



# **John Calvin: And His Passion for the Majesty of God**

*John Piper*

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## **John Calvin: And His Passion for the Majesty of God** John Piper

John Piper fires readers' passion for the centrality and supremacy of God by unfolding Calvin's exemplary zeal for the glory of God.

God rests all too lightly on the church's mind in our time. Consequently, the self-saturation of his people has made God and his glory auxiliary, and his majesty has all but disappeared from the modern evangelical world.

John Calvin saw a similar thing in his day, and it was at the root of his quarrel with Rome. Nothing mattered more to Calvin than the centrality, supremacy, and majesty of the glory of God. His aim, he wrote, was to "set before [man], as the prime motive of his existence, *zeal to illustrate the glory of God*"-a fitting banner over all of the great Reformer's life and work. "The essential meaning of Calvin's life and preaching," writes John Piper, "is that he recovered and embodied a passion for the absolute reality and majesty of God. Such is the aim and burden of this book as well."

As Piper concisely unfolds this predominant theme in Calvin's life, he seeks to fire every Christian's passion for the centrality and supremacy of God, so that God's self-identification in Exodus 3 as "I am who I am" becomes the sun in our solar system too.

## **John Calvin: And His Passion for the Majesty of God Details**

Date : Published December 5th 2008 by Crossway Books

ISBN : 9781433501821

Author : John Piper

Format : Paperback 59 pages

Genre : Biography, Religion, Theology, Church, Church History, History

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## **From Reader Review John Calvin: And His Passion for the Majesty of God for online ebook**

### **Rich Schmaltz says**

I wish we had more men today in the church who were as immovable and courageous in serving God faithfully as Calvin. Can't wait to meet him in heaven.

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### **Eric Durso says**

Good, but short.

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### **Matthew Young says**

I really liked everything I had read by John Piper in the past, and when I was looking for a bio on John Calvin, I picked this one first. As far as a biography goes, this book does not go into a ton of detail on Calvin's life, but it does focus heavily on Calvin's theology--which is even more important than his life.

Piper has a direct and concise style of writing, and he is very Christ-focused. I will need to read another Calvin bio, but as an intro to the man and his beliefs, this was awesome.

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### **Dan Glover says**

This was originally just a section from a longer book by Piper. It is too brief to be a really good treatment of the great reformer and dedicated Christian. However, it is a worthy brief on the slant suggested by the subtitle and if most Christians won't read a longer, more thorough treatment, they ought at least give this a read and understand how much they owe to this very misunderstood giant of the faith. Evangelicals suffer much shallowness for being disconnected from our rich history, and often all because we believe the trite caricatures of ill informed critics both inside and outside the church.

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### **Thaddeus says**

I was quite amazed at this little book and how much Piper was able to cover in it. It's a great little introductory book to the life of John Calvin!

Despite where one might land on the theological spectrum of Evangelicalism - Calvin's influence on Protestant Christianity cannot be underestimated and thus, it is profitable for those who find themselves within varying streams of Protestantism to at least be familiar with John Calvin and his work... but beyond that, hearing a little of his life and ministry is a great inspiration to readers and encouragement for all of us to deepen our passion for the centrality and supremacy of God in all areas of life which was the chief passion of

Calvin. His zeal for the glory of God drove his whole life's work.

In today's Christianity, too often, God's glory is too little on our minds. Our culture pushes us to self-focus and thus the brilliance of the majesty God can become side-lined. However, this is where the life of Calvin - even if one may disagree with the theological camp he comes out of - can be a real encouragement and helpful refocusing of what is our main priority in ministry. Nothing mattered more to Calvin than the centrality, supremacy, and majesty of the glory of God. His aim, he wrote, was to 'set before [man], as the prime motive of his existence, zeal to illustrate the glory of God,' a fitting banner over all of the great Reformer's life and work.

This book is a short read - clearly and compellingly written, and is not an idealized version of Calvin either (as he had his own marks and failures as a sinner saved by grace). Piper seeks to fire every Christian's passion for the centrality and supremacy of God in their own lives so that He would be the sun around which all of life revolves.

I'd highly recommend this book to everyone who hasn't read anything about John Calvin or even just to any Christian who needs a good reminder of the glory of God as our fuel for zeal and passion in this Christian life.

