New Earth, that baptismal name of the Triune God stands for ever on the foreheads of the elect (22:4).

There shall be no night there. The alternation of night and day in the life of the Church shall have ceased in the New Jerusalem. Here and now, the meek shall possess the Earth. There, on the New Earth, nothing more withstands the full establishment of its dominion.

Whoever has set his face steadfastly to go toward the New Jerusalem, shall abide in it for ever. And shall never err from the way of life. That is the healing of the nations, and that is the reigning with God for ever!

'Blessed are they that do His Commandments, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city!' Revelation 22:14.

When Adam broke God's commands (Hosea 6:7), the way to the tree of life was barred. But they who do the Commandments, shall have power over the tree of life. Now, it is only through the gates of the New Jerusalem that entrance can be found back to the tree of life (*cf.* Genesis 3:24).

'They who do His Commandments' means those who by His grace have broken with sin and who live a life of obedience and dedication to the Lord. They are privileged to be able to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and they are admitted to the everlasting blessedness of the city of God.

This is the seventh and last beatitude of the Bible. There can be no real happiness, apart from doing God's Commandments. This beatitude is not so much an encouragement or inducement to men to enter and to continue in the path of obedience, as a description of the actual state of the redeemed throughout eternity -- whose delight will ever be in doing His Commandments.

Only those who have heard the Word of Christ and His Apostles and have followed it, have the right to enter into the city of God -- or to enjoy the privilege of eating the fruit of the tree of life. The tree of life is the living Word of God. That is the Bread of God Who came down from Heaven, and gave His life to and for the world.

The glory of the gates described in Revelation 21:21, here again comes into view. Indeed, there are not two or more gates into the New Jerusalem -- but really, only one Gate or Door! As Jesus insisted: "He who does not enter by the Door..., is a thief and a robber.... I am the Door of the sheep.... I am the Door -- by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved!" John 10:1,7,9.

Outside the Door, however, are all those who keep on breaking the Commandments of God! The dogs (or sodomites); and sorcerers; and whoremongers; and murderers; and idolaters; and all who love and do a lie.

In Revelation 21:8, the fearful and unbelieving; the abominable and murderers; the whoremongers and sorcerers; the idolaters and all liars -- will stay forever in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. In Revelation 21:21, nothing that defiles or works an abomination or makes a lie -- shall enter God's city.

Whoremongers are associated with murderers. And liars continue in the tradition of Satan the father of lies -- who told the first lies mentioned in Holy Scripture (John 8:44 and Genesis 3:1-4).

All the dogs are shut out of the city. All the infidels. All the sorcerers or adulterators of divine doctrine. All the whoremongers and murderers and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie! For only Commandment-keepers have the right to the tree of life! Do you?

'I, Jesus, have sent...to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root.... The Spirit (and the Father) say: "Come!".... He Who testifies these things, says: "Surely, I come quickly!" Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

Behind Revelation's 101-year-old Apostle John, the poor writer, stands One greater than he -- Whose shoes he was not worthy to loosen! Christ the Root -- in Him only is the Church saved!

Jesus is also called the bright Morning-Star, on account of His glorious dominion. And the joyful echo of the Spirit of the Father responds to the Word of Christ -- "Come!"

Then God the Son thunders forth: 'I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this Book -- if any man shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this Book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the tree of life, and out of the holy city!'

The tree of life and the holy city are mentioned and stand as the sum of the blessedness written at the beginning and at the close of the Book (Revelation 2:7 & 3:12 & 21:2 & 22:2). The words 'the things which are written in this Book' -- refer to the tree of life and the holy city.

He, namely Christ, Who testifies these things, says: 'Yes, I am coming quickly!' And the words 'Amen, come Lord Jesus!' -- are spoken by the aged Apostle John through Christ's Spirit.

Throughout this book of ours, we have often referred to that other John -- John Calvin. He suffered much. His father and his brother had both been excommunicated. He himself had been hunted down like a wild animal, until he finally fled his beloved France for ever.

