

# Arminianism



**Total depravity** &  
**Prevenient Grace**

# & Calvinism

## *PART 2*



# INTRODUCTION

Ever since Arminius and his followers revolted against Calvinism in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Protestant soteriology has been largely divided between **Calvinism** and **Arminianism**. These are two systems of theology which attempt to explain the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility with regards to salvation.

1. The **Calvinist** viewpoint highlights man's depravity, the salvation by grace alone of **God's elect**, but emphasizes **God's sovereignty**.
2. The **Arminian** viewpoint accepts man's depravity, salvation by grace alone of **all who believe**, but emphasizes **man's responsibility**.

# INTRODUCTION



More often today the term 'Calvinism' is used to refer to the particular Calvinist views of predestination, as expressed in the 5 'points' of Calvinism which are denoted by the acronym **TULIP**. Here they are contrasted with the 5 articles of Arminianism.

Calvinism	Arminianism
<b>T</b> otal Depravity	Prevenient Grace
<b>U</b> nconditional Election	Conditional Election
<b>L</b> imited Atonement	Unlimited Atonement
<b>I</b> rresistible Grace	Resistible Grace
<b>P</b> erseverance of the Saints	Falling from grace

# CALVINIST BELIEFS

□ 5-point Calvinism holds to the following tenets:

1. **Total depravity:** as a result of his fallen nature man is unable to choose to follow God.
2. **Unconditional election:** double predestination - God has decided from eternity to extend mercy to those he has chosen and to condemn those he has not chosen.
3. **Limited atonement:** Jesus died only for the sins of the elect.
4. **Irresistible grace:** when God decides to save someone, they certainly will be saved and the Holy Spirit cannot be resisted.
5. **Perseverance of the saints:** Eternal security - those whom God has called can never lose their salvation.

# ARMINIAN BELIEFS

□ Arminianism holds to the following tenets:

1. **Prevenient Grace:** Humans are naturally unable to make any effort towards salvation. Salvation is possible by grace alone and works of human effort cannot cause or contribute to salvation. But though born a sinner, mankind is given prevenient grace that enables him to respond positively to God with free will.
2. **Conditional election:** God's election is conditional on faith in Jesus. God does not arbitrarily consign some people to eternal damnation; their wilful rejection of God's salvation makes them responsible.

# ARMINIAN BELIEFS

3. **Unlimited atonement:** Christ died for every person, even though some refuse to accept the provision for their salvation.
4. **Resistible Grace:** No person is forced against their will to become a Christian. God allows his grace to be resisted by those unwilling to believe.
5. **Falling from grace:** Salvation can be lost, as continued salvation is conditional upon continued faith. One's salvation can be lost through wilful disobedience. Rather than the unconditional predestination of Calvinism, Arminianism teaches conditional predestination. We are predestined to eternal life if we accept God's provision of salvation.



# ORIGINAL SIN



# ORIGINAL SIN

- ❑ The Bible teaches that men are born with a sinful nature:
  - Job 25:4 How then can a mortal be righteous before God? **How can one born of woman be pure?**
  - Gen 8:21 "... every inclination of the human heart is **evil from childhood.**"
- ❑ In fact our sinful nature exists from the moment of conception:
  - Psalm 51:5 Surely I was **sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.**
- ❑ The above indicates inheritance - as at conception and birth no deeds have yet been committed.
  - Psalm 57:3 Even from birth the wicked go astray; **from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies.**



# ORIGINAL SIN

- ❑ We are born sinners as a result of "the fall of man" i.e. the first sin of Adam and Eve in Eden:
  - Rom 5:19 ... **through the disobedience of the one man** the many were made sinners...
- ❑ This is what we call "original sin", a sinful fallen nature which we inherited from our first parents.

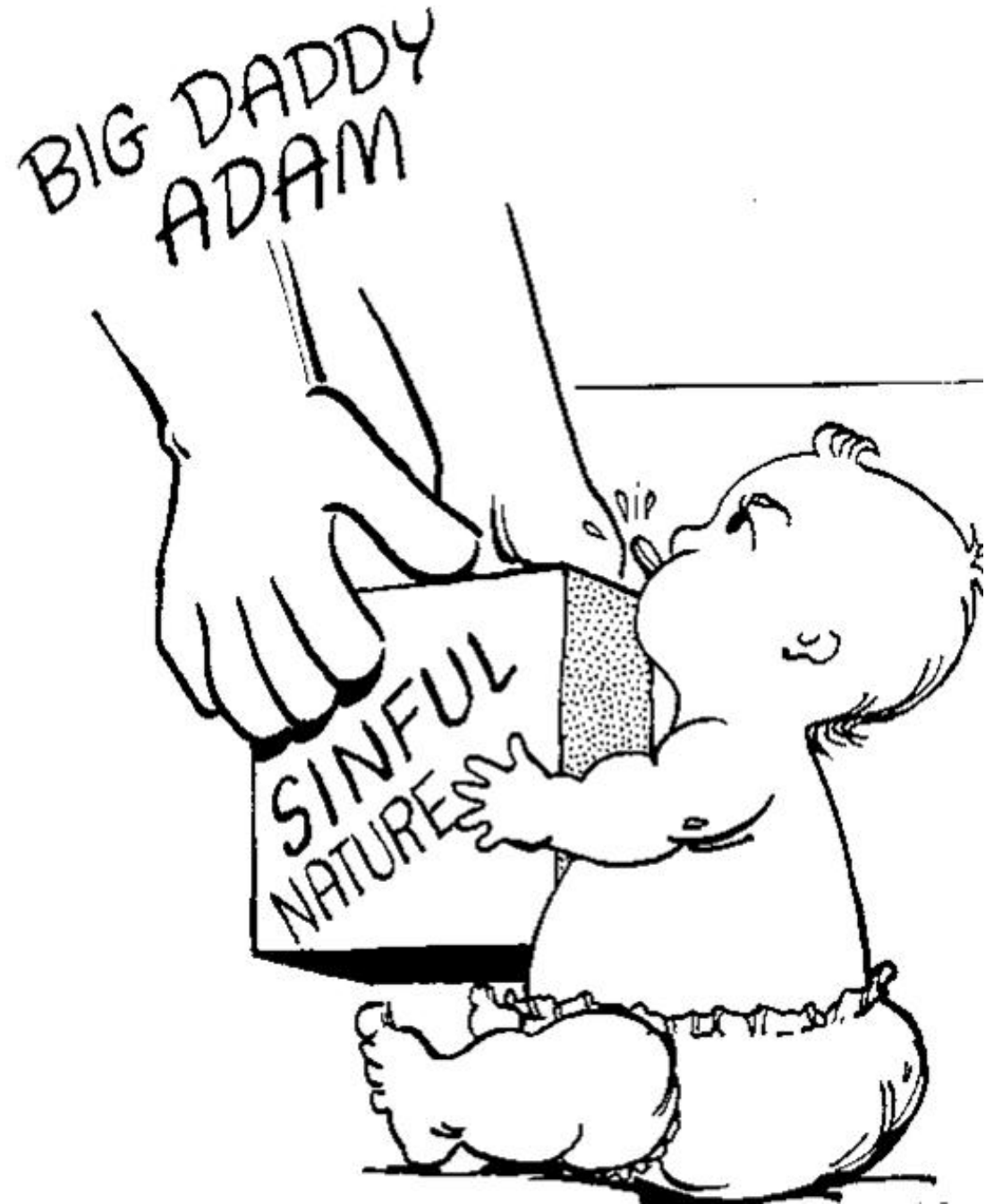


See  
NOTE 2

# Why are we affected by original sin?

## 1. Inheritance

- 1 Cor 15:49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man...
- ❑ Just as we inherit natural bodily characteristics from our parents, so too we 'inherit' from them a fallen nature, dating all the way back to Adam.



