

Please note, direct quotations (in italics) and page and line references are from *Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin. Edited by John T McNeill. Used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press. www.wjkbooks.com

PREPARATION

1. In order to fully understand the contrast Calvin is making in section 1, it is necessary to familiarise yourself with the definition of, *sylogisms*.
- 2.

EXPLORATORY

1. To which passage of scripture does Calvin refer in this section to show that faith manifests itself in a life of prayer (851, 1)
 - a. Romans 10:14-17.
 Why is this? (850, 2,15)
 - a. *...man...lacks.*
 - b. Faith instructs us to, *recognise that whatever we need and whatever we lack is in God.*

What follows is more of a point for reflection but I feel it is too important to defer to that section. In lines 11f, Calvin describes the facts that motivate us to prayer as, *that secret and hidden philosophy which cannot be wrested from syllogisms*. This underlines the fact that we will only pray in the sense that God recognises prayer, if we genuinely know Christ. Simply acknowledging the logic that ought to drive us to prayer will not bring the life of prayer about.

2. With what striking picture does Calvin show the relationship between prayer and our obtaining the things God promises to us in the gospel? (851, 18)
 - a. *...we dig up by prayer the treasures that were pointed out in the Lord's gospel.*
 What benefits of prayer are listed in the second paragraph of section 2? (851, 21ff)
 - a. *...the only stronghold of safety is in calling upon his name;*
 - b. *...we invoke the presence of his providence...*
 - c. *...and of his power...*
 - d. *...and of his goodness*
 - e. *...in short, it is by prayer that we call him reveal himself as wholly present to us.*
 - f. *Here comes an extraordinary peace and repose to our consciences...we even rest fully in the thought that none of our ills is hid from him who...has both the will and the power to take the best care of us.*
 Is this list exhaustive? (851, 21f)
 - a. No. *...words fail to explain...how many ways the exercise of prayer is profitable.*

3. What attribute of God is sometimes used as a disincentive to prayer? (851, 36ff)
 - a. Omniscience.

What do we need to remember about prayer that will prevent us falling into this error? (852, 4f)

- a. *...he ordained [prayer] not so much for his own sake as for ours.*

In what way does our engaging in prayer give God his due? (852, 7f)

- a. When we pray we recognise that *...everything men desire and account conducive to their own profit comes from him.*

In what way does Elijah's behaviour in 1 Kings 18 prove the point that Calvin is making? (852, 12ff)

- a. *Elijah...sure of God's purpose...deliberately promised rain to King Ahab, still anxiously prays...and sends his servant seven times to look, not because he would discredit his prophecy, but because he knew it was his duty...to lay his desires before God.*

Does God limit his actions towards us only to those things about which we pray? (852, 19ff)

- a. *...he watches and keeps guard on our behalf, and sometimes even helps us unasked.*

Notwithstanding the above, Calvin produces six reasons why, it is very important for us to call upon him. What are they? (852, 22ff)

- a. *First, that our hearts may be fired with a zealous and burning desire ever to seek, love, and serve him, while we become accustomed in every need to flee to him as to a sacred anchor.*
- b. *Secondly, that there may enter our hearts no desire and no wish at all of which we should be ashamed to make him a witness, while we learn to set all our wishes before his eyes, and even to pour out our whole hearts.*
- c. *Thirdly, that we be prepared to receive his benefits with true gratitude of heart and thanksgiving, benefits that our prayer reminds us come from his hand.*
- d. *Fourthly...that having obtained what we were seeking, and being convinced that he has answered our prayers, we should be led to meditate upon his kindness more ardently.*
- e. *...fifthly, that at the same time we embrace with greater delight those things which we acknowledge to have been obtained by prayers.*
- f. *...that use and experience may, according to the measure of our feebleness, confirm his providence, while we understand not only that he promises never to fail us, and of his own will opens the way to call upon him at the very point of necessity, but also that he ever extends his hand to help his own, not wet-nursing them with words but defending them with present help.*

Why does God sometimes give the appearance of sleeping or idling? (853, 1ff)

- a. *On account of these things...that he may thus train us, otherwise idle and lazy, to seek, ask, and entreat him, to our great good.*

Some oppose God's goodness and his providence to the need to pray. How do we know that such views of providence are not God's views? (853, 10ff)

- a. *...those very things which flow to us from his voluntary liberality he would have us recognise as granted to our prayers.*

How does 1 Pet 3:12 help us to hold both of these thoughts in our mind at the same time? (853, 17ff)

- a. *This sentence so commends the providence of God...as yet not to omit the exercise of faith, by which men's minds are cleansed of indolence.*

Even though God's providence takes the initiative far more times than we realise, what is his objective in requiring us to pray? (853, 22f)

- a. *...that he may the better prove his love toward us.*

What prompts him to appear inactive? (853, 25f)

- a. *...when he sees us idle and mute.*

In sections 4-16 Calvin sets out, 'The rules of right prayer'. What are they and in what sections are they stated?

