



# John Calvin's *Institutes in the Christian Religion* (1541)

A PPA Seminar: Fall 2017

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## Study 5: Chapter Three: The Law of God, Part 1

Read pgs. 109-145

*"...No one can conceive of [God] in all His greatness without at once being seized by the thought that He is the only one to whose majesty supreme honor is due. As from the knowledge of ourselves...the main thing is to rid ourselves of any illusions about our own strength, and to abandon all trust in our own righteousness... We must also be humbled by the thought of our utter poverty, and must learn perfect humility so as to abase ourselves and to cease all boasting" (Institutes, chap.3, pg. 109).*

**Scripture Reading: Exodus 20:1ff; Deuteronomy 4:10, 15, 5:1ff; Psalm 119; Isaiah 40:18-20, 45:10; Jeremiah 31:31-34**

1. Why is the Law of God necessary for us to know our Creator as Father and Lord? What is the "truest honor" that we can give to God as our Creator? [pgs. 109-112].
2. How can the Law of God reveal our need for God's mercy? How is the Law concerned about our hearts as well as our behavior? Pick one of the Ten Commandments, and give an example of how one commandment reveals sin and shows the need for God's mercy. [pgs. 113-118]
3. **What is the First Commandment?** How does God both establish His authority and reveal the Gospel in the First Commandment? [pgs. 120-123]
4. Summarize the purpose of the First Commandment in your own words. What specifically are four things every human being owes to God? Define each one. [pgs. 122-123]
  - i.
  - ii.
  - iii.
  - iv.
5. **What is the Second Commandment?** Distinguish between the first and second commandments. What are the two parts of the Second Commandment? [pgs. 124-133]

6. What are the various steps toward idolatry? How does this reveal both internal and external forms of idolatry? What is idolatry seeking to do? What does it reveal about man's need and God's truth? [pgs. 126-128]
7. How does Calvin find Augustine useful in his countering the claims of Roman Catholics who teach that images are "books for the illiterate"? What verbal and visible means has God graciously given so that all may come to Him and learn? [pgs. 128-129]
8. What does it mean that God is a "jealous" God (cf. Exodus 20:5)? What are three reasons why God refers to Himself as "jealous"? [pgs. 129-133]
9. How might knowing God is our "Husband" help us to be faithful to His worship? What are the consequences for our posterity if we disobey? If we obey by His grace? [pgs. 130-133]
10. **What is the Third Commandment?** In your own words, what are three points we should carefully observe concerning this commandment? How specifically can we break the Third Commandment? Give three specific examples. [pgs. 133-139]
11. **What is the Fourth Commandment?** What is the aim of the Fourth Commandment? [pgs. 139-145]
12. What does the Sabbath signify for God's people? What are the likenesses that exist between the external sign and the inner heart reality? [pgs. 140-141]
13. Is the Sabbath fulfilled in Christ? If yes, in your own words, explain briefly how it is fulfilled, and the spiritual benefits of this. [pgs. 142-145]
14. Should believers seek to keep the Fourth Commandment today? If yes, then how? Does Calvin offer helpful advice on how believers can avoid legalism and yet enjoy the Sabbath? Explain. [pgs. 142-145]
15. **Optional Advanced Question:** Note Calvin's distinction between the Sabbath and the Fourth Commandment. How does Calvin make an important distinction between the Ceremonial aspect of the law on the Sabbath, and yet upholds the Moral aspect of the same (for further thought, see Calvin's Commentaries and 'Institutes', 177-179, 1541 edition; also 2.8.1-6, 8, 28-34, 51-55, 1559 edition)?