

# Dare All Things by the Word of God ■ John Calvin and His Preaching

by John Piper

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of living to display the supremacy, majesty, and glory of God, as implicit in His being and explicit in His Word. It highlights the need for humanity to exist for the praise of God's grace and laments the shift towards self-centered Christianity. The sermon delves into John Calvin's life, showcasing his unwavering devotion to magnifying God's glory through the Word, despite facing internal and external challenges. It concludes with a call for pastors to boldly proclaim the majesty of God through expository preaching.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 19:1, Ephesians 1:6, 1 John 5:7, 2 Timothy 4:2, Romans 9:20

**Topics:** "God's Glory", "Expository Preaching"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Implicit in the absoluteness of God's being, when he said, I am who I am, implicit in that absoluteness is that we should live for the display of his supremacy and his majesty and his glory. His very being implies that that's what our lives should be about. And explicit in the Word of God is the implication that all creation and all redemption, all providence, is unto the praise of the glory of the grace of God.

So we are to exist unto, for the purpose of praising, displaying, making known the glory of the grace of God. That's Ephesians 1.6. So implicit in his being and explicit in the Word is that humanity exists to display the glory of the grace of God. That's why you exist and everybody in your churches exists and everybody on this planet exists.

Yet, that is not why many churches manifestly exist. David Wells has written this sentence which sobers me. It is this God, majestic and holy in his being, who has disappeared from the modern evangelical world.

Leslie Newbigin, being quoted in Christianity Today about ten years ago, gives the British angle on that kind of sentiment. Here's what he says, I suddenly saw that someone could use all the language of evangelical Christianity and yet the center was fundamentally the self, my need of salvation, and God is auxiliary to that. I also saw that quite a lot of evangelical Christianity can easily slip, can become centered in me and my need of salvation and not the glory of God.

And oh how we have slipped. How many churches today would it be true that the dominant experience is the precious weight of the glory of God? The dominant sense. Go here, you leave here, and it's the weight of the glory of God that's the main thing.

John Calvin, in his own day, saw this as the fundamental problem with the Roman Catholic Church of his day. Beneath everything else, this was the problem. In 1538, the Italian Cardinal Sottole wrote to the leaders of Geneva, Reformation Center, trying to win them back to the Roman Catholic Church, beginning with a long conciliatory excursus on eternal life.

Calvin wrote his response in six days in the fall of 1539, and his response is important because early in his ministry and it signals the fundamental issue for him in his reform labors over against the Roman Catholic Church. He had quarrels on justification, quarrels on priestly abuses, transubstantiation, prayers to the Saints, papal authority. Those were not the most fundamental issue for Calvin.

All of them came in for discussion in that response to Sottole, but there was something more central, more deep that relates to this issue, namely the centrality and supremacy of the majesty of the glory of God. You shift that from the center and everything goes wrong. So he says this key sentence to the Cardinal concerning that long conciliatory excursus on eternal life, your zeal for heavenly life is a zeal which keeps a man entirely devoted to himself and does not even by one expression arouse him to sanctify the name of God.

That's the fundamental issue. Even a doctrine as shared and as precious as eternal life can be so skewed as to displace God at the center and God as the goal. That was Calvin's chief contention with Rome, and it would be, I believe, his chief contention with the Evangelical Church in Rome today.

Comes out over and over and over again. So what he says positively to Sottole and to us, and it is the mission of his life, he says, set before man as the prime motive of his existence, zeal to illustrate the glory of God. That's what I think we should write as the banner over Calvin's life.

Zeal to illustrate the glory of God. Benjamin Warfield said of Calvin, no man ever had a profounder sense of God than he. I would just plead with you, get a profound sense of God.

It's the relentless orientation on the glory of God that gives coherence to all of Calvin's life and the Reformed tradition that flowed from him. Gerhardus Voss, in his essay on the Reformed tradition, said the all-embracing slogan of the Reformed faith is this, the work of grace in the sinner as a mirror of the glory of God. The work of grace in the sinner as a mirror of the glory of God.

I hope it will be said of your life when you have a stone written on your grave. He was a mirror. He labored in all his ways to be a mirror of the glory of God.

Mirroring God's glory was the meaning of John Calvin's life and ministry. He wrote a commentary on Colossians in which he asks this question, how comes it that we are carried about with so many strange doctrines? And he meant what T.H.L. Parker, in his little biography, described like this. He meant these

doctrines.

