

The Song of a City, and the Pearl of Peace

A Sermon

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"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."—[Isaiah 26:3](#)

This is no dry, didactic statement, but a verse from a song. We are among the poets of revelation, who did not compose ballads for the passing hour, but made sonnets for the people of God to sing in after days. I quote to you a stanza from the song of a city. Judah has not aforetime thus chanted before her God, but she has much to learn, and one day she shall learn this psalm also:—"We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Into the open country the adversary easily advances, but walled cities are a check upon the invading foe. Those people who had been hurried to and from as captives, and had frequently been robbed of their property by invaders, were glad when they saw builded among them a city, a well-defended city, which should be the centre of their race, and the shield of their nation.

This song of a city may, however, belong to us as much as to the men of Judah, and we may throw into it a deeper sense of which they were not aware. We were once unguarded from spiritual evil, and we spent our days in constant fear; but the Lord has found for us a city of defence, a castle of refuge. We have a burgess-ship in the new Jerusalem which is the mother of us all; and within that strong city we dwell securely. Let us sing this morning, "We have a strong city." The man that hath come into fellowship with God through the atoning sacrifice, hath gotten into a place of perfect safety, where he may dwell, ay, dwell for ever, without fear of assault. We are no longer hunted by hosts of fears, and trodden down by dark despairs; but "We have a strong city" which overawes the foe, and quiets ourselves. Our gospel hymns are the songs of men who, in the truest sense, have seen an end of alarm, by accepting God's provision against trouble of heart.

Observe how the song goes on to dilate upon the city's strength. "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Our refuge will repay a close examination. We are doubly defended. Its lofty walls are the mainstay of a city's security; when they are strong, and high, they keep out the foe, whether he assail by scaling-ladder, or battering-engine. Outside the wall, on the other side of the moat, lies what is called the bulwark; the earthwork where, in times of peace, the citizens delight to take their walks. The bulwark of their confidence is the *boulevard* of their communion. The Lord our God has set ring upon ring, defence upon defence, around His people. All the powers of providence and grace protect the saints. Ma-

terial and spiritual forces alike surround her. The Lord keeps His people doubly fenced by walls and bulwarks, and hence He speaks of a double peace. "Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace," saith the Hebrew. God does nothing by halves, but everything by doubles. His salvation is decreed and appointed, and this is made the basis for the unbroken serenity of all His chosen.

The song, however, does not end with verses concerning the city, but it conducts us within its walls. "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Entrance into this grace, wherein we stand, is a choice privilege. The greatest joy of true godliness lies in our being able to enter into it. If the City of God were shut against us, it were sad, indeed, for us. If, to-day, you and I were outside of her, of what value would her walls and bulwarks be to us? Whatever God has done to His people, it is just so much additional sorrow rather than increased joy to ourselves if we are not partakers therein. That there should be a Christ, and that I should be Christless; that there should be a cleansing, and I should remain foul; that there should be a Father's love, and I should be an alien; that there should be a heaven, and I should be cast into hell, is grief embittered, sorrow aggravated. Come, then, let us sing of personal entrance into the City of God. The music and the feasting are not outside the door: to enjoy them we must enter in. Our citizenship is now in heaven. Nothing is barred against us, for the Son of David has set before us an open door, and no man can shut it. Let us not neglect our opportunities. Let it not be said, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." No, let it be ours to sing of salvation because we enjoy it to the full. Let our music never cease.

Now, when we get as far as this,—a strong city, and a city into which we have entered, we are still further glad to learn who the keeper and garrison of that city may be, for a city needs to be kept while there are so many foes abroad. To render all secure there needs to be some leader and commander for the people, who has strength with which to man the walls, and drive off besiegers. Our text tells us how securely this strong city will be held—so securely that none of her citizens shall ever be disturbed in heart,—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Permit me to remind you again that my text is the verse of a song. I earnestly desire you to feel like singing all the time while I am preaching, and let the words of the text ring in your heart with deep mysterious chimes, as of a land beyond these clouds and tempests,—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." I do not want you to be thinking, "I wish that the Lord would keep me in peace;" I would have you now enter into rest before the Lord. Do not say, "I am fretting and worrying, because I cannot reach this peace;" but pray to enjoy it this morning. O Lord and Giver of peace, vouchsafe it to our faith at once! O ye trustful ones, enter at once into the opened gates of the city of peace, and then bless God that you cannot be driven out again,

for the Lord promises to be your garrison and safeguard. May the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter, and whose fruit is peace, now work peace in each of us!

