

Sermon XII.

Isaiah xxvi. 3.—“Thou shall keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.”

All men love to have privileges above others. Every one is upon the design and search after some well-being, since Adam lost that which was true happiness. We all agree upon the general notion of it, but presently men divide in the following of particulars. Here all men are united in seeking after some good; something to satisfy their souls, and satiate their desires. Nay, but they scatter presently in the prosecution of it, because, according to every man's fancy and corrupt humour, they attribute that good unto diverse things; and when they meet with disappointment, they change their opinion of that, but are made no wiser, for they turn from one to another of that same kind, in which their imagination hath supposed blessedness to be; and therefore they will return to that which they first loathed and rejected. Is there, then, no such thing in the world as blessedness? Is it not to be found among men? Are all men's insatiable desires in vain? Is a creature made up and composed of desires, to keep it in continual torment and vexation of spirit? No certainly, it is, and it is found by some. All the world strives about it, but the man only who trusts and believes in God, he it is, who carries it away from them,—who hath this privilege beyond the world. And why do so many miss it? Because they do not see or suspect that it is blessedness indeed which he enjoys; but, on the contrary, their corrupted imaginations represent godliness, and a godly man's self-indigency and dependence on God, as the greatest misery and shame. The godly man hides not his blessedness from the world; no, he proclaims it when he hath found it,—he would that all enjoyed it with him. And if there were no more to declare that it doth not consist in worldly things, this might suffice—they are

not communicable to many, without the prejudice and loss of every one. But none will believe his report of his own estate.

If ye would consider, here is that which men toil for,—compass sea and land for; here it is; “near thee in thy mouth.” It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, How shall I ascend to it? It is not in hell below, that thou shouldst say, Who shall descend? It is not in the ends of the earth. No. It is “near thee, in thy mouth.” It is not beyond the sea, but it is “near thee in thy mouth, even the word of faith,” which Christ preached, Rom. x. 6-8. And what says that word? Believe with thy heart, and thou shall be saved; trust in God, and depend on him, and ye shall have peace, and that perfect peace; and this peace shall be kept by God himself. “Blessed, then, is the man that trusts in the Lord,” Psal. xl. 4. Ye make a long journey in vain; ye spend your labour and money in vain; all the pains might be saved: it is not where ye seek it. Ye travel about many creatures; ye go to many doors, and inquire for happiness and peace, but ye go too far off; ye need not search so many coasts, it is nearer hand, in this word of the gospel—the joyful sound; it is this that proclaims peace. Peace is a comprehensive word, especially in scripture. It was the Jews' salutation, “Peace be to you;” meaning happiness and all good things; it is Christ's salutation, “Grace and peace.” Grace is holiness, peace is happiness, and these are either one, or inseparably conjoined as one. This was the angels' song, “Glory to God, peace on earth,” Luke ii. 14. Blessedness was restored, or brought near to be restored, to miserable man, by Jesus Christ; and upon the apprehension of this, angels sing. It was this Christ came into the world with; and when he went away, he left this legacy to his children, “My peace I leave you,” John xiv. 27. We lost happiness, and all men are on a vain pursuit of it since, but it is found, and found by one of our kin. Our Lord Jesus, our elder brother, he hath found it, or made it, and brought it near us in the gospel for the receiving; and whoso receives him by faith, and trusts in him, receives that privilege, that peace. He endured

much trouble to gain our peace; he behoved to undergo misery to purchase our blessedness, and so it is his own, and whoso receives him receives it also.

The news of such a peace might be seasonable in the time of war and trouble, if we apprehended our need of it. It is not a peace from war and trouble, but a peace in war and trouble. “My peace I leave with you,” and “in the world ye shall have trouble,” John xiv. 27, and xvi. at the end. What a blessed message is it, that there is a peace, and a perfect peace attainable in the midst of wars, confusions, and calamities of the times, public and personal; a perfect peace, a complete peace, even complete without the accession of outward and worldly peace, that needs it not; nay, appears most perfect and entire in itself, when it is stripped naked of them all. Behold what a privilege the gospel offers unto you! ye need not be made miserable, but²⁹² if you please. This is more than all the world can afford you. There is no man can promise to himself immunity from public or personal dangers, from many griefs and disappointments; but the gospel bids you reckon up all your troubles and miseries that you can meet with in the world; and yet in such a case, if ye hearken to wisdom, there is a peace that will make you forget that trouble. “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,” Prov. iii. 17. I will undertake to make thee blessed, says wisdom, the Father’s wisdom. When all the world hath given thee over for miserable; when thou hast spent thy substance on the physicians, and in vain, come to me, I can heal that desperate disease by a word. “I create peace,” when natural causes have given it over; I create it of nothing; I will keep you “in perfect peace.”

You have then here, three things of special concernment in these times; and all times, a blessedness, a perfect peace attainable, the way of it, and the fountain of it. The fountain of it, the preserver of it, is God himself; the way to attain it, is “trusting

²⁹² [That is, unless you please.—*Ed.*]

in God, and staying on him.” This sweetness of peace is in God the tree of life. Faith puts to its hand, and plucks the fruit of the tree; hope and dependence on God is a kind of tasting of that fruit and eating of it; and then followeth this perfect peace, as the delightful relish and sweetness that the soul finds in God, upon tasting how gracious he is. God himself is the life of our souls, the fountain of living-waters, the life and light of men. Faith and trusting in God, draws out of this fountain,—out of this deep well of salvation; and staying on God, drinks of it, till the soul be refreshed with peace and tranquillity, such as passeth natural understanding. Christ Jesus is the tree of life, that grows in the garden of God; trusting in him by faith implants a soul in him,—roots a soul in him, by virtue of which union, it springs up and grows into a living branch; by staying and depending upon him, we live by him, and hence springs this blessed and sweet fruit of peace of soul and conscience, which grows upon the confidence of the soul placed in God, as the stalk by which it is united to the tree. Trusting and staying upon God is the soul's casting its anchor upon him in the midst of the waves and storms of sin, wrath, and trouble. The poor beaten sinner casts an anchor within the vail, on that sure ground of immutable promises in Jesus Christ; and then it rests and quiets itself at that anchor, enjoys peace in the midst of the storm,—there is a great calm, it is not moved, or not greatly moved, as if it were a fair day. David flieth unto God as his refuge, anchors upon the name of the Lord, Psal. lxxii. 1, 2; and so he enjoys a perfect calm and tranquillity. “I shall not be moved,” because he is united to the rock, he is tied to the firm foundation, Jesus Christ, and no storm can dissolve this union, not because of the strength of that rope of faith, it is but a weak cord, if omnipotency did not compass it about also, and so we “are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.” The poor wearied traveller, the pilgrim, sits down under the shadow of a rock, and this peace is his rest under it. Faith lays him down, and peace is his rest and sleep. Faith in

