

A Submissive Trust, A Fixed Imagination, and A Perfect Peace Part 3

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Isaiah 26:3

You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

It can be said of the Christian that if the mind is right, the heart is right. We have learned that our thought life is where the battle for our hearts are won or lost. When a person is converted, that is becomes a Christian by the power of God, they are given what the Bible calls a new heart. God says in Ezekiel 36:26, "I will give you a new heart." Earlier in the book of Ezekiel the Lord cries out to the sinner in anguish and states that the sinner's problem is want of a new heart, "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 18:31).

God links the new heart with a new spirit because they are the same thing. And He states that the lack of a new heart and that lack leads to eternal destruction. "For why should you die, O house of Israel?" The fundamental problem of humans is not physical, financial, relational, or even behavioral; it is spiritual—we need a new heart.

What does it mean to get a new heart and what's wrong with the old heart that would require a new one?

In the Scriptures the heart refers to the part of you that is your innermost being. Another word, as we have already learned, is *spirit*. This is the part of you that is made to relate to God. The spirit or heart is the part of you with which God communicates and you can perceive and know God. You are a spiritual being. It is the very seat of your inclinations. That is a very important word. Inclinations are the predispositions of your heart. You were created with certain predispositions, which came as a result of the fall of humanity. You inherited them from your parents, all the way back to Adam and Eve. These predispositions are, for lack of a better word, the motives of the heart that inclines its choices and decisions. You could call the inclinations the loves and hates, the likes and dislikes of the human will. Some are native and some are learned but they are the preferences that motivate the heart to do what you do. "For out of the heart come the issues of life." It's in the heart. A man's path is chosen; his feet are directed by these predispositions and inclinations, these loves and hates.

Now these inclinations, or loves and hates, are more than desires. Surely desire is involved, but desire and love is not the same thing. We may say we love ice cream but we don't cuddle or date ice cream; no, we eat ice cream. So desire and love is not the same thing. Certainly desire is a part

of it, but love goes beyond just desire. It is a predisposition, an inclination that motivates. This is how the heart and will function.

Now most of us believe that we have good hearts. If asked, “Down deep do you believe you have a good heart?” the answer is almost always, “Yes.” We see our sins, mistakes, and bad behavior not as matter of the “down deep” heart but more superficial, a problem of poor judgment, or a problem of bad habits.

But if we are as we suppose, “down deep” good, why do we do much that is not good? If at our core we are good why doesn’t the core win out and we do more good than bad? There is only one reason—we are not good. Our hearts are not inclined to be good but evil, that is if we define good and evil as God does. The Lord judges good to be loving God supremely and loving our neighbor as yourself. How does God define evil? Not loving God supremely and not loving your neighbor as yourself. Our inclination is for our own glory and good before anyone else’s glory and good. We are predisposed to love ourselves—not God—supremely, and not our neighbor as our self. Therefore, since God made everything there is, whether visible or invisible, then surely He gets to define things the way He wants. Since this is the definition of good and evil, we have to come to one conclusion: our hearts are born bad and not good. We are bad to the core. Bad to the bone. This is the problem of us all.

Therefore, what conversion—salvation—does is change the heart. At conversion—when you put your life into Jesus’ control—He gives you a new heart. It isn’t new in the sense that it is an altogether a new heart, but it’s a different heart. It is still your heart but it has a new default, new predispositions, new inclinations, and new motives. Instead of loving yourself above God and others, your new heart is inclined to love God supremely and to love others as you love yourself. You truly want the glory and good of God and others and this is your heart’s greatest pleasure. That is what love is and it’s the primary motivation of the new heart. You love God so much that you see His glory being the sole goal and purpose of your life and that glory. Love for God is displayed in your behavior as a love for your brother and neighbor. That’s what love is and it’s the primary motivation of this new heart.

