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PREPARATION

1. Read the apostles' creed. Focus on the descriptions of the saving actions of Christ.
2. Find out as much as you can about the differences between the two words, 'impute' and 'impart'.

EXPLORATORY

1. How should we apply all the truths about Christ that Calvin has established thus far? (503, 8ff)
 - a. *What we have said so far concerning Christ must be referred to this one objective: condemned, dead and lost in ourselves, we should seek righteousness, liberation, life and salvation in him...*

Why is it necessary to build on this understanding by acquiring a more detailed knowledge of how he saves? (504, 7ff)

- a. *No one can descend into himself and seriously consider what he is without feeling God's wrath and hostility towards him.*
- b. *Accordingly, he must anxiously seek ways and means to appease God - and this demands a satisfaction.*

2. What, 'difficulty', does Calvin, 'dispose of', in the opening paragraph of this section? (504, 15ff)
 - a. *God...should have been our enemy until he was reconciled to us through Christ.*
 - b. *...he had...already embraced us with his free favour.*

How does Calvin, 'dispose of this difficulty? (504, 27ff)

- a. He lists 3 scripture passages that speak of God's wrath abiding on us because of sin.
- b. *Expressions of this sort have been accommodated to our capacity...*

Calvin contrasts two possible scenarios. If the first scenario was true our response to God would be one of gratitude. However, it isn't true. The second *is* true and calls for a much more profoundly grateful response from us.

Why, according to scenario 1, does God not hate us? (504, 36ff)

- a. *...because he kept you in grace voluntarily ...and did not allow you to be estranged from him, he thus delivered you...*

In this situation what in us would be the ground of our relationship with him?

- a. Our own innocence.

What would there be in this set of circumstances to make us...*experience and feel something of what (we) owe to God's mercy?*

- a. We owe our innocence to God's preserving of it.

Scenario 2 (*On the other hand*, 505, 2f) In what ways does our situation outside of Christ differ in this scenario from the way it was described in scenario 1? (505, 3ff)

- a. We are:
 - i. *...estranged from God through sin;*

- ii. *...an heir of wrath;*
- iii. *...subject to the curse of eternal death;*
- iv. *...excluded from all hope of eternal salvation;*
- v. *...beyond every blessing of God;*
- vi. *...slave(s) of Satan;*
- vii. *...captive under the yoke of sin;*
- viii. *...destined finally for a terrible destruction and already involved in it.*

b. **...at this point** Christ:

- i. *...interceded as (our) advocate;*
- ii. *...took upon himself and suffered the punishment that, from God's righteous judgment, threatened all sinners;*
- iii. *...purged with his blood those evils that had rendered sinners hateful to God;*
- iv. *...by this expiation he made satisfaction and sacrifice duly to God the father;*
- v. *...as intercessor he has appeased God's wrath.*

What effect does Calvin expect that an appreciation of the truth and accuracy of scenario 2 will have on us? (505, 16)

- a. We will be *...even more moved.*

3. What charge does Calvin feel he has to vindicate God of? (505, 28)

- a. Falsehood

Why might this charge arise?

- b. Because God threatens us with a judgment that his love specifically for his elect means he will not execute.

How does Calvin vindicate God from the charge of falsehood? (505, 30f)

- a. *All of us have in ourselves something deserving of God's hatred.*

What reasons does Calvin give for the fact that God does not hate us? (505, 34ff)

- a. *...the Lord wills not to lose what is his in us;*
- b. *...we...remain his creatures...created unto life;*
- c. *...pure and freely given love.*

What does this, pure and freely given love, motivate God to do (without any assistance or input from ourselves)? (506, 7ff)

- a. He:
 - i. *...take(s) away all cause for enmity and reconcile(s) us utterly to himself;*
 - ii. *...wipes out all evil in us by the expiation set forth in the death of Christ;*
 - iii. *...goes before and anticipates our reconciliation in Christ...because, He first loved us, he **afterward** reconciles us to himself.*

Why is it the case that we can be...*fully and firmly joined with God **only** when Christ joins us with him?* (506, 14f & 20ff)

- a. *...until Christ succours us by his death, the unrighteousness that deserves God's indignation remains in us.*
- b. *...through him alone we escape the imputation of our sins to us - an imputation bringing with it the wrath of God.*

4. What is *harmonised* when we understand that God's love for us as individuals precedes all that Christ did to save us? (506, 26ff)
 - a. *...those passages in which it is said that God declared his love toward us in giving his only-begotten son to die and, conversely, that God was our enemy before he was again made favourable to us by Christ's death.*
5. Having described in general terms what God has done in Christ, Calvin drills down in this and the following sections to the specific saving actions of Christ, using...*the so-called "Apostles' Creed"* as his framework.