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Jesus Christ is a motion towards him, as the soul's proper place and centre, and therefore it is called a coming to him,—flying to him as the city of refuge. It is the soul's flight out of itself, and misery and sin within, to apprehend mercy and grace, and happiness in Christ. Now, hope is the conjunction or union of the soul with him,—the soul then staying and resting on him, as in its proper place, and so it enjoys perfect peace and rest in its place, so that if ye remove it thence, then ye offer violence to it.

These two things are of greatest importance to you to know, what this perfect peace is, and what is the way to attain it. The one is the privilege and dignity, the other is the duty of a Christian, and these two make him up what he is.

I would think that man perfectly blessed, who is at peace with two things,—God and himself. If a man be at peace with creatures without him, and be at peace with himself, but have war within his own mind, that man's peace is no peace, let be perfect peace. A man's greatest enemy is within his own house. And within indeed, when it is in his bosom and soul, when a man's conscience is against him, it is worse than a world beside. *Conscientia mille testes*,²⁹³ so I say, it is *mille hostes*. It is “a thousand witnesses,” and “a thousand enemies.” It were better to endure condemnation of any judge, of many judges in the world, than to sustain the conviction of a man's own conscience, when it accuseth, who shall excuse? John viii. 9, Rom. ii. 15. “A merry spirit,” saith Solomon, “is a continual feast,” Prov. xv. 15. And what must a heart be, which hath such a gnawing worm within it, as an accusing conscience, to eat it out? This is the worm of hell that dies not out, which makes hell hell indeed. This indeed will be a painful consumption, “A broken spirit drieth up the bones,” it will eat up the marrow of the spirit and body, Prov. xvii. 22. What infirmity is there which a man cannot bear?

²⁹³ [A proverb, which signifies that conscience does not deceive, and that its testimony is as overwhelming as that of a thousand witnesses—*Quintil Inst Orator* lib. v. chap. xi.—*Ed.*]

Poverty, famine, war, pestilence, sickness, name what you will, but a wounded spirit who can bear? Prov. xviii. 14. And there is reason for it, for there is none to bear it, a sound and whole spirit can sustain infirmities, but when that is wounded, which should bear all the rest, what is behind to bear it? It is a burden to itself. If a man have trouble and war in this world, yet there is often escaping from it, a man may fly from his enemy, but when thy enemy is within thee, whither shalt thou fly? Thou canst not go from thyself, thou carriest about thee thy enemy, thy tormentor.

But suppose a man were at peace within himself, and cried peace, peace, to himself, yet if he be not at peace with God, shall his peace be called peace? Shall it not rather be named supine security? If a man be at variance with himself, and his soul disquieted within, there is more fear than danger if he be at peace with God. It is but a false alarm, that shall end well, but if he have peace in his own bosom, and yet no agreement with God, then destructions are certainly coming, his dream of peace will have a terrible waking. A man may sleep soundly, and his enemies round about him, because he knoweth not of it, but he is in a worse estate than he that is in great fear, and his enemies either none, or far distant. The one hath present danger, and no fear, the other present fear, and no danger, and which of these think ye best? Sudden destruction awakes the one from sleep, Ezek. vii. 25. Their fear and destruction come both at once, when it is now in vain to fear, because it is past hope, Prov. i. 27. Therefore the Lord swears, that "there is no peace to the wicked," Isa. xlvi. 22. What! Do not they often cry peace to themselves, and put the evil day far off? No men are so without bands in life and death as they, they have made agreement with hell and death, and their own consciences, yet for all that, "thus saith the Lord, there is no peace to the wicked." If God be against us, what is the matter who be with us, for he can make a man's friends his enemies, and he can make a man's enemies to be at peace with him: He makes peace and creates trouble, Isa. xlv. 7. Men can but destroy the

body, but he can destroy both body and soul for ever. O what a potent and everlasting enemy is he! There is no escaping from his all-seeing eye and powerful hand, Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8. A man may fly from men, but whither shall he fly from His presence? To heaven?—He is there. To hell?—He is there. The darkness of the night hath been a covering under which many have escaped, and been saved in armies, but darkness is no covering to him, it is all one with light. He is near hand every one of us. The conscience is within us, but he is within the conscience, and how much God is above the creature, so great and dreadful a party is he above any enemy imaginable. Therefore I conclude, that that man only hath perfect peace, who is at peace with God, and with his own conscience. If a man be at peace with God, and not with himself, he wants but a moment's time of perfect peace, for, ere it be long, the God of it will speak peace unto him. But if he be at peace with God and himself, I know not what he wants of the perfect peace, of the "peace, peace," for it is a man's mind that makes peace or war, it is not outward things, but in the midst of peace he may be in trouble, and in the midst of trouble in peace, according as he hath satisfaction and contentment in his own breast, for what is all the grace of a Christian? It is godliness with contentment, it is not godliness and riches, godliness and honour, or pleasure, godliness and outward peace. No, no, contentment compenseth all these, and hath in it eminently all the gain and advantage of these. A man in honour, a rich man, having no contentment in it, is really as poor, as ignominious, as the poor and despised man. If contentment then be without these things, certainly they cannot be missed, for where contentment is not with them, it only is missed, and they not considered. Contentment is all the gain that men seek in riches, and honour, and pleasure, if a godly man have that same without them, he then hath all the gain and advantage, and wants nothing, but some trouble that ordinarily attends them. Outward peace cannot add to inward peace, and so the want of it cannot diminish.

