

What About Your Parents or Other Loved Ones?

Do you hesitate to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) or even to admit that the scriptures teach that you should be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16) because your parents or some other loved ones have failed to do so and because you are concerned about their spiritual welfare? If so, you may be risking your eternal salvation while doing nothing to enhance their eternal destiny.

It is natural for you to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of your parents or other loved ones. You must realize, however, that your obedience can neither save your loved ones nor condemn them to hell. God will fairly judge each person according to their own works and according to His word (2Corinthians 5:10; John 12:48). Hence, Paul said, "For every man shall bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:5).

What does love, honesty, and true devotion to God demand when you learn truths that are different from what you once believed and from what your family and close friends believe and practice? If you learn "the way of God more perfectly," that is, learn more about God's will than you knew before, does not honesty and true devotion demand that you change and obey the Word of the Lord just as Apollos did when he was taught "the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26)? And would not parents or loved ones who are honest and truly devoted to God expect a loved one who has learned "the way of God more perfectly" to obey the commands of God - even the command of baptism? To suggest otherwise would cast reflection upon and question the honesty and devotion of your loved ones.

You have no opportunity to teach "the way of God more perfectly" to loved ones who are dead. They will meet the Lord as they were when they died, however honest and just they were, and with the choices they made while on earth. Your obedience or disobedience will not change their eternal destiny, only yours. Do not be so concerned with judging the dead that you fail to walk wherein you have attained (Philippians 3:16) or fail to preach the gospel to the living.

If your parents or loved ones are still alive, you may still have opportunity to teach them "the way of God more perfectly." If they are truly devoted to the Lord, they want all of the truth (Matthew 4:4). It is very unlikely you will ever teach them "the way of God more perfectly" if you do not admit truth and obey it yourself.

You must remember, also, that while you love your parents and/or others here on earth, you must love Christ more and put Him first, or you cannot be His disciple (Luke 14:26; Matthew 6:33). You will be judging yourself "unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13:46) if you allow your love for others to keep you from obeying God.

Love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37) and obey Him at all costs; do not be ashamed of His gospel, but share it with those whom you love. By doing so, you will save yourself, cause no loved one to be lost, and save those loved ones who will "hear" you (1Timothy 4:16). Do not wait; be baptized for the remission of sins to be saved!

- by Harold Hancock

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"? (1Timothy 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?

- by Keith Sharp

Everyone Counts!

Our country accomplished some incredible things during the hard trials of World War II. The feats of brave men and women who faced the enemy on the battlefields inspires us. But there is also amazing historical data that documents the amount of war materials and supplies that were produced in relatively short periods of time right here on the homefront. With limited resources that sometimes required rationing, and without the advantages of the technology we now enjoy, the nation's "war machine" turned out essential equipment at a staggering pace. How was this done?

The key to this effort was a campaign to convince every single worker of his or her importance to the ultimate goal of defeating the enemy and winning the war. The leaders of our country successfully persuaded everyone to work hard, make sacrifices and contribute what they could to this end. The results were amazing. Against huge odds, the victory was won.

We are in another sort of a war. There are no tanks, planes, bombs or missiles. We do not need workers preparing bullets or medical supplies. There's no need for rationing of gasoline or other necessary products. Instead, we are in a spiritual war (2 Cor. 10:3,4). We battle against a very real and powerful enemy (1 Peter 5:8).

To win this war, we definitely need every Christian fully engaged. Everyone counts! We cannot afford to have some of our vital workers slacking off in their duties. We must all "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). Diligent effort, significant sacrifice, and determined commitment to the cause are essential. Every Christian serves in a critical capacity (Eph. 4:15,16).

Some might suggest that the odds against us are overwhelming. But in truth, with God on our side, the enemy is doomed! As Elisha told his fearful servant: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16).

- by Greg Gwin