

# Arminianism vs. Calvinism

## Introduction and definitions:

Arminianism vs. Calvinism has been an ongoing theological debate for the last several hundred years or so and today we have entire bible institutions and seminaries that support either one side or the other. This is not the way it was meant to be in the body of Christ, for the question brings division rather than unity. Contrary to the scriptures of, “being in one accord, (of like mind)”, Acts 1:14, 2:1, 2:46, 4:24, 5:12, 8:6, 15:25, Philippians 2:2

When I was younger in Christ I would have been more than eager to take part in this debate. Now that I have more maturity in the Lord, I see that arguing theology brings division rather than unity among the people in the body of Christ and for this reason alone I hesitate to even debate the question. However, I believe understanding this question it is foundational to becoming free, realizing the value of what we have in Christ and living the victorious Christian life here on earth.

The two definitions, in summary are:

- John Calvin, a French theologian, 1509-1564, is accredited as the founder. Calvinism emphasizes the total depravity, inability and helplessness of mankind, unconditional election along with irresistible grace and holding strongly to a doctrine of predestination. That Christ has purchased salvation for only select men and man has no say in whether he will achieve salvation, that is entirely up to God. This doctrine was mainly adopted by the reform churches during the 16th century.
- Jacob Hermansz, a Dutch theologian, 1560-1609, is accredited as being instrumental in this doctrine. Arminianism emphasizes man's free-will and human ability to choose whether to come into repentance and to enter into the calling of Christ and the grace that He has provided for us. Thus Christ has purchased salvation for all men and they have a decisive role in whether to accept or reject their salvation.

The main contention between the two theologies:

Does man have free-will to accept or reject God's gift of salvation or does God's sovereignty rule over our decision? This difference I will address, for I believe it to be very critical to one's walk and their personal growth with the Lord.

The above **Contention** answered according to scripture.

Just as Jesus told people and gave them a choice to “repent, for He said the kingdom of God is at hand”, we also need to make a personal decision whether to believe or not, our salvation it is not automatic. For Christ gave man a free-will, from the time when man chose to eat of the forbidden fruit, therefore man can either choose to turn to Christ or to choose to reject Christ. Scripture shows that Christ died for all men, and that whoever believes on Him will be saved. Salvation has been accomplished by Him for all men, but it is our choice whether we receive Christ and His gift of salvation or we reject Him, (see scriptures below).

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:22.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved, Romans 10:9.

All men have the gift of grace, and God's will is that all men should come to repentance.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, Titus 2:11.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9

## **The question, “if man can choose to come to Christ or is it decided for him by God?”**

Scripture definitely tells us that: God has provided salvation to all men, Titus 2:11. And that man needs to confess Christ, that He is the Son of God and that God raised Him from the dead and you shall be saved, Romans 10:9. Thus man needs to either choose God's gift of salvation or reject it. See God has made His gift of salvation available to all men, now it is up to us to accept or reject it. Salvation does not come to us automatically, nor does God randomly selected salvation for only certain people. On this key point I will say that Calvinism is clearly wrong. The other points in each theology I will not further address, for I believe that unity in the body of Christ is far more important. And, if the person walks in the spirit, being guided and directed by the Spirit, they will naturally learn the truth of God's Word by the best teacher there is, the Holy Spirit Himself.

How theological differences and personal opinions can render the Word powerless.

Before the healing of the paralytic that was lowered through the roof. [Luke 5:17](#), says that, “there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by: ... and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them”. However the Pharisees and doctors preferred to question, judge and find fault in the Words and actions of Jesus, rather than letting the power of God move in their lives. We can get so caught up in our vain human knowledge and reasoning, that we make the Word of God of no-effect. This also applies to most other theological arguments, for arguments rarely if ever bring us into closer unity.

The question we need to address is.

Are we walking in the Spirit or in the flesh? The entire question about Arminianism vs. Calvinism is to a great extent is an intellectual debate. If one side could show forth more power, more miracles, more peace, joy or love, then one side would rise above the other, but that has not been the case over many hundreds of years. As scripture tells us in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:14-16, we are to avoid foolish arguments and man's doctrines for they only lead to strife and discord.

We must walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

This alone will alleviate most arguments and debates, for when we walk in the Spirit the Holy Spirit will teach us and we will not just be operating off of our carnal knowledge. The power of God is in His Word, knowing it, understanding it, speaking it and believing it, it is not in man's clever philosophies. The gospel is not and can not be put into a formula, where we can then analyze it and discuss why it works. So that we can have the power of the gospel in our lives and can remain completely carnal, (of the five senses), devoid of any faith. The bible, God's Word is spiritual, it is written to our spirit, not to our flesh. Our mind is not able to understand spiritual things, it only understands carnal things, what we can hear, taste, see, smell and feel. Walking in the spirit is a walk by faith, believing that God's Word is real and will accomplish what it was sent to do, Isaiah 55:11. For God's Word is true no matter what our personal philosophy and opinion may be, Romans 3:4. So I encourage you to accept God's gift of His Holy Spirit, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then learn to walk and be guided by His Spirit and His Spirit will teach you all things, John 14:26.