

## The Choice Is Yours – Is 26:1-6

Is 26:1-6; AZ the past two weekends – Preached; Retreat; Came away so encouraged having linked with the respective SP's and their families  
I'm also encouraged and thankful for AJ and Garth and Jeremy who preached in my absence; All did a great job, and I praise God for it

I'm also happy to report that we're making some good progress with the construction, and look forward to giving you an update on that in a few weeks

In the meantime, you can follow along via the photos on our website, or peer through the fence every now and then as you walk by (**Intro**)

- That said, I want to talk about an issue this weekend that every single one of us struggles with; I know I do; And I'm pretty sure you do too; And that's *peace*  
Whether it's peace in our families, peace in our friendships, peace in our world, or peace of mind – we struggle with finding it, and keeping it  
Often b/c we go about it completely wrong

And that's where this passage comes in; It's a simple but powerful solution to our quest for peace, if we'll only heed it; If we'll only listen, and be doers of the Word; Is 26:1-3

- [1] *In that day* [which we know from the previous context, refers to the time approaching God's final judgment when he returns; as in right now] *this song will be sung in the land of Judah* [a way of saying the place where God's people are]

And then he starts the song; “*We* [God's people] *have a strong city* [a secure and safe community or fellowship]; [and] *he* [God] *sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks* [walls and fortifications around our city, our fellowship].  
IOW in the face of God's coming judgment, it's his salvation that protects us; Just like walls protect a city

*Open the gates* [he says], *that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in*.  
You see, the kingdom of God, the city, is open to those who have been justified by God, declared *righteous*; And show it by keeping the *faith* . . .  
Or holding to what they believe and confess; Come in God says

All of which is the basis of our security – God's salvation and protection from the consequences of sin; Especially in turbulent times when his judgment approaches

- And with that security, as we see in the next verse, comes peace – peace of mind  
Speaking to God now, he says in v3 – *You keep him* [the child of God; the one who's a part of the community of believers, the city] *in perfect peace*; Perfect shalom (Heb)  
It's used 237x in the OT, to mean everything from lack of strife and emotional well-being, to spiritual wholeness and harmony with God  
With God's security, comes peace

But here's the deal – it's not automatic; While our salvation and security is *unconditional* – we *have* a strong city, God takes care of us no matter *what* . . .

While that's *unconditional*, our peace is conditional; Conditional on our response

Look at what he says in the next phrase – *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you*

If I've ever been with you in the hospital, or prayed with you during a difficult time . . .

It's likely that these verses are familiar; B/c I share them all the time

And I'd encourage you to do the same, b/c they're the *key* to peace

- And not just any old peace; But *perfect* peace; **If you want perfect peace** in your life, heed these verses; And the reason it's perfect . . .

Is b/c in the original Hebrew, Isaiah uses the word *peace* twice in a row; *You keep him in peace peace whose mind is stayed on you*

That's literally what it says; And it's not a grammatical error

It's a literary construction in the Hebrew language, to convey the superlative of something, the *ultimate* of something

In this case, peace; Peace that's perfect in every respect

- And who doesn't want that? Line 10 people up and ask them if they want peace in life, especially perfect peace, and 10 out of 10 will give you an emphatic “yes”  
*Everybody* wants peace; And some people go to great lengths to get it; Or at least try

I'm reading a book called *Flags Of Our Fathers* right now (**Photo**), about the 6 men in that famous flag-raising picture on Iwo Jima near the end of WWII  
And one of those men, Ira Hayes, the one on the far left – was a Pima Indian  
And in the background of his life, the author points out that Pima Indians think of life as a constant search for peace and security, in the midst of a vast maze  
And if you can only get to the middle of the maze, you'll find it; You'll find peace  
Except they were never sure\*\*\*\*\*

And that's a lot like the majority of people today; Who devise elaborate worldviews, and go to great lengths in their search for peace

Some visiting the spa regularly; Others drinking themselves silly; And a few who hold signs that say “*Honk for peace*”

Which, if *that's* all it took, I'd lay on my horn until the battery ran down

- The point is, *everybody* wants peace; Everybody wants to be free of anxiety; Everybody wants to be rid of strife in their life; Everybody  
But God is the only one who can give it, and it's not automatic just b/c you're one of his own; He *keeps* you in perfect peace, but *you* are the catalyst  
You're the one who triggers it; That's what these verses are saying  
*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you* (3)

And therein lies the choice; If you want the perfect peace that God offers, you need to . . .

- **Think about God constantly (v3)**

As in center your thoughts on him; Focus on his work; Fixate on his glory

Does God's glory hold your attention? Are your thoughts filled with his work? That's the idea of keeping your *mind* on him; It's thinking *constantly* about who he is . . .

What he's done, and what he's doing; You're *stayed* on him

It's the very theme the Apostle Paul articulates in **Col 3:2** – *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth*.

