

General Topics :: Grieved Over Divisions Among Denominational Churches**Grieved Over Divisions Among Denominational Churches - posted by Oracio (), on: 2017/9/7 13:15**

Greetings brethren, it's great to share here again after a lengthy hiatus. I decided to share from my heart on this topic here because it's what I've been having to deal with lately.

When I decided to take a hiatus from the SI forums over a year ago, I was attending a Baptist church in Bellflower CA which seemed pretty solid to me. The problem was that I could not fully get involved there because I believe in Amillennialism and they officially hold to Premillennialism (it's on their statement of faith, as I've found is the case with many churches). So afterward I began attending another Baptist church (affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention) in Hacienda Heights CA which did not make any issues over differing end times views (the lead pastor held to Premil but the associate pastor held to Amil).

However, this church is Calvinistic when it comes to salvation. When I first started attending there I didn't have a problem with that because I personally was leaning back toward that view (I say "leaning back" because I've been a staunch Calvinist before). And at first the lead pastor told me that they don't claim to be either Calvinist or Arminian. But after revisiting and studying the Cal vs Arm debate in recent times, I was convinced of the Arm position on free will in salvation (again). So I shared with the pastor where I ended up landing after studying this issue out again (I felt I had to be honest with him about it). I also shared with him that I wasn't 100 percent sure where I stood on the issue of whether one can lose their salvation (eternal security is the official position of the SBC). So after I shared those things with him he recommended I look for another church, which was sad and grieving to me but not too surprising.

So that happened pretty recently and that's where I'm at right now, asking the Lord to help me find fellowship where I can fit in and where they don't make non-essential doctrines a matter of division. Before those two churches, I attended a Calvary Chapel but it didn't work out there either because I held to the Amil position and because the lead pastor there had a problem with me endorsing the Principles book put out by brother Greg Gordon and others.

All that to say this brethren (and thanks for your patience with my "venting" here), it is indeed sad and grieving to see so much division among denominational churches over petty differences in certain finer points of theology. It seems that the Lord may have allowed me to experience all that to smooth out some of my own rough edges in terms of being divisive over non-essential or non-salvific points of doctrine (though we must draw a line when it comes to the essentials of the faith).

So I ask for your prayers in this regard brothers and sisters, as I know it's not ideal for Christians to walk alone without accountability to others.

I think I can see and understand more now at least one reason why some Christians are leaving the denominational churches and seeking fellowship outside of them.

Personally I like the idea of house fellowships but I don't have any qualms or issues regarding certain "patterns" of gatherings (whether in buildings or in homes) as long as the Lord is present and there is worship in spirit and in truth.

So anyway, again, it's great to be back. But though I haven't posted for a long while, I have to be honest about periodically browsing through the forum discussions like a fly on the wall :)

Re: Grieved Over Divisions Among Denominational Churches - posted by TMK (), on: 2017/9/7 14:13

Hey Oracio- welcome back.

I am curious as to how things have "come to a head" doctrinally speaking in the churches you have attended. Did you approach pastors about various items in their statement of faith, or did it just arise naturally in the course of conversation or a class?

I ask because I have attended a couple of churches in recent years where I am sure I would have some doctrinal differences, but I've never sensed the need to express my disagreement for 2 reasons: 1) I knew what I was getting into because

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se I had already read their doctrinal statements and 2) the overall bible teaching and classes were so solid that it far out weighed any doctrinal differences I may have had on non-essential issues.

Of course I was not asked to sign on dotted line affirming a certain set of doctrines because I never became a "member" of either church.

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2017/9/7 15:09

We are attending a church that has about 8000 in weekly attendance.

I never thought I would do that.

But we took stock of ourselves before diving into it. And we know what we believe. We can read the bible. We have the Holy Spirit within who speaks to us and guides us. We have met with few others in prayer group or small group who have a similar passion and understanding of who God is as we do even if our views on what church should "look like" differ. And the primary teaching is quite solid. So I am not going to trip over what 7995 other people may understand and what 6995 may be doing to mature in the faith. I will take those folks at face value because, frankly, I have zero control, influence or relationship with them. As far as I am concerned it is a church of 50. With really a big parking lot.