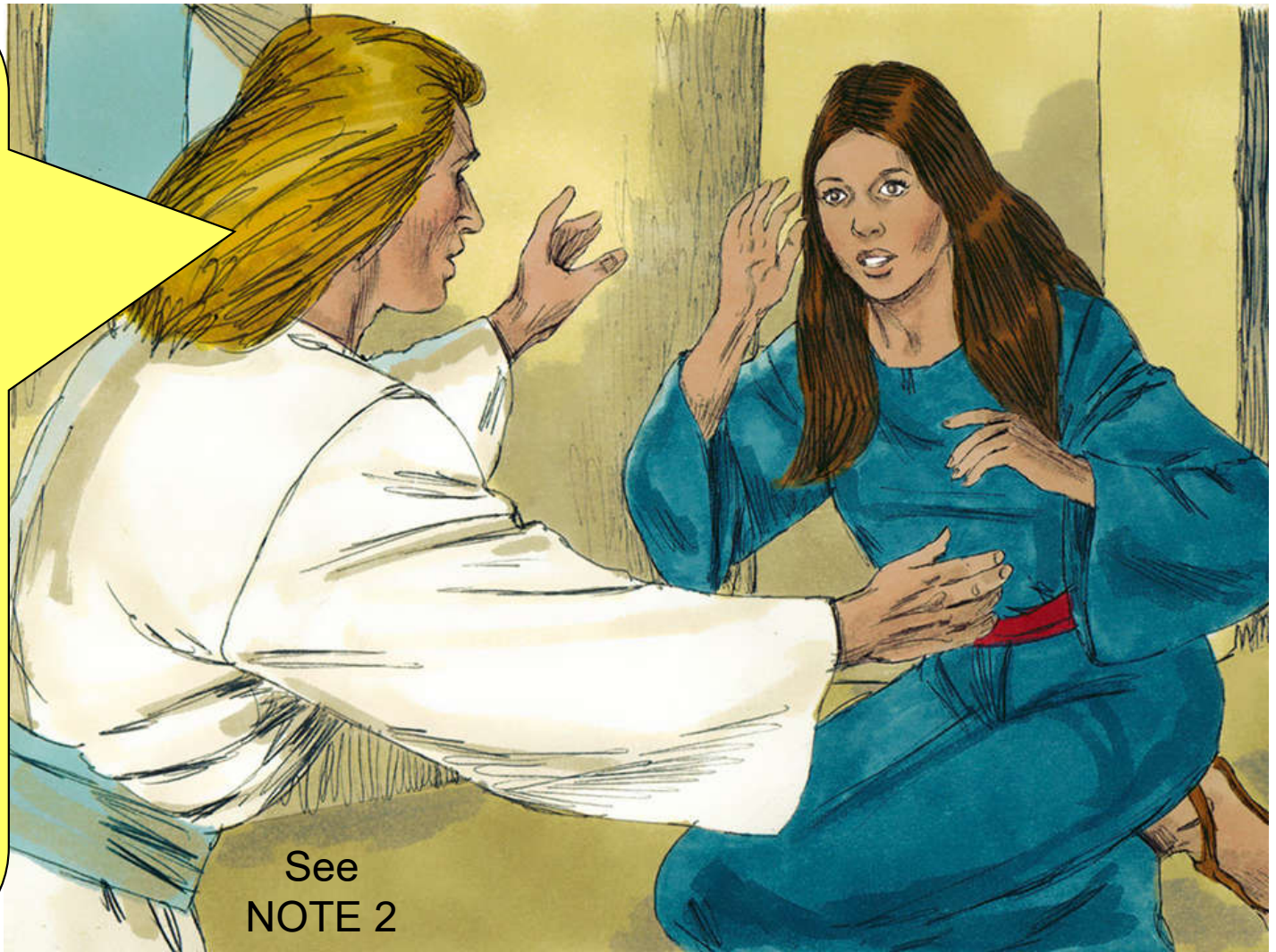


# ORIGINAL SIN

- ❑ Jesus was the only human to be born without an inherited sinful nature. This is because he was conceived by the Holy Spirit (and hence the importance of the virgin birth).

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So **the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.**

[Luke 1:35]



See  
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# ORIGINAL SIN

## 2. Our solidarity with Adam

- ❑ As the forefather of the human race, in a sense Adam “contained” all future human beings within and his choices shaped the nature of those who proceed from him. <sup>1</sup> So we were all “in Adam” when he sinned and we have shared culpability for what he did.

<sup>1</sup> We see a similar principle when Levi, the descendant of Abraham, is considered to be “in the body of his ancestor” paying the tithe to Melchizedek. Heb 7:9-10 “One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, **Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.**”





# ORIGINAL SIN

## 3. Adam as our federal head

- As federal head of the human race, Adam was our legal representative in the covenant between God and the man. As our representative, Adam had the power to ratify or break the treaty for all of us.

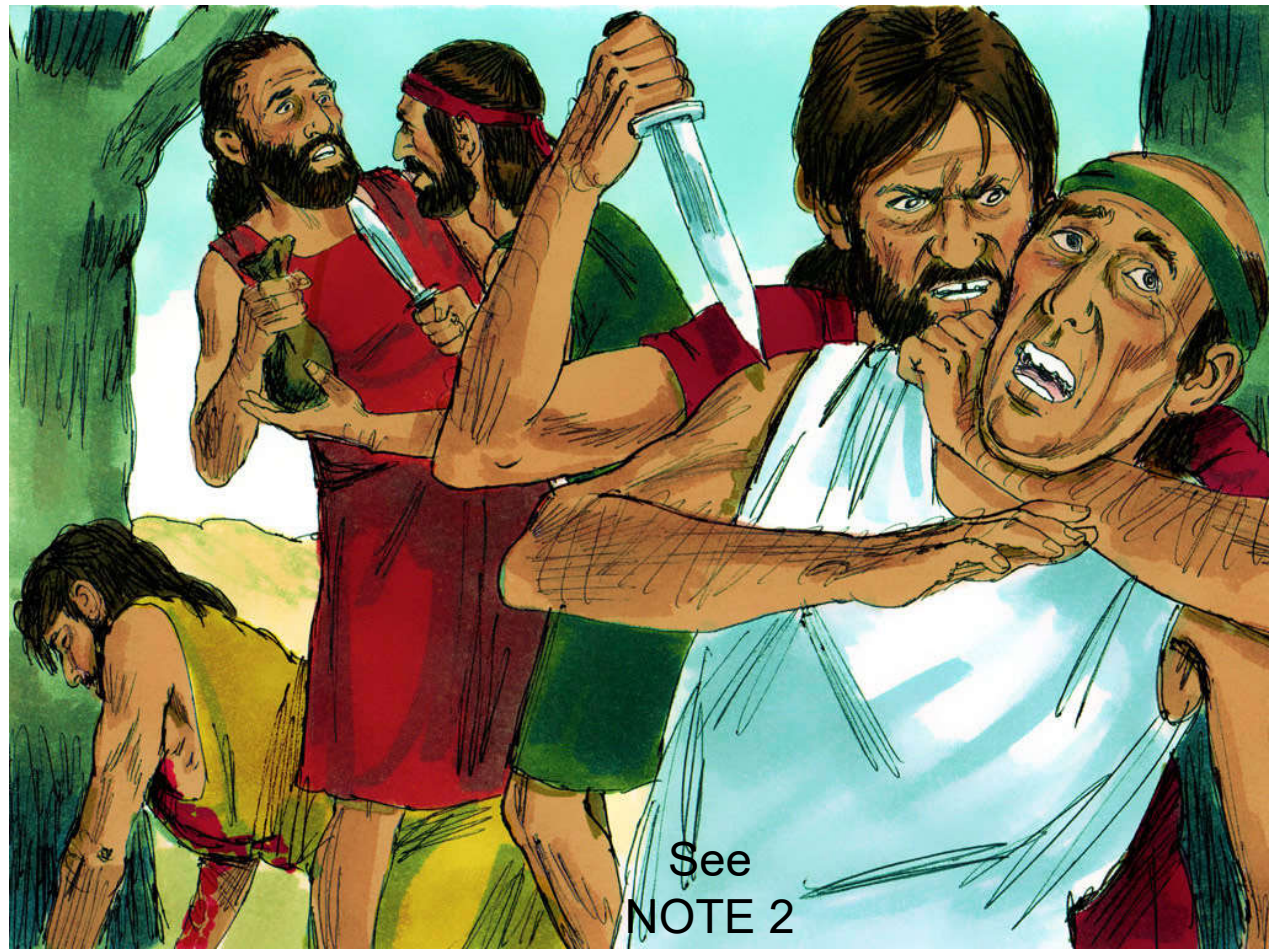


- ❑ Even before we sin on our own, we have the "imputed" sin of Adam, which brings death:
- Rom 5:14 Nevertheless, **death reigned** from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, **even over those who did not sin by breaking a command**, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.



