

A Year through John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559)

Arranged and Prepared by J. R. Harris

John Calvin's *Institutes* represents the finest theological text of the Reformation. Many scholars have spent their entire professional lives attempting to plumb the depths of the text and the man behind it. Karl Barth once remarked in a letter to a friend:

John Calvin is a cataract, a primeval forest, a demonic power, something directly down from Himalaya, absolutely Chinese, strange, mythological; I lack completely the means, the suction cups, even to assimilate this phenomenon, not to speak of presenting it adequately. What I receive is only a thin little stream and what I can then give out again is only a yet thinner extract of this little stream. I could gladly and profitably set myself down and spend all the rest of my life with just Calvin.

I share Barth's awe and respect and yet have found that even for the beginner, Calvin is surprisingly approachable and warm. What follows is the fruit of one who has tried to make the most of his "thin little stream." This schedule allows the student to systematically work his or her way through the 1559 *Institutes* over the course of one calendar year.¹ At the suggestion of J.I. Packer, I began doing this in seminary and have continued ever since, reading the *Institutes* through every year right alongside Holy Scripture. This reading plan does not claim to be authoritative or beyond edition; it simply represents what I have found to be effective. Under this division, the student can expect 4-10 pages of reading per day with a day of "reflection" interspersed once every two weeks or so. Where shorter sections were assigned, this was generally because I felt the topic to be especially important and worthy of more thorough study, but even this was subjective as even the opening sentence merits entire dissertations. Again, Barth reminded us, "I could gladly and profitably set myself down and spend all the rest of my life with just Calvin."

I desired that the divisions, especially within chapters, be consistent with Calvin's subject matter. However, this was not always possible and where changes would make the flow of reading more enjoyable, I would certainly welcome feedback. In the past, I read the text through in fewer sittings and in larger portions, often 80-100 pages at a time. It is my hope that this format (daily, shorter readings) will result in greater comprehension of the overall tenor of the work.

Finally, Calvin wrote this text to introduce a student to the study of Scripture as you will learn on January 1st. A caveat: this program is no substitute or supplement for regular reading of God's Word. Rather, the former is designed to serve as a aid to the latter. Also, this text is meant to be studied in faith, humility, and prayer, always looking beyond the human vessel to the inestimable treasure which it contained. With this in mind, I leave you with a prayer from Calvin himself. We would all do well to read and reflect upon his work with these words in mind:

Grant, Almighty God, that, since to a perverse, and in every way a rebellious people, thou didst formerly show so much grace, as to exhort them continually to repentance, and to stretch forth thy hand to them by thy Prophets, — O grant, that the same word may sound in our ears; and when we do not immediately profit by thy teaching, O cast us not away, but, by thy Spirit, so subdue all our thoughts and affections, that we, being humbled, may give glory to thy majesty, such as is due to thee, and that, being allured by thy paternal favor, we may submit ourselves to thee, and, at the same time, embrace that mercy which thou offerest and presentest to us in Christ, that we may not doubt but thou wilt be a Father to us, until we shall at length enjoy that eternal inheritance, which has been obtained for us by the, blood of thine only-begotten Son. Amen

¹ This edition is the final and definitive one, published just five years before Calvin's death. While there are many translations available, the best is from the *Library of Christian Classics*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

