



GLC
APOLOGETICS PRESENTS:
FREE OR CHOSEN:
Unpacking Calvinism and Arminianism

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Unpacking Calvinism and Arminianism**
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Why tackle this difficult subject?

- The big questions
- We want to grow
- It is “uso”
- It is divisive

Some Limitations

- In two hours we will not settle a 500-year-old dispute.
- We will not exhaustively address all possible concerns, verses or perspectives.
- We will not entertain arguments from those already committed to a specific position.
- We will focus more on the claims of Calvinism.

A Warning

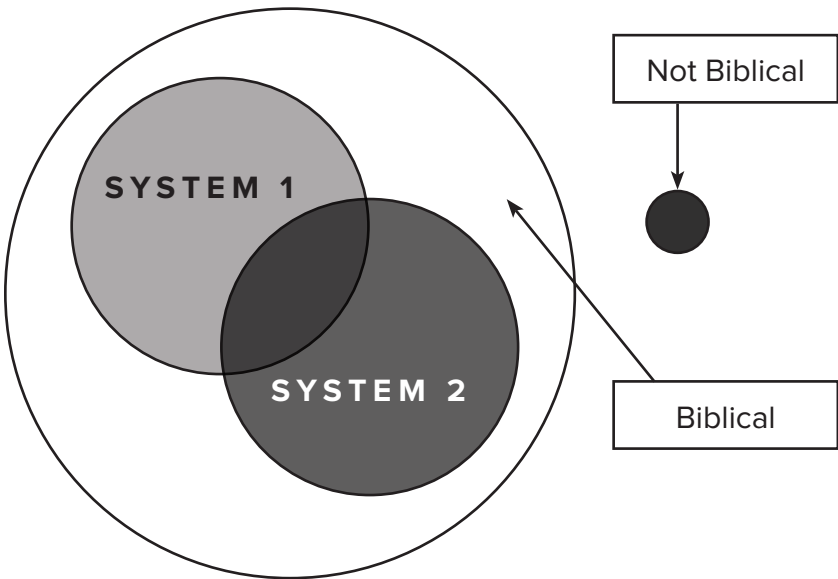
“If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions...”

1 TIMOTHY 6:3–4

Systems of Theology

- Both Calvinism and Arminianism are humanly derived systems that seek to explain all the core issues of theology.
- Problem: they sometimes prioritize their logical systems over the clear meaning of the Bible.
- The Bible is not a book of Systematic Theology – if God wanted us to have a theology textbook, He could have given it to us!

The Bible and Theological Systems



Calvinism and Arminianism

John Calvin – one of the early Reformers, a brilliant theologian and Christian leader, known for his five points of Calvinism (TULIP)

Jacob Arminius – less known, rejected Calvinism; his students developed the five Articles of Remonstrance (the counterpoint of TULIP)

TULIP

- **Total Depravity**
 - **Unconditional Election** (People are chosen for salvation not based on anything, including God's foreknowledge)
 - **Limited Atonement** (Christ died only for the elect)
 - **Irresistible Grace** (God ensures that the elect will be saved)
 - **Perseverance of the Saints** (The elect will be saved)
-

Articles of the Remonstrance

- **Conditional Election** (Conditioned on the foreknowledge of God)
 - **Unlimited Atonement** (Christ died for everyone, but atonement is efficacious for the elect)
 - **Total Depravity**
 - **Prevenient Grace** (Sufficient for people to believe)
 - **Conditional Preservation** (Salvation is maintained by God in cooperation with those who persevere in the faith)
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Core Assumption of Calvinism:

It is all about God's Sovereignty

- God is sovereign. If He is sovereign, everything must work out according to the intention of His perfect will.
- It makes no logical sense to think of God as “partly sovereign.” He either is sovereign or He is not.
- If everything will happen according to His sovereign will, then man's freedom is necessarily limited.
- Anything in the Bible that affirm man's freedom must be qualified to square with His sovereignty.

