

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
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ISAIAH 26 v 3

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose
mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee"

A world full of trouble, bowed down with anxiety; men's hearts failing them for fear because, though God is not acknowledged, it is quite clear to men that the world is in a peculiarly evil condition. Much talk of peace; more preparation for war; evil days are with us. Trouble comes to communities, to families, to persons; the one cause of all is sin; your sin, my sin, the sin of the king and princes, and nobles and the people of the land. Roman Catholicism, Anglo Catholicism, Modernism - all from what Toplady calls the spawn of Arminianism - enmity against God, trouble in the churches. Let us, as the Lord may help us, be very thankful that that is not our case, little work as there appears to be among us of the Holy Ghost. Trouble in your families; one great trouble of many godly parents is that they do not see their children called by grace. Difficulties now in business matters, and what, a few years ago, appeared to be substance, now has taken on the appearance of water, flowing away. The heart, wicked beyond expression, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? This, the chief cause of the sorrow of the Lord's people, is ever, more or less, present, frequently prevalent in some form, so that each child of God says, "Woe is me". "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Where then can we look for peace? How can we expect peace. Have we any reason to look for peace anywhere? Is there ground for reason to expect peace anywhere? If you look to the earth there is nothing but dimness and darkness and anguish. If you look to your circumstances, they are so shifting that you say, and must say, there is no rest in them. Vicissitudes are always with us. Is there a reason then, a ground, for us to look for peace, to pray for peace, to expect peace? The Scripture leaves no doubt

about the answer to such a question. Jehovah is called the God of peace, which is an infinite mercy. He is the God of peace in the Covenant of Peace, in the Prince of Peace, in the cross that brings peace, in the intercession of Christ that procures and communicates peace. But perfect peace or, as the marginal reading is, "peace, peace", which expresses perfection, fullness of peace. Every child of God more or less has a taste of this perfect peace some time, and it depends on the God of peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace". He has made it and we are told how. He made peace by the blood of His cross. God and sinners can never come together without the blood of the cross. The Holy Ghost can never convey peace to a conscience without the blood of Christ. A peace of all peace is this. First of all it is made. We ruined our natural peace in Adam. Eden's garden was a place of peace, all the creatures subject to Adam their lord, God walking in the cool of the day, and doubtless receiving the tale of obedience from His creature and subject, Adam. A place of peace, no discord there, no frown of God there, until the serpent entered and spake to Eve, whispered suspicion into her mind, and that suspicion whispered got hold of her, such a hold, that the serpent became bold and dared to flatly contradict God to her - "Ye shall not surely die", though God had said, on disobedience, they should surely die - "dying thou shalt die", and that destroyed all peace, all solid proper peace between God and man. You will never have peace in your souls, nor with God, nor in your circumstances, as coming from God, without the blood of Christ, without the covenant of peace, never. It is given, that is first. Unless you have it, God cannot keep it. He will preserve it where it is; He has given it. He hath made peace by the blood of His cross. Look at this for a moment or two, the blood of Christ's cross, which means that He died, that God withheld Him not, but delivered Him up for us all; delivered Him up to the law; made Him under it, that, being made under the law, He might receive the imputation of the sin of His people. And this is declared, that "God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin". We owe, if Christ made that peace for us by His death, everlasting praises to Him. O that we could live to praise Him for that divine peace which has been spoken to some of our consciences. This peace made by Christ and applied to the soul by the Holy Ghost, brings God and men together, nearer than

they were in Eden. That was natural, a beautiful natural religion; this is spiritual, and nearer to God is the man in whom this peace is. Yes, as near to God as the Man Christ Jesus, for we are members of His body, bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh, and members of His body in particular. O, believing friends, this is the peace, and the foundation of all other kinds of peace which God may favour us with. Therefore every approach made by a sinful, poor, tried child of God is through the cross, by the Holy Ghost. Every smile that God lets down into the heart is through the blood of the cross. Every kiss of reconciliation is by the same, the blood of the cross. All support under trouble and affliction comes the same way. Nothing good will ever come to a child of God but through the blood of the cross; that must be laid down as the foundation. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace".

