

GRACE IS IN OPPOSITION TO THE FREE WILL OF MAN

We choose Him because **HE CHOSE US FIRST!**

Jesus Christ is God's Salvation! Luke 2:30

This treaty is an explanation of God's grace and the free will of man.

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. Romans 11:6

Calvinism believes salvation is by grace alone apart from any human cooperation. Arminianism believes salvation is from grace alone but.. Some say we are not Calvinists nor Armenians we believe what the Bible say. Calvinists and Armenians both believe in the inerrant word of God, they both go to the Bible for final authority. Then why they both have a different view on this subject?

Remember Jonah said, '**Salvation is of the LORD**'. Jonah 2:9. What made Jonah to say this? He did not go to a seminary or a theological school to understand but he learned in humility in the belly of a fish. On one side we see Nineveh where people were extremely wicked. Then on the other hand we see a disobedient prophet as Jonah was pretty scared to go to Nineveh to preach repentance. We see extremely wicked people on one side and a disobedient prophet on the other side. From human perspective there is no way for people of Nineveh to repent. However God's will His decree overpowered Jonah's will. No wonder Jonah cried out, "Salvation is of the Lord". All the glory goes to God and not to man.

Today almost all Christians believe that only by grace alone the sinner is saved. But when you go a little deeper they say God did his part and now man has to do his part, or man has to cooperate with God's grace. This is Roman Catholic doctrine. This is not grace **ALONE**. This is grace + works = salvation.

John 1:13 "Which were born, not of blood, **nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God**"

So it is that Grace alone is apart from any human cooperation, any human decision, any human works, any merits that we can do, nor human tradition. It is very important for us to understand a little history of the reformation, why God used Martin Luther to break away from manmade doctrines of Romanism. I don't care how big your church is and how great your pastor is, we need to look to the Bible only. Do not be prideful and say, I know everything as I am going to a big church and our pastor teaches only the truth. Remember Jonah, he understood this great doctrine in humility.

Martin Luther, the great Protestant Reformer said, "It is not irreligious, idle, or superfluous, but in the highest degree wholesome and necessary, for a Christian to know

whether or not his will has anything to do in matters pertaining to salvation. Indeed, let me tell you, this is the hinge on which our discussion turns, the crucial issue between us; our aim is, simply, to investigate what ability "free will" has, in what respect it is the subject of Divine action and how it stands related to the grace of God.

If we know nothing of these things, we shall know nothing whatsoever of Christianity, and shall be in worse case than any people on earth! He who dissents from that statement should acknowledge that he is no Christian; and he who ridicules or derides it should realize that he is the Christian's chief foe"

The Bondage of the Will:

These were the words uttered by Martin Luther, if you read very carefully he was very serious and very strong in his statement. As he points out that every Christian should know if his will has anything to do in salvation. Then he goes on to say that this is a very crucial issue, "free will" in relation to the grace of God. Luther goes on to say if we do not know anything of this subject then we do not know anything of Christianity, and he who will disagree on this, is not a Christian and the enemy of Christianity.

Augustine, Luther, Spurgeon and others had much to say on this subject and they all saw how crucial this issue is for our salvation and today the average Christian have no idea of this issue. The sad part is the majority of the churches today; who are claiming to be evangelical Christian churches are teaching the opposite of what Luther, Spurgeon and Jonathan Edwards taught. Yes my friend, many churches believe in the free will of man in regard to salvation. You may say, I believe that too, what's wrong with that?

This is a modern teaching the early church and the protestant Reformers never taught this. Let me tell you, I am not writing this article to the theologians but to the common lay people. I was just like you very ignorant in church history and in theology. I believed that whatever came from the pulpit, as long as there were Scripture to back it up. But we need to remember that Scripture should fit into the whole council of God as Satan can quote Scripture very wisely too.

