Field Manual: The Entrapment Problem in Arminian Theology

Quick Reference Guide

I. THE CORE CONTRADICTION

Arminianism simultaneously affirms four incompatible propositions:

1. **Universal Prevenient Grace** - Grace given to all, enabling response

2. **Divine Foreknowledge** - God knows who will/won't believe

3. **Resistible Grace** - Grace can be rejected

4. **Eternal Punishment** - Hell is just for unbelief

The Problem: God gives grace He knows will fail, then punishes for that failure = **Entrapment**

Only Solution: Effectual grace (grace that secures, not merely enables)

II. THE FIVE-POINT COLLAPSE

A. Prevenient Grace - The Invented Category

- **Claim:** Universal, non-regenerating, resistible enabling

- **Problem:** Zero biblical warrant (John 1:9, 12:32, Titus 2:11 don't teach this)

- **Fatal Flaw:** Even if it existed, it wouldn't solve entrapment—God still judges for resisting grace He designed to be resistible

B. Conditional Election - The Reactive God

- **Claim:** God elects based on foreseen faith

- **Refutation:**

  o Rom 9:11-16 - Election before birth, before action, "not of works but of him who calls"

  o Eph 1:4 - Chose "before foundation of world" (not after seeing choices in time)

  o Acts 13:48 - "As many as were appointed...believed" (appointment → belief, not reverse)

C. Unlimited Atonement - The Redemption Coupon

- **Claim:** Christ died for all, but work only effective when activated by faith

- **Problem:** τετέλεσται (John 19:30) = "it is finished" (not "made available")

- **Double Jeopardy:** If Christ paid for all sins, why are some punished? Same sins punished twice.

- **Scripture:** John 10:11,15 (sheep, not goats); John 17:9 (not praying for world); Eph 5:25 (church specifically)

D. Resistible Grace - The Unsuccessful Spirit

- **Claim:** Spirit offers grace that can be successfully resisted

- **Refutation:**

  - John 6:37 - "All that Father gives **will** come" (no exceptions)

  - John 6:44 - Father's drawing is effectual (all drawn are raised)

  - Acts 16:14 - "Lord **opened** her heart" (causative, not merely persuasive)

  - Phil 2:13 - God works "to **will** and to work"

E. Conditional Security - The Breakable Seal

- **Claim:** Salvation can be lost through apostasy

- **Refutation:**

  - Rom 8:29-30 - Unbroken chain (all justified are glorified)

  - Phil 1:6 - "He who began...will complete"

  - John 10:28-29 - "Never perish...no one will snatch" (includes self)

  - Eph 1:13-14 - Sealed "until redemption"

III. THE TRINITARIAN CRISIS

Arminianism doesn't just get soteriology wrong—it redesigns the Trinity:

Person	Biblical Truth	Arminian Distortion
Father	Sovereign will, accomplishes purpose (Isa 46:10)	Reactive, contingent on creatures, frustrated will
Son	Saves His people (Matt 1:21), secures redemption (Titus 2:14)	Hypothetical savior, potential work, frequently fails
Spirit	Gives life (2 Cor 3:6), effectual power	Defeatable persuader, resistible, often unsuccessful

Key Doctrine: *Opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt* - The external works of the Trinity are undivided. You cannot have different power levels for different persons.

IV. TOTAL INABILITY - THE GREEK PROOF

Standard Greek Construction for Inability: οὐ δύναμαι + infinitive

Text	Construction	Meaning
Rom 8:7-8	οὐχ ὑποτάσσεται, οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναται	"does not submit, **nor indeed is able**"
1 Cor 2:14	οὐ δύναται γνῶναι	"**is not able** to understand"
John 6:44,65	οὐδεὶς δύναται ἐλθεῖν	"**no one is able** to come"
Eph 2:1,5	ὄντας νεκρούς	"**being dead**" (not sick, weak, or impaired)

If Paul meant "unwilling," he had: οὐ θέλω (not willing), ἀρνέομαι (refuse), ἀπειθέω (disobey)

He chose δύναμαι - the standard term for **inability**

V. THE PRAYER TEST

What Arminians Actually Pray:

- "God, **save** them" (effectual action)

- "God, **change** their heart" (override resistance)

- "God, **draw** them to yourself" (effectual, not resistible - John 6:44)

- "God, **grant** repentance" (monergistic gift - 2 Tim 2:25)

What Arminian Theology Permits:

- "God, I hope they choose correctly"

- "God, keep offering and maybe they'll say yes"

Arminians pray like Calvinists because they instinctively know grace must be effectual.