His health was poor, throughout his life. A chronic insomniac, he averaged but two hours sleep per night. He ate little, and had severe indigestion. He often suffered from the most violent attacks of migraine. He contracted catarrh, asthma, haemorrhoids, calculus, intermittent fevers, and arthritis of an almost unbearably painful nature. His constitutionally-weak chest endured many severe colds in the raw Swiss climate -- until he finally succumbed to tuberculosis. Yet he laboured on incessantly, against all odds -- until, in 1564, at only 55 years of age, he finally went to receive his heavenly reward.

He too prayed: 'Amen, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!' And Jesus indeed came for his soul, when he was only 55. And Jesus will yet come again -- not soon, but quickly when He does -- at the end of the world, to welcome all believers onto His New Earth! Amen, and amen!

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all! Amen, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus! For you too!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR ----->

Dr. Francis Nigel Lee was born in 1934 in Cumbria (Great Britain). He is the great-grandson of a fiery preacher whose family disintegrated when he was knocked down and then backslid. Though Dr. Lee's father was an Atheist, he married a Roman Catholic who raised their son Nigel in that faith.

For the Second World War, Dr. Lee's father was appointed as Chief Radar Officer (South Atlantic). So the family then moved to South Africa. There, Dr. Lee became a Calvinist; had the great joy of leading both of his parents to Christ, as well as his father's murderer and his parents, and became Minister of God's Word and Sacraments in the Dutch Reformed Church of Natal.

Emigrating to the U.S.A., he attended the very first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America; transferred his previous ministerial credentials to that denomination, and pastored congregations in Mississippi and Florida. He was also: Professor of Philosophy at Shelton College in New Jersey; Research Scholar-in-Residence at the Christian Studies Center in Memphis; and Academic Dean of Graham Bible College in Bristol Tennessee. He was then the only person in the world serving on the Executives of both the British Lord's Day Observance Society (headquartered in London) and the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States (headquartered in Atlanta).

Preacher, theologian, lawyer, educationist, historian, philosopher and author, Lee has produced more than 191 publications (including many books) and also more than 536 long unpublished manuscripts. In addition to an honorary LL.D., he has twenty earned degrees -- including some eleven earned doctorates* (and one honorary doctorate) awarded for dissertations in education, law, literature, philosophy and theology.

Dr. Lee rises early; reads God's Word in eleven languages; then walks a couple of miles before breakfast. He has been round the world some seven times; has visited about one hundred countries (several repeatedly); and has also visited every inhabited Continent. He is in demand as a promoter of doctoral students in Australia, Britain, Germany, South Africa, and the United States.

A diehard predestinarian and unreconstructed Southerner, Dr. Lee is affectionately nicknamed "General Lee" by his closest friends. In Australia, he was till his retirement in 2000 the Professor of Systematic Theology and Caldwell-Morrow Lecturer in Church History at the Queensland Presbyterian Theological College.

His wife Nellie is in Fulltime Christian Service as a godly Homemaker. Their elder daughter Johanna teaches English, German and Modern History in Brisbane, at Parkridge High School. Their younger daughter Annamarie was Secretary/Librarian at the Queensland Presbyterian Theological Hall, Brisbane, Australia -- and taught for many years at Earnshaw College in Brisbane.

* S.T.D.: *Rebaptism Impossible!*

- | | |
|--|--|
| Th.D.: <i>The Covenantal Sabbath</i> | D.R.E.: <i>Baby Belief Before Baptism!</i> |
| D. Phil: <i>Communist Eschatology</i> | D.Jur.: <i>Women Ministers & Australian Litigation</i> |
| D.Litt.: <i>Holinshed on the Ancient British Isles</i> | Ph.D.: <i>Miracles. What and When and Why</i> |
| D.C.L.: <i>The Roots and Fruits of the Common Law</i> | D.Min.: <i>Daily Family Worship</i> |
| D.Hum.: <i>Tiny Human Life -- Abortion and IVF</i> | D.Ed.: <i>Catechism Before Communion!</i> |