

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Wed. Eve. Bible Study - 9/23/15

Living Successfully In Christ

FINDING GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES

Key Verse: "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." (Isaiah 26 :3)

This wonderful promise was given in the darkest period of Israel's history, so it may well prove to be a special help to us today, when we are surrounded by much gloom and depression and when we are constantly threatened with the three great enemies of doubt, fear and worry. When all is going well, and the skies are bright, it is easy to read our key text in a very superficial way; but when clouds of trial, disappointment, fear and alarm drift across our sky and the sun is hidden, then how precious these words become to us!"

There is no promise anywhere in the Bible which encourages us to believe that while we are in our earthly bodies we shall experience freedom from trouble; but there is something far better - there is the promise of peace in the midst of trouble. Of what value would freedom from trouble be if we had no inward peace? Yet how wonderful it is that in the midst of the fiercest battle, and while the storm is at its height, the trusting soul may experience inward peace, a deep down calm and a quiet confidence!

1. WHAT IS THIS GREAT BLESSING THAT IS OFFERED TO US?

It is described as "perfect peace". But what is perfect peace? Can we define it? Yes, it is a condition of freedom from disturbance within the soul; it is perfect harmony reigning within. The Hebrew word "shalom" has in it the idea of soundness of health, so that to be filled with perfect peace is to be spiritually healthy and free from all discord within the soul. There can be no room for jealousy, envy, discontent, uncontrolled temper, selfishness, pride or intolerance in the soul which is filled with peace, for all these things are disturbing factors in the heart. They are discordant notes. The peace which God offers, and which we by His grace may experience, is very practical. It is none other than a great calm which He commands - look up **Mark 4:39** "He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm." God calls the peace which He gives, "perfect peace". In what sense is it perfect?

- **It is perfect in QUALITY**; that is to say, it is perfect in the kind of peace it is. There is an imperfect peace, e.g. the peace of **Ignorance**, when we imagine that all is going well whereas, in fact, if our eyes were open to see the truth we would know that all is not well.

- There is also the imperfect peace of **Stagnation**; the pool of water may be calm and peaceful, but underneath it is foul and green with slime. Many men and women know only a peace like that, and one day the shock of God's judgment will stir up their pool and they will find that they have no real peace at all. There is also the imperfect peace of **Dependence**, which is a peace which is dependent upon some thing or person. How unsatisfactory this is, for the "thing" may fail and the "person" may die! Then, where is their peace? In contrast with these three kinds of imperfect peace, God's peace is perfect.
- **It is perfect in QUANTITY**; that is to say, the supply of it is sufficient and it exactly meets our need. The marginal rendering of "perfect peace" is "peace, peace", i.e. **double peace**. This is very significant when we turn to **Philippians 4:7**, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." for there we are told that this double peace is peace of heart and mind, and that is the kind of peace we need, a peace which garrisons our mind and calms our heart. This double peace is also double in the sense that it is: peace with God (Romans 5:1); and the peace of God (Philippians 4:7).
- **It is perfect in CONSTANCY**; that is to say, it is permanent and not intermittent. The promise says, "you will keep..." - compare **Psalms 121:4** "indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."

2. HOW DOES THIS PERFECT PEACE COME TO US?

- **By Christ Jesus**. Turn to Philippians 4:7 again and notice that the Lord Jesus Christ is the channel through whom the peace of God flows into our souls. This peace within is the possession of the Christian alone. There is no peace for anyone who does not possess Christ and who is not resting on the finished work of Christ for salvation. It is "the blood of Jesus (which) whispers peace within" (Colossians 1:20).
- **By the Holy Spirit**. The Lord Jesus Christ procured peace for us upon the cross of Calvary, and that peace is offered to us through Him as the channel; but it is conveyed to our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit --look up **Galatians 5:22** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness," As the Holy Spirit fills and floods our lives, so He produces this wonderful fruit within us.
- **By His Word**. Look up the great promise which is made in **Psalms 119:165**. "Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble."

Things and people can so often disturb us, or even cause us to stumble, but here is a promise of perfect peace to those people who love and meditate in and obey the Word of God.

By our obedience. Look up **Leviticus 26:3-6**, " "If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, ⁴I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit. ⁵Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land. ⁶" "I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove wild beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your country" and be sure to notice that most important word "If". God guarantees to us that if we will walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, He will keep our hearts in perfect peace; if we will do our part, then God will surely do His part.

- **By plenty of praise and prayer.** The promise of **Philippians 4:7** is preceded by the conditions mentioned in verse 6.

3. TWO CONDITIONS ARE MENTIONED IN ORDER THAT WE MAY HAVE PERFECT PEACE

Who is it that God will keep in perfect peace? It is the one: (1) "whose mind is steadfast"; and (2) "who trusts in you." Both these expressions denote faith, but whereas one is a *head* word, the other is a *heart* word. What is the difference? With our head we believe, with our heart we trust; with our head we believe that God is the Author of peace, the Giver of peace; with the heart we trust Him to bestow what He promises.

One concluding word: notice that **Isaiah 26:3** begins with God and ends with God; it begins with "You" and it ends with "you" - and the trusting soul goes in between. **"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.**

Perfect peace is, by faith, to get between these two words, and to stay there; perfect peace is the Lord Himself within us, not an experience, a doctrine, an "it", but the Lord Himself. Then, as the hymn writer puts it, when we are "stayed upon Jehovah", our hearts will be fully blessed, and then, and only then, shall we find that He has promised - "Perfect peace and rest."