

Calvinism and Arminianism Explained

FREE WILL VS. PREDESTINATION



FREE WILL OR PREDESTINATION?

The expression “being saved” points to the beginning of a wonderful relationship with God. These words mean much to Christians because they encompass much: A new relationship with God and other people, the renewal of our hearts and minds, the growth of faith and obedience in our lives, and much more. How does this salvation happen? More importantly, once we are saved, can we lose our salvation? Is sharing the good news of the gospel even necessary? Do we have to do anything to be saved?

Before seeing two ways to answer these questions, let’s focus on the points with which all Christians agree. Regarding God’s merciful work of salvation, Christians agree that:

1. Because of sin, all humans need God’s grace.
2. Salvation from sin and condemnation is an act of God.
3. Salvation is accomplished only by grace through faith in Christ.
4. Works, good works or works of the Law, cannot lead one to salvation.

However, Christians do not agree on how God’s sovereignty and human freedom (free will) relate to each other in connection to salvation. Two views answer these questions quite differently: from a Calvinistic (predestination) or an Arminian view (free will). Although the answers available are not simple, they are important for our understanding of God’s mission in the world and our responsibility as believers.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

This pamphlet will define and explain the terms in the following table.

<i>See:</i>	<i>Arminianism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>
p. 4–5	Total depravity and free will (also called human ability)	Total depravity, also called “radical depravity” or “total inability”
p. 6–7	Conditional election	Unconditional election, also called “sovereign election”
p. 9–10	Universal redemption (also called general atonement)	Limited atonement, also called “particular, purposeful, or definite atonement”
p. 10–11	Grace can be resisted	Irresistible grace, also called “efficacious or effectual grace”
p. 12–13	Possibility of falling from grace	Perseverance of the saints, also called “preservation of the saints or believers”

PREDESTINATION IN HISTORY

Augustine (354-430)

He was the Bishop of Hippo (a city in Northern Africa, present-day Annaba, Algeria). An influential Christian thinker, his works continue to be studied. In his book *Confessions*, Augustine concluded, among many other things, that every area of the human nature was corrupted by the effects of sin.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

As a German priest and professor of theology, his objections to church doctrine and practice initiated the Reformation. In *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther debated the great philosopher Erasmus of Rotterdam. Luther argued that original sin—Adam and Eve's sin in Eden—had so corrupted human nature, that now unaided, we are unable to do any good. Any righteousness we may have comes from God's grace.

John Calvin (1509-1564)

As a Reformer, Calvin had a profound influence on Protestant theology. Calvin believed that all the glory of salvation belonged to God. Calvin brought God's sovereignty and mercy together in the historical doctrine of predestination: After the fall, humanity stood condemned before God. In his mercy, God decided to save many people from this condemnation; in his sovereignty, God chose and called those who would be saved. Humans, being unable to reach out to God, received God's salvation without deserving it. That this election happens according to God's will is proof of God's sovereignty, mercy, and love. Calvin's views are well presented in his debate with the Dutch theologian Albert Pighius and in his book *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*.

Reformed churches

These are churches that follow Calvinistic teachings. They originated in countries like the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, and Germany. The Presbyterian churches, also Calvinistic, originated in the United Kingdom.

Synod of Dort (1618-1619)

Almost ten years after the death of Arminius (see next page), the Reformed theologians in the Netherlands called a Synod (assembly) in the town of Dordrecht. This synod responded to a document named "The Remonstrance of 1610," which Arminius's disciples drafted. The *Canons of Dort*, a confessional document for Reformed churches, outlines their view on God's sovereignty, election, grace, and salvation.

Augustine's
Confessions
(397-398)

Augustine's
reply to Pelagius
(412-415)

Martin Luther's
*The Bondage of the
Will* (1525)

John Calvin's
*The Bondage and
Liberation of the
Will* (1543)

Synod of Dort
(1618-1619)

FREE WILL IN HISTORY

Pelagius's response
to Augustine
(c. 405)

Pelagius (354-420/440).

Pelagius argued that sin had no effects on human nature. In his view, humans retained their ability to choose between good and evil. Since humans could choose good, Pelagius proposed that humans could act in a way that they can obtain God's grace. This grace would lead them to salvation and holiness. The church agreed with Augustine and declared Pelagius's teaching heretical.

