

Isaiah 26:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. This beloved promise offers one of Scripture's most profound assurances about the nature and source of true peace. The Hebrew structure reveals depths often lost in translation, making this a cornerstone text for understanding divine peace amid life's storms.

"Thou wilt keep" (תִּצּוֹר/titzor) means to guard, protect, preserve, watch over. The verb suggests active, vigilant protection—not passive absence of danger but God's militant guarding of His people. The same root appears in contexts of watchmen guarding a city against enemies (2 Samuel 11:16), or careful preservation of valuable possessions. This isn't God merely observing from a distance but personally, actively, continuously guarding the peace of those who trust Him. The imperfect tense indicates ongoing, continuous action—God will keep on keeping, perpetually maintaining this protective watch. This divine guarding isn't temporary (only during easy times) or conditional on perfect circumstances, but constant, reliable, and unwavering regardless of external chaos.

"Perfect peace" (שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם/shalom shalom) employs the Hebrew literary device of repetition for emphasis and intensification. Shalom means peace, wholeness, completeness, wellbeing, prosperity, soundness—far more comprehensive than English "peace" suggests. This isn't merely absence of conflict or cessation of hostilities but positive wholeness, comprehensive wellbeing, and complete harmony. Doubled, it becomes "perfect peace," "complete peace," "peace upon

peace," or "abundant peace." This is not superficial calm or temporary relief but profound inner wholeness and harmony with God regardless of external circumstances. It encompasses spiritual peace (reconciliation with God), emotional peace (inner tranquility), relational peace (harmony with others), and comprehensive wellbeing touching every area of life. The repetition suggests wave upon wave of peace, peace layered upon peace, peace so profound and multifaceted it defies single expression. This is peace multiplied, peace perfected, peace that floods the soul.

"Whose mind is stayed on thee" (יֵצֶר סְמוּךְ/yetzer samukh) is literally "a steadfast mind" or "established purpose." Yetzer means inclination, purpose, imagination, disposition—the inner orientation and fundamental focus of the mind, the basic bent of one's thoughts and affections, the habitual direction of mental energy. Samukh means supported, sustained, firmly established, held up, secured—like a pillar firmly set in bedrock foundation or a building anchored on solid ground that cannot be shaken. The picture is of a mind firmly, immovably fixed on God, not wavering with circumstances or distracted by fears but steadfastly, resolutely, persistently focused on Him. This isn't occasional thoughts about God scattered throughout the day, but habitual mental orientation where God becomes the gravitational center around which all thoughts orbit. It's constant awareness of His presence, persistent fixing of thoughts on His character and promises, continual reference to His truth in every situation. The stayed mind doesn't ignore difficulties but views them through the lens of God's sovereignty, character, and faithfulness.

"Because he trusteth in thee" (כִּי בָךְ בָּטִיחַ/ki vekha vatuach) reveals the foundation enabling this steadfastness. Batach means to trust confidently, feel secure, be confident, rely upon completely without reservation. This is active, robust, confident trust producing the steadfast mind—not wishful thinking, blind optimism, or psychological self-talk, but informed confidence rooted in knowing God's character and proven faithfulness throughout Scripture and personal experience. The causal particle ki ("because") establishes clear causation: perfect peace doesn't create trust; rather, trust creates the steadfast mind that receives perfect peace. The object of trust is specifically "in thee"—not in circumstances, human ability, favorable outcomes, religious activities, or personal righteousness, but in God Himself. This trust isn't vague optimism or general religious sentiment

but particular, personal confidence in Yahweh, the covenant God who has revealed Himself in Scripture and proven faithful to every promise.

The theological progression is clear and crucial: deep trust in God → steadfast focus on God → God's protective keeping → perfect peace. Each step depends on the previous. This peace is not self-generated through positive thinking, meditation techniques, or favorable circumstances but God-given to those whose minds are anchored in Him through confident trust. It's the peace that transcends understanding (Philippians 4:7), the peace Jesus gives that the world cannot give or take away (John 14:27), the peace that remains firm even when circumstances scream for anxiety and external conditions demand panic. This verse demolishes all self-help approaches to peace while offering genuine, supernatural, God-given peace to those who trust God completely and fix their minds steadfastly on Him.

