

Should We Give Arminians Assurance of Salvation?

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I hate false gospels... I really do. Every one of you out there who believes and loves the Gospel of Grace in the Lord Jesus Christ will stand in hatred with me. Nobody even remotely likes a teaching that takes the FREE GRACE of Jesus and twists it into a perverted form of self-righteousness under the guise of the gospel. That is the ultimate attack on God; but sadly it takes many forms. One of the things about these false gospels is that people are easily brought to believe their lies because they deceptively use the language of the true gospel to present themselves. For example, the Roman Catholic Church teaches a form of works-based salvation but if you talked to many Roman Catholics today, they would be shocked if you told them that. The Roman Catholic Church officially teaches salvation is solely by God's grace. That's all fine and dandy – and to that no true believer will disagree. What many people don't realize about the Pope's teachings, however, is that they also teach that God declares a person saved based on what He's doing in that person by grace. It's a deceptive form of works-based salvation because people look inside of themselves rather than outside of themselves to Christ alone as the basis of salvation.

I rejoice today that many people who call themselves “reformed” or “Calvinistic” recognize the deceptive and perverse gospel of the Roman Catholic Church and refuse to give people caught up in that system of lies any assurance in their salvation. To pray, worship, or extend fellowship to a Roman Catholic is to willingly give assurance of salvation to a person who has no knowledge of grace by justification through faith in Christ alone. Although there are many Calvinists who recognize the errors of the Roman Catholic Church and refuse to extend fellowship to Roman Catholics, many of these same people fail to make the same discernment concerning another deadly and deceptive religion. The mistake they make is they fail to treat Arminianism/Free Willism the same way they treat Roman Catholicism.

If you are wondering why I'm writing this editorial, please allow me to explain. Recently, I've come out strong against the popular free will religion of today. In fact, I've come out so strong that I've stated things such as, “All Arminians are lost,” “Free willers hate God,” and “Arminians are lovers of self.” I still believe these things. Yet, for some reason or another, I have failed to come portray my beliefs in a loving manner. Maybe it's because most of my discussion on this topic has been through the medium of the Internet instead of through face-to-face conversations. I somehow have not conveyed all of my thoughts that go along with these beliefs of mine. Because of this, I have drawn the charge of being arrogant, prideful, harsh, unloving, and numerous other names. I suppose these charges are warranted, because these people that have accused me of such have only heard half of my message. Others who know me better have kindly taken me aside and spoken their opinion of my message to me in a loving manner. I think my critics haven't heard the compassionate side of my message, so it is through this article that I hope to convey my love for men clinging to a deceptive gospel. I aim to document my beliefs so that I am no longer misunderstood.

First of all, let me state up front that I do not believe a person has to have a perfect understanding of the doctrine(s) of sovereign grace or TULIP in order to be a Christian. Neither do I think the main issue between Calvinism and Arminianism are these five points although I think they are very important. I think the real crux of the argument between these two gospels is the basis for justification. What is the basis for salvation according to God? I can sit and argue all day on limited atonement, election, and perseverance with the saints with Arminians, but I prefer to skip all of

that and go right to the real controversy: justification. Show me an Arminian or anyone else who believes in “free will,” and I will show you someone who is resting in the works of his own mind than someone who is resting in the finished work of Christ alone. How can I make such a claim? It’s really quite simple and it boils down to one question:

What is the ultimate difference between someone who is saved and goes to heaven, and someone who dies and is punished in hell?

What is the difference? Those of us who know the true Gospel can affirm that Christ Alone is the difference. We recognize that when Christ came into this world, He had His people in view and had their sins alone imputed to them on the cross. When we come to recognize our sin and a need of a savior, we officially recognize our guilty status before God and turn from all of our deeds of righteousness to the perfect righteousness of Christ. Those who don’t know this Gospel and affirm the gospel of freewillism believe that Christ died for every human being and the only difference between them and their lost neighbor, was their free will decision. I have yet to meet a person who truly believes in free will affirm that Christ alone is the difference. The answer I always receive when these people are questioned, is their salvation is conditioned upon their decision-making abilities. These people have faith in Christ PLUS their faith. They have not seen their sinfulness because they have not repented of their belief in their ability to be saved. They are looking to themselves, at least partially, in the same way that a Roman Catholic looks to God’s work of grace inside of them rather than to Christ’s perfect life of obedience and death alone. It’s the most deceptive form of idolatry.

