

LOVING THE WORD

Psa. 119:165

Intro: How I first came to notice this verse-- Robert Harkness was at the Temple Baptist Church in Tacoma and asked someone to suggest a verse of Scripture that he might set to music. Several suggestions were made and from them J. R. Hemminger chose Psa. 119:165.

I was not there at the time, but heard this verse sung over and over again in the services, at camp, etc.

Consequently, it has never left me. Recently my mind has gone back to it again, and I want us to consider it together this morning.

I am certain that the one thing that makes this verse attractive is that it speaks of "peace", "Great peace!"

This is something that everyone is interest in. We may have our own ideas as to what peace means, but we want it, especially if it can be "Great peace".

However, if you read the verse carefully, you will find that peace is not the main theme of the verse. Peace is the possession of certain persons who are described in the verse. It is what is said about these persons, what they do, which results not only in peace, but great peace! So let us look, first of all, at

I. The persons: "they that love thy law".

Note first what the Psalmist might have said, but what he does not say:

- (1) He does not say, Great peace have they which have thy law. If this had been the case, the Jewish people would have been the most contented people in the world. But this is not what it says.
- (2) Neither does he say, Great peace have they which know thy law. People can know a lot of Scripture and yet not have peace.
- (3) Again, he does not say, Great peace have they which believe thy law. Believing is important (as is knowing), but James reminds us, "The demons also believe, and tremble" (2:19); they do not have peace.
- (4) Nor does the Psalmist say that men have great peace

if they will just give in to the Word. After all, some will say, you can't resist God so you might as well give up! But this does not bring peace.

No! It is, "Great peace have they which love thy law."

Before we talk about loving, let us find out what the Psalmist means by the "law". Does he mean the Mosaic law, and that only? Hardly. The Mosaic Law of itself never brought peace to anyone.

The law of God is used here to represent all of the Word of God.

Cf. Isa. 1:10, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah."

The word law (לִּוְיָהוָה) basically means teaching, instruction, precepts--not just what to do, but things to know and believe. As such this word describes all of the Scriptures.

But now, what are we to do with it? Love it!

What is the meaning of love? Certainly not just to talk about how much we love the Word.

It is the Hebrew word, לָוַה, similar to the Greek, ἀγαπάω. It means to love for, to desire. It is a word which singles out a special object. We may use it with reference to a lot of people, but it is a word which is usually reserved in its full meaning for one.

So, it is a love which is exclusive. If we would experience "Great peace", we are not to love the Word as we love other things, but to love it in a way that cannot be compared with our love for anything else.

Evidence of such a love is given right in this Psalm:

- (1) Cf. 119:97 - meditation, reading by syllables.
- (2) Cf. 119:167 - keeping it, guarding it, obeying it, refusing to break it.

But I want you to see another thing about this love. It is a love which is related to a Person--"thy law, i.e., God's law. God and His Word are inseparable. You can't love God without loving His Word, and if you really love (desire, long for) His Word, you will experience a love for Him.

But it is also a present love. Note: The verbs in the first part of our verse are in the present tense. "Great

peace have they which love thy law." A present tense peace demands a present tense love.

So the persons we are talking about are those who love the Word of God and the God of the Word supremely above everything else, and who satisfy their desire for it by reading, meditation, obedience, and any other way they can be exposed to it.

But now, what about

II. The peace: "Great peace".

How we love the verses of the Bible that speak of peace! Note Paul's "grace and peace", the Gk and Heb greetings. Cf. also Isa. 26:3, 4; John 14:27; Phil. 4:6, 7; and others.

What is peace?

Peace is inner tranquility, ~~rest~~ of heart, a feeling of being safe or secure. The Hebrew word $\square \{ \begin{matrix} \sqcup \\ \psi \end{matrix} \}$ comes from the verb $\square \begin{matrix} \sqcup \\ \psi \end{matrix}$ which means to be whole, entire, complete. If a person lacks peace, it means that he feels there is something he needs. He feels inadequate.

Ill. Tommy Skipper's panic button.

Cf. Jn. 20:19, 21, 26. The disciples' cause for fear was gone when Jesus came. The threat still existed, but it did not matter when Jesus was there!

See also Mt. 14:27.

So peace means protection, security, sufficiency.

What is "Great peace"?

Great ($\square \sqcup$) peace is a peace so vast, so tremendous, that it is always more than enough to meet any need, a peace that amazes us with its reality. Cf. Phil. 4:7.

At this point in our verse, the person who loves the Word (as we have described it) has the promise of great peace now. But what about the future? This is where we can be thankful that we have not run out of verse!

III. The prospect for the future: "and nothing shall offend them."

To "offend" is to cause to stumble, or fall; to ruin.

One of the things we worry the most about is the future. It is unknown, unpredictable, uncontrollable--at least to us.

Cf. Prov. 27:1.

What about those unexpected trials, disappointments, upset plans, oppositions, uncertainties (financial, physical, world conditions), etc.?

For the person who loves the Word, reading it, meditating on it, letting his life be guided by it, he will not only experience peace now, but he has the promise that "nothing" can ever arise that will prove too great for the peace of God. What a prospect!

"Peace, perfect peace? Our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne!

It is not that God does what we want Him to do. Sometimes this is not the case. But it does mean that we have come to such a knowledge of Him through the Word that we know He is in control, and we are content to leave things in His hands.

He loves us too much to forsake us.

He is too wise ever to make a mistake.

He is too mighty ever to be inadequate.

"Take your burden to the Lord, and leave it there!"

Concl: Dear Christian, God has provided for you not just peace, but "Great peace". But you will never know it apart from a deep love for the Word that causes you to spend time every day, much time, seeking the Lord Himself.

But manifesting such love, we have the promise of His peace for anything that can arise today, and for every tomorrow!