The Christian is to be ruled by this new heart. From this innermost sanctuary the Holy Spirit is to reign. But His reign is not a tyrant’s domination but a Shepherd’s guidance. He will not force your heart to choose something other than what it really wants. Therefore, having a new heart or a will that is inclined with a new default setting to love God supremely and one another as ourselves, we can now begin to glorify God on this earth.

If that’s all there was to it, it would seem that everything was fine. You and I have a new heart that has new default settings to love God and others, and yet we still find we have a problem. Why then do we still sometimes love ourselves more than we do God and our brother and our neighbor? The problem is that while the heart is to drive the agenda for the Christian it cannot rule the mind. The heart cannot dominate the mind. The heart, spirit, is to rule. I am to be guided and influenced by the heart but it cannot dominate the mind. It can only influence it. The heart

can only give the influence of love but the mind, well, it has a mind of its own. Because of sin that remains in us, the mind does not fully or always comply with this new heart; rather it often sways the heart according to its imaginations. If the mind does not think according to the Scriptures, then it will think according to the desires of the flesh, the world, and the devil. There are no other sources of influence for the mind. The mind must think according to the Scriptures, it must be re-informed by the truth with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, the mind will be focused on the flesh, the world, the devil, and these will then have sway over the heart.

Thus, we have to renew our minds to stop thinking according to the old thought patterns that existed before we fell in love with Jesus and now work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to think with the mind of Jesus. In other words, we are to think as Jesus thought as a man here on the earth. You are to think exactly the way Jesus thought when He was here on His mission. “That’s impossible!” you say. “I can’t think that way. Jesus was perfect. He had this extraordinary mind.” Yes, but the Bible says you now have the mind of Christ. You have the Holy Spirit of Christ within your new heart. The potential is there; the possibility exists if we learn how to renew the mind according to the Spirit and the Word of God.

This is what we have discussed so far. We have displayed what this text has promised—that God will keep us in perfect peace *if* we keep our minds fixed upon God. Last week, I gave you five things we are to do to renew the mind and to practice fixing—staying—the mind upon the Lord.

1. Capture the mind.

You have to literally catch your mind slipping off the reservation. You have to catch your mind when it is not thinking according to the Scriptures, according to the mind of Christ. You have to catch your mind thinking according to those old patterns that were established by the old heart, the old man, the person you are no longer. As you catch your heart doing such, you begin to learn how to do that, and you practice that over and over. The mind has to be arrested and you have to apprehend it in the very act of thinking unbiblically.

2. You have to see yourself before the Lord and the Lord before you.

You have to learn how to practice the presence of God. This is not a mind game. This is not fantasy. The Bible says He is with us. He abides with us. He dwells in us. What I have to do with my mind is learn how to let that information, that idea, reform my imagination so that I can literally see with the mind’s eye that God is absolutely, always with me. I must be assured of it. I must be confident in it. I practice His presence. I go through the day acknowledging that He is with me.

One of the ways we suggested to do that is number three.

3. You must learn to pray about everything.

In Philippians 4:6, Paul says “in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” Why? This is one of the ways you practice the presence of God. This is one of the ways in which you learn how to bring God into everything concerning your daily life. If you’re praying about everything you’re confronted with, the issues of your life, then you are engaging the person and presence of Jesus into every category of life so now there is no secular and sacred, it’s all sacred. But if you only pray about everything and you do not do number four you will not advance.

4. You must practice meditation.

Immediately in chapter four of Philippians after telling us to pray about everything, Paul says in verse 8 you must practice meditation. “Meditate on these things...” The reason the Apostle Paul gives such sound advice so quickly after telling us to pray about everything is because if you do not retrain the mind to think biblically, then your prayer sessions will only become times of great worry. If you don’t think according to Scripture, you won’t have prayer sessions you’ll have worry sessions. So Paul advises that if you’re going to pray about everything—which you must—you need to also meditate about these certain things, “whatever things are true ... noble ... just ... pure ... lovely ... of good report ... virtue ... praiseworthy,” which all typify the very person and character of Jesus. Your mind has to learn how to be stayed upon Him and that comes through meditation.