Rule 1: Reverence. Secs 4&5

Rule 2: We pray from a sincere sense of want and with penitence. Secs 6&7

Rule 3: We yield all confidence in ourselves and humbly plead for pardon. Secs 8-10

Rule 4: We pray with confidence and hope. Secs 11-14

4. How does Calvin express rule 1? (853, 28f)

- a. ...that we be disposed in mind and heart as befits those who enter conversation with God.

What is the principle obstacle to our attaining an appropriate level of focus and concentration? (853, 30ff & 854, 8ff)

- a. *...carnal cares and thoughts by which [the mind] can be called or led away from right and pure contemplation of God.*
- b. *...all alien and outside cares, by which the mind...is borne about hither and thither, drawn away from heaven, and pressed down to earth.*

What characteristic of our minds opposes this focus? (854, 8f)

- a. *...the mind, itself a wanderer...*

What is the real antidote to distractions? (853, 30ff & 854, 10ff)

- a. *...the mind...not only devotes itself completely to prayer but also...is lifted and carried beyond itself.*
- b. *...it ought to be raised above itself...to a purity worthy of God.*

5. What, two matters are well worth attention? (854, 15ff & 855, 3ff)

- a. *...whoever engages in prayer should apply...his faculties and efforts, and not...be distracted by wandering thoughts.*
- b. *...not to ask any more than God allows.*

What reasons does Calvin give in paragraph 1 why wandering thoughts are something we should struggle to overcome? (854, 18ff)

- a. *They are, contrary to reverence for God...*
- b. *It is unworthy, when God admits us to intimate conversation, to abuse his great kindness by mixing sacred and profane.*

Whence do these thoughts that are, *contrary to reverence for God*, arise? (854, 18f)

- a. *...the levity that marks an excess of frivolity utterly devoid of awe.*

What does our tendency to, *mix sacred and profane*, imply about our attitude towards communion with God? (854, 26f)

- a. *...it is as if the discourse were between us and an ordinary man.*

Is an awareness of what is right and proper in prayer sufficient to deliver us from distracting thoughts? (854, 21f)

- a. *...no one is so intent on praying that he does not feel many irrelevant thoughts stealing upon him.*

What will free us, in prayer, *from earthly cares and affections*? (854, 30f)

- a. A moving awareness of God's majesty.

What posture, associated with prayer in scripture, expresses the (moral) distance between God and ourselves? (854, 32)

- a. *...the rite of raising the hands.*

What effect should scripture's use of the phrase, *to lift up prayer*, have on us when we pray? (854, 37f)

- a. It should summon us from indolence and inattention, *so that we apply our minds and efforts zealously to prayer.*

What is necessary for this to happen? (855, 1f)

- a. Our minds must stoutly wrestle with hindrances and rise above them.

Turning to the second point: *not to ask any more than God allows.*

What picture does Calvin use to show that God retains the right to refuse to grant our requests? (855, 5f)

- a. *...he still does not indiscriminately slacken the reins to stupid and wicked emotions.*

855, 8f ...in both... - both what?

- a. *...men rashly, shamelessly, and irreverently dare importune God with their improprieties (=stupid and wicked emotions, line 6)*
- b. *...and imprudently present before his throne whatever in dreams has struck their fancy (=wilfulness, line 8)*

What do our minds and hearts do when they should be rising to the occasion in prayer? (855, 30f)

- a. *...they faint or fail, or are carried in the opposite direction.*

How does God come to our aid and deliver us from this perversity? (855, 31ff)

- a. *...God gives us the Spirit as our teacher in prayer, to tell us what is right and temper our emotions.*

When Paul says that the Spirit, *intercedes for us*, does he mean that the Spirit himself engages in prayer on our behalf? (855, 36f)

- a. *...not that he actually prays or groans*

What does he do? (855, 37f)

- a. *...arouses in us assurance, desires, and sighs, to conceive which our natural powers would scarcely suffice.*

In what way can this truth be twisted so that it becomes an excuse for indolence rather than an encouragement to effort? (856, 9ff)

