

Warnings To the Churches - Not Corrupting the Word

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

The following Sermon was preached in England, in August, 1858.

"Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God" (2 Corinthians 2:17)

It is no light matter to speak to any assembly of immortal souls about the things of God. But the most serious of all responsibilities is, to speak to a gathering of ministers, such as that which I now see before me. The awful feeling will come across my mind, that one single word said wrong, sinking into some heart, and bearing fruit at some future time, in some pulpit, may lead to harm, of which we cannot know the extent.

But there are occasions when true humility is to be seen, not so much in loud professions of our weakness, as in forgetting ourselves altogether. I desire to forget self at this time, in turning my attention to this portion of Scripture. If I say little about my own sense of insufficiency, do me the justice to believe, that it is not because I am not well aware of it.

The Greek expression, which we have translated, "peddle," is derived from a word, the etymology of which is not quite agreed on by linguists who compile dictionaries. It either means a tradesman, who does his business dishonestly, or a wine maker, who adulterates the wine which he offers for sale. Tyndale renders it, "We are not of those who chop and change the Word of God." Another version of the Bible says, "We are not as many, who adulterate the Word of God" [Rhemish versions]. In our margin we read, "We are not as many, who deal deceitfully with the Word of God." In the construction of the sentence, the Holy Spirit has inspired Paul to use both the negative and the positive way of stating the truth. This mode of construction adds clearness and unmistakableness to the meaning of the words, and intensity and strength to the assertion, which they contain. Instances of a similar construction occur in three other remarkable passages of Scripture, two on the subject of baptism, one on the subject of the new birth. (John 1:13; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 Peter 3:21). It will be found, therefore, that there are contained in the text both negative and positive lessons for the instruction of the ministers of Christ. Some things we ought to avoid. Others we ought to follow.

The first of the negative lessons is, a plain warning against corrupting or dealing deceitfully with the Word of God. The Apostle says, "Unlike so many" who do it, pointing out to us that even in his time there were

those who did not deal faithfully and honestly with God\

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