

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LOVER OF GOD'S LAW FILLED WITH PEACE.

A Sermon

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“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”—
Psalm cxix. 165.

THIS forms part of a devotional passage. It is not merely a statement that great peace comes to those who love the law of God, but it is uttered as part of a hymn of praise unto the Lord. We cannot praise God better than by stating facts concerning him and his Word. If you desire to praise God, you must speak of him as he is. If you would pour out an acceptable libation before him, you must fill the vessel from himself, as the well-head of all excellence. Our *Te Deums* are simply declarations of what God is: there can be no higher praise. His praises can only be the reflection of his own light. All glory is already in him, none can be added to him; and so, when we are adoring him for his law, and blessing him for giving us his Word, we cannot do better than observe how that law operates upon the heart, and praise him because it so works. We have no need to heap up flattering titles as men do with their kings; we have no need to invent exaggerated expressions; we have but to speak the simple truth concerning our God, and we have praised him.

By the word “law” here is intended, not only the law of the ten commandments, but the whole of divine revelation, as it was in David's time, and as it is now. Whatever God has revealed is loved by saintly men. This sacred Book, which we commonly call the Bible, contains the mind of God, so far as he has seen fit to reveal it to men. It is the law of holiness as the guide of our actions, and the law of faith by which we receive of his grace. Here we have the law of the kingdom of heaven, the law of life in Christ Jesus. As a law of works, this holy Book convinces us of sin; as a law of love, it leads us to Jesus, to find forgiveness through his blood. In David's day, the law was a smaller Book than ours, but he found great peace in the reading of it: it was even then competent for the highest spiritual ends. We have that Book at greater length, but it is one and the same. The same gospel is in Genesis as in Matthew. The

Old Testament was perfect in itself as the law of the Lord, and the New Testament is but an expansion of the same truth which the Old contains. We rejoice to find that our larger edition of the Word of God contains nothing which lessens that great peace which the earlier Scriptures were able to produce. As the light is clearer the joy is brighter, and the reasons for great peace are more clearly seen.

God's law comprises all his precepts, and in keeping these we have peace of conscience; it contains all his promises, and these are our great peace in the hour of need; and it comprehends all those great doctrines which surround the cross of Christ and the covenant of grace, and each one of these is a fountain of peace to our hearts. We take this Book as a whole, and in this way we have peace. We dare not rend it, we would not leave out any part of it, lest we miss the blessed effect which, as a whole, it is calculated to produce. Sitting as learners at the feet of Jesus, our Master, submitting our hearts and minds to the infallible teaching of the Holy Ghost, who leads us into all truth, we find that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.

Three things in the text are worthy of earnest attention. May the Spirit of God bless all we say! First, here is a *spiritual character*—"they which love thy law": secondly, here is a *special possession*—"great peace have they": and thirdly, here is a *singular preservation*—"nothing shall offend them": or nothing shall be a stumbling-block to them. Oh, that we may know our text experimentally!

I. First, here is A SPIRITUAL CHARACTER—"they which love thy law."

Love lies deep, it is in the heart: it is not a thing of the surface, it is of the man's own self. As a man loveth so is he. To love God's law is to have the very nature and essence of our manhood in a right condition. To love the Word is something more than to read it, even though we should study it day and night. It is more even than to understand it; for the cold light of the intellect is of little worth compared with the warm sunlight of love. Many, no doubt, perceive the truths which are taught in God's Word, and so become orthodox in their professed creed; but without love their faith is dead. You cannot learn the law of God as you learn the laws of nature; your heart must be affected by it, and you must obey it in your life, or you do not truly know it. Only he who does the will of God can know of the doctrine. Mere knowledge brings no peace to the man. The truth must go from the head to the heart before its power is known. Some even try to keep the law of the Lord, so far as to make the outward life conformable to morality and religion; but this falls far short of the love of the heart. To stand in slavish fear and dread of God is better than to be utterly indifferent, but it is a poor thing compared with love. Slaves obey their masters because of the lash, and so do many outwardly follow the Word because of the spirit of bondage which will not permit them to rebel; but there is a something lacking: nothing in religion is sound till the heart goes with it. God says, "My son, give me thine heart," and he cannot be satisfied with anything short of it. Search, then, my hearers, and see if you really love the law of the Lord.