- a. *...we hear the impious voices...saying that we should drowsily wait until he overtake our preoccupied minds.*

How do we know that this should not be our attitude? (856, 13ff)

- a. *Paul, when he enjoins us to pray in the Spirit, does not stop urging us to watchfulness.*

What conclusion does Calvin draw from 1 Cor 14:15 about the relationship between the Spirit's activity and ours when we pray? (856, 15ff)

- a. *...the prompting of the Spirit empowers us so to compose prayers as by no means to hinder or hold back our own effort.*

Calvin asserts that the interaction between ourselves and the Holy Spirit in prayer does not undermine the requirement for focus and effort on our part because God tests - what? (856, 17f)

- a. *...how effectually faith moves our hearts.*

6. In this section Calvin calls for consistency between our most deeply held thoughts, feelings and longings and our words.

What practices and attitudes indicate a lack of this consistency? (856, 22ff)

- b. *...perfunctorily intoning prayers, out of habit.*
- c. Cold hearts.
- d. Failing to prepare - *they do not ponder what they ask.*
- e. *...thinking he is not a sinner or at least not thinking he is a sinner.*
- f. *...mere performance.*
- g. Mumbling without meditation.

What (conflicting) thoughts drive such people to pray? (856, 23ff)

- a. *...they admit it to be a necessary remedy for their ills...it would be fatal to lack the help of God..*
- b. *...a general and confused feeling of...need leads them to prayer but it does not arouse them...to seek the relief of their poverty.*
- c. *...men often beseech God for many things that they are dead sure will, apart from his kindness, come to them from some other source.*

7. Is the imperative to pray of equal force in our lives at all times? (857, 20)

- a. *No...we are not always urged with equal necessity to pray, I admit it.*

How does God, prick us the more sharply, as occasion demands, to pray earnestly? (857, 28)

- a. *He uses, troubles, discomforts, fears and trials of other sorts.*

Does this mean we should only pray when we are experiencing these things? (857, 30f)

- a. *...we must, pray at all times, Eph 6:18; 1 Thess 5:17)*

What three factors should move us to, constancy in prayer? (857, 42ff)

- a. *...the many sins of which we are conscious;*
- b. *...temptations;*
- c. *...zeal for the kingdom of God and his glory.*

How does scripture teach us that prayer must be accompanied by repentance? (858, 10ff)

- a. *God promises that, he will be near to all who call upon him in truth;*
- b. *...those who seek him with all their heart will find him.*

What conclusion can we draw about ourselves from our lack of repentance and what response does it draw forth from God? (858, 16ff)

- a. *...they who delight in their own foulness aspire not at all.*
- b. *God does not hearken to the wicked...their prayers...are an abomination unto him.*

How do we apply the requirement for repentance to our prayer life? (858, 40ff)

- a. *We must recognise that, only sincere worshippers of God pray aright and are heard.*
- b. *As we prepare to pray we need to be, displeased with [our] own evil deeds, and...*
- c. *...take the person and disposition of a beggar.*

8. We come now to the third rule, which is - what?

- a. *We yield all confidence in ourselves and humbly plead for pardon.*

In one word, what was required by rule 1? (853)

- a. Reverence.

What was required by rule 2?

- a. Sincere repentance.

What is the source of our confidence in prayer, given that we, abandon all thought of our own glory and cast off all notions of our own worth? (859, 40ff)

- a. *...reckoning themselves to be of God, they do not despair that he will take care of them.*

9. How fundamental is confession? (860, 13f)

- a. *...the beginning, and even the preparation, of proper prayer is the plea for pardon with a humble and sincere confession of guilt.*

On occasion, the psalmist called to mind the sinful course of his whole life. What was the effect of this? (860, 32f)

- a. *...the more rigorously he condemns himself, the more easily entreated he may find God.*

What do we confess when we make the, special confession, that Calvin refers to in line 1 of p861? (861, 17)

- a. *...present guilt.*

So, we see that Calvin advocates a two-fold confession of sin when we pray. One aspect of this is the confession of things that have characterised us throughout life and that reveal the truth about our natures. The other is more specific and relates to present disobediences.

How important is it begin our prayers with this confession? (861, 18f)

- a. *...the general preface that gains favour for prayers must never be passed over.*

Beginning our prayers with confession calls to mind the same thing as the blood-sacrifices of the Old Testament, which is - what? (861, 28f)

- a. Confidence in prayer is derived solely from God's mercy.

