

# Ten Effects of Believing in the Five Points of Calvinism

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These ten points are my personal testimony to the effects of believing in the five points of Calvinism. I have just completed teaching a seminar on this topic and was asked by the class members to post these reflections so they could have access to them. I am happy to do so. They, of course, assume the content of the course, which is [available online](#) from Desiring God Ministries, but I will write them here in the hope that they might stir others to search, Berean-like, to see if the Bible teaches what I call "Calvinism."

## **1. These truths make me stand in awe of God and lead me into the depth of true God-centered worship.**

I recall the time I first saw, while teaching Ephesians at Bethel College in the late '70's, the threefold statement of the goal of all God's work, namely, "to the praise of the glory of his grace" ([Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14](#)).

It has led me to see that we cannot enrich God and that therefore his glory shines most brightly not when we try to meet his needs but when we are satisfied in him as the essence of our deeds. "From him and through him and to him are all things. To him the glory forever" ([Romans 11:36](#)). Worship becomes an end in itself.

It has made me feel how low and inadequate are my affections, so that the Psalms of longing come alive and make worship intense.

## **2. These truths help protect me from trifling with divine things.**

One of the curses of our culture is banality, cuteness, cleverness. Television is the main sustainer of our addiction to superficiality and triviality.

God is swept into this. Hence the trifling with divine things.

Earnestness is not excessive in our day. It might have been once. And, yes, there are imbalances in certain people today who don't seem to be able to relax and talk about the weather.

Robertson Nicole said of Spurgeon, "Evangelism of the humorous type [we might say, church growth of the marketing type] may attract multitudes, but it lays the soul in ashes and destroys the very germs of religion. Mr. Spurgeon is often thought by those who do not know his sermons to have been a humorous preacher. As a matter of fact there was no preacher whose tone was

more uniformly earnest, reverent and solemn" (Quoted in *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, p. 57).

### **3. These truths make me marvel at my own salvation.**

After laying out the great, God-wrought salvation in Ephesians 1, Paul prays, in the last part of that chapter, that the effect of that theology will be the enlightenment of our hearts so that we marvel at our hope, and at the riches of the glory of our inheritance, and at the power of God at work in us – that is, the power to raise the dead.

Every ground of boasting is removed. Brokenhearted joy and gratitude abound.

The piety of Jonathan Edwards begins to grow. When God has given us a taste of his own majesty and our own wickedness, then the Christian life becomes a thing very different than conventional piety. Edwards describes it beautifully when he says,

The desires of the saints, however earnest, are humble desires: their hope is a humble hope, and their joy, even when it is unspeakable, and full of glory, is humble, brokenhearted joy, and leaves the Christian more poor in spirit, and more like a little child, and more disposed to a universal lowliness of behavior (*Religious Affections*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, pp. 339f).

### **4. These truths make me alert to man-centered substitutes that pose as good news.**

In my book, *The Pleasures of God* (2000), pp. 144-145, I show that in the 18th century in New England the slide from the sovereignty of God led to Arminianism and thence to universalism and thence to Unitarianism. The same thing happened in England in the 19th century after Spurgeon.

Iain Murray's *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), p. 454, documents the same thing: "Calvinistic convictions waned in North America. In the progress of the decline which Edwards had rightly anticipated, those Congregational churches of New England which had embraced Arminianism after the Great Awakening gradually moved into Unitarianism and universalism, led by Charles Chauncy."

You can also read in J. I. Packer's *Quest for Godliness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), p. 160, how Richard Baxter forsook these teachings and how the following generations reaped a grim harvest in the Baxter church in Kidderminster.

These doctrines are a bulwark against man-centered teachings in many forms that gradually corrupt the church and make her weak from the inside, all the while looking strong or popular.

[1 Timothy 3:15](#), "The church of the living God [is] the pillar and bulwark of the truth."

### **5. These truths make me groan over the indescribable disease of our secular, God-belittling culture.**

I can hardly read the newspaper or look at a TV ad or a billboard without feeling the burden that God is missing.

When God is the main reality in the universe and is treated as a non-reality, I tremble at the wrath that is being stored up. I am able to be shocked. So many Christians are sedated with the same drug as the world. But these teachings are a great antidote.

And I pray for awakening and revival.

And I try to preach to create a people that are so God-saturated that they will show and tell God everywhere and all the time.

We exist to reassert the reality of God and the supremacy of God in all of life.

**6. These truths make me confident that the work which God planned and began, he will finish – both globally and personally.**

This is the point of [Romans 8:28-39](#).

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died- more than that, who was raised- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**7. These truths make me see everything in the light of God's sovereign purposes – that from him and through him and to him are all things, to him be glory forever and ever.**

All of life relates to God. There's no compartment where he is not all-important and the one who gives meaning to everything. [1 Corinthians 10:31](#).

Seeing God's sovereign purpose worked out in Scripture, and hearing Paul say that "he accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will" ([Ephesians 1:11](#)) makes me see the world this way.

**8. These truths make me hopeful that God has the will, the right, and the power to answer prayer that people be changed.**

The warrant for prayer is that God may break in and change things – including the human heart. He can turn the will around. "Hallowed be thy name" means: cause people to hallow your name. "May your word run and be glorified" means: cause hearts to be opened to the gospel.

We should take the New Covenant promises and plead with God to bring them to pass in our children and in our neighbors and among all the mission fields of the world.

"God, take out of their flesh the heart of stone and give him a new heart of flesh" ([Ezekiel 11:19](#)).

"Lord, circumcise their hearts so that they love you" ([Deuteronomy 30:6](#)).

"Father, put your spirit within them and cause them to walk in Your statutes" ([Ezekiel 36:27](#)).

"Lord, grant them repentance and the knowledge of the truth that they may escape from the snare of the devil" ([2 Timothy 2:25-26](#)).

"Father, open their hearts so that they believe the gospel" ([Acts 16:14](#)).

**9. These truths reminds me that evangelism is absolutely essential for people to come to Christ and be saved, and that there is great hope for success in leading people to faith, but that conversion is not finally dependent on me or limited by the hardness of the unbeliever.**

So it gives hope to evangelism, especially in the hard places and among the hard peoples.

[John 10:16](#), "I have other sheep that are not of this fold, I must bring them also. They will heed my voice."

It is God's work. Throw yourself into it with abandon.

**10. These truths make me sure that God will triumph in the end.**

[Isaiah 46:9-10](#), "I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand that I will accomplish all my purpose"

Putting them altogether: God gets the glory and we get the joy.

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