

Calvinism, Arminianism, or the Word of God?

Please Stand and Open your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3

As we have just finished a series on what is called Soteriology or as we called it, the story of our salvation, I wanted to take the time to teach you some of the viewpoints that are out there. I want you to have an idea of what someone means when they say, “He’s a Calvinist” or “They’re an Arminianist”. This will no means be exhaustive but enough of the basics to get the point. What I want to say and will always stand by is, our faith should always come from what the scriptures say and not what man says it says. It is the one thing that should stop all arguments but for some reason we are still bent on taking sides.

First, * how did we get here?

The church is now 2000 years old and has a long and sorted history that is nothing to be proud about. The one thing that we can definitely say looking back is that God is merciful and faithful to His word towards His bride, the Church. In the name of the church unspeakable horrors and untold heresies have stained her witness and have led to much division and confusion. You and I will look back today and with a heart of thanksgiving and praise, being grateful to live in a time where all of this can be and should be scrutinized though the reading and studying of God’s word. I think learning and reading about church history is a good thing, but looking back and trying to

resurrect the word of man and bring it up to the same level as the Bible is dangerous and, in many cases, reckless. Many people today think that because the church today is far from perfect, we must look back in history to a so called "Purer" time as if men was less sinful then. It does not matter the date, the word of man is just that, the word of man. My opinion and five dollars may have a higher purchasing power in the fifteenth century but it's worth is always the same, nothing...

People throughout history have always debated about theology and many counsels and edicts were made that did a great job to combat heresy. Those that were able to have a copy of, and to study, God's word, have always found a way to stand up for it and that is a good thing.

Back in the first century we had the...

Didache or The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations

2nd century AD

Then...

The Edict of Milan

February, 313 AD

Constantine makes Christianity the state religion.

We had the canonization of scripture through

The council of Rome (AD 382)

Synod of Hippo (AD 393)

Councils of Carthage (AD 397 and 419)

And so on...

All of these things led to what has been known as the dark ages or the rise of the Roman Catholic Church. For almost 1200 years men were forced to the man-made rules of the church and the word of God was only for the “Learned”. Chained to the pulpit and only read in languages the common person could not understand the only way for people to learn the gospel message was by the large stained-glass pictures in the large edifices made by man. Things changed for the better when...

Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses on October 31, 1517

But as important as this date in church history is to us there was something that happened that was more important. An event that would not only change the world but forever change the way man can hear from God...

Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of the movable press in the 1440’s

That brought about...

Gutenberg Bible, Printed in March 1455

It was the availability of God's word to be read that led Martin Luther to discover that we are saved by Grace through Faith!

That caused him to be brought before the catholic church at what was known as the...

Diet of Worms of 1521

"I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen."

AMEN!

This sparked the "Protestant" Reformation that has led to the modern church today. Many theologians were born out of this movement and because of the printing press we have their writings today. One of those men is John Calvin. He is the father of what we call Calvinism. And there are many forms of it, and this is where we are at in our study today.

As the study of God's word got into people's hands and more and more people started to read and teach it many different opinions started to rise on the many aspects of theology.

One of those was what we just studied, Soteriology or the study of salvation.

Two of the main arguments is the sovereignty of God verses the freewill of man and can a person lose their salvation. This led to...

The Synod of Dort 1618

The Synod of Dort (also called the Synod of Dordt or the Synod of Dordrecht) was a church council that convened in 1618 in Dordrecht, the Netherlands, to settle a dispute between two theological factions in the Dutch Reformed Church. The Synod of Dort has had a lasting impact on theology, as it was this synod that produced the summarized version of John Calvin's teachings known today as the Five Points of Calvinism.

On one side of the dispute in the Synod of Dort were the Arminians (also known as the Remonstrants) who followed the teachings of Jacobus Arminius. On the other side were the Calvinists (Counter-Remonstrants) who held true to the Reformed teachings of John Calvin. These two theological systems became nationalized, and Holland was split in two. The Synod of Dort was to bring resolution to the conflict. Representatives of the Reformed Church from eight foreign countries were invited to the synod, and church leaders from Great Britain, Germany, and Switzerland attended.

