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PREPARATION

1. I very highly recommend Dr David Calhoun's Worldwide Classroom lecture on this section (chs 6-10). This part of Calvin's Institutes has come to be recognised as a significant treatment of the Christian life.
2. Chapter 6 is a high-level statement of the overall guiding principles and the Christian's motivation.

Beveridge's introductory remarks on this section:

This and the four following chapters treat of the Life of the Christian, and are so arranged as to admit of being classed under two principal heads.

First, it must be held to be an universally acknowledged point, that no man is a Christian who does not feel some special love for righteousness, chap. 6. Secondly, in regard to the standard by which every man ought to regulate his life, although it seems to be considered in chap. 7 only, yet the three following chapters also refer to it. For it shows that the Christian has two duties to perform. First, the observance being so arduous, he needs the greatest patience. Hence chap. 8 treats professedly of the utility of the cross, and chap. 9 invites to meditation on the future life. Lastly, chap. 10 clearly shows, as in no small degree conducive to this end, how we are to use this life and its comforts without abusing them.

<i>I. Connection between this treatise on the Christian Life and the doctrine of Regeneration and Repentance. Arrangement of the treatise, sec. 1-3. (Beveridge)</i>		
1.	Connection between this chapter and the doctrine of Regeneration. Necessity of the doctrine concerning the Christian Life. The brevity of this treatise. The method of it. Plainness and unadorned simplicity of the Scripture system of morals.	Plan of the treatise
2.	Two divisions. First, Personal holiness. 1. Because God is holy. 2. Because of our communion with his saints.	Motives for the Christian life
3.	Second division, relating to our Redemption. Admirable moral system of Scripture. Five special inducements or exhortations to a Christian Life.	The Christian life receives its strongest motive to God's work through the person and redemptive act of Christ
<i>II. Extremes to be avoided; 1. False Christians denying Christ by their works condemned, sec. 4. 2. Christians should not despair, though they have not attained perfection, provided they make daily progress in piety and righteousness (Beveridge)</i>		
4.	False Christians who are opposed to this life censured 1. They have not truly learned Christ. 2. The Gospel not the guide of their words or actions. 3. They do not imitate Christ the Master. 4. They would separate the Spirit from his word.	The Christian life is not a matter of the tongue but of the inmost heart

5.	Christians ought not to despond: Provided 1. They take the word of God for their guide. 2. Sincerely cultivate righteousness. 3. Walk, according to their capacity, in the ways of the Lord. 4. Make some progress. 5. Persevere.	Imperfection and endeavour of the Christian life
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EXPLORATORY

1.	Connection between this chapter and the doctrine of Regeneration. Necessity of the doctrine concerning the Christian Life. The brevity of this treatise. The method of it. Plainness and unadorned simplicity of the Scripture system of morals.	Plan of the treatise
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What is, *the object of regeneration?* (684, 15ff)

- a. *...to manifest in the life of believers a harmony and agreement between God's righteousness and their obedience, and thus to confirm the adoption they have received as sons [Gal. 4:5; cf. 2 Peter 1:10]*

What characteristic of God's law makes it very useful to us as we seek to make progress in manifesting this harmony? (684, 19f)

- a. *The law of God contains in itself that newness by which his image can be restored in us.*

What more do we need, and why? (684, 20ff)

- a. *...because our slowness needs many goads and helps, it will be profitable to assemble from various passages of Scripture a pattern for the conduct of life*

(At this point, McNeill supplies the underlying Latin phrase in footnote 2, possibly implying, i) that he is not 100% sure that Battles's translation adequately captures the meaning, and, ii) that he cannot improve on it. Beveridge translates this phrase: *... a true account of this reformations...*)

To what danger are those who heartily repent exposed? (684, 23)

- a. *...those who heartily repent may...err in their zeal.*

What has God given to us to prevent the zeal of our repentance carrying us off into error? (684, 22)

- a. *...a pattern for the conduct of life*

The next paragraph deals with the method Calvin intends to adopt in chs 6-10.

