Prayer
Scripture: Psalm 46
Hymn: 332 "All People that on Earth Do Dwell"

AFTER LEAVING GENEVA:

When Calvin and Farel were turned away from Geneva they made their way to Basel. Farel found lodging with the printer, John Oporin. Calvin's learned friend, Simon Grynaeus, took Calvin into his home. The blind Corauld joined Viret at Lausanne. He was called to a brief and unhappy pastors at Orbe where he died on October 4. It was believed that he had been poisoned. Calvin was so deeply grieved that he had difficulty sleeping. Du Tillet was so thoroughly disillusioned with Protestantism that he returned to Paris and to the Roman church. He tried to persuade Calvin to join him. He wrote Calvin giving reasons for his change, and knowing that Calvin had little or no money, offered to send him money. Though Calvin had no money and was dependent on help from friends, he refused any help from du Tillet, thanking him for earlier help, and appealing to the judgment of God to decide who were the schismatics tearing up the church, and praying for the Lord to keep him in his protection and to so direct him that he would not decline from the Lord's way. It was a painful parting for both. Calvin received news of the death of Olivetan. It was believed that he too had been poisoned. Only bitterly disappointing news came from Geneva. Calvin felt a deep sense of injury but he maintained that an all-wise God would vindicate His ways.

When Antoine Marcourt was called from Neuchâtel by Geneva to be one of the pastors, Farel was called to take his place in Neuchâtel. He tried to persuade Calvin to accompany him but Calvin insisted that he wanted nothing to do with church problems; he would devote himself to scholarly work.

In July, 1538, Calvin accepted an invitation from Bucet and Capito to visit them in Strasbourg. They proposed to open a French refugee church and wanted Calvin to be its pastor. Calvin refused and hastened back to Basel. Bucer and the Strasbourg Reformers sent him a letter begging for his help. Bucer became more urgent and threatened him with divine wrath and compared him to Jonah who tried to run away from the work to which God was calling him. Calvin finally gave in and about the beginning of September, 1538, he left Basel and went down the Rhine to Strasbourg where he would spend the next three and a half years. They would be some of the most productive, happiest, and most important of his life.

THE CITY OF STRASBOURG: (Strasbourg in French; Strassburg in German)

Strasbourg was a free imperial city of Germany. It had one of the finest of Gothic cathedrals. It was famous for its commerce and literary enterprises. Some of the first editions of the Bible were printed there. It was the cross-roads city between France, Germany, Switzerland, and the Low Countries. The various currents of the Reformation met there: German Lutherans, French Evangelicals, Anabaptists from the Low Countries, and Zwinglians from Switzerland. Strasbourg was the bulwark of the Reformation in Southwestern Germany. Martin Bucet, Wolfgang Capito and Caspar Hedio had worked there since 1523. Diebold Schwarz, a young cleric, had introduced in 1534 a German translation of the mass that reflected Lutheran beliefs. Bucet and Capito had established good order in the church with a program of preaching, sacraments, catechising and mutual edification. A board of lay workers cooperated with the ministers in visitation and discipline in the seven parishes of the city. The magistrates reserved to themselves the power of excommunication but allowed the ministers large areas of
freedom. Jacob Sturm (1489-1553) for many years had headed the city government. He was an able statesman, spoken of as "the father of his country (Alsace)." He supported the Reformation and took the lead in founding primary schools, Latin schools, and a school for the children of refugees. John Sturm (1507-89), (not a relative of Jacob) was a Paris trained educator who was rector of the Strasbourg gymnasium, one of the most renowned and successful of Renaissance schools. He was a liberal minded Protestant who continued friendly relations with Roman Catholics and hoped for reunion. He was two years older than Calvin, who had known him as a recognized scholar in Paris. The goal of his school was "to form men who are pious, learned, and capable of expressing themselves well." The curriculum gave a large place to classical literature with Cicero the favorite. Even though Calvin knew no German he became good friends with all these Strasbourg Reformers.

Strasbourg was a city of refuge for persecuted Protestants. Among its famous early refugees were Farel, Le Fevre, Roussel, and Michel d'Arande and many of the early Anabaptists. The wife of Matthew Zell, one of the preachers of Strasbourg, announced the policy of their home: Whoever recognizes in Jesus the true Son of God, the only Saviour, may boldly present himself at our house; we will receive him under our roof, and at our table. One day we also will have a part with them in the Kingdom of God. Lutherans, Zwinglians, Schwenkfeldians, Anabaptists--the wise and the foolish according to St. Paul's phrase--all have free access to our home.