Eventually, * the Calvinists agreed to the Arminians' proposal for a national synod, and the Synod of Dort was held in 1618–19. The Arminians presented a list of reasons why Calvinism was wrong, apparently in an effort to gain votes for their side.

The Calvinists argued that, since the Remonstrants were departing from the Dutch Reformed Church, they had to justify their beliefs using Scripture. The Arminians did not like this plan and chose to withdraw from the proceedings. The leaders of the Reformed Church examined the five points put forward by the Arminians, compared them to Scripture, and found them lacking. Finding no scriptural support for the position of Arminius, the Synod of Dort unanimously rejected Arminianism.

But the Synod of Dort went further than simply taking a stand against Arminianism; the delegates drafted their own five points to summarize Calvinistic doctrine, and the Canons of Dort published for the first time the Five Points of Calvinism. Other achievements of the Synod of Dort include the writing of the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. Also, the synod ordered a new translation of the Dutch Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek.

So, this is where it all started, and they are still fighting about it today. What we will do with the remainder of our time is look at the five points of each, one at a time and line it up with what God's word says. This will help you to understand the argument and be able to answer according to the Bible and not someone's ideas or opinions.

First what are the five points of each...

Calvinism:

Total Depravity

Unconditional Election

Limited Atonement

Irresistible Grace

Preservation of the Saints

Arminianism: (No Acronym)

Partial and total depravity

Conditional Election

Unlimited Atonement

Resistible Grace

Conditional Salvation

Let's deal with them one at a time.

Total * Depravity or Partial?

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

But has the fall made mankind completely devoid of anything good at all? What about when sinners do good works? Does that mean God has created some good in man when he made him an image bearer? A verse to consider...

Luke 6:32-33

But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love (Agape) those who love (Agape) them.

And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

My question is where did that good and agape love come from if we are totally depraved?

Yes, we are lost in our sin and creation is fallen but there is still a semblance of God's original creation around us. Your conscience is one of them.

Is * Election Condition or unconditional?

It is a conundrum...

Jesus said...

John 15:16

You did not choose Me, but I chose you

But He also said...

Mark 2:14

And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.

Which * is it???

All God or all man?

The Bible teaches both!

But * that doesn't make sense!

We are not commanded to understand it just believe it.

Is * atonement limited or unlimited?

That's an easy one!

John 3:16

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

1 John 2:1-2

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Is * Grace resistible?

Acts 7:51

“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”

Matthew 23:37

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

That is only two that came to my mind, but we can read that it seems that yes, a man can resist the gospel.

Then finally, are the saints preserved?

We dealt with this last week...

Romans 8:38-39

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The problem is we have two extremes on both sides that come down to whether you have freewill or not. Also, this last point is said to determine your choices you make as a Christian. Calvinists say everything, including the choices you make, are all God's will. Arminianists say everything is all your will and you can even lose your salvation. They divide without any middle ground. If you are not on one side or the other it's time to argue and fight. What happened to letting the Bible say what it means and means what it says? Why do we need to label everyone?

We are living in time where many are choosing to listen to the word of man over the word of God. Many are going back to the beginning of the reformation to answer their questions. I

believe this is because people are too lazy or scared to read the bible for themselves. They want people to guide them, not in helping them understand the scriptures, but in telling them what to believe about them. They want confessionals. They want Systematic Theology. They want to be told what to believe and that is dangerous and the main problem I see in the church today. It was trouble back then too.

Reject Traditions of men
Colossians 2:1-10

For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. 5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

8 * Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

We are Calvary Solid Ground. We are standing on the solid ground of God's word. Period. The reformers could only take us so far. Why? Because even in their day education was limited and bibles were just being translated and circulated. As the world became educated and learned to read and write and have a bible in every home what do we expect?

A continuing reformation!

Jesus said:

Luke 12:48

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

You are required to be a student of God's word!

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Study it, read it, believe it and most of all do it!

A word on communion.

Acts 2:46-47

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and **breaking bread** from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

1 Corinthians 11:23-24

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

1 Corinthians 11:25

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."