When did Christ commence his saving work? (507, 26f)

- a. *...from the time when he took on the form of a servant, he began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us.*

What was his principal saving act? (507, 28f)

- a. *...Scripture ascribes this as peculiar and proper to Christ's death.*

How many passages of scripture does Calvin produce to support this viewpoint? (507, 30ff)

- a. Six

To what point does he return, citing a seventh passage (Philippians 2:7-8) in support? (508, 11f)

- a. *Yet...the obedience...in his life is not excluded.*

What characteristic of Christ's death does Calvin identify in this section as *...the important thing*, and why? (508, 15f)

- a. *...his willing obedience...*
- b. *...a sacrifice not offered voluntarily would not have furthered righteousness.*

508, 41ff Calvin turns to the Apostles' Creed proper.

On page 509 Calvin makes the point that the form of Christ's death and the process that led up to it were all important. Why? (509, 16ff)

- a. *...we know by these proofs that he took the role of a guilty man and evildoer.*
- b. *...the fulfilment...of prophecy.*
- c. *...by the governor's official sentence (he) was reckoned among criminals. Yet not so - for he was declared righteous by his judge at the same time...*

6. What is the significance of the circumstances of Christ's death - it took place on a cross and after due (albeit corrupt) legal process? (510, 6ff)
 - a. *The cross was accursed...by decree of God's law. Hence...Christ...makes himself subject to the curse.*

Why was it necessary that Christ's death should take place in the way it did? (510, 8ff)

- a. *It had to happen in this way in order that the whole curse...might be lifted from us, while it was transferred to him.* (You are allowed to break off and start worshipping at this point, if you've not been doing that already.)

In what way does the terminology that the Old Testament applies to sacrifices teach this transfer of the curse from us to the offering? (510, 12ff)

- a. The offering is called...*"Ashmoleth", a Hebrew word properly signifying sin itself.*

Sacrifices are offered because of sin. If those sacrifices are themselves called, 'sin', what does that signify? (510, 15ff)

- a. *...these were like sacrifices of purification, which take upon themselves and bear the curse due for sins.*

What does that imply about the curse's relationship with the offerer?

- a. The curse has been lifted from the offerer. *Payment God cannot twice demand, first at my bleeding surety's hand and then, again, at mine...*

Did a real transfer of the curse take place in the Old Testament sacrifices? (510, 14, 17)

- a. No. It was figurative.

In what event was the figure fulfilled? (510, 18)

- a. *...Christ...gave his own life as an "Asham".*

In addition to the transfer of the curse from us to Christ what other exchange also took place? (510, 26ff)

- a. *...the Son of God...clothed us in his purity.*

On the cross a great struggle took place - between who and what? (510, 38ff)

- a. Christ and the curse that rested on us because of our sin.

Who emerged victorious? (511, 10f)

- a. *Christ...crushed, broke and scattered its whole force.*

How can we derive spiritual strength from an understanding of what took place on the cross?

- a. By keeping...*sacrifice and cleansing constantly in mind.*

We have been thinking about what Christ's shed blood accomplished *for* us. Calvin concludes this. Section with a reference to what it accomplishes *in* us. What is that? (511, 26ff)

- a. *...Christ's shed blood served, not only as a satisfaction, but also as a laver to wash away our corruption.*

7. Christ's death brings to us a two-fold blessing (512, 24ff). Which of these blessings do we experience in this life? (512, 26)

- a. *...mortification of our flesh.*

Which do we experience after death? (512, 25f)

- a. *...liberation from the death to which we had been bound.*

How should the *efficacy*, that Calvin mentions in. 512,23 make itself known and felt? (512, 11ff)

