

The Possibility of Great Peace – Psalm 119:165

I. Introduction:

- A. Only once have I preached from this verse, and it was twenty years ago.
1. I didn't pull that message out, but I was tempted, because I have it listed as a gospel message.
 2. There are just too many great scriptures in the Bible.
 3. And when a quarter of my sermons are about salvation, it gives me even less opportunity to look at great verses like this one. The time has come to correct my neglect.
 4. *"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."*
- B. When the Psalmist uses the pronoun **"thy"** in this verse, it reminds us that this is a prayer.
1. This is devotional, not instructional or exhortative.
 2. Perhaps it is a testimony before God – something which this child of God has tested and found to be true.
 3. And while it is prayer, it is not a request. It is as much praise as it is anything else.
 4. *"Praise God, we have great peace because we love thy law, and nothing shall offend us."*

II. Let's start our study with the word **"PEACE."**

- A. Nearly every sane person yearns for peace.
1. Even those whose lives are spent in being disruptive – they still want peace for themselves.
 2. **But** – because billions of people define and demand peace personally, **their** peace often disturbs the peace of their neighbors.
 3. Like the baby whose diaper is full or his belly is empty, screaming his heart out because he wants peace.
 4. On a larger scale, nations like Israel, or groups like Hamas, want peace, so they attack their neighbors.
- B. Ever since Adam's sin there has been a fight for personal peace.
1. And because of the universality of sin, there is very little peace in the world; it is a fleeting thing.
 2. Even the child of God; the one whose soul is in the hands of the Lord, often lacks genuine peace.
 3. Most people would never quote David, but they'd agree with his **Psalm 55** – *"O that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest."*
 4. But the writer of **Psalm 119** – David or whomever – praises God for possessing great peace.
- C. What is this **"peace?"**
1. This is the multifaceted Hebrew word **"shalom."**
 2. It can't be confined to simply a calm heart, tranquility or a lack of hostility.
 3. The word is found in our Bibles translated as **"health," "wellness," "prosperity," "safety"** and even more.
 4. What would we think, or picture, if we inserted some of those words into our verse?
 - a. *"Great **HEALTH** have they which love thy law."*
 - b. *"Great **SAFETY** have they which love thy law."*
 - c. *"Great **WEALTH** have they which love thy law."*
 - d. *"Great **HAPPINESS** and **JOY** have they which love thy law."*
 5. Aren't these true in one sense or another?
- D. And then there is a Biblical adjective – **"great."**
1. *"Great peace have they which love thy law."*
 2. The Psalmist is speaking to the omnipotent God, praising Him for His **infinite** blessings.
 3. The **greatness** of his peace is **beyond human measure**.
- E. But perhaps its greatness can best be measured by the lack of peace in difficult surroundings.
1. As **David** was living in the caves & rocks while Saul was seeking to kill him, he had access to this peace.
 2. As **Jonathan** faced the overwhelming arrows and swords of the Philistines he could have died in peace.
 3. As Elijah's body melted away, hidden on the hill side by the brook Cherith, he should have been at peace.

- F. Perhaps because we are currently in good health, our refrigerators are full, the rain is falling on our gardens and we aren't at war, we don't appreciate the wealth there is in the Lord's *"shalom."*
1. But when cancer strikes us or our closest loved one, that is when we need to access God's peace.
 2. And the psalmist's point was simple – *"There it is."*
 3. *"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."*