We must begin at the original, if we would know rightly this peace that passeth knowledge. The fountain-head is peace with God, a stream of this is peace of conscience, and peace with the creatures. There is a peace of friendship, when persons were never enemies, and there is a peace of reconciliation, when parties at variance are made one. Innocent Adam had peace once with God as a friend,—angels continue so to this day, but now there is no such peace between men and God, for all are become enemies to God, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, that peace was broken by rebellion against God his maker, and all the posterity are born with the same enmity against God. On our part are hearts desperately wicked, whose imagination is only evil continually. On God's part is holy and spotless justice, that is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and therefore must destroy it or the sinner. On our part are so many rebellions,—Adam's actual transgression, and all our own sins and breaches of the holy law, as so many breaches of peace. On God's part are so many curses answerable to the breaches of the law: “cursed is every one that abideth not in every thing,” &c. This curse is even the proclamation of men to be traitors, and an intimation of the righteous judgment which will come upon them. Adam was in a covenant of peace with God,—“Do, and thou shalt live, if not, thou shalt die.” Adam brake this covenant, so the peace is dissolved, and God is no more obliged to give life, but to execute the pain contained in the covenant, and in sign and token of this, look how Adam fled from God's presence, to hide himself when he heard his voice, it was a poor shift, for whither should he go from his presence? But, alas! seeking more wisdom, he lost that he had, seeking divine wisdom, he lost human. Now, there is no more making up this peace on such terms again, we have no capacity to treat with God any more, but blessed be his Majesty, who hath found out the way of agreement and reconciliation. O that ye were once persuaded of your enmity against God! ye are not born friends, though ye be born within the visible church.

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How dreadful a thing is it, to have the Most High and terrible God against you, to do to you according to your deservings! Ye all know this, we are enemies to God by nature, I pray you, is it but a name? Is it not worthy deep consideration? But who considereth this matter? If ye lose a friend, ye will be troubled, and the more behoveful your friend was, the more troubled you will be. If a great and potent nation proclaimed war against us, we cannot but be sensible of it, but alas! who considereth the great breach that is between God and all men, occasioned by the first man's transgression and rebellion! It is one of the degrees of health, to know the disease, and I may call it a degree of peace, a kind of preparation to peace, to know the enmity, and not generally to know it, but to ponder it till the heart be affected with it, to call a council of all the faculties and affections of the soul to consider the great imminent danger of man's commonwealth. What is it, I pray you, that is the greatest obstruction of men's making peace with God, that makes the breach irreparable, and the wound incurable? It is this, certainly, no man apprehendeth it aright, we entertain good thoughts of our friendship with God, or that it is easy to be reconciled. Who seeth such a wide breach between God and man, that all the merits of angels and men could not make it up? Who seeth the price of redemption so precious, as it must cease for ever, for all that men and angels can do? Is not every man offering God satisfaction, either his tears, or sorrow, or amendment in time coming, or all of them? Do not men undertake to pacify God with external ordinances, and think it may suffice for their sins? Certainly ye are ignorant of the infinite separation between God and man, who imagine a treaty with him yourselves, or that ever ye can come unto speaking terms, and therefore is this war and enmity perpetual; therefore there is no peace, when ye cry, Peace, peace! When ye have peace within you, and say that ye have peace with God, yet certainly, the Lord thy God is against thee, and will not spare thee, Deut. xxix. 19. Many of you bless yourselves in your own

hearts, when ye hear the curse and threatening of the law, ye say, God forbid that all that were true. Well, thus saith the Lord, All these curses that are written in this book shall be upon thee, and the Lord shall separate thee unto evil, because ye take not with your enmity, there can be no treaty, a mediator can have no employment from you.

How shall the breach of peace be made up? Since the first covenant cannot be made up again, where shall the remedy be found? God is just and righteous, men are rebellious and sinful, can these meet, and the one not be consumed? Will not God be a consuming fire, and men as stubble before the Lord's presence? Therefore, there must be a Mediator between them, a peace-maker, to make of two one, to take up the difference. And this Mediator must be like both, and yet neither wholly the one nor the other. He must therefore be God and man, that he may be a fit day's man betwixt God and man, and this is our Lord Jesus Christ. In his divinity he comes near to God, in his humanity he comes near to man, in his person he is between both, and he is fit to make peace, and therefore he is "a Prince of peace," Isa. ix. 6. And that he may be a Prince of peace, he must be both, "an everlasting Father" like God, and a young child like unto man. God to prevail with God, and a man to engage for man, and therefore he is called "our Peace," Eph. ii. 14. Our Lord Jesus Christ enters into a covenant with the Father, wherein he undertakes to bear our curse, and the chastisement of our peace. He is content to be dealt with as the rebel, "Upon me, upon me be the iniquity," and so there comes an interruption, as it were, of that blessed peace he had with the Father. He is content that there should be a covering of wrath spread over the Father's love, that he should handle the Son as an enemy, and therefore it is, that sinners are admitted as friends,—his obedience takes away our rebellion. The cloud of the Lord's displeasure pours down upon him, that it might be fair weather to us, the armies of curses that were against us, encounter him, and he, by being overcome,

overcometh, by being slain by justice, Satan and sin, overcometh all those, and killeth the enmity on the cross, making peace by his blood, Col. ii. 14, 15, Eph. ii. 15. And it is this sacrifice that hath pacified heaven,—the sweet smell of it hath gone above, and made peace in the high places.

