

Calvinism vs Arminianism – Stephen McLeod

There is frequent conflict in discussions concerning Arminianism and Calvinism (Reformed Theology). These “discussions” usually concern strawmen carefully erected and easily and triumphantly destroyed. Rarely is either point of view coherently and rationally defined before pointing out its faults. This is an attempt at a brief dispassionate look at these controversial views. The most important point is that neither view should violate any essential of the Christian faith and should not be cause for unnecessary disunity. There is enough cause for trouble in the Body of Christ without adding this as well.

The most egregious strawman is the claim that Reformed Theology teaches that God chose those who will be lost as well as those who will be saved. This is called Hyper Calvinism or Double Predestination. This issue is dealt with up front since it causes the most trouble. This idea violates essential elements of God's character making the perfectly righteous God the author of sin. Since we are all sinners by our own free will, the wonder is that God saves anyone. If all are condemned then God's justice would be served but not his love. Christ died on the cross to satisfy His justice and demonstrate His love. Those who come to faith in Christ are the elect and those who do not come to faith are not the elect. God saves some and lets the rest have justice. No one has been chosen for damnation.

For most people the result of holding either of these two views brings the holder to the same actions and outcomes. The Calvinist is no less evangelical than the Arminian. One analogy is to view the unsaved. The Arminian believes that the unsaved is a drowning person to whom the Gospel is thrown by an evangelist. The unsaved person then must decide to grab the life ring thrown out. Once the unsaved person accepts the Gospel then the new birth occurs and that person is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The Calvinist believes that no one is capable of choosing God and is dead in sin and without hope. The Holy Spirit enters the unsaved person and breathes in new life. This is the new birth. Then the Gospel being feed to the newly regenerated person becomes spiritual food where before the Gospel was only nonsense. In both cases the evangelist is required and must carry out the Great Commission.

Another way to view the subject is a parallel with Christ's advent. God took on an additional nature in the advent. He did not give up any part of His deity but added a human nature. It is a work of the Holy Spirit to add an additional nature to those being saved. Without this additional nature, in the Calvinist view, we are unable to choose God. So when the Holy Spirit breaths life into the unsaved, He provides the means for the unsaved person to make a choice for God, but the ability to reject God has not been removed. By this view the free will of the individual is enhanced rather than overwhelmed.

I need to add a more personal analogy. Being of Scottish decent, I believe that the English Parliament surrendered to James VI of Scotland who then ruled England as James I. My wife is English and has a different opinion. She thinks that James accepted a free will invitation from the English Parliament. In either event we agree that history would not be changed, James was King in either case. I'm the Calvinist and my wife is the Arminian on this subject.

Here is the wisdom of Charles Simeon of Cambridge on the subject, in conversation with the veteran John Wesley on Dec 20th, 1784:

“Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions.... Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart?” “Yes,” says the veteran, “I do indeed.” “And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?” “Yes, solely through Christ.” “But, Sir, supposing that you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?” “No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last.” “Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?” “No.” “What, then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms?” “Yes, altogether.” “And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom?” “Yes, I have no hope but in Him.” “Then, Sir, with your

leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree.” (Ch Simeon, *Horae Homileticae*, Preface: I.xvii f; quoted in JI Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, IVF, London, 1961, pp 13-14).

Now, where is the problem? Having made the case for both the Arminian and the Calvinist being saved, I will continue by depicting the Reformed view of regeneration and free will with two simple illustrations. Remember that in the Arminian view the individual has the free will ability to accept or reject the gospel and in the Reformed view the total depravity of all individuals makes it impossible for anyone to accept the gospel unless the Holy Spirit first intervenes.

A simple illustration of the two views of atonement is to depict two men standing at the judgment seat, one is a saved believer and the other a lost unbeliever. In the Arminian view the saved believer can turn to the unsaved and say, “What a wretch you are! You heard the gospel just like me but didn't believe. I heard it and I accepted it.” Notice the “works” related boasting of the saved believer. Believers should not be in a position to boast of contributing anything to their salvation (Rom 3: 27-28; 1 Cor. 1: 29, Eph. 2:8-9). The Reformed view would have the same two individuals with the saved believer praising God for having saved him and saying about the unsaved individual, “But for the grace of God, there go I.” The only thing a believer brings to the work of salvation is his sin.