Rome had destroyed the glory of Christ in many ways. By calling upon the saints to intercede when Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and man. By adoring the Blessed Virgin when Christ alone shall be adored.

By offering a continual sacrifice in the mass when the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is complete and suffering. By elevating tradition to the level of Scripture and even making the Word of God dependent on its authority to the Word of Man. How comes it, Calvin asks, that we are carried about with so many strange doctrines? And here's his answer.

Because the excellence of Christ is not perceived by us. In other words, the great guardian throughout the centuries of robust, God-centered, Christ-exalting biblical orthodoxy, the guardian is a passion for the fullness of the glory of the excellency of God in Christ. Where that central passion shifts, everything goes wrong.

Church goes wrong. Marriages go wrong. Children go wrong.

Society goes wrong. Doctrine goes wrong. Evangelism goes wrong.

Missions goes wrong. Everything goes wrong when the centrality of the passion for the supremacy of the fullness of the excellency of God in Christ is not the center passion of the pastors, the seminary teachers, and the evangelists, and the missionaries, the Sunday school teachers, and the nursery workers. I wish you could walk into our nursery and see what's on the wall, but that's another message.

I have two questions to ask about the life and ministry of John Calvin. What happened to Calvin to make him a man mastered by the majesty of God in the Word? What happened to make him a man so mastered by the majesty of God in the Word? Second question, what did that produce? What kind of life and ministry did being mastered by the majesty of God in the Word produce? That's the outline of my talk, those two questions. So let's tackle the first one.

What happened? Calvin was born in 1509, July 10, same day my good friend David Livingston, who's on staff with me, was married. He's always prided himself that he got married on John Calvin's birthday. That's how I remember David's anniversary.

1509, we don't know a lot, we know some. He studied law, he studied theology, was born in France, he was Frenchman, totally Roman Catholic, sold out to the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church until sometime around the age of 21. By 1533, we know something absolutely dramatic had happened, and he had totally imbibed the spirit of the Reformation and the doctrines of the Reformation.

He describes what happened. He doesn't tell us when. Let me read you the key section of Calvin's own testimony concerning what happened in his life.

When lo, a very different form of doctrine started up. That means the Reformation doctrine. Not one which led us away from the Christian profession, but one which brought it back to its fountain, to its original purity.

Offended by the novelty, I lent an unwilling ear, and at first I confess strenuously and passionately resisted to confess. I had all my life long been in ignorance and error. I at length perceived as if light had broken in

upon me, in what a sty of error I had wallowed, and how much pollution and impurity I had thereby contracted.

Being exceedingly alarmed at the misery into which I had fallen, as in duty-bound I made it my first business to betake myself to the way of God, condemning my past life not without groans and tears. God, by a sudden conversion, subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame. Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with an intense desire to make progress.

So what was the foundation of John Calvin's faith and a life devoted to the displaying of the glory of God? I think the answer is that Calvin suddenly, as he says, saw and tasted in Scripture the majesty of God, and in that moment God and the Word of God were so powerfully, unquestionably authenticated to his soul that he became a servant of that God and the servant of that Word. Let's let him talk to us for a moment about this. I hope this has happened to you, and if it hasn't, then either you need to seek earnestly conversion or you need to pray that the Holy Spirit would so breathe upon the authenticity of your tiny little seed of life that it would flower into the fullness of a passion for the majesty of God in his Word.

Let's let Calvin talk to us about this a little bit. He said, our Heavenly Father, revealing his majesty in the Word, lifts a reverence for Scripture beyond the realm of controversy. Now there's the key for Calvin.

Encountering the majesty of God in the Scripture lifts Scripture for him above the realm of controversy. The witness to God's majesty in Scripture is immediate, unassailable, life-giving revelation. Let's go a little deeper.

Let's push on Calvin here and press. He writes, therefore, illumined by the Spirit's power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that the Scripture is from God, but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty, just as we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself, that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. Now there are several absolutely stunning things in that paragraph.

One, the central one, is that the mouth of God is revealing the majesty of God in a book, the Bible. And what one sees when one's eyes are opened in reading the Bible is the self-authenticating, self-evidencing, lifting-above-controversy majesty of God. That's one stunning thing in this paragraph.

The more stunning thing is the statement that this is above all human judgment, even your own. That is baffling. It was baffling to me the first time I read it.

Let me read it to you again. Therefore, illumined by the Spirit's power, we believe neither by our own or anyone else's judgment that the Scripture is from God. What can it possibly mean to say that you come to believe in the Bible as the very Word of God, not by your judgment? What can that even mean? Let alone whether it's right.

