The Promise of Peace - Isaiah 26:3 (John 14:27)

Welcome to the Summer of Promise! This is a series of messages that focus on some of the great promises of God in the Bible and how we appropriate those promises into our lives. We have found the promise of eternal life and the promise of answered prayer. Today I want us to explore yet another great and precious promise from the Word of God. It is the promise of Peace.

Do you ever long for peace? Do you ever long for the turmoil and stress to end? Do you ever find yourself filled with worry or fear? These are troubling times in which to live.

What does it take for us to find peace? Is escape the answer? Do we have to escape in order to get rid of anxiety? I wonder if Job’s words found in Job 3:25-26 reflect what some of you might be feeling: “What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.”

Is it possible to be at peace in the midst of all our turmoil and stress? In order to get us prepared for the promise of peace, let’s take an inventory to find out how peaceful we really are. Here are four possible responses: Never, Seldom, Frequently, or Constantly.

1. How often do you worry?
2. How often are you at peace with others?
3. How often do you remain peaceful in times of trouble?

How’d you do? Not so good? Me either.

Is it possible to have peace while we still have problems? Can we experience “shalom” in times of sorrow, sickness and sadness? We often say, “If only I could get some peace and quiet,” like it is some sort of destination or something “out there,” when true peace is what happens “in here” (point to heart).

Friends, peace is the not the absence of external conflict. It’s the internal presence of the Prince of Peace. Peace can be experienced in the midst of the mess you are in and can help you endure difficult people and disturbing problems.

Our promise for today is found in Isaiah 26:3. Lots of people throughout the centuries have locked into this verse because the peace that comes from God is perfect: “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusteth in You.”

We’re learning that it’s important to understand the promises of God within the passages in which they’re found. In other words, before we claim a text we must first consider the context.

Isaiah is a prophet of God charged with ministering to the people of God during a very dark time in their history. As a young man he witnessed the rise of his country into an economic and military world power. But along with this prosperity there was also corruption, shallow spirituality and ritualistic religion. A new world power had now come on the scene in the form of Assyria and the splendor of Isaiah’s nation was starting to fade. While politicians argued, the nation was in a moral downward spiral and the people grew anxious. Kind of sounds like America today, doesn’t it?

Isaiah was a wordsmith, utilizing a versatility of expression and vocabulary. His writing has a majestic grandeur to it as he exalts the grace of God in salvation. In chapters 24-27, we see a mixture of judgment and joy, of suffering and singing. Isaiah 26:1 tells us that this section is actually a song: “In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah...” and centers on the city of Jerusalem: “...We have a strong city; God makes salvation its walls and ramparts.”

Isaiah is looking forward to the day when a salvation song will be sung in Israel because he knows that the political problems they were going through could not thwart God’s purposes.

Aren’t you glad that no matter what problems you face, there is never any panic in heaven? As we begin to unpack this promise of peace, let’s look at how various versions and paraphrases render Isaiah 26:3.

King James Version: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”
New Living Translation: “You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!”

Amplified: “You will guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind [both its inclination and its character] is stayed on You, because he commits himself to You, leans on You, and hopes confidently in You.”

NKJV states: “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”

Like we did last week, I want you to know this verse, to memorize it before you leave here today. You are going to need it in the middle of a dark night or in the midst of a terrible storm, so let’s put it to memory. So let me say it again, and then you repeat it back to me. “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” Isaiah 26:3

The first part of Isaiah 26:3 contains a powerful promise: “You will keep in perfect peace...” The word, “keep” means, “to guard, protect or maintain.” It’s a military term meaning to protect a camp or castle.

The enemy is not able to get in when God’s peace protects us. With God as our guard we have nothing to fear, do we? Psalm 85:8: “...He promises peace to his people...” Psalm 29:11: “The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.”

The phrase, “perfect peace” is literally, “shalom, shalom” in Hebrew. The word “perfect” is not in the original manuscripts. There was no need for it. With Isaiah’s use of colorful language and vivid vocabulary, it’s striking to me that he doesn’t use an adjective to describe God’s peace but simply repeats the word: “shalom, shalom.” Literally it translates, “You will keep in peace, peace.”

Spurgeon said that, “God does nothing by halves, but everything by doubles.” When a word is repeated in the Bible it’s done for emphasis, like an exclamation mark. “Shalom” means “completion and fulfillment” and refers to entering in a state of wholeness, unity, and a restored relationship. So to repeat “shalom” is to present absolute, perfect peace. It is peace squared! Peace multiplied! Peace perfected!

In my experience most people fail to find peace that lasts because they’re looking for it in the wrong place. Peace is not found in pleasant circumstances or in people or in having a lot of possessions. Peace is internal, not external and can only come from the God who is “peace, peace.” 2 Thessalonians 3:16: “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way.”

As we’ve learned in our Summer of Promise series, some of God’s promises are conditional, meaning that there are certain conditions that we must meet in order for them to be fulfilled. There are two such conditions in Isaiah 26:3 and one in verse 4.

