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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 30 April 1930

ISAIAH 26 V 3

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

There is goodness for Zion in the chapters 25 and 26. Death is to be swallowed up, the grave robbed of her victory, sinners blessed with grace, God in the midst of them. "As he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim", so God will be with His people to bring down pride, and raise up the poor. And when He does this then this song shall be sung - "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." The city that John saw coming from God out of heaven was a complete city. Walls, bulwarks, gates, jewels, everything complete. The salvation of God is just that - "Ye are complete in Him", and this is that that is to be the song. This song shall be sung in the land where God is, the goodly land of promise, and all difficulties of entrance shall be removed. "Open ye the gates that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in". And these people, this city, God will bless, and give peace, perfect peace to it. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because He trusteth in Thee."

We have to look, as enabled, first of all at this peace - what it is, how it comes to be spoken, or given, and maintained, the means of this, and then the mighty Agent bringing this peace, speaking this peace into the hearts of God's people. This peace is called "the peace of God"; it has its origin in the Trinity. It comes through the Covenant of Peace, the new Covenant because peace between God and man was broken by the fall, and never will be made up according to the Covenant of Works, for that Covenant, being broken, can do nothing but curse those who break it, so that the peace here is another kind of peace. It has not its origin in the earth. No creature could work it, no creature could imagine it. Left to ourselves we could have no proper conception of how such a peace, as is called "the peace of

God", could come to any fallen sinner, to any guilty conscience. Closely look at this dear friends. Consider what we deserve; nothing but trouble. Joshua said to Acan, as he had troubled Israel, so God should trouble him. Now we have, as it were, done; that is done nothing but give God trouble, and He could justly have said to every creature in the Adam fall that He would trouble them. But no, He has made a Covenant of Peace, and that is ordered in all things and sure, so that it must come, it does come, and when it comes it keeps the heart and mind by Jesus Christ. It is a wonderful peace in the nature of it. Nothing short of the word "the peace of God" can describe it. Not earthly, not earth-born, not earth-procured, but just simply, and only originating in God in the Covenant, and brought, honourably brought by Jesus Christ. O, may the Lord fix this upon our spirits, that this blessed peace is not of an earthly origin, but it is born in the Trinity, in the Covenant of Peace, made there, fixed there, never to be really broken, however broken the experience of it may be; that is quite another thing; that comes into another branch of vital religion. The peace of God is unbreakable, unalterable, even as the Covenant is unalterable, unbreakable. So when men are brought into this relationship, and into this experience, they have that which cannot alter, though their feelings about it may very, very often change; they do. We get it, and we lose it, but itself is always the same. How did this become possible? God is just, God is holy, the law is unchangeable in its threatenings, its curse cannot pass away; it must find someone on whom to pour itself. The answer is, this peace is by Jesus Christ. So entirely by Him is it, that He is called our peace. "He is our peace". This Man shall be the peace in our land. That is the blessed means, the procuring cause of this peace coming to any sinner and it will well repay a consideration of how this comes to pass. The Apostle Peter has a beautiful word concerning it. He said, He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Paul says to the Galatians - "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse, being made a curse for us". Every threatening of the law, every bit - if I may speak so - of the curse, Jesus Christ was made; really, actually, painfully was made for His people which, as I understand it, means that the wrath of God to the uttermost was poured out upon Jesus Christ when on the tree. A solemn consideration; heart-breaking, when it is given by the Spirit, to consider that the holy, harmless, undefiled Lord Jesus Christ was, by the determinate counsel and

foreknowledge of God delivered into wicked hands to be crucified and slain. And although these wicked hands of the Jews did their utmost to take away His life, they were not able to do it, for "He gave His life a ransom", and the voluntary nature of the death of Christ is essential to its efficacy. If He had died of a physical necessity, as did the two thieves, who were crucified with Him, there could have been no efficacy in His death. But God delivered Him; His Father gave Him, His Father commanded Him what to do, and He willingly became His Father's Servant, and undertook to do that which was laid upon Him as a divine work, which He could not shirk or put aside, had no wish to do. He stood in the dying traitor's place and suffered in his stead, and the infinite worth of His death, of His blood, is this, that it makes the peace of God an honourable peace, a God-glorifying peace, saving a sinner. This is how this blessed peace comes by Jesus Christ. "He is our peace". By His precious death He becomes the peace of a sinner. His groans give His people songs. His sorrows create their joys. The hiding of His Father's face from Him is the means of their coming to see the Father smile on them. Nothing short of this would do. And every little feeling of sacred peace that a sinner ever gets into his conscience comes this way. The cross shows it, the cross speaks it, the cross maintains it, the cross will fulfil it in this life and take all who have it into glory. O may the Holy Spirit open this mystery to us, that this Man, Jesus Christ crucified, is our peace. Now that wondrous doctrine of the divine peace of God coming to a sinner will abide in the face, and in the midst of, all the changes of feeling, the lapses, the falls, the slips, the backslidings, the many, many things that are wrong, and it will overcome them all, take them out of the way, as it is written - He took the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and contrary to us, out of the way, nailing it to His cross. This peace is perfect, perfect in the nature of it; that is the truth - the experience of it is another branch - in itself it is a perfect peace. Nothing can be added to it by the person who has it. It is always this - God is satisfied and pleased with the death of Christ, and with all for whom that death took place. Jesus poured out His soul unto death, and therefore, all for whom He did that have this perfect peace. They do not have it perfectly, but itself is perfect. Nothing can be added to it, nothing can be taken from it, and were we blessed with a realisation of this truth, it would help us much when we are dark, and