10. Why do some Biblical authors refer to their own righteousness, even using it as an argument for their prayers to be answered? (861, 35ff)

- a. *...they mean nothing else but that by their regeneration itself they are attested as servants and children of God to whom he promises that he will be gracious.*

What are those who refer to their own righteousness in prayer - not as their own work but the fruit of God's work in them - expressing? (862, 3)

- a. Assurance

Who establishes this assurance in their hearts? (862, 2ff)

- a. *...he is pleased to establish the assurance of those who are duly aware of guileless uprightness and innocence...*

What effect do these expressions (provided they are well-founded) have on God? (862, 20ff)

- a. *...from the equity of the cause itself, they might the more move the Lord to provide them with assistance.*

11. The fourth rule is...? (862, 29ff)

- a. *...thus cast down and overcome by true humility, we should be nonetheless encouraged to pray by a sure hope that our prayer will be answered.*

What arises in our hearts and minds from a sense of our own sin, viewed in the light of God's holiness? (862, 32f)

- a. *...a sense of his just vengeance.*

Nonetheless, we are encouraged to pray by a contrary sense, which Calvin describes as....what? (862,32)

- a. *...the firm assurance of God's favour.*

What makes these two thoughts, *very well agree together*?

- a. *God's goodness alone.*

This reconciliation of fear and hope in prayer resembles the reconciliation that comes about through faith in Christ between - what? (862, 36ff)

- a. *...repentance and faith...one of these terrifies us while the other gladdens us.*

It is important that we do not confuse assurance with - what? (863, 7)

- a. *...sweet and perfect repose.*

What combination of experiences is best for a believer's prayer life? (863, 11ff)

- a. *...distressed by their own need...troubled by the greatest unrest...almost driven out of their senses, until faith opportunely comes to their relief.*

How intense can such trouble and distress become? (863, 15ff)

- a. *...they groan with weariness under the weight of present ills, and are also troubled and tormented by the fear of greater ones...*

In what two ways does prayer help us in these circumstances? (863, 18f)

- a. It relieves us of, *the difficulty of bearing them.*
- b. It is the source of solace, *and hope for escape and deliverance.*

What two emotions should therefore be the cause of prayer and be reflected in it? (863, 20ff)

- a. *...he groan(s) under present ills and anxiously fear(s) those to come;*
- b. *...at the same time tak(ing) refuge in God.*

What further rule, implied in all that he has stated up to now, does Calvin introduce at this point? (863, 28)

- a. *...that [prayers] not break forth by chance but follow faith as a guide.*

12. How do we learn what is important in prayer, particularly faith and assurance? (864, 28f)

- a. *...the value and need of that assurance, which we require, is chiefly learned from calling upon him.*

In order to have assurance in prayer, we must enjoy another kind of assurance - what is that? (864, 32ff)

- a. That his mercy (learned from the gospel) *has surely been prepared for them.*

Starting on 864, 1 Calvin produces five scripture passages that speak of hope and confidence in association with prayer. How does this form of confident hope show itself? (865, 20)

- a. *...we quietly watch for God as from a watchtower.*

How do believers know that their faith is active, even when they acknowledge their, *misery, destitution and uncleanness*, and however much they feel themselves, *not only bereft of all*

things that might obtain favour with God, but laden with many offenses that justly render him terrifying? (865, 32)

- a. *...they do not cease to present themselves.*

Why do our problems, failures and disobediences, provided they are repented of, not impede our prayers? (865, 34ff)

- a. *For prayer was not ordained that we should be haughtily puffed up before God, or greatly esteem anything of ours, but that, having confessed our guilt, we should deplore our distresses before him, as children unburden their troubles to their parents.*

13. What is the most frequently commended duty of godliness in scripture? (866, 5ff)

- a. Prayer.

People who avoid prayer are guilty of what two things?

- a. Rebelliousness and stubbornness
- b. *...unbelief because they distrust the promises.*

Does Zech 13:9 indicate that the inclination to pray starts in our lives with us or with God? (867, 4)

- a. *...he precedes those who worship him.*

Why did David, in 2 Sam 7:27, need the promise of God to encourage him to pray? (867, 20)

- a. *...he was fearful.*

We note in the Psalms that sometimes the thread of the Psalmist's prayers appears to be broken but Calvin asserts that the prayers themselves are not mutilated. Why is this? (867, 28ff)

- a. *...believers know by use and experience that ardour burns low unless they supply new fuel. Accordingly, among our prayers, meditation both on God's nature and on his word is by no means superfluous,*

14. In the first paragraph in this section, Calvin supplies 12 scripture quotations and references.

What point do all these scriptures reinforce? (867, 38)

- a. God's generosity, freely given to us.