Capito received many into his home and Bucer's house was called "the inn of righteousness."

MARTIN BUCER:

The spiritual leader of the city and its chief reformer when Calvin arrived was Bucer. Bucer was the young Dominican whom Luther had won for the Reformation at the Heidelberg meeting of the Augustinians. Later he had become a follower of Zwingli. Only Luther and Melanchthon were counted greater among the Reformers. He was the only one who enjoyed great success in debating and winning Anabaptists. He was the leading spirit in the Tetrapolitan Confession that the Zwinglians presented to the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. He was a man of generous, ironic spirit who longed to bring all the Protestants together. In 1530 he tried to unite Lutherans and Zwinglians on the Wittenberg Concord but Bullinger and the Swiss rejected his efforts claiming he had conceded too much to Luther. Bucer was seventeen years older than Calvin. He quickly won Calvin's admiration and confidence, and exercised great influence over him in ideas and temperament. From him Calvin learned much in the area of practical theology. Through Bucer Calvin became acquainted with many of the first generation of Reformers.

CALVIN'S BEGINNING IN STRASBOURG:

On September 8, 1538, Calvin preached his first sermon in Strasbourg in the Church of Saint Nicholas to a meeting of French refugees. For years the French had poured into Strasbourg but they had no organized congregation. Farel had preached to the French colony in 1523 with Lefèvre and Roussel in the group. They had no regular preacher when Calvin arrived. There were a little over four hundred of the Frenchmen. Calvin found them very congenial spirits with whom he had much in common. The first two months they continued to meet in the Church of St. Nicholas near the southern wall of the city. Calvin was soon preaching four times a week. In November they moved to the Franciscan Chapel of the Penitents on the left bank of the River Ill where for the first time Calvin led them in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In 1541 they moved to the church of the Dominicans in the center of Strasbourg, next to the convent that housed John Sturm's school.
Sturm invited Calvin to help in his gymnasium and appointed him "Lecturer in Holy Scripture." For Calvin this was a happy work. He and Bucer joined in training candidates for the ministry. In January, 1539, Calvin wrote Farel that he was lecturing or preaching daily.

Though Calvin worked hard, at first he had no salary. The school board voted in May, 1539, to give him an honorarium of fifty-two florins annually—a florin a week for lecturing every day. Calvin had to sell his personal library to live. He also had to sell the books he inherited from Olivier's estate. To supplement his income he took in young French boarders.

THE FRENCH REFUGEE CHURCH IN STRASBOURG:

Calvin's refugee church in Strasbourg was known as "the little French church." The civil government gave him a free hand in organizing and administering the church. In this peaceful and appreciative atmosphere Calvin was able to carry out successfully the plans that he had for Geneva. He preached four times a week and held the Lord's Supper once each month. He was able to establish and maintain a rigorous church discipline. He wanted an open church that would include all the people but only the worthy would be admitted to the Lord's Supper. In the place of the Roman consecration he introduced a private interview with the pastor. This gave him an opportunity to instruct the ignorant, to admonish the wayward, and to console and comfort those in distress. Bucer's practice in the German church made Calvin's work easier. In 1531 Bucer had established overseers over each parish, consisting of three members of the parish and three members of the town council to make sure that only the pure and sincere were admitted to communion. At first the council appointed the overseers but Bucer had insisted that it was the church's duty to nominate its elders. By 1536 he had established a fourfold ministry in the German church: pastor, teacher, elder, and deacon. Calvin borrowed this fourfold ministry.

One of Calvin's most important accomplishments was the development of his Strasbourg liturgy. He borrowed a large part of it from the liturgy of Bucer's German church—Bucer probably translated it for him. Calvin revised it to suit his own style and conception of worship. The sermon was given the central place. He sought a balance of fixed and extemporized prayers. One of the most distinctive features was the congregational singing of Psalms. After Calvin had left Strasbourg a Walloons student who visited the Strasbourg church wrote of the beauty of its worship, declaring that he was moved to tears. The Word of God was purely proclaimed and the sacraments were administered. In fine Psalms one heard the marvelous works of the Lord. Men and women alike praised the Lord and everybody had a book of music in his hand.