- a. By the mortification of *...our earthly members that they may no longer perform their functions.*
- a. By killing *...the old man in us that he may not flourish and bear fruit.*

8. Why is the statement that Christ 'descended into hell' an important component of our belief? (513, 13f)

- a. *...if it is left out, much of the benefit of Christ's death will be lost.*

Do all understand this phrase in the same way? (513, 6)

- a. *...interpretations vary.*

What two reasons does Calvin give for disagreeing with those who think the phrase, 'he descended into hell' is simply a repetition of the statement, 'he...was buried'? (513, 20ff)

- a. Why repeat more obscurely something that had already been stated clearly?

- b. *...it is not likely that a useless repetition of this sort would have crept into this summary, in which the chief points of our faith are aptly noted in the fewest possible words.*

9. What interpretation of, 'he descended into hell' is Calvin interacting with in this section? (514, 4ff)

- a. *...Christ descended to the souls of the patriarchs who had died under the law, to announce redemption as accomplished and to free them from the prison where they were confined.*

What is Calvin's estimate of this interpretation? (514, 20ff)

- a. *...nothing but a story;*
 b. *...childish to enclose the souls of the dead in a prison;*
 c. *What need, then, for Christ's soul to go down there to release them?*

1 Pet 3:19 is sometimes cited as a 'proof text' for this interpretation. What does Calvin concede to those who would use this text in this way? (515, 4f & 514, 23f)

- a. *...the power of Christ's death...penetrated even to the dead.*
 b. *...Christ shone upon them with the power of his Spirit.*

What did this illumination enable the patriarchs to do? (514, 24ff)

- a. *...realise that the grace which they had only tasted in hope was then (ie at the time of Christ's death) manifested to the world.*

Did Christ's death have any effect on the ungodly who had died previously? (515, 6ff)

- a. *...the wicked realised more clearly that they were excluded from all salvation.*

10. What is Calvin's, *surer explanation*, of, 'he descended into hell'? (515, 16ff)

- a. That Christ did not undergo a bodily death merely. As our substitute, he also underwent all that spiritual punishment that we merited...*he must grapple hand to hand with the armies of hell and the dread of everlasting death.*

On what ground do some object to this interpretation? (516, 6f)

- a. *...it is absurd to put (ie in the creed) after his burial what preceded it.*

How does Calvin deal with this objection.

- a. The creed deals first of all with what took place that was observable by men and then states what was taking place that was unseen.

11. What is Calvin seeking to defend in this section?

- a. The assertion that, on the cross, Christ suffered secretly as well as in ways that could be seen.

As well as the common human experience of dying, what did Christ also grapple with as he took our punishment? (516, 16f & 20)

- a. *...the pangs of death.*

What specific, *pangs*, does Calvin name as those that Christ wrestled with, *hand to hand*? (517, 25ff)

- a. *...the devil's power;*
 b. *...the dread of death;*
 c. *...the pains of hell.*

With what phrase does Calvin sum up all that Christ experienced on the cross to save us? (517, 10)

a. *...the weight of divine severity.*

What is the source of these aspects of dying? (516, 20f)

a. *...God's curse and wrath.*

What are the implications for our understanding of, *He descended into hell*? (517, 15 *...our view...*)

a. It was as he engaged in this conflict, on the cross, that he descended into hell.

12. What is the first objection to his position mentioned by Calvin? (517, 32f)

a. That he (Calvin) asserts something incongruous, ie that in his descent into hell Christ experienced fear for the salvation of his soul.

Did Calvin believe and teach this? (517, 21)

a. Yes. He believed this was something Christ had to conquer on our behalf in order for us to be able to overcome it.

