

## Who was John Calvin? 5: His sufferings.

It is now necessary to give some information regarding the hardships and frugality of Calvin's life in the face of so many attacks and lies. Perhaps only Luther suffered so much from persecution, illness and slander.

Calvin lost his mother when he was three, was raised by a stepmother and had two brothers who died before him in infancy. He cared for his wife's children by a previous marriage, though he was only nine years with her before she died. His own son died in infancy and he took these losses very hard, plagued with sadness and loneliness.

By nature he was weak and shy, but in ministry was a lion, strengthened by fortitude against suffering. In his 20s he was forced to flee Paris and wander through various countries evangelising. He was exiled from Geneva, but when he successfully returned he was constantly opposed, vilified and attacked. Indeed, though persuaded to return to Geneva, he said it was the last place he wanted to be and called it a 'whirlpool'. It was here that he had been chased out of his pulpit, attacked with swords in the street, had his family threatened and was shot at while in his house. Friends suffered for supporting him, one was poisoned. Rumours and lies were spread about him throughout Europe. People called their dogs, 'Calvin' and abused him in the streets.

Despite all this, he risked his life by visiting the sick; he often supported many from his own pocket. He was filled with ailments that would have driven weaker men insane since he was in constant pain. He had constant headaches, piles, irritable bowel syndrome, kidney stones, asthma, arthritis, gout, malaria and finally TB. He had no interest in money, but could have been rich with his great talents and writings. He refused raises in salary, refused gifts and gave money to many charitable causes, especially French refugees. He lived in a small house and shocked Sadoletto (incognito) by answering his own door. Pope Pius IV stated that his dismissal of money was his strength and with a dozen Calvins could conquer the world.

In these trials he never ceased working, saying that he did not want to be found idle when the Lord returned. When sick he worked from his bed with a secretary, doing this up to his death at a young age. He worsened his conditions by never resting for more than a few minutes, so committed to God's work was he. Luther was God's choice to break down the walls of Romanism but Calvin was the man to rebuild them right; the great systematiser of Reformation truth. He suffered for it.

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