I. First, we are going to answer this question as best we can, WHAT IS THIS PERFECT PEACE? The text in the original, as I have told you, is—"Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace." It is the Hebrew way of expressing emphatic peace; true and real peace; double peace, peace of great depth and vast extent. Many of you know what it is; and you will probably think my answer a very poor one. I shall give the best I can, I can do no more; and if you try to make up for my deficiencies, our brethren will be gainers. I confess that I cannot to the full describe the peace that may be enjoyed if our faith is strong, and our confidence in God has reached its appropriate height. We are not limited as to quality or measure of this precious thing. Peace is a jewel of so rare a price that he only hath valued it aright who has sold all that he hath to buy it. Describe it? Nay, verily, there we fail.

This "peace, peace" means, I think, *an absence of all war, and of all alarm of war*. You who can imagine the full meaning of siege, storm, sack, and pillage, can also guess the happier state of things when a city hears no longer the tramp of armies, when from her ramparts and towers no sign of adversary can be discovered; but all is peace. That is very much the condition of the people of God when the Lord keepeth them in peace. God Himself, at one time, seemed to be against us: the ten great cannon of His Law were turned against our walls; all heaven and earth mustered for battle; God Himself was against us, at least, so conscience reported from her look-out. But, now, at this moment, having believed in Jesus Christ, we have entered into rest, and we have perfect peace as to our former sins. Who is he that can harm you, O ye that are reconciled to God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" We have by faith arrived at a state of perfect reconciliation with God. The divine Fatherhood has covered us. We inherit the spirit of children, the spirit of love and of unquestioning confidence. Everything is quiet, for we dwell in our Father's house. Look upward, and you will perceive no seat of fiery wrath to shoot devouring flame. Look downward, and you discover no hell, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Look back, and sin is blotted out. Look around, and all things work together for good to them that love God. Look beyond, and glory shineth through the veil of the future, like the sun through a morning's mist. Look outward, and the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field, are at peace with us. Look inward, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. The Lord leadeth us by still waters at such happy times, along that road of which we read, "No lion shall be there." If you who are believers in Jesus do not usually enjoy this peace, the blame must be laid to your own door: you make your own disquietude, for God saith to you, "Peace, peace," and He will keep you there if your mind is stayed on Him. Happy is he whose conflict is ended, and whose warfare is accomplished by faith in Christ Jesus.

Further, *this perfect peace reigns over all things within its circle*. Not only is no enemy near, but the inhabitants of the city are all at rest, and all their affairs are happy. No man can be said to be at *perfect* peace who has any cause of disquietude at all. Yet the child of God has this perfect peace according to our Lord's own statement; and, therefore, it must be true that the believer is raised above all disquietude. "What," say you, "has he not an evil heart of unbelief?" Yes, and that demands his watchfulness, but should not create in him any kind of terror, for God is greater than our hearts, and where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. The flesh has received its death-warrant, and unbelief is but a part of the flesh doomed to die. The holy life within us must triumph. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Though we be as yet like the smoking flax, we shall soon shine forth, and He will bring forth judgment unto victory. "Ah," saith one, "but I have disquietude in my family: I have a wild, unruly son; or, I have a sick, pining child, who will soon be taken away from me by consumption!" Yes, friend, but if your mind is stayed on God, and you can trust God with such matters, you should not lose your perfect peace even through this. For, what if your heart be troubled? Will that make the consumptive child any the stronger? Or will your melancholy be likely to restrain your rebellious son? No, but "The just shall live by faith," and shall triumph by faith, too. It shall be your strength to bring your sick, and lay them at Jesus feet; it shall be your hope to bring your unruly one, and say, "Lord, cast out the devil from my child, and let him live unto Thee." Nothing ought to avail to break the peace of the believer; the shield of faith should quench every fiery dart. For, observe, that your sin is forgiven you for Christ's sake, and that is done once for all. Observe, that Christ has taken possession of you, and you are His; neither will He lose you, but He will hold you single-handed against the world, and death, and hell. Observe, too, that your heavenly Father rules in providence, giving you what you need, for He has said, "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." He reigns in power, anticipating every danger, for He hath declared, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." God's peace covers the whole extent of the territory. Tell it out through every street of Mansoul that the Prince Emmanuel has come, and to every creature within the city walls the peace of God is granted, to be possessed with gladness and delight.