Erasmus of Rotterdam

(1466-1536). He was a Dutch scholar, known for his humanist and theological works. Although an early sympathizer of Luther's ideas, Erasmus objected to Luther's views about human free will. He presents his views in his book, *The Freedom of the Will*.

Albert Pighius

(1490-1542). He was a Dutch Catholic theologian, mathematician, and astronomer. Among his works, Pighius argued against the Reformation. In his *Ten Books on Human Free Choice and Divine Grace*, Pighius argued that original sin did not corrupt human nature.

Arminius (1560-1609)

Arminius agreed with Calvin and the other Reformers that God's grace is essential for the beginning, the continuation, and consummation of faith. He agreed that human nature was so tainted that it is impossible for people to seek God on their own. However, Arminius considered that Christ's death conveys grace to all people. This grace, which John Wesley later called "prevenient grace," enables people to choose or reject God's offer of salvation. Arminius rejected Pelagius's views, in favor of the position that, although God's prevenient grace allows people to exercise their free will, humans cannot do such choosing without God's grace.

Remonstrants

The term was used for Arminius's students who drafted the strong protest against the Reformed church's teachings about election, predestination, and God's grace. Their writing became the basis for Arminian theology that many still hold.

Erasmus's *The
Freedom of the
Will* (1524)

Albert Pighius's
*Ten Books on
Human Free
Choice and
Divine Grace*
(1542)

Remonstrants
1610

Issue 1: FREE WILL AND TOTAL INABILITY

What are the effects of sin in humanity? How does human sin relate to human free will? Can humans choose to move closer to God on their own?

Points of Agreement

Christians agree that the effect of sin on the human nature is fatal and reaches every area of our nature. Arminians and Calvinists agree on the total inability or depravity of humanity. In other words, total inability means that without the prior intervention of God's grace, humans cannot come to him on their own. Total depravity does not mean that humans are as sinful or evil as they can be. It means that the entirety of the human being is tainted, in one way or another, by sin.

Biblical Passages

- ✱ *As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:10–12).*
- ✱ *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins (Eph 2:1).*

DEPRAVITY

Human sin affects every area of humanity in every person. It means that people continue to make choices, but every choice is tainted by the effects of sin.

Arminianism

Although the effects of sin are devastating, God did not leave humans in that helpless state. God extended his grace to all humans to enable them to come to him. This measure of grace, called "prevenient grace," allows human free will to accept God's call. However, the will is also free to reject this call. Faith, then, as a gift of God, grants the power to believe. However, people must choose to exercise this faith in the act of belief. Until this faith is exercised, the Holy Spirit does not make a new heart. Faith, then, precedes the new birth.

Before God's graceful intervention, humans are unable to believe. Once God's grace, "prevenient grace," arrives, people are enabled to believe or to reject. Humans are held accountable based on their free choice of accepting or rejecting God's call.

Some Arminians believe that the effects of sin, although damaging to the extreme, were not fatal. Human nature retained a faint pulse and remained alive. Most Arminians today do not hold this view.

Biblical Passages

- ✱ *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself (John 12:32).*
- ✱ *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).*
- ✱ *This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3–4).*

Adam's fall into sin left humanity spiritually dead. Human free will, the ability to move toward God, is broken. People are blind and deaf to God. Without God's direct intervention, no person is able to come to God. Although death is the deserved payment for sin, God's grace and love intervenes. When the Holy Spirit makes the sinner alive, he also gives that person a new nature. The Holy Spirit replaces the heart of stone with a heart of flesh. The new birth—also called *regeneration*—precedes faith.

Biblical Passages

- ✘ *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day* (John 6:44).
- ✘ *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions* (Eph 2:4–5).

Questions and Other Issues

- ✦ A possible danger for Arminians is forgetting that salvation is God's unmerited gift to humanity.
- ✦ A possible danger for Calvinists is to highlight God's sovereignty to such an extreme that they reduce human free will. The primary danger is to make God the author of evil and remove all responsibility for sin from humanity.
- ✦ *Regardless of what you believe, what does it mean for your faith and life to know that God is sovereign—the king of the whole creation?*

Map of Dordrecht, Netherlands, about 1550



Points of agreement

The Bible is clear that God elects—God chose Israel from all the nations of the earth (Deut. 7:6–8), for example. The New Testament often talks about God choosing people. How does God elect people? How does this election relate to human free will?