# ORIGINAL SIN

- ❑ So **we are not sinners because we sin** - rather, **we sin because we are sinners**. Man has a natural inclination towards sin:
  - Gen 6:5 The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

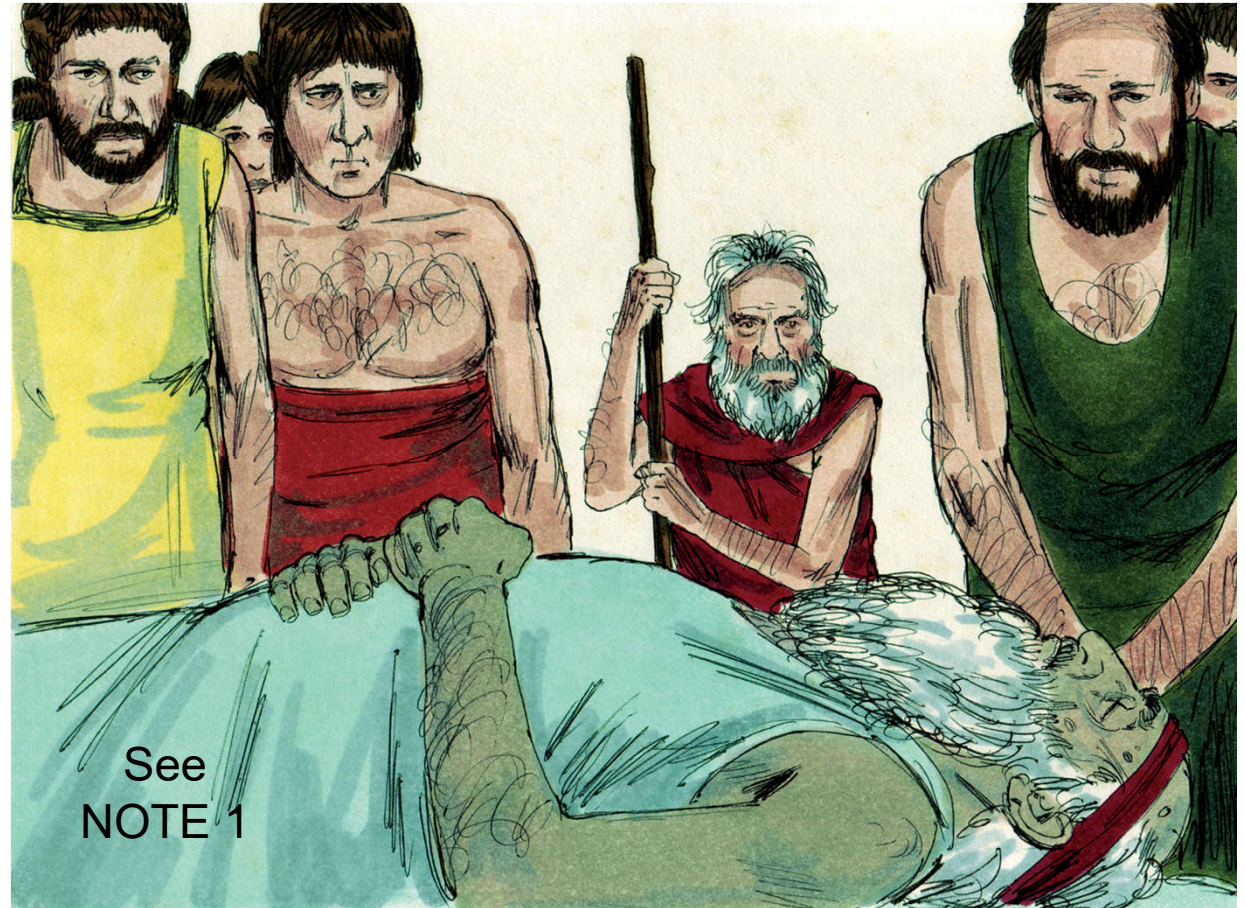




As a result of original sin  
all mankind is subject to:

## 1. Physical death

- 1 Cor 15:21-22 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For **as in Adam all die**, so in Christ all will be made alive.



- Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and **death through sin**, and in this way **death came to all men**, because all sinned...



# ORIGINAL SIN

## 2. Spiritual death (i.e. separation from God):

- Rom 5:18 "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was **condemnation for all men...**"
- Gen 3:23-24 So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden ...  
After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.



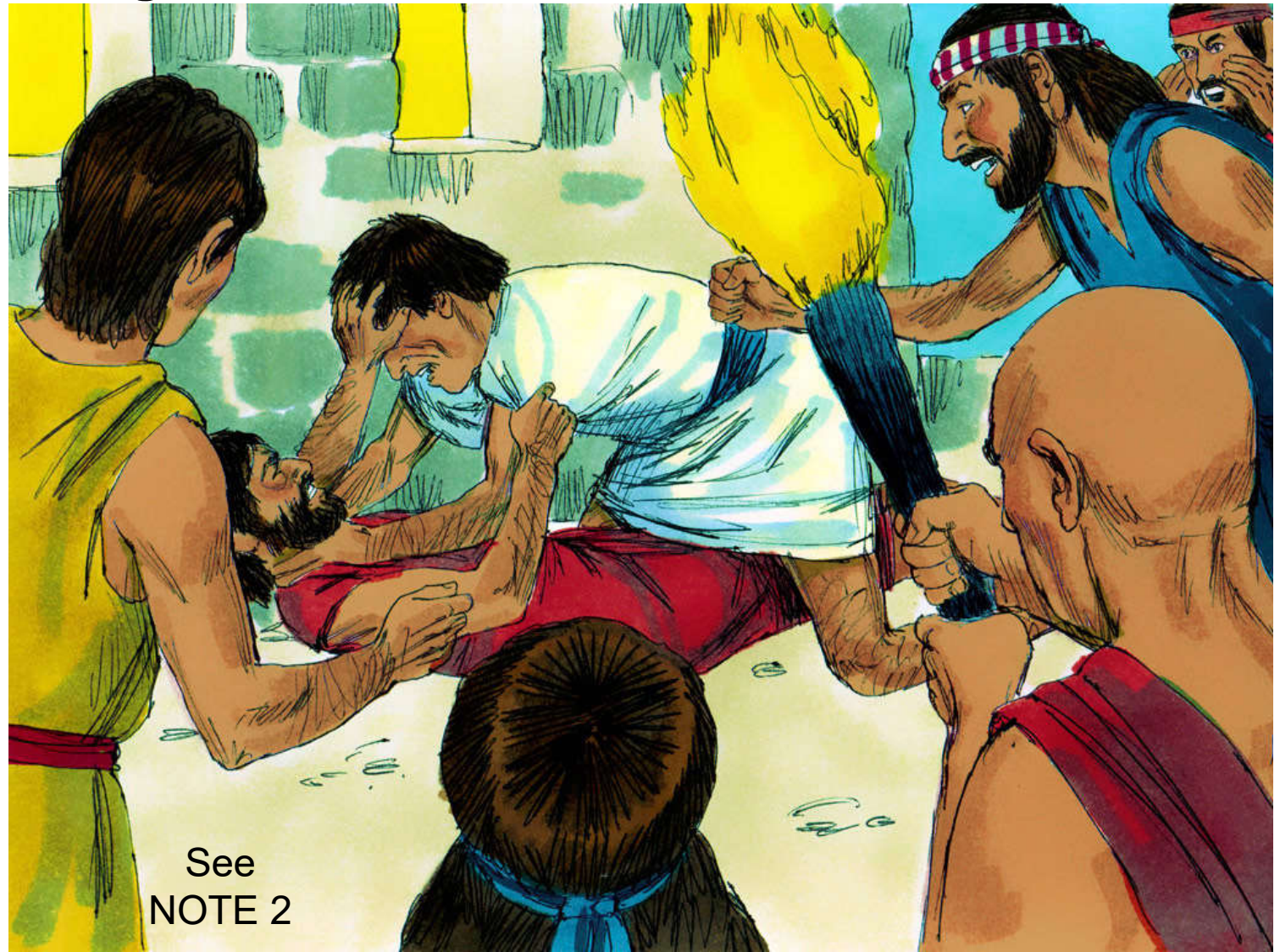
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# ORIGINAL SIN

## 3. A sinful nature

- Rom 5:19 ... through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners...
- Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man...



