

PERFECT PEACE

Isa. 26:3, 4

Intro: We all have our favorite Bible verses. Some verses are favorites with most of the Lord's people. Such are the verses we have tonight: Isa. 26:3, 4. (Have everyone repeat them.)

We also note, as we get better acquainted with our Bibles that sometimes there are verses in the NT which closely parallel verses in the OT. For Isa. 26:3, 4 it would surely have to be Phil. 4:6, 7. (Have everyone repeat them.)

Now--in looking at any verse or verses, the meaning is enriched for us if we look at the context (the verses which precede, and the verses which follow). This is really the case with Isa. 26:3, 4 because the context really explains to us what it means to keep our minds stayed on the Lord so that the result will be "perfect peace."

At the outset let us recognize that this does not mean that we will never be disturbed about anything again. It speaks of a peace that is a "deep and constant peace," always complete, and ever-satisfying, but we must come again and again to recognize the basis upon which our peace rests, and the reasons why our peace can be interrupted.

"Peace," of course, was the greeting of the people of Judah. By this a Jew would wish you health, happiness, prosperity, security and everything else that it would take to make you joyful and satisfied. But to talk about "peace, peace" (which is what the original says), which we can translate, "perfect peace," is something which only the Lord can give. It is a peace which goes beyond every other peace.

Now let us look at the context which precedes, then at the verses themselves, and finally at the context which follows. And we will only go down as far as v. 12.

I. THE VERSES BEFORE OUR TEXT (Isa. 26:1, 2).

A. The setting: "In that day."

This is a song which will be sung in Judah, but one which Isaiah is setting before them so that they can get a glimpse of what was possible even then.

It is like our Lord said in Luke 19:42 as He looked over Jerusalem and wept over it,

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!
But now they are hidden from thine eyes."

B. The picture of an empty city. Cf. v. 1b.

This city is not Jerusalem, but Salvation. And, it also affords any inhabitant security of mind if he knows about the "walls and bullwarks" which God has established around the city.

C. The invitation (v. 2).

It is one thing to know about the city, and to view it from the inside; IT IS QUITE ANOTHER THING TO GO THROUGH THE GATE INTO SALVATION.

Summary: This means that, if you are looking for peace, you will not find it outside of the city of salvation. AND A GREAT PART OF YOUR PEACE WILL BE IN KNOWING THAT INSIDE OF THE CITY YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY SECURE IN THE LORD.

But, unfortunately, not everyone in the city has peace. This takes us to our text.

II. THE TEXT (Isa. 26:3, 4).

This verse is a promise. And in v. 4 we have both a command and a promise.

The prominent word is trust.

The Hebrews have another word for believing--the word which we generally associate with entering into salvation. This is a word which speaks of the way we commit ourselves to the Lord, the way we lean ourselves upon Him, the way we give Him the burdens that are too heavy for us to bear and which would disturb our peace.

It is not only entering into the city which gives us peace, but what we do about our cares once we are on the inside.

"Lord Jehovah" is the most emphatic form of Jehovah's name, and is found only elsewhere in Isa. 12:2.

So our thoughts are to be directed to the Lord, what He always has been, and what He always will be!

And we have a lot of past experience to go on. He is, lit., a faithful rock. Nothing gets past this rock which could possibly do harm to the people of God, BUT IT IS NECESSARY FOR US TO TRUST IF WE ARE TO HAVE PEACE.

Are you learning to trust the Lord? Do you know the joy, the peace, that comes by putting the burden over on the Lord?

But this is not all. We can still need some of the things which are mentioned in vv. 5-12 before our peace will be perfect. And keep in mind that Isaiah is not just talking about what we do once and never repeat (with the exception of salvation), but about what we need to do and continue to do.

III. THE VERSES AFTER OUR TEXT (Isa. 26:5-12).

There are several things here that are extremely important.

A. Humility (vv. 5, 6).

This is probably a reference to what the Lord has done with some of the nations, BUT WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT THAT WHICH BRINGS JUDGMENT UPON THE WICKED BRINGS JUDGMENT UPON THE PEOPLE OF GOD--and a loss of our peace.

B. Righteousness (v. 7).

In Isa. 48:22 Isaiah writes,

"There is no peace, saith the Lord, to the wicked."

When troubles arise that threaten our peace, what a necessary thing it is for us to make sure that things are right in our lives in the sight of God, AND THAT THINGS ARE RIGHT IN OUR HEARTS.

One thing David rediscovered as a result of his own sin was this:

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts,
in the hidden part thou shalt make me know wisdom."
Cf. Psalms 51:6.

C. Patient, eager waiting for the Lord to make known His will (v. 8a). Eager is expressed in the thought of the words which Isaiah uses.

It is not a time for rebellion. It is not a time for us to get the Lord to do things our way. IT IS A TIME FOR OUR WILLS TO BE SUBMITTED AGAIN TO THE WILL OF GOD. This is so essential for our peace.

D. A fresh seeking after the Lord (vv. 8b-11). This is where Isaiah devotes a major part of his emphasis. HOW OFTEN WE FORGET ABOUT THE LORD! WE CAN BE READING THE WORD FAITHFULLY, AND EVEN PRAYING FAITHFULLY, WITHOUT REALLY HAVING OUR HEARTS TURNED TOWARD HIM.

One thing that trouble does is to get us stop saying prayers, and to begin praying. We seek HIM until we find HIM! This is where the people of Judah got off the track at the very beginning. Cf. Isa. 1:2-4.

E. A new delight in what the Lord is doing (v. 12).

How easy it is for us to get our sights narrowed down to just what we are doing. And how often we are inclined to feel that our work is the most important, that we need to note what the Lord is doing

--in us,

--and for us.

I believe that it was Dr. Bach of TEAM who used to say about Paul's prison epistles, "You see what happens to you when you get behind in your correspondence!"

Do you suppose that even the Apostle Paul had to be reminded that "it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

Concl: These are the things which Isaiah wants us to know about "perfect peace."

OR BETTER YET--THESE ARE THE THINGS WHICH THE LORD WANTED ISAIAM TO KNOW SO THAT HE COULD TELL THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH, AND THEN HE HAD ISAIAM WRITE IT IN A BOOK SO THAT YOU AND I COULD KNOW IT TODAY! The way to "perfect peace" had not changed.

Some day Israel will know this kind of peace. What a tragedy that they are not beginning now.

Oh, that we would take these truths to heart and experience each day among allop the trials and testings of life the peace that God has provided for us in His way through His wonderful Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.