5. You must do the things that godly men do if you are to be godly.

That is meditation. That is praying about everything. That is learning how to practice the presence of God. That is learning and practicing how to capture your mind when it’s not thinking according to the Scriptures but in vain imaginations. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:9, “The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

All of this is useless if it is not fueled by something other than sheer determination. Thus far, at face value, it sounds like God will guard our minds and hearts in perfect peace because we merit His peace by doing the hard work of renewing the mind. I’m very much aware that if you take what you’ve heard thus far in the two messages on this text that you will walk away and say, “Well, it seems to me it’s completely up to me. I’ve got to do this disciplined, difficult work of re-training my thought patterns, *then*, having successfully done that, God will give me perfect peace. I will have earned it.” But this is not what the text or I am suggesting. Not at all.

The last phrase of this verse shows us that the fuel of setting the mind and its imagination upon God is the fuel of faith, “Because he trusts in You.” You could say the verse this way, “Because you trust in God you fix your mind upon Him.” There is no one you deem more valuable and worthy of the concentration of the mind, because He is so good, so loving, so kind, so great, so glorious, so gracious. You trust Him for what He is, therefore you fix your mind upon Him, therefore He guards your mind and heart with His perfect peace. The fuel of fixing your mind, renewing it, keeping it upon Christ, is not sheer human effort but the grace of faith.

Faith is a grace given to us. It's a gift given to us by God. It is a spiritual work of God in your soul that causes you to be able to place all of your confidence in Him, who He is, and what He is said. Faith is a grace given to us and it is true we must exercise it; nevertheless it is a grace. And grace is never against labor; it's against legalism. Legalism is working because I want to earn, but grace is working because I'm empowered to do so. Faith is a grace that empowers me to trust in the Lord. I have already received through Jesus Christ this grace of faith therefore I don't have to earn anything from God. And, in the case of our text, the grace of faith is enabling our effort to fix our minds on the Lord. It's because I trust the Lord in everything that I have fixed my mind upon Him. I've found Him worthy of the mind's occupation.

If you are going to renew your mind, it has to be fueled by this grace of faith. What kind of faith is it? This is the question. The Bible states there are different kinds of faith. The faith I want you to see here in our text is what I call a submissive trust.

I. A Submissive Trust

A. A Faith That Does Not Submit.

People can have faith, even in God, but it is not a submissive faith.

The Apostle James says that a faith that is without submission is dead.

“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (James 2:17)

Dead faith does not mean nonexistent or not functioning. Don't read it that way or you'll miss what James is trying to say. The key is that James defines it as a faith that is “by itself.” It's by itself because it produces nothing. The kind of faith that submits to God and comes under His authority is a kind of faith that produces. It produces works of obedience. A submissive trust gladly submits to God and obeys His Word because it trusts in Him to the degree it is willing to say, “Not my will, but Thy will be done.” This dead faith is all by itself. It doesn't produce this kind of obedience. Death does not reproduce and thus James calls this kind of faith, dead. Therefore, this is a faith that is all alone “by itself.”

This dead faith is without submissive obedience. It will not obey Jesus submissively. I didn't say it would not obey, I said it would not obey *Jesus submissively*. You can obey but not submit. I'm saying *submissive* or *submission* to mean more about an attitude rather than an action. You can, in action, submit or obey and the heart not be engaged. If the heart is not gladly bringing itself under the authority of God, then your actions are dishonoring to God. It's from the heart that man is to be ruled with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit and His guidance. So if the heart is not engaged in joyful obedience then God is dishonored and your obedience means nothing.

This kind of obedience, offered by dead faith, is oppressive.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3)

I’ve learned a long time ago that there are people in churches, in fact, many, many people, who have learned how to obey God in most of the commandments. They learned to do the things God expects and they refrain from doing the things He disallows. They read their Bibles, they try to pray, they go to church, they get involved in “ministry,” they refrain from partying and drunkenness and immorality. They are “good people,” as you and I judge goodness, and they have a form of obedience, a form of godliness.

