

# PRIMITIVE BAPTIST NOTE



## ***“A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM”***

***By  
Elder/ Rev. Roderick Ford, Esq.***

Primitive Baptists need not, and should not, define themselves as either “Calvinists” or as “Arminians,” but simply as orthodox Christians.

This policy is in keeping with the historical fact that Baptists do not consider themselves to be a “Protestant” sect, and the debate between Calvinists and Arminians is recent in the history of the Christian religion, having emerged during the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Reformation period.

As an Augustinian theologian myself, I would suggest that both Arminians and Calvinists allow the erudite writings of the North African scholar from Hippo be the tie-breaking vote in favor of a “merger” between the two opposing viewpoints.

Notably, both Calvin and Luther considered themselves to be “Augustinian,” but I believe Luther’s viewpoint on predestination was closer to Augustine’s than Calvin’s.

When Luther was alive, and as this debate was beginning to emerge, Luther himself opined that the fall-out between the Calvinists and the Arminians was superfluous and fruitless, and, for reasons which I have set out in this letter, I am in agreement with Luther’s position.

Whether grace is “**irresistible**” (no need for pastors, preaching etc., God does all the work) or whether the “elect” may “**fall away**” (need for pastors, preaching, missions, etc., because God does not do all the work) are superfluous.

The Calvinists admit that they do not know who the “elect” are—only God knows this-- and that the Gospel must be preached to everyone.

The Arminians admit that God foreknows who the “elect” are, which is tantamount to also saying the God foreknows who the “damned” are.

Since **a just God does not punish unjustly**—and since both sides agree that He does not— then there is no reason for either the Calvinists or the Armininians to suppose that any “damned” individual will be **unjustly judged** and **unjustly punished** by the sovereign God.

But this only means that both Arminians and Calvinists reach the same end (i.e., the “**elect**” saints and the “**damned**” reprobates, both of whom are foreknown by God) but by different means.

The Calvinists argument is more with the machinery of Roman Catholicism and the power of the Papacy, not with fellow Puritans who happen to be Arminian leaning in theology.

I think this is why Wesley and Whitefield could ultimately be reconciled under the umbrella of Methodism.

And I also think this is why General and Reformed Baptists should be reconciled.

Below I have provided a brief article by Roy Ingle, titled “Biblical Arguments For and Against Unlimited Atonement,” which helps to bolster my observations.

Yours Faithfully,

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## Roy Ingle, “Biblical Arguments For And Against An Unlimited Atonement (Part 1)”

*April 8, 2024 , [SEA](#) , Comments Offon Roy Ingle, “Biblical Arguments For And Against An Unlimited Atonement (Part 1)”*

When it comes to the doctrine of election, I believe the strength or weakness of the arguments for unconditional election lies in the doctrine of the atonement of Christ. If Jesus did in fact die for only the elect and this can be proved from the Scriptures, then the argument is much stronger that election according to Calvinism is biblically true. However, if the opposite is true and the Scriptures can be shown to teach that the atonement is for all people, then the doctrine of election as taught by Calvinists falls short of the biblical standard for sound doctrine.

This one doctrine – the doctrine of the atonement, is the basis for the arguments over conditional versus unconditional election. I want to examine the biblical arguments for and against an unlimited atonement because, if the atonement is not unlimited, then unconditional election must be true. The basis for the Arminian understanding of the atonement is fundamental to our view not only of God Himself and His nature but also to the gospel itself and its application to the believer.

## Defining The Views Upfront

Essentially there are two main approaches to the atonement that we will examine. The first will be the arguments against the Arminian view and thus for the biblical basis for the Calvinist understanding of the atonement of Christ. Then we will look at the Arminian basis for teaching an unlimited atonement. Lastly, we will look at the Calvinist questions of the Arminian viewpoint with counter arguments from an Arminian view of the Calvinist critique.

The basic understanding of the atonement that we will study is essentially this:

Calvinism – John Calvin taught (although this is debated among Calvinists) that the atonement is limited in its application, and thus Christ died only for the elect. Calvinist theologians such as Dr. Samuel Storms, Dr. John Piper, or Dr. Michael Horton all hold firmly to the teaching that Christ died for only the elect. However, this does not mean that the gospel should not be preached to all men since only God knows who the elect are. This is why Scripture often uses the word “world” or “all” when speaking of the atonement, because while the death of Jesus is sufficient for all men, its application is only to the elect known and chosen by God Himself by His own wisdom and knowledge and only by His grace. The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus died for the elect (see Isaiah 53:11-12; Matthew 1:21; John 6:37; 10:11; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:29-30; 9:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; etc.). While there have been hyper-Calvinists, such as John Gill, who taught that evangelism was not necessary since God Himself will save the elect, many Calvinists, such as Jonathan Edwards or Charles Spurgeon opposed such a view and taught that, **while the Bible teaches unconditional election and God does sovereignly save by His grace and power alone, nonetheless we are still called to preach the gospel to all nations** (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

Arminianism – James Arminius taught that election was indeed a biblical doctrine but he simply rejected unconditional election. Arminius taught that Christ’s death on the cross provides salvation for all who would believe and repent (Acts 17:30). He saw clearly in the Scriptures that Jesus died for all men (Luke 19:10; John 3:16; 5:24-25; 20:31; Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 3:18; etc.) and he concluded that it was not God’s will for anyone to perish in their sins but to repent (2 Peter 3:9). While salvation is a gift from God and is not earned in any way (Ephesians 2:8-9), Arminius saw that, once man met the conditions for salvation, God had promised in His Word to save them (Acts 2:36-41). **The elect are those foreknown by God** (Romans 8:29-30; 1 Peter 1:1-2) and are saved by faith in Christ’s death and resurrection (Ephesians 1:3-14; Romans 10:9-13). Arminius read 1 Timothy 4:10 which says, “For this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe” (ESV). Therefore, Arminianism teaches that Christ died for all men and **that the elect are those who meet the conditions that God has set forth in His Word. Arminianism does not teach works-salvation or that we co-operate with God for our salvation**, nor does this negate the sovereignty of God but enhances the goodness, grace, and love of God for humanity.

**THE END**