

## Peace, Perfect Peace

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January 1997

Edward H. Bickersteth was born on January 26, 1825 in London, England, the son a prominent clergyman in the Anglican Church. Edward displayed great musical and poetic talent and edited the most widely used evangelical hymnal in Great Britain.

“One Sunday in August, 1875, while vacationing in the town of Harrogate, England, Bickersteth listened to a sermon delivered by another minister ... on the text Isaiah 26:3. Bickersteth was deeply moved and impressed by his colleague’s explanation that the original Hebrew version of this text reads, ‘Thou wilt keep him in *peace peace* whose mind is stayed on Thee ...’ The point of the sermon was that in repetition the Hebrew conveyed the idea of absolute perfection.

“That afternoon, Bickersteth paid a call upon an aged, dying relative ... He found the man in a deeply depressed and disturbed emotional state of mind. Desiring to be of spiritual help, Bickersteth took his Bible and began reading and discussing the portion of the Scriptures still fresh in his mind from the morning’s sermon.

“Then, taking a sheet of paper from a nearby desk, he quickly composed the comforting lines of his new poem and read them to the dying man. It is said that these helpful lines have remained exactly as they were originally written ... The lines of this poem were no doubt a source of great comfort to the dying relative as he slipped into eternity, even as they have been to troubled hearts to the present time” (**101 Hymn Stories**, p. 206-207).

The hymn presents five questions along with a simple answer for each:

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.*