He who loves the Word would not wish to have it altered, enlarged, or diminished: it reveals enough for him, and no more; for he is content with what God chooses to teach him. If he finds any want of conformity in his own thought to God's thought, he throws his own thought away, and sets up the divine thought in its place. As he is reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, so is his mind reconciled to the teaching against which he at first rebelled. He loves the law of the Lord just as he finds it; and instead of judging it, and daring to set himself up as a dictator of what it ought to be, he is humble and docile, and cries, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." He loves every truth which the Lord declares, ay, and the very style and method of the declaration. Every word of God's Book has in it music for his ear, beauty for his eye, honey for his mouth, and food for his soul. The teachings of God's Word are to the instructed believer, not only articles of faith, but matters of life. Our faith has imbibed them, and our experience has assimilated them. We could part with everything except what we have learned out of the Sacred Book by the teaching of the Holy Ghost; for that flows through our souls like the blood through our body, and it is intermixed with every vital part of our being. Like wool which has been made to lie long in scarlet, we are dyed ingrain. As certain insects take their colour from the leaves they feed upon, so have we become tintured to the core of our nature with the living and incorruptible Word, which has proved its own inspiration by inspiring us with its spirit. Now we live in the Word as the fish in the stream; it is the element of our spiritual life. This may suffice to set before you the sort of people who obtain great peace from the law of the Lord, because, in the truest sense, they love it.

This inward and spiritual love to God's Word includes many other good things. Permit me to use the connection in order to help myself as to order, and to help you as to memory. Read the first verse of this octave—the one hundred and sixty-first verse: "Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy Word." The love of God's law includes a deep *reverence for it*. That man is blessed who trembles at God's Word. This Book is not to be compared with other books; it is not of the same class and order. It is inspired in a sense in which they are not; it stands alone, and is not one among other books. As towers an Alp above the mole-hills of the meadow, so Holy Scripture rises above the purest, truest, and holiest literature of man's composing. Even could all those other books be purged of error, and be corrected to the highest degree of human knowledge, yet would they no more reach to the degree of the Book of God than man can become God. It is supreme, and of another quality from all the rest of them. Other writings we feel free to criticize, but "My heart standeth in awe of thy Word." The man who loves God's Word does not trifle with it; it is far too sacred to be toyed with. He does not cavil at it; for he believes it to be God's Word. With a docility which comes of true sonship, it is enough for him that his Father says so. His one anxiety is, as far as possible, to know the meaning of his Father's words; and, that known, all debate is out of question. "Thus saith the Lord," is to every true

child of God the end of the matter. I have often told you, my dear friends, that I view the difficulties of Holy Scriptures as so many prayer-stools upon which I kneel and worship the glorious Lord. What we cannot comprehend by our understandings we apprehend by our affections. Awe of God's Word is a main element in that love of God's law which brings great peace.

This advances to *rejoicing in it*. Read verse 162: "I rejoice at thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil." As a conqueror in the glad hour of victory shouts over the dividing of the prey, so do believers rejoice in God's Word. I can recollect as a youth the great joy I had when the doctrines of grace were gradually opened up to me by the Spirit of truth. I did not at first perceive the whole chain of precious truth. I knew that Jesus had suffered in my stead, and that by believing in him I had found peace; but the deep things of the covenant of grace came to me one by one, even as at night you first see one star and then another, and by-and-by the whole heavens are studded with them. When it first became clear to me that salvation was all of grace, what a revelation it was! I saw that God had made me to differ from others: I ascribed my salvation wholly to his free favour. I perceived that, at the back of the grace which I had received, there must have been a purpose to give that grace, and then the glorious fact of an election of grace flowed in upon my soul in a torrent of delight. I saw that the love of God to his own was without beginning—a boundless, fathomless, infinite, endless love, which carries every chosen vessel of mercy from grace to glory. What a God is the God of sovereign grace! How did my soul rejoice as I saw the God of love in his sovereignty, immutability, faithfulness, and omnipotence! "Among the gods there is none like unto thee." So will any young convert here rejoice if he so loves the law of the Lord as to continue studying it, and receiving the illumination of the Holy Ghost concerning it. As the child of God sees into the deep things of God, he will be ready to clap his hands for joy. It is a delightful sensation to feel that you are growing. Trees, I suppose, do not know when they grow, but men and women do, when the growth is spiritual. We seem to pass into a new heaven and a new earth as we discover God's truth. A new guest has come to live within our mind, and he has brought with him banquets such as we never tasted before. Oh, how happy is that man to whose loving mind Holy Scripture is opening up its priceless treasures! We know that we love God's Word when we can rejoice in it. Fain would we gather up every crumb of Scripture, and find food in its smallest fragments. Even its bitter rebukes are sweet to us. I would kiss the very feet of Scripture, and wash them with my tears! Alas, that I should sin against it by a thought, much more by a word! If it be but God's Word, though some may call it non-essential, we dare not think it so. The little things of God are more precious than the great things of man. Truth is no trifle to one who has fought his way to it, and learned it in the school of affliction. "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength!" and that which thou hast gained in the battle is thy joyful spoil.