The Incoherence: Their prayers assume monergism; their theology teaches synergism.

VI. KEY PROOF TEXTS

Effectual Grace

- **John 6:37** - "All that Father gives **will** come" (certainty, not possibility)

- **John 6:44-45** - "No one **can** come unless Father draws...all taught **will** come"

- **John 6:65** - "Unless it has been **granted**" (perfect passive - completed divine gift)

- **Acts 16:14** - "Lord **opened** her heart" (divine causation)

- **Eph 2:5** - "Made us alive" (God acts on dead, not cooperates with willing)
- **Phil 2:13** - "God works in you to **will** and to work" (God causes the willing)

Election Unconditional

- **Rom 9:11-16** - Before birth, before action, "not of him who wills...but of God who has mercy"
- **Eph 1:4-5** - "Chose us...before foundation...according to purpose of **his will**"
- **Acts 13:48** - "As many as were appointed...believed" (appointment → belief)
- **2 Thess 2:13** - "God chose you...to be saved"

Atonement Definite

- **John 10:11,15** - "I lay down my life **for the sheep**"
- **John 17:9** - "I am not praying for the world but **for those you have given me**"
- **Acts 20:28** - "Church which he **obtained** with his own blood"
- **Eph 5:25** - "Christ loved **the church** and gave himself **for her**"

Sovereignty Comprehensive

- **Isa 46:10** - "My counsel shall stand, I will accomplish all my purpose"
- **Dan 4:35** - "Does according to his will...none can stay his hand"
- **Eph 1:11** - "Works all things according to counsel of his will"
- **Prov 16:9** - "Heart plans...LORD establishes steps"
- **Phil 2:12-13** - "Work out...for God works in you"

VII. QUICK REBUTTALS

"But John 3:16 says 'world'!"

- κόσμος = people groups (Jew + Gentile), not every individual
- Context: John 3:17-18 assumes perishing unless belief
- Present participle (ὁ πιστεύων) = "the believing ones" (descriptive of elect)
- Doesn't say "everyone can choose"—says believers won't perish

"But 2 Peter 3:9 says God wants all saved!"

- "You" = the elect (v.8 - "beloved")
- "Any" and "all" refer back to "you"—not humanity at large
- If God "wants" all saved universally but fails, His will is impotent

"But 1 Tim 2:6 says Christ died for all!"

- Context (vv.1-2): all **kinds** (kings, authorities, etc.)

- Same pattern as Titus 2:11 - scope, not exhaustive effect

"But God desires none to perish (Ezek 33:11)!"

- Preceptive will (command/moral law) ≠ Decretive will (sovereign decree)

- God commands all to repent (preceptive) while electing whom He saves (decretive)

- See Two Wills distinction (Deut 29:29; Isa 46:10 vs. 1 Thess 4:3)

"But Acts 7:51 shows Spirit is resistible!"

- External call can be resisted (common operations)

- Effectual call cannot be thwarted (John 6:37,44-45; Acts 16:14)

- Distinguishes outward ministry from inward regeneration

"But this makes God author of sin!"

- God ordains that sin occur for wise purposes (Gen 50:20; Acts 2:23)

- He doesn't commit it or approve it morally

- Creature sins according to own desires; God ordains for His glory

- Author = moral approval. Ordainer = sovereign purpose. Not the same.