But John goes on to say that the commandments are not burdensome. In other words, John is sticking a goad to the heart. He is prodding to discover the predisposition of the heart.

“Do you love God?”

“Yes, I love God.”

“Well, if you love God, do you keep His commandments?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Ahh, very good. Do you find those commandments burdensome?”

John is not saying that obeying the commandments are always easy because sometimes they are not. Sometimes to do what God tells us to do is very difficult. What John wants you to understand that while a commandment may not be easy it is not oppressive. The word *burdensome* means afflictive. It inflicts pain and discomfort to the point there is no joy in it. John says if you really love God and keep His commandments you will do so with an attitude of joy not oppression, gladness not duty. And while it may be difficult, while it may cost you a great deal to obey God, there will be in the heart, in the core of your being, a silent pleasure and joy because you are loving God supremely and you’re demonstrating it with your life.

There are many people who profess to be Christians and, from outward appearance, they appear to love and obey God but they have no submissive trust. The heart is absent of this joy and pleasure.

People can have faith in God and it not save because it’s not of the quality needed in this submissive trust.

*“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”
(James 2:19)*

You believe in God, very well then. Do you believe to the degree that Satan believes? Do you believe what a demon believes? Because when the demons recognize the presence of God they always tremble. Do you have a knee-knocking kind of faith? When you know you’re in the presence of God is there a sense of the holiness of God that causes you to tremble? If you don’t, though you may have faith, but it is so dead that it doesn’t rise to the level of a devil, it’s not even that good.

“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:22-23)

I wish that first word wasn't *many* but *a few*. But it is *many*. Many people who even have the kind of faith that can do genuine miracles will be cast out of His presence. I've seen this. But that kind of faith will not save the person who exhibited miraculous power. There is a faith that does not submit nor save.

Thankfully, there is a faith that does submit and save. This is the kind of faith that Isaiah is talking about.

B. A Faith that Does Submit.

Submission is not just obeying but obeying gladly. It's an attitude of the heart.

We trained our children to obey gladly. That doesn't mean they always did so, but I trained them that they should do what we tell them with a proper attitude. If they didn't do it with a right attitude they dishonored us and, in effect, they didn't really obey. You say, "Didn't you run the risk of training them to become better actors?" Perhaps. Perhaps I ran the risk of making little Pharisees out of them. That is true. But what I wanted to do was to show them that any kind of obedience that doesn't come joyfully from the heart is not obedience at all. God deserves that kind of submission. The kind that gladly comes under His authority because it loves Him and therefore trusts in Him. "Faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). That's the only kind of faith that honors God.

For example, young person, if mom or dad tells you to take out the trash and you do it, but as you take it out with clenched teeth and you mutter under your breath, "I despise taking out the trash." What have you done? You might say you did what you were told and that you obeyed. Yes, but in your act of obedience do you not see that you actually dishonored your parents? What you showed was a lack of respect and trust in them that you would not gladly submit to their authority so, in the end, your obedience dishonored them. You did not deem your parents worthy of your sacrifice and in the end felt as if you were the one dishonored. The same is absolutely true when we go through the motions of obedience, when we do obey the commandments without submission from the heart. We blaspheme and dishonor God and He is not glorified.

It is this kind of faith that Isaiah is stating in our text that motivates the mind to revolve around our Lord Jesus. This submissive trust in God submits because it believes with all of its energy that God truly is good. This kind of faith gladly submits because it knows God is good. How does it know? The answer cannot altogether be given but it knows nonetheless that God loves and that His love can be trusted, therefore it brings itself under the authority of God and gladly obeys. This does not mean it will obey easily or that it's not difficult and it doesn't mean there aren't times of struggle to come to the place of joyful obedience, but it will come. This kind of faith will

fight, you will fight with this kind of faith to be able to gladly bring yourself under the authority of God and hence you know whether or not you have been given a heart that is predisposed to love Him supremely.