Spurgeon and Calvinism:

Now let's read Spurgeon's own words on Calvinism,

"There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer I wish to be called nothing but a Christian; but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it"

Spurgeon also said, "We only use the term "Calvinism" for shortness. That doctrine which is called "Calvinism" did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Holy Spirit of

God, from diligent study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them from the Holy Ghost and from Jesus Christ, the great founder of the Christian Church. We use the term then, not because we impute an extraordinary importance to Calvin's having taught these doctrines. We would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood, and which on the whole would be as consistent with the fact."

Spurgeon went on to say, "The old truths that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, is the truth that I preach today, or else I would be false to my conscience and my God. I cannot shape truth; I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox's gospel is my gospel. And that gospel which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again."

False views on Calvinism:

My friend, many of you are ignorant on this subject but it meant a lot to Spurgeon, Luther and others. Many may believe that John Calvin and James Arminius had a disagreement in theology and they debated on this issue. That is false. By the way John Calvin and Arminius never saw each other. John Calvin lived from AD 1509-1564 and James Arminius lived from AD 1560-1609. Many believe that Calvin wrote the 5 points, again this is false. It was the Armenians who wrote their 5 points first, and then Calvinists responded. Also many believe that Calvinists are against evangelism. This is also false as one of the greatest soul winners was none other than Charles Spurgeon who proclaimed boldly as a Calvinist, and then others like William Carey, David Brainard, Cameron, Jim Elliot, Adoniram Judson, John Patton and a host of other great missionaries were Calvinists.

How did the Freedom of Will begin?

Pelagianism:

Pelagius was a British monk who lived in the 4th century; he rejected original/inherited sin. Adam's sin affected only Adam, others who are born after Adam are innocent in their birth and later on when they grow up, they have a free choice to sin or not. He believed there is no need for divine grace and man has the capacity to do the will of God. The Church ex-communicated Pelagius in 417 AD Augustine defended the church against the Pelagius heresy. Augustine believed that mankind is incapable of raising itself from the spiritual death, just like an empty glass cannot fill itself with water. Grace of God is needed for salvation. The Pelagian heresy was officially condemned at the council of Ephesus in 431, one year after Augustine's death.

Semi-Pelagianism:

Semi-Pelagianism believes in the fall of man and the nature of man is changed by the fall. They believe the fallen sinner is not totally dead spiritually but only sick. The sinner still has an inherent goodness and righteousness. They believe that salvation is by God's grace but the sinner has the ability to cooperate with God's grace, this is done by the

exercise of his will. Semi-Pelagianism was condemned at the Synod of Orange in 529 A. D. However Semi-Pelagianism never died, as it revived under the banner of Arminism.

Arminianism:

James Arminius was born in Holland in 1560. Although he was a Calvinist in his views, he was influenced by humanistic traditions. After Calvin's death Arminius was greatly influenced by Beza, who took over the leadership of Calvin after his death, in Geneva. Arminius went back from Geneva to Amsterdam and became a famous pastor. However Arminius came to doubt Calvinistic doctrine and denied that predestination was unconditional. Then a bitter controversy sprang on this subject. After Arminius death his views were stated in the Armenian Article of Remonstrance. They made the 5 points of Arminism. As the controversy grew, on November 13, 1618, 39 pastors, 18 ruling elders, 5 professors and 19 delegates were invited. It lasted for seven months and at the Synod of Dort, Arminism was unanimously rejected and condemned. The five theological points were formulated to answer the Armenian five points.

Today in our modern church the doctrines of Arminism have gained wide acceptance. And no one wants to question these evangelists and pastors, as the common lay people are not educated in Church history. But the theologians at that day rejected this doctrine. That is why the great men of God that day like Spurgeon, Whitefield, Edwards and others were not afraid to tell the truth to the people.

Armenian belief on the free will:

As I said Armenian belief is Semi-Pelagianism view. The sad part is most Christians do not know that they are Armenians. Many Christians admit that they are sinners. But they are not taught the how salvation was initiated and the doctrine of grace. Now let us see first the Armenian view on mans fall.