You want peace? Look up; Think about *heavenly* things; Get vertical; And stay there

*Fix* your eyes on Jesus (Heb 12:2), and *set* your thoughts on things above\*\*\*\*\*

That's the first way to think about God constantly

➤ The 2<sup>nd</sup> comes from Phil 4:6-9, where just like Isaiah, Paul links our *thoughts* w/ *peace* [6] *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication* [as in appeals, or requests] *with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* [7] *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding* [IOW it doesn't make sense in the midst of need and strife], *will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Bottom line? If you want peace, pray; Set your mind on heaven – #1; And #2 – pray

And then he says in v8 – *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* [9] *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

IOW dwell on what's good and true and praiseworthy, the things that reflect God's character – and once again peace is yours  
It's a 3<sup>rd</sup> way to think about God constantly – dwell on what's good

And last, take every thought captive, like it says in 2 Cor 10:5  
If a thought isn't of the Lord, get control of it and stop spinning  
4 ways to think constantly about God, and receive the peace that only he can give

➤ Which you and I both know, is easier said than done, isn't it? Especially when there's strife in your life; Or pain; Or a big decision to make  
It's hard to think about God at *all* in those times, let alone *constantly*

I struggle something terrible with this  
I have to work overtime to look up and stay on God; Sometimes b/c I don't want to I *want* to think about the junk; I *want* to have conversations in my head; I *want* to be mad; I *want* to spin out of control  
Or sometimes I think – “If I can just get it all straight/figured out, *then* peace will come”  
No; That's not how it works; It's a lie from the pit of hell

We can't generate our own peace; It doesn't work that way  
It seems like it should; But it doesn't  
That's why when we do it *God's* way, when we think constantly about *him*, it exceeds our understanding as to how it can be; How we can be at peace  
Especially when people are throwing stones; Or misjudging your motives; Or undermining your efforts; Or spreading discontent; Peace doesn't seem possible  
But it is; B/c with God, all things are possible  
And the choice is yours; If you want perfect peace, think about God *constantly*

And 2<sup>nd</sup> . . .

- **Trust in God confidently (v4)**

Turn back to Isaiah 26 and look at v3 again; *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.*

The second catalyst, the second trigger for peace from God, is trusting him  
*You keep him in perfect peace . . . because he trusts in you.*  
And that makes sense; B/c peace always goes hand in hand with trust

Think of a marriage; If a husband and wife trust each other, there's peace in their hearts – they know that the other will honor their commitments  
If 2 iron workers high atop a building trust each other, there's peace – b/c they know the other will look out for them  
If a group of soldiers trust each other, there's peace – b/c they have each other's back  
And by the same token, if you trust God, who does all that and more – you too will be at peace; Peace and trust go hand in hand

➤ But Isaiah doesn't just tell us to trust blindly; He gives us good *reason* to do so  
Saying in v4 – *Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.*

When we were in AZ, Bill and Pam Borinstein ask us if we wanted to climb Pinnacle Peak with them (**Photo**); Bill is the SP of Harvest N. Phoenix . . .  
And we wanted to hang out with them – so we said, “sure”  
What they failed to mention is that (a) it's a 3000 foot mountain; (b) climbing it means that you climb up the front side, go down the backside . . .  
Climb another mountain behind it, go down it's backside, and then return the way you came; It's like a 4 mile round trip or something  
And (c) they climb it 3 times a week

So, ignorance being bliss, off we went; And while the girls made it all the way, Becky and I stopped at the 1 ½ mile point and turned around  
And on the way back, while stopping every now and then to catch our breath, I couldn't help but notice the massive *boulders* along the way  
Huge rocks that for all intents and purposes were immovable; And we leaned on them with complete trust, for a bit of peace and rest in their shadow\*\*\*\*\*

And that's how God is – he's a rock; An . . .  
Ever lasting, never ending; Ever faithful, never failing; Ever strong, never weak . . .  
Ever there, never absent; Ever dependable, never flaky; Ever secure, never feeble . . .  
Ever powerful, never frail; Ever immovable, never changing – Rock; The rock who made the rocks; And shakes them with his voice  
I think that qualifies as a pretty good reason to trust him, don't you?

➤ But that's not it; Check out the words *LORD GOD* in caps there (v4)  
It's one of the few places in Scripture where you find that, and it translates *Yah Yahweh* in Hebrew; Which is the proper name of God spoken twice  
And he does so to express 3 things I think

The first is *certainty*; Certainty as to *who* we're trusting  
It's not just any old god who's our everlasting rock; It's not just a vague, nebulous *concept* of God that's our rock; It's Yahweh; The *only* God  
The creator, redeemer, and sustainer of the universe; The healer and restorer; The great I Am; The Alpha and Omega  
That's the first thing he's trying to convey with the repetition – certainty as to who we're trusting; Who our rock *is*

➤ Second, is *intimacy*; Intimacy, b/c we're not trusting a nameless, faceless *entity*, but the God we *know*; Personally; By name; Do you realize how uncommon that is? (kings)  
And 3<sup>rd</sup> is *perfection*, b/c it's the same literary construct as *peace*

So when Isaiah says, *the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock* – he’s saying that God, the God, Yahweh, in all his perfection and intimacy, is our eternal support  
Which means we can trust him; Confidently; The choice is yours

➤ And then, last, in v5-6, he piles on yet another reason to trust him  
Namely, that he’s done some pretty amazing and powerful things  
Trust in the LORD he says – [5] *For he has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust. [6] The foot tramples it, the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy.*

Isaiah sticks with the *city* metaphor that he started in v1, this time using it to describe those who are proud, and the lofty heights from which they fell when God judged them  
And the trampling by the poor and needy is meant to further emphasize just how low they were *brought*

He’s not only an everlasting rock, perfect in all his glory, and knowable on a personal basis – but he’s capable of great and mighty things, that he’s proven over/over again

➤ Which means you really can trust him; With everything; Your life, your health, your loved ones, your relationships, your enemies, your future, your past, you name it  
You can trust him – and trust him with confidence  
Not to do what *you* want, but to accomplish what *he* wants; And work all things together for good, no matter what (**Summary**)

If you want peace, the perfect peace that only God can give – trust in him confidently, and think about him constantly; The choice is yours (:05)

Pray – Thank you Lord, for everything; For *your* life, that we might *have* life; For being our rock, so we can trust; For being faithful, that we might have peace  
Receive our tithes and offerings now; It’s our joy and privilege to order our lives, so that we can give to your work