II. Evidences of Submissive Trust

How do you know you have trusted God with this kind of faith? I want to ask you four diagnostic questions. They're diagnostic because they *diagnose*. That's what we want to do now. We want to bring our hearts under the inspection of the Spirit and Word with these four questions.

1. Do I trust God submissively when He commands something that is not easy or I do not like?

This exposes the heart and proves if in the heart there is this submissive trust. We have already said to you that there are many times when the Spirit of God will come to you and require of you something that will not be easy. The act, the obedience, has no joy in itself. That means whatever He is asking you to do, in itself, is displeasurable but you can bring yourself to submission and joyful obedience, not in the thing but in God whom you are pleasing. Do you do that?

There are many instances in my life that I can go back and look and see where God has required something of me that was not easy, that required me to leave the comfort and the ease and do something quite difficult, quite out of my abilities and range of gifts. Sometimes I've struggled with it, I confess that to you, but I have learned that when I joyfully submitted because I trusted God that He was not being unkind to me, He wasn't being vindictive or judgmental, but He had my best interest at heart. When I have gladly surrendered I have never ever been disappointed. But when I would not submit joyfully, when I would not exercise submissive trust in Him, there was no joy whatsoever.

2. Do I rest peacefully although my circumstances are anything but restful?

This is the whole point of our text. How do you know you have this kind of submissive trust? You have the perfect peace of God. You will always have this kind of peace if you have this kind of faith. "You will keep him in perfect peace, (because) his mind is stayed on You, because (the ground, the foundation) he trusts in You." Jesus said to those who were not at rest to come, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." He says, "When you join in cooperation with Me, coming under My authority gladly because you trust in Me, the work becomes easy, the labor becomes manageable, and peace rules." It will always rule.

A beautiful illustration of this is in the life of Jesus and His disciples in Mark 4.

"On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side.'³⁶ Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.

37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' 39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?'" (Mark 4:35-40)

Jesus is saying, "Didn't you trust Me? Didn't you hear Me say, 'We will go over to the other side'? I just fed 5,000 men plus women and children with five loaves of bread and two fish, don't you know who I am, and don't you know that I am completely in submissive trust to My Father that I knew I was safe in His will? There is no safer place to be than in His will." That's the kind of faith Jesus exhibited and that's the kind of faith He requires of you so you can be at rest.

What is the condition of your soul today? Are you at rest or does the inside feel like the Sea of Galilee as it was blowing the very night Jesus did this miracle? Do you feel like the disciples that you cannot solve the problem? Is anxiety racking your mind and your heart and you can't rest? Inside is there a disquietedness that seems to rule over the heart? Well then, there it is. Submissive trust is lacking.

3. Do I trust God submissively and do not need to understand what He is doing in my life?

I think this is the greatest diagnostic question of the four. Are you so gladly submissive to Him because you so trust Him that He doesn't need to tell you what He's doing and you don't need to know? Or are you the kind of person that prays, "Lord, would You please show me what You're doing in my life? Please explain this to me so I can gladly submit." Oh no, my friend, you've got it backwards. You are to gladly submit first and then if He chooses to tell you, very good. If not, very good also. You don't need God to explain because you so believe that He is not hurting or harming you but He is helping you, He's strengthening you, He's making something out of your life that you only dream about. He's making you a man of God, a woman of God, a man or woman of faith that demons fear.

Do you need to know what God is doing in your life in order to submit to Him? Then you do not have this kind of submissive trust and therefore no wonder you're never at rest. No wonder you're seeking peace in many things other than Christ. You don't have this submissive trust.

I can't tell you what God is doing in your life. I can't even tell you what He's doing in mine, but I've come to the place where I know I don't need to know. When I begin to think, *If I could just know, if I could just see what He's up to, if I could just see the end result then I could have peace*, I know I'm not submissively trusting in Jesus. My heart has been exposed and it is not what I think it to be.