Martin Luther said in replying to Erasmus, who was a Pelagian in Christian clothing, "for the power of "free-will" is nil, and it does no good, nor can do, without grace. It follows, therefore, that "free-will" is obviously a term applicable only to Divine Majesty; for only He can do, and does (as the Psalmist sings) "whatever he wills in heaven and earth" Ps. 135:6. If "free-will" is ascribed to men, it is ascribed with no more propriety than divinity itself would be and no blasphemy could exceed that! So it befits theologians to refrain from using the term when they want to speak of human ability, and to leave it to be applied to God only."

According to the Armenian view, although the human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but he does not interfere with mans freedom. Each sinner posses a free will and his eternal destiny depend on how he uses it. Mans freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with Gods Spirit and be regenerated or resist Gods grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the

Spirit assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is mans act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinners gift to God; it is mans contribution to salvation.

According to the above the Armenians believe in the following order of salvation.

Free will to choose or reject the gospel, Faith, Regeneration (New Birth)

Well, this sounds pretty good, and many will not see as if there is anything wrong. We should wonder why Spurgeon, called the prince of preachers, preached at least twenty four sermons on election or some aspect of it, and he totally disagreed with the above Armenian perspective. The reason is that the Scripture being the rule of faith does not permit to the Armenian view.

According to the Armenian view, when man sinned it did not affect him seriously. But that is not what the Bible is saying, the Bible says when man sinned and not only death came physically but he spiritually died.

Spurgeon said in this matter, “because of the fall of Adam he did not break his little finger, but he died”. Now if the fallen man is spiritually dead, he is not alive to spiritual things. He is dead to spiritual things. Now you may understand why the Armenians say faith comes first before regeneration. Why? The sinner is not totally spiritually dead but he has a little life where he has the power to make a decision to accept the Lord. The Scripture say otherwise.

1Cor. 2:14 “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Now according to Arminism, man has the ability or the free will of choosing power to accept Christ. If this is so, then man is cannot be spiritually dead. And God is infinitely holy and man is a sinner, for man to come to the holy God, he must have even a little goodness and righteousness in him, meaning man is not that bad. **This is humanism.** All evangelical churches loudly denounce humanism, but it really entertains the humanistic will of salvation which really removes one of the battle cries of the reformers sola gratia.

The Scripture says man is spiritually dead and powerless.

The Armenian view shatters in the light of Scripture.

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Genesis 2:16-17

As for you, **you were dead** in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. Eph. 2:1-2.

1Cor. 15:22 “for as in Adam **all die**

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 Rom. 5:12. Adam and Eve’s first son Cain was a murderer this was the result of the first sin.

David said, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful at the time my mother conceived me" Ps. 51:5.

We are all inherited with Adam’s sin. You do not have to teach a child to lie or to be disobedient; the child is disobedient by birth. We are sinners not because we sin, but we are sinners because we are sinners.

Calvinistic view of Total Inability or Total Depravity

Charles Spurgeon gives this beautiful example, one day a man said, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. This was very foolish saying according to Spurgeon. Because as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ, as physically men are alive, they can raise a hand in coming to Christ, they can walk down the isle in coming to Christ, and they can say a prayer in coming to Christ. But just because they did all these things physically, it does not mean they truly came to Christ. The defect is not in the body, as the natural man is alive and strong physically, the defect is in the mind and in the heart. It is spiritual, as he is spiritually dead.

Spurgeon gives the example of a lion and a sheep. The lion has legs so does sheep, the lion has a mouth so does a sheep, the lion have ears so does a sheep. Physically both can walk and eat. But the lion will not eat grass like a sheep neither the sheep will eat meat like a lion. The distinction is in the nature. By nature, the Lion is different than a sheep. In the same way by the natural man’s nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit.

Because of the fall, the sinner is dead, Eph. 2:5 blind 2 Cor. 4:4, and deaf to the things of God Isa. 29:18; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. Jer. 17:9 His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not, indeed he cannot, choose good over evil in the spiritual realm.