What writings on this subject does Calvin regard as especially helpful for somebody who wants a lengthy treatment of individual virtues? (685, 5)

- a. *...the homilies of the fathers*

What method does Calvin tell us he intends to pursue? (685, 1ff; 5ff)

- a. *...I do not intend to develop, here, the instruction in living that I am now about to offer to the point of describing individual virtues at length, and of digressing into exhortations.*
- b. *To show the godly man how he may be directed to a rightly ordered life, and briefly to set down some universal rule with which to determine his duties – this will be quite enough for me.*

Why does Calvin does not want to treat these matters at great length? (685, 10f; 14f)

- a. *By nature I love brevity*
- b. *...the plan of the present work demands that we give a simple outline of doctrine as briefly as possible*

What distinguishes the Holy Spirit's method of teaching virtue from the philosophers' method? (685, 20ff)

- a. *...they (ie the philosophers), as they were ambitious men, diligently strove to attain an exquisite clarity of order to show the nimbleness of their wit*
- b. *But the Spirit of God, because he taught without affectation, did not adhere so exactly or continuously to a methodological plan.*

What is Calvin's estimate of the Holy Spirit's method compared to the methods of the philosophers? (685, 19f)

- a. *...a most beautiful dispensation, and one much more certain than all the philosophical ones.*

2.	Two divisions. First, Personal holiness. 1. Because God is holy. 2. Because of our communion with his saints.	Motives for the Christian life
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Calvin writes of, this scriptural instruction, having, *two main aspects*. How does he describe the subjective aspect? (685, 28ff)

- a. *...the love of righteousness...be instilled and established in our hearts.*

How does he describe the objective aspect? (685, 30)

- a. *...a rule*

Why has God given us a rule? (685, 31f)

- a. *So that we are not allowed to, wander about in our zeal for righteousness.*

What is the fundamental reason why we must be holy? (685, 36ff)

- a. *From what foundation may righteousness better arise than from the scriptural warning that we must be made holy because our God is holy? [Lev. 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16.]...When we hear mention of our union with God, let us remember that holiness must be its bond...*

Why is this – is it because our holiness brings us into union with God? (686,3ff)

- a. *...not because we come into communion with him by virtue of our holiness! Rather, we ought first to cleave unto him so that, infused with his holiness, we may follow whither he calls.*

Our holiness reflects something special about God. What is that? (686, 6f)

- a. *...it is especially characteristic of his glory that he have no fellowship with wickedness and uncleanness.*

3.	Second division, relating to our Redemption. Admirable moral system of Scripture. Five special inducements or exhortations to a Christian Life.	The Christian life receives its strongest motive to God's work through the person and redemptive act of Christ
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In 687, 3ff Calvin draws a momentous conclusion from all that has so far gone before it in this paragraph. What is that conclusion? (687, 3ff)

- a. *Accordingly, unless we give and devote ourselves to righteousness, we not only revolt from our Creator with wicked perfidy but we also abjure our Saviour himself.*

Trace the steps by which Calvin builds to this conclusion. (686, 22ff)

- a. *God the Father, as he has reconciled us to himself in his Christ [cf. 2 Cor. 5:18], has in him stamped the likeness [cf. Heb. 1:3] to which he would have us conform.*
- b. *Scripture...after it has taught that we have degenerated from the true origin and condition of our creation, it also adds that Christ, through whom we return into favour with God, has been set before us as an example, whose pattern we ought to express in our life.*
- c. *...we have been adopted as sons by the Lord with this one condition: that our life express Christ, the bond of our adoption.*

Along the way, Calvin contrasts the Scripture method of setting forth moral philosophy with that of the philosophers. Wherein does the contrast consist? (686, 28ff; 687, 29f))