troubled, and have lost the peace; the peace is the same. It can never be added to, it can never be taken from. Everything belonging to it is everlasting. O, hold this fast, the perfection of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding". And this has one thing connected with it which I would like to name here, this namely, that this peace in the church, this peace of God is not dependent on any conditions in this world. The troubles of the world, the difficulties that are presented to the people of God, the changing things, moving mountains, shaking earth, roaring seas, do not, cannot, affect this peace. 'Tis God's peace. Like the city that came from God out of heaven is perfect, so this divine peace is perfect. A world of enemies, and enmity, cannot affect this divine peace. May the Lord help us to believe this. It will say, at times, to a troubled person, you need no change in your circumstances to bring this peace. You need no difficulties to be taken out of your way to have this peace. You can have it perfectly in your heart's feelings while you are full of trouble. While the world is disturbed, and all things are out of course in the world, this peace coming will prove to be a support, a garrison, a power, a power that will pass your understanding.

Now let us look, in the third place, at the Agent of this, the One who brings it. The Father in the Covenant ordained it, the Son on the cross procured it. Who brings it? The Holy Ghost. And this constitutes a Trinitarian religion, and no man will go to heaven who has not this religion. Many a man is going there who is afraid, fears he is destitute of it, and that he may never get it, but this comes, in the beginning, unbidden. It comes on later in answer to prayer. The Holy Spirit is the great, the blessed Agent, sent as the Spirit of Promise by the Father, given to the Son, and shed by the Son in due time on poor, needy sinners. This, dear friends, has a teaching, and a comfort in it, if we may but see it, namely that all that is needed for us to have this peace in our hearts is the coming down from Christ of the Holy Ghost, fulfilling the promise of Christ concerning Him - "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you". When you can take a poor, troubled heart, a guilty conscience; when you can go feeling very dead, dark, ignorant, distant, troubled by many things, chiefly by the uncertainty of your state because of your sins, then this Divine Spirit in pity, in love,

and mercy, will come and bring the things of Christ, the blood of Christ, and make in your heart and conscience a peace that passeth all understanding. I would dwell a few minutes on this mighty Agent, this Divine Spirit, whose love is equal with the love of the Father, and the love of the Son. Indeed, there are not three loves, but one love in three co-equal Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. One love, one mind, one will, one purpose - a Trinitarian religion. Let us hang upon it for a minute or two. A religion originating in the Counsel of Peace in Eternity, the Father predestinating sinners unto the adoption of children to Himself by Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ the willing, able servant of the Father, saying to His Father - "A body hast Thou prepared Me". Lo I come, I come to take that body as prepared by Thee in Eternity, as created by the Holy Spirit in the virgin, I come to take that body, and He took it, and in that He suffered. He sweat blood, He poured out His soul unto death, He ascended into heaven, after His burial, and His resurrection, and now the third Person in the Trinity comes. He passes by a sinner and says "Live", and the sinner lives, and believes, and prays, and is troubled by his sins. His conscience is burdened, and he justifies God, and then that Divine Spirit brings Jesus Christ to the sinner, opens the mystery of God in Christ to the sinner's faith, and sprinkles on the sinner's conscience the blood of the everlasting Covenant. What we owe to God we shall never fully know. We owe a tribute of thanks, and adoration to the Father. We owe the same to the Son. We owe the same to the Holy Ghost, and when we adore One, we adore the Three.

When we live on Jesus' merit  
Then we worship God aright  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
Then we savingly unite

O, my brethren, it is a living religion; it is a living peace, an honourable peace; honourable to God, and whatever honours Him must be very wonderful.