What title of God sums up this generosity? (868, 25)

- a. Father.

How much of the success of our prayers depends on God's promises, rather than our merit (868, 30f)

- a. *...their whole worth and hope of fulfilment are grounded in God's promises, and depend upon them, so that they need no other support.*

What advantage do the eminently holy 'heroes' of the Bible have over us when it comes to prayer (868, 36f)

- a. *...if we rely on God's word, in this way we are rightly their fellows.*

What four things have to be present if our prayer is not to be hypocritical? (869, 4f)

- a. *...sincerity of heart;*
- b. *...dissatisfaction with ourselves;*
- c. *...humility;*
- d. *...faith.*

What actions of God give us further encouragement to pray? (869, 6ff)

- a. *Our most gracious Heavenly Father...not only urges, but stirs [us] up with every possible means, to come to him.*

To what two Old Testament characters does Calvin refer, as examples of those who grounded their prayers explicitly on God's promises to them? (869, 8ff)

- a. David and Jacob.

If we are prayerless what do we deny? (869, 28)

- a. *God is the author of every good thing.*

In the final sentence in this section (870, 1ff) Calvin sums up believers' complex but co-existing states of mind when they engage in prayer. What are those co-existing states of mind.

- a. *...persuaded of his fatherly love, they gladly commit themselves to his safekeeping and do not hesitate to implore the assistance that he freely promises...*
- b. *...not elated by heedless confidence, as if they had cast away shame...*
- c. *...they...climb upwards by the steps of the promises.*

15. What problem does Calvin address in this section? (870, 18ff)

- a. *...it seems we may infer that, although prayers are not framed according to the rule of the Word, they obtain their effect.*

How many considerations does Calvin bring forth in response to this observation? (870, 21ff)

- a. Three.

What is the first consideration? (870, 21F)

- a. *...a universal law is not abrogated by individual examples.*

How do we know that it is not right to infer from these individual examples that our motives in prayer are unimportant? (870, 24ff)

- a. *...we must note Christ's answer when his disciples heedlessly desired him to emulate the example of Elijah...*

What is the second consideration? (870, 28f)

- a. *...the prayers that God grants are not always pleasing to him.*

Does it follow from this that such praying is to be taken by us as an example or that we are to adopt an uncaring attitude as far as motive is concerned? (870, 30ff)

- a. *But in so far as example is concerned...Is it because he with such gentleness attests the prayers to be acceptable..? Nay, it is...to emphasise or illumine his mercy...*

What does scripture teach that helps us to understand why prayers, that are not pleasing to him, are granted? (870, 30ff)

- a. *...he helps the miserable and hearkens to the groans of those who, unjustly afflicted, implore his aid...he executes his judgments while complaints of the poor rise up to him, although they are unworthy to receive even a trifle.*

How should true believers be affected by these displays of Divine mercy towards the undeserving? (871, 7ff)

- a. By being incited to, *pray the more.*
- b. By concluding from, *this evidence*, that God is, *easily entreated (by) his elect when they come with true conversion to appease him.*
- c. *...there is no reason why believers...should envy unbelievers, as if from having gotten what they wished, they had made great gain...he no more grants them salvation.*

What scriptural example does Calvin produce to show that having his/her prayers answered makes the unbeliever's situation worse, not better? (871, 16ff)

- a. *...in Psalm 106, he blames the Jews because having found him receptive to their pleas, they shortly after reverted to the stubbornness of their nature.*

What is the third consideration? (871, 28f)

- a. *In the cases of Abraham and Samuel, more difficult questions seem to arise*

Certain prayers of Abraham, Samuel and Jeremiah raise, more difficult questions, because there was no clear command of God that they could use as a basis. What does this call into question? (871, 34)

- a. Whether these prayers arose from faith or from some other impulse.