See  
NOTE 2

# CHURCH FATHERS

- ❑ While Augustine was the one who most clearly articulated the doctrine of original sin, while engaged in his debate with Pelagius, the idea was by no means invented by him - rather it was alluded to by most early Church Fathers.
- ❑ Here are some excerpts which indicate how some early Christian writers made the connection between Adam's sin, death, and our inherent sinful state.
  1. Irenaeus (130-202 AD):
    - **"And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so is it rescued by a virgin... For in the same way the sin of the first created man receives amendment by the correction of the First-begotten..."**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Against Heresies 5.19



# CHURCH FATHERS

## 2. Tertullian (160-220 AD):

- **"Every soul, then, by reason of its birth, has its nature in Adam until it is born again in Christ; moreover, it is unclean all the while that it remains without this regeneration; and because unclean, it is actively sinful, and suffuses even the flesh (by reason of their conjunction) with its own shame."**<sup>1</sup>
- **"On account of his transgression Man was given over to death; and the whole human race, which was infected by his seed, was made the transmitter of condemnation."**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A treatise on the soul, ch. XL    <sup>2</sup> The Testimony of the Soul 3:2

# CHURCH FATHERS

3. Origen (c. 185 - c. 254 AD) also held to a view of original sin, albeit very unorthodox, whereby humans inherit a sinfulness acquired by choices in a previous existence. <sup>1</sup>

4. Cyprian (c.200-258 AD):

- "... an infant, who, being lately born, has not sinned, except in that, **being born after the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of the ancient death at its earliest birth...**" <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In his typical fashion, Origen views the story of the Fall as allegorical and also tries to synthesize the gospel with Greek philosophy. He believed in the Platonic concept of the pre-existence of souls, describing the origin of our sinful nature with a story similar to that of Plato in the Phaedrus. He saw human souls as fallen celestial spirits - banished to earth by God to live as fleshly mortals - in order to purify and restore themselves. <sup>2</sup> Like some others, Cyprian used original sin to try and justify the practice of infant baptism.

# CHURCH FATHERS

5. Athanasius (c. 296-373 AD):

- “For as when **Adam** had transgressed, **his sin reached unto all men**, so, when the Lord had become man and had overthrown the Serpent, that so great strength of His is to extend through all.”<sup>1</sup>

6. Hilary of Poitiers (c. 310- c. 367 AD) writes of Christ:

- “But as **all flesh comes from sin**, that is, it derives **from the sin of Adam the progenitor**, He has been sent in a flesh similar to that of sin, because in Him sin does not subsist, but the image of sinful flesh.”

<sup>1</sup> Four Discourses Against the Arians

# CHURCH FATHERS

## 7. Ambrose (337-397 AD):

- **"Peter was clean, but he must wash his feet, for he had sin by succession from the first man, when the serpent overthrew him and persuaded him to sin."**<sup>1</sup>

## 8. Cyril of Alexandria (c. 378-444 AD):

- **"All men have been condemned to death by the transgression of Adam. For the whole of human nature has suffered this in him, who was the beginning of the human race."**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "On the Mysteries" - Ambrose explaining their custom of washing feet after baptism    <sup>2</sup> "On Romans" 5.15

# ORIGINAL SIN

- ❑ When discussing the part of man with the natural tendency to sin, the Greek NT often uses the word "sarx", which is translated variously in English as "flesh", "carnal" or "sinful nature":
  - Eph 2:3a All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of **our sinful nature** (flesh) and following its desires and thoughts.
- ❑ We all enter the world with a fallen nature and a predisposition to sin. As such we are in bondage to sin.
  - Rom 7:14 ... but I am unspiritual, **sold as a slave to sin...**
  - Rom 6:20 When you were slaves to sin, you were **free from the control of righteousness.**



# What is Pelagianism?

- ❑ In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, a debate took place between Pelagius and Augustine of Hippo. Pelagius was a British monk who denied the doctrine of original sin.
- In his view, which became known as **Pelagianism**, **Adam's sin did not taint human nature** and our will is still capable of choosing good or evil without God's help. **So men have full control of their own salvation.**
- **Religion's purpose is to teach us virtue**, from which we can expect reward from God. By great efforts, it is possible for those in the flesh to achieve moral perfection. Sadly this is the kind of understanding that some today seem to have of Christianity.

# PELAGIANISM

- ❑ So Pelagianism sees Adam as simply “setting a bad example” for his offspring. The role of Jesus was to “set a good example” for the rest of humanity (thus counteracting Adam’s bad example). Pelagianism does not explain why Jesus had to die for anyone’s sins; if men can redeem themselves by their own efforts, atonement by Jesus on the cross was at best a vague sort of moral example.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ In opposition to Pelagius, Augustine taught that a person’s salvation comes solely through a free gift, the grace of God, and that no person could save themselves by their own works.

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace\\_%28Christianity%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_%28Christianity%29)

# **TOTAL DEPRAVITY**



# TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ❑ Total depravity is a doctrine derived from the concept of original sin.
  - It is the teaching that, as a consequence of the Fall of Man, every person born into the world is enslaved to the service of sin and, apart from the ... grace of God, is utterly unable to choose to follow God, refrain from evil, or accept the gift of salvation as it is offered.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ It is advocated to various degrees by many Protestants. Arminians also hold to the doctrine of Total Depravity, albeit not in the same way as the Reformed.

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total\\_depravity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_depravity)

# MISCONCEPTIONS

- ❑ One common misconception by critics of Arminianism is that it denies original sin and total depravity.
  - Some Reformed theologians have mistakenly used the term "Arminianism" to include some who hold the **Semipelagian** doctrine of **limited depravity**, which allows for an "island of righteousness" in human hearts that is uncorrupted by sin and **able to accept God's offer of salvation without a special dispensation of grace.** <sup>1</sup>
  - **No system of Arminianism founded on Arminius or Wesley denies original sin or total depravity;** both Arminius and Wesley strongly affirmed that man's basic condition is one in which he cannot be righteous, understand God, or seek God. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total\\_depravity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_depravity)

<sup>2</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/Arminianism>



# SEMI-PELAGIANISM

- ❑ In more recent times, the term "Semipelagianism" has been used in the Reformed Protestant camp to designate anyone who deviates from what they see as the Augustinian doctrines of sovereignty, original sin, and grace, most notably Arminian Protestants and Roman Catholics.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ Many Arminians have disagreed with this generalization, believing it is libellous to Jacobus Arminius and the Remonstrants. John Wesley (founder of Methodism) and other prominent **classical and Wesleyan Arminians maintained the doctrines of original sin and the total depravity of the human race.** Likewise, ever since the Council of Orange (529), the Catholic Church has condemned Semipelagianism and has not accepted the Calvinist interpretation of Augustine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semipelagianism>

## The Bible clearly teaches that all men are sinners

- Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- Prov 20:9 Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?
- Eccl 7:20 Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins.
- Eccl 9:3 The hearts of people, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live...
- 1 John 1:8,10 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us... If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

# TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- Jer 17:9 (NLT) The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked...
- ❑ Jew and Gentile alike are under the power of sin:
  - Rom 3:9-17 ... Jews and Gentiles alike are **all under the power of sin**. As it is written: "**There is no one righteous, not even one**; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."
  - "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips."
  - "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."
  - "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

The sinful nature makes us incapable of pleasing God, despite our best efforts.

- Rom 8:8 Those controlled by the sinful nature (flesh) **cannot please God.**
- Eph 2:3b Like the rest, we were **by nature objects of wrath.**
- Rom 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature (flesh). For **I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.**
- Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and **all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;** we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

# TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ❑ Now Calvin believed that man was depraved to the extent that "The will is so utterly vitiated and corrupted in every part as to **produce nothing but evil**".<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ But the unsaved can at times choose to do something good:
  - Rom 2:14-15 Indeed, **when Gentiles**, who do not have the law, **do by nature things required by the law**, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, **since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts...**
- ❑ This text implies that man's nature is not depraved in the sense that he can do nothing good, because these pagans can clearly "do by nature things required by the law". (Yet it doesn't say that they act this way apart from grace.)