4. Do I trust God submissively when He puts His finger on something I want and removes or demands that I remove it?

He does that. And that becomes a diagnostic of whether or not you truly submissively trust Him. Do you know, with all confidence, that He is working for your good.

God tested Abraham, "Abraham, take your only son and offer him up as a sacrifice to Me." And Abraham passed the diagnostic test and he went up on that mountain and he offered his son Isaac. How could a father do such? Because he so trusted in his God and he knew that his God was good and his God would not demand something of him that was not good for him and Isaac. He had that kind of submissive trust.

When the Father came to His own Son and said, "I want You to drink the cup of Michael's sins, I want You to embrace His sins, I want You to take upon Yourself his punishment, his condemnation, and his rejection," the test was so strong the Bible says that Jesus prayed and His sweat literally turned to blood by the inner pressure. This is the only time we see Jesus struggling with the Father's will. But in the end His submissive trust won out and He said, "Nevertheless not My will but Thy will be done," and He took our sins and was rejected by God.

Peter gives us a glimpse of how He could do that. He says in his first epistle that Jesus "committed Himself to Him who judges righteously." He trusted His Father so much that He literally gave Himself because He knew God was righteous. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Jesus knew that He would.

The writer of Hebrews gives us another glimpse, "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." He joyfully submitted.

Is there something in your life right now that God is demanding you to remove, turn loose of, loosen your grip on it, and you're struggling with it? It's test to show you whether or not you have this submissive trust. Oh my friend, I plead with you, turn loose of it. Joyfully believe that God is working on your behalf with your best interest and that you will come through this much better than you are right now and that His perfect peace will guard your heart and mind. We're not necessarily talking about sin. We're talking also about good things in your life, things that are commendable and God ordained but God says, "I want you to relinquish them as a sacrifice of worship unto Me." If you can do that, you have submissive trust.

If it is joyful you believe that God is both good and great and glorious and gracious. You know it and therefore you do not fear what God takes from you because God has never taken that which He has not replaced with something even more wondrous. This is the way this peace works in your heart. If you can say yes to these things, you have a faith that both submits and saves. But if you cannot, if you, through these diagnostic questions, have discovered that your heart doesn't really trust in God to this degree, then I plead with you and warn you that you may not have a saving faith but a dead faith. You have a faith that's by itself, without works, and without peace and joy in God. I plead with you who are not yet saved that you would understand that God truly loves you with a love that is indefinable, a love that will always work toward you with goodness and grace. You do not have to placate or appease Him, Christ has done that already, He was the

Lamb, the sacrifice for your sins. By the life of Jesus you can see what God the Father did through Him and know that you too can entrust your soul to Him who is righteous.

What has God done with His Son? What did He end up doing with Him? He exalted Him to His right hand and gave Him a name that is greater than any other name. My friend, if He'll do that for Jesus on your behalf, then He'll do it for you if you'll trust Him.

God is working in the truth believed in our hearts and minds. Often we do not recognize the very presence of God because we're looking for some supernatural thing, some sensational thing. But God works in the quiet recesses of your heart by causing you to believe the truth. God is in the faith that trusts Him submissively. God is in the truth that we think about that reminds us of His greatness, goodness, graciousness, and gloriousness. It's not you thinking that alone, it's God's activity bringing that to your mind and therefore, ultimately, it is not by earning, it is God who is working in us that He might guard us and keep us in perfect peace. It is God alone.

So my friend, today you can rest. We have a God who enables us to be able to trust Him like this.

*Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heav'n and home,
When Jesus is my portion? My constant Friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.*

Do you know, my friend, that He watches you with a kind of love that has your best at heart? Do you know that? Do you know that His eye is on you? If so, is your eye on Him? Is the mind's eye fixed upon Him because you trust Him so? Well then, you have perfect peace that passes all understanding. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You because he trusts in you." Amen.