Pelagius was a British monk and theologian active in the late 4th and early 5th centuries. His teachings on **salvation** sparked a major controversy in the early Church, especially with Augustine of Hippo, and the debate became known as **Pelagianism**.

Here's the core of what Pelagius taught about salvation:

Human Nature and Free Will
Pelagius believed that human beings are born **morally neutral** — not inherently sinful. He rejected the doctrine of **original sin** (the idea that all humans inherit sin from Adam and Eve). According to him, every person is born with the same capacity for good as Adam before the Fall.

Grace and Human Effort
Pelagius taught that salvation is achieved primarily through **human effort and moral living**. God's grace helps by offering guidance (like Scripture, Jesus' example, and moral encouragement), but it is not an essential inner transformation or a supernatural gift. Humans can freely choose to obey God or to sin.

Jesus and Salvation
For Pelagius, Jesus was primarily an **example** to follow. His life and teachings show the path to righteousness. Pelagius believed that by following Jesus' teachings and exercising their free will properly, people could live sinless lives and attain salvation.

Summary
In short:
→ Humans have the full ability to choose good or evil on their own.
→ Salvation depends on personal moral effort and obedience, not on divine grace correcting human weakness.
→ Christ shows the way, but the real work is done by the person.

Why it was controversial:
Augustine argued that Pelagius' view downplayed human dependence on God's grace. He believed humans are enslaved to sin because of original sin, and only God's grace can free them. Pelagius' teaching was seen as making grace unnecessary for salvation, which the Church labeled heresy at the **Council of Carthage in 418**.

Pelagianism is a theological belief attributed to Pelagius, a British monk who lived in the 4th–5th century. He taught that humans are born morally neutral and can achieve righteousness through their own efforts, without the necessity of divine grace. This view was declared heretical by several church councils, most notably the Council of Carthage (418 AD), because it contradicted the doctrine of original sin and the need for grace.

Here are **biblical arguments against Pelagianism**, emphasizing the **need for divine grace, the reality of original sin, and human inability to attain righteousness apart from God**:

Topic	Pelagius	Augustine
Human Nature	Born **morally neutral** — no inherited sin from Adam.	Born **sinful** (due to **original sin**).
Free Will	Fully intact — humans can choose good or evil on their own.	**Wounded by sin** — free will is enslaved to sin without grace.
Role of Grace	Helpful, but **not necessary** for doing good. Grace is God's teaching, example, and encouragement.	**Essential** — no one can choose or do good without God changing the heart.
Role of Jesus	Jesus is a **moral teacher and example** to follow.	Jesus is the **Savior** whose death and grace are necessary to heal and save the soul.
Salvation	Achieved through **personal effort and moral living**.	A **gift of God's grace**, received by faith. Good works are a result, not the cause.
View of Sin	Sin is a matter of **personal choice**, not inherited.	Sin is a **condition** inherited from Adam; everyone is born a sinner.
View of Baptism	A public commitment, but not essential for cleansing original sin (since he denied original sin).	**Washes away original sin** and is necessary for salvation.
Moral Perfection	Believed people could live a **sinless life** by their own strength.	Believed this is **impossible** without constant divine grace.

Summary:

- **Pelagius:** Humanity is capable of choosing good without divine help, and salvation is about living morally.
- **Augustine:** Humanity is deeply broken by sin, and salvation is entirely dependent on God's grace, not human strength.

• **Theological Issue**	📜 **Pelagius' Scripture References**	📜 **Augustine's Scripture References**
Human Nature	→ *Ezekiel 18:20* — "The son will not share the guilt of the father..." → *Deuteronomy 30:19* — "Choose	→ *Psalm 51:5* — "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." → *Romans 5:12* — "Sin entered the world

	life, so that you and your children may live."	through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people."
Free Will	→ *Joshua 24:15* — "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." → *Matthew 5:48* — "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."	→ *John 6:44* — "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them." → *Romans 7:18-19* — "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."
Grace	→ *Titus 2:11-12* — "For the grace of God has appeared... teaching us to say 'No' to ungodliness..." Pelagius saw grace more as instruction & example than inner transformation.	→ *Ephesians 2:8-9* — "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."
Role of Jesus	→ *Matthew 19:17* — "If you want to enter life, keep the commandments." → *1 John 2:6* — "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."	→ *Romans 3:23-24* — "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."
Salvation	→ *Matthew 7:21* — "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father."	→ *Titus 3:5* — "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."
View of Sin	→ *Genesis 4:7* — "Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." (shows humans can resist sin)	→ *Romans 5:18-19* — "Just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people..." → *Ephesians 2:1-3* — "... you were dead in your transgressions and sins."
Baptism	→ *Matthew 28:19-20* — "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..." (seen as a public act of commitment rather than cleansing original sin)	→ *John 3:5* — "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit."

Why both sides quoted Scripture differently:

Pelagius emphasized **moral responsibility and human choice**, so he focused on verses about action, choice, and righteousness.
Augustine emphasized **human dependency on grace** and the depth of sin, so he leaned on verses about human weakness and God's sovereign rescue.

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1. All Have Sinned (Original Sin)

Romans 5:12 – "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."

This passage teaches that sin entered the world through Adam and that his sin affects all humanity, contradicting Pelagianism's denial of original sin.

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2. We Are Born with a Sinful Nature

Psalm 51:5 – "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

David acknowledges a sinful nature from birth, supporting the idea that humans inherit a tendency to sin, not moral neutrality.

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3. Human Inability to Do Good Apart from God

Romans 3:10–12 – "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside..."

This shows that no one is inherently good or seeks God on their own—opposing the Pelagian view that humans can choose good unaided.

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4. Salvation Is by Grace, Not Works

Ephesians 2:8–9 – "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

This directly refutes the Pelagian idea that we can earn salvation through good works.

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5. Faith and Repentance Are Gifts from God

Philippians 1:29 – "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."

Even belief itself is described as something "granted"—a gift—emphasizing God's initiative over human effort.

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6. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Regeneration

John 3:5–6 – "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.'"

Spiritual rebirth, necessary for salvation, is a work of the Holy Spirit—not of human effort.

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7. Apart from Christ, We Can Do Nothing

John 15:5 – "I am the vine; you are the branches... apart from me you can do nothing."

This verse challenges the Pelagian claim that people can live righteous lives independent of divine help.

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8. God Draws People to Himself

John 6:44 – "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."

Human initiative is not enough—God must take the first step in drawing people to Christ.