Secondly, when people hear me say that these men are lost, they automatically assume that I’m glad they are lost. At least that’s what I’ve been told by at least a few people now. One person at least knows me well enough to know I don’t believe that but said I came across as being “glad” these people were lost. Let me set the record straight... I am not glad that the people I love and care for that also are believers in their decision-making powers are going to hell. I know more Arminians than I do those who believe the Gospel of Grace. Many of them are family and lifelong friends. How could anyone be glad their loved ones are on the path to hell? I am not glad that any Arminian I meet is on the road to hell. That’s a disturbing thought indeed.

But what is even more disturbing to me is that nobody seems to be disturbed about these loved ones enough to actually stand up and say, “hey friend, if you don’t turn from your self-righteousness to Christ, you are going to perish!” What I hear coming from those who confess to believe the gospel of Grace is that many of these Arminians are brethren in Christ. This to me is a very disturbing thought, and every time I hear it, I cringe. Why would we want to give these people any comfort in their standing before God? Granted, I don’t think we should condemn anyone to hell or lash out at these unbelievers with hatred. But to boldly proclaim amongst those who love the gospel of Christ that even *some* Arminians are saved is to possibly give someone who is not saved comfort in their sin. Further it tells the rest of the world who is watching that these doctrines of grace that we claim to love really aren’t that important. It’s as if these five points of sovereign grace are just beliefs that should be picked up by everyone, but are not essential. It’s saying to everyone that it’s ok to believe something more than Christ is necessary for salvation even if we may privately believe the opposite. Do we really want to convey this message?

Thirdly, I do not believe just because a person is in an Arminian church that does not mean they are not Christians. I was converted in a church that consisted of Arminians and Amyraldians. Was I converted believing their teaching? Absolutely not. I was not an Arminian although I may have been in an Arminian church. God reached out to me through His word and changed my stony

heart into one of flesh and revealed to me the true Gospel. Shortly after this conversion, the teaching of my church became too much for me to bear and I left. I do not believe anyone who knows the true gospel can stomach the false teaching around them for very long. By leaving these dens of iniquity, they are evidencing themselves to be true believers.

Those of you who are reading this and have spoken peace to Arminians, think about this before you respond. Are you so adamant that some Arminians are saved because you think you were saved as an Arminian or you don't want to think about your loved ones clinging to their free will as lost people? When talking with many of you, that seems to be the case because I am often asked if I think any Calvinists were saved when they believed that salvation was conditioned on the sinner in any form. Are you humble enough to admit that you might not possibly have understood and believed the gospel when you were an Arminian, or does that thought scare you? Does your standing as a Christian today depend on your conversion experience? Does your past really mean that much to you? Are you willing to repent of your former self-righteousness and confess that you were converted when you came to a knowledge of Christ's righteousness alone as the basis for your salvation?

These questions are not easy to answer because we are sinful people who hate to be confronted in our sin. It's completely natural. Those of you who understand total depravity should know what I'm talking about! It's not easy to be confronted — and so I now confront you as tenderly as possible. Where do you stand? Is a person converted believing a false gospel? If you say yes, I have to question if you really understand the gospel.

I love Arminians too much to allow them to remain comfortable in their sin of self-righteousness. I would rather sit and listen to a Benny Hinn sermon on TV than watch a Calvinist approach Arminians and give them assurance of salvation.

I leave you with this test:

Is Arminianism a false gospel?

If yes, proceed to the next question. If no, how is it that salvation conditioned upon the sinner is the gospel? I'm afraid you don't know the true gospel if you think Arminianism is a true form of the gospel.

Are people saved believing a false gospel?

If no, proceed to the next question. If yes, are you saying it's OK to be a Roman Catholic, a Muslim, or a Mormon too? If so, you don't know the gospel of Grace in Christ. Repent and rest in Christ's righteousness alone.

If you passed the previous questions, how is it that anyone who is an Arminian (that is, who believes Arminian doctrines) is a Christian?

Objections and Answers: Below are all objections I have received since writing this article. I have paraphrased these objections and added my response.

“I don't think you can generalize and say all Arminians are lost because it's possible for a person to believe the true gospel in his heart and express another gospel with his mind.”

Friend, anyone who knows the Gospel of Grace cannot help but express the true Gospel. Anyone who is aware of their salvation cannot possibly express belief in salvation by their own hands. Further, Scripture teaches no head-heart dichotomy - "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart...(Mt 15:18)" - "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Rom 10:9-10)"

"You really shouldn't use the term Arminian as that's too broad of a generalization. Instead you should use terminology such as 'those who have faith in their faith instead of Christ alone.'"