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### **Randall Hartman says**

I read the book in a single sitting on an airplane flight. The overall theme of the book is captured well in short excerpts from the Forward and the Appendix: "Calvin was a man possessed by the Holy Spirit...he understood that to know God is to step into another world, to be born again into a relationship with the One who made and governs all things, and who had called a people, who did not deserve it, to rule that creation at his side...Fundamental to [his] theology was the Word of God...Everything hung together because there was only one God and one eternal mind at work, undergirding it all. It is this knowledge that gave Calvin's work its strength...There was in the life and ministry of John Calvin a grand God-centeredness, Bible-allegiance, and iron constancy. Under the banner of God's mercy to miserable sinners, we would do well to listen and learn."

I found the book's short chapters to be packed with interesting reading and, embarrassingly for someone who has followed Christ for 45 years, enlightening about fundamental truths that are neglected or missing from today's "Bible-believing" churches. In particular, these key themes seem so foundational to what it means to be a Christian, yet they are short-changed or even contradicted in today's sometimes skewed emphasis on evangelism as the ultimate purpose of God in our lives:

1. An appreciation of God Himself - chapter 1: "Nothing mattered more to Calvin than the supremacy of God over all things...The absoluteness of God's existence enralls the mind: God's never beginning, never ending, never becoming, never improving, simply and absolutely there—to be dealt with on his terms or not at all...one thing remains absolutely unassailed: God is. He was there before we came. He will be there after we are gone. And therefore what matters in life above all things is this God."
2. Commitment to the glory of God above all else (even salvation for sinners) - chapter 2: "God rests lightly on the church in our time, and John Calvin saw the same thing in his own day...even precious truth about eternal life can be so skewed as to displace God as the center and goal...the great guardian of biblical orthodoxy throughout the centuries is a passion for the glory and the excellency of God in Christ. Where the

center shifts from God, everything begins to shift everywhere—a fact which does not bode well for doctrinal faithfulness in our own non-God-centered day.”

3. A passion and reverence for the word of God used by the Holy Spirit as the means of salvation - chapters 3 & 7: “So two things came together for Calvin to give him a “saving knowledge of God”: Scripture and the “inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit.” Neither alone suffices to save...What does the Spirit do? The answer is not that the Spirit gives us added revelation to what is in Scripture, but that he awakens us, as from the dead, to see and taste the divine reality of God in Scripture, which authenticates it as God’s own Word...God witnesses to us of his reality and the reality of his Son and his Word by giving us life from the dead so that we come alive. His witness is the gift of spiritual life. His witness is that we come alive to his majesty and see him for who he is in his Word. In that instant, we do not reason from premises to conclusions—we see that we are awake, and there is not even a prior human judgment about it to lean on...The Scriptures were absolutely central because they were absolutely the Word of God and had as their self-authenticating theme the majesty and glory of God...God’s Word is mainly about the majesty of God and the glory of God. That is the main issue in ministry.”

4. The harsh, difficult, and barbaric era in which he lived - Appendix: “The Europe that John Calvin was born into on July 10, 1509, was a harsh and immoral and even barbaric place to live...and had a contaminating effect on everyone, just as we are all contaminated today by the evils of our time. Their blind spots and evils may be different from ours. And it may be that the very things they saw clearly are the things we are blind to. It would be foolhardy to say that we would have never done what they did under their circumstances, and thus draw the conclusion that they have nothing to teach us. In fact, what we probably need to say is that some of our evils are such that we are blind to them, just as they were blind to many of theirs, and the virtues they manifested in those times are the very ones that we probably need in ours.”

I read the book in a single sitting on an airplane flight. The overall theme of the book is captured well in short excerpts from the Forward and the Appendix: “Calvin was a man possessed by the Holy Spirit...he understood that to know God is to step into another world, to be born again into a relationship with the One who made and governs all things, and who had called a people, who did not deserve it, to rule that creation at his side...Fundamental to [his] theology was the Word of God...Everything hung together because there was only one God and one eternal mind at work, undergirding it all. It is this knowledge that gave Calvin’s work its strength...There was in the life and ministry of John Calvin a grand God-centeredness, Bible-allegiance, and iron constancy. Under the banner of God’s mercy to miserable sinners, we would do well to listen and learn.”

