

Why Christians Differ Doctrinally - Part III, The Origin of Doctrinal Differences

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[0 : 00] You can call this a litany of adversity. As you read through that list, you might ask yourself the question, what in the world is this all about? And why did this man insist on putting up with this kind of treatment?

What in the world is going on? Well, this is simply the price that the Apostle Paul paid for being a radical.

Because he was a radical. We are talking about why and how it is that people hold different doctrinal positions.

And it all has to do with radicalism, no matter what the position is. We have a tendency to think of radicalism in a negative way, simply because of what's taking place in our world today with Islamic terrorism.

These people are radicals. Yes, they are. So was Mother Teresa. She was a radical. The Apostle Paul was a radical. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were radicals.

[1 : 08] It all depends on what the cause is. Because there are good causes and there are evil causes, as we shall see as we move on through this. We are exploring the dynamics behind all decision-making and the taking of various positions.

And that includes doctrinal or religious ideas. Because they are not to be excluded from the whole gamut of decision-making in general.

People arrive at the decisions they do in the same way. Whether you are talking about politics or economics or spiritual matters, all decisions are reached the same way.

They are all predicated upon information. Data received. Data evaluated and processed. And then you reach a conclusion.

That is a position that you will hold after having processed the data. This is nothing more than the simple process of thinking.

[2 : 19] Everyone who has a mind undergoes this process all day long about a whole host of things. Some minor and trivial and some very important.

But we always take the information that we have or try to get more information so we can make a more informed decision. And then we evaluate that information.

We put into the mix everything that we have experienced in our life up to that time. It becomes part of the ingredient. We all have a life story.

We all have a background. We all have experiences that have come into our life that have shaped us and molded us and caused us to have the opinions and the ideas that we have.

And we throw those into the mix. And all of that is part of the mental processing that takes place.

And when we are finished, out pops a decision, a conclusion.

[3 : 21] And we may decide to go forward and do something positive about it. We may decide we don't want anything to do with it and we back off from it.

Or we may decide that we're going to wait a while because we still want more information. So all of these ingredients are responsible for contributing to the positions that we take.

We all have an IQ. That is something to think with. We all have some education. And even if you do not have any formal education, you have informal education.

And it started with very earliest of ages. And then we have life experiences. And we have personal biases. We have likes. And we have dislikes. And all of those things come into the mix.

When we are prejudiced about something, that means we have, the word prejudice means pre-judge. It means you reach a decision about a position you are going to take before you have all

of the information you need.

[4 : 25] So you are prejudging the situation. And we call people who do that on a consistent basis, prejudiced. They are prejudiced.

We are talking about why and how it is that Christians differ doctrinally. We are attempting to answer the question, why are there so many different doctrines, beliefs, denominations, churches, and all the rest of it?

Why can't we all just get together and believe the same thing? And isn't there one God? Why don't we have just one system of belief? How did we get all of these ideas? How did we get Islam? How did we get Buddhism? How did we get Judaism? And can't they agree on anything? And even within Christianity, we've got Baptists.

And we've got Methodists. And we've got Presbyterians. And we've got Episcopalians. And we've got this. And on and on and on the list goes. What is it with these people? And yet they all call themselves Christians.

[5 : 28] And the only thing that they all have in common is each one believes they are right. And all the others are wrong. But, can that be the case?

No, it clearly cannot be the case. And let me make an important point here before I move on. Because this is very, very important. I want you to get this. There is not some special or different way of thinking about reality or facts when you are dealing with religious or spiritual issues. Many people think that there is. They are completely, totally wrong. Some take the position that, well, here you have a certain faith that believes that water baptism is essential for salvation. And if you are not water baptism is not necessary for salvation. There is no way in the world that you can go to heaven. Here is a group over here who believes that water baptism is not necessary for salvation.

And that all that is necessary for salvation. And that all that is necessary is a personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ. And you don't have to be baptized by water in any mode.

[7 : 06] Now, both of those positions cannot be correct. They cannot both be correct. And here is where there is a lot of fallacious thinking.

People think they are coming in to the rescue of the religious crowd when they bring a new standard with them by saying, Now, ordinarily, that would be true.

But when it comes to religious issues, that's a very, very nebulous thing. And they involve faith. And faith is different. When you are dealing with faith, this person over here can believe, as I pointed out earlier, and they are right. And this person over here believes the exact opposite. And they are right. Isn't it wonderful that it works that way in religion? It doesn't. It doesn't. Please don't cut us any slack. It doesn't work that way.

