Learning to Trust

Isaiah 26:3 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. 4 Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.

The Hebrew language often uses repetition instead of extra descriptive words. Repeating a word can express intensity, certainty, or completeness. The English language might say 'very,' 'surely,' or 'completely,' but Biblical Hebrew often repeats the word or uses closely related forms. That is what the prophet Isaiah does in the passage we just read. In this passage, he uses this form of expression twice. The first is used for the term "peace." The second is used for the name of God, "The Lord." If you read it in the original language, verse 3 literally says "you keep him in peace peace." The second use of this grammatical tool occurs in verse 4, in which the Lord's covenant name "Yahweh" appears three times. "Trust in Yahweh, forever, for Yahweh, Yah, is an everlasting rock." The Lord wants us to see that there is an offer of complete peace, which is God's wholeness, flourishing, and well-being. He also wants us to know this is available only to those in a covenant relationship with Him. Being in a covenant relationship with Him simply means being part of His family. When we commit our lives to Him by faith in His shed blood on our behalf, we are united to Him and adopted into His family. Simply put, this is what it means to be in a covenant relationship with Him. Just as an adopted child is entitled to all the benefits of every other member of the family, so we receive the Fatherly care of God our Father. This is why Isaiah repeats the name "Yahweh" three times. He wants us to know that everything that flows from the heart of our gracious, sovereign, merciful, and loving God, as revealed to us in Scripture, is ours. This passage emphasizes the heart of our heavenly Father.

The second emphasis is the offer of complete and perfect peace. This is the Hebrew word "shalom," and it appears twice. It is a word that involves wholeness and well-being that can come only to those reconciled to God. It is a deep, complete wholeness of our minds and hearts. The apostle Paul describes it in Philippians as *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding.* He is simply saying that it is a condition of life that is virtually impossible to explain; it has to be experienced. And it is available to every one of God's children. The logical question should arise: why do so few Christians experience this? The answer is pretty simple. Because it is something that can only be experienced by faith. That is why he encourages us at the beginning of verse 4 to trust in the Lord. He encourages us to place our confidence in Him. Let the character of our unchanging, unchangeable Father govern our hearts and minds, not our circumstances. And this requires faith. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that "*faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen*." Philip Yancey said, "Faith is believing in advance something that will only seem logical when seen in reverse." And that is where our greatest challenge presents itself. We see with our physical eyes a world in turmoil, and, if we are honest, a God who seems somewhat indifferent to the effect these circumstances have on our lives. It is easier and more logical to be affected by circumstances we can see than by our Father in Heaven, whom we can't see. We also tend to believe wrong things about God because of our sinful hearts. We doubt that He is good. We doubt that

He is sovereign. We doubt that He loves us. This robs us of the perfect peace offered through our relationship with Him.

I would love to offer you a simple three-step formula for placing your confidence in God, rising above your circumstances, and experiencing this perfect peace. There is just no simple formula. However, there are things we can do to strengthen our faith. Obviously, we can take time to learn God's character by studying the Word of God. He wants us to seek to know Him. He said that if we seek Him with all our hearts, we will find Him. We can also grow in our faith by learning from those who have gone before us. The writer of Hebrews goes on to say a little later: *Hebrews 13:7: Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*. We can grow in our faith by seeing how Jesus proved Himself faithful to those who have lived by faith in the past. One of my favorites is Hudson Taylor. He founded the China Inland Mission and was determined to never ask for money to fund the work. He said that he wanted to live in faith that God would move hearts by prayer alone. His biography is encouraging and challenging. On one occasion, his team got together to pray because they were in a difficult financial situation. As they were about to pray, one person said: "The financial balance for the entire China Inland Mission yesterday was twenty-five cents." Hudson Taylor responded, "Twenty-five cents and all the promises of God." That is a heart in perfect peace because he has placed his confidence in his covenant-keeping Heavenly Father.