

Calvin's 500th Birthday!

– Soli Deo Gloria –

(This resource was written by Andries Combrink and is used with his permission.
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John Calvin was born 500 years ago, on 10 July 1509. His life and ministry would change the Christian views of many millions of Christians, shaped the thoughts of tens of thousands of theologians and ministers of the Church, founded the Western views of just as many philosophers on the state, politics, democracy, science and every other important sphere of life!

This is one birthday everyone can celebrate. Our values and beliefs benefited from his genius, his humble faith and piety and his dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Calvin's theology is popularly summarised by quoting the five "sola's" or "only's", of the Reformed tradition, namely:

- *We should live our lives "only to the glory of God!"*
- *We know the Gospel truth "only from the holy Scriptures!"*
- *We are justified "only by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ!"*
- *We are saved "only by grace!"*
- *We are saved "only through faith!"*

Calvin became the leader of the Protestants in the city of Geneva, which became the centre of the Reformation in Europe. From Geneva Presbyterianism spread to Germany, Scotland, mainly through John Knox who studied under Calvin, and to England, Ireland, the Netherlands, Hungary, America and eventually other parts of the world, including the Dutch and British colonies.

Today some 50 million men, women and children throughout the world belong to 'Reformed' or 'Presbyterian' Churches. The name Reformed refers to Calvin's intention to establish a Church reformed according to the Word of God. The name Presbyterian refers to our form of church government with 'presbyters' or elders.

To celebrate Calvin's work and life, the Rev William Pool, minister of the Berea Presbyterian Church, wrote the following:

Promptly and sincerely in the service of my God.

John Calvin was born in Picardy on 10 July 1509. Exiled from his native France, he spent most of his working life in Geneva where he wrote, taught and preached on average, 5 sermons a week. His prolific writings further displayed his capacity for sustained hard work and resulted not only in an enormous quantity of work produced but also displayed a depth and clarity which transformed the Theology of the times and continues to influence us today. His magnum opus, the "Institutes of the Christian Religion", was published in 1559. In this text book of systematic theology he set out the Protestant manifesto which so deeply challenged the thinking of his age and laid the foundation for so many aspects of modern Western society.

His Bible centred teaching matched his God centred living and God centred faith. This translated into individuals relentlessly pursuing righteousness not only in their own private lives but in society as a whole. His writings and teachings were a direct challenge to the Christianity of the time and his energetic propagation of these views saw over two thousand congregations founded in France and his teachings quickly spreading to Holland and Britain then further a field.

Calvin's ideas of religious toleration certainly challenged the Church but the logical application of these ideas had revolutionary implications for the state and society as a whole. Tyrannical powers tremble. His separation of the powers of Church and State where each is independent of the other yet supportive of the other in the two divinely ordained spheres is best espoused in the USA where Puritan values flourish. Economic theories were revolutionised as were banking systems and without these and the development of civil liberties to which his teachings pointed, the Industrial and Scientific revolutions would not have been possible.

Down through the centuries Calvin's thinking has influenced many for it was the Calvinism of both President Woodrow Wilson of the USA and Jan Smuts of South Africa which drew the two men together after the publication of Smuts's "Covenant of the League of Nations" (16 December 1918) and resulted in the drafting of the constitution of the League, known as the Covenant of the League of Nations—the precursor of the United Nations.

(Further writings and information are available from Rev. William Pool, Berea Presbyterian Church, South Africa.
Website: <http://bereapresbyterianchurch.co.za/>

Songs for Calvin's bash...

Here at the Centurion West Presbyterian Church, we developed the following "Calvin's Bash" lyrics to be sung with the melodies of well known songs and hymns. You are welcome to join us in singing them, as we joyously give thanks for a life lived to the glory of God, in service of the Church of Christ and for the liberation of humanity.