Romans 6:6, “knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

2 Thess. 3:2, “for all men have not faith”.

Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ, it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation, it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.

Adam was created perfect and he was holy, and he had a free will to choose Gods obedience or to disobey. But after the fall his offspring did not have a free will to choose God as man was dead in sin.

Due to the Total Depravity, the following did not happen.

1. Does not mean that man lost his conscience:

After the fall of Adam, he hid from God, why his conscience was guilty. When a thief robs a bank the first thing he does is to run and hide away from the authorities, why he has a guilty conscience.

2. Does not mean that the unregenerate cannot perform any outward good works. There are many unbelievers that perform outward good works. However it is not done to the glory of God.

3. Does not mean that the sinner will perform all the wickedness that he is capable of doing. Although from Gods sight the unsaved are utterly sinful, as God looks at the man's heart and motives as He weigh his thoughts, outwardly the unsaved person may not do what he really is capable of doing.

I have heard many Armenian preachers say that God did not make us like robots but with a free will. I myself am guilty in believing this before. Yes, the sinner has a free will and his free will, is a slave to sin. He exercise his will to please his carnal nature and not towards God. By nature the sinner has no life in Gods sight. He is positively condemned, and legally dead.

Also the sinner is spiritually dead. The sin affected our heart, mind and soul. The spiritually dead person has no power to choose God, as he is dead and the dead will not understand. Spurgeon said, "God does not violate the human will when he saves men. They are not converted against their will, but their will itself is converted. The Lord has a way of entering the heart, not with a crowbar, like a burglar. But with a master-key, which he gently inserts in the lock, and the bolt flies back, the door opens, and He enters."

J.C. Ryle said, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will."

The Scripture does not say anywhere that fallen man is sick, or has a decease or partly paralyzed or any kind of that nature, but the Scripture boldly says the fallen man is dead, and unable to be alive, unless like the dead Lazarus, who was dead for four days, get the calling from Jesus, "Lazarus come forth" Then the sinner fallen dead man in sin, will be regenerated, meaning he will be born again. Only the call of God can make the fallen man alive.

Eph 2:1 and you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

In reality the fallen man is powerless. Yes POWERLESS, he has no power to gain salvation, as the Scripture is very clear when it says, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly" Rom. 5:6.

On the free will Martin Luther said on the tiny spark of the power of man, "The term "free-will" is too grandiose and comprehensive and fulsome. People think it means what the natural force of the phrase would require, namely, a power of freely turning in any direction, yielding to none and subject to none. If they knew that this was not so, and that the term signifies only a tiny spark of power, and that utterly ineffective in itself, since it is the devil's prisoner and slave."

When the sinner is spiritually dead, powerless, a slave to sin will he have a god shaped vacuum?

The Bible is loud and clear when it shows the depraved condition of mankind with the following Scriptures.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. Rom. 7:18.

"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one:" Rom. 3:10

I have heard pastors saying from the pulpit that God has put a god shaped vacuum in the heart of man, and man is spiritually hungry and seeking, that is why there are so many religions as man is spiritually seeking, but only when he decided to accept Jesus that spiritual vacuum is filled and he does not thirst anymore. Doesn't that sound so good? But nowhere in the Scripture supports that, in fact the Scripture speak just the opposite.

"There is none that understandeth there is none that seeketh after God" Rom. 3:11.

"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" Rom. 3:12.

Jesus said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man" Matt. 15:19-20.

But someone might say, I know there are many people who are seeking God, and I know there are some very religious people who are very devout and really seeking God. Again the Word of God stands true and not our experiences or seeing things. Yes the Bible also says,

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." 2 Tim. 3:5 My friend the fallen man has not the capability to raise himself from the

dead, and he will not seek the Holy God of the Bible, but make or seek a god that will suite his problems and his immediate desires. And that is not the God of the Bible.

THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN WILL:

The fallen man will not come to Christ by nature; on the other hand the natural man is running away from God. When Adam sinned he was not looking for God but hiding away from God, it was God who was looking for Adam. Man's will toward salvation is zero. The fallen man cannot love God but he is rebellious toward God as he is hostile to God.

John 5:42 "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you."

Mans will is to crucify Christ. "And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:" Luke 23:18.

Yes my friend it is a fact that men loved Barabbas than Jesus as the natural man is totally depraved and he likes darkness, his sinful pleasures than the light and the absolute holiness of God.

The sinful mind is hostile to God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom. 8:7.

The sinful man is not at peace with God but at war with God. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" Rom. 5:10.

The fallen man by nature believes he does not need Christ as he is good. He has a robe of righteousness and he does not see that he is naked. He will see that he is naked only if God shows him. He will see that he is not good and un-righteous only when God shows him.

In Arminianism man has a part in salvation. But not so according to Scripture..

Spurgeon said, "The late lamented Mr. Dedham has put, at the foot of his portrait, a most admirable text, "**Salvation is of the Lord.**" That is just an epitome of the Bible; it is the sum and substance of it. If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, "He is one who says, Salvation is of the Lord." I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. "He only is my rock and my salvation." Tell me anything contrary to this truth, and it will be a heresy; tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rock-truth, "God is my rock and my salvation.

What is the heresy of Rome, but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ the bringing in works of the flesh, to assist in our justification? And what is the heresy of Arminianism but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here. I have my own

private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what the Bible says. It is a nickname to call it Bibiology.

If you think for a moment, why is it that you are on the way to heaven and not your neighbor? Your neighbor has heard the gospel too. Is it because you made a decision for Jesus and not your neighbor? What was in you to make that decision and where your neighbor did not have? Is it faith?

That does not make sense as Jesus came for sinners, to the prostitutes, murderers, thieves and did they have more faith to accept Christ than others? If the answer is your decision, then again you decided because you had faith, then how can you have some faith when your heart is evil? "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked", beyond cure" Jer. 17:9.

Why the heart is deceitful? Because the heart is dead toward the Holy God, Unless God gives you a new heart.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you and heart of flesh" Ezekiel 36:26.

Who gives the heart? Who gives the Spirit? It is all from God. In Bible theology all the glory goes to the Lord, in Armenian theology there is some that is reserved for man.

But the Scripture is clear when God gives the new heart and He opens the heart in response to the gospel. He not only initiates in salvation but He acts on man's heart in salvation, so all the glory of salvation goes to the Lord, and there is not a moment that I can say, I made the choice to accept Christ. To say that 99% we depended upon God's grace and that 1% we depend on ourselves is blasphemy! The Scripture speaks against, as we will see how the Lord opens the heart to believe the gospel.

"And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: **whose heart the Lord opened**, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message, there were no works involved. Acts 16:13-14.

The doctrine of Arminism falls apart in the light of the Scripture. In Eph. 2:8-9 Man has no room for boasting in salvation.

Eph 2:8-9 "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.

It is not your decision; it was the Lords decision. Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father which sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day" John 6:44. **Salvation is of the Lord.**

Repentance and faith are the acts of regenerated men, not of men dead in sin. We need to understand that God does not believe for us and he cannot repent for us but we will trust in Christ for salvation. We must tell people in the gospel message to repent and trust in the Lord for their salvation. But first it is God who will raise the dead sinner, open the heart to believe by His grace and implants a new heart, breathes into the sinner the Spirit of His Son.

“And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ” Acts 18:27.

That is why this is called the gospel of grace, and the Bible is the gospel of grace as it is ‘Theo centric’, meaning it is centered in God. In Arminism man has the free will, and man himself is at the center.

Jonathan Edwards said, if God did not pardon angels when they sinned, is He obligated to save us, not at all?" We all deserve death. That is where man embraces God's grace.

Here we should understand in the view of salvation, the following is correct.

