



## JOHN CALVIN

He was in his early twenties at the University of Orleans in Northern France. In anyone's eyes, he must have seemed no different from his fellow-students. There was no real outward difference, but the eye of divine grace was on John Calvin.

The truths of God's Word began to have an unexpected impact on Calvin's soul. He was a determined Roman Catholic, 'obstinately devoted to the superstitions of the Papacy'. He said it was like having to be pulled out of very, very deep and horrible pit. God alone could draw him out, set his feet upon a rock. Calvin had been brought up in a very superstitious home. His mother took him on pilgrimages from an early age. They went to various shrines to see

supposed relics of saints, which might be bones or other body-parts. According to his parents' wishes, he started to study for the Roman Catholic priesthood at the age of 11 or 12.

After five years, his father changed his mind and sent him to Orleans. He would make more money if he became a lawyer. Though his father had changed his course of study, Calvin tells us of another change. God's providence 'gave a different direction to my course'. Calvin first came into contact with the gospel of free grace here. He also began to study the New Testament in the original Greek language. This 'taste and knowledge of true godliness' inflamed him with desire for the truth.



He now gave over his life to the One who had claimed it. At the end of his life he could say: 'It is enough that I live and die for Christ, who is to all His followers a gain both in life and in death'. It was a dangerous time to be a Protestant, and Calvin had to run away from Paris to avoid arrest. He had to go to other countries and eventually settled in Switzerland.

Calvin came after Martin Luther and God used him to teach the Bible. John Calvin was greatly used by God as a preacher and writer during the time of the Reformation. In 1536 (when he was just 27 years old) he published the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This is a large, famous book that explains the teachings of Scripture. He was so influential in fact that someone has said that if you did not know about Calvin, you were reading modern history with one eye shut.

Calvin had a motto that stirred him in his zeal towards God: 'I offer my heart to Thee O Lord, promptly and sincerely.' He had a picture engraved of a hand presenting a heart and these words around the outside. This became his seal. In those days letters were sealed with wax. While the wax was still

warm a seal would be pressed on it. The seal would leave a picture of a coat of arms on the wax. The person who received the letter would know who it was from.

The motto sums up Calvin's life and influence. The great thing for Calvin was to apply 'the whole force of his ability in the service of the Lord'. Calvin found the highest blessing in this. We are to 'be wise in nothing and to will nothing through ourselves but to follow the leading of the Lord alone.'

Calvin's motto has a lot to teach us today. It reminds us that God requires the heart from every one of us. The LORD says, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me' (Exodus 20:3). This is another way of saying to us, 'My son, give me thine heart' (Proverbs 23:26).

There are people who want to be known as Christians and speak a lot about it, but they do not live as Christians should. Calvin said something truly important. The gospel is 'received only when it possesses the whole soul...[and dwells] in the inmost affection of the heart.' We must give all the heart to God and love Him with all our heart. We cannot give a half heart to Him. Some want to give their thoughts and affections to the world and honour God too. But this comes short of giving our hearts to God. The promise is that 'ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart' (Jeremiah 29:13). Not a little bit of our heart, but all of it.

God is so great and majestic in all His being that we must worship and serve Him. We must worship God 'with grateful devotion and burning love, giving ourselves completely to His obedience and honouring Him in all things'. Our need is to seek Christ with all that we are and cast ourselves in total dependence upon Him. Calvin's motto reminds us to give our heart earnestly, willingly, and honestly to God.

JOHN CALVIN

# WORD SEARCH



CAN YOU FIND ALL THE HIDDEN WORDS  
IN THIS WORD SEARCH?

Words can go in the following directions: → ← ↓ ↑

G R E E K I D V I Y I E K I V  
Q X J S E N I R H S N R I Q S  
Q H E P T S S O U S S U H Y L  
M P C Z Y U H Q I N T T E Z U  
Y T M S T O V H K A I P A F T  
P N G W I I V N P E T I R D H  
E A H I S T U L L L U R T J E  
F T E T R I X A C R T C K Q R  
F S O Z E T K X W O E S T X V  
F E T E V S S L A E S C Q W X  
S T T R I R E L I C S W S A F  
M O O L N E W E L B I B J X T  
Q R M A U P V F A R E Y W A L  
B P K N Y U B N P A P A C Y J  
R S T D P S O M M J S E M J B

GREEK  
ORLEANS  
WAX  
SWITZERLAND  
MOTTO

LUTHER  
BIBLE  
SCRIPTURE  
RELICS  
SHRINES

HEART  
SEAL  
LAWYER  
INSTITUTES

SUPERSTITIOUS  
PROTESTANT  
UNIVERSITY  
PAPACY