Further than this, we receive Holy Scripture *with emotion*. David

says, "I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love." He regards all that is opposed to the law of the Lord as hateful lying. Those are hard words, David! Surely you are sinning against the charity of our cultured age! Yes, but when a man feels strongly, he cannot help speaking strongly. "I hate," says he, and that is not enough; he says, "I hate and abhor lying." His whole being revolts at it. He means not only that lying with which in common life men would deceive their fellows, and that is hateful enough; but he refers especially to that kind of teaching which gives the lie to the law of the Lord; for he adds, "But thy law do I love." A good man's hate of falsehood is as intense as his love of truth; it must necessarily be so. He who worships the true God detests and loathes idols. In these days there are many men to whom the truths of Scripture are like a pack of cards, to be shuffled as occasion suits. To them peace and quietness are jewels, and truth is as the mire of the streets. It does not matter to them what this man preaches and what that man writes. Hold your tongue, it will be all the same a hundred years hence; and really nobody can be quite sure of anything! To the man that is loyal to his Lord, and faithful to his convictions, it can never be so; he hates the teaching which belies his God. He that has never felt his blood boil against an error which robs God of his glory does not love the law, nor will he know that great peace which comes by having the law enshrined in the heart.

One other virtue is included in the love of the Word. According to the context, *great gratitude to God* for his Word is formed in the believing heart. "Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments." God's judgments written in his Word are matters of praise.

"This is the judge that ends the strife
Where wit and reason fail."

God's judgments actively going on in the world, which tally with those predicted in his Word, are also matters for adoring praise. The God of the word is the God of the deed. What he says he does, and every day and all the day we praise him for it.

Beloved, God may do what he wills, and we will praise him. He may say what he wills, and we will praise him. We read in his Word stern things, words of wrath and deeds of vengeance. Shall we try to soften them, or invent apologies for them? By no means. Jehovah our God is a consuming fire. We love him, not as he is improved upon by "modern thought," but as he reveals himself in Scripture. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, "this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our Guide, even unto death." Even when he is robed in the terror of his judgments, we sing praises unto his name; even as they did at the Red Sea, when they saw Pharaoh and his host swallowed up of the mighty waters: "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Our hallelujahs are "to him that slew mighty kings; for his mercy endureth for ever." It is not mine to improve upon the character of Jehovah, but to reverence and adore him as he manifests himself,

either in judgment or in grace. I, who am less than nothing and vanity, dare not scan his work, nor bring him to my bar, lest I hear a voice saying, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" What am I that I should be the ultimate judge of truth, or of justice, or of wisdom? Whatever God may be, or speak, or do—that is right: it is not mine to arraign my Maker, but to adore him. Extenuations, explanations, and apologies may be produced from the best of motives; but too often they suggest to opposers that it is admitted that God's most holy Word contains something in it which is doubtful, or weak, or antiquated. It looks as though it needed to be defended by human wisdom. Brethren, the Word of the Lord can stand alone, without the propping which many are giving it. Those props come down, and then our adversaries think that the Book is down too. The Word of God can take care of itself, and will do so if we preach it, and cease defending it. See you that lion. They have caged him for his preservation; shut him up behind iron bars to secure him from his foes! See how a band of armed men have gathered together to protect the lion. What a clatter they make with their swords and spears! These mighty men are intent upon defending a lion. O fools, and slow of heart! Open that door! Let the lord of the forest come forth free. Who will dare to encounter him? What does he want with your guardian care? Let the pure gospel go forth in all its lion-like majesty, and it will soon clear its own way and ease itself of its adversaries. Yes, without attempting to apologize even for the severer truths of revelation, seven times a day do we praise the Lord for giving us his judgments, so righteous and so sure.

