

The Order of Salvation Compared

Historically in the Church there has been disagreement about the order of salvation, especially between those in the Reformed and Arminian camps. The following two perspectives of God's order in carrying out His redemptive work reveals the stark contrast between these two main historic views. Keep in mind that both viewpoints are **based on the redemptive work** which Christ accomplished for His people in history:

In the Reformed camp, the ordo salutis is 1) election, 2) predestination, 3) gospel call 4) inward call 5) regeneration, 6) conversion (faith & repentance), 7) justification, 8) sanctification, and 9) glorification. (Rom 8:29-30)

In the Arminian camp, the ordo salutis is 1) outward call 2) faith/election, 3) repentance, 4) regeneration, 5) justification, 6) perseverance, 7) glorification.

Notice the crucial difference in the orders of regeneration and faith. While the Reformed position believes spiritual life is a prerequisite for the existence of the other aspects of salvation, the Arminians believe that fallen, natural man retains the moral capacity to receive or reject the gospel of his own power. Even with the help of grace he still must find it within himself to believe or reject Christ. This has broad implications and raises questions like why does one man believe and not another? You might also notice that, according to Arminians, election is dependent on faith, not the other way around. This is no small matter ...understanding the biblical order, while keeping in mind its unitary process, is crucial and has a profound impact on how one views God, the gospel, and the Bible as a whole.

Calvinism and Arminianism cannot be reconciled because of the following irreconcilable differences between them:

1. Depravity is either total, leaving man's will in bondage to sin and therefore unable to believe on Christ (Calvinism) or partial, leaving man's will free to accept or reject Christ with the help of grace (Arminianism).
2. Election is either conditional on man repenting and believing (Arminianism) or unconditional, God purposing that the elect would repent and believe (Calvinism).
3. Atonement is either universal, designed to save every individual (Arminianism) or limited, intended to save only some in particular (Calvinism).
4. Saving grace is either resistible, because of man's free will (Arminianism) or irresistible, because God makes His people willing in the day of His power (Calvinism).
5. The saints either persevere to the end, in dependence on God's keeping grace (Calvinism) or they fail to persevere, and may finally and irretrievably fall from grace (Arminianism).

A Comparison of Calvinism & Arminianism

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Originally posted on Archegos: the Champion
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Arminianism	Calvinism
<p>Free-Will or Human Ability 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><u>Total Inability or Total Depravity</u> 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>
<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</p>	<p><u>Unconditional Election</u> 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</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><u>Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement</u> 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.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><u>The Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace</u> 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</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><u>Perseverance of the Saints</u> 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.</p>

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.