KJV 1 Cor. 1:29-31 — That no flesh should glory (boast) in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

NIV Eph. 2:8-9 — For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

The second illustration is of the Reformed view of free will. Our choices are limited by our nature. We can only choose what we are able to choose. Interestingly, God too is limited by His nature, He can not sin (Nu 23:19). We are made in God's image, but it would seem in this fallen world a mirror image. If you see an open office safe that has no marks of forced entry, then the natural assumption is that the person who opened it knows the combination. God knows the combination to our heart. He does not need to force entry to change our will. God's ability to change our desire from rebellion against God to desire for obedience to and fellowship with God does not violate our free will. God does not force entry to the vault of our free will, he has the combination to the vault. We choose what our sinful nature has placed in the vault of our free will or we choose what is placed there when we are reborn (regenerated) by the intercession of the Holy Spirit. In the account of Lydia's conversion in Acts 16:13-15, we see clearly that her new life was initiated by God moving to change her heart: “Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us.... The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.” Please reread Romans Chapter 8 to check this view of free will. (See also: Deut 29:4; Deut 30:14; Is 29:10; Ps 69:22-23; Rom 11:8-10)

A general answer to the question of God's “fairness” in choosing some to be saved comes from God's character as infinitely just and infinitely loving. We are all sinners and deserve the justice of God. God reconciled justice and love on the cross (Rom 3:23-26). Those whom He chose He atoned for. He did not die to provide the possibility of salvation but to provide the certainty of salvation. It is not “unfair” to choose some and not others since everyone deserves punishment, it is Grace that some should not be punished.

Two keywords, foreknew and world, are used to justify the Arminian position. The word knew is used often in the context of relationship in the Bible rather than knowledge of something (Gen 4:1; Deut 34:10; Judges 19:25; Jer 1:5). This means that, in the context of Rom 8:29, foreknew can mean that God had a relationship with the elect before the foundation of the world (1 Kings 19:18; Act 2:23; Rom 8:29; Rom 11:2; Rom 11:4-5; 1 Pet 1:2; 1 Pet 1:20). When the Bible speaks of a call to all the world to come to him it means all people without distinction, it does not mean all people without exception.

The problem is that when we are saved we don't lose our sin nature (Rom 7:14-20). When regenerated by the Holy Spirit we desire not to sin, but until we are resurrected with imperishable bodies we will continue to sin. When we sin we lose fellowship with God but we don't lose our salvation. It is the loss of fellowship with God that David describes in Psalm 51 and his desire for fellowship with God in Psalm 42.

This debate did not begin with Joseph Arminius and John Calvin. In the fifth century Augustine and Pelagius showed the contrast between these two lines of religious thought. Augustine pointed men to God as the source of all true spiritual wisdom and strength, while Pelagius threw men back on themselves and said that they were able in their own strength to do all that God commanded, otherwise God would not command it. Pelagius espoused a works salvation which is not consistent with salvation by faith. God's commandments are consistent with His attributes of holiness and righteousness and not with man's ability to keep the commandments.

Jacobus Arminius wrote a list of five points of doctrine that were presented in 1610 to the Church of Holland. In reaction the Calvinist position was summarized by five points of doctrine. These two sets of five points are the short definition of both viewpoints. The Synod of Dort in 1619 rejected the Arminian five points as unscriptural and affirmed the Calvinist position. It should be noted that the Five Points of Calvinism are not an expression of Reformed Theology nor John Calvin's ideas in particular. The Five Points of Calvinism were not written by John Calvin and were written specifically to rebut the Five Points of Arminianism. Also, these two views do not exhaust the doctrinal variations concerning the subject of predestination, election, free will, etc.

What should be clear by this point is that the Arminian position can't be justified by Biblical support in more than a cursory manner. The Biblical citations supporting the Reformed position are considerable as shown in the notes below. The problem with Arminianism is that when it is taken to its logical conclusions, it is unbiblical if not outright heretical. As demonstrated by the discourse between Simeon and Wesley quoted above, most Arminians do not follow the logic to the bitter end. Pelagius certainly went to an obviously unorthodox conclusion and the hyper Calvinists go to another unorthodox extreme.

=====

The following are notes and commentary on this subject.

