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## Making Faith Too Easy: Subtracting from the Word is as Bad as Adding to It

The last thing we Christians need is another Inquisitor looking for the speck in his brother's eye. I'm not a legalist, and I won't, and can't, impose on you another Law. But in our attempt to move beyond the sins of the past church (which was judgmental, legalistic, not very welcoming, and bossy), have we made our present faith too easy?

Easy music, easy parking, easy sitting (which we all like), easy preaching with not too much of the word, a few verses we like and which sell. Seventy one (until about 1700), or sixty six books of the bible, yet our word menu is less expansive than the menu at the donut shop.

What a simple menu. No judgment, not much cross bearing, not much discipleship which might take 20 years not 20 minutes. Not much sense that God will teach us anything beyond what the pastor says. No afflictions for the faithful, only for the wicked. Prophecy, if at all, is prophecy Lite. Preaching to the choir, who we assume is saved. Isn't this the recipe for the lawlessness of the last days?

I'm all for welcoming churches, and kind pastors, and uplifting simple messages. We need them and we needed the change. None of us will keep coming back to folks that make things more complicated than God says, but there's a difference between simplifying and dumbing down.

When God's house becomes more our house, we are dumbing down the gospel.

When worship means service to God and we come to serve and help ourselves, we are dumbing the gospel. When the just shall live by faith becomes try, try, try, without deliverance and healing and then Holy Ghost empowerment, we have dumbed down the gospel.

We all agree with Proverbs 30,6. "To his words make no addition, lest he reprove you and account you a liar." We all agree that adding things is a big no no. But Revelation 22,19 reminds us that cutting out stuff from God's word is also wrong: "If anyone cuts anything out of the prophecies in this book, God will cut off his share of the tree of life and of the holy city, which are described in the book."

If all the stuff in the book of Revelation applies to me, and it's the Word, and all the rest of the bible is the Word, there's no fat to cut, even in the form of benign neglect to make up for the past sins of the church. Or am I missing something? Isn't it time to put away the Reformation scalpel if it's turning into a revelation scalpel? Isn't it time for us in the Pentecostal movement to show ourselves as possessing more revelation rather than less?

But don't despair. The real body doesn't have to cut out any revelation, because it's all doable for us. Jesus said "My yoke is easy and my burden is light" not because he cut out the hard parts of his Father's prior revelation. He said his entire yoke is not hard since we had seen him, and been faith empowered. Now we can live like he wanted us to and that he would be there to help.

But we do have to put Him on. Then it gets “easy.” How? Because we have him leading us, nudging us and prodding even, yoked to him, as we work for and with Him . So now we can do all He wants, do his yoke, not just wear a yoke of the 613 laws of Moses. Thus, if we catch what he meant- we don’t have to subtract anything from his revelation to make it easy, because we are all now yoked to him who makes all things possible, dare I say “easy.”

Jesus didn’t cut anything out. For example, we know Jesus healed on the Sabbath, and once picked grain with his followers on that day, but he didn’t subtract the Sabbath from the faith of his people. We know the first Jewish Christians worshipped on Sunday and kept the Sabbath on Saturday, and that Sunday came to be known as the “Lord’s [resurrection] Day” when Christians, Jew or gentile, would gather for a fellowship meal, the Lord’s supper and preaching. Was this not the way that God inspired non Jewish Christians, now yoked to him, to keep a day of rest and worship even when we all were freed from the law? No cutting here.

God’s revelation of the Jesus in a new covenant doesn’t require anyone to keep the Mosaic Law, even though Jesus said he did not come to abolish it but to fulfill it. Paul answered the question definitively when he said that the law was a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5,1), not because it was bad per se, but because it could not be accomplished by man without the new law of grace in our heart.

So just because we Christians have been freed from the Mosaic law doesn’t mean that our new yoke is easy by way of subtraction. No. It’s “easy” and “light” by way of Ezekiel 11,19; “I shall give them a new (single) heart and I shall put a new spirit in them. I shall the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh, so that they can keep my laws and respect my judgments and put them into practice.” This is specifically fulfilled in Christ according to Hebrews 8,10.

What a generous God is this God of Israel. We’re not bound by any external law, but we are empowered to live according to the ways and means of God, all of the ways and means he reveals. This new freedom is neither a pass to subtract anything, or a temptation to dumb down Christianity into a marketable retail commodity like any other.

In fact, and in contrast to the present trim it down trend, God says “to whom more is given, more is expected.” That means we who now have the ability to keep God’s ways, we the church, should be adding to the storehouse of our understanding of God in wisdom, rather than cutting out parts that are difficult.

With this new ability to walk the walk, it would seem that God would have a lot more to say to each of us and as his church. Perhaps even a judgment, and a nudge every day, about anything important in our life.. That doesn’t sound like subtraction. Or addition. It sounds like Christ’s promise that he would send another advocate who would “teach us all things.” Hmm. Not so simple, not so streamlined, not so marketable, certainly not a dumbing down. But simply God’s word, a possibility, a promise and a confident game plan.

Then why do churches stop short of teaching us all things? Because to teach a few things, is easier and more efficient, than teaching all things according to the Holy Ghost and the fullness of God's word.

But faithing is better than fretting. And the Lord is my and your shepherd, and He will pastor us when the church won't. Besides a hunger for the fullness of God's teaching and his word is growing, and this hunger may determine who has added or subtracted from the word and who has clung to it.

Peace Out Brothers and Sisters.