I have shown you now, dear friends, how this love lies deep in the heart, and how it includes much of honour and reverence; let me further remark that *this love is productive of many good things*. They that love God's Word will *meditate* on it, and make it the man of their right hand. What a companion the Bible is! It talks with us by the way, it communes with us upon our beds: it knows us altogether, and has a suitable word for every condition of life. Hence we cannot be long without listening to our Beloved's voice in this Book of books. I hope we realize the character described in the first Psalm: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water." Love to the Word of God creates great *courage* in the defence of it. It is wonderful how the most timid creatures will defend their young, how even a hen becomes a terrible bird when she has to take care of her chicks: even so, quiet men and women contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and will not tamely submit to see the truth torn in pieces by the hounds of error and hypocrisy.

The love of the law of God breeds *penitence* for having sinned against it, and *perseverance* in obedience to it. It also begets *patience* under suffering; for it leads the man to submit himself to the will of God whom he loves so much. He saith, "It is the Lord. Let him do what seemeth him good." The Word of God begets and fosters *holiness*. Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth." You cannot study the Scriptures diligently and love them

heartily without having your thoughts and acts savoured and sweetened by them. A gentleness and kindness will be infused into your spirit by the very tone of the Word; a sacred delicacy and carefulness of conduct will surround your daily life in proportion as you steep your mind in Scripture. Let me commend to you, my beloved friends, that you live with the law of the Lord, till even men of the world perceive that you keep choice company. The trashy lives of most people are the fit outcome of the trash which they read. A life fed on fiction is a life of fiction; a life fed on divine fact will become a life of divine fact. I have not time in which to show you all the sweet uses of the law of the Lord: it doeth much every way for the formation of a perfect character. No moulding force is so much to be desired as that of the Word of the Lord in the love of it.

This much, however, I must add: if in any of us there is a love of the law of the Lord, *this is a work of the Holy Spirit*. Nature does not love God, and hence it does not love God's law. Human nature is in open and active rebellion to everything that is commanded or commended by the thrice-holy God. If, then, thou lovest God and his holy law, the Holy Ghost has been at work in thee; and by this new love it is proven that thou art a new creature. The old nature delights itself in everything which is of the earth earthy; it is only the new and heavenly life which can appreciate and love heavenly things. My brother, let thy love of the law be to thee a proof of thy regeneration; thou hast passed from darkness into marvellous light, for thou lovest light. Let this be to thee the evidence of thine election: thou hadst never loved God and his law if he had not loved thee first. What can thy love to God be but a reflection of his love to thee. Wherefore, hear him say, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." See, also, in this love of God's law the prophecy of thine ultimate perfection. We do not keep the law as we would; but if we will to keep it, that which holds the will is the real law of our life. If there be in us a strong and passionate desire to accept and obey God's Word in everything, and to be conformed to it in thought and life, that desire will ultimately get the victory. Use well the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and by the force of thy love give sin sharp and heavy thrusts, and thou shalt conquer until every thought is brought into captivity to the law of Christ.

II. We have spent too long a time upon our first point, and shall have to be brief upon the other heads. Our second division is a very sweet part of the text; here is A SPECIAL POSSESSION, "great peace have they which love thy law." When Orientals meet each other their usual salutation is "Shalom"—"Peace be to thee." The word does not mean merely quiet and rest, but happiness or prosperity. Great peace means great prosperity. Those who love God's law have great blessedness in this life as well as in that which is to come. In loving the law of God we have intense enjoyment and real success in life.