- Topics: Arminius, James (Joseph, Jacobus)?
Text: (1560-1609). Born at Oudewater, the Netherlands, Arminius was educated at the universities of Marburg (1575) and Leiden (1576-81), at the academy at Geneva (1582, 1584-86), and at Basel (1582-83). He was pastor of an Amsterdam congregation (1588-1603), and a professor at the University of Leiden from 1603 until his death.
- Topics: Calvin, John
Text: (1509-1564). Father of Reformed and Presbyterian doctrine and theology. Calvin was born in Noyon, Picardie. His father was a notary who served the bishop of Noyon, and as a result Calvin, while still a child, received a canonry in the cathedral which would pay for his education. Although he commenced training for the priesthood at the University of Paris, his father, because of a controversy with the bishop and clergy of the Noyon cathedral, now decided that his son should become a lawyer, and sent him to Orleans, where he studied under Pierre de l'Etoile. Later he studied at Bourges under the humanist lawyer Andrea Alciati. It was probably while in Bourges that he became a Protestant.

The technical term for "receiving a new heart" or being "born again" is regeneration. This is the first step in the order of salvation: regeneration, conversion, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

The following brief overview is taken from *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* by H. Wayne House, Zondervan 1992, ISBN 0 310 41661 2, page 97.

Arminianism

- Definition - The conditional choice of God by which he determined who would believe based on his foreknowledge of who will exercise faith. It is the result of man's faith.
- Pros - Emphasizes the responsibility of man to make a choice. Also, acknowledges man's depravity and helplessness without God's intervention. Most attractive aspect is its allowance for man's free will to choose. Man can resist God's grace.
- Cons - De-emphasizes God's sovereignty. By putting God in a position of dependence on the decisions of a created being, this view makes it appear that God is not in control of his universe. Also, acknowledging the doctrine of total depravity required Wesley to come up with prevenient grace, which has no basis in Scripture.
- Scriptural Evidence - Central text: No logical treatises can be found to support the Arminian position. Thus, they appeal to the universal character of God's invitation to salvation; I Tim 2:3-4 is offered as evidence that God desires all people to be saved (see also Is 55:1; Ezek 33:11; Acts 17:30-31; II Peter 3:6).

Calvinism

- Definition - The unconditional and loving choice of God by which he determines who must believe. It is the cause of man's faith.
- Pros - Emphasizes the holiness and sovereignty of God and thus his right to make such decrees as election to salvation. Rightly emphasizes the total depravity of man and his inability to choose what is right unaided. The overriding doctrine is the absolute sovereignty of God, who is not dependent on the whim or will of man. Man cannot resist God's grace. This view is supported by an overwhelming amount of Scriptural evidence (see below for references).
- Cons - De-emphasizes man's responsibility. Seems to eclipse man's free will and thus his responsibility for his sin. Critics charge that it is fatalistic and destroys motive for evangelism. Biggest problem: apparent logical contradiction to human freedom.
- Scriptural Evidence - Central text is Rom 9:6-24. This demonstrates that election is based on God's just character and his sovereignty. Therefore, he will not make an unjust decision, and he is not required to explain to man why he still finds fault with those whom he did not choose.
- An in-depth discussion of the Reformed view of election can be found in *Chosen by God* by R. C. Sproul, Tyndale, 1986, ISBN 0 8423 0282 4. R. C. Sproul does not like the TULIP acronym used for the Five Points of Calvinism.
-

Five points of Arminianism and Calvinism.

• First Point

Arminius: Free Will or Human Ability — Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but he does not interfere with man's free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists in his ability to choose good over evil in

spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power either to cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or to resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.

Calvin: Total Inability or Total Depravity — Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the Gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is sinful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore he will not — indeed he cannot — choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ — it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation. Salvation is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.

- **Second Point**

Arminius: Conditional Election — God's choice of certain individuals to salvation before the foundation of the world was based on his foreseeing that they would respond to his call. He selected only those whom he knew would be themselves freely believe the Gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned on what a person would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which he based his choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted from man's free will, cooperating the Spirit's working. God chose those whom he knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. In this sense God's election is conditional.

Calvin: Unconditional Election — God's choice of certain individuals to salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in his own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom he selected. These acts are the result, not the cause, of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned on any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected he brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

- **Third Point**

Arminius: Universal Redemption, or General Atonement — Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all people and for every person, only those who believe on him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if a person chooses to accept it.

Calvin: Particular Redemption, or Limited Atonement — Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. In addition to putting away the sins of his people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith, which unites them to him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.