- a. *They, while they wish particularly to exhort us to virtue, announce merely that we should live in accordance with nature.*
- b. *But Scripture draws its exhortation from the true fountain. It not only enjoins us to refer our life to God, its author, to whom it is bound; but after it has taught that we have degenerated from the true origin and condition of our creation, it also adds that Christ, through whom we return into favour with God, has been set before us as an example, whose pattern we ought to express in our life.*
- c. *What more effective thing can you require than this one thing? Nay, what can you require beyond this one thing?*
- d. *...the philosophers, who, in their commendation of virtue, never rise above the natural dignity of man*

In this section's second paragraph (beginning, 687, 6) Calvin moves on to a second, *occasion for exhortation*. What is this second occasion? (687, 6ff)

- a. *Then the Scripture finds occasion for exhortation in all the benefits of God that it lists for us, and in the individual parts of our salvation.*

What benefits does Calvin list in this paragraph? (687, 8ff)

- a. *...God revealed himself Father to us*
- b. *...Christ cleansed us with his blood and imparted this cleansing through baptism*
- c. *...he engrafted us into his body*
- d. *...Christ himself, who is our head, ascended into Heaven*
- e. *...the Holy Spirit dedicated us as temples to God*
- f. *...both our souls and bodies were destined for heavenly incorruption and an unfading crown.*

Each of these benefits carries with it a consequent obligation. List the obligations that attach to the above benefits. (687, 8ff)

- a. *Ever since God revealed himself Father to us, we must prove our ungratefulness to him if we did not in turn show ourselves his sons. [Mal 1:6; Ep[h. 5:1; 1 Jm. 3:1]*

- b. *Ever since Christ cleansed us with his blood and imparted this cleansing through baptism it would be unfitting to befoul ourselves with new pollutions [Eph. 5:26; Heb. 10:10; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Peter 1:15, 19]*
- c. *Ever since he engrafted us into his body, we must take special care not to disfigure ourselves, who are his members, with any spot or blemish [Eph. 5:23-33; 1 Cor. 6:15; John 15:3-6]*
- d. *Ever since Christ himself, who is our head, ascended into Heaven, it behooves us, having laid aside love of earthly thing, wholeheartedly to aspire heavenward [Col. 3:1ff]*
- e. *.Ever since the Holy Spirit dedicated us as temples to God, we must take care that God's glory shine through us, and must not commit anything to defile us with the filthiness of sin [1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16].*
- f. *Ever since both our souls and bodies were destined for heavenly incorruption and an unfading crown [1 Peter 5:4], we ought to strive manfully to keep them pure and uncorrupted until the Day of the Lord [1 Thess. 5:23; cf. Phil. 1:10].*

How does Calvin powerfully sum up the worth of these benefits and their consequent obligations? (687, 27f)

- a. *...the most auspicious foundations upon which to establish one's life.*

Why would, *one look in vain for the like of these among the philosophers?* (687, 29f)

- a. *...the philosophers...in their commendation of virtue, never rise above the natural dignity of man.*

4.	False Christians who are opposed to this life censured 1. They have not truly learned Christ. 2. The Gospel not the guide of their words or actions. 3. They do not imitate Christ the Master. 4. They would separate the Spirit from his word.	The Christian life is not a matter of the tongue but of the inmost heart
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Against whom is this section aimed? (687, 31ff; 688, 17f)

- a. *...those who, having nothing but the name and badge of Christ, yet wish to call themselves "Christians."*
- b. *...these trifling sophists who are content to roll the gospel on the tips of their tongues*

What are the implications of Paul's statement in Ephesians 4:22,24 that, *all those who were not taught that they must put on him have not rightly learned Christ, as they have nor put off the old man, who is corrupt through deceptive desires?* (687, 34ff, 39ff; 688, 10ff, 19ff)

- a. *...there is no intercourse with Christ save for those who have perceived the right understanding of Christ from the word of the gospel*
- b. *Therefore, it is proved that they have falsely, and also unjustly, pretended the knowledge of Christ*
- c. *...the gospel...is a doctrine not of the tongue but of life. It is not apprehended by the understanding and memory alone, as other disciplines are, but it is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and resting place on the inmost affection of the heart.*
- d. *...the doctrine in which our religion is contained...must enter our heart and pass into our daily living, and so transform us into itself that it may not be unfruitful for us.*

