

## “Peace—Perfect Peace” ~ Edward H. Bickersteth

Bickersteth was vacationing in Harrogate, England, where he heard a sermon on Isaiah 26:3 by Canon Gibbon. The passage read “*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.*” The minister related that the Hebrew text used the word peace twice to indicate absolute perfection. He said, “*It reads in the original, ‘Thou wilt keep him in peace peace whose mind is stayed on Thee,’*” and explained the repetition in the Hebrew conveys the idea of absolute perfection. The translators of the King James Version knew of this Hebrew method and instead of repeating the word *peace*, which would seem awkward, translated it to “*perfect, peace.*”

The message of that morning’s sermon was still on Bickersteth’s mind when he visited an aged and dying relative that Sabbath afternoon. As he entered the man’s bedroom he found him in deep depression and troubled about his impending death. To soothe the man’s emotional turmoil, Bickersteth opened his Bible to read from Isaiah 26:3, *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.* When his friend dropped off to sleep Bickersteth took a sheet of paper and began to write a poem, posing the most disturbing obstacles to peace in life and then answered with the affirmation of faith that could not be denied. When the patient awoke, the author read the stanzas to him and comfort came to his troubled mind and heart. Perhaps the last thing he heard before Jesus called him “to Heaven’s perfect peace.”

Later his hymn would comfort his own heart as he stood over the grave of a preacher son.

*Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?  
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.*

*Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?  
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.*

*Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?  
On Jesus’ bosom naught but calm is found.*

*Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?  
In Jesus’ keeping we are safe, and they.*

*Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?  
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.*

*Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?  
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.*

*It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,  
And Jesus call us to Heaven's perfect peace.*

After one of Bickersteth's sisters pointed out that there is nothing specific in the hymn about physical suffering. "That is soon remedied," he replied. He took up an envelope and wrote the following verse (apparently never published) on the the back...

*Peace, perfect peace, 'mid suffering's sharpest throes?  
The sympathy of Jesus breathes repose.*

Taken from *Songs in the Night*, by Henry Garipey. Eerdman's Publishing Co.