

Comparison on “Five Points” of Doctrine

(Shaded areas indicate teachings that are contrary to Scripture)

Doctrine	Calvinists	Arminians	Confessional Lutherans	Scripture References
The depth of the unconverted man’s sin nature.	Total Depravity - man cannot aid in his own conversion.	Synergism - man can and must aid in his conversion (“decide for Christ”).	Total Depravity - man cannot aid in his own conversion.	Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:9-20; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 12:3; Ephesians 2:1-3;
God’s eternal election (predestination).	Faith is because of God’s election; God decrees damnation by not electing.	Election is because of our faith; damnation is because of unbelief only.	Faith is because of God’s election; damnation is because of unbelief only.	Matthew 27:37; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 4:1-2
The extent of Christ’s atonement.	Christ died only to pay for the sins of those who will go to heaven.	Christ died to pay for the sins of all, without exception.	Christ died to pay for the sins of all, without exception.	John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; 1 John 2:2; 2 Peter 2:1;
Man’s ability to reject God’s grace.	God’s purpose to convert cannot be resisted.	God’s purpose to convert can be resisted.	God’s purpose to convert can be resisted.	John 3:19-21; Acts 7:51; Romans 10:16,21;
Man’s ability to fall from faith.	“Once saved, always saved” – a believer cannot fall from faith.	Faith can be lost, resulting in a former believer’s damnation.	Faith can be lost, resulting in a former believer’s damnation.	Luke 8:11-15; 1 Corinthians 10:11-12; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Hebrews 3:7-19

- **Calvinism ruins the Gospel** because it denies *universal grace*: Jesus didn’t pay for all sins, and God really only wants some people to be saved. Therefore, His forgiveness is conditional, depending on whether He has already decided in eternity to condemn us.
- **Arminianism ruins the Gospel** because it denies *grace alone*: Our salvation is not completely God’s doing, but is conditional, depending on our own “positive response” to the Lord.
- **The Scriptural position upholds the Gospel** by affirming BOTH *universal grace* and *grace alone*. The real Gospel is unconditional – salvation is truly intended for all people, and is completely God’s work from beginning to end. True, this position does not satisfy human reason, since it cannot then be explained why some are saved and not others. Yet it is this unconditional Gospel that brings salvation to us, not human reason!