Implications:

- Oh that I would appreciate and be enthralled by God Himself
- We will stop arguing with the word of God, stop treating it as secondary to good works, and reverence it as God Himself because it is from God Himself

God is absolutely sovereign over everything, including salvation

- No one can understand the scripture and be saved unless the Holy Spirit opens their eyes to see, understand, and believe
  - No one can be saved without the Spirit of God using the word of God
  - Our primary focus must be to glorify God, even above evangelism or holiness - any other action will flow from true salvation, and if it does not, then it is dead works
  - Salvation is not about making a decision or changing our lifestyle or agreeing with certain doctrines but about an inward change by God using His word that produces all of these behaviors as a result
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## **Emily Perrine says**

This is an engaging overview of Calvin's vigorous passion for the glory of Christ. It reveals his concern for the majesty of God by his commitment to rightly grasping the Word of God. A short and informative read meant to fire up our passion for God's majesty!

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## **James Cloyd says**

There is no doubt that Calvin had a passion for the majesty of God. His commitment to scripture was certainly admirable, even if misguided. Being a Calvinist himself, it is no surprise that Piper focused on his hero's praise-worthy accomplishments, like how he stood strong in the face of persecution, suffering, & loss. Piper only briefly mentioned in the appendix how Calvin's "passion" led him to condemn his friend to be burned at the stake for holding an "inferior" view of God's nature. Piper attempted to downplay this little blemish in Calvin's character by reminding us that nobody's perfect, & even king David sinned when he killed Uriah. But unlike David, Calvin was never rebuked by God (nor any priest or prophet) for his "sin". This wasn't done in a moment of weakness, he didn't do this despite his zeal, but because of it. Calvin's "passion" for God's glory drove him to do what we today would consider a crime against humanity, & a violation of basic human rights, such as free speech, & freedom of religion. Clearly Calvin's values were different than ours, for what mattered more than a person's right to live & think for himself was the protection & enforcement of "right doctrine". I admire Calvin for his courage & commitment, but his story is ultimately a sad one, one that serves to show us dangers of having a government that does not separate church & state.

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## **Joe Cowan says**

A decent overview on the life of Calvin and the focus of his life. I appreciated that the issue with Servetus (Not sure if that's the right spelling of the name). Overall, at 59 pages, I would say this is good for someone who is interested in Calvin but does not want to read a whole book on him.

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## **Noel Burke says**

This was about a one hour listen. It was a very short review of Calvin's life and his focus on the majesty of God. If you are looking to get a good book under your belt quickly, try this one out. Listened on my iPod.

Listened again on 9 Apr 16. I was shocked at the depravity of man in each generation. He gives examples of people purposefully infecting people with the plague and then when they were arrested they tried to infect the guards by putting something on their jail cell handle. God's grace is necessary to save man in each generation. We are all evil left to our own devices and unable to pursue God. There was not a golden era to live in. All men need Christ to be saved.

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## **Kevin says**

This book can be best described as a rudimentary introduction to the life and principles of John Calvin. With that in mind, it is good and useful as far as it goes. Hopefully, it will whet the appetite for further research of the greatest of the Reformers by readers of it.

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## **Emily says**

Wanted to get a bird's eye view of Calvinism so I read this book and also Piper's, "Five Points", and a Walls and Dongell book entitled, "Why I am not a Calvinist"!! Although some of it went over my head, both arguments were well laid out, supportive of their own views as well of their antagonist's. Piper's English is always so well staged, sometimes his sentences do not flow well. But otherwise, it gives a great understanding of the man and his viewpoints.

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## **Daniel Alvers says**

I waited until today to do the review on this book. It is his 500th birthday. Everyone should read it and learn a little about the man who had a large impact on Christianity. Of course this out of the sovereign direction of God. Calvin made contributions to Christianity that can't be overlooked and his thoughts are echoing to our current day. It would do men good to learn from the good and the bad produced in one of the most prolific persons in the Christian faith. Also for all of you who are looking for a short book this is your book. (Only about 50 pages) You could read it over lunch.

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## **Ruth says**

As always, Piper writes with an easy clarity and an obvious desire to impact both heart and mind, even through the recounting of a biography. I appreciate his willingness to be complete in his recounting of Calvin's life rather than turn this into a work of hagiography.

If nothing else, reading this short biography has given me two new points to plot into my time machine: 1) I'd like to observe Calvin throwing himself atop the communion elements and shielding them with his arms rather than allowing the Lord's Supper to be contaminated, and 2) I'd love to attend his epic exposition on the book of the Acts, which "he began... on the book of Acts on August 25, 1549, and ended... in March of 1554." Dude.

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## **Ken Thomas says**

This is a very well written review of Calvin's life and thoughts.

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