III. But *THIS* great peace is available only to them who *LOVE* God's *LAW*.

- A. *Twenty-five times* the Psalmist refers to God's *"law"* in this song.
1. Sometimes he is obviously referring to the *Decalogue* – the Ten Commandments.
 2. But sometimes it is difficult to confine his thoughts to just one chapter in *Exodus* or the book of *Leviticus*.
 3. Sometimes it appears that he's referring to *Genesis* or *Joshua* – *history & prophecy* as well as *legality*.
- B. *"Great peace HAVE they which love thy law."*
1. It is not *"they shall have peace,"* but they actually have it. It is God's own peace.
 2. How can this country keep its people safe & at peace, not knowing if its enemies should choose to attack?
 - a. Can we build literal walls tall enough to keep out Korean nuclear missiles?
 - b. Would a billion-man army give us peace?
 - c. Can we create enough anti-missile defenses sufficient to stop a million enemy drones?
 - d. We *could* create & threaten a greater retaliation, thereby making the enemy think twice about attacking.
 - e. We *could* make preemptive strikes and destroy anyone whom we consider to be aggressive.
 3. But in the mean time here are thousands of people, including professing Christians, who are worried about their physical safety. It is because they lack the peace of this verse.
- C. We need peace in a number of different ways.
1. Peace about *physical safety* is not necessarily a bad thing.
 2. And *a congenial relationship* with the people living across the road & across the northern border is good.
 3. Of course, we need *peace with God* which is available only through the sacrifice of our Saviour.
 4. But there needs to be *peace in our hearts*. We need *inner peace*.
 5. Which means we need to have peaceful *consciences*, especially when we come into the presence of God.
 6. This is the kind of peace we need when we go to the Lord in prayers.
 7. The presence of the Lord is a dangerous place, when we are in conflict with Him.
- D. But *"great peace have they which love thy law and nothing shall offend them."*
1. *Nothing* shall *offend* these particular people, *because* they are *in fellowship* with the Lord.
 2. And they are in fellowship with Him, because they are standing on the holy ground of His approval.
 3. They haven't come to Him with the current popular standards of morality.
 4. It is not because their political connections are with the less evil group at the moment.
 5. They have great peace because of their relationship with the message of the Bible – all the messages of the Word of God.
 6. And I don't refer to mere intellectual agreement. Their hearts are in actual accord with the Word of God.

IV. *"Great peace have they which LOVE thy law."*

- A. We all know there are *degrees of love* and *varieties of affection*.
1. We might be willing to say that we *"like"* some one or something, but we'd stop short of saying, *"love."*
 2. Could we say that *"love"* comes from deep within us?
 3. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."*
 4. And the third commandment might be: *"Thou shalt love the WORD of the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."*
 5. *"All the heart, soul, mind and strength"* suggests a love which comes from our innermost depths.

6. To have the peace of this verse, the Bible needs to be **our favorite book**, our basic **theology book**, our **romance novel**, our **history book** and our **“how to”** book.

B. One of the unique blessings of all this is that the more we know of God’s Word the more we will love it.

1. It is the man who has **merely been TOLD** about the Bible who criticizes it, or hates it and rejects it.
2. **Cultivating a little bit of love** for the Word is like cultivating a **garden – it grows**.
3. This Psalmist began by honestly confessing, *“O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.”*
4. And as he progressed in his spiritual life he added, *“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,”* and *“The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.”*
5. The deeper he progressed into the heart of God through the Word of God, the deeper grew his love for both the Lord and His Word.
6. There is the source of the peace to which he referred.

C. And by the way, when it comes to love, don’t we take **“as is”** whatever or whoever it is that we love?

1. My wife often tells me that she loves me, probably because she knows I am forgetful.
2. She loves me even with all the **foibles**, **deficiencies** and **disappointments** I create for her.
3. That is a poor illustration for our verse, because there are no deficiencies in the Word of the Lord.
4. But the application is that we must love God’s Word, even when it rebukes our sin, rebukes our faulty intellects and rebukes our deficiencies and disappointments.

V. **“Great peace have they which love thy law: and NOTHING shall OFFEND them.”**

A. The Hebrew word **“offend”** is most often translated in some form of **“cause to stumble.”**

1. The first time it is used in the Bible we read *“Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.”* – **Leviticus 19:14**.
2. We might say, *“Great peace have they which love thy law and nothing shall cause them to TRIP & FALL.”*
3. When Peter and John were arrested, and when James was killed by the Jews, the members of the first church might have lost their confidence and their peace, but they didn’t.
4. They had great peace because they knew and loved the promises God had given to them in His Word.
5. They knew that all things work together for good, because they loved God and were called according to His purpose.

B. At the time when Paul wrote his epistle to the **Philippians**, he was incarcerated in Rome.

1. Early in that letter he encouraged his readers out of their fears for him and for themselves.
2. He said, *“For to me to live in Christ, and to die is gain.”*
3. As for yourselves, *“Be careful for nothing”* – don’t be worriers; look at the Psalmist’s word of praise.
 - a. *“Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made know unto God.*
 - b. *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*
4. The Lord said through **Isaiah** – *“Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock offence to...”* the wicked” – **Isaiah 8:13-14**.

C. In this world of tribulation and strife, we need stability, comfort and peace.

1. The child of God has access to that peace through the Lord and His Word.
2. Peace should be a part of our testimony, as it is in this Psalm, and it should be a part of our evangelistic outreach as well.