Biblical Passages

- ✘ *For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Deut. 7:6–8).*
- ✘ *God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth (2 Thess. 2:13).*

ELECTION

Choice—God's choice to save people is not based or conditioned on who they are or anything they have done or will do. God, as King, chooses freely to save people in Christ.

Arminianism

Arminians argue that God's election respects human free will because it is based on his *foreknowledge*. Because God knows how all choices will turn out, God foresees who will choose to follow his calling and who will reject it. Based on this foreknowledge, God elects those who will believe. For Arminius, as for Wesley, everyone who believes *is* elect.

Some Arminian scholars propose to use the concept of *corporate election*. Whenever the Bible refers to *election*, they argue, it means that God is electing a group of people (Israel in the Old Testament and the Church in the New Testament) rather than individuals. Based on this concept, they argue that God did predestine the church to be an elected people. However, Christians individually must still exercise their faith to become part of this elected group, just as God predestined Israel, even if individually they might rebel.

Biblical Passages

- ✘ *To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood (1 Peter 1:1–2).*
- ✘ *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters (Rom. 8:29).*

IMPORTANT WORDS

Arminian Points—When Arminius's supporters confronted Reformed theologians in the Netherlands, they wrote five articles. These articles expressed their views on salvation. Because of their *remonstrance*—a forceful protest—they became known as the *Remonstrants*, and their document as the *Five Articles of Remonstrance*.

Prevenient grace—For Arminians, it refers to the grace of God that precedes human decision to come to God or reject him. Extended to all humanity, prevenient grace enables people to respond positively or negatively to God's call.

Regeneration—It is the new birth that believers experience (2 Cor. 5:17). For Calvinists, regeneration occurs simultaneously with the gift of faith from God. For Arminians, regeneration occurs only after people have exercised faith and come to Christ.

Remonstrance—The word refers to a forceful protest. The Remonstrance of 1610 refers to the forceful protest that Arminius's disciples expressed to Calvinist teaching in the Netherlands.

Saints—Those who believe in Jesus. God will cause his chosen ones to persevere in and through all the things that life throws at them until they come into the full and eternal life God has for them.

Synod—From the Greek word *synodos*, it means "assembly" or "meeting." A synod is a meeting of church representatives. In Episcopalian churches, it is used for the meeting of Bishops of the church. In Reformed and Presbyterian churches, it is used for the meeting of church representatives, often pastors, elders, and other lay leaders.

TULIP—TULIP is the acrostic that has become traditionally associated with Reformed theology. It is important to note that TULIP is a late (perhaps around the end of the 1800s) device to help people remember the five points of doctrine derived from the Synod of Dordt documents—the *Canons of Dordt*. As with many acrostics, the fitting sentences that form the acrostic do not always express correctly or completely the idea behind it. TULIP, although a helpful memory device, on its own is an inadequate summary of Reformed doctrine.



National Synod in Grote Kerk, Dordrecht

Calvinists believe that God, in his mercy, chose to extend his grace to many to save them from condemnation. Because of sin, humans are already justly condemned. Calvinists believe that God's choice resides entirely in his good pleasure. In deciding to choose people for salvation, God chose to pass others by, leaving them in their already lost condition. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God calls and transforms those whom he previously chose. The label "unconditional election" refers to the free exercise of God's sovereignty. Based on the apostle Paul—"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion" (Rom. 9:15)—Calvinist scholars argue that God's choice of people is not conditional to any action or characteristic of each person. Rather, God chooses based on his good pleasure and for the glory of his name.

Biblical Passages

- ✚ *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves (Eph. 1:4–6).*
- ✚ *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you (John 15:16).*
- ✚ *He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Tim. 1:9).*

Questions and Other Issues

- ✚ A possible temptation for Arminians might be to imagine that people who choose God are, in some way, better than those who didn't.
- ✚ God's choice here refers to salvation. If his choice is extended beyond the issue of salvation, the question of determinism might arise. If God chooses based on his will alone, are humans even responsible for their choices?

EXTREME VIEWS

Two extreme views, on opposite sides, cause comparable problems. One extreme emphasizes God's sovereignty to such an extent that it denies the importance or even the existence of human responsibility. The other extreme emphasizes human choice to such an extent that it diminishes God's sovereignty. The result is a god that hardly resembles the God of the Bible.