Calvin was exceedingly busy preaching, teaching, caring for his people, advising the town leaders, counselling with the ministers, entertaining visiting churchmen and people, answering letters, and pursuing his scholarly projects. On April 29, 1539, he wrote Farel that when the messenger came to take part of a book to the printer he still had eighty pages of proof to correct, a lesson and a sermon to prepare, four letters to write, a controversy to settle, and more than ten visitors to see. But Calvin was happy in his work and in July, 1539, he purchased citizenship in Strasbourg and joined the guild of the tailors.

CALVIN'S PUBLICATIONS IN STRASBOURG:

In 1539 Calvin published the little hymnbook entitled Some Psalms and Canticles Set to Music. It contained eighteen Psalms, seven of which were translated into French by Calvin himself. The others were the French translations of Marot whom Calvin had met in Italy. The Book contained three canticles and the Nunc Dimittis, the Ten Commandments and the Creed set to music.

In August, 1539, Calvin brought out a carefully revised and much
enlarged edition of his Institutes (in Latin). The first edition of 1536 contained six chapters, a small book to be hidden under the coat. The revised edition had seventeen chapters and was a large desk volume. Among the subjects enlarged and given fuller treatment were the knowledge of God and ourselves, the distinction between natural and revealed theology, the doctrine that the final authority of Scripture is firmly based on the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit witnessing to the reader that it is God who speaks through the words, the original state of man and the consequences of the fall, and election and reprobation as doctrines of divine revelation.

In January, 1539, Calvin had begun lectures on the Gospel of John in the school. Lectures on Corinthians followed. Next came lectures on Romans. His Commentary on Romans was the first of his long list of commentaries to be published. The preface was dated October 18, 1539. It was published in Strasburg, March, 1540, by Wendelin Rihel. In his preface he praised the commentaries on Romans by Melanchthon, Bucer, and Bullinger.

In 1540 Calvin published his book of liturgy, The Form of Prayers and Manner of Ministering the Sacrament according to the Use of the Ancient Church. The outline of the Roman mass was still discernable. He borrowed much from Bucer. Some of the prayers were his own compositions. There was a special treatment of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. The exhortation concerning the Lord's Supper warned the unworthy not to take it. Calvin set forth his doctrine of the Supper: We participate truly in Christ's body and blood so that we completely possess Him and He lives in us and we live in Him. He accomplishes in our souls spiritually all that He shows us in the outward visible signs. He is the heavenly bread that refreshes and nourishes us to eternal life. He modeled his marriage service on that of Farel. In 1540 he also published in French his Little Treatise on the Holy Supper of Our Lord. In 1545 it was published in Latin and widely circulated. One day Martin Luther, after lecturing on Genesis, followed by his students, walked into the bookstore of Moritz Glotz. Luther said to the bookseller, "Well now! What do they say of me in Frankfurt? Do they still want to burn the great heretic, Martin?" The bookseller replied, "No master, but here is a little book which comes from there and which deals with the Lord's Supper. Its author is Master John Calvin, who originally wrote it in French and Nicholas des Gollars has translated it into Latin. They say the author is a young man of great knowledge and piety and that in this book he shows how you have gone astray with Zwingli and Oecolampadius, on the article of the sacrament." Luther asked to see the book and eagerly read it. When he had finished he said to Glotz, "He is a man of faith and scholarship. If Oecolampadius and Zwingli had dealt with the business as he does, the dispute would have been shorter and less bitter.

THE EPISODE TO SADOLET:

One of the most important of Calvin's works was his Epistle to Sadolet, dated September 1, 1539. Jacques Sadolet (1477-1547) was one of the more admirable leaders in the Roman hierarchy. Erasmus numbered him among the true scholars. He had served as secretary to Leo X in 1513. He was made bishop of Carpentras. He received the rank of cardinal in 1538. He saw in the expulsion of Calvin and Farel from Geneva an opportunity to restore Geneva to papal obedience. He sent the Geneva magistrates a Latin Letter urging the necessity of unity with Rome, stressing the perpetuity of the church approved by unanimous consent for fifteen centuries and now challenged in the last twenty-five years by men who were over-bold and believed themselves clever. The magistrates of Geneva sent the letter to the magistrates of Bern who sent it to Calvin and begged him to answer it. Though Calvin wrote his answer in six days it is the masterpiece among his polemical works.
He set forth the nature of the true church and denied the charge of schism. He pictured the Romanists as soldiers who had deserted their commander and scattered in disorder. The Reformers were soldiers who raised aloft the ensign of the commander and called men back to their posts. The Lord had enlightened him with his Spirit and set his Word before him that he might expose and abominate pernicious and evil things. No one is a real theologian who forces other men into his own strait-jacket but never instructs them in a life directed to increase and adorn the glory of the Lord.