Did they, *utterly lack faith*? (871, 37)

- a. *...they did not utterly lack faith.*

What guided their prayers, in the absence of a clear command of God? (871, 35ff)

- a. *...general principles by which God bids us bestow mercy even on the ungodly*

What distinction is drawn by Augustine that is relevant to praying in faith? (871, 40ff)

- a. A distinction between God's, *hidden and unchangeable will*, and, *the will that he inspires in them.*

What is Calvin's conclusion from the data that is available to us? (872, 6f)

- a. *...where no certain promise shows itself, we must ask of God conditionally.*

16. How does Calvin summarise the requirements set forth in his four rules for prayer? (872, 14ff)

- a. *...perfect faith;*
- b. *...repentance;*
- c. *...warmth of zeal;*
- d. *...rightly conceived*

In this section, Calvin openly discusses our deviations from the four rules and notes that, despite our shortcomings, God still accepts and even answers our prayers. What is Calvin's aim in this section? (874, 18ff)

- a. *I do not recount these matters in order that believers may confidently pardon themselves for anything but that by severely chastising themselves they may strive to overcome these obstacles; and although Satan tries to block all paths to prevent them from praying, they should nonetheless break through, surely persuaded that, although not freed of all hindrances, their efforts still please God and their petitions are approved, provided they endeavour and strive toward a goal not immediately attainable.*

What does it reveal if we, *give loose rein to miscellaneous requests, and...crave more than God allows*, in our prayers? (872, 18)

- a. We are not approaching prayer with sufficient, *reverence and moderation.*

What is the remedy for this situation? (872, 20f)

- a. *...we should lift up our minds to a pure and chaste veneration of him.*

To which eminent believer and passage of scripture does Calvin refer for an example of prayer that displays this lack of reverence and moderation. (872, 23ff)

- a. David, Psalm 39:13.

What factors mitigate David's behaviour? (872, 25ff)

- a. *Not that he would either deliberately expostulate with God or clamour against his judgments, but that, fainting with weakness, he finds no other solace better than to cast his own sorrows into the bosom of God.*

What delivers such praying from being repudiated? (873, 10f)

- a. *... provided the saints bemoan their sins, chastise themselves, and immediately return to themselves, God pardons them.*

What conclusion does Calvin draw from the fact that even David struggled with the first rule of prayer? (872, 23f)

- a. *No one has ever carried this out with the uprightness that was due.*

How should we react to our difficulty in keeping to the second rule? (873, 12ff)

- a. *...they must repeatedly wrestle with their own coldness.*

The third rule - how thoroughly do we comply with it? (873, 26ff)

- a. *We, do not offer the tenth part of...the sacrifice acceptable to God...a broken spirit; a contrite and humbled heart.*

What should this breach of the third rule lead us to do? (873, 31)

- a. *...seek a two-fold pardon...because...(we) are not as displeased with (our)selves as (we) ought to be, but also because, in so far as it has been granted to (us) to benefit by repentance and fear of God, stricken down with a just sorrow on account of (our) offenses, (we) pray that the wrath of the judge be averted.*

What is the main defect that sucks the life and efficacy out of prayer? (873, 38)

- a. *...weakness or imperfection of faith.*

What inclines God to pardon this defect? (874, 2f)

- a. *...he often tests his own with sharp trials, as if he deliberately willed to snuff out their faith.*

These trials can sometimes be of such intensity that it seems as if even our prayers annoy God.

How should we react to this? (874, 12ff)

- a. *But because (we) do not reach the goal desired, (we) ought the more to endeavour to correct (our) faults, and each day come nearer to the perfect rule of prayer.*
- b. *Meanwhile (we) should feel too the depths of evil in which (we) have been plunged who bring new diseases upon (our)selves in (our) very remedies, seeing there is no prayer which in justice God would not loathe if he did not overlook the spots with which all are sprinkled.*

17. What is the best emotional reaction to God that we could manage if Christ had not been given to us to make us and our prayers acceptable? (874, 29)

- a. *...shame and fear.*

Why is this? (874, 40ff)

- a. *For as soon as God's dread majesty comes to mind, we cannot but tremble and be driven far away by the recognition of our own unworthiness...*

18. What was taught in, *the foreshadowing ceremony of the law?* (875, 26f)

- a. *...from the beginning, those who prayed were not heard save by the Mediator's grace.*

How did the law show this? (875, 28ff)

- a. *...the priest alone entering the sanctuary should bear the names of the tribes of Israel upon his shoulders and the same number of precious stones on his breastplate, but the people should stand afar off in the court, and there join their petitions with the priest.*

Given the continual need of a mediator (876, 4ff) and God's provision of one, what distinctive characteristic of Christ's mediation is Calvin drawing attention to in this section? (875, 22ff)

- a. *...we ought carefully to note the circumstance of **the time when Christ enjoins his disciples to take refuge in his intercession**, after he shall have ascended into heaven.*

What did Christ take upon himself following his ascension that made him, *a more surer advocate of the Church than he had been before?* (876, 17f)