- e. *...its efficacy ought to penetrate the inmost affections of the heart, take its seat in the soul, and affect the whole man a hundred times more deeply than the cold exhortations of the philosophers.*

Ponder this conclusion: *The philosophers rightly burn with anger against, and reproachfully drive from their flock, those who when they profess an art that ought to be the mistress of life, turn it into sophistical chatter With how much better reason, then, shall we detest those trifling Sophists who are content to roll the gospel on the tips of their tongues when its efficacy ought to penetrate the inmost affections of the heart, take its seat in the soul, and affect the whole man a hundred times more deeply than the cold exhortations of the philosophers.*

5.	Christians ought not to despond: Provided 1. They take the word of God for their guide. 2. Sincerely cultivate righteousness. 3. Walk, according to their capacity, in the ways of the Lord. 4. Make some progress. 5. Persevere.	Imperfection and endeavour of the Christian life
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Having stressed the place of conformity to God's law, in this section Calvin guards against an over-rigorous and non-gospel application of what he has written.

To what degree do Christians live a life of, *evangelical perfection*? (688, 27f; 689, 4ff)

- a. *...no one is found who is not far removed from it, while many have advanced a little toward it*
- b. *But no one in this earthly prison of our body has sufficient strength to press on with due eagerness, and weakness so weighs down the greater number that, with wavering and limping and even creeping along the ground, they move at a feeble rate.*

Should this imply to us that the way we live our lives is unimportant? (688. 22ff)

- a. *I do not insist that the moral life of a Christian man breathe nothing but the very gospel, **yet this ought to be desired, and we must strive toward it.***

Given the gap between the life we desire and the life we live, what must we do? (688,30ff)

- a. *What then? Let that target be set before our eyes at which we are earnestly to aim. Let that goal be appointed toward which we should strive and struggle.*

Why must we never regard as acceptable the situation in which we, *divide things with God in such a manner that [we] undertake part of those things which are enjoined upon [us] by his word but omit part, according to [our] own judgment*? (688, 35ff)

- a. *...in the first place, he everywhere commends integrity as the chief part of worshipping him [Gen. 17:1; Ps 41:12; etc].*

What is meant by, *integrity*? (688, 37ff)

- a. *By this word he means a sincere simplicity of mind, free from guile and feigning, the opposite of a double heart.*

Where does right living originate? (688, 39f)

- a. *...the beginning of right living is spiritual*

What kind of spirit produces right living? (689, 1ff)

- a. *...where the inner feeling of the mind is unfeignedly dedicated to God for the cultivation of holiness and righteousness.*

Given the discouragements we face from within ourselves (*cf.* first question and answer this section) what should we aim at and by what steps should we achieve it? (689, 7ff)

- a. *...let each one of us, then, proceed according to the measure of his puny capacity and set out on the journey we have begun*
- b. *No-one shall set out so inauspiciously as not daily to make some headway, though it be slight.*
- c. *...let us not despair at the slightness of our success; for even though attainment may not correspond to desire, when today outstrips yesterday the effort is not lost.*
- d. *...let us look towards our mark with sincere simplicity and aspire to our goal.*

To what end should our, *continuous effort*, be directed? (689, 18f)

- a. *...that we may surpass ourselves in goodness until we attain to goodness itself.*

When shall we attain, *to goodness itself*? (689, 21f)

- a. *...only when we have cast off the weakness of the body, and are received into fellowship with him.*

FOR REFLECTION

1. In section 5 Calvin stresses not what someone has attained but what they desire and seek after as a mark of a credible profession. This raises two questions:
 - a. What are my ambitions?
 - b. Do I apply the same standard as Calvin to the professions made by others or do I require something of them that I do not require of myself?