I have thought a long time, thought for years about trying to understand this reality of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, which is what this is about. And here is my effort to give an account of what I think he meant letting the Apostle John interpret Calvin. We do that in reverse.

I'm gonna read the verses that I think are key from 1st John 5. These are the most important verses on the testimony of the Spirit concerning God's Word and truth, but here's what John says in 1st John 5, 7 to 11. Trying to understand Calvin's conversion to a mastery by the majesty of God mediated by the Word of

Scripture. That's what I'm trying to understand.

John writes, verse 7, it is the Spirit who bears witness because the Spirit is the truth. That's worth about an hour, but let's drop to verse 9, keep going. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.

For the witness of God is this, that he has borne witness concerning his Son. Now that sounds like double talk. Don't ever call John guilty of double talk.

He is the deepest writer in the New Testament in the simplest grammar. The witness of God is this. I'm reading again what I just read.

The witness of God is this, that he has borne witness concerning his Son. I'm dropping to verse 11. The witness is this.

Here we're close to the bottom. We are at the bottom as far as I can get to the bottom. The witness is this, that God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son.

Now let me try to tell you what I think that means and how Calvin said you arrive at a passion for the supremacy of the majesty of God in the Scriptures above your own judgment. What does he mean by that? That verse 11, God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son, is the witness. I take to mean that the essential nature of the divine witness is the miracle of giving life to the soul.

So if you were to ask Lazarus, for example, who is dead in the tomb, how he came to be persuaded that he is alive and Christ made him alive, I think he would say there was a witness, there was a word, and the word was, Lazarus, come forth, and I knew I'm alive above all judgment by reason and excursus. I think that's what he would say. I'm alive, a word sounded in my heart, and I'm alive.

That's the divine witness. You're alive by the Word of God and the bottom of our confidence is not any long train of argument by which we conclude that this is divine power, but we're alive. I think that's what Calvin meant.

In that instant, we do not reason from premises to conclusions as valuable, Calvin would say, as those are. I write books. I believe in thinking.

In that instant, we do not reason from premises to conclusion. We see that we are awake and there was no human judgment that made us awake to the majesty of that voice. We are just alive and we hear it and we're walking out of the tomb in response to it, and there is the marvel.

So in his early 20s, John Calvin experienced a miracle. His blind eyes were opened by the Spirit of God, and what he saw immediately without any intervening chain of human reasoning was two things interwoven. One, the majesty of God, and two, the Word of God.

The Word mediated the majesty, the majesty vindicated the Word, and henceforth he would be a man utterly devoted to displaying the majesty of God through the Word of God. That's my answer to question number one. What happened to this man? That's what happened, to make him devote his whole life to displaying the majesty of God in his Word.

Second question, last question, what did it produce? What kind of ministry, man, life did being mastered by the majesty of God in the Word produce? What has it and will it produce in you? Or are you asking that question? What kind of pastor, teacher, Sunday school teacher, small group leader should I be if I am

mastered by the majesty of God in his Word? What will it produce? What kind of husband, what kind of father, what kind of citizen, what kind of friend? You get asked that question. What would it look like if this encounter gets bent out in life and ministry? 1536 now, he's 27 years old. An amnesty had been offered briefly in France between killing Reformation people.

He went back, got his sister and his brother, and then left and never went back to his homeland ever again, and with tears wrote letters to those who were being burned at the stake for being reformed. He's on his way to Strasbourg, and he wants one thing, a life of leisure to write on behalf of the Reformation. He's a scholar through and through, and God obviously had other plans.

He wrote, I have learned from experience that we cannot see very far before us. When I promised myself an easy, tranquil life, what I least expected was at hand. Charles V and Francis I at war were moving troops, and the troops blocked his way to Strasbourg.

Don't you love how God will turn the whole world upside down to position his pastors where they ought to be, or cause a Roman law to be passed to get a virgin to Bethlehem? You don't ever know what's going on in this world. You do not ever know what is going on in this world. The macro movements of God have meanings you could never begin to fathom, and a lot of them have to do with you, and oh how we should trust him.