<sup>1</sup> Institutes, Bk. II, Chapter II, Para. 26

# TOTAL DEPRAVITY

❑ So to the Arminian:

- Total Depravity does not mean that **every man is as bad as he could possibly be**, but it means that in every area of his being, he is touched by sin. In that sense man is "totally" depraved.
- Humans are **not totally devoid of goodness or unable to do any good outwardly** as a result of the fall. People retain the image of God, though it has been distorted.
- But while unsaved persons are **not necessarily devils**, they are **helpless to do anything on their own to establish a right relationship with God**.
- When unsaved people do good by choice, it is because of **God's prevenient grace** at work in their lives.



## What's the difference?

- ❖ **Pelagianism:** the belief that original sin did not taint human nature and that man's will is still capable of choosing good or evil without special aid from God.
- ❖ **Semi-Pelagianism:** the belief that man is only partially depraved and the initiative in salvation is made by the human will, with God's grace only coming into effect later.
- ❖ **Arminianism:** the belief that man is totally depraved and so the initiative in salvation is taken by God (Prevenient Grace) in which he enables (but does not compel) men to accept his universal offer of salvation through God-given free will and faith.
- ❖ **Calvinism:** the belief that man is totally depraved and so all steps towards salvation are taken by God, who compels (Irresistible Grace) only certain elect men to be saved.

# **ROMANS 7: THE WRETCHED MAN**



# NOT BY WORKS

- ❑ **Salvation is a declaration of spiritual bankruptcy**, in which penitents acknowledge the inadequacy of their own resources and trust only in God to save them. Only the unearned, unmerited grace of God can save anyone. No one can have a claim of entitlement to God's grace, and it is only by his generosity that salvation is even possible.<sup>1</sup>
  - **2 Tim 1:8-9 ...God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.**
- ❑ **Grace is God's initiative and choice to make a way of salvation available for men.**

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace\\_in\\_Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_in_Christianity)

# NOT BY WORKS

- ❑ Grace is the undeserved favour of God for mankind irrespective of our actions, earned worth or goodness.
  - Titus 3:5 But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, **not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.**
- ❑ Grace is an attitude of God towards mankind by which He provides a benefit, without consideration of merit.
  - Rom 11:5-6 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, **then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.**



# NOT BY WORKS

- ❑ Some Calvinists claim that Arminians teach a works-based gospel because the sinner uses free will to accept God's offer. But point III of the Five Articles of Remonstrance states:
  - That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the working of his own free-will, inasmuch as in his state of apostasy and sin he can for himself and by himself think nothing that is good--nothing, that is, truly good, such as saving faith is, above all else. But that it is necessary that by God, in Christ and through his Holy Spirit he be born again and renewed in understanding, affections and will and in all his faculties, that he may be able to understand, think, will, and perform what is truly good, according to the Word of God [John 15:5].
- ❑ Accepting a free (undeserved) benefit is not a "good work".

# WANT A GOOD GIFT?

- ❑ In reality Arminians believe that salvation is not earned by good works, but is a free gift.
  - Eph 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works...
- ❑ But a gift has to be accepted. Does the fact that a man is evil mean that he does not desire good gifts? Go visit some criminals in prison and offer them a gift of R10,000 - see if they do not desire good gifts.
- ❑ There is no merit in desiring (free will) a good gift you do not deserve (works). Many a man wills to do something good, but doesn't do it.

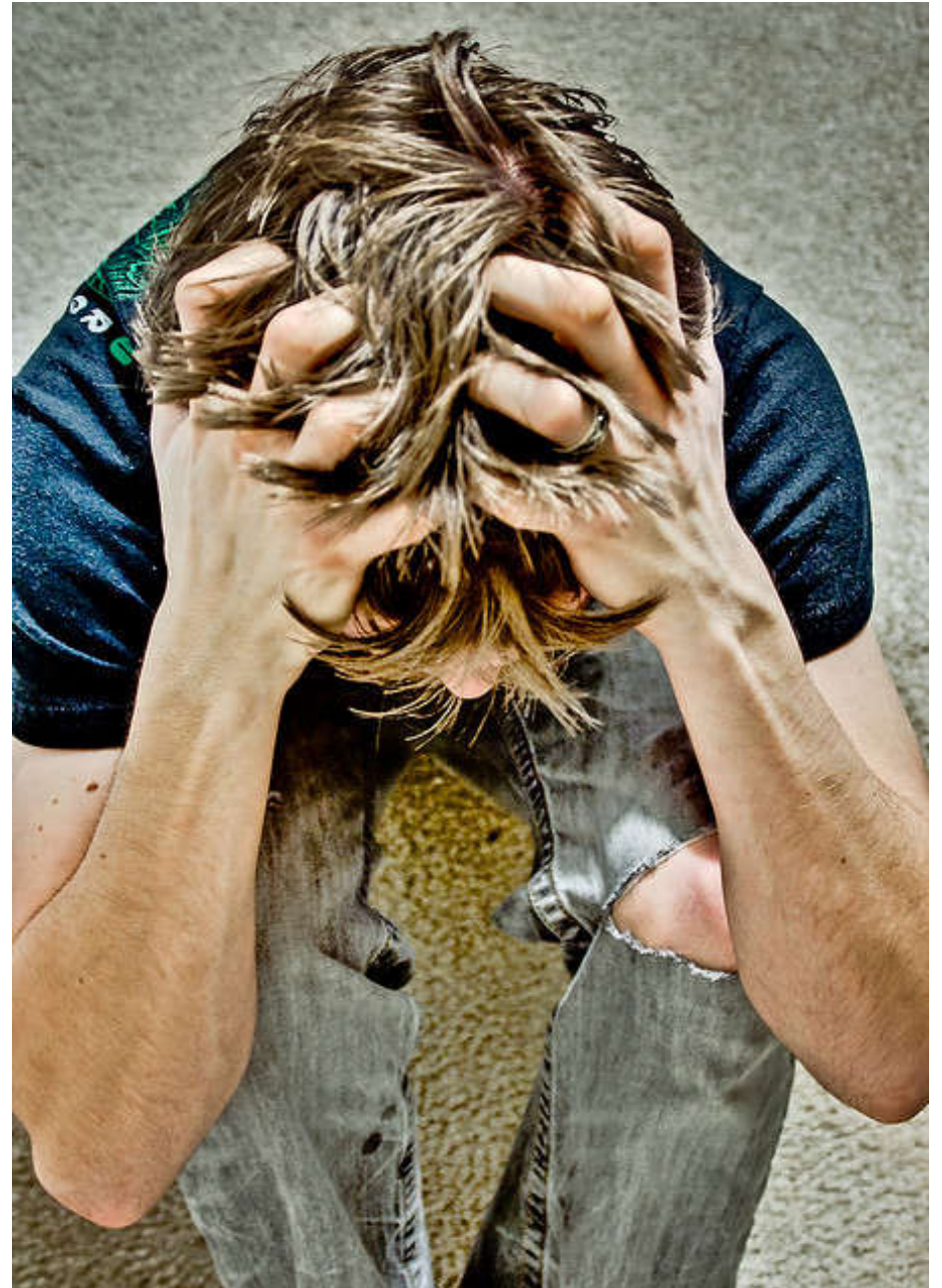


# WANT A GOOD GIFT?

- ❑ And many sinners, no matter how wicked they are, desire to go to heaven or to be good. The problem is not in the desire for good, but in the inability to do it, because of our corrupted nature. This is what Paul teaches in Romans 7 about the "sinful nature" desiring to do good!
  - Romans 7:18 "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature (flesh). For **I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.** For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing."
- ❑ Calvinists generally assert that this passage is talking about the Christian in their ongoing battle with sin, but Arminius saw this as Paul speaking of the unsaved man being drawn by God (prevenient grace) prior to conversion.

# ROMANS 7

- Rom 7:14-18 "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature (flesh). For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.





