

Pastor's Voice
21 June 2009

John Calvin 500 - A Warning Issued

Dearly beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

This year is a very significant year for the Reformed Churches all over the world. This year we celebrate the 500th year of the birth of John Calvin. He was born in Noyon, France in 1509.

What is so special about this man? Who is he? First, let me highlight the many celebrations that are held all over the world commemorating his birth. They are calling this event Calvin500. Go the World Wide Web and type in Calvin500 and you will see the many events, and books written to mark this event. Secondly, look at the voluminous books and literature that is published in his name. He wrote THE INSTITUTES, a tome on Reformed Theology, a set of commentaries on most of the books of the Bible, letters, tracts and treatises. In the third place, he was above all a great preacher, a great expositor of the Scriptures. He preached through several books of the Bible, verse by verse and it was his habit to preach a few times a week. In the fourth place, He reformed system of Church Government at Geneva. It is without doubt that he was a great man of God. As part of our own celebrations of the work of Calvin, I plan to write a several articles in the Pastor's Voice, on his life and his biblical doctrines that he taught. I hope this will be beneficial to you.

At the same time, I would like to issue a serious warning to you. Calvin is a great man and there is a real danger that we look to him, as if, what he writes and teaches are infallible and there are no errors in it. He a mere mortal like you and me and thus, he is liable to errors. And so, our approach must be not to look up to personalities, though how great they are and accord to them near divine status, but to subject their teaching and writings to the only infallible rule of the Holy Scriptures. Great men do err but not the infallible, inerrant Word of God does not err. And thus, if great men err, we must declare with the greatest humility that they are wrong on this matter according to the Holy Scriptures.

It is important that we subject all teachings of great men to the infallible rule of Scriptures, otherwise, we will be returning to the blasphemous practices of Rome. Rome does not subject her teachings to the Scriptures, rather its teachings come from the declarations of the pope and their councils. Rome basically looks to the pope as the final arbiter of truth, and there is very real danger that we look to Calvin or any great man of God as the Protestant pope. Beloved, be warned.

Let me end with the words of an article of our Belgic Confession.

The Belgic Confession of Faith, Article VII - The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to Be the Only Rule of Faith

“We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein. For since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them at

large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul says. For since it is forbidden to add unto or take away anything from the Word of God, it does thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.

Neither may we consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule, as the apostles have taught us, saying, Prove the spirits, whether they are of God. Likewise: If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house”.

Pastor Paul Goh