

Calvinism

Total Depravity – Man is so crippled by sin that he is unable to lift the slightest finger to save himself. He is truly *dead* in his sin. Mankind has a problem we can't fix. The key idea is *ability* – we *can't* believe in Christ apart from divine aid because sin has so blinded us. Apart from being born again by the Spirit, we are literally unable to recognize the salvation offered in Christ.

Unconditional Election – Before the creation of the world, God chose certain individuals called “the elect” for salvation. God did **not** look into the future to see who would choose him, because no one would or could choose him anyway. His choosing was an unconditional act of grace. “Why this one and not that one,” no one knows. It is the secret counsel of God. *Man's faith depends on God's election.*

Limited Atonement – Jesus Christ died for the *possibility* of salvation for all, but for the elect he did more than that – he died for the *actuality* of salvation. He objectively paid at the cross for the sins of the elect. (If he had objectively paid for every sin of every human being who ever lived, then all people would be saved.) Therefore Jesus died for all, but not for all in the same way. Jesus' death was *sufficient* for the entire human race, but was *efficient* only for the elect. Calvinists prefer to call this “particular redemption” instead of “limited atonement.”

Irresistible Grace – Common grace is given to all humanity, but when God's special, saving grace through the Holy Spirit does away with total depravity for an elect person, that person is then able to see who Jesus Christ truly is and the offer of salvation in him. No one can resist this grace. If you are chosen, Christ *did* die for you, you *will* be revived, and you *will* place your trust in Christ to the saving of your soul.

Perseverance of the Saints – Because salvation from beginning to end is a work of God, believers can trust that it will be completed. No believer has ever begun to be saved and not finished; every elect person will persevere to glory. We have no more power to remove ourselves from God's hand than we had power to place ourselves in God's hand in the first place.

Arminianism

Free Will – The all-disabling depravity that mankind was under was removed at the cross. While total depravity was once a reality, it is no more. The key idea is *ability* – all people everywhere are *able* to see Christ for who he truly is and choose for themselves whether they will place their trust in him for salvation. Through “prevenient grace,” Adam's guilt was removed from us all and free will was restored.

Conditional Election – Before the creation of the world, God chose certain individuals called “the elect” for salvation. However, God's choosing was based on his foreknowledge of man's choosing Christ. God looked into the future to see who would respond to Christ in faith, and upon seeing those individuals, chose them for salvation. *God's election depends on man's faith.*

Unlimited Atonement – Jesus Christ died for every human being in exactly the same way without distinction. When a person trusts in Christ, Christ's death on the cross is “ratified” and applied to the believer. Christ's death on the cross bought the possibility of salvation for all people. With the cross of Jesus Christ, God made *provision* for the salvation of all people. The *application* of that salvation, however, is appropriated by the believer's faith decision. Arminians prefer to call this “general redemption” instead of “unlimited atonement.”

Resistible Grace – The grace that God gave at the cross is the same grace that did away with total depravity for all mankind, thus enabling them to exercise their own free will and choose for themselves whether to place their faith in Christ or not. There is only one kind of grace, and it is resistible. People choose for themselves whether they will be a believer in Christ. Grace *calls* everyone, but *compels* no one.

Potential Loss of Salvation – Believers must partner with the Holy Spirit in order to keep their faith to the end and receive final salvation. To say that a believer cannot be lost is to attack his free will. Through prevenient grace, man saw Christ clearly and chose to put his trust in him to the saving of his soul. By the same free will, he is able to remove that trust and thereby forfeit salvation. To say otherwise is to either encourage the believer to be careless or to make him a mere puppet.