[8 : 08] It is what it is. Reality is reality. It makes no difference if you're dealing with spiritual issues or economic issues. What is, is. There is not a special religious way of thinking that something becomes right if you believe it.

There is no such thing. There is no such thing as wish fulfillment. Just believe something long enough and strong enough and hard enough and it will come to pass.

Nonsense. Now, if you believe something like that, you may put more effort into it and you may put more money into it and you may put more of whatever into it that is designed to help make it happen and realize it that way.

But it isn't going to happen because you wish for it. Reality is reality. Reality is reality. And it works the same way in spiritual matters as it does every other way.

There is not a special religious way of thinking so that you can deny reality in a religious area and it's okay. Because, well, that's what people believe.

[9 : 24] So, it becomes legitimate. It is not. It is not. That is a very, very important point. Christians differ doctrinally because of the information they receive and the processing thereof.

Information is derived from its source. Processing is the assessment of the data. We process data from where we are.

That's why people see things differently because we use the expression, well, he's coming from a different position. He's coming from a different background.

So, you would expect his conclusions to be different from somebody else's that comes from another background. The result of the processing, as I've said, is the conclusion or the position that is taken.

The intensity of our thinking and deciding is coupled with our understanding of its importance.

[10:33] As we receive this data and as we process it and as we reach a conclusion, then we have to ask ourselves, now, this is what I think about this.

Now, how important is it? How much does this matter? Where do I put this item on my list of priorities? Is it a top priority or is it in the middle or is it down near the bottom someplace?

When you are dealing with issues that involve life after death, whether or not there is one and where one is going to be if there is one, that becomes a pretty important matter.

Especially when you realize that it is for good. There is no return and there is no change. That makes it a matter of top priority.

The view of importance produces passion. If it is something you regard as really top drawer priority, it is something that you are passionate about.

[11:51] Everybody tends to be passionate about something. Parents are passionate about the protection and provision of their children.

You ought to be passionate about that. If you aren't, you are not much of a parent. Lots of people are, virtually everybody is passionate about something.

And passion put to action becomes radical. I want to emphasize at the expense of beating this issue, radical is not necessarily bad.

It all depends on the object. There are lots of things you ought to be radical about. And I am using radical in the same sense as the word passion. You ought to be radical when it comes to the protection and care for your children.

Or for your parents. Or for your loved ones. You ought to be radical about that. You ought to be willing to go to extra lengths when these important issues are involved.

[13:07] Yes, you are legitimately radical about that. You could even be called an extremist. An extremist is, well, let's just look at it this way.

Here we've got a center line. And here we've got an extreme right.

And here we've got an extreme left. Most of us are here when it comes to most issues.

Most of us are somewhere in the middle. These represent far out positions. This to the right, this to the left. You may be talking about politics, or economics, or Islam, or whatever.

But you will find people on both sides of this issue. If you're talking about Christianity, you will find people on both sides of the issue. And where are most Christians? Right here.

[14:17] Closer to the middle. These represent extremes. And all extremes are is passion put to action.

And the important thing to remember is action. Passion that does not move you to action is lip service.

We call it put your money where your mouth is. We call it, if you really believe that, why aren't you doing something about it?

This is radicalism. And it can be a very good thing. The rightness or the wrongness of our radicalism is determined entirely by the cause.

What is the objective? Karl Marx was an extremist. He was a radical in the cause of politics and economics. So was Adolf Hitler.

[15:27] He was a radical. Charles Darwin was a radical in his belief about origins. And he wrote a book about it. He wrote several books.

He wrote The Origin of Species. The world has never been the same since. And we are still dealing with the issues of that. Jesus Christ was a radical. And the twelve apostles were radical.

Let me tell you. Anyone who is willing to die rather than deny what he believes is a radical. That's an extremist. But it's a good extremism.

Was it Nathan Hale? He said, I regret that I have but one life to give for my country.

The man was a radical. Don't allow yourself to get in the position of looking on all radicalism with disfavor.

[16:31] Because nothing changes till someone gets radical. Do you understand that? This is a truism.

It goes all the way back. It goes all the way back. Well, it goes all the way back at least to Noah. When the Lord looked upon the earth and saw that the sons of men were altogether become corrupt, He decided to cancel humanity and start all over again.

And He told Noah, Noah, it's time for you to get radical. I want you to build a big ark.

What do you think all of His friends and neighbors called Him? A crazy old coot. An extremist. A radical. He's out of His mind.