1-Jan	Prefatory
2-Jan	1.1
3-Jan	1.2
4-Jan	1.3
5-Jan	1.4
6-Jan	1.5.1-4
7-Jan	1.5.5-8
8-Jan	1.5.9-12
9-Jan	1.5.13-15
10-Jan	1.6
11-Jan	1.7.1-3
12-Jan	1.7.4-5
13-Jan	1.8.1-4
14-Jan	Reflection
15-Jan	1.8.5-10
16-Jan	1.8.11-13
17-Jan	1.9
18-Jan	1.10
19-Jan	1.11.1-4
20-Jan	1.11.5-7
21-Jan	1.11.8-11
22-Jan	1.11.12-16
23-Jan	1.12
24-Jan	1.13.1-2
25-Jan	1.13.3-6
26-Jan	1.13.7-10
27-Jan	1.13.11-13
28-Jan	Reflection
29-Jan	1.13.14-15
30-Jan	1.13.16-20
31-Jan	1.13.21-22
1-Feb	1.13.23-25
2-Feb	1.13.26-29
3-Feb	1.14.1-3
4-Feb	1.14.4-8
5-Feb	1.14.9-12
6-Feb	1.14.13-19
7-Feb	1.14.20-22
8-Feb	1.15.1-2
9-Feb	1.15.3-5
10-Feb	1.15.6-8
11-Feb	Reflection
12-Feb	1.16.1-4
13-Feb	1.16.5-7
14-Feb	1.16.8-9
15-Feb	1.17.1-2
16-Feb	1.17.3-5

17-Feb	1.17.6-8
18-Feb	1.17.9-11
19-Feb	1.17.12-14
20-Feb	1.18
21-Feb	2.1.1-3
22-Feb	2.1.4-7
23-Feb	2.1.8-11
24-Feb	Reflection
25-Feb	2.2.1-4
26-Feb	2.2.5-9
27-Feb	2.2.10-11
28-Feb	2.2.12-17
1-Mar	2.2.18-21
2-Mar	2.2.22-25
3-Mar	2.2.26-27
4-Mar	2.3.1-5
5-Mar	2.3.6-9
6-Mar	2.3.10-14
7-Mar	2.4.1-5
8-Mar	2.4.6-8
9-Mar	Reflection
10-Mar	2.5.1-5
11-Mar	2.5.6-11
12-Mar	2.5.12-15
13-Mar	2.5.16-19
14-Mar	2.6.1-2
15-Mar	2.6.3-4
16-Mar	2.7.1-5
17-Mar	2.7.6-11
18-Mar	2.7.12-17
19-Mar	2.8.1-5
20-Mar	2.8.6-12
21-Mar	2.8.13-16
22-Mar	2.8.17-21
23-Mar	2.8.22-27
24-Mar	2.8.28-34
25-Mar	2.8.35-38
26-Mar	Reflection
27-Mar	2.8.39-44
28-Mar	2.8.45-50
29-Mar	2.8.51-55
30-Mar	2.8.56-59
31-Mar	2.9
1-Apr	2.10.1-6
2-Apr	2.10.7-14
3-Apr	2.10.15-19
4-Apr	2.10.20-23

5-Apr	2.11.1-3
6-Apr	2.11.4-8
7-Apr	2.11.9-12
8-Apr	2.11.13-14
9-Apr	2.12.1-3
10-Apr	2.12.4-7
11-Apr	Reflection
12-Apr	2.13
13-Apr	2.14.1-3
14-Apr	2.14.4-8
15-Apr	2.15.1-2
16-Apr	2.15.3-6
17-Apr	2.16.1-4
18-Apr	2.16.5-7
19-Apr	2.16.8-12
20-Apr	2.16.13-19
21-Apr	2.17
22-Apr	Reflection
23-Apr	3.1
24-Apr	3.2.1-5
25-Apr	3.2.6-7
26-Apr	3.2.8-13
27-Apr	3.2.14-18
28-Apr	3.2.19-28
29-Apr	3.2.29-32
30-Apr	3.2.33-40
1-May	3.2.41-43
2-May	3.3.1-4
3-May	3.3.5-9
4-May	3.3.10-15
5-May	3.3.16-20
6-May	3.3.21-25
7-May	Reflection
8-May	3.4.1-3
9-May	3.4.4-8
10-May	3.4.9-13
11-May	3.4.14-19
12-May	3.4.20-24
13-May	3.4.25-27
14-May	3.4.28-33
15-May	3.4.34-39
16-May	3.5.1-5
17-May	3.5.6-10
18-May	3.6
19-May	3.7.1-3
20-May	3.7.4-7
21-May	3.7.8-10