- **Fourth Point**

Arminius: The Holy Spirit Able to Be Effectually Resisted — The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the Gospel invitation; he does all that he can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth. Thus man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can draw to Christ only those who allow him to have his way with

them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted.

Calvin: The Efficacious Call of the Spirit, or Irresistible Grace — In addition to the outward general call to salvation, which is made to everyone who hears the Gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. the external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation to man's will, nor is he dependent on man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

- **Fifth Point**

Arminius: Falling From Grace — Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith. (Not all Arminians agree on this point; some hold that believers are eternally secure in Christ — that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.)

Calvin: Perseverance of the Saints — All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.

Scriptural Support for Five Points of Calvinism condensed from *The Five Points of Calvinism* by David N. Steele & Curtis C. Thomas

Total Depravity

- Born in Sin / Spiritually Dead - Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1-3; Col 2:13; Ps 51:5; 58:3; John 3:5-7
- Blind & Deaf to Spiritual Truth - Gen 6:5; 8:21; Ecc 9:3; Jer 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; John 3:19; Rom 8:7-8; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 4:17-19; 5:8; Titus 1:5
- Slaves to Sin - John 8:44; Eph 2:1-2; II Tim 2:25-26; I John 3:10; 5:19; John 8:34; Rom 6:20; Titus 3:3
- All Sin (Universal) - II Chron 6:36; Job 15:14-16; Ps 130:3; 143:2; Prov 20:9; Ecc 7:20, 29; Is 53:6; 64:6; Rom 3:4-12; James 3:2, 8; I John 1:8, 10
- Inability of Self - Job 14:4; Jer 13:23; Mt 7:16-18; 12:33; John 6:44, 65; Rom 11:35-36; I cor 2:14; 4:7; II Cor 3:5

Unconditional (Unmerited) Election

- Elect to Salvation/Eternal Life - Deut 10:14-15; Ps 33:12; 65:4; 106:5; Haggai 2:23; Matt 11:27; 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31; Luke 18:7; Rom 8:28-30, 33, 11:28; Col 3:12; I Thess 5:9; Titus 1:1; I Peter 1:1-2; 2:8-9; Rev 17:14
- Elected Before the Foundation of the World (not based on foresight) - Eph 1:4; Rev 13:8; 17:8; Mark 13:20; Rom 9:11-13, 16, 10:20; 11:7; I Cor 1:27-29; II Tim 1:9; 2:10
- Based on God's Will (not man's will) - Ex 33:19; Deut 7:6-7; Matt 20:15; Rom 9:10-24; 11:4-6; 33-36; Eph 1:5

- Based on God's Sovereignty - I Chronicles 29:10-12; Job 42:1-2; Ps 115:3; 135:6, Is 14:24-27; 46:9-11; 55:11; Jer 32:17; Dan 4:35; Matt 19:26

Limited (Specific / Particular / Definite) Atonement

- Save His People - Matt 1:21; Luke 19:10; II Cor 5:21; Gal 1:3-4; I Tim 1:15; Titus 2:14; I Peter 3:18; Matt 20:28; 26:28
- Reconciliation - Rom 5:10; II Cor 5:18-19; Eph 2:15-16; Col 1:21-22
- Justification - Rom 3:24-25; 5:8-9; I Cor 1:30; Gal 3:13; Col 2:13-14; Heb 9:12; I Peter 2:24
- Regeneration / Sanctification - Eph 1:3-4; 5:25-26; Phil 1:29; Acts 5:31; Titus 2:14; 3:5-6; I Cor 1:30; Heb 9:14; 13:12; I John 1:7
- Christ's Suffering - John 6:35-40; 10:11, 14-18; 10:24-29; 11:50-53; Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25-27; Rom 8:32-34; Heb 2:17; 3:1; 9:28; Rev 5:9
- Christ's Intercession - John 17:1-11, 20, 24-26; Eph 1:3-12; Rom 5:12-19; Heb 9:15

Note: "World" and "All" in context of Atonement - All men without distinction, not all men without exception.

