**Calvin’s *Institutes of Christian Religion***

Lesson 19: Repentance (Book 3, Chapters 3-5)

**Chapter 3: Our Regeneration by Faith – Repentance**

1. “The sum of the gospel is held to consist in repentance and forgiveness of sins.”
2. Luke 24:45-47 – “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, **46**and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, **47**and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”
3. Acts 5:31 – “God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sin.”
4. Repentance is the fruit of faith and Calvin says it is “born” of faith. So in a logical manner, Calvin argues that faith comes before repentance.
5. “…surely no one can embrace the grace of the gospel without betaking himself from the errors of his past life into the right way, and applying his whole effort to the practice of repentance.”
6. Repentance is necessary.
7. However, we must be clear that our justification is no by repentance or holiness of life. It is by faith.
8. But repentance is grounded in the Gospel. The gospel call to all people is to repent.
9. “But no one is truly persuaded that he belongs to God unless he has first recognized God’s grace.”
10. God’s grace precedes even repentance. This stands contra the Anabaptists and Catholics who reverse this order.
11. Repentance ought to extend throughout one’s life. This stands contra the Catholics who prescribe a certain length of “penance” and then it is done.
12. Repentance has 2 aspects to it:
    1. Mortification: We are more and more enabled by the Spirit to die unto sin
    2. Vivification: We are more and more enabled by the Spirit to live unto righteousness
13. This means that we keep on repenting our entire lives because our pursuit of holiness daily involves both mortification and vivification.
14. Repentance is therefore a transformation – both inner and outer – of our lives so that we turn from our old selves (mortification) to God (vivification)
15. Luke 3:8 – “Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.”
16. Acts 26:20 – “they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.”
17. True repentance begins with a fear of God by thinking about divine judgment. Acts 17:30-31 – “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, **31**because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”
18. Ephesians 4:22-24 – “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **23**and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24**and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”
19. Repentance is the continual process by which we are conformed into the image of Christ. We are united to Him in salvation by faith (justification), and we are shaped to look like Him in the pursuit of holiness (repentance and sanctification). In this, the image of God that was damaged and deformed in the Fall is being restored.
20. “This restoration does not take place in one moment or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advances God wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing all their minds to true purity that they may practice repentance throughout their lives and know that this warfare will end only at death.”
21. But perfection has not come yet and so we are called to walk a life of repentance. “Thus, then, are the children of God freed through regeneration from bondage to sin. Yet they do not obtain full possession of freedom so as to feel no more annoyance from their flesh, but there still remains in them a continuing occasion for struggle whereby they may be exercised; and not only be exercised, but also better learn their own weakness.”
22. “There remains in a regenerate man a smoldering cinder of evil, from which desires continually leap forth to allure and spur him to commit sin.”
23. Sin no longer reigns over you and me, Christ does. But sin is still present in us and Christ is at work through His Spirit to root it out more and more for the rest of our lives.
24. Augustine: Sin has lost its dominion on earth, but will not perish until heaven
25. “So long as you live, sin must needs be in your members. At least let it be deprived of mastery. Let not what it bids be done.” Romans 6:12 – “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”
26. What is the unpardonable sin? Persons “whose consciences, though convinced that what they repudiate and impugn is the Word of God, yet cease not to impugn it –these are said to blaspheme against the Spirit, since they strive against the illumination that is the work of the Holy Spirit.”
27. It’s “the inability to return to the light of the knowledge of Christ for those who have willfully rejected it. They cannot be forgiven, for they cannot repent. They are stricken by God’s just judgment, being rendered eternally and perpetually blind.”

**Chapter 4: How Far from the Purity of the Gospel is All that the Sophists in Their Schools Prate About Repentance**

1. Calvin rails against Scholastic Theology of the Roman Catholic Church.
2. Calvin says they wrongly focus on “outward externals” so that repentance has to tame the flesh and punish faults. At the same time, they are silent as to “inner renewal.”
3. The Scholastics divided repentance into 3 parts: contrition of heart, contrition of mouth, and satisfaction of works. Each is necessary for true/perfect repentance.
4. Calvin says that the consequences of such a division is that the conscience is tormented because there is no peace with God, no assurance of salvation, and God becomes loathsome.
5. The depth of your sorrow does not obtain forgiveness, rather looking to the Lord’s mercy alone.
6. Calvin argues that the practice of confessional is unbiblical and the priests dispense what rightly belongs to God.
7. According to the RCC, satisfaction to God also has to be paid to achieve true repentance. Calvin argues from Scripture that the full and free remission of sins is given by Jesus because He has made full/complete satisfaction for our sins.

**Chapter 5: The Supplements That They Add to Satisfactions, Namely, Indulgences and Purgatory**

1. The RCC taught that indulgences would lesson one’s time in purgatory, where further satisfaction is made for sins committed while alive.
2. Calvin says they profane the blood of Christ and calls such practice a “Satanic mockery” that leads Christian people away from God’s grace, life in Christ, and the true way of salvation.