1. Man is totally depraved, cannot choose God in his free will.
2. God regenerates the spiritually dead man, making him alive for true spiritual things Eph. 2:3-5.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **made us alive** with Christ even **when we were dead** in transgressions, it is by grace you have been saved.

3. Once the sinner is regenerated, alive from the dead he will realize how sinful he is and repent of his sins. The ungodly will not repent only the godly will repent 2 Cor. 7:10. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance.”

Now he will thirst for God and seek after Him. The Armenian cannot utter these words. "O yes! I do love Jesus, because he first loved me." 1 John 4:19, “We love him, because he first loved us.”

All the glory goes to God as he opens the heart and mind.

The natural man's heart is dead toward God and Satan has blinded his mind that he cannot see the light of the gospel. 2 Cor. 4:4. It is God that opens the heart and the mind. Matt. 16:13-17.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

Again we see the credit did not go to Peter, but to the Father who revealed it to Peter Matt. 16: 17.

We see the story of the two disciples traveling to a village called Emmaus, and they were discussing all what happened at the crucifixion of Jesus, when Jesus himself came and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing Him. Well, what happened to mans free will here? Is not God sovereign? Yes, God can do anything because He is the Potter and we are the clay. Then we see how their eyes were opened.

“And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” Luke 24:30-32.

Yes my friend God can shut the eyes and he can open the eyes according to His will.

Can you remember when Jesus was with the disciples, how many times He told them that He has to suffer, die and the third day He will rise, but it never went into their heads. Again in the following Scriptures we see how Jesus opened their minds.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” Luke 24:44-45.

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.”

Dear people, we cannot choose God, he chose us.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” John 15:16.

J. C. Ryle makes a good point in Ephesians 2:8-9 where many evangelical Christians believe.

"One of the clearest passages in the New Testament on the role of faith in relation to grace is found in the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It is a familiar text to most, “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. Too often Christians misread this verse to mean that God's plan of salvation is that people accept his free gift of grace offered through faith in Christ.

The analogy is often used that if you are given a gift from a friend, you still have to accept the gift before it becomes yours. The acceptance of God's gift is the means of salvation in this view, but this idea is simply found nowhere in the text. What we do find, however, is a completely sovereign description of the role of faith in relation to grace. Notice, for example, the comment made by the apostle, "...so that no one may boast." If I save myself by making the right choice, deciding for Christ, then surely I can boast about this choice, because, in effect, I have shown that I am wiser and smarter than many others, having acquired for myself eternal life by this decision. But if Paul is suggesting that the entire salvation process, from God's grace, to my personal faith in space and time, is the gift of God in which we do not cooperate, "that not of yourselves", then, and only then, has room for boasting been eliminated."

If we are saved by our own faith, a faith of good works we possess, then there is no room for grace.

Romans 11:6 “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

Grace is the unmerited favor of God toward the fallen man. Some believe that grace is a substance, but the Bible describes grace as disposition of God upon the undeserving. Grace is initiated by God's own character, through His love and mercy. The sinner cannot earn this kindness or merit it but it is the act of God.

One of the battle cries of the Protestant reformation is called "Sola Gratia" meaning we all deserve the wrath of God, but God did not foresee anything good in us for us to be saved but we are saved purely by His grace. If we are saved by our own faith, then there is no room for grace.

God called out of His grace Abraham, when Abraham was living in paganism. Why did God call Abraham and not anyone else? Is God unfair? God chose a tiny nation called Israel, over other nations, God took care of them like a father to a son and other nations did not have that blessing, Is God unfair? Moses had killed an Egyptian and hid him in the sand, he was a murderer. God gave grace to Moses and not to Pharaoh, is God

unfair? Saul of Tarsus was an enemy of God, killing the Christians but God instantly gave mercy and grace to him while Pilate was not. Is God unfair? Paul was a violent persecutor of the Church and so were Pilate and Caiaphas who was against Christianity. Therefore is God obliged to give the same mercy and grace that he gave to Paul? Jacob and Esau before they were born, before they could do anything good or bad God chose Jacob, so God's sovereign will stands. In later years Jacob deceived his brother and father, yet God's choice and His Word did not change. Why God did choose you over your friends? Did you deserve salvation? Are you better than others?