Here, then, is the privilege of a believer,—to be at peace with God, to be one with him, and this indeed is life eternal, to be united unto the fountain of life, in whose favour is life and whose loving kindness is better than life. Is not this a blessed estate? Whatever a man hath done against God is all forgiven and forgotten, it shall never come into remembrance. Are not angels blessed who are friends with God? Such is the soul whose sins are pardoned through Christ,—its sins are as if they never had been. The soul is not only escaped that terrible wrath of God, but being at peace with God, all the goodness that is communicable to creatures, it shall partake of, “that they may be one, as we are one, that they may be perfect in one,” John xvii. This Christ prayed for, and this was the end of his death,—to make of two one. So, then, the glory that Christ is partaker of with the Father, we must be partakers of with him, and all this by virtue of that peace with God by him. O if ye knew what enmity with God is! how would it endear and make precious peace with him! The one engageth all that is in God to be against a man; the other engageth all that is in him to be for a man. And is not he then a great one, whether he be a friend or an enemy, is he not the best friend and worst enemy, who hath most power, yea, all power, to employ for whom he will, and against whom he will? What a blessed change is it, to have God, of a consuming fire, made a sun, with healing and consolation! that the righteous, holy, and just God, before whom no flesh can stand, should accept so rebellious sinners, and dwell among them! He had not only power to destroy, but law against us also. What a perfect peace is it, then, that the Judge becometh a merciful Father, and the law of ordinances is cancelled, and that power employed to keep

salvation to us, and us to salvation! Ye who have made peace and atonement through Christ's blood, rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, there wants nothing to make you completely blessed, but the clear and perfect sight and knowledge of your estate before God.

Now, when this peace, which is made up in heaven, is intimated unto the conscience, then all the tempests and clouds of it evanish, and this is the peace of believing, which is the soul's resting and quieting itself upon the believing favour of God. There may be a great calm above, good-will in God towards men, and yet great tempests in this lower region, no peace on earth. There is a peace of conscience which is a disease of conscience, a benumbedness of conscience, or a sleep of conscience, when men walk in the imagination of their own hearts, and flatter themselves in their own eyes, will not trouble themselves with the apprehension of the wrath of God. When souls will not suffer their sin, or the curse to enter in, this is that "no peace" which the Lord speaks often of, it is but a dream, and when a man awaketh, alas! what a dreadful sight meets he with first,—"sudden destruction!" Sin enters into the conscience, and the law, the strength of sin, and so that peace endeth in an eternal disquietness. But what is the reason, that notwithstanding of God's justice and men's sins, so many are not afraid of him, so many pass the time without fear of wrath and hell? Is it not because they have taken hold of his strength, and made peace with him? No, indeed, but because they know not the power of his anger, to fear him according to his wrath. Who will spend one hour in the examination of his own ways, in searching out sins, in counting his debt, till he find it past payment? No, men entertain the thoughts of sin, and hell and wrath, as if it were coals in their bosom, they shake them out, they like and love any diversion from them. Oh! ignorance maketh much peace, I would say security, which is so much worse than fear, because it is so far from the remedy, that it knoweth not the evil and

danger. It is not the rising of the Sun of righteousness, shining into the soul, that hath cleared them, but their perpetual darkness that blindeth them. I say, then, in the name of Jesus Christ, that ye never knew the peace of God, who knew not war with God, ye know not love, who have not known anger, but this is the soul's true peace and tranquillity, when it is once awakened to see its misery and danger—how many clouds overspread it, what tempests blow; what waves of displeasure go over its head! But when that peace, which is made in the high places, breaketh through the cloud with a voice, “Son, be of good comfort, thy sins be forgiven thee!” when that voice of the Spirit is uttered, presently at its command the wind and waves obey, the soul is calmed, as the sea after a storm, it is not only untroubled, but it is peaceable upon solid grounds, because of the word which speaks peace in Christ. The peace of the most of you is such as ye were born and educated withal. Is it not a created peace, a spoken peace,—the fruit of the lips, and so no true peace? Ye had not your peace from the word, but ye brought it to the word, ye have no peace after trouble, and so it is not the Lord's peace.

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The Christian may have peace, in regard of his own salvation and eternal things, and in regard of all things that befalleth in time; the first is, when the conscience is sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ, and getteth a good answer to all the challenges and accusations of conscience, and of the law and justice, 1 Pet. iii. 21; when the Spirit of God shines into the soul, with a new light to discover these things that are freely given, 1 Cor. ii. 12. And this is the sealing of the Spirit after believing, Eph. i. 13. When a soul hath put to its seal by believing God's word, and hath acknowledged God's truth and faithfulness in his word, the Spirit sealeth mutually the believer's faith, both by more holiness and the knowledge of it; and how great peace is this, when a soul can look upon all its iniquities when they compass about a man, and outward trouble sharpeneth and setteth on edge inward challenges, and yet the soul will not fear,—it hath answers to

them all in Christ's blood, Psalm xlix. 5. This is a greater word than all the world can say. Many men's fearlessness proceedeth from ignorance of sin, their iniquities were never set in order before them; but if once they compassed them about, and wrath, like a fiery wall, compass them about also, so that there were no escaping, O it would be more terrible than all the armies of the world! Ye would account little of a kingdom, ye would exchange it for such a word as David hath upon good grounds.

Now, I say again, the soul that hath thus committed itself to him as a faithful keeper, may have peace in all estates and conditions; and this peace floweth from that other peace. There is a peace which guards the heart and mind, Phil. iv. 6, 7, opposed to carefulness and anxiety; and this Paul is exemplary for, "I have learned in every estate, therewith to be content, to want and abound," &c. ver. 11. The soul of a believer may be in an equal even tenor and disposition in all conditions; it may possess itself in patience. Impatience and anxiety make a man not his own man; he is not himself, he enjoys not himself; he is a burden to himself, and is his own tormentor; but if souls were stayed upon God, certainly they would possess themselves, dwell securely within their own breasts. We may find that the most part of men are exposed to all the floods and waves of the times. They move inwardly, as things are troubled outwardly; every thing addeth moment to their grief or joy; any dispensation casteth the balance, and either weighs them down with discouragement, or lifteth them up with vanity and lightness of mind; but the believer's privilege is to be unmoved in the midst of all the tossings and confusions of the times, Psal. cxxviii. 1, 2. Ye would be as mount Zion if ye trusted in God; no dispensation would enter into the soul to cast the balance upon you; ye might stand upon your rock Jesus Christ, and look about the estates, persons, affairs, and minds of men, as a troubled sea, fleeting, tossed up and down, and ye stand and not be moved, or not greatly moved, Psal. lxii. 2. And this is to be wise indeed.