Before we do, let’s repeat our verse for today. “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” Isaiah 26:3

God Keeps Us in Perfect Peace...

1. When we keep our minds mindful. “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast...”

A double dose of peace comes when we discipline our minds to stay centered on God. The word “mind” refers to “mindset or a frame of mind.” Most of us need to reframe our focus so that instead of getting all caught up in our problems, we set our gaze on God. This means that God’s double dose of peace is given to those whose minds are intentionally riveted on God.

A man named Paternus wrote these words to his son: “First of all, my child, think magnificently of God. Magnify His providence; adore His power, pray to Him frequently and incessantly. Bear Him always in your mind. Teach your thoughts to reverence Him in every place for there is no place where He is not. Therefore, my child, fear and worship and love God; first and last, think magnificently of Him!”

Wow! What a legacy to hand down to your son!
It's time to claim God’s promises instead of focusing on our problems. I love the words to the song, “Like a River Glorious” – “Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest; finding, as He promised, perfect peace and rest.”

Philippians 4:6 says: “Do not be anxious about anything...” This provides a helpful corrective to what might be the number one sin of Christians today – anxious worry. Someone has said that there are more people addicted to anxiety than to all other addictions combined.

The word “anxious” means, “That which divides, distracts the mind and which draws a troubled person in different directions.” Friends, worry is wasting today’s time to clutter up tomorrow’s opportunities with yesterday’s troubles.

Some years ago a professor at a leading American university studied the things people worry about. His research discovered that:

- 40% of what people worry about never happens
- 30% concerns the past
- 12% are needless worries about health
- 10% are about petty issues
- 8% are legitimate concerns

That means that 92% of our “worry time” is wasted energy. But the Bible says that we are not to worry about the 8% either. Why is that? Because when we worry we’re really saying that God can’t take care of us, that our problems are bigger than His promises.

R.H. Mounce once said, “Worry is practical atheism and an affront to God.” One pastor writes, “Worry is the warning light that God is not really first in my life at this particular moment because worry says that God is not big enough to handle my troubles.” Jill Briscoe adds, “We can worry or we can worship.”

Jesus doesn’t want us to be saturated with stress or inundated with anxiety. In Luke 21:34, He warns, “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life...” Worry can weigh us down, and like an anchor, anxiety can cause us to sink spiritually.

Even worse, stress can strangle us. That’s the picture Jesus paints of how worry can wipe us out in Matthew 13:22: “The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.”

If you’re sinking with stress today, follow the clear teaching of 1 Peter 5:7: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

Some of us are stressed out simply because we’ve been allowing our minds to focus on things that bring us down. Wrong thinking leads to wrong feelings, which can lead to wrong living. Conversely, right thinking leads to right living.

What we put into our minds determines what comes out in attitudes and actions.
What we believe determines how we behave.
Proverbs 23:7 in the King James Version puts it this way: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

As a result we are neither joyful nor peaceful because we allow our thoughts to control our behavior. Did you know that the average person has 12,000 separate thoughts each day? That works out to over 4 million thoughts a year.

Philippians 4:8 provides us with eight filters to help us keep out the bad and let in only the good: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.”

We are to “think about” these kinds of things, which means we are to “continuously ponder them in a detailed and logical manner.” God has packed a lot of good into His world and we need to fill our minds with that which is praiseworthy. Be deliberate about what you allow yourself to think about.
2. When we keep our wills willing. “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” Isaiah 26:3 Let’s say that verse again together.

To trust means to fully lean on someone, or to rely on them. So, here is how the promise is delivered. We begin by focusing our minds on the Lord and not our problem. Then we put our trust in the Lord in the midst of our terrible storm to be Master of our situation. Then, with our mind set on Him and our trust secured in Him, He fills us with “peace, peace.”

Let’s go back to Philippians 4 again to see how important it is that we lean on the Lord.

• The Peace of God will protect us.

Once we trust God with our trials and present our requests to Him, His peace will come flooding into our lives. Verse 7: “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” This peace “transcends all understanding” which means that it goes way beyond all that we can even ask or imagine; it excels and surpasses everything we could have hoped for. In fact, we can’t even put it into words because it is peace, peace.

• The God of Peace will be with us.

We do not have to live the Christian life in our own strength because Jehovah Shalom is with us. Look at verse 9: “And the God of peace will be with you.” We’ll learn more about the Promise of God’s Presence next Sunday.

In what area do you need to trust God in? Let’s keep our minds mindful and our wills willing.

Let’s say our verse together again. “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” Isaiah 26:3

That leads to the third condition. God keeps us in perfect peace...

3. When we keep our lives living for the Lord. Look with me at the very next verse; verse four. “Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.”

I’m grieved when I see so many believers start out with a bang in their Christian life and then end up compromising, staying away from church and getting trapped in cycles of sin. Friends, God wants us to be faithful forever. We’re to lean on Him today and every day.

Here’s what happens when we don’t. If you don’t walk with God, you’ll worry yourself silly. If you don’t trust, you’ll tremble at all your troubles. If you unplug, you will unravel.