Irresistible Grace (Effectual Call)

- Work of the Trinity (Spirit) - Rom 8:14; I Cor 2:10-14; 6:11; 12:3; II Cor 3:6, 17-18; I Peter 1:2
- Regeneration - John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:3, 23; I John 5:4
- New Heart - Deut 30:6; Ez 36:26-27; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10; II Cor 5:17-18
- Life - John 5:21; Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2-13
- Enlightens Elect - Matt 11:25-27; 13:10-11, 16; 16:15-17; Luke 8:10; 10:21; John 6:37, 44-46, 64-65; 10:3-6, 16, 26-29; I Cor 2:14; Eph 1:17-18
- Faith / Repentance - Acts 5:31; 11:18; 13:38; 16:14; 18:27; Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; II Tim 2:25-26
- Inward Calling - Rom 1:6-7; 8:30; 9:23-24; I Cor 1:1-2, 9, 23-31; Gal 1:15-16; Eph 4:4; II Tim 1:9; Heb 9:15; Jude 1; I Peter 1:15; 2:9; 5:10; II Peter 1:3; Rev 17:14
- Only by God - Is 55:11; John 3:27; 17:2; Rom 9:16; I Cor 3:6-7; 4:7; Phil 2:12-13; James 1:18; I John 5:20

Perseverance of the Saints

- Assurance - Is 43:1-3; 54:10; Jer 32:40; Matt 18:12-14; John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:35-40, 47; 10:27-30; 17:11-12, 15; Rom 5:8-10; 8:1, 29-30, 35-39; I Cor 1:7-9; 10:13; II Cor 4:14, 17; Eph 1:5, 13-14; 4:30; Col 3:3-4; I Thess 5:23-14; II Tim 2:19; II Tim 4:18; Heb 9:12, 15; 10:14; 12:28; I Peter 1:3-5; I John 2:19, 25; 5:4, 11-13, 20; Jude 1, 24-25 (Some references cited to support possibility of losing salvation — Hebrews 6: 4 - 6; Revelation 3:5)

Comments on Hebrews 6: 4

Written by Paul Watkins
Grace College and Seminary

If it were possible to lose the salvation that God has granted those who believe in Christ, then according to Hebrews 6 one fall is all it would take. If our unrighteousness could disallow the righteousness of Christ then our work must be greater than his. So it seems here is the bottom line. What do we trust in. Our own righteousness which is as filthy rags or the finished work of Christ. When we have settled that issue the meaning of Hebrews 6:1-9 will be much easier to determine.

Hebrews 6:4-6, Majority/Byzantine text:

“(4) adunaton gar tous apax phwtisthentas geusamenous te ths dwreas ths epouraniou kai metochous geghthentas pneumatous agiou (5) kai kalon geusamenous theou rhma dunameis te mellontos aiwnos (6) kai parapesonatas palin anakainizein eis metanoian anastaurountas eautois ton uion tou theou kai paradeigmatizontas”

Literal translation:

“For [it is] impossible [for] those once enlightened, and having tasted the heavenly gift, and becoming sharers of [the] Holy Spirit, and tasting [the] good Word of God, and [the] miracles of [the] coming age, and falling away¹ to renew [them] again to repentance, [because they are] crucifying again to themselves the son of God and openly disgracing [Him].”

At this point, I agree that it is hypothetical (as hinted by 6:9) but not so because of any Greek construction. However, I'd have to say concerning this passage: I don't know.

Paul Watkins
Grace College and Seminary

Norm Olson wrote concerning Hebrews 6:

The question often raised in response to Hebrews 6 asks, “Can a person ever lose their salvation.” Hebrews 6 tells us quite clearly, “It is impossible that IF someone were to 'fall from grace' that they could be renewed again to salvation.” Obviously then, the question is moot since a person could not fall. Then the question is raised, “Where do we get the idea that we can choose to get UNSAVED? Well, it sure wasn't from the writings of Charles Haddon Spurgeon!

Revelations 13:8 says, And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 17:8 says, and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”

Other verses are Rev 3:5; 20:12, 15; 21:27.

All of these verses do seem to have an election ring to them; they all refer to the “book of life.” John identifies the unsaved or earthlings as those whose names have NOT been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world. Those who remain faithful to Jesus avoid having their names erased from the

¹ This should read “to then fall away” – which changes its entire meaning. “It is impossible... to then fall away...”

book of life (3:5). Having one's name inscribed in the book of life is the necessary criterion for escaping the lake of fire (20:12, 15) and for inhabiting the New Jerusalem (21:27). The data are consistent, the names of the saved appear in the book, the names of the damned do not. The writer envisions a register of some kind in which peoples names have been entered (before the creation of the world). There isn't a separate book with the names of the lost.