Core Assumption of Arminian Theology:

Man's Responsibility

- God is just. A just God cannot hold people responsible for actions that they cannot freely choose.
- Affirming God's absolute, unqualified sovereignty makes God the author of sin and evil.
- Alternatively, affirming man's (albeit limited) ability to choose fits better with the biblical view of God's love and justice.

The three most *controversial elements* of **Calvinism** are:

1. **Unconditional Election**
2. **Limited Atonement**
3. **Irresistible Grace**

So we will focus on the **UnLI's** of Calvinism :)

Issue 1: Unconditional Election

John Piper says:

Unconditional election is God's free choice before creation, **not based on foreseen faith**, to which traitors he will grant faith and repentance, pardoning them and adopting them into his everlasting family of joy.

Question isn't whether there are people who are elect (Arminians also accept the biblical idea of election), but whether election includes any conditions.

Source:

<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/five-reasons-to-embrace-unconditional-election>

So what does the Bible say?

“When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many ***as had been appointed to eternal life believed.***”

ACTS 13:48

Illustration 1: Jacob and Esau

*“And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to His choice would stand, **not because of works but because of Him who calls**, it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” Just as it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”*

ROMANS 9:10–13

“What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, **but on God who has mercy.**”

ROMANS 9:14–16

Illustration 2: Pharaoh

“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.” So then **He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.**”

ROMANS 9:17–18

Calvinist Perspective:

- God did not choose Jacob based on anything he had done or would do; it was entirely God's choice (election) with no conditions.
 - God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, indicating that it was not Pharaoh's choice, but entirely God's.
 - Therefore election (whether to salvation or perdition) is not conditioned on anything except the sovereign will of God.
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Context

“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness **which is by faith**; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because *they did not pursue* it by faith, but **as though it were by works.**”

ROMANS 9:30–32

“for though the *twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, **not because of works** but because of Him who calls,”

ROMANS 9:11

“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law. Why? Because *they did not pursue* it by faith, but **as though it were by works.**”

ROMANS 9:30–32

Paul's Point:

- Not everyone that is a descendant of Israel is saved.
- Why? Because the people of Israel were not chosen because they did good works or kept the Law.
- They were chosen to demonstrate God's mercy.
- Now that God has chosen to save Gentiles, Israel should not complain.
- Bottom line: Even Israel is not saved by works of the Law, but by faith!

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as **He chose us** in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He **predestined us** to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, **according to the kind intention of His will...**”

EPHESIANS 1:3–5

Calvinist Position:

- Ephesians 1 teaches that we are saved because God chose us before we (or the cosmos) even existed.
- His election is according to the kind intention of His will.
- It is not because He foreknew that we would respond positively or were inclined to have faith.
- Therefore, election is unconditional.

But compare Ephesians 1 to 1 Peter 1:1–2

“To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are **chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.”

Issue 2: Limited Atonement

Calvinist argument:

1. If God is sovereign, His will must be accomplished.
2. If He willed (decreed) for Jesus death to be for all people, then everyone must be saved.
3. But we know from Scripture not all will be saved.
4. Therefore Jesus did not die for everyone.

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save **his people** from their sins.”

MATTHEW 1:21

“...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom **for many**.”

MATTHEW 20:28

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out **for many** for the forgiveness of sins.”

MATTHEW 26:28

“...and I lay down my life **for the sheep**.”

JOHN 10:15

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the **church of God, which he bought with his own blood**.”

ACTS 20:28

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ **loved the church and gave himself up for her**.”

EPHESIANS 5:25

“So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of **many people**; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”

HEBREWS 9:28

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life **for his friends**.”

JOHN 15:13

Arminian Alternative

Jesus' atoning sacrifice is sufficient for all but efficacious for the elect.

