

HOLD TO THE PATTERN

God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle according to the pattern He had shown him (Exodus 25:40), and Moses did (39:42-43). Most everyone understands what a pattern is and how important that the prescribed form is followed. Patterns are used in all areas of life, ranging from set forms to assist in assembling to diagrams used to guide to design intended to be reproduced. The New Testament reveals the heavenly pattern to be followed today in regard to spiritual and religious matters.

Men generally are willing to follow assigned patterns when the instruction does not require careful diligence or conflicts with their own personal desires. Unfortunately, modern man tends to assume that he does not need to adhere to all the particulars of the heavenly pattern, thinking that his own wisdom and own judgments suffice in determining what is acceptable and pleasing to God. Like the Israelites during the time when judges ruled and led the nation, most people end up doing what is right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25), not what is right in God's eyes.

The apostle Paul told Timothy, "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me" (2 Timothy 1:13). The apostle's "sound words" were the revelation of the wisdom of God as the Holy Spirit taught (1 Corinthians 2:7, 12-13). What Paul received from the Lord he then preached (1 Corinthians 11:23). What he taught, he taught "everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17). The admonishment to hold fast the pattern was given in view of the fact that men do depart from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1) and do turn away from sound doctrine and truth (2 Timothy 4:3-4). "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Philippians 3:17).

Our Lord Jesus Christ promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). The church is His body, and He is the Head (Colossians 1:18). Life is in the blood, and Jesus' blood purchased the church (Acts 20:28). He loved the church "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26). This special relationship and unique fellowship is not left to men to choose to do whatever is right in their own eyes. He sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles to bring to remembrance everything He had said to them and to guide them into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13).

The divine pattern in the gospel of Jesus Christ is to be transcribed and reproduced. Fellowship with the Father and the Son is dependent upon abiding "in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). Paul urged Christians, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Through the gospel of Christ men are called to salvation and sanctification. That gospel is the standard of authority and rule of measure to be obeyed (Romans 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 2:3). The inspired message of the Lord that has been preserved and passed on to us is to be studied and followed. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." (2 Thessalonians 2:15).