First, peace in the conscience; a grand thing that. The most troublesome companion you can have in this world is a guilty conscience, a sense of having a guilty conscience. You know what I mean who have it, or have had it. When conscience and memory unite and you think of, you remember, your sins and shortcomings; infidelity, enmity, lust, pride, and vanity. You know what guilt means and the need of purging by the blood of Christ. This peace in the conscience is such as to remove all the terrors of the Almighty from the soul. Paul knew the terror of God and he persuaded men of that terror and told them of it; told them what it would mean to have the terror of God in the conscience, the curse of a broken law. Now when this conscience, defiled and troubled, plaguing the soul day and night, is purified, this conscience without any guilt, then there is peace, and the approach of the soul to God is in peace. You made many approaches to Him in humble faith, asking Him to purify your conscience, and when it is purified then you approach Him in a different manner. The same faith embracing the cross, embracing the Person of Christ who died voluntarily, you go to God through Him in a manner in which you went not to Him before; that is peace. O, the greatness of it, the power of it. The peace of God shall keep your heart and mind as in a garrison, surrounded by divine attributes, surrounded by God Himself round about Jerusalem as the mountains are. The sweetness of it; no earthly

sweetness can be compared with this. Saccharin, three hundred times sweeter than sugar, cannot be compared to this. God, no terror to you; evil, no terror to you; affliction, no terror to you; death, no terror; and God keeps this. We should soon lose it; we do lose the power of it. When the mind is stayed on Him, stayed on Christ. "God forbid" said Paul, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". There was his stay, his strength, his hope, his peace, his love, his faith, his boasting; all there. That is the mind - not the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; not the natural man who receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned - but that divinely instructed mind, heart, understanding and will. I think you may take them all as embraced in this word - "Whose mind is stayed on Thee". The Psalmist expresses what this steadiness is. He says - "O God my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed". Where? You can answer it, who have had it. Fixed on God; fixed on the Father, on the Son, on the Holy Ghost. You never will leave out the Trinity when you have a good experience; when you have divine experience in your soul. You will praise the Father, you will praise the Son, you will praise the Holy Ghost who has given you this peace. It means another thing which I will point out to you; it means that you have against you a world, the world that lieth in wickedness; your own world, small it may be, as just you live in your house, your family, and the church of God, but it is a world to you, and your heart in it, your mind. This will try to interfere with, to spoil that, your peace, and sometimes it will succeed painfully, but God maintains it in the principle, though it seems to fail in the sweet effect. You may not, you do not, uninterruptedly enjoy, and yet there is, this blessed peace which the soul is kept in - kept in the principle of it; that never changes, never diminishes. The exhaustless fullness of the Prince of Peace, we have to draw upon. This is drawing water out of the well of salvation; it is drawing comfort from the blood of Christ; it is drawing strength from the joy of God. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" said Nehemiah to the weeping Jews newly returned from their captivity.

But peace in other respects. First, peace with providence. We do not, perhaps, enter much into this, not as much as we should. Trouble comes. From whom? A question that some of you can answer. Some would say, from so and so, from such and such an untoward circumstance; some would say from one who hated me and opposed me. Some would say from a lying disposition manifested against me by some. Faith says, this is chastening from the Lord. Faith answers God's question - "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" And you say, by faith, can this trouble in my house, in my business, in my person, have come and the Lord hath not done it? Submission to adverse providences is a blessing and is connected with peace. As long as you kick against God in His dealings with you, so long you will be troubled by Him. So long as you despise His chastening, lift up your head and determine to bear the trouble as well as you can, so long as you faint under it, so long will you lack peace. But when your heart is chastened, brought down graciously, sometimes quietly without much perception of an incoming of God to you, and you fall flat before Him and say - Thou art the divine Potter, I am the clay; make me more plastic; let Thy will be done in me as it is in heaven - and then faith goes on and says, this rod I kiss, to this trouble I submit; I submit because God is in it, thus you have peace. All your fretfulness, rebellion, holding up, God forbids; does not deal with you angrily for that sin, but gives you to feel peace. Love is in this - "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent". Repent of that which brought the rebuke, repent of that which hid God's face from you, repent of that which hardened your heart against His dealings with you. And when thus you are blessed with repentance, then peace comes. Never look for peace as long as your hearts are hard, as long as you reject the cross, but when, as it is said, I think for the moment, by Moses, when you can accept the punishment of your sin which, in gospel word, is when you can submit to the will of God, then - not because you submit and so merit it, but because it is His method, because He will have things so - then peace comes, sweet peace, and O, is it not beautiful when you can take hold of a trouble and humbly submit yourself to it and say, this is the rod of a Father, this is the token of sonship, this is an evidence of His love. So the Apostle represents it in the