Now I must leave this beautiful, wonderful subject, the objective religion that we have, and come to this subjective religion, a religion in a sinner. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect

peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee", does not trust in this world, in anything in it. The Scripture teaches him - and the Spirit teaches him what the Scripture teaches - that the whole world is movable, shakeable, and much in it shaken. God has shaken some of you, and some of your things. Much is shaking; the earth, and the dry land, and the sea, and a great shaking it is, and that brings a sinner to some understanding in that Psalm - "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble". "Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river" - a river of peace, a river full of pleasures at God's right-hand, and from that river come streams of peace, streams of love, and mercy, which make the city of God glad. It does not say, the mountains are stilled, and settled; that the earth is put straight, and right; that the waters have ceased their roaring. No, all this may continue, but "there is a river" whose streams come into the soul in sweet peace, and these keep the sinner. "Thou wilt keep him" - a member of Christ, a troubled sinner - "in perfect peace" and I believe that makes good what I said just now, that the peace of the people of God is not dependent on anything in this world. Not easy to believe certainly when everything is full of trouble to you, but it is a truth, and some of you know it in a measure, as I trust I also do, that there have been times when we have been in real trouble, and no creature has been, perhaps, able to alleviate the sorrow we have been feeling, and yet God has given that solid peace that enabled us to say, though these troubles continue, they do not, for the time being, disturb our minds. He brings this peace by manifesting the Lord Jesus. The Apostle's great word to Timothy is this - "Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, and believed on in the world" This is a great thing, that God in Christ is believed on in the world, that some sinners do actually, in their hearts, believe in Jesus Christ; that they can say with the Eunuch - "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God". That is not a mere nominal belief, but a belief of a person in whom is wrought living faith, and that faith gets hold of the Lord Jesus, as He is seen in the light, the revealing light, of the Spirit, and by that, and the precious blood that Christ shed, peace comes into the soul, and a great peace it is. It is called "the peace of God which passeth all understanding". There is no

reason, no understanding, in a man that can grasp this. It is entered into by faith, it is understood by faith, but human reason, in its fallen condition, cannot grasp this; how a holy, just, awful God, can be at peace with an enemy, and embrace that enemy, and kiss that enemy, and love that enemy, so as that that enemy cannot but believe what God says to him. With all his disposition, sinful disposition to doubt, he cannot doubt what God speaks to him now. And this is the peace of God. It is a smile; it is a smile on God's well-pleased face, which faith sees. It is a sweet apprehension that God has no quarrel with you. It is a solid feeling that the door is open to you through which you may go into the presence of Jehovah in Jesus Christ. And also there is in it a singular power whereby the sinner believes that all his sins, and all his troubles, all his fears, all his enemies, are not able, never shall be able, to destroy his soul. This is a far-reaching feeling, the feeling that faith brings, a far-reaching feeling. Shipwrecks, troubles, losses, crosses, trials, chastisements, all these, together with a deep-seated wickedness in fallen nature; faith reaches to them all, and says to them, you wont destroy me, and there is a solid feeling of it. I do not know how better to express it; it is a little understanding that I have of it for my own soul, but it is a difficult thing, so far as I am concerned, to properly express this wonderful feeling of peace. And sometimes it comes very unexpectedly, surprising you, when you feel, now I have got that trouble, I have got that difficulty I must face, this affliction I must bear yet, and yet with all that, there is no feeling that God is angry with you. Is not it wonderful, that any man, full of sin, should ever come to that sacred feeling that his afflictions which have come upon him are not an expression to him of God's anger against him. You understand it, surely some of you do; when you feel, now the Lord, He does not put me away. I can go to Him, and I do go to Him, with these afflictions, and He does not tell me not to come, but He draws me, and when He draws then you sweetly run after Him. "Draw me, we will run after Thee". O, it is very beautiful to have it in your soul. Look at the word - "Thou wilt keep him". The sinner does not keep himself; he cannot. "Myself I cannot keep", is the honest confession of every child of God more or less distinctly. He cannot keep what God has given to him. He has got some earnest money, but he is afraid he cannot keep it; he is afraid of misusing it. Solomon says in the Proverbs - "There is oil and treasure in the

house of the wise, but a fool spendeth it up". And you may feel sometimes God has given me peace, may I not be the fool to waste it. He has granted me the Holy Spirit in this oil, may I not be the fool to send that Divine Spirit away for a time and move Him to be an enemy to me. We need good experience given to us to be kept in us, and kept for us, by Him who gives it. You follow me, I am sure, you who have teaching in this matter, that God must keep us, keep peace in us. We do not deserve to have it, and if we have it, we cannot keep it, but He can keep it for us. "Thou wilt keep him", hold him up, hold the peace in his conscience by the efficacious atonement witnessed to by the Spirit. "Thou wilt keep him" in that state; keep his mind in that condition.

