

ARMINIANISM

FREE WILL OR HUMAN NATURE

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 so in such a manner as not to interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has power to either cooperate with God's spirit and be regenerated or 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 gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.

CONDITIONAL ELECTION

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His seeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom he knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined, or conditioned upon, what man 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 solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus, the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

GRACE

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 deceitful 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. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation - it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.

(Read Rom 3:10,12; 5:12; 5:18; Matt. 15:19; Eph. 2:1-3)

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

God's choice of certain individuals 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 or repentance. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are results, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon 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.

(Read John 6:37-40;15:16; Rom. 9:11-16; Eph. 1:3-6; Jer. 31:3; Ps. 65:4; Matt. 11:25-26; II Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 1:9)

ARMINIANISM (cont.)

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 men and for every man, only those who believe in 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 man chooses to accept it.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN BE EFFECTIVELY 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 only draw to Christ 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 by man.

GRACE (cont.)

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION (OR LIMITED ATONEMENT)

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. 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 infallible when applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.

(Read John 17:9, 20; Isa. 53:8, 10, 11; II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:12)

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

In addition to an 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. Whereas the external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected, the inward 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 by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, and 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.

(Read Psalms. 65:4; 110:3; John 6:44-45, 63; Rom. 9:16)

ARMINIANISM (cont.)

FALLING FROM GRACE

Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, good works, and so forth. All Arminians have not agreed on this point; some have held that once a sinner is regenerated he can never be lost.

ACCORDING TO ARMINIANISM:

Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond), with man's response being the determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, "choose" to cooperate with Him and accept His offer of Grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role; thus, man, not God, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.

LAW AND GRACE

Law manifests what is in men -- sin! Grace manifests what is in God -- love!

Law demands righteousness from men! Grace brings righteousness to men!

Law sentences men to death! Grace brings dead men to life!

Law speaks of what I must do! Grace tells what Christ has done!

Law gives a knowledge of sin! Grace puts away sin!

"Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be."

GRACE (cont.)

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

All who were 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 preserved to the end.

(Read John 10:27-28)

ACCORDING TO GRACE

Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the Triune God. The Father chose a people and the Son died for them. The Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect (without exception) to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by His grace alone. Thus, God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.

Arminianism versus Grace