He doesn't know what He's doing. Listen, lots of radicals have been labeled incompetent, insane, crazy, and everything else. But they don't always turn out to be that way.

[17 : 36] Now, granted, some of them are. Some of them are. But some of them aren't. And we are all beneficiaries of many of them.

A non-radical is content or resigned to the status quo.

How is everything? Everything is okay. I'm fine. I'm fine. And all they mean is, all I want is for things to stay like they are.

And I will be happy with that. But a radical or an extremist is not content with the status quo.

Difference is, what shall I call these people?

Where the average is, we'll call them the moderate. The moderate is the one who says, if they are at all dissatisfied, the moderate is the one who says, somebody ought to do something.

[18 : 49] But nothing ever gets done because somebody turns out to be nobody. But you let one wild-eyed extremist, radical, rise up in that group.

And he is not content with saying, somebody ought to do something. He says, I'm going to do something. And they start making noise.

They start, we call it making waves. They cause a commotion. They cause a stir. And the stir may be for good or ill.

It may be a wonderful boon for mankind. You know, Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin, inventors of the vaccine for polio.

You know, both of those men were radicals. Both of them were extremists. You have any idea how many times they spent after hours in their laboratory?

[20 : 01] And they wouldn't give up? And we have benefited enormously from the radicalism of Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin with the polio vaccine.

And you could say the same thing about Madam Curry and Louis Pasteur. These people were radical. Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Edison was a radical. He was a real weirdo extremist.

You know, he really was. I mean, he would spend so many hours in his laboratory. And his assistant, when he was looking for this special filament for the light bulb that wouldn't burn out, what was it he settled on, tungsten?

And they had spent months and months with all of these experiments. And his assistant was ready to throw in the towel. And he says, Mr. Edison, he said, I'm discouraged.

We've tried 10,000 things and nothing works. It's all for nothing. And Edison said, no, no, no, no, no. It isn't all for nothing. We have discovered 10,000 things that won't work.

[21 : 14] And he kept at it. And he kept at it. And people laughed at him. They scoffed at him. By the way, radicals and extremists are often ostracized and marginalized and considered a little bit kooky.

Because these are not only people who think outside the box. They live outside the box. And many of them are just a dab flaky and weird. They have a funny set of values that nobody else understands.

They have a passion. They have a drivenness about them that won't let them go. And they just push and push and push and they won't stop. Nothing changes until a radical gets involved.

Nothing. The status quo just stays static. But someone comes on the scene that says, this isn't right. This isn't right.

This isn't fair. This isn't just. And that's exactly the way Martin Luther King Jr. was thinking. And instead of saying, somebody ought to do something.

[22 : 27] I suspect that there were people in the black community, decades before Martin Luther King Jr. ever came along, who were saying, somebody ought to do something. And Martin Luther King Jr. said, I'm going to be that somebody.

I'm going to do something. And he started organizing marches and protests. And whether you approve or disapprove, what did he do? He made waves.

He caused a notice. He caused attention. He changed America. And the way America thinks about race.

No, the change isn't complete. No. But it is a vast improvement over what it was. And there isn't anything that you can call Martin Luther King Jr.

but a radical and an extremist. Billy Graham is a radical. He's an extremist. A radical or an extremist is someone who comes to a position and they are no longer content to just hold it for themselves personal.

[23 : 36] They believe that everybody ought to believe this. Everybody ought to have the same position that I have. Well, what kind of arrogance is that? It isn't arrogant at all as long as you are convinced that your position is the truth and not merely a personal opinion that you have.

And there is a vast difference between one's personal opinion and the truth. Billy Graham came to the position that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one comes to God but by Him.

And he committed his life to that message and preaching it wherever he could get an invitation to as many people as would come. He really believes that everybody ought to believe that.

That's radical. Abraham Lincoln. was a radical. He had a passion.

He was an extremist when it came to the preservation of the Union. And he was willing to throw the lives of tens of thousands of Americans into the fight to preserve the Union.

[24 : 55] And all the while, Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee were also radicals and extremists in favor of secessionism.

It all depends on what the cause is as to whether the radicalism is good or bad. Thank God for good radicals. We need more of them.

Radicalism involves commitment, dedication, consecration, a drivenness that consumes you and won't let go until you put it into action.

We need more of that. But with the right goal or objective. Barack Obama is a radical.

He is an ideologue for liberalism. He is. Call it what it is. I'm not being unkind. And I am certainly not being untruthful.

[25 : 59] Because the whole Senate, which he was at one time a member, regarded him as the most extreme liberal in the whole Senate.