And there is a means to this in the text, an ordained means. "Whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee". Now take these two expressions -

"Whose mind is stayed on Thee". If you look at your mind in certain ways, at certain moments, you will say, my mind is not stayed on the Lord. I try to pray, and almost in a moment I am gadding after something in my business, or my family. I try to pray, but I find myself hurried away, and I am thinking of other things. A painful experience; some of you may well know it, and often you rue it, you grieve over it, you suffer for it. But now, look beneath if you can, these changes, these painful changes, and what do you find? You find the mind bent toward God; you find a spirit that says, O, if I could but get near Him and live there. If I could but set my heart on Him, and not go after other foolish things, I would be glad. Sometimes the mind is stayed on His goodness; it endureth continually. Sometimes on His eternal love; no change, immutable love. Sometimes on the atonement; so sufficient, so ample for all things; guilt, and sins. Sometimes on the patience of Christ; how wonderful it is that He should be patient with you, should have been all these years patient with you. Sometimes on His compassion; the High Priest is One who is able to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. And sometimes on the promise; sometimes on the power of God. And more than the devil, and more than sin, will be required to pull the heart away from God in these particulars. "O God" said the Psalmist, "my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed". Yes, the needle may

be violently shaken, winds, and waves may come, but you will find the moment there is a little quiet the needle tremblingly gets back to its proper place, and pointing. And you may get shaken in your mind by many things, but when the Lord enables you by faith to look to Him you say, this is my place, here is my rest, here is the great God I trust, the Saviour I hope in, and love. Here is the Spirit on whom I depend for all teaching, and gracious leading. The mind is stayed, and sometimes this is quite comfortably the case. I mean, you feel it. You feel that God attracts you, that the Father draws you, that the Son draws you, and that the Holy Spirit guides you. You feel it, and there is no disposition, for the moment, to turn away from Him. "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste". "Whose mind is stayed on Thee".

Then - "Because he trusteth in Thee". Here is the Object, God in Christ, and faith loves that Object, goes to that Object. In the wilderness she goes to Him, and comes up leaning on His arm. In storms, and troubles, she leans on the Saviour, trusts His righteous character, His precious blood, His justifying righteousness; there is all her trust. Sometimes she sings comfortably - "There is all my trust". Not a shadow of doubt have I that He is able to save me, and I am not able to believe that He will not save me. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". Now the feeble is strong here. "All things are possible to him that believeth". He trusts in his God; he trusts in the Father's love; he trusts in the blood, and righteousness of the incarnate Son, the Son who freely gave His life for the sheep, and he trusts in the Spirit who is one with the Father, and the Son, and he believes that that Divine Spirit will see him well to the end. His mind is stayed on God. Though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, God is my refuge and strength, says the sinner. Here I stay my soul, here I lean the weight of my eternal interests, here I trust. "Because he trusteth in Thee". It is not a condition of merit, but it is a state that God has ordained. When unbelief is prevalent, then there is nothing but perturbation of mind when some surprising trouble comes, but when the mind is stayed here, then this blessed peace is the fruit. "Thou wilt keep him" - who trusts in Thee - "in perfect peace", because he does trust in Thee; his mind is stayed on Thee.

Now here, in conclusion, I would just like to say that this is according to the chapter which I read. "Ye are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God before ordained before the world began". This is God's workmanship, the creature of His Own blessed hand. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away and behold all things become new."

Now brethren, where is your trust? In self? No. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" and some of us have played the fool often. But when you come to the point, as between God and your own soul, with regard to eternity, then, as Christ has been revealed to you, He is your trust. As the Father is seen in Him, He is your trust, and as the Holy Spirit dwells in you, He is your trust for all wisdom, and grace, and right movements; right love, right hope, right prayer; everything that is good you trust Him for. Well then, whatever changes may come to us, whatever difficulties may surround us, whatever pains we may have to feel, however many devils may haunt and afflict us, however much we may be driven by providence, this remains, this remains - "Thou art the same, Thy years fail not". The same in His nature, the same in His grace, in His Covenant. You may say to Him - "Thou art the same".

Now have I at all brought it properly before you, that the religion the saints have is a Trinitarian religion, that it wholly hangs on the Trinity; that sinners are pieces of clay, lumps of clay, and the Divine Potter has taken them, and moulded them according to His divine mind, and purpose, and put heavenly treasure into them. We are, if we are Christians, passive receivers of God's mercies. In the first place then, having received mercies in that way, the Holy Ghost stirs up the faith He has created, and draws it out into exercise on the Trinity in the particular ways in which the Scriptures speak of them as being concerned in the salvation of sinners. "Thou wilt keep him" - a sinner, a weak sinner - "in perfect peace". A peace complete in itself; a peace that can never be added to by anything of the creature. A perfect peace, being made by the cross. Having made peace by His cross, Jesus has become, and is, and ever will be, the peace of His people, and the Spirit, bringing it, maintains it in measure,

renews it from time to time, and thus the people of God are brought into an understanding of that word - "He is our peace". May we feel it.

AMEN.