If I would describe a wise man, I would say, he “is one man,” beside him no man is one with himself, but various, inconstant, changeable. He is unwise who is unlike himself, who changeth persons according to dispensations: wisdom is the stability of thy times, and faith is wisdom. It establisheth as mount Zion, so as a man cometh out still one,—in prosperity not exalted, in adversity not cast down, in every estate content; and this is the man who is blessed indeed. This were wisdom,—to will the same thing, and nill²⁹⁴ the same thing. *Semper idem velle, atque idem nolle.*²⁹⁵ I need not, says Seneca, add that exception, that it be right which you desire, for no one thing can universally and always please, if it be not good and right; so I say, he were both wise and happy, who had but one grief and one joy. Should not a believer's mind be calm and serene, seeing the true light hath shined; it should be as the upper world, where no blasts, no storms or clouds are to eclipse the sun, or cloud it. While our peace and tranquillity is borrowed from outward things, certainly it must change; but a believer's peace and tranquillity of mind, having its rise from above, from the unchangeable word of the Lord, it needeth not to change according to the vicissitudes of providence. He needeth not to care beforehand, because there is one who careth for him; and what needeth both to care? He needeth not be disquieted or troubled after, because it shall turn about to his good; all things shall do so, Rom. viii. 28. He needeth not be anxious about future events, because he hath all his burden cast upon another by prayer and supplication. What needeth he then take a needless burden? Prayer will do that which care pretends and cannot do, and that without trouble. He needeth not be troubled when things are present, for he cannot by his thought either add or diminish, take away or prevent. There is one good and necessary thing

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²⁹⁴ [That is, not to will.—*Ed.*]

²⁹⁵ [See Note, page 96. *Si vis cadem semper vella, vera oportet velis.*—“If you are desirous to have always similar wishes, it is necessary that you should wish for things that are proper.” *Senec. Epist. xcv.*—*Ed.*]

that his heart is upon, and that cannot be taken from him; and therefore all things else are indifferent, and of small concernment to him.

Now what wanteth such a man of perfect peace, who is reconciled to God, and at peace within himself? When peace guardeth the heart and mind within, compasseth it as a castle or garrison, to hold out all the vain alarms of external things, may not all the world be troubled about him? What though the floods lift up their voice, if they come not into the soul? If he be one and the same in peace and trouble, prosperity and adversity, do not lament him in the one more than the other. It is the mind that maketh your condition good or bad; but yet, I say, the believer hath likewise peace with all the creatures, which the world hath not, and even in this he is a privileged man. He is in league with the stones of the field, and in peace in his tabernacle, Job v. 23. All things are his, because he is Christ's, and all are Christ's, who is the possessor of heaven and earth, at least the righteous heir of both, 1 Cor iii. 21. The unbeliever hath no right to the creature; though there be a cessation for a time between them and him, yet that is no peace, for they will at length be armed against him. They are witnesses already against him, and groan to God for the corruption that man's sin hath subjected them unto. His table is, it may be, full, yet it is a snare unto him; he getteth ease and quietness outwardly: nay, but it slayeth the fool and destroyeth him. But the godly man is at peace, through Christ's blood, with all crosses and comforts; the sting and enmity of all evils is taken away by Christ. Poverty is made a friend, because Christ was poor; hunger and thirst is become a friend, because Christ was hungry and thirsty; reproach and contempt is at peace with him, because Christ was despised; afflictions and sorrows are reconciled to him, because Christ was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; in a word, death itself is become a friend, since Christ subdued it by lasting of it. I may say, the worst things to a natural man are become best friends to the believer;

the grave keepeth his body and dust in hope. Death is a better friend than life, for it ministers an entry into glory: it is the door of eternal life: it taketh down the tabernacle of mortality, that we may be clothed upon with immortality. In sum, whatever it be, Christ hath stamped a new quality on it; it cometh through his hand, and so, if it be not good in itself, yet it is good in the use, and in his appointment, Rom. viii. 21. If it be not good, yet it worketh together for our good; it contributeth to our good, because it is in his skilful hand, who can bring good out of evil, peace out of trouble. O that ye were persuaded to be Christians indeed, to love his law, and trust in him. Great peace have all such. This were more to you than peace in the world; your peace should be as a river, for abundance and perpetuity; no drought could dry it up; it should run in time as a large river, and when time is done, it would embosom itself in eternity, in that ocean of eternal peace and joy which the saints are drowned in above; other men's peace is but like a brook that dries up in summer.

Sermon XIII.

Isaiah xxvi. 3.—“Thou shall keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.”

Christ hath left us his peace, as the great and comprehensive legacy, “My peace I leave you,” John xiv. 27. And this was not peace in the world that he enjoyed; you know what his life was, a continual warfare; but a peace above the world, that passeth understanding. “In the world you shall have trouble, but in me you shall have peace,” saith Christ,—a peace that shall make trouble no trouble. You must lay your accounts to have such a life as the forerunner had; but withal, as he hath left us his trouble, so hath he left us his peace; the trouble will have an end, but the joy can no man take from you. We have this sure promise to rest upon, in behalf of the church, peace shall be in Israel; a peace that the world knoweth not, and so cannot assault it, or take it away. O that ye would hearken to this word, that ye would trust in the Lord, and stay upon your God, then should your peace be as a river, Isa. xlvi. 18. There is nothing more desired in time of trouble than peace; but all peace is not better than war: some necessary war is better than evil-grounded peace. The kingdoms have been long in pain, labouring to bring forth a safe and well-grounded peace. But, alas! we have been in pain and brought forth wind; when we looked for peace, no good came, and for healing, behold trouble. But how shall we arrive at our desired haven? Certainly, if peace be well-grounded, it must have truth for its foundation, and righteousness for its companion; truth must spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven. This were the compendious way for public peace, if every man would make his own peace with God. There are controversies with God, between king, nobles, and people; and therefore God fomenteth the wars in the kingdoms. If you would have these ended, make peace with God in Christ,