1. FIRST SONG: - Only for God's glory. *Sung to the tune of "Bind us together"*

ONLY GOD'S GLORY

Chorus:

*Soli Deo Gloria,
only Gods glory,
only his honour we live for!
Venerate our God and work for his glory,
only God's grandeur we seek!*

All that the Bible reveals,
all that the Scriptures decree,
everything Jesus has died for,
that mankind God's victory may see:

*Soli Deo Gloria,
only Gods glory,
only his honour we live for!
Venerate our God and work for his glory,
only God's grandeur we seek!*

He is the sovereign God,
nothing escapes divine rule.
Whatever Christians may do,
whatever our passion may fuel:

*Soli Deo Gloria,
only Gods glory,
only his honour we live for!
Venerate our God, and work for his glory,
only God's grandeur we seek!
Only God's glory we seek...*

2. SECOND SONG: Scripture alone - Only the Bible *Sung to the tune of "Majesty"*

ONLY GOD'S WORD

Everything, all that I have to know,
all sufficient to calm a lonesome soul –
is God's Word, written inspired Word:

All I believe,
I need to know,
know to be saved!
With his finger God wrote his Word
on two stone tablets.
Through the Spirit
prophets, apostles wrote his Word too.
Only God's
written, inspired Word,
reveals the Way, the Jesus way,
Only God's Word!!

3. THIRD SONG By Christ alone - **Only Jesus:** *Sung to the music of I WORSHIP YOU, ALMIGHTY GOD.*
Songs of Fellowship 282

ONLY JESUS CAN!

I cannot save myself o God,
- no one can, my Lord!
There is no one, to take away
all my guilt, unrighteousness!
Just Jesus can,
can achieve God's gospel plan.
Yes, Jesus can,
o holy God,
only Jesus can!

A Saviour pure, I need, o God,
- sinless man and God,
to carry all my punishment,
satisfy your will, your wrath!
Pure Jesus can,
sinless Christ, the Son of man.
Lord Jesus can,
the Son of God,
only Jesus can!
only Jesus can!

4. FOURTH SONG: Salvation by grace alone - **Only grace,** *Sung to "Breathe on me, Breath of God - see*
SOF 51.

Only by grace I'm saved!

Washed with the blood of Christ,
cleansed with his Spirit's flame,
only by grace was called to live,
and only by grace, I came!

Only by grace I live,
only by grace restored.
Only by grace my faith is real:
I'm only by grace adored!

Only by grace I love,
only by grace believe,
and by the Spirit's gracious work,
a trusting heart receive!

Jesus has made me whole,
into God's heart engraved.
Father who chose me – praise the Lord -
yes, only by grace I'm saved!

5. FIFTH SONG: Salvation only through faith

Only through faith I'm saved *Sung to 'Praise to the Lord, the Almighty' SOF 470*

Only through faith
in the Lord we receive his salvation.
Only our faith creates true and sincere celebration.
We shall believe,
and all his mercies receive:
Trusting the God of creation!

Only our faith
in the Saviour assures of God's favour.
It is through faith in the Son that we joyfully labour.
Through faith do right,
witness with power, with might,
love God with zeal, love your neighbour!

It is God's Spirit
who grants us our faith through his teaching,
when by his grace and love into our deepest thoughts reaching.
Learning Gods Word,
only through faith we're assured,
while we Christ's gospel are preaching!

Bonus song!!!!!!!:

Contemporary song for "Only through Faith".

- Justification through faith alone - only faith
Sung to the music of : Come, now is the time to worship.

Only Faith

Faith – hearing God's Word, believe it!
Faith – knowing his grace – accept God's love!
Faith – listening - rejoicing in Jesus!
Faith – leaning on Christ – believe the Lord!
Faith!
Only Faith!

Jesus did make all of God's promises true,
and we will accept that he did!
Hungry and thirsty for Christ we come.
In face of doubt - BELIEVE!!

Faith – hearing God's Word, believe it!
Faith – knowing his grace – accept God's love!
Faith – listening - rejoicing in Jesus!
Faith – leaning on Christ – believe the Lord!
Faith!
Only Faith!
I believe!
Only Faith!
Only Faith!!

Sung to the music of the (NB) the 5th verse of SOF 389 (May your Kingdom come to the nations.)

Only Jesus can (2)

Jesus Christ, Redeemer and Saviour,
the only Light on the pathways of this world,
until all the glorious Lamb of God behold,
only Jesus will redeem!

Jesus, Lord, so righteous and holy,
who kept the law, died and triumphed in my stead!
On behalf of sinners a perfect life has led.
Only Jesus can redeem!

Jesus is the Way to the Father,
the Way, the Truth and the Life if you believe.
Only Jesus can all our sorrows now relieve.
Only Jesus will redeem.

Only Jesus is Lord and Saviour,
The only Lord - and he is our only King.
He's the only Saviour we praise and honour bring,
only Jesus Christ redeems,
only Jesus Christ redeems,
only Jesus can redeem!