So he went to Geneva instead of Strasbourg. Briefly, he hoped, and he met William Farrell, and Farrell came to him that night, and here's the record of what happened, written in his preface to the Commentary on the Psalms. Farrell, who burned with an extraordinary zeal to advance the gospel, immediately 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 imprecations that God would curse my retirement and the tranquility of the studies which I sought if I should withdraw and refuse to give assistance when the necessity was so urgent, and by this imprecation I was so stricken with terror that I desisted from my journey which I had undertaken, and the whole world was changed.

History changed that night. I have delivered a few words like that to people. They haven't always obeyed.

I have tried to be a Farrell for some people I thought should change their mind and their life, but Farrell's word landed with great power, and Calvin now, for the rest of his life, would never have tranquil studies. He would write commentaries, books, tracts, sermons, letters, all of them from now on hammered out on the anvil of pastoral life and pressure. So he took his responsibilities first in the university, professor of sacred scripture, a few months later appointed pastor of St. Peter's, one of the three parishes in Geneva, 10,000 people in this city.

The city council could see immediately that he and Farrell had much clout and did not bow the knee the way they should to the secular authorities, but believed in a free church and therefore they banished them in April of 1538, and for three years Calvin was a pastor to 500 French refugees in Strasbourg, teaching the New Testament. May 1st, 1541, the city council thinks better of it. They can't handle this city, therefore they remove the banishment, and Calvin faces the agonizing choice once more whether to go back, and he says, yet because I know that I am not my own master, I offer my heart as a true sacrifice to the Lord.

Frank Thielman quoted his life motto, promptly and sincerely, I offer my heart. Prompte et sinceri. And he went back, and for 23 more years he labored as a pastor.

He had married Idelette during those three years. She was the widow of an Anabaptist. She had two children, and so he got a son and a daughter, and when he went back they had a son, July 28, 1542, and he died two weeks later.

Calvin wrote, the Lord has certainly inflicted a severe bitter wound in the death of our baby son, but he is himself a father and knows best what is good for his children. That's just a window in the absolute submission of John Calvin to the living God. He had two more children, and they died in childbirth or soon after, and then in 1549, nine years after they were married, Idelette died.

So picture 54 years of life. He died at age 54, the same age Jonathan Edwards died, and of the 54 years, he was married for nine of those years. He never remarried after Idelette died, and that's probably a good thing, because his pace and his nature was so absolutely lopsided in its devotion to his work that probably he would not have made a good husband.

Coladon, his friend, wrote this trying to capture the flavor of his life. Calvin did not spare himself at all, working far beyond what his power and regard for his health could stand. He preached commonly every day for one week in two, twice on every Sunday, a total of ten times in every fortnight.

Every week he lectured three times in theology. He was at the consistory on the appointed day and made the remonstrances. Every Friday at the Bible study, what he added after the leader had made his declaration was almost a lecture.

He never failed in visiting the sick, in private warning and counsel, and the rest of the numberless matters arising out of the ordinary exercise of his ministry. But besides these ordinary tasks, he had great care for believers in France, both in teaching them and exhorting and counseling them and consoling them by letters when they were being persecuted, and also in interceding for them. Yet all that did not prevent him from going on working at his special study and composing many splendid and very useful books.

He was, as Musculus says, a bow always strung. In one way, he took care of his health because he discovered that he could only eat one meal a day in order to contain his diseases. If he ate more, there would be consequences with migraines and stomach ailment.

But in another way, he neglected his health because of the way he worked and was careless, probably, of his health. You can hear the drivenness of this man in 1546 in a letter to Falais. Apart from the sermons and the lectures, there is a month gone by in which I have scarce done anything.

In such a wise, I am almost ashamed to live thus useless. Apart from the sermons and the lectures, 20 sermons and 12 lectures in one month is a wasted month. So you can feel the drivenness of this man.

His ill health was really quite sad. There was an iron constancy of will that kept him going, but in 1564, when he was 53, he described his colic, spitting of blood, his ague, his gout, his excruciating suffering from hemorrhoids, and worst of all, his kidney stones. Listen to this description.

These stones gave me exquisite pain. At length, not without the most painful strainings, I ejected a calculus, which in some degree mitigated my sufferings, but such was its size that it lacerated the urinary canal, and the copious discharge of blood flowed. This hemorrhage could only be arrested by the injection of milk through a syringe.

Those were hard days to be sick. On top of sickness, there was pressure of threats from enemies. I have lived amid continual bickerings.

I have been from derision saluted of an evening before my door with 40 or 50 shots of a musket. Troops would come, be within a half an hour of enemies, and he wrote about them in a letter to Melanchthon. Whence you may conclude that we have not only exile to fear, but that all the most cruel varieties of death are impending over us, for in the cause of religion they will set no bounds to their barbarity.