by flying in unto him, and resting on him; more trusting in God would despatch our wars; trusting in the arm of flesh continueth them. Always whatever be, peace or war, here is the business that more concerns you,—your eternal peace and safety; and, if ye were more careful of this, to save your own souls, you would help the public more. If you could be once persuaded to be Christians indeed, we needed not press many duties in reference to the public; and until you be once persuaded to save yourselves, by flying from the wrath to come, it is in vain to speak of public duties to you. We do therefore declare unto you the way of obtaining perfect peace,—peace as a river; if you will quit all self-confidences, flee from yourselves as your greatest enemies, and trust your souls unto the promise in Jesus Christ, and lean all your weight on him, we assure you, your peace shall run abundantly and perpetually. Whoever trusteth in creatures, in uncertain riches, in worldly peace, in whatsoever thing besides the only living and glorious Lord, we persuade him, that his peace shall fail as a brook. All things in this world shall deal deceitfully with you, as a brook which is blackish, by reason of ice; what time it waxeth warm, it shall evanish. You that looked and waited for water in it shall be confounded, because you hoped, and are ashamed because of your expectation. Job vi. 15, &c. The summer shall dry up your peace, and what will ye do? But if you pour out your souls on him, and trust in the fountain of living waters, you shall not be ashamed, for your peace shall be as a river. The elephant is said to trust that he can drink out a river; but he is deceived, for he may drink again,—it runs, and shall run for ever. If any thing would essay to take your peace from you, it is a vain attempt, for it runs like a river; it may be shallower and deeper, but it cannot run dry, because of the living fountain it proceedeth from. There is no other thing can be made sure; all besides this is uncertain, and this only is worthy to be made sure; nothing besides this can give you satisfaction.

Are your hearts asking within you, how shall this peace be

attained? If you desire to know it, consider these words, “Whose heart is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.” It concerneth you much to know well, what this is that your eternal peace depends on. [427]

Trusting in God, is the leaning of the soul's weight on God. The soul hath a burden above it, heavy and unsupportable, and this the truster casteth upon God; and so he is a loadened and weary man, whom Christ exhorteth to come to him, and he shall find ease for his soul, Matt. xi. 28; Prov. iii. 5. Leaning to ourselves, and trusting in God are opposed. Psal. xxii. 10, trusting is expounded²⁹⁶ to be “a casting upon God.” Psal. xxv. 1, it is called, “a lifting up the soul to him.” This one thing is included in the bosom of trusting and believing, that a man hath many burdens too heavy for him, which would sink him down: the believer is such a one as Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12, “O Lord, we have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do.” O Lord, I have an army of iniquities against me, a great company compasseth me about; an army of curses as numerous as mine iniquities; both are innumerable as the sand of the sea; I have no might against them, neither know I what to do: nay, the Lord is against me, his wrath is like the roaring of a lion; what can I do against him? The first beginning of trusting in God is distrusting ourselves; and until a man see his duty and burden beyond his strength, his burden greater than he can bear, you will never persuade him to come to Jesus Christ, and lean on him. We will not preach any such doctrine, as to discharge any to come to Christ, till they be wearied and loaden; for, when a man conceiveth that he wanteth that weariedness, whither shall he go to find it? Is there any fountain, but one, Jesus Christ, both of grace and preparations to it, if any such be? But this we preach unto you, that until you be wearied and loaden, you will not cast your burden on Jesus. We need not discharge you to come till

²⁹⁶ [That is, laid open or explained.—*Ed.*]

you be such, for certainly you will not come. This is the desperate wickedness of our hearts, that we will never forsake ourselves till we can do no better. Until men be as David, "I looked on the right hand, and there was none would know me; refuge failed me," certainly they will not cry to God. Men will look round about them, before they will look up above them; they will cast the burden of their souls upon any thing, upon their own sorrow and contrition, upon their resolution to amend, upon external duties and privileges, upon civil honesty, until all these succumb under the weight of their salvation; and then, it may be, they will ask after him who bare our griefs. I would not willingly speak of preparations to faith, because it putteth men upon searching for something in themselves, upon fashioning their own hearts, and trimming them to come to Christ; whereas there is nothing can be acceptable to him but what cometh from him. But I think all that men intend, who speak of preparations, may be gained this way by holding out unto men the impossibility of coming to Christ, till they be emptied of themselves. Not that the one is a thing going before, to be done by us, but because they are all one; it is one motion of the soul to come out of itself, and into Jesus; it is one thing really to distrust ourselves, and to trust in him; and by this means, when the true nature of faith itself is holden out, men might examine themselves rather by it, whether they have it, than by the preparations of it.

But to come to our purpose, when the soul is pressed under burdens of sin and misery, of duty and insufficiency, and inability to do it, then the gospel discovereth unto the wearied soul a place of reposing and rest. The Lord hath established Christ Jesus, an "ensign to the people;" those who seek unto him shall find his rest glorious, Isa. xi. 10. When there is discovered in us all emptiness and inability, yea impossibility to save ourselves, or perform any duty, then are we led to Jesus Christ, as one who is come with grace and truth, in whom it hath pleased the Father all fulness should dwell; and the turning of the soul over upon him

is trusting in him. You would not mistake this; trusting in the Lord in its first and most native acting, is not always persuasion of his good-will and love in particular. No, the soul meets first with a general promise, holding out his good-will in general; and the soul closeth with this, as a thing both good and true,—as faithful in itself, and worthy of all acceptation. This is it that we must first meet with,—an all-sufficient Saviour, able to save to the utmost all that come to him; and the soul's accepting of that blessed Saviour on the terms he is offered, this is believing in him, and trusting to him, as a complete Saviour. [428]

Now when the soul hath disburdened itself upon God, and set its seal to the truth of the promises in the gospel for salvation; if the light of the Spirit shine to discover this unto it, that it hath laid hold on his strength who is able to save to the utmost, then it becometh persuaded of his love in particular; and this is rather the sealing after believing, than believing itself.