What is the second objection? (517, 34)

a. *...I attribute to the Son of God a despair contrary to faith.*

Why does Calvin describe this objection as wickedly motivated? (518, 2)

a. *...Christ's fear and dread, is something that...the evangelists openly relate.*

How do Calvin's critics get round the open declaration, by the evangelists, of Christ's fear and dread? (518, 6)

a. They say...*he was pretending.*

What would have been the consequence had Christ's sufferings been confined to bodily sufferings only. (518, 9f)

a. *...surely, unless his soul shared in the punishment, he would have been the redeemer of bodies alone.*

What does Christ give to us that arises directly from the fact that he has not confined his sufferings to the body but has entered into every aspect of the whole process of dying on our behalf and in our place? (518, 14f)

a. *...comfort for our anguish and sorrow.*

Calvin's opponents accuse him of attributing to Christ something, *evil of itself*. What do they have in mind? (518, 33ff)

a. *...sorrow, fear and dread.*

What 'proof text' does Calvin advance, to show that the Holy Spirit harmonises Christ's identification with us in these experiences with his (Christ's) perfect holiness? (518, 20f)

a. Hebrews 4:15b.

What character do we lack as a result of the fall that makes our experience of the same things sinful? (518, 29f)

a. *Our fallen nature...is without moderation.*

Refuted, Calvin's opponents take another tack, which is - what? (519, 4)

a. *...although Christ feared death, he did not fear God's curse.*

What would this make Christ? (519, 7)

a. *...more unmanly and cowardly than most men of the common sort.*

b. Shamefully soft

What have, *these quibblers...never earnestly considered*? (519, 28f)

- a. *...what it is or means that we have been redeemed from God's judgment.*

Where did Christ's descent into hell start? (519, 32)

- a. *In Gethsemane, when he prayed that death be averted.*

Calvin is careful to remind us of two things he has established already about the manner in which Christ underwent his sufferings. What are they? (519, 35ff)

- a. *...the divine power of his Spirit remained hidden for a moment to give place to weakness of flesh.*
- b. *...the trial arising from weakness and pain was not contrary to faith.*

How do we know the latter assertion is true? (519, 40ff)

- a. *...feeling himself... forsaken by God, he did not waver in the least from trust in his goodness...proved by that remarkable prayer...My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

How did Applinaris (wrongly) try to resolve some of the issues arising from Christ's two natures? (520, 5f)

- a. *...Christ had an eternal Spirit instead of a soul.*

What would this make Christ? (520, 6)

- a. *...half a man.*

If this were true, what would have suffered on the cross? (520,6)

- a. *...half a man*

If that were the case, something necessary to our salvation would have been missing. What is that?

- a. The voluntary offering of himself in our place by a true man, in our place in conscious satisfaction of the requirements of God's will.

Wherein lies the source of all of our obedience? (520, 9)

- a. *...in the soul*

What, therefore, would Christ's death have achieved for us had he been half a man?

- a. Nothing.

The monothelites - why were they so-called?

- a. From two Greek words - 'mono', meaning, 'one' and 'thelema', meaning 'will'.

Calvin takes issue with their view that Christ had two natures but only one will. Why?

- a. *...we see that he did not will as man what he willed according to his divine nature.*

What is Calvin's prrof-text for this, *great paradox*? (520, 15f)

- a. John 12:27-28.

13. In the Apostles' Creed, what subject follows the descent into hell? (520, 19)

- a. *...the resurrection from the dead.*

Was the resurrection necessary in order for Christ's death to have saved us? (520, 22f)

- a. *We have in his death the complete fulfilment of salvation...*

What does the resurrection do, that the death of Christ does not do? (520, 25ff)

- a. *...we are said to hve been, born again to a living hope, not through his death but, through his resurrection.*

Why is the resurrection necessary for us to have, 'a living hope'? (520, 20f)

a. *...only weakness appears in the cross, death and burial of Christ.*

What does our faith derive from the resurrection that it would not derive from the death of Christ alone? (520, 22 & 28)

a. *...full strength;*

b. *...victory...over death.*

When it comes to Christ's saving acts, what is the relationship between his death and resurrection? (521, 8ff)

a. *...through his death, sin was wiped out and death extinguished; through his resurrection, righteousness was restored and life raised up, so that - thanks to his resurrection - his death manifested its power and efficacy in us.*

When (the benefits of) either Christ's death or resurrection are mentioned, what are we to think of? (521, 27ff)

a. His death and resurrection.

