

## **Is There a Divine Pattern For the Church?**

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We must surely realize our need for such a pattern. No reputable contractor would attempt to construct a building without a blueprint. Even the most talented seamstress realizes the need for a pattern. This is because the tasks they undertake are difficult. Of how much more infinite difficulty is the task of the church, which is "the pillar and ground of the truth"? (1 Timothy 3:15)

Indeed, concerning man's entire relationship to God, Jeremiah could cry in all truth, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). You need divine guidance.

And we can know assuredly there is such a pattern. Paul commanded young Timothy: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13). The word "form" means "an example, pattern . . . the pattern to be placed before one to be held fast and copied, model . . . ." (Thayer) This is a plain declaration that there is a pattern. This form, according to the inspired writer, consists of "words, which thou hast heard of me." These are apostolic words. But, the apostles' words are God's words, received by revelation from the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:9-13) These words were written down by the apostles and constitute the New Testament, which we can read and understand. (Eph. 3:1-6) The term "sound" is defined thus: "to be well, to be in good health . . . true and incorrupt doctrine." (Thayer) These are words that are conducive to spiritual health. Being the words of God, they are true. (John 17:17) But we dare not corrupt them.

If one were to add a pinch of arsenic to wholesome wheat flour, death would result. If one adds a pinch of opinion to the wholesome apostolic words, damnation will result. (Gal. 1:6-9) Thus, the divine blueprint for the church consists of the sum total of everything the New Testament says about the church, nothing more or less. Equipped with this pattern, we "may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." (2 Tim. 3:17, ASV)

The aged apostle enjoined an obligation to this pattern. He commanded Timothy to "hold fast" the form. The words "hold fast" mean to "keep," "retain" or "be consistent with." Under the Old Covenant, if one brought into service to God that which was unauthorized, punishment was swift and severe. (e.g. Lev. 10:1-2) Under the New Testament we must "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (by His authority, Col. 3:17) lest we be without God (2 Jno. 9-11) and thus lose our hope of life eternal. (Rev. 22:18-19) Indeed, there is a divine pattern for the church, the New Testament. Will you not lay aside human opinion and by faith be conformed to the divine pattern?