22-May	Reflection
23-May	3.8.1-6
24-May	3.8.7-11
25-May	3.9.1-2
26-May	3.9.3-6
27-May	3.10
28-May	3.11.1-4
29-May	3.11.5-8
30-May	3.11.9-12
31-May	3.11.13-20
1-Jun	3.11.21-23
2-Jun	3.12.1-3
3-Jun	3.12.4-8
4-Jun	3.13
5-Jun	Reflection
6-Jun	3.14.1-6
7-Jun	3.14.7-8
8-Jun	3.14.9-11
9-Jun	3.14.12-17
10-Jun	3.14.18-21
11-Jun	3.15.1-4
12-Jun	3.15.5-8
13-Jun	3.16
14-Jun	3.17.1-5
15-Jun	3.17.6-10
16-Jun	3.17.11-13
17-Jun	3.17.14-15
18-Jun	Reflection
19-Jun	3.18.1-4
20-Jun	3.18.5-7
21-Jun	3.18.8-10
22-Jun	3.19.1-3
23-Jun	3.19.4-6
24-Jun	3.19.7-9
25-Jun	3.19.10-13
26-Jun	3.19.14-16
27-Jun	Reflection
28-Jun	3.20.1-3
29-Jun	3.20.4-5
30-Jun	3.20.6-7
1-Jul	3.20.8-10
2-Jul	3.20.11-14
3-Jul	3.20.15-16
4-Jul	3.20.17-20
5-Jul	3.20.21-24
6-Jul	3.20.25-27
7-Jul	3.20.28-30

8-Jul	3.20.31-33
9-Jul	3.20.34-35
10-Jul	3.20.36-40
11-Jul	3.20.41
12-Jul	3.20.42
13-Jul	3.20.43
14-Jul	3.20.44
15-Jul	3.20.45
16-Jul	3.20.46
17-Jul	3.20.47
18-Jul	3.20.48-49
19-Jul	3.20.50-52
20-Jul	Reflection
21-Jul	3.21.1-4
22-Jul	3.21.5-7
23-Jul	3.22.1-3
24-Jul	3.22.4-6
25-Jul	3.22.7-8
26-Jul	3.22.9-11
27-Jul	3.23.1-3
28-Jul	3.23.4-7
29-Jul	3.23.8-11
30-Jul	3.23.12-14
31-Jul	Reflection
1-Aug	3.24.1-2
2-Aug	3.24.3-5
3-Aug	3.24.6-8
4-Aug	3.24.9-11
5-Aug	3.24.12-14
6-Aug	3.24.15
7-Aug	3.24.16
8-Aug	3.24.17
9-Aug	3.25.1-2
10-Aug	3.25.3-4
11-Aug	3.25.5-6
12-Aug	3.25.7-9
13-Aug	3.25.10-12
14-Aug	Reflection
15-Aug	4.1.1-4
16-Aug	4.1.5-6
17-Aug	4.1.7-9
18-Aug	4.1.10-13
19-Aug	4.1.14-16
20-Aug	4.1.17-22
21-Aug	4.1.23-27