Historical Context

Isaiah prophesied during turbulent times spanning four kings of Judah (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah), approximately 740-700 BCE. Isaiah 26 appears within the "Isaiah Apocalypse" (chapters 24-27), a section of prophetic vision addressing God's ultimate judgment and salvation. This promise of perfect peace comes amid prophecies of cosmic upheaval and divine judgment.

Chapter 26 takes the form of a song of trust, sung by God's people in "that day" when salvation comes. Verse 1 opens: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." The context is eschatological—looking forward to God's final deliverance and establishment of His kingdom.

For Isaiah's original audience facing Assyrian aggression (which would destroy the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE and threaten Judah), this promise had immediate relevance. King Ahaz famously refused to trust God, instead seeking alliance with Assyria—the opposite of the steadfast trust Isaiah 26:3 commends. Later, King Hezekiah would exemplify this trust when Assyria besieged Jerusalem (701 BCE). Despite overwhelming odds, Hezekiah trusted God, and God miraculously delivered the city (2 Kings 19; Isaiah 37).

The broader context of Isaiah 26 emphasizes that this peace comes only to the righteous who trust God, not to the wicked. Verse 10 warns: "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness." True peace is inseparable from righteousness and trust in God.

For post-exilic Jews returning from Babylonian captivity, this promise addressed deep trauma. They had experienced national destruction, exile, loss of temple and homeland. Rebuilding required trusting God's promises while facing opposition (Ezra, Nehemiah). Perfect peace wasn't circumstantial—enemies still opposed them—but came through steadfast trust in God's faithfulness.

New Testament writers understood this peace as ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Jesus is called the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). His death made "peace through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20), reconciling humanity to God. The peace Isaiah promises flows from the atonement Christ accomplished. Paul speaks of Christ Himself being "our peace" (Ephesians 2:14) and declares "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7)—strikingly similar language to Isaiah 26:3.

Throughout church history, believers in every age of persecution, suffering, and uncertainty have clung to this promise. Early martyrs faced death with supernatural peace. Reformers endured opposition with steadfast trust. Missionaries ventured into hostile territories with minds stayed on God. In every case, perfect peace came not from favorable circumstances but from steadfast trust in God's character and promises.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically to have your mind 'stayed' or 'steadfastly fixed' on God in the midst of daily distractions and anxieties?
2. How does the causal relationship between trust and peace challenge modern therapeutic approaches that seek peace through self-focused techniques?
3. In what specific circumstances are you most tempted to let your mind drift from God to anxious preoccupation with problems, and how can this promise help?
4. How does 'perfect peace' (peace upon peace) differ from mere absence of conflict or temporary emotional calm?
5. What is the relationship between the peace Isaiah promises here and the peace that comes through justification in Christ (Romans 5:1)?

Interlinear Text

וְלִבִּי	שָׁמַר וְ	תִּצָּרְרָה	שְׁלֵמָה	שְׁלֵמָה	כִּי	בְּ
whose mind	is stayed	Thou wilt keep	him in perfect	him in perfect	H3588	H0
H3336	H5564	H5341	H7965	H7965		
בְּטוֹחִי:						
on thee because he trusteth						
H982						

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 4:7 (Peace): And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

John 16:33 (Peace): These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

John 14:27 (Peace): Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Psalms 9:10 (Faith): And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Romans 5:1 (Faith): Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Isaiah 31:1 (Faith): Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

Micah 5:5 (Peace): And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men.

2 Chronicles 13:18 (Parallel theme): Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers.

2 Chronicles 16:8 (Parallel theme): Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.

1 Chronicles 5:20 (Faith): And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him.