Re: Grieved Over Divisions Among Denominational Churches - posted by twayneb (), on: 2017/9/7 15:26

Oracio: I am curious about the title of your post, and I have a question. Please do not misunderstand my question as I am absolutely NOT trying to be confrontational or say anything at all negative. Just some food for thought as you process what is going on here.

Quote:
----- The problem was that I could not fully get involved there because I believe in Amillennialism and they officially hold to Premillennialism

It seems to me that you have a pretty solidly formed doctrinal position that you hope to find mirrored in the fellowship you attend, yet your title and your comments suggest that you recognize that divisions are not good in the body. Are you willing to fellowship with others who have a different doctrinal view from you on issues such as election and eschatology?

I hope that question is not offensive. I don't mean it to be.

I honestly believe that God has a place in the body for each and every believer and that we should seek to find His will in where we connect ourselves. Obviously we don't connect ourselves to heresy. But I cannot conceive of a fellowship where everyone will see it the same way I see it in every aspect of doctrine.

I guess that is why I like SI. I have been able here to fellowship so to speak with people from many different doctrinal streams and it has driven me to scripture and helped me to knock off some rough edges. The same will happen in a body of believers where God has placed you by His will.

I would encourage you to pray earnestly about where God wants you and seek Him until you know. Then I would say to attend there until He tells you to leave, regardless of whether you are in agreement with their eschatology or any of the other non-essential doctrines.

Welcome back. It is always good to hear your input in the discussions.

Re: - posted by Heydave (), on: 2017/9/7 15:41

Oracio,

Really good to have you back here. I sympathise with where you are at in this, I see things much the same. I sense you are like me, in that it is not that you cannot fellowship with folk holding differing doctrinal positions on non essential, but the fact that they make these part of their doctrinal creed and will not tolerate alternative views and if you are honest in explaining you don't hold to their particular view then you are either side lined or limited in how much you can be a part of the church there.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2017/9/7 16:02

Thanks Todd; Good question and points. In terms of Calvary Chapel, they do not have official membership or an official statement of faith one can look up online. I attended a mega Calvary Chapel for several years as a newer believer and really had no issues there because I did not have firm beliefs about certain end times views. But when I came to hold to the Baptist Covenantal Amillennial view I knew I couldn't get that involved with any Calvary Chapel as they take that issue quite seriously, therefore I looked elsewhere for fellowship.

When I started attending the Baptist church in Bellflower CA the first thing I did was look through their statement of faith, but I missed the part where they said they believe in a Premillennial return of Christ. So I went through the membership class there and afterward noticed that part of their statement of faith. When I noticed it I asked the senior pastor why they include that in their statement if it's a non-essential. He said that he and the other elders wished it wasn't there, but since it's a congregational church, any changes to the statement had to come about through a certain amount of votes. In that church you had to agree with everything in their statement of faith to become a member. So I decided to look elsewhere for fellowship because I wanted to find a church where I'd be more fully welcome as a member, to be able to get as close and involved as possible without feeling like an outcast.

When I started attending the SBC church in Hacienda Heights CA I didn't think it was staunchly Calvinistic and divisive over that though I knew it had leanings toward Calvinism at the very least. And again, the pastor told me at first that they do not claim to be either Calvinistic or Arminian. While attending the membership class, as the pastor explained certain portions of their statement of faith I did get the impression of Calvinism being his view. So I asked him if one had to be a five point Calvinist to be a member and he said no. I told him that I personally wasn't convinced either way in terms of the Cal vs Arm debate at that time. He said that as long as one doesn't have any unsettled convictions against anything in their statement of faith one could be a member. So I became a member and remained one for several months. But I certainly found out how staunchly Calvinistic the senior pastor was when I shared with him about my view on free will.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2017/9/7 16:02