Let us, however, take the text as we have it in our Bibles. By peace here is not meant that a man who loves God's law will have great peace with everybody, for that is not at all true. If David penned this sentence, he certainly was not an instance of great peace

with men flowing out of his love to the Lord's law. He was a man of war from his youth. He had peace as a shepherd boy, but even then he had to kill lions and bears, and soon after he had to meet a giant in single combat. Neither in his family nor in Saul's court was he at peace. He was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, and had to run for it from day to day. He had not much earthly peace; for when he had done with Saul, the Philistines invaded the land. If it be possible, we are to live peaceably with all men; but he who has put enmity between the serpent and the woman never meant that we should enjoy the friendship of the world. The great peace which they have who love God's law refers to a peace which can exist when strife rages all around us.

Does not it mean this—first, *great restfulness of the intellect*? If we love God's law in the sense in which we have explained it, so as to stand in awe of it, and rejoice over it, the result will be great peace of mind. Everybody must find infallibility somewhere. Some think it is with the Pope at Rome, others dream that it is in themselves: the second theory is no more true than the first. Others of us believe that infallibility lies in the Word of God: this Book is to us the final court of appeal. When God's Holy Spirit leads us into the truth which he has revealed in this Book, we feel a full assurance that we know the truth, and we speak from experience when we say that the loving belief of the Word brings us great intellectual repose. I care nothing what supposed philosophers may discover: they cannot discover anything true which is contrary to God's Word. I know that I am speaking that which is best for my fellow-men in the highest and best sense, when I am not venting a theory, but setting forth a revelation from heaven.

He who gave us the infallible Book has all the responsibility for its contents. If I believe what God tells me, and do what he bids me, the results are with him, and not with me. He is the ruler of the universe, and not I; and if there be any terrible mysteries, he must explain them, and not I, if they ought to be explained. I am like a servant who is sent to the door with a message; if I deliver the message which my master gives me as I receive it, you must not be angry with me, for I did not invent the message, I only repeated it to you. Be angry with my master, not with me. That is how I feel when I have done preaching. If I have honestly preached what I believe to be in God's Word, I am free from all responsibility for my ministry. My responsibility lies in endeavouring to interpret the Word as clearly as I can; I am not accountable for its teaching. I have not before me the unbearable burden of composing a gospel. I remember well a minister, whom I much respect, saying to me, "I wish I could feel as you do. You have certain fixed principles about which you are sure, and you have only to state them and enforce them; but I am in a formative state; I make my theology fresh every week." Dear me, I thought, what a hopeless state for progress and establishment! If the student of mathematics had no fixed law as to the value of numbers, but made a new multiplication table every week, he would not make many calculations. If a baker were to say to me, "Sir, I am always altering the ingredients of my bread: I make a different

bread every week"; I should be afraid the fellow would poison me one of these days. I would rather go to a man whose bread I had found good and nourishing. I cannot afford to experiment in the bread of life. Beside, there is an intellectual unrest in all this kind of thing, which is escaped from when we come to love the Word of the Lord as we love our lives. Oh the rest of knowing within your very soul that the truth you rest upon is a sure foundation!

Those who love God's Word have also a great peace which comes of a *pacified conscience*. Conscience is as a terrible wild beast when aroused and irritated by a sense of sin. Nothing will quiet conscience effectually and properly but the great doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. When we see that God has laid on his only begotten Son all our iniquities, and that the chastisement of our peace was exacted of him, as our substitute, then conscience smiles upon us. If God is satisfied with regard to our sins, we are satisfied too. We see in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ that which must satisfy divine justice, and therefore our conscience receives a safe and holy quietus, and we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the atonement.

And the same conscience also brings great peace when it bears testimony to renewal of heart and life. When a man knows in his own soul that he seeks to do that which is right in the sight of God, and that he is aspiring after a pure, gracious, useful life, he has great peace even when others ridicule him. If you have taken your own way, and acted dishonestly for gain, peace will not visit your heart; but if you have loved God's law, and kept to the way of strict integrity, you will have within your own bosom an angel of peace to strengthen you in the hour of sorrow. "The testimony of a good conscience" is like the song of the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem.

Beloved, what a peace the love of the Word brings to *the heart*! All hearts require an object of love. How many hearts have been broken because the thing beloved has disappointed them, and proved false to their hopes! But when you love God's Word, your love is not wasted upon an unworthy object. It introduces you to Christ, and you love him intensely, and however much you yield your heart to him, you are always safe. Jesus is never a Judas to his friends. Jesus cannot be loved too well, and hence the heart has great peace when it comes to him.