We are getting some idea, I trust, of this peace, though words cannot fully convey it; we must know it ourselves. Yet it is pleasant to note that this peace is deeply real and true. No perfect peace can be enjoyed unless *every secret cause of fear is met and removed*. Whisper it at the gates, and in the hostleries, that the city might be taken by surprise, and that spies had been seen in the meadows, down by the East gate; and straightway the city would be in a ferment. No; peace cannot breathe while suspicion haunts the streets. Our peace may be a false peace, a fools peace; we may be lulled into a carnal security. Politically, nations have become self-confident, have dreamed of peace when the forges were ringing with the ham-

mers of war; and so ill has happened unto them. Spiritually, there are multitudes of persons who think that all is right with their souls, when, indeed, all is wrong, for eternity. It is to be feared that some have received a "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Now, we cannot call that perfect peace which lies only on the surface, and will not bear to be looked into. We desire a peace which sits in open court, and neither blindfolds nor muzzles ambassadors. The peace which requires that there should be a hushing-up of this and that is an evil thing. Such is the direct opposite of the peace of God. If there be any charge against God's people, men are challenged to bring it,—*"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"* The pardon which God gives us is not a smothering-up of our sins, nor a blinding of justice. God is as just in His pardons as in His punishments. It shall be seen at the last, when believers enter into their glory, that they rise there by law, just as surely as the lost sink down to hell by law: that is to say, that the Lord Jesus Christ hath rendered to the law such recompense by His perfect obedience, and His matchless atonement, that it shall be as just on God's part to save His elect as to condemn the unbelieving world. We claim that our peace is just and right. It may be examined and tested; for here we have NO FICTION. If truth is to be found beneath the stars, it is in the peace which come through the precious blood of the Son of God. The peace which God gives goes through the very bottom of things, and brings us into the eternal harmonies.

We may gaze upon this truth with the most attentive eye, but we shall see only the more clearly that he that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath salvation for walls and bulwarks. Under any light believers in Jesus are secure. You may be put in circumstances of a very trying kind, especially you may be brought to the brink of death, and near to the bar of God; and yet, dear friend, the God in whom ye trust will not fail you. Your heart rests on His promises and faithfulness, and there is no reason why its peace should be broken.

Is not this a perfect peace? If I stood here to preach up a sort of enthusiastic confidence, which would not bear the test, I would be ashamed of myself; but in preaching this peace of God, which passeth all understanding, which has no back-reckonings to disturb it, which has nothing behind that can come in ultimately to break it up, I preach something worth the having. I do desire and pray that every man and woman here may know it as I know it; for I have peace with God, and therefore my heart is glad. Oh that all of you here present might now believe God, and stay yourselves upon Him; then would you hear the Lord say "Peace! peace!"

One thing more, *peace in a city would not be consistent with the stoppage of commerce.* During perfect peace intercourse goes on with all surrounding places, and the city by its trade is enriched. Where there is perfect peace with God, commerce prospers between the soul and heaven. Good men commune with the good, and thereby their sense of peace increases. If you have perfect peace, you have fellowship with all the saints: personal jealousies, sectarian bitternesses, and unholy emulations are all laid aside. Oh, it is a happy state of

mind when we have no prejudices which can wall out the godly from fellowship with us! Oh, how blessed to say spontaneously, "If he is a child of God, I love him; if he is a member of the heavenly family, he is my brother, and I welcome him!" When we are at one with all the people of God, we are quit of a world of wars.

Better still, there is a sweet peace between the heart and its God when from day to day, by prayer and praise, we commune with the Most High. Any peace that is linked with forgetfulness of God is a horrible thing: it is the peace of the miasma, which is brooding in quiet before it strikes with the arrow of death; it is that dead calm which precedes the cyclone or the earthquake. The perfect peace which God giveth sunneth itself in the presence of God; it is a tropical flower, which lives in the flaming sun-light; a bird with rainbow-wings, which is at home in the high-noon of heavens summertide. God gives us to know more and more of this perfect peace, by enabling us to plunge more and more completely into His own self! One with God in Christ Jesus, we have reached everlasting peace.