VIII. DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

Use these to expose the system's incoherence:

On Prevenient Grace:

1. Where does Scripture teach universal, non-regenerating, resistible enabling?

2. If grace enables but doesn't secure response, how is condemning for resistance just?

3. If God could make grace effectual but chooses not to, isn't He the architect of failure?

On Election:

1. In Rom 9:11, why does Paul say election is "not of works" if it's based on foreseen faith?

2. In Eph 1:4, how can election be "before foundation" if based on choices in time?

3. In Acts 13:48, why does appointment precede belief if belief precedes election?

On Atonement:

1. Did Christ actually pay for sins or only make payment possible?

2. If He paid for all sins of all people, why are some punished for those same sins?

3. What does τετέλεσται mean if the work wasn't finished at the cross?

On Grace:

1. In John 6:37, why do **all** given come if grace is resistible?

2. In John 6:44, why are **all** drawn raised if drawing can be resisted?

3. In Acts 16:14, did God enable Lydia to respond or cause her response?

On Prayer:

1. Can you pray for God to save someone in your system? (If yes, you're praying for effectual grace)

2. Can you pray for God to change their heart? (If yes, you're praying against resistible grace)

3. Can you pray for anything more than "I hope they choose correctly"?

IX. THE EZEKIEL 18/36 PATTERN

Ezekiel 18:31 - Command (Law):

"Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!"

- Imperative: עֲשׂוּ לָכֶם = "you make for yourselves"
- Sets the standard
- **They couldn't do it** (hence judgment and exile)

Ezekiel 36:26-27 - Promise (Gospel):

"And **I will give** you a new heart...And **I will put** my Spirit within you, and **I will cause** you to walk in my statutes"

- Six first-person verbs: all God as subject
- Monergistic solution to what law commanded but man couldn't do
- Pattern: Law exposes inability → God provides solution

The Provisionist Problem: If man has "innate moral capacity," why couldn't Israel obey 18:31? Why does God need to promise in 36:26-27 what they could already do?

X. IS IT ANOTHER GOSPEL?

Paul's Standard (Gal 1:6-9)

- Judaizers: "Christ + circumcision" (synergism)
- Arminians: "Christ + choice" (synergism)
- **Both make creature's action decisive**

- Paul's verdict: ἀνάθεμα (accursed)

The Dividing Line: Teachability

- **Confused but correctable** = covered by grace (like disciples' pre-Pentecost confusion)

- **Shown truth but obstinate** = damning rebellion (1 Sam 15:23; 1 John 2:19)

Critical Distinction:

- System = another gospel (definitional)

- Individuals in system = may be saved despite bad theology if they trust Christ and remain teachable

- Those who harden against correction after being shown Scripture = reveal unsaved state

The Test

When shown that:

- Rom 9:16 says salvation doesn't depend on human will

- John 6:44,65 says no one can come unless granted

- Eph 2:5 says God made us alive when dead

- Acts 16:14 says God opened the heart

Response reveals heart:

- Submits to text = genuine faith (even if previously confused)

- Defends system despite text = idolatry of theology over Scripture

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XI. COMPATIBILISM IN 60 SECONDS

The Claim: Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are compatible.

How:

- God ordains **both** the end **and** the means (including human choices)

- Humans act according to their desires (real, responsible choices)

- God ensures their desires align with His purposes

- Result: Creatures do what they want; God accomplishes what He wills

Biblical Examples:

- **Gen 50:20** - "You meant evil...God meant it for good" (same act, dual agency)

- **Acts 2:23** - "Delivered by God's plan...you crucified" (same event, both true)

- **Phil 2:12-13** - "Work out...God works in you" (work commanded; God causes it)

Not Fatalism:

- Fatalism: Means don't matter (if decreed, I can sit still)

- Compatibilism: Means are decreed (God ordains I will use means)

Not Coercion:

- Doesn't violate nature or force against will

- Changes will so choice is free, responsible, and aligned with God's decree

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XII. TWO WILLS OF GOD

Essential for resolving alleged contradictions:

Decretive Will (Secret, Sovereign)