1. The first extreme is often called "hyper-Calvinism." People holding this view may deny the importance of sharing the gospel because, they reason, the elect will come to God in any case. In addition, it leads people to question their status as elect, creating both tendency toward legalism and great anxiety for believers.
2. On the Arminian extreme is a view often connected to "Open theism" in which the over-emphasis on human responsibility diminishes who God is and what he does in his creation. Since free will is so emphasized, open theists reason that God must respect even the choices that humans haven't yet made. For that reason, the future is mostly unknown even to God. This view seems to diminish who God is and what he can do.

Points of agreement

All Christians agree that Christ's death on the cross fulfills God's requirements and is sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world.

Biblical Passages

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Arminianism

Arminian theologians affirm that Christ's death, his atonement, was universal. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. It doesn't mean that all people are saved—the term "general" atonement may help to avoid confusion. Rather, it means that the benefits of Christ's death apply to all people—this is the effect of prevenient grace. Yet, individuals must accept God's calling for forgiveness and regeneration to occur.

Biblical Passages

- ✠ *Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him." For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:14–18).*
- ✠ *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).*

Calvinism

The common name "limited atonement" incorrectly summarizes this Reformed doctrine. It does not mean that Christ's death on the cross is limited or we limit him. In a sense, unless one is a universalist—a person who believes that God will, eventually, save all humans—most Christians "limit" the results of the atonement. For Arminians, the atonement is limited by being a possibility for all people, but only those who do not reject God receive its benefits. For Calvinists, the atonement is definite and effective—those for whom Jesus died will certainly be saved. Thus, for Calvinism, the benefits of the atonement are for the elect only. Since we cannot know who the elect are, then, Calvinists agree that we must make the offer of the gospel to all people.

ATONEMENT

The invention of the English word *atonement* has been attributed to William Tyndale, the English Bible translator in the sixteenth century. The term expresses what Jesus accomplished on the cross: the cancellation of sins and reconciliation of God and humanity. The word has two parts: *at* and *onement*. Atonement, then, is God's way to bring reconciliation and restoration to the problem of human sin and its effects.

Biblical Passages

- ✘ *Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28).*
- ✘ *Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me (John 10:25–27).*
- ✘ *I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours (John 17:9).*

Questions and Other Issues

- ✦ Arminian scholars are clear that individuals must accept God's calling to be saved. However, a danger with the Arminian perspective is assuming that since Jesus died for all, then all people will be saved. This concept of universal salvation is not biblical (see, for example, Gal. 5:19–21; 1 Cor. 6:9–10). The Bible makes it clear that only those who come to Jesus will be saved (John 14:6) and those who do not will experience eternal separation (2 Thess. 1:7–9; Rev. 20:11–15). In addition, it might be easy to forget that God initiates our salvation. Even if, in Arminian theology, Christians must make a choice for God, salvation is all from God's grace.
- ✦ For Calvinists, the doctrine of definite (or limited) atonement does not contradict the need for evangelism. According to Calvinist theology, God knows those whom he elected, but we do not. To be obedient to Jesus' command to spread the gospel, Calvinist Christians must make evangelism a priority in their Christian practice.

Issue 4: GRACE

Points of agreement

- Christians agree that humans are in a state of total inability to come to God on their own—in other words, our total depravity. This state of complete helplessness to please God is a consequence of the fall.
- Humans continue to move away from God. We are unable to seek God on our own. This means that no good deeds or behavior, nothing that we do or be can earn us God's favor. Only God's grace—a gift we do not deserve—can allow us to come to him. Where Christians differ is in the way God's grace operates.

Biblical Passages

- ✘ *It is by grace you have been saved (Eph. 2:5).*
- ✘ *And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24).*
- ✘ *He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Tim. 1:9).*

GRACE

It refers to God's favor or kindness that he gives apart from any actions people may do and despite what people actually deserve. God's grace is supremely revealed in the person and ministry of Jesus. By the grace of God, Jesus died for our sins so that we may enjoy life with God.

Arminian theologians argue that God respects human free will. Thus, although God offers his grace to all people, he also endows them with the ability to reject that grace. This way, individuals are responsible for their own decisions, accepting or rejecting God's grace. Thus, we can explain why some people who hear the gospel remain away from God. In his mercy, God allows people the freedom to reject the offer of salvation.