THE STORM OVER CAROLI:

In 1539, Pierre Caroli, who had charged Farel and Calvin with heresy on the Trinity at Geneva, and who had returned to the Roman church when he failed to persuade the synods of Lausanne and Bern in 1537, sought to return to Protestantism. In July he was received into the friendship of Farel and Viret. He came to Strasbourg with a letter of commendation from Simon Grynaeus, professor at Basel. He sought the approval of the ministers and professors of Strasbourg and renewed charges of heresy against Calvin. Bucer held a conference at which Caroli was allowed to present his charges. After Caroli retired from the conference, Calvin was brought in to present his side of the case. The Strasbourg ministers drew up an Act of Reconciliation which was signed by Caroli and the ministers. When Calvin saw that it contained Caroli's charge that he and Farel were the cause of his returning to Rome, Calvin stormed out of the room in great anger. Bucer followed and calmed him. Calvin secured a change in the wording. He wrote Farel on October 8 confessing that he had sinned in so losing his temper.

CALVIN'S MARRIAGE:

In May, 1539, Calvin wrote Farel that he was beginning to think of marriage. Friends had proposed to him two possible choices. In his letter to Farel he declared, "The only beauty that attracts me is this, that she should be modest, obliging, not arrogant, thrifty, patient and careful for my health." In February, 1540, Calvin wrote Farel that he was considering marriage with a well-to-do and nobly born young lady. Her brother and his wife were ardent admirers of Calvin and wanted him to marry the sister. Calvin insisted that she must learn French and when she refused he broke off the negotiations. A little later he sent his brother, Antoine, to propose for him to a young lady of more modest means. He wrote Farel asking him to perform the ceremony not later than the tenth of the next month. The young lady delayed her answer. By June when she accepted the proposal Calvin had heard reports on her conduct that caused him to withdraw the proposal, being convinced she was not sympathetic with his aims.

Early in August, 1540, Calvin was married by Farel to Idelette de Bure, a widow with a teenage son and a younger daughter. She was the widow of an Anabaptist artisan from Liege, Jean Stordeur. He and his wife had moved to Strasbourg where they were converted by Calvin. Calvin was impressed with her deep and sincere interest in the Word. Jean Stordeur had contracted the plague and died. The son had been one of Calvin's pupils. It was a happy marriage. Both Calvin and his wife suffered from poor health, but his greatly improved with her loving care. She was a devoted wife, willingly sharing his poverty. She proved very helpful in his ministry. Calvin and his friends praised her highly.

THE COLLOQUIES:

After the Emperor Charles V successfully ended his wars with Francis I of France in which he defeated the French and took the pope a prisoner, he called on France and the pope to join him in crushing the revolt in Germany. The strength of the Schmalkald League and the threat of the Turks in Austria prevented his attack on Germany. The
emperor wanted an ecumenical council to restore unity to the church but Pope Paul III would not call the council. The emperor grew more insistent in his demands for a council. The German Reichstag was to meet in Frankfurt in April, 1539. The emperor called an imperial conference in Frankfurt in February as a preliminary to the meeting of the Reichstag he proposed a series of friendly discussions between Catholics and Protestants looking toward Christian unity. If the discussions did not bring a union, a few concessions could be made to the Protestants and then if they would not return to Rome, he could declare them unreasonable in their demands and would be justified in crushing them with force. Both sides were to send representatives to the colloquies in leading German cities to present their cases.

Bucer and John Sturm represented Strasbourg in the meeting in Frankfurt in February. Calvin went along in no official capacity but hoping to plead for aid to the French Protestants. At Frankfurt he made the acquaintance of Melanchthon. It was the beginning of a great friendship. Calvin found they had much in common and that they agreed on the Lord’s Supper. Calvin was troubled by Melanchthon’s willingness to make concessions to the emperor.

