

Rev. 22:18-19. the Divine Word, and the Doom of Its Defacers

by Horatius Bonar

The sermon emphasizes the importance of not adding to or taking away from the Bible, as it is the perfect word of God, and any attempt to change it is a sin.

Scripture: Revelation 22:18

Topics: "The Authority of Scripture", "The Consequences of Tampering with God's Word"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the sanctity and perfection of God's Word in his sermon on Revelation 22:18-19, warning against the grave consequences of adding to or taking away from Scripture. He highlights that the Bible is not merely a human text but a divine revelation that demands respect and responsibility from its readers. Bonar stresses that tampering with the Word is a serious sin, leading to dire consequences, including the loss of one's place in the Book of Life and the Holy City. He calls for a reverent approach to Scripture, recognizing its authority and the dangers of modern interpretations that seek to diminish its truth. Ultimately, Bonar urges believers to honor God's Word as the ultimate expression of His character and will.

Transcript

"For I testify unto every man who hears the words of the prophecy of this book--If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book--and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."--Revelation 22:18, 19.

This warning in reference to the Book of Revelation is applicable to all Scripture, and carries us back to Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32. 'You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it.'

It is given in the form of a testimony--from the faithful and true witness, to show its importance, and its truth. To everyone who hears that testimony the warning comes. How great the responsibility of those who have the Bible in their hands! How solemnly they should look on it, and listen to it, and handle it! In this testimony, then there is declared to us--

I. The perfection of God's word. Man may not meddle with it--either to add, or to take away. He may meddle with his own words, or doings, or plans--to alter, to correct, to complete--but not with what is divine. The words and things of God are not for him to touch. They are perfect; perfect for the ends required; perfect for God's purpose in speaking them to man. Can man improve the works of God? the mountains, rivers, flowers? the blue sky, the stars, the sun? Even so is the word of God too perfect for him to touch.

II. The honor God puts on it. He has magnified it, even above His works; so that he who disparages the word of God is more guilty than he who disparages the works of God. Whether we see its perfection is not the question. We may be blind to it; but whether blind or seeing, God expects honor at our hands for His word. It is the fullest expression of His mind, the completest revelation of His character. It is such a declaration of the name of God as can be found nowhere else.

III. Our responsibilities in regard to it. It is not given us for mere speculation or gratification; but for something far higher. We are responsible for the way we treat it, study it, profit by it. Its perfection makes our responsibility very great, and appeals to our consciences most powerfully. Were it not so perfect, we might deal with it as we deal with a human volume; were it not divine, we might forego the honor to it of which we speak. Hence the modern dislike to the idea of a perfect Bible; because the pressure upon the conscience is felt to be so solemn and so overpowering, with no possibility of evasion or escape. Definite Bible doctrine, the age hates, as trammeling its freedom--specially doctrine defined by a divine revelation.

IV. The sin of tampering with it. In regard to many of the things of God, the idea is, that while it is a misfortune to be in error, there is no sin in it. No sin in differing from God! No sin in trifling with His truth, or denying it! No sin in undervaluing His revelation! The sin of tampering with the Bible is one of which man is not easily persuaded; yet in the reckoning of God it is real and great. Every low thought about the Bible is sin. Every attempt to touch it, either in the way of addition or subtraction, is sin.

V. The danger of meddling with it. The danger is exceeding great; and the punishment awarded to the meddlers is the declaration of the danger. God will not be mocked in this!

There are two opposite ways in which men treat the Bible--to add or to take away; and both these our text condemns in the most fearful way.

(1.) The doom of those who ADD. 'God shall add unto them the plagues written in this book.' Those plagues are very fearful. Read the plagues of the seals, the trumpets, the vials. Are they not fearful? They are for this life, as well as for that which is to come. The very mention of them is appalling. Who in our day credits such things, or believes that God will execute such terrible vengeance upon all such as add to His word! The Pharisees added to it; the Romanists add to it; and we ourselves often add to it, by the way in which we enter on its perusal with unteachable hearts, with preconceived opinions, which would make the obvious meanings of the word give way before them. Let us tremble at the word! Add not unto His word, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar. God adds His plagues to the adders of His book!

(2.) The doom of those who TAKE AWAY from it. This is especially the sin of our age. We sit in judgment upon its verities; we tamper with its certainty; we trifle with its words. We take from it; we render it null and void; we deny its authority; we object to its inspiration; we cut off what books we please! But let us not be deceived. God is not mocked. He also can take away--and He will! He will take away--

(a.) Our part of the book of life--effacing our names, and inserting them in the book of death!

(b.) Our part in the holy city. No holy city, no new Jerusalem--for the deniers of His word!

(c.) Our part from the things written in this book. These are many--the promises to the seven conquerors, the first resurrection, the marriage supper! How much we lose! What a condemnation is there for those who reject or mutilate the divine word!

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