

5. Following with Certainty the New Testament Pattern

Is there a New Testament pattern and are we bound to follow it? As we discussed previously, this is the fundamental issue that divides the new innovative practices from the teaching of the New Testament. These innovative practices include new and different items of worship and new ideas of what constitutes the fellowship of true believers. We have previously established: (1) *Jesus preached a gospel of certainty of works and worship.* (2) *over and over the Lord reiterated these principles.* (3) *The Lord charged his disciples to teach certainty in the practices that the church was to observe.* (4) *The spirit was to guide the apostles into all truth.* (5) *From the beginning, the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.* (6) *The New Testament writers understood that they were teaching the verbally inspired word of God.* (7) *Paul showed exactly how these words of the Spirit came to us.* (8) *The certain language is unmistakable, for all time.* (9) *The apostles and prophets taught that a certain pattern defines true believers and their fellowship.* (10) *The apostles and prophets taught that a certain pattern defines acceptable worship for Christians.* We now address the degree to which we are bound to follow the pattern so emphatically taught by the Lord and His apostles and prophets.

The Lord taught that those who practice lawlessness would be told, "I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness." **Matt 7:23.** The word for *lawlessness* describes a condition of people who call on the name of the Lord and even do wonderful works in His name, but are not doing the will of the Father. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." **Matt 7:21.** Today's innovators have their own works, which are not found in the teaching of the Lord or his apostles and prophets. They look to their fervor and enthusiasm for justification, when they should seek the "pattern of sound words." **2 Tim. 1:13.** In **John 17:17,** Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in truth, Your word is truth." We are bound to accept the teaching of the New Testament and apply its pattern or accept the consequences of not entering into the kingdom of heaven. We should fear lest we hear those fateful words: **"I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness."**

The apostle Paul taught that if an apostle, an angel from heaven, or any man should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! **Gal 1:6-10.** Paul also said in verse 7, "Which is really not another [gospel]; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ." In the strongest way, Paul declares the disfavor to come on any who even distorts the gospel. The false teachers in Galatians had another thing in common with modern innovators. They both appeal to the Old Testament to support their perversion. False teachers will say today that their practices (e.g., instrumental music) were done in the Old Testament or that God did not hold the people of the Old Testament to the pattern that he laid down. Paul's response was emphatic and clear in **Gal 5:4:** "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." When modern teachers appeal to the Old Testament to justify their practices, it is clear that their practices are not found in the New Testament. We should respond to them with the words of Paul in **Gal 3:1-3:**

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

If we are accursed for distorting the gospel, how careful we should be to follow the word of truth. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." **Rom 10:17.** The apostle Peter agreed: "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God." **NIV 1 Peter 4:11.** **If anyone preaches a distorted gospel, he will be accursed.**

People who distort the truth are savage wolves, so be on your guard. Paul warned the elders of the Church at Ephesus in **Acts 20:29-31:** "Savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard!" When these savage wolves come among us teaching things not found in the New Testament, both elders and members must respond to protect the Lord's church. Elders are not only to be on guard, but they are told:

To hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. . . . who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. **Titus 1:9-11.**

Here Paul contrasts the faithful word, the teaching, and sound doctrine with teaching things that they should not. The truth is clear, the error is clear, and the remedy is clear: **Refute those who contradict and silence them.**

Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished . . . Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. 2 John 8-11.