Besides sickness and enemies from it out, there were so many enemies from within. The Libertines in Geneva were unspeakable. There was a law when he came that you could only have one mistress in Geneva, and he took his stand in obviously a more biblical place and therefore ran into conflict with the Libertines who considered themselves free in Christ to eat the Lord's Supper, keep mistresses.

We're free, and this led to, of course, a tremendous and dangerous conflict, and let me just give you the quote where it came to a head. It was a critical moment. The Lord's Day had arrived, the day of eating the Lord's Supper, 1553.

He knew there would be a crisis and a conflict. It's very similar to Jonathan Edwards. Similar, not the same.

The sermon had been preached. The prayers had been offered. Calvin descended from the pulpit to take his place beside the elements at the communing table.

The bread and wine were duly consecrated by him, and he was not ready. He was not ready to distribute them to the communicants. I think that's supposed to be now.

Now ready. Then, on a sudden, a rush was begun by the troublers in Israel in the direction of the communion table. Calvin flung his arms around the sacramental vessels as if to protect them from sacrilege, while his voice rang through the building.

These hands you may crush. These arms you may lop off. My life you may take.

My is yours. You may shed it, but you shall never force me to give holy things to the profaned and dishonor the table of my God. And Beza, in his earliest biography, wrote, after this, the sacred ordinance was celebrated with a profound silence and under solemn awe, in all present, as if the deity himself had been visible among them.

Now what's the point of my pointing out physical ailments, external opposition, internal crisis? My point is simply to say that my first answer to the question, what kind of life, what kind of ministry did being mastered by the majesty of God in the Word of God produce, is it produced iron constancy in his calling. Invincible constancy was his phrase for what God required of ministers. And now I have one more answer to the second question, what kind of life, what kind of ministry.

There was a focus to this invincible constancy, and it was the focus on the Word of God. It was the Word of God that had mediated the majesty of God. The majesty of God had vindicated the Word of God, and therefore in the constancy of devotion to the majesty of God, the Word of God must be absolutely not only central but pervasive.

And therefore, it was a life of absolutely unending exposition. Everything in his life was exposition. Everything.

Tracts, the Institutes, starting small, five editions, got big. Commentaries on all the New Testament books except Revelation, the Pentateuch, Psalms, Isaiah, Joshua, biblical lectures that became commentaries on all the other Old Testament books, ten sermons every two weeks, three lectures every week, and all of it exposition. All of it exposition of Scripture.

Nothing out of his own head, at least by his own intention. He wrote in his last will in Testament, I have endeavored both in my sermons and also in my writings and commentaries to preach the Word purely and chastely and faithfully to interpret His sacred Scriptures. And of all these things, commentaries, writings, tracts, preeminent was preaching.

Preeminent was preaching. On the 400th anniversary of his birth, his most voluminous biographer, and I don't know how to pronounce this name, Dumerge perhaps, come up to me and tell me afterwards, D-O-U-M-E-R-G-U-E, stood in Calvin's pulpit in Geneva and said, that is the Calvin who seems to me to be the real and authentic Calvin, the one who explains all the other Calvins, namely Calvin the preacher of Geneva, molding by his words the spirit of the Reformed of the 16th century. And his preaching as the centerpiece of his ministry was of only one kind, exposition of the Word of God.

He never wavered for 25 years in St. Peter's Church of Geneva to preach the Scriptures book after book. On Sunday, he always took New Testament texts except once or twice, and during the week he would take Old Testament texts and do the expositions and give you some idea of the scope of this man's exposition. I just hope that some of you young pastors at the front end of your ministry dream a dream like this.

It is not a dream that will be held out to you in any church planting seminar anywhere in America. He began the book of Acts, August 25, 1549, and ended it March of 1554, five years later. He moved to 1 Thessalonians, 46 sermons, then to Corinthians, 186 sermons, then to the pastoral letters, 86 sermons, then to Galatians, 43 sermons, then to Ephesians, 48 sermons, until May of 1558.

Then he was so sick there were several months which he didn't preach, and then in the spring of 1559, he began his exposition of the harmony of the Gospels, and he died before he finished it. 159 sermons on Job during the week, 200 sermons on Deuteronomy during the week, 353 sermons on Isaiah during the week, 123 sermons on Genesis during the week. That's how the Reformation happened and was sustained.