Further let me speak upon this peace that God gives to us. It consists in *rest of the soul*. You know how the body casts all the limbs upon the bed, and they lie at ease; so does our spiritual nature stretch itself at ease. The heart reclines upon God's love, and the judgment leans on His wisdom; the desires recline, the hopes repose, the expectations rest, the soul throws all its weight and all its weariness upon the Lord, and then a perfect peace follows. To this absolute recumbency add a *perfect resignation to the divine will*. If you quarrel with God, your peace is at an end; but when you say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good," you have obtained one of the main elements of perfect peace. When the Lord's will is owned and love, all ground for quarrel is over: the peace must be deep. It consists also in *sweet confidence in God*, when there is not the shadow of doubt about anything God does, for you are sure of this, if of nothing else, that He must be true, and He must be right and kind, and in all things better to you than you are to yourself. Then to leave everything with God, trusting in Him for ever, because in Him there is everlasting strength—this is peace. It means, in fact, the swallowing up of self in the great sea of God, the giving up of all we are, and all we have, so entirely to God that henceforth we cannot be troubled, or be disturbed, because that which could make trouble is already bound over to keep the peace. Then comes a *blessed contentment*; we want no more, we have enough. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." Having Him, my desires all stay at home with Him. Let me but know Him better, and I shall grow even more satisfied with unutterable beauties, His indescribable perfections.

I hope you know this peace; and if you do, I need not tell you it means *freedom from everything like despondency*. The mind cannot yield to mistrust, for the Lord's peace keeps it. The compass on board an iron steam-vessel is placed aloft, so that it may not be so much influenced by the metal of the ship: though surrounded by that which would put it out of place, the needle faithfully adheres to the pole because it is set above the misleading influence.

So with the child of God, when the Lord has given him peace: he is lifted beyond the supremacy of his sorrowful surroundings, and his heart is delivered from its sad surroundings.

Thus we are *kept from everything like rashness*: resting in God, we are not in sinful haste; we can wait God's time to deliver us, knowing that there is love in every second of the delay. We do not kick, as the untutored bullock kicks against the goad, but we push on the more eagerly with our furrow, toiling on to the end, till God shall appear for us. Thus we are saved from the temptations which come with our trials. We get the smelting of the furnace without its smut. We endure the sorrow, but escape the sin, and this is joy enough for a pilgrim in this vale of tears.

O friends, he that hath this perfect peace is the richest man in the world! What are broad acres if you have a troubled spirit? What are millions of gold, laid by in the bank, if you have no God to go to in the hour of distress? What would it be to be a prince, a king, an emperor, if you had no hope for the hereafter, no treasure of eternal love? I, therefore, charge you to get and keep this "peace,"—this perfect peace.

II. May the Lord strengthen me, in this time of painful weakness, while I speak upon another question. WHO ALONE CAN GIVE US THIS PEACE, AND PRESERVE IT IN US? The answer is in the words of the song, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." See, it is God Himself that can give us this peace, and keep us in it. The answer is one and indivisible. I know that while I was speaking some of you were saying, "The pastor is setting forth a high style of living; how can we reach to it?" But if peace be God's gift, and if the Lord Himself is to keep us in it, how easily can we attain it by putting ourselves into His hands! To be striving after peace is hard work, for by our very anxiety to find it we miss its trail. How differently does the matter appear when we read, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace!"

How does the Lord keep His people in peace? I answer, first, *by a special operation upon the mind in the time of its trial*. We read in the 12th verse, "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." If this be so, we can understand how the Lord can work peace in us among all the other works. There is an operation of God upon the human mind, mysterious and inscrutable, of which the effects are manifest enough; and among those effects is this, a quiet of heart, a calm of spirit, which never comes in any other way. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace." The Creator of our mind knows how to operate upon it by His Holy Spirit. Let the heart and will be allowed to be as free as you choose, yet is the Lord free to act upon them. As we can tune the strings of an harp, so can the Lord adjust the chords of our heart to joyous serenity. Not only by the Word of God, and by our meditation thereon, but by His own direct operation, the Lord can create peace within the land-locked sea of the human spirit. The Lord can get at men, and influence them for the highest ends, apart from the outward means. I have noticed that, altogether apart from the subjects of my reflections, I have, on a sudden, received a singular calm and peace of spirit directly from God. I can remember occasions when I had been hurried through broken

water; the winds were wild, and my little vessel was at one instant lifted out of the water, and at the next beaten under the waves. Then, in a moment, everything was calm as a summer's evening, quiet as when the hush of Sabbath falls on a hamlet in the lone Highlands. My heart was royally glad, for it had entered into perfect peace. I think you must have noticed such matters in your own case. Generally, I grant you, we are led into this peace by the consideration of the promises of God; but sometimes, apart from that, without our knowing why or wherefore, we have upon a sudden glided from darkness into light, by the distinct operation of the Spirit of God upon the mind.

