

# THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ARMINIANISM AND CALVINISM

By Sherry Cumby

The Holy Spirit only extends an inward call to the elect and they are always brought to salvation.

*Faith is not knowing  
what the future holds,  
but knowing  
who holds the future.*

**NOTE:** This work was published only to properly inform the person desiring to know the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism. Calvinism is not what the author approves as how she believes. She believes there are people saved (true believers) in both areas of discussion and thought. However, the idea of God not accepting "whosoever wills" and "God accepting only those He has chosen / elected" (Calvinism) is only a part of truth, and not the "whole truth and nothing but the truth" according to the Word.

*Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"*

**Arminianism** - Adherents of Jacobus Arminius, believed and taught that salvation is a spiritual work between God and man. God initially calls to man by His Holy Spirit and man must respond. They believed that God provided salvation for all mankind and gave man a free will to choose to accept His offer of grace through Jesus Christ, or reject Him. Man's free will plays a crucial part in the work of salvation; thus, it is man and not God who determines who will or will not receive the gift of salvation.

Concerning Calvin's tenet of the total depravity of man, Arminianism holds that although man was born in sin because of the fall, he is not totally spiritually helpless. God graciously makes it possible for every sinner to turn from sin and believe by the work of the Holy Spirit; however, man's freedom to choose is up to him. His free will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. God has given to mankind the power to cooperate with His Holy Spirit and be regenerated or the freedom to resist His grace and thus perish. The initial drawing power of the Holy Spirit upon the sinner is necessary, but the sinner does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe. Man believes God by faith which precedes the new birth. They believe that before the foundation of the world, God's choice of those who would receive salvation was based upon the fact that God knows all things, including those who by the act of their free will He granted them, would accept His call. Therefore, election was determined by what man would do. Faith was always man's contribution as an act of his free will in the salvation experience. The ultimate cause of salvation is the sinner's choice of Jesus Christ, not God's choice of the sinner. The redemptive work of Jesus Christ upon the cross made it possible for all to be saved. Only those who respond to the call of God upon their lives by the Holy Spirit will be saved. They believed that Christ's death provided pardon for sinners by God if they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. The redemptive work of Christ only becomes effective if man chooses to accept it. The Holy Spirit calls to a sinner inwardly - in his heart- as he hears the outward gospel invitation. The gift of God's grace can be accepted or resisted by man; it is not invincible.

The Arminians disagree among themselves on "Perseverance of the saints/Present assurance of the saints." Some taught that those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation as a further act of their will by not keeping the faith; others believe in the eternal security of the believer: once regenerated, never to be lost.

**Calvinism** - The adherents of John Calvin believed that salvation is a work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a person's life. They taught that the Father chose a people, the Son died for them, and the Holy Spirit moves upon a person's heart - elected by God- bringing them to faith and repentance through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Election, redemption, and regeneration is all the work of God by the gift of grace. God, not man, decided who will be chosen/elected to receive the gift of eternal life. Since the fall of Adam, mankind is not able to have

faith in the gospel message and repent because he is dead, blind, and deaf to spiritual matters. His heart is depraved, his will is not free but in bondage to his sinful nature, his spirit cannot allow him to choose good over evil. Rather than just the Spirit's prompting to accept the free gift of salvation, the sinner must receive regeneration by the Spirit making him alive and gives him a new nature. Faith in God is not something that man contributes to salvation, but faith is given to the elect as a part of God's gift of salvation. God's elect was determined by His sovereign will before the foundation of the world. It was not based on any foreseen response by sinners crying out to God, faith, or repentance. Rather, God gives grace, faith, and repentance to those whom He elected to receive it in the due course of their existence. God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Jesus Christ, is the ultimate causes of salvation. Jesus Christ substitutionary death was only for the elect and secured salvation through faith only for them.

The Holy Spirit only extends an inward call to the elect and they are always brought to salvation. God's grace is invincible and never fails to draw the elect sinner to conversion; therefore, all who are chosen by God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and given faith by the Holy Spirit are eternally saved by the power of God.