And that was when Ted Kennedy was alive. And Rush Limbaugh is a radical.

He is an extremist. And he is over here. And Barack Obama is over here. And most of us are here. And ne'er the twain shall meet.

This is just reality. This is what it is. What makes each one what they are? Information. Received. Processed. Wealth of back experiences applied to it.

Personal preferences applied to it. Out pops a position. A conclusion. That's what you hold. That's what you believe.

[27 : 01] That's what you vote for. That's what you give to. That's where your passion is. Muslim terrorists are radicals or extremists.

We'll get any argument there. What is the goal? They think their goal is honorable. That it pleases Allah to kill as many Jews and as many infidels as possible.

That's their goal. They really, really want you dead. Do you understand that? They want you dead. That's their objective.

And they believe it is a good one. That's their passion. They believe that so strongly they are willing to strap bombs onto themselves and go into a public marketplace and kill as many people as they can kill.

Because they really believe that. It is a passion. Lovers. Lovers are radicals.

[28 : 05] Extremists. Lovers. Extremists. Extremists. Just try. Prying apart.

Two teenagers who are madly in love with the hormones raging. Just try to pry them apart or keep them apart. When Her Majesty and I were dating.

I was 21. She was 19. Every night. This ritual. I'd get on the bus. Fort Lewis, Washington. Get on the Greyhound bus.

And ride into Olympia. About 13 miles. Spend the evening with her. Take her to dinner. Catch the last bus back. Two o'clock in the morning.

Stand reveille at five o'clock. And that went on for four months. And the idea of even thinking about missing a night.

[29 : 03] Are you crazy? Couldn't do that. No way I could be parted from that delightful creature for 24 hours. If I didn't have to be. And finally it just got so bad that we just could not live apart any longer.

So what do you do? You have to get married. So you don't have to spend any more time apart. That's radical. Today. We could use some more radicals. Couldn't we? Today. They just. Can't be apart. But they don't want to be married. So they just live together.

That's their solution. Not a very good one. But lovers are radicals for sure. They are obsessed with each other. You ever get in the presence of someone who is smitten with the opposite sex. And I mean smitten. We would say of them. Boy. He's got it bad. He's lovesick. And. All he wants to do is talk about her.

[30 : 08] And think about her. And. He. If he pulls that picture out of his pocket to show somebody. One more. He's going to wear that thing out. And. What is that?

That's passion. That's extremism. That's commitment. That's. Drivenness. That is being smitten. And what a heavenly feeling that is. Isn't that wonderful? Love is grand. Makes the world go around. Kamikaze pilots of Japan were radicals. Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi were radicals. Feminists. Are radicals. So are male chauvinist pigs. They're radicals also. Militant atheists. Writing best-selling books. Like Richard Dawkins.

[31 : 10] Christopher Hitchens. Sam Harris. They are all. Radicals. Their cause is. Atheism. They are so convinced.

That there is no God. They believe. Everyone. Should believe that. And they are engaged. In an evangelistic effort. For atheism. That's their passion. They are committed to it. They write books about it. They give lectures on it. They draw considerable crowds. They are radicals. They are extremists. They actually believe. Everybody. Should either be like they are. Or. compliment them.

[32 : 06] For being as they are. And support them. And endorse them. And think like they do about that. That's a radical position. They are radicals.

And. Those. Clergymen. Who show up. To protest. Funerals. Of servicemen. Who are killed in action. Can you believe. That. A clergy person. Would show up. At the funeral. Of a marine. Killed in Afghanistan. And protest. With a placard. That says. God hates. Fags. And say. That this marine. Was killed. In action. By an enemy. Of the United States. Because. The United States. Of America. Is tolerant. Toward.

[33 : 04] Homosexuals. And this is God's judgment. He kills our marines. That's radical. That's really extreme.

But there are people. Who think that way. Who believe that way. And. They put it into action. And what you get. Is what you've got. Now. We are talking about. And all of this is just background material. We are looking at. How it is. And why it is. That people make the decisions. They make. And I'm using this. Broad scope. Covering politics. Economics. Inventiveness. Everything else. For one reason. And that is to show you. That religious thinking. And religious. And doctrinal ideas. Are no different. They're all arrived at. The same way. These other things are. It's just.

[34 : 02] In a different area. It has to do. With religious matters. But the process. Through which people pass. In order to reach their conclusions. Is exactly the same.