“The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said,
“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away **the sin of the world.**”

JOHN 1:29

John Calvin says of John 1:29:

“He uses the word sin in the singular number for any kind of iniquity; as if he had said that every kind of unrighteousness which alienates men from God is taken away by Christ. And when he says the **sin of the world**, he extends this favor indiscriminately to **the whole human race.**”

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that **whoever believes** will in Him have eternal life.

For God so **loved the world**, that **He gave His only begotten Son**, that **whoever** believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

JOHN 3:14–16

2 Corinthians 5:14–15

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that **one died for all**, and therefore all died. **And he died for all**, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom **for all men** - the testimony given in its proper time.”

1 TIMOTHY 2:5–6

“We have put our hope in the living God, who is the **Savior of all men**, and especially of those who believe.”

1 TIMOTHY 4:10

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.”

TITUS 2:11

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God **he might taste death for everyone.**”

HEBREWS 2:9

“He is the atoning sacrifice (propitiation) for our sins, and not only for ours but also **for the sins of the whole world.**”

1 JOHN 2:2

Issue 3: Irresistible Grace

- Man is dead spiritually.
- He is therefore unable to respond to the gospel in faith.
- Logically he must be regenerated before believing.
- Irresistible grace is the grace God gives to bring spiritual life to a dead person.
- It is what makes salvation not only possible but actual.

Biblical Support

“When you were **dead in your transgressions** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions...”

COLOSSIANS 2:13

“One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The **Lord opened her heart** to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”

ACTS 16:14

“**All that the Father gives Me will come to Me**, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”

JOHN 6:37

“Who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus **before the ages began.**”

2 TIMOTHY 1:9

“No one can come to me **unless the Father who sent me draws him.** And I will raise him up on the last day.”

JOHN 6:44

“And you were **dead in your trespasses and sins**,
in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world...”

EPHESIANS 2:1–2

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,”

EPHESIANS 2:4–6

“so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For **by grace** you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift of God**; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

EPHESIANS 2:7–9

Arminian Perspective

- Agree that without God the Holy Spirit drawing people, they cannot respond or be saved.
- Define prevenient grace as grace sufficient to bring people to a point where they can choose to believe or not believe.
- See a mutual relationship between the work of God and response of man

“If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, **choose for yourselves today** whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

JOSHUA 24:15

“Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that **you have chosen** for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him.”

And they said, “We are witnesses.”

JOSHUA 24:22

“**Seek the LORD** while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the LORD, and **he will have mercy** on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”

ISAIAH 55:6-7

“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now **choose life**, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

DEUTERONOMY 30:19-20

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**”

1 PETER 3:9

“But as many **as received Him**, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name...”

JOHN 1:12

“...that **if** you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, **you will be saved**; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, “**Whoever** believes in Him will not be disappointed.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same **Lord** is Lord of all, abounding in riches **for all who call on Him**; for “**Whoever** will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

ROMANS 10:9-13

How do we reconcile these?

Two vantage points

How can God be “Sort Of” Sovereign?

- Example is found in Philippians 2.
- Jesus voluntarily surrendered His right to exercise His divinity so that He could bring us into relationship with Himself.
- He limited His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, etc. but retained what was essential to be God in human flesh.
- Likewise, God could have, in ways we cannot fathom, voluntarily limited His exercise of divine sovereignty in order to allow man to exercise limited freedom while still accomplishing His divine purpose.

Why would He voluntarily do so?

- In a strange way, this relates to the problem of suffering.
- Those who complain that if God is both all powerful and good He should intervene to mitigate all evil and pain.
- But without actual choice, we would all effectively be robots.
- What are the options?

What are the options?

1. God could have chosen not to create anything – avoiding all pain.
2. God could have chosen to create a world where people have no choice – no pain but no real relationship.
3. God could have chosen to create a world with actual choice, allowing for real relationship but also making possible sin and suffering.

In Conclusion

- CCF does not hold exclusively to either Calvinism or Arminianism.
- CCF does not encourage heated debate on secondary issues.
- CCF's priority is making disciples of Christ.

*In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty;
and, in all things, charity*

