



1 PREFACE

Christians love God. He is our great Treasure, and nothing can compare with him. One of the great old catechisms says, “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”¹ This is the One we love. We love the whole panorama of his perfections. To know him, and be loved by him, and become like him is the end of our soul’s quest. He is our “exceeding joy” (Ps. 43:4).

He is infinite—and that answers our longing for completeness. He is eternal—and that answers our longing for permanence. He is unchangeable—and that answers our longing for stability and security. There is none like God. Nothing can compare with him. Wealth, sex, power, popularity, conquest, productivity, great achievement—nothing can compare with God.

When the Fog Clears

The more you know him, the more you want to know him. The more you feast on his fellowship, the hungrier you are for deeper, richer communion. Satisfaction at the deepest levels

1 Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question Four.



FIVE POINTS

breeds a holy longing for the time when we will have the very power of God to love God.

That's the way Jesus prays for us to his Father: "That the love with which you have loved me may be in them" (John 17:26). That is what we long for: the very love the Father has for the Son filling us, enabling us to love the Son with the magnitude and purity of the love of the Father. Then the frustrations of inadequate love will be over.

Yes, the more you know him and love him and trust him, the more you long to know him. That's why I have written this little book. I long to know God and enjoy God. And I want the same for you. The great old catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?" and answers, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and *enjoy* him forever."² Enjoying God is the way to glorify God, because *God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.*

But to enjoy him we must know him. Seeing is savoring. If he remains a blurry, vague fog, we may be intrigued for a season. But we will not be stunned with joy, as when the fog clears and you find yourself on the brink of some vast precipice.

Worthwhile Wrestling

My experience is that clear knowledge of God from the Bible is the kindling that sustains the fires of affection for God. And probably the most crucial kind of knowledge is the knowledge of what God is like in salvation. That is what the five points of Calvinism are about. Not the power and sovereignty of God in general, but his power and sovereignty in the way he saves people. That is why these points are sometimes called *the doctrines of grace*. To experience God fully, we need to know not just how he acts in general, but specifically how he saves *us*—how did he save me?

² Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question One.

I do not begin as a Calvinist and defend a system. I begin as a Bible-believing Christian who wants to put the Bible above all systems of thought. But over the years—many years of struggle—I have deepened in my conviction that Calvinistic teachings on the five points are biblical and therefore true, and therefore a precious pathway into deeper experiences of God’s grace.

My own struggle makes me more patient with others who are on the way. And in one sense, we are all on the way. Even when we know things biblically and truly—things clear enough and precious enough to die for—we still see through a glass dimly (1 Cor. 13:12). There can be many tears as we seek to put our ideas through the testing fires of God’s word.

But all the wrestling to understand what the Bible teaches about God is worth it. God is a rock of strength in a world of quicksand. To know him in his sovereignty is to become like an oak tree in the wind of adversity and confusion. And along with strength is sweetness and tenderness beyond imagination. The sovereign Lion of Judah is the sweet Lamb of God.

My Prayer for You

I pray you will be helped. Please don’t feel that you have to read these short chapters in any particular order. Many of you will want to skip the historical introduction because it is not as immediately relevant to the biblical questions. There is an intentional order to the book, but feel free to start wherever it looks most urgent for you. If you get help, then you will be drawn back to the rest of it. If you don’t, well, then just return to the Bible and read it with all your might. That is where I hope you will end up anyway: reading and understanding and loving and enjoying and obeying God’s word, not my word. I pray that because of our meeting here you will move “Towards a Deeper Experience of God’s Grace.”