

“A Warning from the Word of the Lord”

¹⁴ Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

¹⁸ For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.”

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

We now reach the final section in this brief survey of the Book of Revelation. There are many things in this book that are repetitive. Often we have seen the same story or event portrayed before us, but from different angles or perspectives. One of the things that I have tried to do every week as I presented these messages to you is to present not only the similarities in the text, but to also show you the areas where the text was slightly different from other places where it appeared.

This week, our final message, I have decided to title the message, “A Warning from the Word of the Lord.” There are many other places throughout this book where we could rightly see warnings, but today’s passage the warning is more direct.

Before I go on with this, I want to quote the warning I am talking about specifically in this passage:

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

John places at the end of this Book a warning that these words, which are called faithful and true are not be added to or to be taken away from. To those who add to the words, God will add to them the plagues that are written in the book, and those who remove words from the prophecy, we read that God takes away their part or portion from the Book of Life. Obviously this warning is meant to be taken very seriously. But the location of this warning is also very interesting.

This warning is placed not only at the end of the Book of Revelation, it is also providentially placed at the end of Scripture. Revelation is the last book of the Bible. There has been much discussion by Biblical scholars and academics about the scope of this warning. “Is this warning merely about the last book of the Bible or is it also a warning about the Word of the Lord in general?”

R.J. Rushdooney in his book on Daniel and Revelation says the following:

“In a very real sense, Revelation concludes Scripture. It speaks deliberately as a final word. Moses, in Deuteronomy 4:2, declared:

‘Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it. . . .’

Words were to be added by others, but the revelation would be one unchanging word. Now, with the conclusion of Scripture, adding or removing the ‘words’ of the book is forbidden; words can no longer be added. The self-conscious parallel and alteration are too obvious to be accidental. The last words have been given of the unchanging word.”

I believe these words in a very real sense sum up the Final Word of the Lord. His revelation is complete. He has in a very real way “sealed up the vision and the prophecy,” in fulfillment of Daniel 9. The Most Holy has been anointed and the Kingdom has been brought forth. There is nothing to add, and nothing should be taken away. The Revelation of Jesus Christ is complete.

As we may recall from our last message, the angel who was speaking to John said of these words, “These words are faithful and true.” Well, let me say something

clearly. Faithful and true words are words that must be welcomed by all who claim to know Christ. A faithful and a true word can bring comfort and healing, where other words, that are often designed to manipulate or maneuver people or situations bring no peace. And yet so often, we find people attempting to blunt or dull the true words of Scripture to make them more palatable or acceptable, and in doing that they are actually, according to our text bringing judgment upon themselves.

One of the things that we must remember is the warning of our Lord in Matthew 10 verse 28:

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Words matter greatly. Our Lord is identified as the Word of God. And He is called the faithful and true witness. Here in this last chapter we are being warned with a very severe warning not to add or subtract from these words. This means our sensitivity when discussing these things must be ultimately toward the Word of God and not toward how pronouncing the Word of God makes us look.

Now I know this is difficult, because there are often times where Christians will disagree. I have often witnessed this. And just for the sake of this discussion, I am not speaking primarily about huge denominational differences, but I am speaking about disagreements between us. These things are going to happen, but one of the things we must recognize is that in conversations among believers the faithful and true word must speak louder than my opinion, your opinion, and the opinion of 100, 200, 500, or 1000 years of tradition.

Will we be wrong from time to time? Of course, but the question becomes are we willing to submit ourselves to the only standard we have that could be called faithful and true? What are the other things that allow us to compromise on the truth of the Word of God?

Well primarily, what causes us to compromise is fear. We like to be accepted by our friends, our family, by society. So sometimes we do something to be accepted by the herd. Rather than take a stand that is going to cause us to lose popularity even though it is in agreement with God and His word we make excuses. Now, I am not asking us to be constant belligerents. We must be humble and place others above our selves but we dare not compromise the faithful and true word. After all, the Word of God commands us to “give an answer to all who ask of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear.”

The fear we are commanded to have here is fear of God. And of course meekness is born directly from this fear of God. Everyone of us is only who we are in Christ because of what Christ has done for us. The blessings that are given to overcomers throughout this book are not given to those of superior intellectual ability, they are not given to those who are best at destroying their opponents in arguments they are given to those who follow after Christ who in Chapter 19 is seen slaying the nations with a sword that comes forth from His mouth. But not only does Christ carry the sword, He also provides us leaves from the tree of life for healing the nations.