Epistle to the Hebrews: "Therefore", he says "despise thou not the chastening of the Lord" - you have forgotten that, now do not despise it any longer - "nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him". You have fainted, you have said, it may be, I shall never get through this, this seems to kill my faith, to damp my hope and the ardour of my love has gone. You have failed and you have forgotten the Scripture - "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten" Now, I say, then you can take hold of a trouble, yea, you can say with the Psalmist - "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes". Before I was afflicted I broke through the hedge, I leapt over a wall, I transgressed; I broke the statutes, the limitation. Now I can say, Lord keep me in the way, keep me within the statutes, keep me in Thy fear, humble me by Thy grace, enable me to walk humbly with Thee in this affliction. Peace with providence; it is a rare blessing, but a very sweet blessing. Those of you who have had it, and I would number myself among you, have found it to be sweeter than having no trouble. That was Paul's experience when he had the thorn in the flesh and so felt its pricking. Not one of our little thorns to scratch you, but a piercing thorn that entered into the flesh, a thorn in the flesh - not scratching it, in it. O, the pain of it, the anguish. Thrice I sought the Lord that it might depart from me. But God gave him what, in His judgement, was better than the removal of the thorn. "My grace is sufficient for thee". That brought him to a stage far beyond what some of us have attained to. We may have submitted to the will of God - indeed we have - but he gloried, boasted, was glad that he had the thorn in order that the power of Christ might rest upon him. God kept him; his mind was stayed on God.

Let us look a little at this. Stayed by faith on infinite mercy and love. Cowper, I think it was, who said

Trials must and will befall
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all
This is happiness to me

The wisdom of God - stayed there. O what fools we are. If God left us to manage ourselves, to manage our circumstances, to

manage any enemy that we have, O what would become of us? We should just make matters a thousand times worse. Do not try to manage things friends; do not try to manage your own hearts. Look to infinite wisdom. O, there is much to admire in the wisdom of God, not only, and chiefly indeed, as it is in Christ, who therefore is the wisdom of God, but in the dealings of God with you. You say, I wish I had not done that; I am sorry I took that step; I grieve over my foolishness. Now the Lord help you to turn away from these hopeless and useless regrets. If they are real, confess them, but look to the hand that guided, the wisdom that ordered, the God who ruled and still rules. He turned the hearts of the people to hate His people; He turned their hearts to pity them. The heart of the king is in the hand of God, and He turneth it withersoever He will. Dependent you are depending you may not be at the present, but if you are not depending still God will go on working. He does not accommodate Himself to our fancies and wishes, but He works all things after the counsel of His own will. It is good to believe in His wisdom, guiding wisdom, wisdom that will lead you to avoid snares, that will lead you in the way to the city of habitation, that will lead you to the cross, that will lead you to self-abasement, and cause many a hot tear to trickle down your cheek for your foolishness and base treatment of God. Thou wilt keep him whose mind is stayed on wisdom, wisdom divine.

