

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Seven Problems with Arminian Universal Redemption

JOEL R. BEEKE, PHD

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In the theology of Arminianism, we are told that Christ died to make it possible for everyone to be saved, if they so choose. This is a rejection of the Reformed view that Christ died to actually save a particular people chosen by God. The Arminian view is by far the most popular view of the atonement in the Christian church today. However, serious objections must be lodged against Arminian universal redemption, among which are these:

- *It slanders God's attributes, such as His love.* Arminianism presents a love that actually doesn't save. It is a love that loves and then, if refused, turns to hatred and anger. It is not unchangeable love that endures from everlasting to everlasting.

It slanders God's wisdom. Would God make a plan to save everyone, then not carry it out? Would He be so foolish as to have His Son pay for the salvation of all if He knew that Christ would not be able to obtain what He paid for? I would feel foolish if I went into a store and bought something, then walked out without it. Yet Arminianism asks us to believe that this is true of salvation—that a purchase was made, a redemption, and yet the Lord walked away without those whom He had redeemed. That view slanders the wisdom of God.

It slanders God's power. Arminian universalism obliges us to believe that God was able to accomplish the meriting aspect of salvation, but that the applying aspect is dependent on man and his free will. It asks us to believe that God has worked out everyone's salvation up to a point, but no further for anyone.

It slanders God's justice. Did Christ satisfy God's justice for everyone? Did Christ take the punishment due to everybody? If He did, how can God punish anyone? Is it justice to punish one person for the sins of another and later to punish the initial offender again? Double punishment is injustice.

- *It disables the deity of Christ.* A defeated Savior is not God. This error teaches that Christ tried to save everyone but didn't succeed. It denies the power and efficacy of Christ's blood, since not all for whom He died are saved. Hence, Christ's blood was wasted on Judas and Esau. Much of His labor, tears, and blood was poured out in vain.

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- *It undermines the unity of the Trinity.* Just as parents must work together to run a family effectively, so the triune God co-labors in each of His persons with identical purposes and goals. One person cannot possibly have in mind to save some that another person has not determined to save, but Arminian universalism implicitly teaches just that. It denies the Father's sovereign election, since Christ would have died for more than God decreed to save, thereby making Christ seem to have a different agenda than that of the Father. That would have been *anathema* to Jesus, who asserted that His entire redemptive ministry was consciously designed to carry out a divinely arranged plan (John 6:38–39).

Similarly, Arminian redemption disavows the saving ministry of the Holy Spirit, since it claims that Christ's blood has a wider application than does the Spirit's saving work. Any presentation of salvation that makes the Father or the Spirit's work in salvation lag behind Christ's work contradicts the inherent unity of the Trinity. God cannot be at odds with Himself. Arminianism is inconsistent universalism.

- *It rejects all of the other points of Calvinism.* The Arminian view of the atonement rejects the doctrine of man's total depravity, teaching that man has the ability within himself to receive and accept Christ. It rejects unconditional election, teaching that God elects on the basis of foreseen faith. It rejects irresistible grace, teaching that man's will is stronger than God's. It rejects the perseverance of the saints, teaching that man can apostatize from the faith.

- *It detracts from the glory of God.* If God does everything in salvation, He gets all the glory. But if God can do only so much and not everything, then the person who completes the application of salvation gets at least some glory. That is why there is so much emphasis in mass evangelism on the free will of man. Universal atonement exalts the will of man and debases the glory of God.

- *It perverts evangelism.* We repeatedly hear today in evangelistic messages: "Christ died for you. What will you do for Him?" But do we ever find in the Bible that someone is told personally, "Christ died for you"? Rather, we find the work of Christ explained, followed by a call to everyone: "Repent and believe the gospel." The message is not "Believe that Christ died for you" or "Believe that you are one of the elect." It is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

- *It disparages the intrinsic efficacy of the atonement itself.* Arminians teach that Christ's work induces the Father to accept graciously what Jesus accomplished in place of a full satisfaction of His justice. It is as if Jesus persuaded His Father to accept something less than justice demanded. That is why Arminius claimed that when God saved sinners, He moved from His throne of justice to His throne of grace. But God does not have two

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thrones; His throne of justice *is* His throne of grace (Ps. 85:10). Arminianism forgets that the atonement does not win God's love but is the provision of His love.

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