



It Is Well with My Soul



"When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll -
whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
'It is well, it is well with my soul.'

"Tho Satan should buffet, tho trials should come,
let this blest assurance control,
that Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
and hath shed His own blood for my soul.

"My sin- O, the bliss of this glorious thought -
my sin, not in part, but the whole,
is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

"And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
the trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend,
'Even so' - it is well with my soul.

"It is well (it is well) with my soul, (with my soul,)
It is well, it is well with my soul."

"He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me ... Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken" - Psalm 55:18, 22

"As for me, I trust in You, O Lord, I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in Your hands." - Psalm 31:14,15

Today's beloved hymn speaks eloquently of an inner peace that comes from implicit trust in the love and goodness of God. In the midst of our trials, we have confidence in our heavenly Father who does all things well and according to His providential care.

Horatio G. Spafford was a successful attorney in Chicago, a devoted husband and father of four daughters, an active member of a Presbyterian church, and a loyal supporter and friend of D.L.Moody. Life was good for this devout Christian man until a series of calamities came upon his family.

Horatio and Anna's only son, Horatio Jr., died of Scarlet Fever in 1870 at the age of 4. Then in 1871, the Chicago fire wiped out his extensive real estate investments along the shores of Lake Michigan. In November of 1873, Ira Sankey and D.L. Moody were leaving for an evangelistic campaign in Great Britain, so Horatio decided to go with his family to Europe to assist in the meetings, giving them some pleasure after such personal loss.

As the time came for the ship to depart, Spafford was detained by urgent business and sent his family ahead, promising to catch up with them shortly. But halfway across the Atlantic, the S.S. Ville du Harve was struck by an English vessel and sank in 12 minutes. This was the worst disaster in naval history until the sinking of H.M.S. Titanic 40 years later. All four of his daughters drowned along with 222 others, but Anna survived and sent her husband this heart-wrenching message: "Saved alone. What shall I do?"

Horatio Spafford stood overwhelmed by grief on the deck of the ship that carried him to rejoin his wife in Wales. When the ship passed the approximate place where his daughters drowned, he felt the comforting presence of God that enabled him to write, "When sorrows like sea billows roll ... It is well with my soul."

The title of Psalm 31 in my Bible is "A Psalm of Complaint and of Praise." When the bottom falls out of life at times, we are told to cast our burdens upon the Lord. God has strong shoulders, and He is not surprised by our complaints. Rather, He offers a shoulder to cry on until His peace floods our souls and we have strength to move forward again. David moves from anguish to assurance in the verses of Psalm 31 as he gives voice to his problems, prayers and praises to God, his refuge in trouble.

Verse 5 will sound familiar to you, because those words were spoken by Jesus as He took His last breath upon the cross. King David found strength in the Lord as his enemies came against him, saying, "Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth." Luke 23:46 records that Jesus cried out with a loud voice and said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." So, the lesser David points us to the Greater David who would die for the sins of the world.

The reason that "It Is Well with My Soul" is so precious to believers, is that we all know what it is to feel overwhelmed by our circumstances. Psalm 142:3 says, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, You knew my path." That is an important truth to remember, since God sees the big picture and knows the beginning from the end.

In such times, you can find comfort in Psalm 94:18 -19, which says: "If I should say, 'My foot has slipped,' Your lovingkindness, O Lord, will hold me up. When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations delight my soul." Then entrust yourself to your loving Father, just as David and Jesus did, and you will find, as Horatio Spafford found, "peace like a river."