Biblical Passages

- ✘ *You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! (Acts 7:51).*
- ✘ *For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people (Titus 2:11).*

In Calvinism, the external call when we preach the gospel to people is resistible—individuals can reject that call. However, the internal calling of the Holy Spirit is “efficacious”: When God calls the people he has elected, his calling achieves his purpose. The Holy Spirit does not only give a measure of grace to be able to choose, as in Arminianism. Rather, he makes individuals spiritually alive. With the new ability to see God and Jesus’ work on the cross, God’s calling is so wonderful and enticing that it becomes impossible to say no. What God proposes to do, he accomplishes.

In Calvinism, this is not a violation of humanity’s free will because this will is already enslaved and disabled by sin. Rather, the internal work of the Spirit (regeneration) frees people’s wills.

Biblical Passages

- ✘ *All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away (John 6:37).*
- ✘ *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day (John 6:44).*
- ✘ *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).*

Questions and Other Issues

- ✦ We must recognize that “the secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children...” (Deut. 29:29). The exact operation of God’s grace might well be one of those secret things that belong to God.
- ✦ However, the Scriptures reveal enough for us to know that apart from God’s grace, we can do nothing. God’s grace has broken through human hopelessness and despair, opening the door for new beginnings walking alongside God.
- ✦ We can argue that the primary doctrine is that God’s grace begins and ends salvation, we can’t come to God without it, and we receive it completely as God’s gift. The exact way God’s grace works in us is, then, a secondary doctrine that shouldn’t divide believers.

Points of agreement

Christians agree that, once individuals are *in Christ*, God enables and equips them to strive against Satan, sin, and temptations, and to be victorious.

Disagreement occurs on the issue of the possibility for believers to fall into apostasy.

Biblical Passages

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:6).

APOSTASY

Apostasy is the willful falling away or rejection of Christian truths. The Greek translation of the Old Testament—known as the Septuagint—uses the Greek related term for apostasy to express departure from God (for example, Josh. 22:22; Jer. 17:5–6; Ezek. 3:20).

Arminianism

In the Arminian view, security of one's salvation—God preserving believers in salvation—depends on the believers' continued exercise of the faith. Believers can and do fall away from the faith. When people fall away from the faith, they are no longer saved. Like any other unsaved person, those who fell away from grace need a new commitment to God.

According to some scholars, at least four dangers can cause apostasy in believers:

1. Persecution that pressures Christians to deny Christ
2. Accepting false doctrine with respect to the essentials of the faith
3. Temptations to sin
4. Weariness in faith

Biblical Passages

- ✘ *Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live (Rom. 8:12–13).*
- ✘ *But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel (Col. 1:22–23).*
- ✘ *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown (Rev. 2:10).*

Calvinists believe that once God has elected, called, and regenerated individuals, he will not allow them to fall from grace. Salvation cannot be lost.

Calvinists maintain that anyone who seemingly had faith and then fallen from faith was not truly saved in the first place. Calvinists also realize that Christians will struggle throughout their lives with sin, temptation, and distractions from the faith. However, their salvation does not depend on themselves, but solely on God. Once saved, Calvinists believe, God will not allow believers to lose their salvation.

Christians can grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30)—in the context of the verse in Ephesians, Paul lists eleven sins that grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:17–32). However, believers can neither totally nor finally fall away from God's grace. The Holy Spirit is the seal—the mark that shows we belong to God—that guarantees this salvation.

Biblical Passages

- ☒ *Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:35–37).*
- ☒ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35, 38–39).*
- ☒ *For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29).*
- ☒ *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it (1 Thess. 5:23–24).*

Questions and Other Issues

- ✦ A possible danger in Arminianism is anxiety: If people do choose God with their free will, are we personally responsible to persuade people to become believers? In an extreme case, believing that we have a part in people's conversions might cause in us spiritual pride.
- ✦ In addition, if our eternal salvation depends on our faithfulness, yet we recognize that we will always struggle with sin until we reach heaven, wouldn't this view cause a great deal of spiritual anxiety in believers? To avoid this problem, we must emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding and empowering us to be victorious over sin.
- ✦ For Calvinists, the certainty that God will preserve and carry us to the end may lead to complacency. However, Calvinism is not anti-missionary, nor does it diminish the importance of spiritual revivals and awakenings. On the contrary, many great missionaries and preachers were and are Calvinists.