But usually the Lord keeps His people in perfect peace *by the operation of certain considerations, intended by His infinite wisdom to work in that manner*. For instance, if sin be before the mind, it may well disquiet us, but when a man considereth that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, he hath that before him which allayeth the disquietude. When he considereth that, in dying, the Lord Jesus rendered unto God a full and satisfactory atonement for all the sin of all His believing people, then the man is at once, by that consideration, brought into perfect peace. Or suppose that a temporal trial ruffles the mind; the uneasy one turns to Scripture, and he finds that affliction is not sent as a legal punishment, but only as a fatherly chastisement of love: then is the bitterness of it passed away. Let a man know that all his trials work together for his good, and every sufficient reason for discontent is removed. The man noteth that there is good in the evil which surrounds him; indeed, he perceives the Lord to be at work everywhere, and henceforth he accepts the arrangements of providence without mistrust, and his heart is at peace. Depend upon it, dear friend, if you are tossed up and down, like the locust, you will only find peace by flying to the fields of Scripture. In this garden of the Lord, flowers are blooming which yield a balm for every wound of the heart. Never was there a lock of soul-trouble yet, but what there was a key to open it in the Word of God. For our pain, here is an anodyne; for our darkness, a lamp; for our loneliness, a friend. It is like the garden of Eden: a double river of peace glideth through it. Turn you then to the Lord's Word, to communion with His people, to prayer, to praise, or some form of holy service, and God will thus keep you in perfect peace.

I believe, also, that the Lord keeps His people in perfect peace *by the distinct operations of His providence*. When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. By secret workings he can quiet foes so that they are as still as a stone till Thy people pass over, O Lord. When one providence apparently fights against you, another will come in to deliver you. The Lord's thoughts towards His people are thoughts of good, and not of evil; and they shall see it to be so. Either the afflicted shall reach a place of rest, or else double strength shall be given for the double trial. God will allow no war in His providence against His own child, all must be for you there. If you are God's Jonah, and are thrown into the sea, a whale must wait upon you; and if you are God's servant, and are brought into the lowest dungeon in Egypt, Pharaoh's own self must send and fetch you out

of it to sit upon a throne. Lift up now your eyes, O you that crouch among the ashes because of your daily fret! Be no longer grovellers in the dust! The Lord is your King; nothing can break your peace. The Creator of yon stars and clouds, Lord of the universe, Monarch of all nature: thinkest thou that He cannot speedily send thee deliverance? All these ages has He loved thee; canst thou mistrust Him? Knowest thou not that He feeds the sparrows, ay, and the fish of the sea, and the myriads of living creatures which only His eye can see? There is no limit to His stores, nor bounds to His power. Canst thou not trust in Him, that He will help thee through, and give thee rest? Thus, you see, our peace comes from God in some way or other; and I therefore the more earnestly ask you never to seek peace elsewhere. Do not seek peace by praying for the absence of trial. You may be just as happy *in* affliction as out of it, if the Lord be with you. Do not seek peace by cultivating hardness of heart, and indifference of spirit. No, when you are afflicted, you ought to feel it: God means you should; and you must learn to feel it, and yet be fully at peace. Do not imagine you can get peace by philosophy, or by considerations derived from reason, or by knowledge fetched from experience. There is but one well from which you can draw the sweet waters of perfect peace, and it bears about its rim this dainty inscription—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, O Jehovah." Such peace as God giveth makes us like to God, it fills us with His love, it sets us acting according to His holiness; and, meanwhile, it prepares us for His palace, where everlasting peace perfumes every chamber, and covers the whole fabric with glory.