Spurgeon said, "Well can I remember the manner in which I learned the doctrines of grace in a single instant. Born, as all of us are by nature, an Armenian, I still believed the old things I had heard continually from the pulpit, and did not see the grace of God. When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this.

I can recall the very day and hour when first I received those truths in my own soul when they were, as John Bunyan says, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown on a sudden from a babe into a man that I had made progress in Scriptural knowledge, through having found, once for all, the clue to the truth of God. One week-night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher's sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, **how did you come to be a Christian?** I sought the Lord. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, How came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, I ascribe my change wholly to God."

That is to say, man should realize that in regard to his money and possessions he has a right to use them, to do or to leave undone, according to his own "free-will" though that very "free-will" is overruled by the free-will of God alone, according to His own pleasure.

However, with regard to God, and in all that bears on salvation or damnation, he has no "free-will", but is a captive, prisoner and bond slave, either to the will of God, or to the will of Satan. Martin Luther

Professor James White said, "It was not the Armenian theology that provided the strength and power of the Reformation; it was "reformed or "Bible" theology that called men to stand up for the truth of the gospel against the tyranny of Rome. Modern evangelicals need to recognize that Arminianism is, at its very core, a return to the very principals that the Reformation fought against in the first place! While the outward

manifestations might differ, Arminianism and Roman Catholicism stand hand in hand in opposing God's sovereign grace in salvation! Both place the final decision of the outcome of an individual life completely in the hands of the man himself, and in so doing, deny God his rightful role as Creator and Sovereign of the Universe. Most of modern evangelicalism does not, in reality, have anything to say to Rome, simply because it has compromised on the central issue of God's grace!

Further, since Arminianism is, when taken to its logical conclusions, antithetical to simple Christian theism, those who embrace this system find themselves incapable of consistently dealing with the philosophies of man, simply because they have embraced some of the most fundamental concepts of those philosophies rather than accepting the revelation of the sovereign God! In a vain effort to "win" men by seeking to avoid offense, the strong doctrines of God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe are left to the side, and the battle is joined on the home ground of the atheist or secular humanist. The gospel is compromised in the interest of defending it! Such simply ought not to be.

One is saved by grace alone not by any human decision, merits and works but by Christ's work alone. We were all under sin we were all by nature the children of wrath. Eph. 2:3. There was no way we could change our nature by any works or anything that we can cooperate with God's grace. We were spiritually dead and God by His grace by the power of the Holy Spirit brought a spiritual resurrection Eph. 2: 1, 5. We can boast of nothing but give glory to God alone for salvation.

Finally Charles Spurgeon tackles this issue when he preached on Martha and Mary in his later years.

The next thing she was commended for was this it was her own choice, "Mary has chosen the good part." Some of our captious friends will be saying, "Ah! Ah! Are you going to preach free-will now, and tell us that it is man's choicest?" Oh! brethren, you know what I think of man's will, that it is a slave, bound in iron fetters; but yet God forbid that I should alter Scripture to suit anybody's doctrine, or even my own. Mary did choose the better part, and every man that is saved chooses to be saved. I know that at the back of his choice, and as the cause of his choice, there is God's choice; but still the grace of God always imparts grace to the man's heart. No one is dragged to heaven; nor does anyone ever go to Christ against his will; the soul must be made willing in the day of God's power. This is the triumph of God's grace; not that He takes men to heaven as we might carry machines there, but that He expressly acts upon the human mind, leaves it as free as ever it was, and yet makes it perfectly obedient to his own will. Mary chooses; God had chosen her from all eternity, and, therefore, she chooses Him.

We choose Him because **HE CHOSE US FIRST.**