We can rely on the Lord because He is the covenant-keeping God. The name “Lord” here is Yahweh or Jehovah, the self-existent One. He is unlimited and unchanging. He can be trusted to keep His promises.

It’s very interesting that once again Isaiah gives us a double dose of a word. It’s as if he can’t find an adjective to describe the awesomeness of the Almighty so he simply repeats himself: “The Lord, the Lord.” This is one of only two times this is done in the entire Bible. Isaiah impresses on us what he cannot express with human vocabulary.

Do you think God is not big enough to handle your problems? Are you better equipped to handle those difficulties than He is? You can rely on Him because He is the “Rock Eternal.”

It’s one thing to have right beliefs; it’s another to believe that God can handle your hurts and give you peace in the middle of your problems.

This is where the hymn “Rock of Ages” gets its theme: “Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.” God has given us a place to hide and it’s found in a personal relationship with Him.

Last year we had the privilege of going to Montana with some dear friends and I am reminded how magnificent and mighty those mountains really are. As we walked around we saw some clefts, which are like indentations, and we saw how easy it is to hide in there. When you cling to a cleft in the rock you are protected from the elements and other dangers.
Friends, the only way to find peace, peace is to rely on the Rock of Ages, whose name is Jehovah, Jehovah! LORD, LORD!

God will keep us in perfect peace…
• When we keep our minds mindful
• When we keep our wills willing
• When we keep our lives living for the Lord

But is this Peace for everyone?
I would be remiss to assume that everyone here is a full-fledged follower of Jesus. If you do not know Jesus yet through the new birth, perfect peace will be elusive for you. To say it another way, you will be restless until you receive Him as your Savior and Lord.

Isaiah 57:19-21: “‘Peace, peace, to those far and near,’ says the Lord. ‘And I will heal them.’ But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. ‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.’”

If you’re looking for peace today, according to Psalm 34:14 you’re going to have to pursue it:
“Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

Say our verse with me again. “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” Isaiah 26:3

There are at least four sources of peace to go after.

1. Peace is produced by the Savior.
   In John 14:27 Jesus said: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”
   He expands this thought in John 16:33: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”
   And Isaiah 9:6 tells us that Jesus is the “Prince of Peace.”
   Peace doesn’t come from going to a special place; peace comes from knowing a special Person. I don’t have time to develop this concept this morning but in the Bible salvation and peace go hand in hand.
   Peace has nothing to do with the absence of a catalyst of fear. Instead it has everything to do with the presence of Christ.
   • Peace isn’t a clear doctor’s report.
   • Peace isn’t when there’s no conflict in your marriage.
   • Peace isn’t absolute certainty about your future.
   It’s the knowledge of the fact that Christ is with you even if the report comes back with news of cancer. That Christ is with you in the midst of tense moments in your marriage. That Christ is with you in the present, and He’s already waiting for you in the future. God brings His peace into situations where we’re the most afraid and most frightened, not where there is no fear or no trepidation. It’s in the moments when we need God’s peace most desperately that He supplies it most abundantly.”

2. Peace is produced by Holy Spirit.
   You can’t manufacture peace. You can’t fake it because it flows out of a relationship with Christ. Peace is one fruit Holy Spirit brings in our lives according to Galatians 5:22: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace…”

3. Peace is produced by the Scriptures.
   If we want peace, we must fill our minds with the Word of God. Check out Psalm 119:165: “Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.”
4. Peace is produced by our submission.

   If you’ve not surrendered fully, it’s time to do so. If you want rest, then make sure that you’ve repented. Isaiah 30:15: “This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: ‘In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.’”

   Ponder this conditional promise in Leviticus 26:3-6: “If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands...I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid.”

   I remember one time I left on a trip and left my garage door open! I can’t believe I did that, but I did! I had left our house wide open and something bad could have happened. My neighbor was a dear friend and deacon in my church, and he closed it for me. I’m just wondering, what’s wide open in your life? Does worry have easy access into your home? Have you left the door of anxiety ajar?

   God wants to bless us, but he often does it in surprising ways. Give Him your worries, your fears, your concerns, those things that keep you up at night. And ask Jehovah, Jehovah to give you peace, peace because the peace that comes from Him is perfect.

   As a way to help you process the promise of peace, I invite you to watch this video and ponder the words. It’s from Laura Story and the song is called, “Blessings.”

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGniRk_GcLs

   She wrote the song because as she prayed for healing for her husband’s health, she felt like her prayers were not being answered. And then she learned that sometimes blessings come through tears and peace comes as a result of a thousand sleepless nights.

   We pray for blessings, we pray for peace
   Comfort for family, protection while we sleep
   We pray for healing, for prosperity
   We pray for Your mighty hand to ease our suffering
   All the while, You hear each spoken need
   Yet love us way too much to give us lesser things
   Cause what if Your blessings come through raindrops?
   What if Your healing comes through tears
   What if a thousand sleepless nights
   Are what it takes to know You’re near?
   What if trials of this life
   Are Your mercies in disguise?