# ROMANS 7

- Romans 7:19-25 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!



# ROMANS 7

- ❑ Romans 7 is one of the most hotly contested passages of Scripture. The debate is about who the "wretched man" is that Paul refers to:
- ❑ The different takes on Romans 7.
  1. Applies to the unbeliever
  2. Applies to the unbeliever under conviction of sin (Arminius)
  3. Applies to the immature believer
  4. Applies to the mature believer (Augustine, Calvin)
  5. Applies to unbelievers and believers alike, who are trying to be justified by the Law.

# ROMANS 7

- ❑ Theodore Beza, along with John Calvin, had taught that the person of Romans 7 was saved and that the struggle pictured in Romans 7 is universal for all Christians. Arminius disagreed once he began to teach through Romans 7.<sup>1 & 2</sup>
- ❑ Arminius taught that the person of Romans 7 was not Paul himself nor about even a redeemed man but about a man living under the Law. While Paul does write in the first person in Romans 7, Arminius taught that the way he describes himself in Romans 7 is at variance with what he writes about himself elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://arminiantoday.wordpress.com/2009/07/12/arminius-on-romans-713-25/>

<sup>2</sup> His sermons were later published in 1613 under the title, A Dissertation on the True and Genuine Sense of the Seventh Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

# ROMANS 7

- ❑ Some contend that Paul's use of the first person (I, me, my) indicates that he speaking of himself in the present tense - and thus the passage applies to a mature Christian. But if Paul is describing his present and supposedly ongoing condition (as a mature Christian) when he writes:
  - "I know that **nothing good lives** in me, that is, in **my sinful nature** (flesh)" (Rom 7:14)
- then he is contradicting his statement in his earlier letter to the Galatians (Gal 5:24) that:
  - "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have **crucified the sinful nature** (flesh) with its passions and desires."
- ❑ So it's more likely that he is in fact writing about an unconverted person and **his use of the first person is simply a literacy device.**



# ROMANS 7

- ❑ The man “under the law” is a sinner:
  - Arminius began his exegesis of Romans 7 back in Romans 6:12-14 where he shows that Christians are not under Law but under grace. **In 6:14, Arminius points out that Paul uses the phrase “under the law” for sinners. To be under grace and under law are two different positions and two different persons. This is illustrated for us, writes Arminius, in Romans 7:1-4. Romans 7:6 is clearly showing that we are free from the law and under grace. Paul then returns to the proposition that sin has dominion over those who are under the Law in Romans 7:7-14. From Romans 7:14-25, Paul now gives two reasons for sin: the man under the law is carnal and he is under the dominion of sin.**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://arminiantoday.wordpress.com/2009/07/12/arminius-on-romans-713-25/>

# ROMANS 7

- ❑ Arminius taught that becoming a Christian delivered a person from the power of the law and the dominion of sin and where this did not occur, neither did regeneration.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Cor 5:17 (NASB) Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.



- ❑ So Arminius concludes that the term "under law" has to point back to Romans 6:12-14 and the rest of the Epistle of Romans as clearly showing this to be a lost man.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid

# ROMANS 7

□ Charles Leiter writes:

- Some theologians have tried to escape this "wretched Christian" view of Romans 7 by saying that even though Paul is speaking here of his own present experience as a believer, he is merely describing the fact that "no Christian is as holy as he wants to be." Romans 7, according to this view, teaches only that "the Christian's reach always exceeds his grasp" and that during this lifetime the Christian "cannot arrive at perfection."<sup>1</sup> →



<sup>1</sup> <http://illbehonest.com/the-context-of-romans-7-is-paul-talking-about-when-he-was-lost-or-saved> From the book "Justification & Regeneration"

# ROMANS 7

← All these statements are undoubtedly true, but they do not do justice to the degree of failure and misery evident in this passage. Paul is clearly describing here (to use his own words) a state of "wretchedness," 6 a state of "bondage," 7 and a state of inability 8 to "do good." In other words, the man of Romans 7 is **not just battling with sin but utterly defeated by it**, in stark contrast with Paul's description of all true Christians in Romans 6 and Romans 7:1-6.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Ibid



- ❑ Admittedly it is possible for a Christian to experience something similar to what Paul describes in 7:14-25. But we have to ensure that we interpret Scripture within its context. Contrast the man in Romans 6 with man in Romans 7. Paul cannot be speaking of himself as a saved man because sin seems to have dominion over him in Romans 7.

Romans 6 (ESV)	Romans 7 (ESV)	QUESTION
Rom 6:7 For one who has died has been <b>set free from sin</b> .	Rom 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, <b>sold under sin</b> .	How can you be “sold under sin” while being “set free from sin”?
Rom 6:14 For <b>sin will have no dominion over you</b> , since you are not under law but under grace.	Rom 7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For <b>I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out</b> .	How can you be incapable of doing what is right when “sin will have no dominion over you”?

# ROMANS 7

- ❑ But some ask how a non-Christian could say, "For in my inner being I delight in God's law" (7:22)?
- Paul is referring to the experience of a **non-Christian under the conviction of sin.**
- Then too we must remember that when Paul uses the word 'I' here, it is **this person as seen through Paul's eyes**, which explains why they have such a Christian view of their non-Christian condition.



# ROMANS 7

- ❑ How could a believer who has already been redeemed cry out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (7:24)?
  - Romans 7:24-25 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!
- ❑ Instead Paul is expressing how an unbeliever who wants to obey and follow God is driven to frustration, futility and failure in his own attempts - because by virtue of his sinful nature he is still a slave to sin.



# ROMANS 7

- ❑ Arminius argued that on the basis of Romans 8:1 with the term "therefore", it is clear that **Paul is not speaking of himself or sinning saints** but that those who are in Christ Jesus do not walk in condemnation of the law and under the dominion of sin but are under grace.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ The close of chapter 7 speaks of the wretched unbeliever calling on God, who then delivers him. Chapter 8 then continues with the man who is now converted.
  - Romans 8:1-2 Therefore, there is **now no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has **set you free from the law of sin and death.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://arminiantoday.wordpress.com/2009/07/12/arminius-on-romans-713-25/>



# ROMANS 7

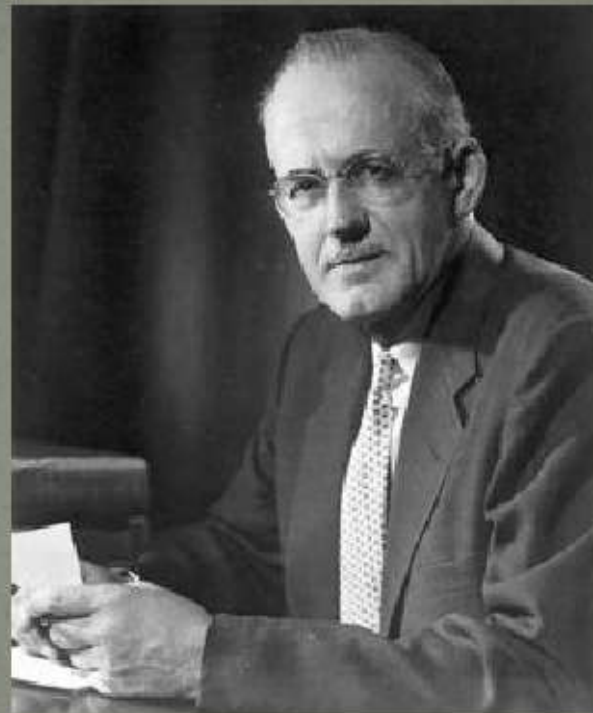
- ❑ Arminius ... ends his several hundred pages of exegesis by ... citing fourteen ancient Church fathers, several writers from the middle ages, and seven contemporary commentators who all agreed with his exegesis. Arminius taught that until Augustine, the most common view of Romans 7 was the one he was teaching.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ Interestingly Augustine actually changed his viewpoint on Romans 7. Initially he had held the same view as Arminius, writing that Romans 7 must be understood as relating to a man under the law and not to a man under grace.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://arminiantoday.wordpress.com/2009/07/12/arminius-on-romans-713-25/>

<sup>2</sup> "Exposition of certain Propositions in the Epistle to the Romans". In what was probably an over-reaction to the Pelagian heresy (where Pelagius was teaching sinless perfection through human free will and rejecting the doctrine of original sin) Augustine later taught that Romans 7 was part of the Christian experience.

