

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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May 12, 2019

Volume 39, # 20

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### **Is There a Divine Pattern for The Church?**

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 John 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?

- Keith Sharp

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## Owe No One Anything

In this modern age credit has exploded. Most everyone has a wallet full of charge cards, from banks, department stores, and oil companies. There is nothing inherently immoral about this, and yet to many those little plastic devils are a grave temptation that enables their discontentment and addiction to things.

Paul wrote the Romans to "Owe no one anything except to love one another" (13:8). This passage is not outlawing all debt, for other passages seem to regulate the practice. As Clinton Hamilton writes in his commentary on Romans, "One may have incurred a debt which if due in the present must be paid because that is the appointed time for it to be paid. Until that point, it is not due. One must not be in arrears in the payment of a debt" (Romans, page 725).

Paul is telling us not to get in situations in which we cannot pay a debt when it is due. Credit cards, mortgages, and car loans have the potential to get people in exactly that situation. The answer to credit trouble, unfortunately, is usually more credit. Carry the balance; take out a second mortgage, whatever it takes. Revolving credit can be a bottomless pit. The over-extension of credit often leads to bankruptcy, in which a man's creditors are usually paid only a small percentage of what they are owed.

This is immoral and a violation of Romans 13:8. Yet the vile seeds were sown long before, when we thought we could be happy if we only had more things.

The problem is more fundamental than a lack of possessions; it is a lack of contentment. Learn how to enjoy life with what you can afford and when more comes, you will appreciate it better (Phil. 4:11). Credit is not always bad, but if it is a substitute for godly contentment, you will regret it all the way to hell.

- J.S. Smith

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## Kinds of Preachers

"If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed until now: but refuse profane and old wives' fables" (1 Tim. 4:6, 7).

These words are from Paul to admonish an evangelist named Timothy, and all others who want to be "good ministers." The word "minister" is obviously not used as a religious title, but rather to describe what Timothy was. The word translated "minister" is also translated by some, "servant," and is used often with reference to a teacher of the gospel. Paul's letters to Timothy show some characteristics of a good minister and faithful steward. Notice a few of them.

*A good minister must be a servant of Christ.* Sometimes preachers and churches forget this. How often have people reasoned "We pay his wages, he should do our bidding," or "He must preach what we want because he works for us." But wages of a gospel preacher come from money contributed to do the work of Christ; therefore, Christ should dictate what that work is, not some large giver or influential person. A congregation should not try to strangle a gospel preacher and force him to preach what they desire. With a dedicated servant of Christ the effort will fail anyway.

To many, a preacher is like an elected political figure. "You please us or else." Paul warned Timothy about this kind of attitude in these words: "For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3,4). When preachers begin to "serve a church" they turn away from the truth. A faithful minister will not swerve to the right or to the left, regardless of the financial or social pressures. He will fearlessly expose any teaching or practice that is contrary to the truth.

*A good minister will be dependable and responsible.* ". . . It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). His mission is to "preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). He must be faithful in presenting the good news of salvation of both Jew and Gentile in the one body which is the church (see Eph. 2:14; 3:3). But rather than do this, some who claim to be Christ's ministers would mock Him by contradicting His teaching or by affirming that what He taught was for an outdated First Century and not needed now. One faithful to Christ must know that His message is authoritative, that it is final, and that our task is to obey it.

*A good minister must not fear man's judgment.* Paul said, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment . . ." (1 Cor. 4:3). This does not mean that a preacher should not be concerned with the welfare and wishes of people. Neither does it mean that he should strive to make people mad at him. It simply means that he should not be intimidated by their judgment, opposition, or hatred so as to change his teaching or soften it in any way. God will judge all by Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1). God's judgment will vindicate the message and the faithful messenger (2 Cor. 5:10).

- O. C. Birdwell, via *Truth Magazine*, 08/19/76

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## Almost Is Not Enough

It is sometimes said of an individual who has not yet obeyed the gospel, "I believe he is almost ready to be baptized," or that "she is close to becoming a Christian."

Friend, are you one of those people? Can we not somehow impress upon you (1) that "almost" is not sufficient to make one a Christian; (2) that being "close" is not the same thing as being "in Christ"; (3) that you are still in a LOST condition; and (4) that Christ is coming in judgment one day? It is essential for you to note the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 Where he states that those "who obey not the gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction ..." We URGE you to take a serious look at your life, your need of salvation, and the hope that can be found only in Christ. Obey the gospel TODAY.

- Barney L. Keith

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- > "Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them!"
  - > "No one can help everyone, but everyone can help someone!"
  - > "If you would have God hear you when you pray, you must hear Him when He speaks!"
  - > "Be kind whenever possible - and, by the way, it is always possible!"
  - > "Judge each day not by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Fear!*" (Text: Isa. 12:2); Sunday evening:  
Hebrews Class: 12:14-29, p. 137-ff.