III. I have to answer another question this morning, and that is—WHO SHALL OBTAIN THIS PEACE? "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." The Hebrew is very involved and difficult to understand, but we shall not err if we permit it to teach us this,—that *the whole of our being is stayed upon God in order to this peace*. The word for "mind" is very vague, but it must include our thoughts. If your thoughts are stayed on God, you will have perfect peace: our misery comes from stray, vagabond, unsettled thoughts. If you will think of nothing except in connection with God, if you will only think of your sin in connection with a merciful God, if you will only think of tribulation in connection with a faithful God, if you will set the Lord always before you, so that he is at your right hand, you shall not be moved; but you certainly cannot be perfectly at peace till each thought, being held captive, learns to stay itself on Him. This includes the imagination. The imaginations are most untamable wild beasts, and cause a world of terror in timid minds. Oh for grace to fasten up imagination in the Lord's own cage! We must not imagine anything to be possible which would make the Lord appear to be unkind or untrue. Pray that your imagination may be stayed on God, that you may never again imagine anything contrary to the grace, goodness, and love of your heavenly Father. What peace would rule if this were the case! I think our text includes especially the desires. Desires are very grasping things. It is utterly impossible to satisfy a worldly man's heart: if he had all he now wishes for, he would be sure then to enlarge his desires as hell, and ask for more. But you, dear friend, must stay

your desires at some bound or other, and what more fit than to stay them upon God? Say, "I want nothing but what God wills to give me; I desire to have nothing but what He thinks is for His glory, and for my profit." When you once come to this point, when your imaginations and desires all pitch their tents within the compass of God Himself, Who is your heavenly portion, then you will be kept in perfect peace.

What else is meant by being stayed? Does it not mean rested? When your thoughts recline at their ease in God's revealed will, that is staying upon God. When your desires are filled, and no longer open their greedy mouths for more, because God has filled them, that is staying. Does it not mean stopping there? We speak of staying at a place. Well, when our minds are stayed upon God, we just stop at God; we do not propose any further journeying; we do not wish to push on in advance of where He leads the way. Our heart is rooted and grounded in the great Father's love, and so we stay our souls on Him.

Staying means upholding. We speak of a stay, and of a mainstay; it is something upon which we are depending. Such a person is the stay of the house,—its chief upholder and support. See, then, what it is to stay your souls on God, and mind that you daily carry it out. Some are staying themselves upon a friend, others are staying themselves upon their own ability, but blessed is the man who stays himself upon God. We are to have no confidence except in the Almighty arm; our reliance must be place there only. When in our God we live, and move, and have our being, this is the crowning condition of a creature. Oh, to feel to the utmost that we are wholly the Lord's, and that, whether His will appoints us joy or woe, we shall be equally satisfied, for we have come to lie down on His will, and go no further. I like staid persons—you know what they are and where they are. They are not easily put about, neither do they readily forsake a cause which they have espoused. He that is stayed upon God is the most staid in the world; he is steadfast, grounded, settled, and he cannot be removed from the blessed hope of the gospel. He that is fully staid is the man that shall have perfect peace. Oh, whither away, ye undecided ones? Oh, whither away, poor hearts? Will ye wander over every mountain? Will ye never take up lodging with your God, and dwell at ease in Him? Of this be ye well assured, your souls are on the wing, and are bound to fly on and on for ever unless they make bold to settle down upon the Lord their God. In God is rest, but in none else. All earth and heaven, time and eternity, cannot make up a peace for a bruised spirit, and yet a word from the Lord bestows it beyond recall.

Observe, it says, "*stayed on thee.*" Dwell with emphasis upon that, for there are many ways of staying yourself, but you must mind that all your staying is on God; on your heavenly Father, who will withhold no good thing from you; on your divine Saviour, who pleads for you at the right hand of God; on the Holy Ghost, who dwells in you; on the triune God, who hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Now, instead of saying more, I should like, if God the Holy Spirit would help us, for each one to go through the mental act of rolling our care upon the Lord. Let us commit

ourselves, and all that we are, and all that we have, and all that we have to do, and all that we have to suffer, to the guardian care of our loving God, casting all our care upon Him, for He careth for us. Here we are in God, and here we mean to abide. We are not regretting the grace of yesterday, nor sighing for the grace of to-morrow. We stay where we are—at home with God. Our anchor is down, and we do not mean to draw it up again. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." "Oh," saith one, "you do not know my troubles!" No, but I remember the story of a poor Methodist at the battle of Fontenoy. He had both his legs shot away, and when the surgeon came to attend to him, he was evidently bleeding to death, but he cried, "I am as happy as I can be out of Paradise!" Well, if in the very article of death, and suffering as he was, he could overflow with happiness, surely you and I can rejoice in perfect peace. I want you all to be like Dr. Watts, who said that for many years he went to his bed without the slightest solicitude as to whether he should wake up in this world, or in the next. To rest in God's Word, to rejoice in God's covenant, to trust in the divine sacrifice, to be conformed to God's will, to delight in God's self—this is to stay yourself upon God, and the consequence of it is perfect peace.