# PREVENIENT GRACE

“Christian theology teaches the doctrine of prevenient grace, which briefly stated means this, that before a man can seek God, God must first have sought the man.”  
- A. W. Tozer



# PREVENIENT GRACE

☐ Calvinism holds:

❖ **Total depravity:** as a result of his fallen nature man is unable to choose to follow God. Man's will only allows him to choose sin.

☐ Arminianism holds:

❖ **Prevenient Grace:** Humans are naturally unable to make any effort towards salvation. Salvation is possible by grace alone and works of human effort cannot cause or contribute to salvation. But though born a sinner, mankind is given prevenient grace that enables him to respond positively to God with free will.

# COMMON GRACE

- ❑ Both Calvinists and Arminians generally accept the concept of common grace in that there are undeserved blessings which God extends to all mankind.<sup>1</sup> E.g. God's sustaining care for his creation, God making the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust (Matt 5:45), etc.
- **Calvinists** maintain that God's common grace **does not improve man's unregenerate nature**.<sup>1</sup> They distinguish it from special or saving grace, which extends only to those whom God has chosen to redeem.
- **Arminians** see this common (or 'prevenient') grace as extended so that **the effects of the Fall are offset** and everyone now has free will and the ability to turn to God for salvation.

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common\\_grace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_grace)



# PREVENIENT GRACE

- ❑ The word **prevenient** is derived from Latin and means “**to come before**”. Prevenient grace is **divine grace that precedes human decision**. It exists prior to and without reference to anything humans may have done. As humans are corrupted by the effects of sin, prevenient grace allows persons to engage their God-given free will to accept or to reject God's offer of salvation.
- ❑ Arminius taught of a prevenient grace that has been conferred upon all by the Holy Spirit and this grace is “**sufficient for belief, in spite of our sinful corruption, and thus for salvation.**” He stated that “the grace sufficient for salvation is **conferred on the Elect, and on the Non-elect**; that, if they will, they may believe or not believe, may be saved or not be saved.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacobus\\_Arminius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacobus_Arminius)

# PREVENIENT GRACE

- ❑ In Wesleyan theology, because of the atonement on the cross, God has given a universal "prevenient grace" which **negates the total depravity of man**. Thus, **man is now in a neutral state and able to respond to the drawing of the Holy Spirit**. By releasing men from their bondage to sin prevenient grace **enables us to come to Jesus, although it does not guarantee that the sinner will actually do so** (i.e. not irresistible grace).
- ❑ So while on the one hand, the Scripture teaches that we are indeed dead in our sins and totally void of any ability to save ourselves (Eph 2:1, Col 1:21, 2:13; Luke 15:24), we also see the universal call of the Gospel which requires us to 'come' (Matt 11:28), 'repent' (Acts 2:38), 'believe' (Acts 16:31), all of which call us to specific acts of faith and obedience.

# Does the Bible teach prevenient grace?

**A. GOD LEADS:** Paul speaks of God's kindness as intended to lead (a process) to repentance - this is prevenient grace.

➤ Rom 2:4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that **God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?**

❑ There are two possible responses by men to this kindness:

➤ Rom 2:5-7 But because of your **stubbornness and your unrepentant heart**, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will repay each person according to what they have done." To those **who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality**, he will give eternal life.

# PREVENIENT GRACE

**B. LIGHT IS GIVEN TO ALL:** Jesus brought enough light into the world to illuminate everyone.

- John 1:9 The true light that **gives light to everyone** was coming into the world.





- ❑ While not all may have the same amount of light, those who miss heaven will be denied on the basis that they rejected whatever light they did receive.
- John 3:19 "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."



# PREVENIENT GRACE

**C. SALVATION IS OFFERED TO ALL:** There is a grace that "offers salvation to all people" before (i.e. prevenient) they are saved:

- Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...



**D. GOD CALLS ALL:** Prevenient grace is God "calling" us:

- Luke 5:32 "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

# PREVENIENT GRACE

**E. GOD DRAWS ALL:** Prevenient grace is described in terms that speak of God “drawing” with unsaved men. Jesus spoke of “drawing” people to him, implying a gradual persuasion:

- John 12:32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, **will draw** (Greek: *helkō*) **all people to myself.**”
- ❑ This gracious drawing is resistible, but provides all people with the opportunity to believe. The Greek verb *helkō* does not mean that God irresistibly drags the elect into faith.<sup>1</sup> “There is no thought here of force or magic. The term figuratively expresses the supernatural power of the love of God or Christ which goes out to all (12:32) but without which no one can come (6:44)”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fwponline.cc/v18n2/v18n2witzki.html>

<sup>2</sup> Oepke in Kittel's One-Volume Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

# PREVENIENT GRACE

- ❑ It's clear that man's will alone is not enough (as taught by Pelagius). You cannot be saved unless the Father has first drawn you to Jesus.
  - John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me **draws** (helkō) **them**..."
- ❑ John Wesley says of this verse, "No man can believe in Christ, unless God give him power. He draws us first by good desires, not by compulsion, not by laying the will under any necessity; but by the strong and sweet, yet still resistible, motions of His Heavenly grace". <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Wesley, Explanatory  
Notes upon The New Testament





# PREVENIENT GRACE

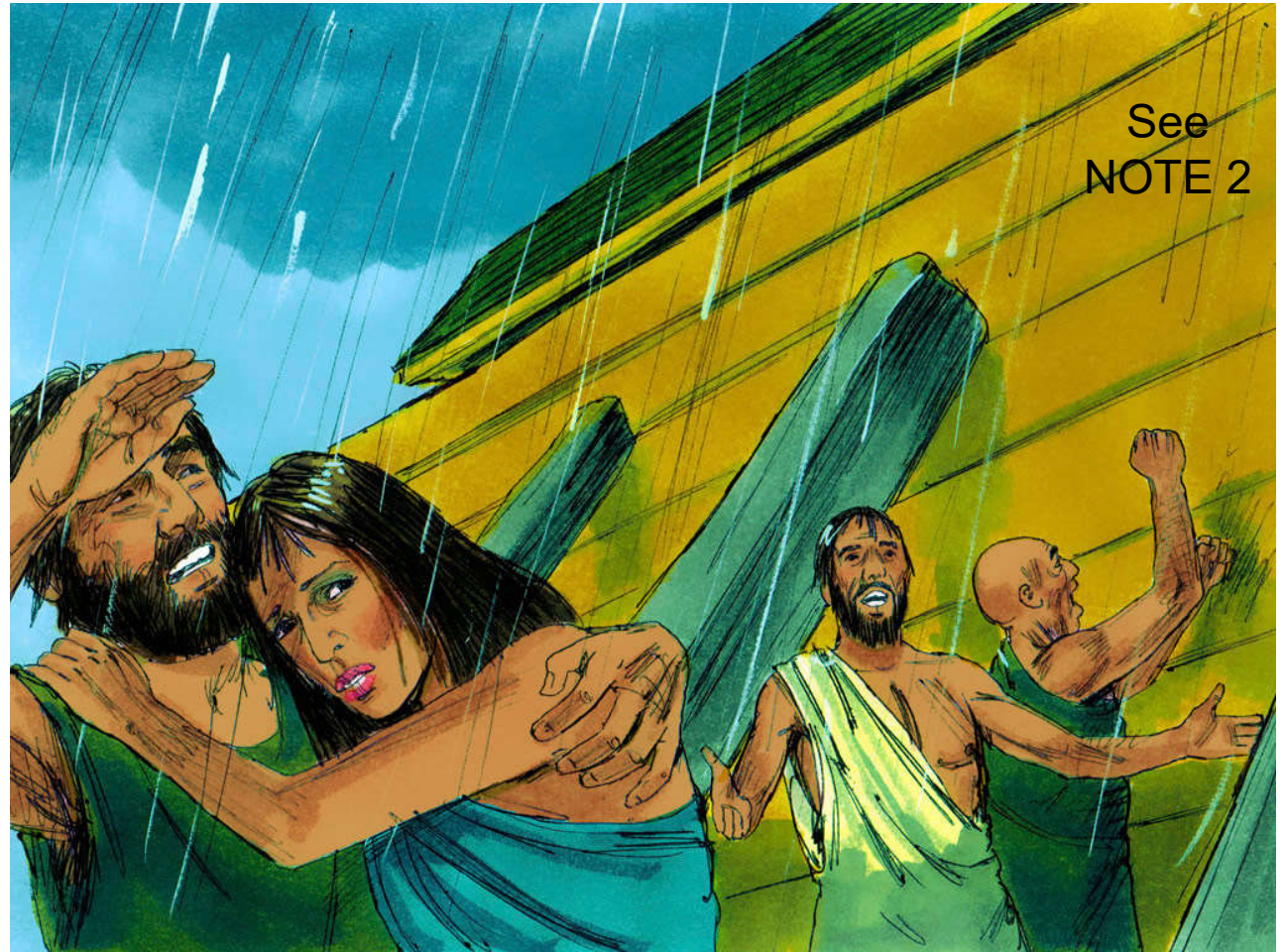
- ❑ God says of the idolatrous Israelites:
  - **"I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them."** (Hosea 11:4, NKJV)
- ❑ Speaking of Israel's restoration with the Lord, Jeremiah writes:
  - The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: **"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."** (Jer 31:3)