22-Aug	4.1.28-29
23-Aug	4.2.1-3
24-Aug	4.2.4-6
25-Aug	4.2.7-11
26-Aug	4.2.12
27-Aug	4.3.1-3
28-Aug	4.3.4-6
29-Aug	4.3.7-9
30-Aug	4.3.10-15
31-Aug	4.3.16
1-Sep	Reflection
2-Sep	4.4.1-4
3-Sep	4.4.5-9
4-Sep	4.4.10-12
5-Sep	4.4.13-15
6-Sep	4.5.1-3
7-Sep	4.5.4-7
8-Sep	4.5.8-10
9-Sep	4.5.11-14
10-Sep	4.5.15-19
11-Sep	4.6.1-4
12-Sep	4.6.5-7
13-Sep	4.6.8-10
14-Sep	4.6.11-13
15-Sep	4.6.14-17
16-Sep	Reflection
17-Sep	4.7.1-4
18-Sep	4.7.5-10
19-Sep	4.7.11-13
20-Sep	4.7.14-16
21-Sep	4.7.17-18
22-Sep	4.7.19-22
23-Sep	4.7.23-26
24-Sep	4.7.27-30
25-Sep	4.8.1-5
26-Sep	4.8.6-9
27-Sep	4.8.10-12
28-Sep	4.8.13
29-Sep	4.8.14-16
30-Sep	Reflection
1-Oct	4.9.1-7
2-Oct	4.9.8-11
3-Oct	4.9.12-14
4-Oct	4.10.1-4
5-Oct	4.10.5-8

6-Oct	4.10.9-13
7-Oct	4.10.14-16
8-Oct	4.10.17-18
9-Oct	4.10.19-22
10-Oct	4.10.23-26
11-Oct	4.10.27-32
12-Oct	4.11.1-2
13-Oct	4.11.3-5
14-Oct	4.11.6-10
15-Oct	4.11.11-16
16-Oct	Reflection
17-Oct	4.12.1-4
18-Oct	4.12.5-7
19-Oct	4.12.8-13
20-Oct	4.12.14-18
21-Oct	4.12.19-21
22-Oct	4.12.22-28
23-Oct	4.13.1-7
24-Oct	4.13.8-10
25-Oct	4.13.11-14
26-Oct	4.13.15-17
27-Oct	4.13.18-19
28-Oct	4.13.20-21
29-Oct	Reflection
30-Oct	4.14.1-6
31-Oct	4.14.7-9
1-Nov	4.14.10-13
2-Nov	4.14.14-17
3-Nov	4.14.18-20
4-Nov	4.14.21-26
5-Nov	4.15.1-6
6-Nov	4.15.7-9
7-Nov	4.15.10-13
8-Nov	4.15.14-18
9-Nov	4.15.19-22
10-Nov	4.16.1-6
11-Nov	4.16.7-9
12-Nov	4.16.10-16
13-Nov	4.16.17-20
14-Nov	4.16.21-22
15-Nov	4.16.23-24
16-Nov	4.16.25-27
17-Nov	4.16.28-30
18-Nov	4.16.31-32
19-Nov	Reflection

20-Nov	4.17.1-3
21-Nov	4.17.4-7
22-Nov	4.17.8-10
23-Nov	4.18.11-13
24-Nov	4.18.14-15
25-Nov	4.18.16-19
26-Nov	4.18.20-23
27-Nov	4.18.24-25
28-Nov	4.18.26-28
29-Nov	4.18.29-31
30-Nov	4.18.32-34
1-Dec	4.18.35-37
2-Dec	4.18.38-42
3-Dec	4.18.43-46
4-Dec	4.18.47-50
5-Dec	4.18.1-3
6-Dec	4.18.4-7
7-Dec	4.18.8-11
8-Dec	4.18.12-14
9-Dec	4.18.15-18
10-Dec	4.18.19-20
11-Dec	Reflection
12-Dec	4.19.1-3
13-Dec	4.19.4-7
14-Dec	4.19.8-13
15-Dec	4.19.14-17
16-Dec	4.19.18-21
17-Dec	4.19.22-24
18-Dec	4.19.25-27
19-Dec	4.19.28-31
20-Dec	4.19.32-37
21-Dec	Reflection
22-Dec	4.20.1-2
23-Dec	4.20.3-7
24-Dec	4.20.8-10
25-Dec	4.20.11-13
26-Dec	4.20.14-18
27-Dec	4.20.19-21
28-Dec	4.20.22-26
29-Dec	4.20.27-29
30-Dec	4.20.30-31
31-Dec	4.20.32