To love God's Word gives great peace as to *our desires*. You will not be grasping after wealth when the Word is better to you than the most fine gold. You will not be ambitious to shine among men when to you the Word of the Lord is a kingdom large enough. Your desires will be regulated by true wisdom when your heart is garrisoned by the Word of the Lord which dwells in you richly. When Christ himself is our all in all, we are harboured in the haven of peace. When our desires find their pasturage around the Great Shepherd's feet, our ambitions cease to roam, and we abide at home in peace. Content with a dinner of herbs in our Lord's company, we no longer pine for the stalled ox of the wicked who prospers in his way. To love the law is to cease from covetousness, and to cease from covetousness is great peace.

When we love God's law also, we reach forward to the peace of *resignation* to God, acquiescence in his will, and conformity to it. It is of no use to quarrel with God; let me say more, it is disgraceful, ungrateful, and wicked for a child of God to do so. When we perfectly yield to God, our heart's sorrow is at an end. The sting of affliction lies in the tail of our rebellion against the divine will. When we love God's Word intensely, we take pleasure in persecutions, tribulations, and infirmities, since they instruct us in the divine promises, and open up to us the hidden meanings of the Spirit. Our mind is so near to God, and so pleased with all that pleases him, that we do not desire to suffer less, or to be less weak, or less tried, than the will of God ordains. To love the law and the Lawgiver goes a great way towards loving all that he appoints and decrees; and this is a garden of peace to all who know it.

Besides, the love of the Word breeds a *happy confidence in God* as to all things in the past, the present, and the future. Whatsoever the Lord does or permits must be right, or work right. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." This is a very peace-breathing belief. When we love God's Word, we see God at the beginning of everything, God at the end of everything, and God in the middle of everything; and as we see him present whom we love, we cease from anxious thought. "My soul is even as a weaned child." Of such a man is it written, "His soul shall dwell at ease." The Lord whom he takes to be his Shepherd makes him to lie down in green pastures, and he asks no more.

III. I am cramped by want of time; I must, therefore, in a very few words sum up what deserves to be spoken at length upon the third point. Here is A SINGULAR PRESERVATION: "Nothing shall offend them." There shall be no stumbling-block in their way.

Intellectual stumbling-blocks are gone. One asks me, "Do you mean to say that you read the Bible and do not find difficulties in it?" I regard the Word of God as being infallibly inspired, and therefore if I find difficulties in it, which I must do from the very nature of things, I accept what God says about those difficulties, and pass on. The Word of God does not profess to explain all mysteries: it leaves them mysteries, and my faith accepts them as such. When out in a yacht in the Clyde we came opposite the great rock called the Cock of Arran. Our captain did not steam right ahead, and rush at the rock; no, he did what was much wiser: he cast anchor for the night in the bay at the foot of it, so that we were sheltered from the wind by the vast headland. I remember looking up through the darkness of the night, and admiring its great sheltering wing. A difficulty was it. It became a shelter. Every now and then in Scripture you come before a vast truth. Will you steam against it, and wreck your soul? Will you not, with truer wisdom, cast anchor under the lee of it? Do we need to understand everything? Are we to be all brain, and no heart? What should we be the better if we did understand all mysteries? I believe God. I bow before his Word. Is not this better for us than the conceit of knowing and understanding? We are as yet mere children. We know in part. Of course,

we are blessed, in this enlightened age, with some wonderfully great men, who understand more than the ancients, and either know the unknowable, or think they do. In a sentence I will give you the result of my observation upon men and things: "No man knows everything except a fool, and he knows nothing." I have not yet met with any exception to this rule; no, not even among the superior persons who prefer culture to Scripture. If thou lovest the Word of God, thou wilt see no difficulties which will in the least cause thee to stumble. Love to the Word is the abolition of difficulties. Things hard to be understood become stepping-stones on which to rise, and not stumbling-blocks over which to fall.