# PREVENIENT GRACE

**F. GOD STRIVES:** Prevenient grace is also described in terms that speak of God "striving" with unsaved men.

➤ Gen 6:3 (NASB) Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not **strive with man** forever..."

- ❑ In the case above this striving of the Spirit was clearly not irresistible, as many perished in the Flood because of their refusal to respond to God's striving, drawing, prevenient grace.



# PREVENIENT GRACE

**G. GOD CONVICTS ALL:** Prevenient grace is evident in the work of the Holy Spirit "convicting" the world of sin.

➤ John 16:8 (NASB)  
"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment..."

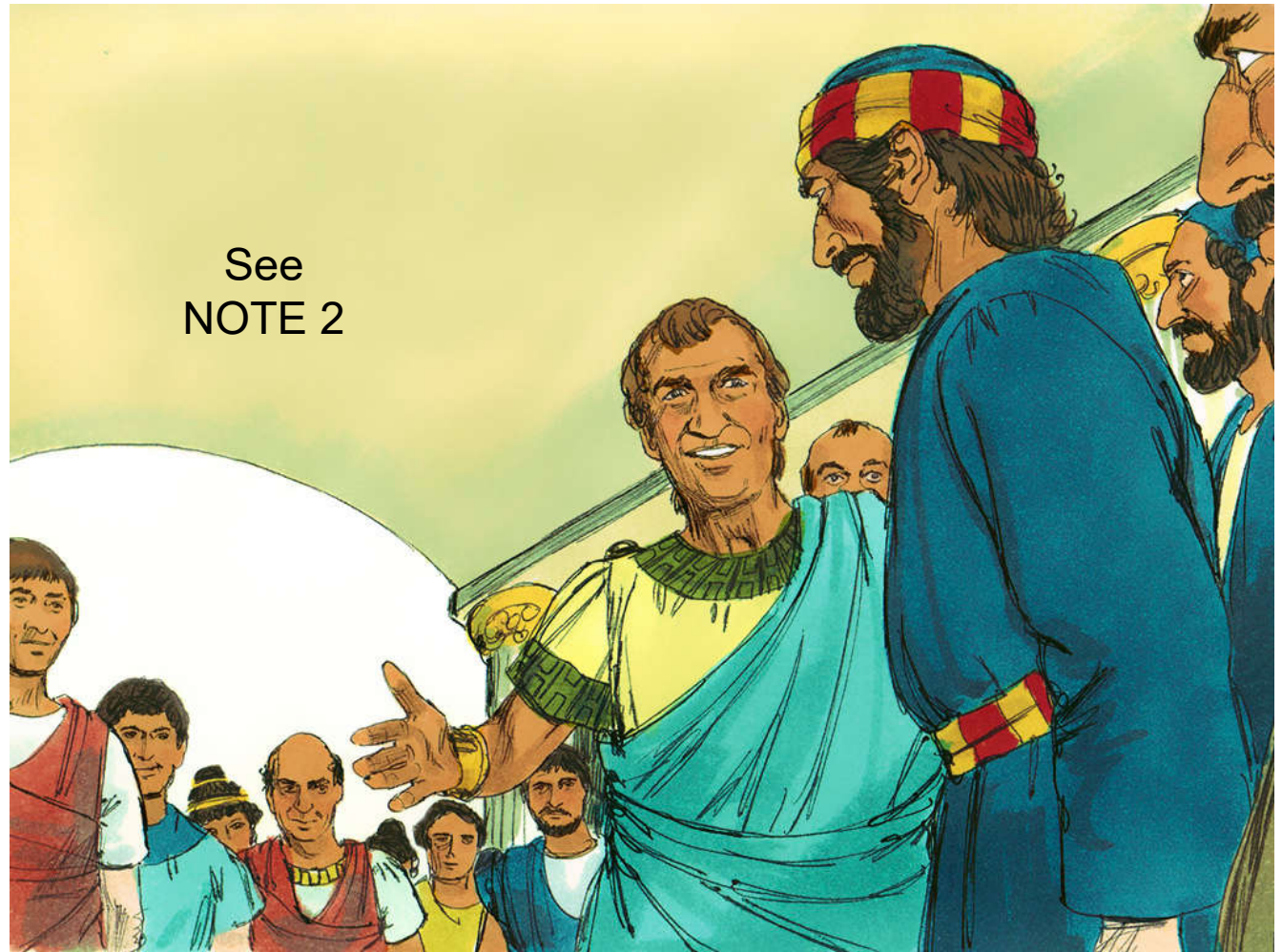
□ This is clearly a work done prior to conversion and it is a work done to all (the world).





# PREVENIENT GRACE

- ❑ It was said of Cornelius that:
  - Acts 10:2 He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.
- ❑ Yet at this stage, Cornelius was not a saved person, even with all his good works. Still we see God's prevenient grace moving in his life to draw Cornelius to salvation.





# PREVENIENT GRACE

- ❑ So too Lydia before she was saved was a worshiper of God, but when Paul preaches we read that:
  - Acts 16:14 One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.



See  
NOTE 2

# PREVENIENT GRACE

□ Rev. Norman Brush commented on Prevenient Grace.

"... in chapter 17:4 at Thessalonica we find devout Greeks, and chief women who were under prevenient grace waiting to be told of the gift of saving Grace, and at Berea the Bible searchers were hungry to hear God's Word, and at Athens men were ignorantly worshiping the unknown god and certain men cleave unto Paul and believed on Jesus. At Ephesus in chapter 19 the grace of God preceded Paul's preaching of Christ, but they were not New Testament Christians until Paul came and sensed their lack of the Spirit (which was a lower experience than the New Testament afforded) and exhorted them to be baptized in the name of Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit, thus bringing up to the New Testament standard" <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Arminian <http://www.imarc.cc/pregrace/hartpg.html>

# CONCLUSION

- ❑ The need for this prevenient grace is based upon man's fallen condition. **Wesleyans and Calvinists are in fundamental agreement on man's depravity.** In fact, the command to repent and believe, found throughout scripture, would be impossible were it not for God's grace. <sup>1</sup>
- ❑ But whereas **Calvinists maintain that God's grace cannot be resisted,** **Arminians believe that it enables, but does not ensure, personal acceptance of the gift of salvation.** <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fwponline.cc/v18n2/v18n2witzki.html>

# CONCLUSION

- ❖ **Calvinism:** Man is sinful and depraved (Total Depravity) and all steps towards salvation are taken by God in which he compels (Irresistible Grace) only certain men (Unconditional Election) to accept salvation, while not even providing this as an option for others (Limited Atonement). The elect can never fall away (Perseverance of the saints).
- ❖ **Arminianism:** Man is sinful and depraved and the first steps towards salvation are taken by God (Prevenient Grace) in which he enables, but doesn't compel (Resistible Grace) all men (Unlimited Atonement) to accept his universal offer of salvation through free will. God predestines based on his foreknowledge of our choice (Conditional Election). The elect can never fall away provided they choose to remain in Christ (Falling from grace).



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