

WHAT IS ARMINIAN THEOLOGY?

- Who is Jacob Arminias?** Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) was a Dutch theologian known for his opposition to the strict Calvinist doctrines of predestination and his development of what would come to be known as Arminianism. Here are some key points of his life and theological contributions:
 - Early Life and Education:** Born in Oudewater, Netherlands, Jacobus Arminius studied at the University of Leiden and later under Theodore Beza in Geneva. His education placed him within the Reformed tradition initially, but he gradually developed ideas that diverged from strict Calvinism.
 - Theological Career:** Arminius became a pastor in Amsterdam in 1588 and later a professor of theology at Leiden University in 1603. During his tenure, he began to question and critique the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, which led to significant controversy.
 - Key Doctrines:** Arminius argued for a more conditional understanding of predestination, emphasizing free will and God's foreknowledge rather than absolute predestination. His views suggested that salvation was available to all people, not just a predestined elect.
 - Arminianism:** After Arminius' death, his followers formalized his teachings in the Remonstrance of 1610, a document that laid out the five main points of Arminianism: conditional election, unlimited atonement, prevenient grace, resistible grace, and the possibility of falling from grace. These ideas contrasted sharply with the Calvinist TULIP (Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, Perseverance of the saints).
 - Synod of Dort:** The theological debate between Arminianism and Calvinism culminated in the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), which condemned Arminianism and affirmed the Calvinist position. Despite this, Arminianism continued to influence many Protestant traditions, particularly Methodism and the broader Evangelical movement.
- Five-Point Calvinism.** The five points of Calvinism were articulated in response to the theological positions put forward by the Remonstrants (followers of Jacob Arminius) and were formally codified at the Synod of Dort (1618–1619). The Canons of Dort summarize these five points and provide a detailed theological basis for them. These points collectively emphasize the sovereignty of God in the process of salvation, human inability to achieve salvation apart from divine intervention, and the assurance of salvation for those who are truly elect.
 - Total Depravity:** This doctrine asserts that as a result of the fall, every part of human nature is corrupted by sin. This does not mean that people are as bad as they could be, but rather that sin affects all aspects of a person's being (mind, will, emotions, etc.). Consequently, individuals are unable to come to God and choose salvation on their own because their will is bound by sin.
 - Unconditional Election:** According to this principle, God's election of certain individuals for salvation is not based on any foreseen merit, effort, or action on their

part. Instead, it is solely based on His will and purpose. God's choice is not conditioned upon any human action or decision.

- c. **Limited Atonement:** This point teaches that Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross was intended to save the elect only. Although Christ's death is sufficient to atone for the sins of the entire world, it was God's intention to effectively secure salvation for those He has chosen. Thus, the atonement is limited in its intended scope but not in its power or value.
 - d. **Irresistible Grace:** Irresistible grace means that when God extends His grace to the elect, it will inevitably result in their salvation. The Holy Spirit effectively draws the chosen individuals to Christ, overcoming their resistance to the gospel. This grace is not coercive, but it is so powerful that it brings about the intended response of faith and repentance.
 - e. **Perseverance of the Saints:** This doctrine holds that those whom God has elected and regenerated will persevere in faith until the end. They are eternally secure and cannot lose their salvation. True believers may fall into sin, but they will ultimately return to God and be preserved by His grace.
3. **John Wesley's Objections to Five-Point Calvinism.** "Calvinists, who deny that salvation can ever be lost, reason on the subject in a marvelous way. They tell us, that no virgin's lamp can go out; no promising harvest be choked with thorns; no branch in Christ can ever be cut off from unfruitfulness; no pardon can ever be forfeited, and no name blotted out of God's book! They insist that no salt can ever lose its savor; nobody can ever "receive the grace of God in vain"; "bury his talents"; "neglect such great salvation"; trifle away "a day of grace"; "look back" after putting his hand to the gospel plow. Nobody can "grieve the Spirit" till He is "quenched," and strives no more, nor "deny the Lord that bought them"; nor "bring upon themselves swift destruction. Nobody, or body of believers, can ever get so lukewarm that Jesus will spew them out of His mouth. They use reams of paper to argue that if one ever got lost he was never found. John 17:12; that if one falls, he never stood. Rom. 11:16-22 and Heb. 6:4-6; if one was ever "cast forth," he was never in, and "if one ever withered," he was never green. John 15:1-6; and that "if any man draws back," it proves that he never had anything to draw back from. Heb. 10:38,39; that if one ever "falls away into spiritual darkness," he was never enlightened. Heb 6:4-6; that if you "again get entangled in the pollutions of the world," it shows that you never escaped. 2 Pet 2:20; that if you "put salvation away" you never had it to put away, and if you make shipwreck of faith, there was no ship of faith there!! In short they say: If you get it, you can't lose it; and if you lose it you never had it. May God save us from accepting a doctrine, that must be defended by such fallacious reasoning!"
4. **Biblical Support for Arminian Theology**
- a. **1 Timothy 2:3-4:** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.
This verse highlights God's desire for all people to be saved, suggesting that salvation is available to everyone, not just a preselected few.
 - b. **2 Peter 3:9:** "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."
Peter emphasizes God's patience and desire for everyone to repent, indicating that individuals have the choice to turn to God.
 - c. **Ezekiel 18:23:** Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?