- What God ordains to occur

- Always accomplished (Isa 46:10; Dan 4:35; Eph 1:11)

- Includes evil for wise purposes (Gen 50:20; Acts 2:23)

- **Example:** "Jacob I loved, Esau I hated" (Rom 9:13)

Preceptive Will (Revealed, Moral)

- What God commands/desires morally

- Often resisted by sinners (1 Thess 4:3; 1 Pet 2:15)

- Reveals duty and exposes rebellion

- **Example:** "Repent, for kingdom is at hand" (Mark 1:15)

Application to "God desires all saved":

- Preceptive: God commands all to repent (genuine offer, reveals standard)

- Decretive: God elects whom He will save (sovereign choice)

- No contradiction—different categories

Same Pattern in 1 Sam 15:

- v.11: "I regret making Saul king" (anthropomorphic, relational displeasure)

- v.29: "Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not man"

- Text itself forces distinction between relational language and ontological truth

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XIII. QUICK GREEK LOOKUP

For Total Inability:

Greek	Meaning	Where Used
οὐ δύναμαι	not able, cannot	Rom 8:7-8; 1 Cor 2:14; John 6:44,65
νεκρός	dead (corpse)	Eph 2:1,5
οὐδείς	no one (universal negative)	John 6:44,65

For Effectual Grace:

Greek	Meaning	Where Used
ἑλκύω	draw, drag, pull	John 6:44
δεδομένον	has been given (perfect passive)	John 6:65
διήνοιξεν	opened (aorist active)	Acts 16:14
συνεζωοποίησεν	made alive together	Eph 2:5

For Accomplishment vs. Possibility:

Greek	Meaning	Where Used
τετέλεσται	it is finished, paid in full	John 19:30
τετάχαται	had been appointed	Acts 13:48

XIV. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

In Evangelism:

- Preach gospel to all (universal call is sincere)
- Trust Spirit to effectually regenerate elect
- Human responsibility: proclaim truth faithfully
- Divine sovereignty: God secures response in His chosen

In Assurance:

- Security rests on God's work, not your grip
- "He who began will complete" (Phil 1:6)

- Sealed by Spirit "until redemption" (Eph 1:13-14)

- Unbroken chain: justified → glorified (Rom 8:30)

In Prayer:

- Pray for effectual work (not mere offers)

- Ask God to open hearts (Acts 16:14)

- Request divine drawing (John 6:44)

- Trust God's sovereign will in outcomes

In Dealing with Objections:

1. Don't defend philosophical system—appeal to text

2. Go straight to Greek/Hebrew when challenged

3. Ask diagnostic questions exposing incoherence

4. Distinguish system (false) from individuals (may be saved)

5. Focus on teachability as key marker

XV. BOTTOM LINE

The Issue: Does grace enable or does grace secure?

Arminianism: Grace enables choice (synergism)

- Requires human contribution as decisive factor

- Makes salvation ultimately dependent on creature

- Produces logical contradictions and entrapment

- Distorts Trinity (Father frustrated, Son hypothetical, Spirit defeatable)

Scripture: Grace secures response (monergism)

- God alone saves from first to last

- No human contribution to decisive cause

- Resolves contradictions; preserves justice

- Honors Trinity (Father sovereign, Son effectual, Spirit powerful)

The Proof: Arminians pray like monergists (asking God to save, change hearts, draw effectually) while maintaining synergistic theology. Their practice refutes their system.

The Verdict: Arminianism as system is another gospel (Gal 1:8-9). Individuals may be saved despite it if they trust Christ and remain correctable when shown Scripture.

The Test: Will you submit theology to text, or defend system against Scripture?

"Salvation belongs to the LORD" (Jonah 2:9)

יְשׁוּעָתָה לַיהוָה

Not "salvation is made possible by the LORD."
Not "salvation depends on cooperation."
But **"Salvation belongs to the LORD"** - from first to last.

This field manual condenses extensive theological analysis into practical reference format. For full arguments, Greek/Hebrew analysis, and comprehensive proof sets, see complete paper.