- a. *...the office of advocate.*

19. What access to God is made available to those who do not come via Christ? (26ff)

- a. *...to those who turn aside from this way and forsake this access, no way and no access to God remain.*

Does Christ's intercession remove the need for us to intercede for one another? (876, 36)

- a. *...the saints still retain their intercessions.*

What motivates our prayers for one another? (876, 40)

- a. *...they gush forth from the emotion of love.*

How does the presence of this love, *in which we willingly and freely embrace one another as members of one body*, show that even the saints. Prayers for one another have Christ as their foundation? (877, 1)

- a. It exists only because of our unity in Christ, our head...*so also are they (ie the saints prayers for one another) related to the unity of the Head.*

What does the fact that we pray for one another in Christ's name show us? (877, 3f)

- a. *...no one can be helped by any prayers at all save when Christ intercedes.*

Why does Calvin say that Christ's sole mediation is a special reason to, *beware of ungratefulness?* (877, 8ff)

- a. Calvin is starting to move into the subject of the next section - where he deals with the human tendency to neglect Christ's mediation and over-emphasise the saints' mediation for one another.

Why is it generous of God to permit us to pray for one another? (877, 9ff)

- a. *...God, pardoning our unworthiness...allows individuals to pray for themselves...permits men to plead for one another.*

20. What distinction is drawn by those who want to promote the prayers of Christians unduly and thus take away from Christ some of the honour that is his alone? (877, 16ff)

- a. *...Christ is the Mediator of redemption, but believers are mediators of intercession.*

What is Calvin's principal argument, set out from line 18 onwards, against this position?

- a. That the Bible speaks of Christ's mediation as an ongoing ministry and emphasises. His uniqueness as the, *one mediator between God and man..*

What is it that Paul does not do, that supports Calvin's position? (878, 7)

- a. *...he does not make himself mediator.*

What does he do that is also consistent with the position Calvin advocates? (878, 8f)

- a. *...he asks that all members of Christ's body mutually pray for one another.*

How does Christ carry out his ministry of intercession on our behalf? (878, 25ff)

- a. *...he so appears before God's presence that the power of his death avails as an everlasting intercession in our behalf.*

21. What reason does Calvin give for belief in the intercession of Christians who have died? (879, 19f)

- a. *...they are burdened by anxiety.*

Anxiety about what? (879, 20f)

- a. *...as if Christ were insufficient or too severe.*

What does this anxiety reveal about our attitude towards Christ?

- a. *We, plainly deny, that Christ is our brother, unless (we) reflect that he has brotherly affection towards (us), than which nothing can be gentler or more tender.*

22. By what stages does Calvin trace our tendency to, *play the wanton*? (880, 8ff)

- a. *...they attributed to each a particular function;*
- b. *...each man adopted a particular saint as a tutelary deity, in whose keeping he put his trust;*
- c. *...finally, there are very many who do not refrain from the horrid sacrilege of calling upon the saints...as determiners of their salvation.*

Why do, 'pastors', not stop this practice? (880, 33f)

- a. *They are, attracted by the odour of gain.*

Which early Church council forbade this practice? (881, 3)

- a. *Carthage.*

23. How do heretics twist Jeremiah 15:1 and Ezekiel 14:14? 881, 34ff)

- a. *They take the word, if, to imply that what God refers to by his prophets - the intercession of dead saints - actually takes place.*

How does Calvin counter this?

- a. *By pointing out the significance of the fact that it is *not* taking place.*

24. No comment

25. Genesis 48:16 *Jacob...asks that his name and the name of his fathers Abraham and Isaac be invoked over his posterity.* Why does this not lend scriptural support to the idea that we should seek the prayers of departed Christians? ((883,36ff)

- a. *This expression occurs more than once in scripture...women are called by the men's name when they have them as husbands and live under their care and protection...Jacob does this not because he is concerned about spreading the renown of his own name but because he knows that the complete blessedness of his posterity consists in the inheritance of the covenant that God had made with him.*

26. No comment

27. What is Calvin's concluding argument against the invocation of the dead saints as intercessors? (887, 26ff)

- a. *...while scripture is replete with many forms of prayer, no example is found of this advocacy...*

28. NB. This section marks a change of subject.

This section gives us four reasons to engage in private prayer. Please list them. (888, 1ff)

