

Issues That Have Divided Us:

Attitudes Toward Scriptural Authority

Introduction:

- A. Division among “churches of Christ” in America is a historical fact.
 - 1. The major division in the last half of the 1800's.
 - 2. The major division in the last half of the 1900's.
- B. We need to understand the issues that have divided us.
 - 1. To understand why different groups exist.
 - 2. To avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.
 - 3. Hence our series on “Issues that have divided us.”
- C. The underlying problem behind the issues that have divided us is two-fold.
 - 1. Different views about the need for scriptural authority.
 - 2. A lack of understanding the overall nature of scriptural authority.

Discussion:

I. Two Opposing Different Views of Authority.

- A. Conservative view.
 - 1. A thing is forbidden in religion unless it is expressly authorized.
 - 2. We must have authority for all that we do in religion.
- B. Liberal view.
 - 1. A thing is permitted unless expressly forbidden.
 - 2. We do many things for which we have no authority.
- C. Biblical view
 - 1. Must be expressly authorized (cf. Lev. 10:1-2. Matt. 15:9, 13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).
 - 2. Must have authority for all we do (Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11)

II. Three forms of Authority — *Commands, Examples and Necessary Inferences.*

- A. This is a self-evident principle.
 - 1. Recognized in secular law.
 - 2. Recognized in all kinds of authority: Civil, parental, schools, etc.
- B. This is a divinely recognized principle — Jesus used all three.
 - 1. Command (Matt. 4:4).
 - 2. Example (Luke 4:23-27).
 - 3. Necessary inference (Matt. 22:31-33).
- C. This is illustrated by Lord's supper.
 - 1. Command: “This do...” (Luke 22:19)
 - 2. Examples: “Upon the first day of the week when...” (Acts 20:7).
 - 3. Necessary Inference: Every necessary inference, like Sabbath”

III. The Basic Kinds of Authority

- A. General and Specific.
 - 1. The principle illustrated (Gen. 22:1-3; Heb. 7:14).
 - 2. The principle applied: Gopher wood, sing, go, teach, etc.
- B. Rights and Obligations.
 - 1. Must do certain things (Matt. 28:18-20; Heb. 10:25).
 - 2. May do certain things (1 Cor. 9:1-6).

Conclusion:

- A. Understanding authority would go a long way in preventing and solving problems that divide.
- B. Only one thing worse than division — unity in error.