

Answers to Questions

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What are the basic differences between Calvinism and Arminianism?

The fundamental difference between Calvinists and Arminians is this: Calvinists believe that human beings repent and believe because God causes them to do so by choosing them to be saved. Arminians believe that the ultimate reason people believe is our free will. Perhaps the clearest way to explain the difference is to contrast the five points of Calvinism and Arminianism, commonly known as by the acronym tulip.

Calvinists believe in total depravity. That doesn't mean people are as evil as they can possibly be, but as sinners they have no ability to choose to be saved (Rom. 8:7-8). Arminians believe people are evil but still have the ability to choose to be saved.

Calvinists believe in unconditional election. God from eternity past chooses from his own good pleasure whom will be saved (Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 9:10-23). Arminians believe God looks ahead and sees who will believe in him and then chooses those whom he foresees will have faith.

Calvinists believe in limited atonement, or what is better described as particular redemption. That means Christ's death is particularly for the elect and that he has purchased their faith (Rev. 5:9). Arminians believe in unlimited atonement, which means that Christ died for all people, and those who trust in Christ will be saved. Some people are four point Calvinists and reject limited atonement.

Calvinists believe in irresistible grace. This doesn't mean that no one ever resists God's grace, but that God overcomes the resistance and hardness of those whom he has chosen (John 6:37, 44, 65; Rom. 8:28-30). Arminians believe that God's grace is not effectual and can be resisted.

Calvinists believe in perseverance of the saints (John 10:28-30; Rom. 8:28-39; 1 John 2:19). All those whom God has chosen will never fall away from the faith. Arminians teach that believers can lose their salvation.

What does the Bible mean when it talks about hair coverings for women and long hair for men?

The first question is why Paul gave these commands about head coverings and long hair. He did so because the way people wore their hair indicated in the culture of Paul's day whether one was behaving as a man or a woman. In other words, Paul wanted to retain the distinctions between the sexes. This is a powerful word to our culture where differences between the sexes are routinely denied, and we commonly have gender-blending and gender confusion. The principle Paul teaches in 1 Cor 11:3 is male headship. Men have a unique God-given authority in the family and the church for leadership. Men are responsible to protect and provide for women, and women are to humbly submit to their leadership and to assist men in their leadership roles. Such differences in role don't indicate lack of equality, for Christ submitted to the Father but was equal to him (1 Cor 15:28). The issue Paul addresses isn't really head-coverings and length of hair in and of themselves. In the culture of Paul's day a woman not wearing head covering in worship would signal rebellion against male headship, and in the same way a man's wearing long hair would suggest that he was denying his masculinity. What matters in the passage, then, are not the exact customs, but the principle or truth

communicated in the text. If a woman wears a veil today, it doesn't suggest to people in our culture that she is rebellious. We need to apply the principle of male headship and female submission to our culture today. We can apply the passage as follows. Men would deny their masculinity if they wore a dress, and a woman denies male headship if she did not wear her wedding ring or refused to take the last name of her husband.

How exactly does the order of creation demonstrate a model for male headship and authority in the church?

In 1 Tim. 2:12 Paul says that a woman should not teach or exercise authority over a man. The reason he gives for this command is found in 1 Tim. 2:13. "For Adam was created first, not Eve." The reason women should not function as pastors or teach men is rooted in the created order according to Paul. The point we should notice here is that Paul does not argue for male headship because of sin. Male headship is not the result of the fall but stems from God's good creation. What we must recognize here is that commands rooted in creation are still God's will for us today. For example, both marriage and the eating of all foods is a good thing because both of them were ordained for our good at creation (1 Tim. 4:1-5). So too, divorce is never God's ideal because God indicated when he created Adam and Eve that one man should be married to one woman (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18-25). Jesus argued from creation in supporting the permanence of marriage (Matt. 19:3-12). In the same way, homosexuality is wrong because it violates the created order, for once again the creation account teaches us that sexual relations are restricted to marriage between one man and woman (Rom. 1:26-27). We see, then, that male headship is not due to sin or to a patriarchal culture, but is rooted in the way God created males and females. Men, of course, are to lead with love and wisdom. Male headship is not a privilege but a great responsibility.

Why was Saul of Tarsus name changed to Paul and when did this occur?

Students have always been interested in the shift of the apostle Paul's name from Saul to Paul in Acts 13:9. Up until chapter 13 in Acts the apostle is always called Saul. From Acts 13:9 he is always called Paul. The only exceptions are in passages in which Paul related the words Jesus spoke to him at his conversion (Acts 22:7, 13; 26:14). But these passages are not truly exceptions since they repeat what happened to the apostle on the road to Damascus in Acts 9.

So how do we account for the change of name? Some have said in popular circles that the new name came from Paul's conversion. But this view is contradicted by Acts itself. Luke continues to call the apostle Saul immediately after his conversion. Some early church fathers, like Origen and Jerome, suggested that his name was changed to Paul after the conversion of the Cypriot proconsul, Sergius Paulus, in Acts 13:5-12. On this view Paul adopted the name of this prominent Roman official who was converted.

The most likely view, however, is that the apostle was given at birth, as a Roman citizen, both a Greco-Roman name and a Hebrew name. His Hebrew name was Saul, but he was also given a Greco-Roman name "Paul" as a Roman citizen. So why sudden shift from Saul to Paul in Acts 13:9? Perhaps Paul wanted to be known by his Greco-Roman name since he was the apostle to the Gentiles and was going to the Gentiles as a missionary. In all his letters Paul introduces himself to his readers as "Paul" not "Saul."