Tim, I can certainly understand how one can view things and be in fellowship in your type of situation and I've also thought about being open to something like that. My concern is that sometimes, once one starts getting to know a lot of folks and sharing their "non-essential" views it can become a problem if they have strong convictions in some of those areas of doctrine.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2017/9/7 16:07

By the way Todd, I sincerely apologize for having posted about questioning your salvation a long time ago on these forums. I never apologized for that and feel I should have done so a long time ago.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2017/9/7 16:12

Thanks Travis. Yeah, I think you misunderstood where I was coming from. I certainly would not expect or demand every Christian or church I fellowship with to agree with me on these non-essentials. My problem is that they are the ones choosing to divide over them and they are the ones that do not welcome me.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2017/9/7 16:14

Dave, thanks for the encouragement brother.

Re: - posted by twayneb (), on: 2017/9/7 17:09

I see. I would say that you need to fast and pray and seek God for His will for where you should fellowship. Perhaps if there is an area where you disagree, unless it is a matter of heaven or hell, you should not even let it be known publicly that you disagree. Once you have strong relationships established, then you have a door to discuss disagreement without offense.

I would say this. I too am grieved when I see churches that include the non-essentials in their statements of faith and then major on how that non-essential makes them different from other churches. To me, what difference does Pretrib, Posttrib, or no trib make in my ability to worship with you and together work in the harvest field?

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2017/9/7 17:53

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Thanks again for the input Travis. My concern is that I tried that at a certain small Calvary Chapel (the one I mentioned in the OP) and it didn't work. At first I didn't say anything about my "non-essential views" but eventually the topic came up in conversations between myself and the pastor and I felt I had to be honest with him, and there ended up being problems. I'm concerned that if I wait till I get deeply involved in a church, along with my family, eventually when these topics come up there may be problems and more hurt to have to deal with; hurt that can be avoided if I'm upfront about these things and ask them if I'm welcome in light of them.

But yeah, I have no problems fellowshiping with brethren who have differing views on these topics and I don't try to push my non-essential views on anyone. I have a close friend/brother in Christ with whom I do street evangelism regularly who holds to Dispensational Pre-trib Premil, and we get along just fine. Like Dave pointed out, the problem arises when churches include certain non-essential stances in their statements of faith and divide over them. Sadly, I'm finding that that is the case with a multitude of churches, so I'm not sure how long it will take me to find a church where I'm welcome after being upfront with them. But again, I do believe that I need to be upfront to avoid hurt both for myself and my family.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2017/9/7 20:26

I guess I have been fortunate in that the churches I have attended where I knew there were doctrinal differences (e.g. End times and cal/arm) there was never "in your face" preaching or teaching on these topics, so I was never in a position of having to squirm in my seat or bite my tongue.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2017/9/7 21:55

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Actually, those churches I mentioned did not really pound Calvinism or Arminianism or certain end-times views from the pulpit either (except maybe the Calvary Chapels a bit in terms of end-times, not too much though). Those topics became an issue after conversing with pastors about them; in my case it was unavoidable.

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Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2017/9/7 22:17

We should not let things that we are not sure about cause division among us. The Bible says that we should all speak the same thing and not be divided. That means to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only.

What we should know is that we have not yet completed the book of Acts. We should know that the Bible teaches that we are to be saved and born of God. We are to then be filled with the Holy Spirit and be sanctified unto God. We are to receive power from the Holy Spirit to be a witness unto Jesus.

So let's deny ourselves, take up our Cross and follow Jesus walking in the Holy Spirit so we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Let's be devoted to Jesus following His will from scripture and look forward to His appearing...desiring to love Him and serve Him with all of our heart. Let's do His will desiring and hoping to hear Him say "well done".

He is not going to judge you by someone's else's theory. He may judge you by arguing over your own theory that is not clearly revealed from scripture. Now the truth is...God is going to judge everyone by the Word of God they knew and did not obey.

Blessings....rbanks

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2017/9/7 22:35

Amen rbanks, fully agree!