When once men have hazarded their souls upon his word, and trusted in him, then they may trust in him for all particulars: he that hath given his Son for us, will he not with him give all things? This, therefore, is the continual recourse of a believer,—from discovered emptiness and insufficiency in himself, to travel unto the fulness and strength of Jesus Christ, that his strength may be perfected in weakness. Yea, when all things seem contrary, and his dispensation writes bitter things against us, yet ought we to trust in him, Job xiii. 15. There is a peace of wilfulness and violence in faith, that will look always towards his word, whatever be threatened to the contrary.

Now, from this faith in God, floweth a constant dependence and stayedness on him, they are stayed on him, because they trusted in him; for faith discovereth in God such grounds, that it may lean its weight upon him without wavering and changing. It considereth his power, his good will, and his faithfulness; he is able to perform, he is willing to do it, and he is faithful, because he hath promised. His greatness and power is a high rock, higher

than we, that faith leadeth us unto. His love and good-will in Jesus Christ, maketh an open entry and ready access to that rock; and faithfulness engageth both to give a shelter and refuge to the poor sinner. Would a soul be any more tossed, would there be any place for wavering and doubting, if souls considered his excellent loving-kindness, and great goodness laid up and treasured with him for those that trust in him? Psalm xxxvi. 7. Who would not put their trust under the shadow of his wings, and think themselves safe? Again, if his eternal power were pondered, how he is able to effectuate whatever he pleaseth; what everlasting arms he hath that by a word supports the frame of the world; what he can do, if he stretch out his arm; and then, if these two immutable things, (Heb. vi. 18.) his promise and his oath, were looked upon;—how he hath engaged himself in his truth, and sworn in his holiness; would not a soul lie safely between these three? What strong consolation would such a threefold consideration yield? Would any wind or tempest blow within these walls mounted up to heaven?

Stayedness on God is nothing else but the fixedness of believing and trusting, Ps. cxii. 7, 8, “his heart is fixed, trusting in God; his heart is established.” It is even the mature and ripe age of faith. Faith, while it is yet in infancy, in its tender years, neither can endure storms, nor can it confirm us in them; but when it hath sprung up and grown in that root of Jesse, when it is rooted and established in Jesus Christ, then it establisheth the soul. Faith abiding in him and taking root, groweth, confirmed as a tree that cannot easily be moved; and if you establish faith, you shall be established.

There are two particulars which I conceive the trusting soul is stayed on. First, in the meditation of God. Secondly, in expectation from him of all good things. When I say the meditation of God, I take in both contemplation and affection. The most part of men have but few thoughts of God at all; even those who trust in him do not consider sufficiently what a one he is in

whom they believe. If faith were vigorous and lively, it would put men to often thinking on him, seeking to know him in his glorious names; the mind would be stayed upon this glorious object, as the most mysterious and wonderful one. How strong are men's minds with their vanities? When they awake, they are not still with God. The meditation of him is a burden to them; any other thing getteth more time and thoughts. But meditation addeth affection to contemplation; men may think long upon the heavens and their course, but their affections are not ravished with them. But thus is the soul stayed on God;—when the soul's desires are towards the remembrance of his name, then affection stayeth the mind upon what it pitcheth on; and certainly the mind giveth but passing looks, constrained thoughts, where the heart is not. Here is David's meditation, Ps. i. "My delight is in the law of the Lord." The soul of a believer should be constant and fixed in the consideration of God, till he be wholly engaged to admiration and wondering. "O Lord, how excellent is thy name," Psal. viii. 1: "and who is like unto thee?" You all say that you believe in God, and know his power,—you know he is good, he is merciful, just, long-suffering, faithful, &c. But what is all this knowledge but ignorance, and your light darkness, when it doth not press you to put your trust in his name? You know; nay, but you consider not what you know. This is trusting, when the mind is stayed on what it knoweth, when all the scattered thoughts and affections are called home, and united in one, to be exercised about this comprehensive object, "the Lord our God." It is not want of knowledge destroyeth you, but want of consideration of what you know, and this is brutishness. Men's hearts do not carry the seal and stamp of their knowledge, because thoughts of God and his word are but as passengers that go through a land, as lightning going through the mind, but warms it not; and so their practice carrieth no impression of it either. How base is it for those who have God for their God, to be so ignorant of him! Would not any man willingly travel about his own possessions?

Have you such a large portion, believers, and should ye be taken up with other vanities? Should your hearts and minds be stayed on them, more than the living God? There is a great vanity and levity in men's minds; "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity." There is an unsettledness of spirit,—we cannot pitch on that upon which we may be stayed; and so all the spirits of men are in a continual motion from one thing to another, for nothing giveth complete satisfaction, and therefore it must go and try one after another, to see if it can find in it what it found not in the former. And such is the inconstancy of the spirit, that it licketh up its vomit; and what thing it refused, it eateth it up as its meat. The time is spent in choosing and refusing, rejecting one thing and taking another, and again returning to what you have rejected. Thus are men tossed up and down, and unstable in all their ways, as a ship without ballasting. Now, faith and trusting in God is the ballast and weight of this inconstant ship: it is the anchor to stay it from being driven to and fro. If once men would pitch upon this one Lord, who hath in himself eminently all the scattered perfections of creatures, and infinitely more,—if you would consider him, and meditate on him, till your souls loved him, would you not be ravished with him? Would you not build your house beside him, and dwell in the meditation of his name? This would fix and establish you in duties—"when I awake, I am still with thee." A little searching and experience discovereth emptiness in all beside; and therefore is it, that the soul removeth sooner from such a particular creature than it expected. But here is One that is "past finding out." The more I search and find, I find him the more above what I can search and find. The creatures are but painted and fair in men's apprehension, and at a distance; but the near enjoyment of them discovereth the delusion, and sendeth a man away ashamed, because he trusted. But the Lord God is, and there is no other. He is not as waters that fail, no liar,—he is an everlasting fountain,—the more you dig and draw, it runs the faster; he will never send any away ashamed that trust

in him, because they shall find more than they expected.