IV. WHY IS IT THAT THE LORD WILL KEEP THAT MAN IN PERFECT PEACE WHO STAYS HIMSELF ON HIM? The answer is, "because he trusteth in thee." Dear friends, that means surely this, that *in faith there is the tendency to create and nourish peace*. In all other ways of trying to live before God there is a tendency to produce uneasiness; but he that believes shall rest. Faith lays a cool hand upon a burning brow, and removes the fever of the fearful heart. Faith hath a voice of silver, wherewith she whispers, "Peace, be still." Nothing can conduce so much to a quiet life as a firm, unwavering confidence in the faithfulness of God's promise, and in the fact that what He has promised He is able also to perform.

Further, the text means this, that when a man stays himself upon God it is not only his faith that brings him peace, but *his faith is rewarded by peace*, which the Lord gives him as a token of approval. A kind of discipline is going on in our heavenly Father's family, not rewards and punishments such as judges award to criminals, but such as fathers give to their children. By this we are being trained for the many mansions in the Father's house above. If we will stay ourselves on God, we shall have peace; if we will not do so, we shall have no rest, and shall be in sore disquietude. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." The pressure of the trouble comes with the decline of faith. If thou believest more, it may not make thee richer, but thou wilt not feel thy poverty so keenly. If thou believest more, it may not make thee healthy in body, but thou shalt not fret because of thy sickness: if thou believest more, it will not give thee back thy buried ones, but it shall fill thy heart with a still higher love. "All things are possible to him that believeth," and peace, peace is among those possibilities; but if thou wilt not believe, neither shalt thou be established, thine unbelief shall be a rod for thine own back, a bitter for thine own cup. If thou

wilt not trust thy God, thou shalt wander into a weary land, seeking rest and finding none. Come, brothers and sisters, let us fly from such a fate, and win perfect peace as the reward of perfect confidence.

I think, lastly, this peace comes out of faith, because *it is faiths way of proclaiming herself*. If God gives you perfect peace, you will not need, when you go home, to shout to your friends, "I am a believer." They will soon see it. You have lost one that was very dear to you, and instead of fretting and repining, you kiss the hand of God, and go about your daily duties with patience. That is a very wonderful fruit of the Spirit, wrought by faith, and thus faith is seen. A man has had a fire, or some other form of loss, and his comforts are destroyed. If he is an unbeliever, we do not wonder that he tears his hair, and curses God, and rages and fumes. But if he has stayed himself on God, he will be at peace, and he will say, "The Lord hath done it. It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." By this will you be known to be the disciples of Christ, when in patience ye possess your souls. Faith which only operates when all goes well, is the mockery of faith; the love that praises God when God gives thee according to thy desire is no more than the love of some dogs to their masters, who care just as much for them as the number of the scraps may be. Wilt thou have such a cupboard love as that? It were far better to get to this state, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." If thou hast this faith within thee, then shall thy peace be like a river. The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep thy heart and mind by Christ Jesus.

I am very much concerned in leaving you, that you, dear friend, should aim much at the possession of this peace. It is a mode of propagating the gospel never to be despised. Multitudes of people have been converted by seeing the holy patience of God's people: they have been impressed by it, and have said, "There must be something in a religion that can give such a peace as this." When you are fretting and worrying, you are undoing your ministers work. When the people of God are over and above troubled, when they count life to be a burden to them because things are not as they would wish them to be, they are really slandering their heavenly Father, and they are preventing the wandering from coming back. The unconverted say, "Why should he go to God to be made miserable?" O ye banished seed, be glad! O ye troubled ones, rejoice! Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, yet lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Within a short time you shall put on the garments of your excellency and beauty, and the weeds of your mourning shall be laid aside. Wherefore play the man: better still, play the Christian; and let all men know where God is, and where the Lord rules the heart, there is, there must be, a deep and profound peace. May God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 26.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—46, 738, 552.