

Is Arminianism A Damnable Heresy?

by Stephen Pribble

Having been condemned by the Synod of Dordrecht (Dort) in 1618-1619, Arminianism is indeed a heresy, a serious departure from the historic faith of the Christian church. "Arminius, a theological professor at the University of Leyden, departed from the Reformed faith in his teaching concerning five important points. He taught conditional election on the ground of foreseen faith, universal atonement, partial depravity, resistible grace, and the possibility of a lapse from grace. These views were rejected by the Synod..." (from the introduction to the Canons of Dort in the Psalter Hymnal, 1959 ed.).

The Bible teaches that God elected His people in Christ before time began.

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world..." (Eph. 1:4). This election was out of God's mere free grace and love, with nothing in the creature as a condition or cause inducing Him to do this. "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)... So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:11, 16).

The Bible teaches that Christ did His atoning work on behalf of His elect people, and no others.

"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). "I lay down my life for the sheep" (Jn. 10:15). "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (John 17:9).

The Bible teaches total depravity, that is, that man, in every part of his nature (intellect, emotions and will) is hopelessly ruined by the fall.

Fallen man is dead in trespasses and sins and cannot give himself spiritual birth. Regeneration is entirely the working of our gracious, sovereign God. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1:13).

The Bible teaches that God is absolutely sovereign and all-powerful.

“...the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.... and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan. 4:32, 35). “The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power...” (Ps. 110:2-3). “For who hath resisted his will?” (Rom. 9:19). “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev. 19:6). If God’s will cannot be resisted, then His grace cannot be resisted either; His grace is irresistible.

The Bible teaches that Christ’s true sheep have eternal life and shall never perish.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (Jn. 10:27-29).

Since the teachings of Arminianism are contrary to Scripture, they are manifestly false. They are serious perversions of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is only one gospel, not two. Anyone who preaches any other gospel is preaching a false gospel and is accursed. “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8-9).

Jesus Christ is the true and faithful witness (Rev. 3:14). Since He has chosen that His gospel be preached by fallible men (Ac. 9:15; Eph. 4:11), it is evident that there is no perfect preacher among the sons of men, born by ordinary generation. A true preacher might make an honest mistake, but he will not intentionally deceive or distort the gospel of Jesus Christ. Only the Lord Jesus Christ is the unerring discernor of men’s hearts who will infallibly judge the motivations of all His ministers at the final day. “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “damnable” as “worthy of condemnation” or “subject to divine condemnation.” Surely all false doctrine—including Arminianism—is both worthy of condemnation and will ultimately be subject to divine condemnation at the final judgment. Since the Arminian doctrines of conditional election, universal atonement, partial depravity, resistible grace, and the possibility of a lapse from grace are contrary to Scripture, they are false and worthy of condemnation: therefore

damnable.

Is Arminianism a heresy?

Yes.

Are Arminian preachers heretics?

In a sense, yes, though most have not been condemned as such by a church council having the authority to make such a determination.

Can an Arminian preacher be a “damnable heretic” who preaches a false gospel of man’s free will instead of the true gospel of God’s sovereign grace? Yes, surely.

Is it possible for an Arminian preacher to preach the false doctrines of conditional election, universal atonement, partial depravity, resistible grace, and the possibility of a lapse from grace, while still (inconsistently) calling upon his hearers to trust in Jesus Christ alone, to the saving of their souls? I believe so.

Is it possible to believe the false doctrines of conditional election, universal atonement, partial depravity, resistible grace, and the possibility of a lapse from grace, while still (inconsistently) trusting in Jesus Christ alone for one’s salvation. Perhaps, but ultimately this is up to God to judge.

Is Arminianism a damnable heresy?

Yes. The false doctrines of conditional election, universal atonement, partial depravity, resistible grace, and the possibility of a lapse from grace originate in the pit of hell with the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). They are contrary to Scripture and worthy of condemnation. This is a serious matter. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1).

Are pastors who teach Arminianism damnable heretics who are not Christians and who will certainly go to hell?

Ultimately, this is up to God to decide, and He surely will decide—on a case-by-case basis. The only ones who go to heaven are those who trust in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. It would seem to be very difficult, if not impossible, to be trusting in Jesus Christ alone if you hold to conditional election on the ground of foreseen faith, universal atonement, partial

depravity, resistible grace, and the possibility of a lapse from grace. Those who hold to these false doctrines consistently must believe that their salvation depends, in part, on their own merit—and persons who are depending on their own merit instead of the merit of Christ are on their way to perdition. If you hold, for example, that God elected you because He foresaw that you would have faith, then why do you have faith, while someone else does not? Don't you really believe that your faith is meritorious—you merited salvation by your faith, while your neighbor did not have faith, and thus did not merit salvation? If you hold this consistently you are not trusting on the merit of Christ alone but upon your own merit, and you are lost. The biblical Christian believes that salvation is all of grace; otherwise all men are lost. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).