But isn't this what Arminianism is? When I use the term *Arminian*, I mean exactly what you think it is. Anyone who claims to be an Arminian is a person who has "faith in their faith."

"I fail to see the purpose of this article. It's not in any way edifying. Yes, it's true that all Arminians are probably lost but it's not our job to go around judging people's hearts and condemning them to hell."

First, the purpose of this article is twofold. *First*, I hope that Arminians who have not had their sin of self-righteousness revealed, read this and are brought to repentance. *Second*, I hope that those who are resting in Christ Alone are brought to a further understanding of the false gospel through this article. I hope to kindle an evangelistic zeal for the lost and dying world of Arminianism around us. Further, how is it that a presentation of truth is not edifying? It may not be edifying to you at this moment, but God can certainly take truth and apply it at Will to some of His elect as He desires.

Also, I do not think it's our job to go around condemning people to hell because of their belief in the false gospel. However, if we love these people, we will refuse to give them any assurance of their salvation. I don't think there is anything wrong with taking an Arminian friend aside and telling them in love that we do not think they are saved because they are not resting in Christ's work ALONE. If we have the courage to do this, then we should do so in the hopes that God will grant them repentance and faith through the presentation of the true Gospel. We should never run around in an arrogant attitude condemning people to hell. When rejecting our Arminian associates, we must always present the Gospel of Grace and Truth and depend on the Holy Spirit to call His elect into fellowship.

"If you were to take what Arminians say is the gospel, I agree that this evidences that they are lost. However, men such as Spurgeon and other great reformers of the past counted Arminians as brethren. Therefore, we should do the same."

We must be very careful to avoid the cult of the personality. Spurgeon spoke a lot of true things, but he also taught a lot of false doctrine. These men were fallible; and we must avoid erecting protestant popes at all costs. Our rule for thought and practice comes from the Scriptures alone and not from church tradition.

"Everything in this article is true, but we must keep these things to ourselves because we will turn Arminians away with the message that they are lost."

So you are saying we should sit idly on our hands and watch these dear friends of ours die in their sins? How can you feel comfortable knowing the truth but refusing to share it? Yes, we will turn many Arminians away with this message, but that's the nature of the Gospel. But what you are

failing to realize is it's the truth that God will use to call His elect. We must always be diligent to speak the whole counsel of God to all people. Failure to do so is willful disobedience to God's Word.

“Some people are just ignorant of the truth concerning God's sovereignty. Do we really want to push these people away?”

This ignorance of the true Gospel is precisely why they are lost. If they were truly converted, they wouldn't be ignorant of the truth. Now, while I believe it's possible for an immature believer to be confused on some terminology, (that is they may not be able to express their thoughts concerning salvation well), they will not express belief in a false gospel of salvation conditioned upon faith. Further, if these ignorant people are truly believers as you say they are, then when presented with these facts of Christ's Sovereign Grace they will not be pushed away but instead will rejoice and love the truth as it's delivered.

“Some new believers reading this will really be shocked and shaken when they read this. This article appears to be cruel and unloving because you're not taken these brethren of ours into account.”

Anyone who loves the Gospel does so in “fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). If you were to think of what you were saved from (hell), you too would be shaken. Further, a sobering view of the world is necessary if we are to be moved to adoring worship and evangelism. We *must* take our blinders off to the massive reprobation that surrounds us in this world. You are right that this will shock and shaken up some of our newly converted brethren, but this will be good for them, and God will preserve them through this ordeal. They may even be brought to a further joy in the Lord that bought them!

“How can you say all Arminians are lost when some of the greatest works in Christian literature have been authored from Arminians?”

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Mt 7:22-23 ^{KJV}

Our standing in Christ is not based on *anything* we do. It is true that God has used Arminians to produce some things of benefit to His elect, but that in no way means these men were Christians. Just because men like John Wesley penned some great hymns, does not mean he was a Christian.

John Gill, a great particular baptist theologian wrote the following that expresses what every true Christian believes:

“I depend wholly and alone on the free, sovereign, eternal, unchangeable and everlasting love of God; the firm and everlasting covenant of grace; and my interest in the persons of the Trinity; for my whole salvation: and *not upon any righteousness of my own, nor anything in me, or done by me under the influences of the holy Spirit; nor upon any services of mine, which I have been assisted to perform for the good of the church; but upon my interest in the persons of the Trinity, the person, blood and righteousness of Christ, the free grace of God, and the blessings of grace streaming to me through the blood and righteousness of Christ; as the ground of my hope.*”