Therefore the soul that is stayed on meditation of God, and knoweth him certainly, will be fixed in expectation from him. Our expectation from the creatures changeth, because it is often frustrated. Disappointment meets it. It is above what is in the creature, and so it must meet with disappointment; but as he is above our meditation, so is he far above our expectation; and if a man's experience answer his hope, he hath no reason to change his hope. The Lord hath often done things we looked not for, but we never looked for any thing, according to the grounds of the word, but it was done, or a better than it. He doth not always answer our limitations; but if he give gold, when we sought silver, are we not answered? Are we disappointed? There are three things that use most to disquiet and toss men's spirits,—sin and wrath, future events, and present calamities. Faith establisheth the soul on God in all these, and suffereth it not to be driven to and fro with these winds; it finds a harbour and refuge in God from all these. If he be pursued by the avenger of blood, God's wrath and justice, here is an open city of refuge that he may run to and be safe. If iniquities compass me about, yet I will not fear, but oppose unto that great company the many sufferings and obedience of Jesus Christ. My conscience challengeth and writeth bitter things against me, yet I have an answer in that blood that speaketh better things than Abel's. If sins prevail, he will purge them away. His mercy is above all my sin, and his virtue and power is above my sin. He hath promised, and will he not do it? Oft times men's souls are perplexed and tossed about future events, careful for to morrow. This is a great torment of spirit, it cutteth and divideth it,—putteth a man to his own providence, as if there were no God, but he that trusteth in God is established in this, “His heart is fixed trusting in the Lord.” He hath committed his soul to him, and why may he not his body? He hath nothing but his promise for eternal salvation, and may not that same suffice for temporal? He careth for me, saith faith, why then should we both care about

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one thing? He hath given his Son for me, the most precious gift which the world cannot match, and will he not with him give all these lesser things? And thus the believer encloseth himself within the Father's love and providence, and is fixed, not fearing evil tidings, for what tidings can be evil, seeing our Father hath the sovereign disposing of all affairs, and knoweth what is best for us? Present dispensations often shake men, and drive them to and fro, their feet slip, and are not established, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." But if you trusted in God, and considered what is in him to oppose to all difficulties and calamities, you would say, "I shall not be moved, though the floods lift up their voice." If you believed his love, would not this sweeten all his dealing? He maketh all work together for good. Sovereignty, righteousness, and mercy, are sure and firm ground to stand upon in all storms. You may cast anchor at any of those, and lie secure. "It is the Lord, let him do what he pleaseth." This was enough to quiet the saints in old times. Should he give account of his matters to us? Shall the clay say to the potter, why is it thus? His absolute right by creation maketh him, beyond all exception, do what he pleases, but beside this, he is pleased and condescendeth to reason with us, and give account of his matters, to testify to our conscience that he is righteous in all his ways. It was the ground of Jeremiah's settling, Lam iii. "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed." It should have allayed and stayed Job. Know this, thou art punished less than thy iniquities deserve. Who will set a time to plead with him? Shall any be found righteous before him? And this might stop all men's mouths, and put them in the dust to keep silence, seeing he hath law to do infinitely more than he doth, why should not we rather proclaim his clemency, than argue him so very hard? If to both those you shall add the consideration of his mercy, that all his paths are mercy and truth unto you, even when he correcteth most severely, so that you may bless him as well for rods as for meat and clothing, and count yourself blessed when

you are taught by the rod and the word, the one speaking to the other, and the other sealing its instruction,—if you believed that it were a fruit of his love, that “he chasteneth every son whom he loveth,” because he will not let you depart from him, will not let you settle upon a present world, and forget your country above, therefore he compasseth you about with hedges of thorns to keep in your way, and therefore he maketh this world bitter and unpleasant, that you may have no continuing city,—if all this were believed would not the soul triumph with Paul, “What can separate me from the love of God?”—not past things, for all my sins are blotted out, and shall be remembered no more, not present things, for they work to good, and are a fruit of his love, not things to come, for that is to come which shall more declare his love than what is past, would not a soul sleep securely within the compass of this power, this love, and faithfulness of God, without fear of dashing or sinking?

Now, judge whether a perfect peace may not flow from all this. May it not be a perfect calm, when the mountains that environ go up to heaven? Not only doth the soul trust in God, but God keepeth the trusting soul in peace. He is the Creator of peace, and the preserver of it,—“I create peace, I keep him in peace.” The same power and virtue is required to the preserving of a thing, and the first being of it. Our faith and hope in God is too weak an anchor to abide all storms. Our cords would break, our hands faint and weary, but he is the everlasting God, who faileth not, and wearieth not. He holdeth an invisible gripe of us. We are kept by his power unto salvation, and we are kept by his power in peace. “Thy right hand holdeth me,” saith David, and this helpeth me to pursue thee. What maketh believers inexpugnable, impregnable? Is it their strength? No indeed. But “salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” Almighty power is a strong wall, though invisible,—this power worketh in us and about us. [431]

Now, believers, pity the world about you, that knoweth not this peace. When they lie secure, and cry Peace, peace, alas!

they are a city open without walls as the plain field,—there is no keeper there, nothing to hold off destruction. Entertain your own peace, do not grieve the Spirit who hath sealed it. If you return to folly after he hath spoken peace to you, I persuade you, you shall not maintain this peace. There may be peace with God, but no peace in thy conscience, as long as the whoredoms of thy heart are to the fore, thou mayest be secure, but security is worse than fear. Know this, that continuing in a course of sin, entertaining any known sin, shall trouble thy peace. If God hath spoken peace to thee, thou shalt not lodge that enemy in peace. “Great peace have they that love thy law.” Obedience and delight in it doth not make peace, but it is the way of peace, and much meditation on the blessed word of God is the most excellent mean to preserve this peace, if it be secured with much correspondence with heaven by prayer, Phil. iv. 6, 7. If you would disburden your hearts daily at the throne of grace, peace should guard and keep your heart, and then your peace would be perfect indeed. But because your faith is here imperfect, your requests few and infervent, your follies and iniquities many, therefore is this promised perfection a stranger to the most part of Christians. Always what we want here, we must expect to have made up shortly. Heaven is a land of peace, and all things are there in full age, here all are in minority, it is but yet night, but when the day shall break up, and the shadows fly away, and the Prince of peace shall appear and be revealed, he shall bring peace and grace both with him, and both perfect. To Him be praise and glory.