

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 17 JOHN CALVIN AND FAREL

After the publication of the first edition of his *Institutes* in early 1536, Calvin decided to go to the German-Swiss city of Strasbourg, to pursue the quiet life of a scholar, and to partner with Martin Bucer. “However, because of hostilities between Francis I and Charles V and troop movements resulting in blocked roads” (DeMar, *Reformation*, 201), he took a detour; and “on a warm day in August, 1536, arrived through the gates of Geneva [population then about 10,000]” (Kuiper, 192).

“A postcard-picture spot, Geneva nestles against a lake surrounded by mountains. The city could boast inhabitants as far back as the days of Julius Caesar. (Nichols, *Reformation*, 75). “Near-by, through a pass in the Alps, runs an important trade route connecting Italy, German, and France” (Kuiper, 192).

“When Calvin entered Geneva, he did not think anyone in that city knew of him. He himself was a total stranger there, and of the situation in Geneva he knew little or nothing” (Kuiper, 193). He did not know that William Farel (1489-1565), an old acquaintance from Paris, had come as an exile to Geneva in 1532 and after much effort had convinced the citizens of Geneva to forsake Catholicism in favor of the Reformation. “On May 21, 1536, the General Assembly of the citizens voted in favor of the Reformation and made Protestantism the official religion of Geneva” (Kuiper, 192).

“All through this time, Geneva was in revolt against its bishop, and against its lord, the Duke of Savoy. Farel was of a fiery temper, and gifted with eloquence and a powerful voice. But he did not feel himself equal to the task of bringing peace and order to the distracted city. Then he heard that Calvin had come to Geneva [unknown to Calvin, his *Institutes* had already made him famous all over Europe]. It came to Farel as a revelation that this young Frenchman of twenty-seven was just the man for the place. Farel hurried to the inn where Calvin was stopping for the night [hoping to convince him to remain and help with reform efforts]” (Kuiper, 193). “Calvin protested, pleading his youth, his inexperience, his need of further study, his natural timidity and bashfulness, which made him unfit for public action” (Schaff, 8:348).

When Calvin gave his final answer of “No!” Farel “rose from his chair, and, straightening himself out to his full height as his long beard swept his chest, he directed his piercing look full at the young man before him and thundered: ‘May God curse your studies if now in her time of need you refuse to lend your aid to His Church.’” (Kuiper 193-94).

In the Preface to his commentary on *Psalms*, Calvin describes his encounter with Farel: “I had resolved to pass quickly by Geneva, without staying longer than a single night in that city.” But Farel “strained every nerve to detain me. And after having learned that my heart was set upon devoting myself to private studies, for which I wished to keep myself free from other pursuits, and finding that he gained nothing by entreaties, he proceeded to utter an imprecation that God would curse my retirement, and the tranquility of my studies, if I should refuse to give assistance, when the necessity was so urgent. By this imprecation [which I felt to be as if God had from heaven laid His mighty hand upon me to stop me] I was so stricken with terror, that I ceased from my journey [to Strasbourg and agreed to stay in Geneva].”

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 17: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, QUESTION 45

Question 45: WHAT BENEFIT DO WE RECEIVE FROM THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST? First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He might make us partakers of the righteousness which He has obtained for us by His death. Second, by His power we are also now raised up to a new life. Third, the resurrection of Christ is to us a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.

Question 45 explains the biblical basis of article 5 of the Apostles' Creed: "The third day He arose from the dead." The core of the gospel is that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). The soul of Christ, which (for three days) had been in the hands of His Father in heaven, truly did return to His body in the tomb and come forth from the grave. His resurrected body was adorned with immortality, no longer subject to the frailties of a human body, but it was still *flesh and bones* (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:24-29). Christ's resurrection "is proven by the testimony of angels, women, evangelists, apostles, and other saints, who saw Him, felt Him, and talked with Him after His resurrection [Matt. 28:1-9; 1 Cor.5-8; Acts 1:2-3]" (Ursinus, 233). Even Christ's enemies could not deny but tried to cover up the fact of the empty tomb (Matt. 28:11-15).

Christ's resurrection was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Psalm 16:8-11; Luke 24:46-47). Christ Himself foretold His own resurrection (Matt. 12:40; 16:21; 26:32). His resurrection proved He truly was the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to give eternal life to all who believe in Him (John 20:30-31; Rom. 1:1-4).

Christ rose from the dead to give us believers the benefits which He obtained for us by His death. The first benefit is *justification* (which will be explained more fully in Question 60). Christ "was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Justification is God's verdict that we are forgiven the eternal penalty of sin and accepted as righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (Rom. 4:1-8; 22-24). We are justified the moment God works true faith in our hearts (Rom. 3:28).

The second benefit of Christ's resurrection is that by the power of His Holy Spirit we are regenerated (born again), that is, *raised spiritually* from the dead, which is exactly why we believe in Jesus (Eph. 2:8), and confess our sins to God (1 John 1:9), and desire to please God out of thankfulness for our salvation (Rom. 6:4). "And you God *made alive*, who were *dead* in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1; cf. John 3:3).

The third benefit of Christ's resurrection is that it *guarantees* our physical bodies will also be raised from the dead (Rom. 6:5; 1 Cor. 15:20-23). Our salvation includes both soul and body. Both soul and body belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20). "He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies" (Rom. 8:11). Since we still have to suffer death in our body, we "who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for ... the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). Our resurrected body will be like Christ's resurrected body (this will be explained more fully in Question 57). "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21).

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