God expresses no pleasure in the death of the wicked, showing His preference for their repentance and life, which suggests an opportunity for change and choice.

- d. **1 John 2:2:** He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.
This verse indicates that Christ's sacrifice was for the sins of the entire world, not just a select group, implying a universal potential for salvation.
 - e. **Matthew 23:37:** Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.
Jesus expresses a desire to protect and gather the people of Jerusalem, but their unwillingness highlights the role of human response and choice.
 - f. **Revelation 3:20:** "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."
The imagery of Jesus knocking on a door and waiting to be let in symbolizes the invitation to a relationship that requires a personal response.
 - g. **Romans 10:13:** For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'
The promise of salvation to "everyone who calls" on God's name suggests that salvation is available to all who choose to seek it.
5. **Theology Starting with Jesus (not Adam).** Calvinist **soteriology** (theology of salvation) expressed in TULIP begins with the fallen-ness of Adam (total depravity) and builds from there. However, Jesus is the preeminent form of divine revelation (the perfect image of God (Heb. 1)). Because Jesus is the "exact imprint" of God, Wesleyans (and Arminians) prefers making Jesus the starting point of soteriology.
 6. **The Five Points of the Remonstrance.** The Remonstrance of 1610 is a theological document drafted by the followers of Jacob Arminius, who sought to outline their opposition to certain aspects of Calvinist doctrine, particularly predestination.
 - a. **Conditional Election:** God elects individuals to salvation based on foreseen faith or unbelief. This opposes the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election, where God's choice is not based on any foreseen merit or action.
 - b. **Unlimited Atonement:** Christ's atoning sacrifice was made for all people, but only those who believe in Him will be saved. This contrasts with the Calvinist view of limited atonement, which holds that Christ died only for the elect.
 - c. **Prevenient Grace:** God's grace is necessary for anyone to come to faith, but this grace can be resisted. This opposes the Calvinist belief in irresistible grace, where those elected by God cannot resist His call to salvation.
 - d. **Resistible Grace:** God's grace enables humans to respond to His offer of salvation, but it is not coercive, and individuals can choose to reject it.
 - e. **Possibility of Falling from Grace:** Believers can fall from grace and lose their salvation if they turn away from God. This is contrary to the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, which holds that those truly elected by God will persevere in faith and cannot lose their salvation.
 7. **Holy Love.** Holy Love is central to Wesley's theology. John Wesley understood salvation first and foremost as a love relationship over and above a change in status (guilty to innocent). For love to be love, free agency must remain intact. Before God was a Sovereign, he was a Father.