Whose mind is stayed on the forgiveness of God. He multiplies forgivenesses. He does not deal with people as we deal perhaps with one another. You may owe somebody a grudge, and your dealings with that person, they always have, more or less, that grudge upon them. God does not deal so. He convinces of sin, then He says, I will love him freely, I will heal his backslidings. And infinite wisdom is in all this, directing the trouble, and directing the mind where to stay itself; wisdom is in all this.

Whose mind is stayed on the immutability of God. When David and his men were weeping over burnt Ziklag, and his men, in their affliction and distress on account of their loss, spoke of stoning David, he, as it is written, encouraged himself in the Lord his God. There was faith in the immutability of God; He

changes not. Men change in themselves; men change towards others; no stability in men - the fall ruined all stability in man - but immutability in God. The immutability of the Covenant, the immutability of the precious, infinitely precious, blood of Christ. The immutability of the Spirit's love. When He undertakes to save a man, He does not half do it. "Whose mind is stayed on Thee".

"Whose mind is stayed on the promises of God. All the promises of God are yea and amen unto the glory of God by us, says the Apostle. To the glory of God by us, is this, that God is glorified in fulfilling His promises to us. A weak believer with a promise of God locked up in his heart is firmer than heaven and earth, for heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one tittle that God has spoken, either concerning the world, or the church, or an individual member of the church, not one tittle shall pass away unfulfilled. The mind is stayed on this sometimes. The mind leads a man to say, as in a hymn, my soul depends on God and God alone. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" - gracious, faithful. God is faithful, immutable; He is just always Himself. Changes in His dispensations do not argue changes in Himself. If God could change He would cease to be God. "Whose mind is stayed on Thee".

And lastly, and briefly, whose mind is stayed on Thee as Thou art in heaven. What has that to do with me? says the poor, tried, believer. It has this to do with you. "Where I am there shall my servant also be" Is that enough? Yes, when the Lord speaks. God is in heaven. What a beautiful representation of the Trinity we have in the Revelation. God the Father on the throne, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and the seven Spirits of God like seven lamps of fire before the throne. When your mind is stayed on this blessed Jehovah in the covenant of grace and in salvation, then you have peace.

And now says Isaiah, "because he trusteth in Thee". Not because he merits it, O no. If you say my peace comes from my trust, you are trusting to your trust, and that wont do; that wont stand by you in an hour of trouble; do not trust in your trust. Proper trust in God is the movement of a living faith

that lays hold of the Lamb and says the God I trust is true and just, knows no change; the "because" is this. When the mind is gadding about and running after vanity, God is nowhere to you. Do not some of you know that? Do you not know what it is to be barrenised and confused and brought into the dust in a few minutes by gadding after some vanity? But when faith is recalled, so to express it, and is enabled to fix itself on God in Christ, then peace comes. The "because" does not mean you buy it. It means your faith goes to Him who says - "Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Because he trusteth in Thee". When you trust an arm of flesh, down you go. God will never honour you in that foolish, false trust. When you say, I come up out of this trouble, out of this wilderness, leaning on the arm of my Beloved, looking to His grace, His mercy, His love, His blood, His righteousness, then peace flows like a river. Then a fixed heart says, Lord take this poor heart and keep it; take this trouble and sanctify it to me; take this adverse circumstance and use it for my good, for my growth in grace and for Thy glory. O take me, a poor, worthless creature. Ah it is great to have your heart fixed here. You may look at yourself and say, I am not fit to be where the people of God are, and yet when your heart is fixed on the Lord, then you know you are a favourite of heaven. I do like Rutherford's word which I have named to you more than once. I know, he says, my friends think my one talent to be ten talents, but if they knew me as I know myself, not one of them would cross the road to ask me how I did. I wonder how many of you believe that, have felt that. I have felt it I know many a time. You have been all kind to me for many years, but I have felt sometimes if you knew me as I know myself, just as Rutherford says, not one of you would cross the street to ask me how I am. Not mock humility - God does not approve that - but when that is the language of the heart, then says the sinner there is one hope I have, one ground of hope, one object of faith. Here I rest. May the Lord give us peace; He has it; He is the God of peace.

AMEN.