One of the clearest and almost humorous illustrations of his absolute devotion to expository sequential preaching was that on Easter Day, 1538, he finished his sermon, walked out, and was banished from Geneva for three years. And when he came back, September 1541, three years later, he picked up in the next verse. Why, Calvin, and I'm closing, I'm moving toward the end with this, why, Calvin, this devotion to this kind of preaching? Exposition of the Word, and I don't think Calvin, he might, I don't think he would, I wouldn't, Stott wouldn't equate exposition with only moving verse by verse through a book.

Exposition means you have a text in front of you and you're telling the people what it means and applying it to their lives with great Holy Spirit power. Doesn't matter whether you go sequentially so much, but he did. So let's ask him, Calvin, why? Why this this way of living your life? Three answers and we'll be done.

Number one, Calvin believed, in his words, that the lamp of the Word of God had gone out in the church. Has it today? And he said, Thy Word, which ought to have shone on all my people like a lamp, was taken away, or at least suppressed, as to us. And now, O Lord, what remains to a wretch like me but earnestly to supplicate Thee, not to judge according to my deserts, that fearful abandonment of the Word of God from which in Thy wondrous goodness Thou hast at last delivered me.

He's describing his 23 years before he discovered the majesty of God in the Word, and he describes it as a fearful abandonment of the Word of God. Ask yourself whether American churches could be described as a famine of the Word or a fearful abandonment of the Word. Second answer, I suppose I should add the sentence in connection with that first one.

Therefore, Calvin believed that moving through books in expository way was the best antidote to the fearful abandonment of the Word of God. Number two, THL Parker says that Calvin had a horror of those who preached their own ideas in the pulpit. It was a horror to him that a place like this, when sermons are being given, would speak our own ideas.

He said, when we enter the pulpit, it is not so that we may bring our own dreams and fantasies with us. He believed that expositing the Scripture book by book is the best way that the whole counsel of God could be brought to bear on the church. He wanted the majesty of God in the fullness of his justice, in the fullness of his love, and the fullness of his wisdom, and the fullness of his power.

It's called Reformed theology. The fullness of the biblical witness to the whole God would come through, and he judged preaching all of Scripture is the best and safest way for that to happen. Finally, number three, my third answer, the majesty of God in his Word would best be seen through expository preaching.

Here's a quote, let the pastors boldly dare all things by the Word of God. Let them constrain all the power, all the glory, all the excellency of the world to give place to the divine majesty of the Word. That's the key phrase.

He wanted the divine majesty of God in the divine majesty of the Word to be seen and known, and my conviction is that that is the desperate need of our day, and that this kind of preaching will never ever disappear, even after iPods, CDs, videos, dramas, narrative stories of all kinds. It will never disappear for this reason, the majesty of God in his Word will summon us again and again. This is my Word! What are you doing? We may be able to go for a generation or two playing games in the pulpit, but the Word of God is going to have its say, and there will be a generation raised up that believes this again.

The call of God to the ministry of the Word of God comes from seeing the majesty of God in the Word. Let me tell you how that happened for me in prayer. I was teaching for six years at Bethel College, and I loved it.

I am so glad there are teachers. I had some, I was one, but after six years something began to happen in me, a rumbling. Actually, it began slowly.

I would go to church on Sunday and I would hear a good sermon and I would say, I would love to handle the Word like that. I would go to church and hear a bad sermon and I would say, we've got to do better than that. So whether it was bad or whether it was good, it was a pincer on me.

I got a sabbatical in January of 1979 and I aimed to write a book on Romans 9, which was published as The Justification of God. All I did from January of 1979 to October of 1979 was read and study Romans 9

and everything I could read about it, because I had to understand, is this God that I think is here in his absolutely sovereign majesty, the God of the Bible, the God of the church? And on October 14, 1979, at 1 a.m. in the morning, I'm tempted to say, fire! But that would put me in the class with Pascal and I shouldn't be there. But I will just say, after nine pages of journaling about my life and about the majesty of God in Romans 9, the word that I heard through the Word, there was no voice, just through the Word was, I, the God of Romans 9, in my absolute sovereignty, will not just be analyzed, will not just be explained, I will be proclaimed.

Go to bed and ask your wife about it. And I did, and she said, whatever God calls you to do. Father, may this kind of thing happen for the aspiring pastors at Beeson Divinity School.

I pray that there would be an encounter of the majesty of God in the Word of God, and that they would dare all things by the Word. In Jesus' name.

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