

“PRESERVING THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS”

Isaiah 26:3

Theme: We must maintain an awed focus on God and His grace.

Introduction: As we take a deep breath after our push to get ready for Christmas and the energy spent in our celebrations yesterday, we pause to ask: “Why did we do all that?” What the Scriptures describe in the celebration is the rejoicing in the provision of a Savior who would bring us peace – cp. *Luke 2:10-14*. This “peace” seems to be something that not only dissipates after the holidays, it eludes us during the chaos of the Christmas celebration. How is it that one can maintain the peace that the Lord came to provide and that ought to prevail all year through? Our text today provides us with the

I. DEFEND THE STEADFASTNESS OF YOUR MIND

A. *DECIDE TO APPROPRIATELY OCCUPY YOUR MIND*

1. One of the things that makes the Christmas season special is that everything points us to consider the grace of God and His abundant love for us – music, lights, decorations, etc ...
2. Once Christmas comes and goes, our focus tends to shift to the mundane things of life – such as paying the bills of the purchases we made, jobs, etc
3. We are told that our minds are the great battlefield in spiritual warfare – cp. *2 Corinthians 10:3-5*.
4. To know victory in this struggle, it is necessary that we are constantly being renewed in our minds – cp. *Romans 12:2*.
5. Notice that we do not renew our own minds, but they are renewed – by God and His grace.
6. *“The steadfast of mind ...”* - in the KJV, this verse phrase reads: *“Whose mind is stayed on Thee”* – referring to possessing faithfulness to God.
7. The word *“steadfast”* [יָמַדָּ] – is passive – “is caused to lean upon,” “to rest,” or “is supported.”
8. In order to preserve the joy that captures our spirit, we must allow our minds to be occupied with the appropriate things – cp.

Philippians 4:8-9.

9. The first word in this verse in Hebrew is “*mind*” – a reference to the importance that this has – what the mind is occupied by will be what controls us – *Proverbs 23:7.*

B. *DESIRE TO ALWAYS REFRESH FAITHFULNESS TO GOD*

1. Allow me to ask: Is the miracle of Christmas less significant in July than it is in December?
2. Do we only seasonally occupy our minds with the glorious concepts of Immanuel – “God with us?”
3. We must develop (by the prompting of God’s gracious Spirit) a desire to always be refreshing our faithfulness to God – to truly possess a steadfastness in our commitment to our beloved Redeemer.
4. That is, we must aspire to walk with Him daily – the mind must be caused to be “firmly leaning on him” – “*steadfast*”
5. Satan is a master at luring us to alter our focus from Christ to anything else – even Christmas itself – cp. *Hebrews 12:2*
 - a. Perhaps we’ll be lured to focus on:
 - (1) Family
 - (2) Church
 - (3) Time off from work or school
 - (4) A spirit of benevolence
 - b. To define the “spirit” generated by focusing on these things is to taint the genuine “spirit” that can last the entire year by focusing on Christ.
6. Thus, the mind must be constantly being renewed and refreshed in what God has given to us in Christ Jesus.
 - a. **Awareness** – objective truth through the influence of God’s *Word.*
 - b. **Astonishment** – subjective truth through the influence of *worship.*

- c. **Appreciation** – practical truth lived through one’s walk of obedience.
7. These things are a means of grace whereby we function properly within the context of the local church – by God’s design helps to defend our minds and re-orient us regularly to what is truly most important.
- a. This is done by the weekly assembly with other saints to be reminded through worship and preaching of the glories of what God has done for us in Christ.
 - b. It is also done as we pour ourselves out on behalf of others – intentionally helping others follow Christ more through participation in things like community groups and personal discipleship.

II. DELIGHT IN THE SHIELDING OF YOUR PEACE

A. *CHERISH THE PROTECTION OF THE PEACE OF GOD*

1. When the mind is steadfastly committed to God so that we faithfully walk with Him and rely upon Him, He *“will keep [us] in perfect peace.”*
2. Thus, God is said to *“keep”* us – [נִצַּר] - that is to provide *“a watch over us, or to guard”* us – providing protection against that which would assail us and our well being (carrying the idea of a blockade).
3. Thus, when we faithfully focus on God, His grace and power, our minds are kept in an inviolable peace that nothing can remove from us – *Philippians 4:4-7.*
4. It is the peace of God because we have been granted peace with God through the accomplishment of Jesus Christ – cp. *Luke 2:14.*
5. To preserve the spirit of Christ (or Christmas), we must cherish this peace, which is inviolable if we are consistently defending the steadfastness of our focus on God.

B. *CONSIDER THE PERFECTION OF THE PEACE OF GOD*

1. This peace is not simply an accomplishment of our minds resulting

from a perspective that sees God's power, it is a provision that comes to us from God and is therefore supernatural – as the “fruit of the Spirit” – cp. [Galatians 5:22](#).

2. It is something that Jesus Christ stated clearly that He came to provide us – [John 14:27](#).
3. It is called a “*perfect peace*” – [shalom shalom - שְׁלוֹם | שְׁלוֹם] a peace that cannot be generated or preserved by the will of man – but only as it comes from God.
4. Thus, it is a total peace that prevails through our good experiences or bad – cp. [Psalms 112:7-8](#).

III. DEVELOP THE STAMINA OF YOUR CONFIDENCE

A. *REGARD FOR GOD ADVANCES THIS PEACE*

1. The “*perfect peace*” is fortified as we consider the power of God displayed in various situations – both in our own personal experience, the testimony of fellow believers, and in the revelation of God's Word.
2. When we consider the displays of God's power on behalf of His people, one can only develop a confidence that advances the peace of God – cp. the context of the verse.
3. Thus, we are to deliberately cultivate faithfulness to God as we consider Him and His accomplishments – [Psalms 37:1-5](#).

B. *RELIANCE ON GOD ACTUALIZES THIS PEACE*

1. This is described in our text as the reason that this peace can prevail – “... *because he trusts in You.*”
2. Once you can develop an appropriate regard for God's power, realizing that there will never be anything that you and God cannot handle together, you are able to rely on Him to see you through – cp. [Deuteronomy 33:27](#).
3. When this is our practice, Immanuel (the real spirit of Christmas) is a relevant concept – not just during the month of December – [Matthew 28:20](#).

So What?

1. **Spiritual Self-Discipline is necessary to maintain one's focus on God and His grace.**
2. **God's peace is found ONLY in the perception of Him being constantly relevant to our lives .**
3. **A growing faith in God is essential to maintaining the "spirit of Christmas."**