After the April meeting of the Reichstag in Frankfurt the first of the conferences was held in Haguenau in June, 1540, and was disappointing in that it hardly got beyond preliminaries. The next colloquy was held in Worms in November, 1540. Both sides had been ordered to send eleven representatives. Calvin went as a delegate of Strasbourg and representative of Duke Ernst of Lueneburg. He played an important part in preparing the Protestant case and was so impressive in a dispute with Dean Robert Mosham of Passau that Melanchthon and the German theologians gave him the title "the Theologian." In the main discussion Melanchthon and Eck were the chief disputants. It was more of a real debate. Calvin formed an unfavorable opinion of Eck. He wrote an epic poem of sixty-one distichs celebrating what he considered a Protestant triumph over the Romanists. Eck was backed by Cochlaeus, Nausea, and Pelangus. The Colloquy of Worms was broken off in January, 1541, to be resumed at the Diet of Regensburg (Ratisbon) in April, 1541, in the presence of the emperor.

The Diet of Regensburg, the final debate, opened April 5, 1541. At the special request of Melanchthon Calvin appeared as a delegate of Strasbourg. The Catholic side was represented by Dr. Joen Eck, professor of Ingolstadt, Julius Pflug, canon of Mainz, and John Gropper, professor of canon law at Cologne. The Protestant spokesmen were Melanchthon from Wittenberg, Bucer of Strasbourg, and Pistorius of Nidda in Hesse. Granvella presided in the name of the emperor. Cardinal Contarini, an enlightened prelate who held some evangelical views and favored a moderate reformation, was the legate of Pope Paul III. Both sides were willing to accept the doctrine of original sin and the bondage of the will. The Catholics agreed to the evangelical view of justification by faith if Luther’s "sola" be omitted. Also they were willing to grant the cup to the laity in the Eucharist. Calvin was given an opportunity to speak in Latin against transubstantiation as a scholastic fiction and against the adoration of the wafer as idolatry. The negotiations failed because of extremists on both sides. The emperor closed the Diet on July 28 promising to use his influence to get the pope to call a general council to deal with the theological questions.

Calvin secured permission to leave Regensburg about the middle of June because of an outbreak of the plague in Strasbourg. He had received news of the death of one of his deacons, Claude Ferray, his friends Bedrotus and Capito, one of his boarders, Louis de Richeborg, and the sons of Oecolampadius, Zwingli, and Hedio. He wrote a moving letter to the father of Louis de Richeborg and poured out his grief in a letter to Farel.
At the colloquies Calvin had been a keen observer and penetrating critic of religious affairs. He had made the acquaintance of the religious leaders of the day and had proved himself the leading representative of French Protestantism. His pleas for tolerance for the French Protestants brought a letter of appreciation from Marguerite of Angoulême, Queen of Navarre. In letters to Farel Calvin voiced his private criticisms of the German theologians for their subservience to the princes, for their willingness to compromise, and for their ambiguous formulas. The colloquies had convinced him of the great need for unity among the Protestants. He considered Eck an impudent babbler and sophist; the king's representative, Du Veil was a busy blockhead; he saw little difference between Bishop Morone, a special papal nuncio, and Contarini, except that Morone wanted to subdue the Protestants by bloodshed and Contarini without bloodshed. Calvin was urged to have a meeting with Contarini but he refused.

THE INVITATION TO RETURN TO GENEVA:

Things had not gone well in Geneva. The citizens split into hostile parties over the city's policy toward Bern. The Artichauds supported articles of agreement with Bern. The Guillermins (taken from Guillaume, the name of Farel) worked for the return of Calvin, declaring the expulsion of the Reformers was a blunder. The ministers, Antoine Marcourt and Jean Morand, resigned and left the city in September, 1540. The Guillermins gained the ascendency in July. On September 21, 1540, the Little Council voted to recall Calvin. Two deputations and numerous letters were sent to persuade him to return. When they learned that he was in Worms at the Colloquy the deputations hastened to Worms. Calvin refused their invitation. On October 22 the Councils and syndics sent a more urgent letter sealed with the motto, "After the darkness I hope for the light." Strasbourg wanted Calvin to stay. Calvin wrote Farel that he would prefer a hundred deaths rather than go back to the cross of Geneva where he would die a thousand times a day. Geneva finally persuaded Bucer that Calvin should return. Farel came to Strasbourg and threatened Calvin with divine wrath if he did not again take up the yoke God had laid upon him. Calvin finally yielded with fear and trembling, declaring, "I offer my heart to God as a sacrifice." On September 13, 1541, he reentered Geneva.