

## Adding To The Word Of God

One Sunday morning, a young preacher was approached by a sister in the congregation who told him a certain brother was angry at him, because he understood the preacher to say that it is always wrong to play an instrument of music. The preacher approached the man and said to him, "I play a coronet." He then explained to him what the sister had said. The man responded that the woman had misunderstood. The man had not misunderstood what the preacher said at all. He was upset at what the preacher did say—that it is wrong to use mechanical instruments of music in the worship service!

The two men stepped to the side of the "churchyard," where, as the preacher explained to me, it got rather heated and loud. The conclusion of the whole episode was that the man accused the preacher of being a judaizing teacher and adding to the word of God by preaching that it is wrong to use instrumental music in the worship service. How much ignorance can reside in one skull? He was the one adding to the word of God!

To add to anything means that additional points, substances, or actions are attached to an original. If the preacher added to the word of God by preaching against instrumental music in the song service, but instrumental music is not mentioned in the New Testament, the only thing he could have been guilty of adding was singing. However, singing is not only authorized by the word of God; it is commanded (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)! He had not added anything to the Word of God! The man who added to the word of God was the one who ignored Jesus teaching that God must be worshiped *"in Spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). Since instrumental music is not a part of the truth God has revealed about worship, one who adds it has added to the word of God.

If one preaching against instrumental music makes him guilty of adding to the word of God, so are those who, perhaps giving offence to the Cowboy Church, preach against adding bullriding as an act of worship, those who speak against including vanilla shakes and french fries in the Lord's Supper, and those who preach that it is wrong to pray to Mary! In other words, according to some, adding to the word of God means not allowing someone else to add to it!

The argument is as old as Martin Luther and Huldreich Zwingli. Luther believed that if the Bible did not specifically condemn an act in religious observance, man was free to do it. Zwingli, on the other hand, taught that one must have Bible authority to do a thing, or it must be excluded. As sharp as the disagreement was, we dare say that Luther would never have been so moronic as to accuse Zwingli of adding to the word of God.

How puzzling it is that those who accuse faithful brethren of legalism refuse to see the facts. The Pharisees were guilty of binding *additional acts* (their traditions) to the law of God (Matt. 15:1-9). In the first century church, the judaizing teachers were guilty of adding additional conditions of salvation (circumcision and other requirements of the law of Moses) to the gospel (Acts 15:1). These matters were additions, because the only thing the gospel says about them is that Jesus took them out of the way (Col. 2:14) and nailed them to the cross. Had modern day liberals been present they, would not have been in agreement with the apostles, but with the Pharisees and Judaizers. It is their actions of adding instrumental music and observing the Lord's supper in the middle of the week, parallel the

actions of the Pharisees and Judaizers, not the actions of the faithful who refuse to accept them, that are wrong. By no stretch of the imagination do brethren who teach and preach fidelity to the word of God manifest legalism or Pharisaism. The accusers are the guilty, not the accused.

We beg pardon if this sounds a bit redundant. Perhaps we are caught up in astonishment at the circumstances between the young preacher and his accuser. We do not recall a single time when the Pharisees or the judaizing teachers ever accusing the apostles of adding something to God's law. We do, however, remember that Jesus rebuked them sharply for *their* additions. The Judaizers were rebuked by Paul, not because they preached against binding circumcision, but because they added it to the Gospel.

The argument liberals make today is that it takes away from one's liberty in Christ if he is told he may not with God's approval do that which God has not approved. Three pertinent questions are these: Must men restrict themselves to what God has authorized when coming to prostrate themselves before the great I AM (Jn. 4:23,24)? Do men have the right to do that which seems right in their own eyes (Jdg. 17:6; Prov. 14:12)? Do men have the authority to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6)? The answers are yes, no, and no.

The position of the man who confronted the young preacher is becoming an almost regular occurrence. Those who love the truth must stand and defend the scriptures which authorize by what they do say, not by that which they do not say.

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