

1. **Introduction**: As mentioned, the public beginning of the Arminianism/Calvinism controversy came in 1610 (after the deaths of both Calvin and Arminius).
 - Some followers of Arminius' theology, who were Dutch Reformed Pastors, filed a formal complaint in the form of 5-Articles of Remonstrance (a forceful protest).
 - The Pastors were defending themselves against the accusation that they were preaching doctrine that was against Confessional Standards.
 - Since the Dutch Reformed church was the state church of Holland, the concerned Pastors sent their complaint to government officials.
 - Ultimately, in 1618-19, a Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church was held. By the time the Synod met, the 5-article presentation of the Remonstrance had become the standard form for addressing the contested doctrines.
 - The Synod ruled against the Arminians. A written report was prepared that responded to each of the five-points of Remonstrance. The Synod's 5-article response eventually became known as the "Five Points of Calvinism."
 - The Arminianism/Calvinism controversy is focused on a few point of soteriology;
 - A more complete view of Calvinism reveals it presents a complete worldview as held by John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, and many others.
2. **A Reformed Baptist Pastor's View**: John Piper's response to a question about the 5-points of Calvinism and the Arminian 5-points of Remonstrance was:
 - *"Calvinism says we are chosen. God chooses unconditionally whom He will mercifully bring to faith." (God's choice to enable some to come to faith is merciful. Without His action, all mankind is fallen and under God's wrath).*
 - The Calvinist version of what salvation looks like emphasizes how it happens under God's sovereignty. The Arminian response was, *"There are five places where we don't agree, and they gave their version of those five statements."*
 - The disagreement became a big issue within the Dutch Reformed Church.
 - The Synod of Dort of the Dutch Reformed Church ruled against the Arminians. A report was written opposing each of the 5-points of Remonstrance.
 - That 5-article report became known as the five points of Calvinism.
 - All differences between the Arminianism and Calvinism positions on the 5 points have to do with soteriology (doctrine of salvation).
 - Piper lists the five points and gives both Arminianism and Calvinism views.
 - **1. Total Depravity**
 - Calvinism says people are so depraved and rebellious they are unable to trust God unless He does a special work of grace to change their hearts enabling them to necessarily and willingly – freely – believe.

- Arminianism says, people are indeed depraved and corrupt, but God, because of the first coming and atoning work of Christ, has dispensed a universal prevenient grace that fully negates the depravity of man.
- For Arminians, ever since Christ atoning death, people are now in a neutral state. Prevenient grace was purchased by Christ's work on the cross.
- Arminians believe in unlimited atonement, so they believe that when Paul speaks of God giving "all things" (Rm 8:32) to those whom Christ died for, they include universal prevenient grace as one thing included in "all things."
- **2. Unconditional Election**
- Calvinism says, we are chosen by God. He chooses unconditionally, according to His own essence and character. He chooses whom He will mercifully bring to faith and whom He will justly leave in their condition.
- Arminianism says God chose and elected to bring to salvation all whom He foresaw would on their own believe thus those saved bring about their own faith and provide the decisive impetus themselves. In that view, God doesn't decisively produce the faith that He foresees. The person produces their faith.
- **3. Limited Atonement**
- Calvinism says, that in the death of Christ, God provided sufficient atonement for all but designed that it be effective for the elect.
- Arminianism says that in the death of Christ, God provided sufficient atonement for all and designed that it would become effective by virtue of faith for which we – not Christ – provide the decisive impetus.
- That means faith itself is not purchased by the cross (*nor is it, as Paul says, the gift of God*), but faith, produced by the person, is their means of obtaining the forgiveness of sins purchased by Christ's death on the cross.
- **4. Irresistible Grace**
- Calvinism says, the new birth is God's work of regeneration and renewal in our hearts that necessarily brings about the actions of a willing, saving faith.
- Arminianism says the new birth is God's work of renewal in our hearts in response to our act of saving faith.
- **5. Perseverance of the Saints**
- Calvinism says, God works infallibly to preserve us in faith – all who are truly born again – and no one is ever lost who was truly born of God.
- Arminians say God works to preserve His people, but He does not always prevent some who were born again from falling away to destruction, i.e., you can lose your salvation.
- **Summary:**
- Arminianism and Calvinism differ in the understanding of how we can move from a condition of spiritual unbelief to a condition of true faith in Christ as Savior. In short, the difference is in how we come to salvation.