Pastor Stoos has often used the illustration of the opposite errors. You are driving down the road and find yourself running off the right edge. In your attempt to correct you overcorrect and find yourself over in the other ditch. The Word of God as it is presented gives us balance. We have to be careful when speaking truth, that we speak it in love. Sometimes people mistake wrath for righteous anger. And on the other end they confuse sentimentality for love. We cannot add to the words, nor can we take away. And the warning is very severe. Adding to the words gains us our part in the judgments of this book, and to take away removes our part from the Book of Life of the Holy City.

We must regard the Words of God in a very sober and honest fashion.

The Book closes with a promise, a response, and a benediction.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

One thing I have noticed constantly as I have read through this Book numerous times. The order and the patterns of the way things are spelled out in this Book are often written in such a way as to make us see things written herein as a Divine Worship Service. And we see that very clearly right here.

First we see the Lord pronouncing His soon coming. In this way He is calling His people to service. As we do every Lord's Day at Church of the King, we begin our service with the Call to Worship. "Surely I am coming quickly." Is that call here in the last verses of the Book of Revelation.

One of the things we have to understand is the worship service is a conversation, but in this case as in all cases it is a God initiated

conversation. Surely or behold I am coming quickly, as we discussed last week in detail his coming is a coming in judgment. He is coming to inspect those who are His. Have they washed their robes, have they made themselves ready?

After the call to worship we have our time of confession of sins. As we are often reminded, When we find ourselves called to worship, the first thing we should be aware of is that on our own, none of us can stand in the presence of the Lord. As Christians though, we see our need to confess our sins in Christ Jesus. 1 John 1:9 which we often read at Church of the King tells us though that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness in Christ Jesus. Once we have been cleansed we are raised up into heavenly places with Christ Jesus. Where we join in praise of the risen and ascended King with the angels and all the company of heaven and we join with the Church on earth to praise the Lord.

The Lord then ministers to His people with His Word and we should respond in agreement to the Word of the Lord. Notice earlier in this Chapter we have the Spirit and the Bride both saying come. The Spirit is calling for the coming of the Lord in judgment and the Bride in response agrees. Here in this verse, the Lord tells His Church, the recipient of the letter, "Behold, I am coming quickly." And the Church responds with the Words "Amen, Even so, come Lord Jesus."

This is a difficult passage for some. When we are calling the Lord to come, we are calling for His judgment. Calling for judgment is scary for many. And again, some people seem to be overjoyed at the idea of God bringing His judgment on His enemies. We must remember though, As God does not "take delight in the death of the wicked", Christians do not take delight either Yet they who are wicked will be judged perfectly by God, Some will go to eternal punishment and the faithful to eternal life. This is the what Romans 11:22 calls the "kindness and severity of God." We should not delight in troubles that come upon our enemies, yet we can still call for and rejoice in God's righteous judgment.

I think there are two primary reasons most Christians do not like the idea of calling out for God's judgment.

First, they realize that God is not a respecter of persons, and to call out God's judgment on the wicked of necessity brings judgment upon ourselves. There is a fear that in calling for His judgment we will bring judgment on our own heads. Secondly what weighs heavy upon us is the idea that if we stand for righteousness and call for judgment those around

us, who have known us, may accuse of being hypocrites. How many have attempted to stand for righteousness and for the Word of God, and had the opportunity to see our past faults thrown in our face? These are both things that can cause us to pause when calling for the Lord to come and judge, but they really should not. We have to remember that the Blood of Christ Jesus has washed us clean, and truthfully we should not be concerned of accusations that we are not perfect, unless of course we are trying to present ourselves as we are.

Our worship is something that should always keep in our mind the idea that we are sinners in need of a savior. But it should also make us aware that Christ has made us clean.

When the Lord speaks that He is coming, we have heard the Word of the Lord, and we are right to speak out in agreement with that word, I know we are from a different tradition in the reformed community than I grew up in. It was pretty common in the church tradition I grew up in to respond to the preaching with hearty amen's and other comments. Sometimes, I will admit it went a little over board, people often would give an amen or an agreeing word in response to just a voice inflection. But one thing that was very common in the sermons that I often heard, was people were voicing their agreement with the Word of God.

Sometimes, and I am not scolding us, because we often do chime in to voice our agreement with God's Word, but this is not a pattern we learn from other Church traditions, it is a pattern we learn from the Scripture.

The Book and the Bible itself closes with a benediction. The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The people to whom this letter is being addressed are about to go through a time of great trial. And the final word is that the Lord's grace would be with them all.

Closing Comments

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing verse 3:

O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee
Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above