What benefit do we obtain from the resurrection that corresponds to the benefit of mortification, which we obtain from participation in Christ's death? (522, 10ff)

a. *...we are reborn into righteousness through his power.*

What, in Calvin's view, is the third benefit that we derive from the resurrection? (522, 13f)

a. *...we are assured of our own resurrection.*

What implications of the phrase, *risen from the dead*, does Calvin draw our attention to in this section's final paragraph? (522, 19ff)

a. His death was the same as...*other men naturally die.*

b. He...*received immortality in the same flesh.*

14. What aspect of Christ's life, experiences and actions does the Apostles' Creed now move on to? (522, 22f)

a. The ascent into Heaven.

What did Christ do when he ascended that he had not done previously? (522, 25f)

a. *...he truly inaugurated his kingdom only at his ascension into heaven.*

To what...*apparent contradiction* does Calvin refer in 522, 29?

a. The apparent contradiction between Christ's physical absence and his powerful, reigning presence.

In what ways is Christ's presence...*more useful to us*, now that he is absent? (522, 39ff)

a. He is now present by his Spirit.

b. We are now...*taught by a surer experience that the authority he wielded and the power he exercised were sufficient for believers not only to live blessedly but also to die happily.*

c. *...much more abundantly he then poured out his Spirit...by his ascension he fulfilled what he had promised: that he would be with us even to the end of the world.*

d. He rules...*heaven and earth with a more immediate power.*

e. *...his power and energy were diffused and spread beyond all the bounds of heaven and earth.*

15. What does the creed move on to after the ascension?

a. Christ's being seated at the right hand of the father.

When Stephen saw Christ he was standing. Why does this not contradict the passages of scripture that teach that following the ascension, he is now sitting? (524, 25f)

a. *...it is a question, not of the disposition of his body, but of the majesty of his authority.*

What status and activities does Christ's being seated at the right hand of the father imply? (524, 6ff)

- a. *Christ was invested with Lordship over heaven and earth...solemnly entered into possession of the government committed to him...*
- b. *...both heavenly and earthly creatures may look with admiration on his majesty...*
- c. *...be ruled by his hand...*
- d. *...obey his nod...*
- e. *...and submit to his power.*
- f. *...all things were entrusted to his decision.*

What view of Christ's being seated at the Father's right hand does Calvin regard as wrong? (524, 22f)

- a. The view that it designates simply his blessedness or rest from activity.

16. Why was Paul able to write that, *we already "sit with God in the heavenly places in him"* when this is obviously not true of us as individuals? (524, 31f)

- a. *...he entered heaven in our flesh, as if in our name...*

How does his being seated at the Father's right hand fill, *with grace and kindness the throne that for miserable sinners would otherwise have been filled with dread*? (524, 38ff)

- a. *...as our constant advocate and intercessor...he turns the Father's eyes to his own righteousness to avert his gaze from our sins.*

How does the contemplation of his might, displayed in the ascension, assist us? (525, 5f)

- a. We derive our, *strength, power, wealth, and glorying against hell*, from his might.

What will bring Christ's present session at the right hand of the father to an end? (525, 19f)

- a. *...his final act...coming to judge the living and the dead.*

17. This section needs no comment from me.

18. Calvin lists four ways in which Christ relates to us, that show that we have nothing to fear from his judgment. The first one is that he is our, *most merciful ruler*, who will not destroy his people. What are the others? (526, 25ff)

- a. The head - how could he scatter his own members?
- b. The advocate - how could he condemn his clients?
- c. *He who promises eternal blessedness in the gospel, he will, fulfil his promise in the gospel.*

What benefit do we derive from the fact that all judgment is committed to the Son? (526, 35ff)

- a. He cares for, *the consciences of his people, who tremble in dread of judgment.*

What is, *the only point that ought to concern us*, as far as the Apostles' Creed is concerned? (527, 17f)

- a. *...the whole history of our faith is summed up in it succinctly and in definite order.*

19. What word does Calvin choose in 528, 10 that shows his profound acquaintance with the human heart?

- a. *...hope...*

FOR REFLECTION

1. If, ...*Christ's shed blood served, not only as a satisfaction, but also as a laver to wash away our corruption*, what does this imply about the necessity of a changed life for a believable Christian profession?
2. How absolutely do we take such passages as Romans 6:5&4 and Calvin's interpretation and application of them in 512, 10ff?
3. In what ways can we use section 19 profitably?