- To a Calvinist, God is the decisive cause of faith. God is sovereign in all things.
 - To an Arminian, the decisive cause of faith is their choice to believe in God’s promises or, perhaps, their invitation to Christ to come into their heart.
 - Calvinists believe that God must produce in us the decisive desire for Christ.
 - Arminians believe the decisive desire for Christ must come from within through the exercise of their libertarian free-will.
3. **Role of Doctrine:** How many people are saved by believing the “right doctrine?”
- Exactly zero! Our Lord Jesus Christ saves – and He alone. We are saved by His perfect life under the law, and His atoning death on our behalf.
 - Since we are fallen and spiritually dead, salvation begins with regeneration, being born again of the Spirit. We receive God’s gift of faith, we believe, are justified, we begin to be sanctified, and we are ultimately glorified.
 - If doctrine cannot save (and it can’t), what is the purpose of “right doctrine?”
 - Doctrine provides direction to our spiritual life in many vital ways. Doctrine determines how we view God, tells us what Jesus accomplished on our behalf in His life and death, and tells us what duties God requires of us.
 - Doctrine impacts our attitude toward the saved and unsaved, impacts the way we live our life, the way we pray, the way we understand our relationship with God, the way we understand everlasting life, Scripture, etc. Doctrine does not and cannot save.
 - Arminian and Calvinist doctrine are both important and contain truth, but neither can save. Believing one versus the other will not gain you entrance into everlasting life nor keep you from it.
 - In 1 John, the Apostle John gives 3 self-tests of your confidence of having salvation. The tests are independent of both Arminian and Calvinist doctrine.
 - Self-test (1.) Righteousness (the test of obedience) – Am I increasingly obedient to God’s commands? Am I progressing in practical righteousness such that my profession of being “in Christ” is increasingly matched by my conduct?
 - Self-test (2.) Love (the test of relationships) – Am I increasingly acting toward others in ways consistent with the affections and actions of agape love?
 - Self-test (3.) Truth (the test of right belief) – The key is do I believe Jesus the man of Nazareth is Christ the Lord, God come in the flesh?
 - These probe the reality of transformation from “death in Adam to life in Christ.”
 - Belief in neither Calvinist or Arminian doctrine either assures or blocks salvation. Jesus saves! He alone saves.
 - Doctrinal differences arise from the results of theological attempts to decipher the mind of God by analyzing Scripture.
 - Because people bring different presuppositions to the interpretation task, the results (and hence doctrine) depend on the presuppositions assumed.

- Given a non-negotiable presupposition God is sovereign in all things, you will get Calvinist doctrine. Given a non-negotiable presupposition of libertarian free-will, you will get Arminian doctrine.
- Doctrine organizes (systematizes) principles and commands either obtained direct from Scripture or properly inferred from Scripture (e.g., the Holy Trinity is not directly found in Scripture but is a proper inference).
- What practical value is doctrine in the life of a believer? The Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 3 points out that the purpose of Scripture is to teach us what God would have us know about Him and what duties He requires of us.
- Scripture does reveal what God would have us know about Him and the duties He requires of us, but pertinent passages are scattered throughout both Testaments and subject to interpretation that depends on presuppositions.
- The primary goal of doctrine is to clarify what God would have us know about Him and the duties He requires of us. The methodology is to systematize and clearly state the things taught in Scripture.
- Calvinists believe the doctrine of election reveals important things about the nature of God and our relationship to Him. The role of election in salvation was a particular concern in the Arminianism/Calvinism controversy.
- Arminius struggled with questions like – what is God’s purpose in election, and what criteria does He use to choose the elect?
- Scripture doesn’t reveal the details of how God elects. There is mystery.
- Deuteronomy 29:29 reminds us that ***“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”***
- Though the “how” of election is a mystery, that election is in Scripture is not.
- Further, we know some are saved and some are not. The details of why this is so is hidden in God. It is His mystery.
- What does Scripture reveal about the elect? (1.) The elect were sovereignly chosen by God before the foundation of the earth. (2.) The community of the elect is such that no man can number it.
- (3.) There are elect individuals from every tribe and nation. (4.) All the elect are saved by the atoning work of Christ, each one cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.
- We know these things because God has revealed them in His Word. But He chose to not reveal any information about His criteria of choice to election. Nor do we have any information about how we might with certainty identify the elect.
- One thing to keep in mind is that a great crowd that no one can number were chosen before the foundation of the earth. Many of the chosen lived long before Calvinism and Arminianism were articulated. Even so, they will be in heaven.

- Arminius big issue was how does God choose the elect without violating His attributes of justice and love?
- He came to believe the answer was that God used His foreknowledge to elect those whom He foresaw would use their freedom of choice to believe.
- Calvinists don't accept that answer, neither do they have a clue how to answer the question of how God chooses His elect.
- God is sovereign and good. We know He has a reason. We just don't know it. God is purposeful. He does nothing without a reason.
- Election is an effect. Every effect has a cause, but the details of the cause of election are hidden in God. We will not know why God elects some to salvation and passes over others unless God chooses to reveal that to us.
- So far, God has chosen to not reveal how and why His election choices are made, nor has He given us information on how to distinguish between the "saved" and the "lost" – except to judge "by their fruit."

According to Arminianism:

Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond) - 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 recipients of the gift of salvation.

According to Calvinism:

Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the Triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect 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 grace alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.

Arminianism	Calvinism
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Free-Will or Human Ability</u></p> <p>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 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 the 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 act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Total Inability or Total Depravity</u></p> <p>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.</p>

Conditional Election

God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world was based upon His foreseeing 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 by 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.

Unconditional Election

God's choice of certain individuals unto 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 of 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 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.

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 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 man chooses to accept it.

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 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 infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.

The Holy Spirit Can 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) proceeds 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.

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 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 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, 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.

Falling from Grace

Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc. All Arminians have not been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ - that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.

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.

This material was taken from *The Five Points of CALVINISM - Defined, Defended, Documented*. David N. Steele and Curtis Thomas are Baptist ministers in Little Rock, Arkansas. Their contrast of the Five Points of Calvinism with the Five Points of Arminianism is the clearest and most concise form found for the edification of the average student. It is also included as an Appendix in, *Romans: An Interpretive Outline* by the same authors. Each of these books is published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, N.J.