Following text taken from *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* by H. Wayne House, Zondervan 1992, ISBN 0 310 41661 2, pages 95-96.

Arguments for Arminianism

- God desires all persons to be saved and does not desire the death of the wicked (Ezek 33:11; I Tim 2:3-4; II Peter 3:9).
- The universal character of God's commands and exhortations reveal his desire to save all people (John 3:3, 5-7; I Peter 1:16). Also God issues a universal invitation for all to come to Christ (Is 55:1; Matt 11:28; John 9:37-39).
- All people are able to believe and be saved, because God has issued a universal call to salvation and because God has given all people prevenient grace to counteract sin and to render everyone able to respond to the gospel. There is no need for special grace from God for salvation.
- It would be unjust of God to hold people responsible for what they are unable to do.
- God does choose some to salvation and pass over others, because he has foreseen who will accept the offer of salvation in Christ. Foreknowledge is God's knowing beforehand who will receive salvation and is closely tied with election (Rom 8:29; I Peter 1:1-2).

Arguments Against Arminianism

- God has selected some to be saved, not all; and he has even chosen not to reveal some truths to some people (Matt 13:10-16; John 10:24-30).
- God's standard does not change because of man's inability to obey; a person can come to God only if God draws him (John 6:35-40, 44-47, 65).
- The term "prevenient grace" is not found in the Bible. Paul expresses the fact that man is unable to turn to God and does not even seek God, but that he rejects the revelation he has been given (Rom 1:18-32; 3:10-19).
- "Foreknowledge," as used in Scripture, is not just knowledge of future events, but is a relational term showing that God has loved and related to the elect before they came into existence and chose them to be saved because he chose to love them, regardless of their deeds (Rom 9:26-29).

Arguments for Calvinism

- The whole human race is lost in sin, and each individual is totally corrupted in intellect, will, and emotions by sin. Man is unable to respond to God's offer of salvation because he is spiritually dead (Jer 17:9; John 6:44; Rom 3:1-23; II Cor 4:3-4; Eph 2:1-3).
- God is sovereign in all he does, and he does all according to his good will and pleasure. He is not answerable to man, because he is the Creator and can choose whomever he wills to save (Rom 9:20-21; Eph 1:5; Phil 2:13; Rev 4:11).

- God has chosen certain people for his special grace, irrespective of their physical descent, character, or good deeds. Specifically in salvation, he has chosen to save certain people through faith in Christ (John 6:37, 44, 65; 15:16; Acts 13:48; Rom 9:6-24; Eph 1:4-5).
- Election is an expression of God's sovereign will and is the cause of faith (Eph 2:8-10).
- Election is certainly effective for the salvation of all the elect. Those whom God chooses will certainly come to faith in Christ (Rom 8:29-30).
- Election is from all eternity and is immutable (Eph 1:4, 9-11).

Arguments Against Calvinism

- If man is unable to respond and cannot obey God, then how can God truly offer salvation to all through the Gospel and expect obedience from man (Matt 11:28-30; John 3:16; 6:35)?
- God desires everyone to be saved (I Tim 2:3-4; II Peter 3:9).
- God would not be fair in choosing only some to eternal life and passing over others, because this would violate man's free will to choose and because the offer of the Gospel to all would not be in good faith.
- God cannot demand that man believe if faith comes from him.
- There is the possibility that those who have come to faith may fall from grace and lose their salvation.
- God foresaw those who would believe and elected them in eternity (Rom 8:20).

See Also:

[Canons of the Council of Orange \(529 AD\)](#)

The Council of Orange was an outgrowth of the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius. This controversy had to do with degree to which a human being is responsible for his or her own salvation, and the role of the grace of God in bringing about salvation. The Pelagians held that human beings are born in a state of innocence, i.e., that there is no such thing as a sinful nature or original sin. As a result of this view, they held that a state of sinless perfection was achievable in this life. The Council of Orange dealt with the Semi-Pelagian doctrine that the human race, though fallen and possessed of a sinful nature, is still "good" enough to be able to lay hold of the grace of God through an act of unredeemed human will. As you read the Canons of the Council of Orange, you will be able to see where John Calvin derived his views of the total depravity of the human race.

[Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter IX Of Free Will](#)

Source: <http://smcleod.home.infionline.net/election.html>