Pillars of the Truth

Article #18

*Can We Understand the Bible Alike?*

David Lipscomb

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*David Lipscomb (1913)*

WORK AND WORSHIP. I could prove the same to be true concerning questions that have divided the religious world in years and centuries past in all sections of the world. Were we to examine questions which have destroyed the peace of congregations and disciples, they would be found precisely of the same character. There are two questions over which there is great diversity of sentiment. One affects the worship; the other, the organization and consolidation of churches. On all points of worship for which we have either precept or example in the Scriptures there is perfect unity. The assembling, the teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, prayer, exhortation, singing and making melody in the heart to the Lord—all recognize these as right, proper, and necessary. There is no diversity or division of sentiment on these points that are authoritatively presented in the Scriptures. Some think that the strict order of the primitive times is not necessarily to be observed, and feel themselves at liberty to introduce instrumental music into the worship. Hence, men divide and dispute, are of diverse judgments and are not, cannot be, perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Then, again, in reference to church work and organizations and co-operation to carry it out. The Bible, by both precept and example, teaches that individuals and churches should “teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”—in other words, to spread abroad the religion of Christ, our Redeemer, to lost and ruined sinners. In reference to this work and the means for doing it as recognized in the Scriptures there is not a breath of dissent. Christians are all perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. They may let the selfish and sordid element of their nature prevent their doing what the judgment approves but they are all of one accord of one mind, of the work and manner and means for its prosecution as set forth in the Bible. There can be no division here, but others think that liberty is given them to form new organizations of churches or individuals for doing this work which are known to the whole realm of revelation. When these are presented, the unity of judgment is destroyed and strife and division come.

Now, I believe people can and do understand what God has presented in the Bible precisely alike, and that the questions that cause division and strife are not those taught in the Bible, but those introduced concerning which the Bible teaches nothing. Men cannot agree where they have no rule laid down to guide them. When they have an authoritative rule laid down to guide them, they can be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment. They can never be by introducing practices into the church for which there is no divine authority. The Savior demands unity, and the Holy Spirit says, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). One deferring his judgment to another does not answer the divine requisition. There can be no active, harmonious, hearty cooperation in this course. The demand is imperative: “Be perfected together in the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” Then there is no occasion for compromise. Christians can be perfected together on this and on all questions and practices ordained and commanded in the Bible. Whoever, then, introduces a question or practice not taught in the Bible introduces strife and division and schism. He is a schismatic, a heretic, and works directly contrary to the will of God; he destroys the unity of the followers of Christ, and so makes it impossible for men to believe that he is sent of God. Whoever does this, even under the plea of sending the gospel to the heathen, destroys the ground of man’s faith in Christ, so really promotes infidelity!