

Option c: The Time-Salvation Paradox

By Clark Campbell
Veritatem Cum Mica Salis

In the paper about Option c, it points out that both Calvinism and Arminianism have their own strong points as well as weak. They both seem to point to, or rely on, aspects of each other and thus, provide evidence that Option c is true. What that paper does not outline, other than God's transcendence, is how Option c can be understood. In my studies and thoughts about salvation, human will, and God's transcendence, I have realized I was limiting God by thinking that what God has decreed is in the past. For example, when God chose the elect. And as it turns out, this is a very important detail with some surprising consequences. This paper will provide one viable apologetic option about how Option c can be, though be it only somewhat, understood.

The one conclusion that I have come to is that the only people who choose God are the ones He elects, but God only elects those who choose Him. This statement alone may not sound logical but the reasoning behind it however, I believe, makes all the difference. If you take into account the fact that God did choose those He elected before the foundations of the earth, and since God is outside of time, what has happened with God may not have happened yet with us. To say that it did would mean that God is subject to the same confines and laws of time as we are. Because God is outside of time, what has already happened, (i.e. His choosing the elect) can be said to have not yet happened until we choose God.

What I like about this stance is that it focuses on what God can do instead of what God cannot do. Calvinism says that God cannot make man with free will because that would compromise His authority. Arminianism says that God cannot choose people unto salvation because that would compromise His love and justice. Option c says that God can do both, the paradox, if it can even be called such, is understanding how.

It is important to point out that both Calvinism and Arminianism have paradoxical elements to their views as well.

Calvinism says that man has no free will with salvation, even though it would be a God given ability, because that would be earning salvation as if by works. The paradox is that it says we do have freedom in sin, even though freedom is a God given ability.

The paradox with Arminianism is simple; God has complete authority but He does not have power over who will be saved.

Both sides have attempted to explain why their view does not contradict itself and God's character but both sides seem to fall short in their explanations.

“Logical paradoxes arise from the attempt by the human mind to unify or to coordinate the multiple facets of experience. Because of the diversity and complexity of reality and also because of the limitations of finite and sinful human reason, man's best efforts to know reality bring him only to the production of equally reasonable (or apparently so) yet irreconcilable (or apparently so) truths. In such cases man may be nearer the truth when he espouses both sides of a paradoxical issue than when he gives up one side in favor of the other.”*

The next page is a breakdown of the Time-Salvation Paradox and some verses in the Bible that I feel adequately support it.

* **W. A. Elwell**, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*; **E. J. Carnell**, *Philosophy of the Christian Religion*; **H. De Morgan**, *Budget of Paradoxes*; **V. Fern**, *Encyclopedia of Morals*; **C. F. H. Henry**

The Time-Salvation Paradox

What does 2 Peter 3:8 have to do with salvation?

“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.” * 

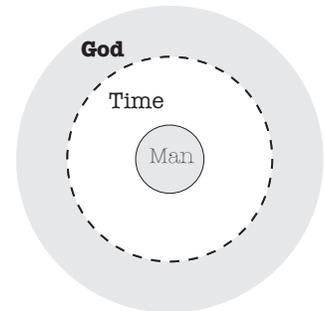
The basics

God is spirit and He is eternal.

God exists outside of time.

Man is physical and he is temporal.

Man exists inside of time.



2 Peter 3:8

Looking at this verse: A day to man in time, is like a thousand years **and also** a fraction of a second with God outside of time.*

This verse is an example of how God exists outside of our laws of time and space, and thus, outside of our understanding. God’s “time” is not faster or slower than ours, it is nonexistent.

When Heaven meets Earth

Because God exists outside of the laws of time, what has already happened to man could be said to be happening right now with God.

But because man is temporal, what has happened inside of time has already happened and will not happen again with man.

Also, since God exists outside of time, what has not yet happened to man could be said to have already happened with God.

Effects on Eph 1:4 salvation

Similarly, consider how God had chosen the elect outside of time before the foundations of the Earth were even set.

1Cor 7:18, 20, 22, & 24

Because man is temporal, what has not yet happened inside of time has not yet happened with man.

1Tim 6:12 & 1Pet 5:10

And because man exists inside of time, man has not yet been chosen inside of time until the moment he chooses God.

To conclude

So it can be demonstrated that people who do not choose God are personally responsible for their choice for eternity, while people who do choose God do so because they were called by God.

This is because everyone has a God given ability to choose God inside of time, while God has chosen the elect outside of time.

* Calculating a day as a fraction of a second:
A millennium to man is like a day with God

1,000 years = 365,242 days
1 day ÷ 365,242 = 0.000002738 days

0.000002738 x 24 = 0.000065712 hours
0.000065712 x 60 = 0.00394272 minutes

0.00394272 x 60 = 0.2365632 seconds
1 day to man = 0.236 seconds with God

The Time-Salvation Paradox

On a final note, the simple fact that man exists is evidence enough to support that human will is somewhere between self-caused and God-caused. To say that it is only one or the other causes logical inconsistencies and theological and hermeneutical problems. When it comes to salvation, if human free will were to be taken out of the equation completely, man would need to be taken out of it as well.

If I were to say that because of sin, humans are unable to choose good over evil to contribute to their own salvation, this would mean that someone professing Jesus as Lord of his life could not have done so by choice or use of his own will. Subsequently, it seems that this would also mean the choices someone makes which lead up to the moment he is saved would have to have been a direct result of God's leading in his life, even the bad choices. Also, the words someone speaks when he professes Christ would at that moment, need to be the very voice of God coming from his mouth, or that person would have contributed to his own salvation. And finally, he really could not even exist because the mere fact that he is there to be called is contributing to his own salvation. At some point, the line needs to be drawn, but where?

If human will is somewhere in the middle of the spectrum between Calvinism and Arminianism, then that means:

Believers arguing about if God chooses us or if we choose God is as silly as arguing about if we are in Christ or if Christ is in us.

I'm not saying that as believers, we can not surmise and debate, iron should sharpen iron after all. What I am saying is that as believers we must not lose sight of what is most important, and that is Jesus. In light of Him, it seems arbitrary to argue semantics, especially when it comes to salvation, but it seems to me that when it comes down to it, the ideas behind Calvinism and Arminianism are really just that; semantics.