



Pastor's Update August 4, 2024

By Rev. Francis Williams

The Story Behind "It is Well With My Soul"

Perhaps you are already familiar with the story which inspired the hymn, *It Is Well With My Soul*, but I pray that it will bring renewed encouragement to you. The following is taken from James Montgomery Boyce's little booklet, *What God Says About Suffering*.

In the year 1873, a Christian lawyer from Chicago, named Horatio Spafford, placed his wife and four children on the luxury line Ville du Havre sailing from New York to France. Spafford expected to join them in about three or four weeks after finishing up some business; but with the exception of his wife, he never saw them again. The trip started out beautifully. But on the evening of November 21, 1873, as the Ville du Havre proceeded peacefully across the Atlantic, the ship was suddenly struck by another vessel, the Lochearn, and sank a mere thirty minutes later, with the loss of nearly all on board.

On being told that the ship was sinking Mrs. Spafford knelt with her children and prayed that they might be saved or made willing to die, if such was God's will. A few minutes later, in the confusion, three children were swept away by the waves while she stood clutching the youngest. Suddenly the youngest child was swept from her arms. She reached out and caught the baby's gown. Then the baby, a little girl, was lost again. Mrs. Spafford became unconscious and awoke later to find that she had been rescued by sailors from the Lochearn. But the four children were gone.

Back in the United States Horatio Spafford was waiting for news of his family, and at last ten days later (after the ship had reached Cardiff), it came. "Saved alone" was his wife's message. That night Spafford walked the floor of his rooms in anguish, as anyone would have done. But this was not all. For as he shared his loss with his Lord, a loss which could not be reversed in this life, he found, as many have, that peace which indeed passes all understanding. Toward morning he told a friend named Major Whittle, "I am glad to be able to trust my Lord when it costs me everything." Then, sometime later, as he reflected on the disaster at sea, he wrote:

*When peace, like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea-billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blessed assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And has 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!*

*O 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.*

By God's Grace and for His glory,

Pr. Francis