

Introduction There are core doctrines and issues that all Bible believing Christians should agree on. Doctrinal purity and avoiding false teaching is a key NT teaching. However, there are many issues that Christians can fairly and do, disagree on. The problem is, deciding which are the issues we cannot accept differing positions. Issues need to be examined submitting to the Word of God, as the supreme authority. In a spirit of love, we should be avoiding arguments for arguments sake. 2 Timothy 2 :23-24. Also, we should be gracious to those of a different perspective.

Personal note. I will try to be fair to differing sides, however you may work out where I personally stand, if so, please accept my views in the spirit in which they are given, in humility and open to discussion around the scriptures.

1. Women's role in ministry There are two main positions. Egalitarian or Complementarian.

Egalitarians believe men and women are equal, and the functions they can perform in the church are the same. Complementarians believe Men and women are equal in value before God, but have different roles to perform in the Church, and those roles complement each other. Both sides accept, men & women are made in God's image. Both would agree that abusive male leadership is sinful, and leadership is a servant hearted role, 1 Peter 5:2-3.



The Egalitarian view Those that take this view, point to Deborah in the Old Testament, Priscilla and Phoebe in the New, as having leadership roles. They would argue that the male leadership in the NT, was culturally sensitive to the age in which they lived. But from creation both men and women were to rule over creation Genesis 1:27-28. The roles people perform in Church should be on the basis of gifting, not gender. Galatians 3:28. There were deaconess' in the early church Romans 16:1.

The Complementarian accepts women have roles in the church, but the main leadership roles including teaching doctrine should be done by men. 1 Timothy 2:11-13. They say Jesus was clearly not bound by culture of the day, but he chose only men to be apostles. Women were deacons in the early church, but Elders were always men 1 Timothy 3:2. They point to the Trinity, which shows us that the different persons of the Godhead can have different roles, but together are harmonious and equal in value.

Questions

How do we fellowship with believers who take a different stance?

2. Hell for unbelievers, forever or not? Jesus clearly talked about Hell as a real place. Matthew 8:12.

Our question is; Will those who are unbelievers, suffer for all eternity? Is it eternal in terms of length or of consequence (meaning their separation from God is irreversible)? The root of this debate is, are we all immortal, if everyone is, then Hell is forever, but if not, eternal life is only for believers.

The Classical view is one that the Church has mainly held for generations, it is that unbelievers will consciously suffer Hell eternally. Matthew 25:31, 41 and 46. Jesus spoke of fire and Hell twenty times in the gospels Mark 9:47-48. The Old Testament says less on the subject but does in Isaiah 33:14. The Bible is clear that all, believers and unbelievers will be resurrected, and all will come before God Philippians 2:10. We know Hell is eternal and sinners will be sent there. Matthew 7:19, Revelation 21:8.

If we sin against an eternal God, surely our punishment will be eternal too? When a person becomes a Christian the results are forever, surely then, a non believers rejection of God, is forever too?

Annihilationist's believe that everyone is not immortal 1 Timothy 6:16, after the judgement, non believers will be denied the gift of everlasting life. Although their punishment is of eternal consequence, they will not have to endure that punishment eternally. Look at John 3:16, the word 'perish' most commonly means, to fully destroy. The Classic view points to Matthew 10:28, however Jesus said of Gehenna (Hell) as the destruction of soul and body. Annihilationist's accept that the fires of Hell are eternal, and Satan and demons will be there eternally, but that does not necessarily mean humans who reject God will also suffer eternally too. Many annihilationist's do not deny that the wicked will suffer, perhaps for long periods of time, prior to being annihilated.



3. Do all Christians need a 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' after salvation? All Christians believe that, Christians are indwelt with the Holy Spirit Romans 8:11, that is when someone comes to faith they receive the Holy Spirit, who begins a work within them. Many Christians have had a second experience after faith that is described as a 'Baptism in the Spirit'. **Pentecostal View** That following salvation, we should seek a 'Baptism in the Spirit' which will empower us for serving Jesus. Before Acts 2, the disciples believed in Jesus and he had given them his Spirit John 20:21-22. Yet on the day of Pentecost they received power to go about their work. Supporters of this view point to examples



in the book of Acts. For example, did Paul become a Christian when he called Jesus his Lord 9:5, and did he then receive a Spirit baptism in v17-18? They would also point to Jesus himself, saying he was conceived by the Spirit, but baptised by the Spirit with John the Baptist. Some traditional Pentecostals claim that speaking in tongues is the evidence, that a person had this experience. Some call the Baptism in the Spirit a 'Second blessing'.

Non Pentecostal view This view holds that when we come to Christ, the Holy Spirit enters us and that is what the Baptism in the Spirit really is, Ephesians 1:13-14. Paul says there is one baptism, Ephesians 4:5-6, so water baptism is a picture of the baptism into God that happened at our conversion. There is no Scripture text urging believers today to seek a second experience after becoming a Christian for the Spirit's Baptism. The point is that it is not possible to receive what we already have! Acts 2:38. This stance does not deny that people can experience an infilling or release of the Spirit at different times in their lives, but it is wrong to say everyone should seek a second experience after conversion. Instead we should all seek to be filled with his Spirit daily. This view is the one that has been the most commonly held throughout Church history.

Questions

Should a local church have a settled view on these issues?

4. Do we choose God or did He choose us? This is a debate centuries old, it is often described as Arminianism v Calvinism, however the ideas existed long before them. The issue resolves around who initiates our salvation? Did we choose God and he chose us back? Or, did God choose us, and drew us to himself?

The Arminian view says people have been given free will by God, and he wants all to turn to him and be saved. 2 Peter 3:9, Romans 10:13. We can resist God's message, and decide for ourselves if we want to give ourselves to him. The responsibility for our final destination rests on us alone. Many Arminians believe if a person later turns away from God, they can lose their salvation Hebrews 6:4-6. In the Old Testament God urged the people to make a choice. Deuteronomy 30:19-20. When Stephen was being tried he said to the priests that they were resisting the Holy Spirit, in other words choosing not to accept Christ Acts 7:51 **The Calvinist view** is that in our fallen state, dead to God, we are incapable of turning to him

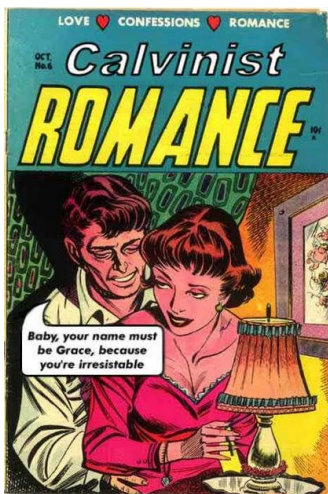


Jacob Arminius

John Calvin

unless God works in our lives first. God has elected to draw some to himself. In the O.T. God choose, one race, the Jews, to be his 'Chosen People' Deuteronomy 7:6-8. Isaiah 65:1:1. When Jesus began his ministry he selected certain men to be his disciples. So historically the pattern is that God calls some people, and not others. When the message was preached in Antioch Acts 13:48 only those who God had chosen responded. Paul points to the O.T. in Romans 9: 10-16 to explain that God chooses who he wishes. In John ch1, it states our new birth is dependent on God not out human decision.v12-13. Jesus was clear that people cannot come to God unless drawn by him John 6:44. Those who God calls will respond John 15:16-19. One example given is Paul, who hated Christians, but God burst into his life, without being asked Acts 9, because God had selected him to take God's word to the gentiles. v15.

Conclusion These issues are important, but we should remember, our aim is love.



Questions

Question or comments?

Next time - The Old Testament