- a. *...the weight of our poverty and the facts of experience proclaim that the tribulations which drive and press us from all sides are so many and so great that there is reason enough for us all continually to groan and sigh to God, and to beseech him as suppliants.*
- b. *...even if they be free of adversities, the guilt of their transgressions and the innumerable assaults of temptations ought still to goad even the holiest to seek a remedy.*
- c. *...all our hope and wealth so reside in God that neither we nor our possessions prosper unless we can have his blessing...*
- d. *...since...he is honoured in the manner due him when he is acknowledged the author of all blessings, it follows that we ought so to receive all those things from his hand as to accompany them with continual thanksgiving...as often as he blesses us he provides us with occasion to bless him.*

29. What was Christ cautioning against in Matt 6:7? (891, 15ff)

- a. *...we should not be confident in our ability to wrest something from God by beating upon his ears with a garrulous flow of talk.*

What did Christ not mean to discourage by this warning? (891, 13ff)

- a. *Christ does not forbid us to persist in prayers, long, often or with much feeling.*

What hypocritical tendency is joined with trusting in the length of our prayers as also being wrong? (891, 32ff)

- a. *...hypocrites, for the sake of show, pant after many witnesses, and would rather frequent the market place to pray than have their prayers miss the world's applause.*

What truth about prayer does this practice clash with? (891, 38f)

- a. *...the essentials of prayer are set in the mind and heart...prayer itself is properly an emotion of the heart within, which is poured out and laid open before God, the searcher of hearts.*

What advice did Christ give, based upon this fact, described by Calvin as, *the best rule for prayer*? (892, 4f)

- a. *...enter into our bedroom and there, with door closed, pray to our Father in secret, that our Father, who is in secret, may hear us.*

What example did Christ himself set us in this regard? (892, 18ff)

- a. *The Lord himself also, therefore, with good reason, when he determined to devote himself more intensely to prayers, habitually withdrew to a quiet spot far away from the tumult of men.*

What does God's adoption of the term, *the house of prayer*, as a name for the temple imply about what he values most in worship? (892, 37f)

- a. *...the chief part of his worship lies in the office of prayer.*

30. What was peculiar about the Old Testament era, that made the temple at Jerusalem an appropriate institution, with unique associations with God's presence? (893, 36f)

- a. *...at that time the truth lay hidden, figuratively represented under...shadows.*

Why did the temple and its worship take the particular form that it did? (894, 1f)

- a. *...that they (ie the Jews) might be trained to contemplate the likeness of the true temple.*

Now the truth of the gospel has been, expressed to us in living reality. What is the implication of that for the way we view the buildings in which we meet? (893, 14ff)

- a. *...there ought to be public temples in which these (prayers) may be performed.*
- b. *...we must guard against taking them to be God's proper dwelling places...or feigning for them some secret holiness or other.*
- c. *...it does not allow us to cleave to any material temple.*
- d. *...we ourselves are God's true temples.*

Is our tendency to associate God's presence with a particular place just a harmless error? (894, 2ff)

- a. *Isaiah and Stephen gravely rebuked those who thought that God in any way dwells in temples made with hands.*

31. What danger is associated with singing? (894, 12ff)

- a. We can honour God with our mouths, while our hearts are far from him.

In what ways is it God's intention to do good through public singing of gospel truths in worship? (895, 3ff)

- a. *...that all men mutually, each one from his brother, may receive the confession of faith and be invited and prompted by his example.*

32. After the time of the apostles, where, according to Augustine, did Congregational singing first become an established part of Christian worship? (895, 22)

- a. In, *the Eastern Churches.*

What prompted its adoption in the Western Churches?

- a. Opposition to the gospel.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Is Calvin's first rule for prayer an argument for setting aside seasons for prayer, in which we can, by appropriate meditation, try to approach the level of focus that Calvin describes?

2. What practical steps can we take to counteract the tendency to distraction in prayer? (Some thoughts: Have a notebook handy in which to record distracting thoughts if they concern other things we need to do. Praying out loud.)
3. Do you agree with Calvin's statements about the intercession of the Holy Spirit - that the Spirit does not actually pray or groan for us but *arouses in us assurance, desires, and sighs, to conceive which our natural powers would scarcely suffice*. If you do agree with him, have you known anything of these sensations as you have prayed? Have you realised this is the Holy Spirit doing what Paul describes in Romans 8?
4. 865, 38ff: *...the boundless mass of our sins should amply furnish us with spurs or goads to arouse us to pray...* Do they, or do they tend to discourage us? If so, why is that?
5. In section 16 Calvin asserts that even some prayers recorded in scripture are unscriptural! (My paraphrase of his words). Is this possible?
6. 876, 14ff *Christ, by his very ascension into heaven would be a surer advocate of the church than he had been before*. Why?