And once you get that in mind. And get thinking along that line. You will be able to see. And really understand. How and why people. Hold the positions. That they hold. It involves very much. What we're talking about. How did Buddhism begin? Began by Guitanama. Buddha. Where did he get his ideas? Do you realize. That there are. Billions. That's with a B. There are. Billions of people. Into Buddhism. Today. Or. If not billions. At least. Hundreds of millions. Of people. And. Where did it start? How did it? It started with. One man. One man. And there are.

[34 : 59] Hundreds of millions. Who subscribe. To Buddhism. The thinking. The theology. The conclusions. Reached by one man. Muhammad. And Islam.

How do people. Get to be. Islamists. What's the basis for that? It started. One man. Eighth century. One man. And today. Muslims. Number.

Number. In the billions. Mormons. Mormon theology. Some really.

Strange. Things. With that. Where did they come from? One man. One. Man. Joseph Smith. Eighteen hundreds.

[35 : 56] Jehovah's Witnesses. Where did that come from? There are tens of thousands of people involved in Jehovah's Witnesses today.

They come knocking on your door and want to study the Bible with you. And they've got the kingdom literature and the Watchtower Society and all that. Where did it start? How did that get started? Where did this stuff come from?

One man. Charles. Taze. Russell. One man. Today there are kingdom halls all throughout the country.

Seventh Day Adventism. Where did that come from? One man. William Miller. Christian Science.

Where did that come from? One woman. Mary. Baker. Glover. Patterson. Eddie.

[36 : 57] She survived several husbands. But she came up with these really strange ideas. And as a result, there are Christian Science reading rooms established all throughout the country.

And today, there is a well-respected newspaper. Christian Science Monitor is a national publication. Christian Science Monitor. Where did these ideas come from?

One woman. Where did she get her ideas? Where did Charles Taze Russell get his ideas? Where did William Miller get his ideas? They got them all from the same source.

They got them from the Bible. But now, wait a minute. They are poles apart in their beliefs and their theology. And they got them all from the same book?

Right. Well, how can that be? It's all in how you interpret it. Have we not been told many, many times?

[37 : 59] You can prove anything you want from the Bible. It's all in how you interpret it. And that's very true. Well, then, how are you supposed to interpret it, Mr. Wiseman?

I suppose you think the way to interpret it is the way you interpret it. No. You would be foolish if you went that way. There is Calvinism.

There is Arminianism. There is Lutheranism. There is Methodism. All of these isms. And they all arrived at the conclusions they hold the same way.

From the same book. But they arrived at different interpretations. Well, how in the world are you supposed to know which one is right?

And they all claim to be true. So, who among us, present company included, who among us is really competent and capable and trustworthy to interpret the Bible?

[39 : 17] The answer is, nary one. None of us. None of us.

Did you get that? None of us. Present company included. None of us. Why?

The answer is very simple. Because even though I do not try to be, and I try not to be, I still am.

What? Biased. Prejudiced. It is very easy for me to read the Bible in such a way that it says what I want it to say.

It says what I already agree with. That makes me feel good. This is the position I hold, and the Bible supports it. And it's just such a comfortable feeling.

[40 : 26] God's on my side, and I'm right, and everybody else is wrong. I knew it all the time. But the truth is, man is not to be trusted with the interpretation of Scripture.

Man is not to be trusted. Present company included. Well then, people's all we've got.

What do we have left? How are we supposed to know what the Bible says? How do we interpret the Bible? I'm sorry, but our time is gone.

It is 1130, and I am committed to quitting on time. But this is a good place to pick up next week, and we will do so. Some of you, I'm sure, already know the answer to this question, and it is a delightful answer.

It's the only one with which anyone, in my estimation, can truly be comfortable, and we will pursue that. May we pray. We are grateful, our Father, for extremism, and for radicals, who promote the right causes, for the right ends, to bring about positive changes that are needed, to correct injustice, and to right wrongs.

[41 : 50] We are all beneficiaries of that. We lament the fact, that there are many radicals and extremists, with wrong and injurious causes, who do great harm, and bring great pain to humanity. We recognize them as well. But we are grateful, that there are truths, and positions, about which, we should, be passionate, and we should, be radical.

Not moderate, but extreme, when it comes to those things, that really matter. and how grateful we are, that our Lord Jesus Christ, was an extremist, going, to the incredible extreme, of being made flesh, and dying, in our place, on a Roman cross.

surely, that is the world's greatest example, of positive, extremism. The title belongs to our lovely Savior.

Thank you, for your passion, on our behalf. In your name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[43 : 11] Amen. Amen.