"Nothing shall offend them." Does not this also mean that *no moral duty shall be a cross to them* which shall cause them to turn aside? They will not turn away from Jesus because a sin has to be abandoned, a lust denied, or a pleasure given up. The man who has counted the cost will not be offended by his Lord's requirements. Does Jesus say, "Do this?" He does it without demur. Does Jesus say, "Cease from that?" He withdraws his hand at the instant. When a man once loves the law of God, albeit it involves self-denial, humiliation, loss, he shrinks not at the cost. Self-denial ceases to be self-denial when love commands it. The cross of Christ is an easy yoke, and soon ceases to be a burden. A duty which for a little season is irksome, becomes pleasurable before long to a lover of the law of the Lord.

Moreover, the man who loves God's law is *not offended if he has to stand alone*. To some persons it is impossible to traverse a lonesome way, but he that truly loves God's law resolves that if all men forsake him he will cleave to the Lord and his truth. Can you not stand alone? Does solitude offend you? As for me, I am resolved not to follow a multitude to do evil. I will keep to the old faith, and the old way, if I never find a comrade between here and the celestial gates. I do not think a man loves God's Word thoroughly till it breeds in him a self-contained peace, so that he is satisfied from himself, and drinks water out of the cistern of his own experience. Paul was not offended, though at his first answer no man stood by him. What have we to do with other men as supporters of our faith? To their own master they stand or fall. As for our Master in heaven, let us follow him through life, and unto death; for to whom else could we go? He only hath the words of eternal life.

Neither will such persons ever be so offended as to despair of God's great cause. The night grows darker and darker, but the man who loves the divine law expects the sun to rise at his appointed hour. Oh that the Lord would hasten it in his own time! If he delay, we will not therefore doubt. Grace has produced, in past ages, men who were confident as to the triumph of truth when others feared for it. Look at the dauntless courage of Luther, who, when everybody else despaired of the gospel, trusted his God and cheered his people, and would not hear of drawing back. He could not pronounce the word "despair." "Luther, canst thou shake Rome? The harlot sits enthroned upon her seven hills, canst thou hope to dislodge her, or loose the captive nations from her bonds? Canst thou do this?" "No," said Luther,

“but God can.” Luther brought his God into the quarrel, and you know which way the conflict turned. Not to-day, nor to-morrow, nor in twenty years, may God’s truth win; but the Lord can afford to wait. His lifetime is eternity. O struggler for the truth, make thou sure that thou art with God and with the truth, and then be sure that God is with thee in truth, and will deliver thee. “Nothing shall offend them.”

It is wonderful, if you love God’s Word, how things which are stumbling-blocks to others cease to be injurious to you. Suppose you enjoy prosperity: if you love God’s law, you will not be puffed up by deceitful riches or honours. You will be humble, when all men admire you, and all comforts flow in upon you. The Lord’s Word in your heart will be as a salt to your estate, so that it breeds in thee neither worldliness, nor forgetfulness of God, nor pride. Your goods shall be your good, if you learn to use them for God’s glory.

The same will be true of adversity. He that can stand on the hill-top can stand in the valley. If you love God’s law, you are the man to be poor, to be sickly, to be slandered; for you can bear it all, because you have meat to eat that the world knows not of. Your love to God’s law will furnish you with a ceaseless stream of consolation. Nothing will damp the flame of your spirit, because the Lord feeds it secretly with a golden oil. O servants of God, let us be glad together in this day of rebuke! The thunder is heard, but it is mere noise. The sea roars, but it is only roaring. Let us laugh at those who would silence faithful testimony; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and great is the peace which he gives to the lovers of his law.

As for you who love not God’s law, who know nothing of Jesus, because you have never submitted to the law of faith—there is no “great peace” for you. There may be the deceptive cry of, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace”; but may the Lord save you from it! Soul, there is no hope for thee, thou canst not rest till thou art at one with God. As surely as God made thee, thou must yield to thy Maker, and accept thy Redeemer, and be renewed by his Holy Spirit, or thou art lost for ever. I pray God the Holy Ghost lead thee to accept what God has revealed, and bow thyself to the supreme majesty of his Word, especially to the power and grace of the Incarnate Word, the Lord Christ Jesus; then wilt thou have great peace for this world and the next. God bless you, beloved, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxix. 161—176.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—100 (Version I.), 478, 667.