

My sin, oh 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, Oh my soul!

Let us sing the chorus today:

It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul!

3. A day will come when unfairness is no more.

As Spafford stood there on that rail thinking of his four daughters, I believe he eagerly longed for that day, the day he'd be in Heaven with his son and his daughters. If you've grieved the death of a husband or father or your loved ones, then I know you can identify with that yearning, that longing for the day when you'll be reunited and there will be no more unfair partings.

With eagerness Spafford says:

And, Lord, haste the day, when my faith shall be sight,  
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll  
the trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend!

He was eager for the day when the unfairness of life would become a dim memory, as Jesus returns with our loved ones and an eternity of no separation begins.

We don't have to face the unfairness of life alone. We don't have to fear death. If we pray and ask for God's forgiveness and grace, God will give it. As Psalm 34:22 says, *"The Lord redeems His servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in Him."* Let us take our refuge in Jesus today. No matter what circumstances, it is well with our souls. When you sing "It Is Well with My Soul," during the communion, think of God's grace, care, and healing power. Rely on God and take refuge in God.

September 3, 2017

Great Hymns: **It Is Well With My Soul**

Psalm 34:15, 17-19, 22

Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

I would like to share the story of our favorite hymn, "It Is Well with My Soul" this morning. This is a picture of Horatio G. Spafford. He was a hard-working, successful attorney who lived in Chicago. He was a devoted husband and father. Plus he was a growing Christian—not only active in his church, but also a close friend and supporter of the evangelistic ministry of Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sanky. And, Spafford was a talented hymn writer. But in spite of all these good things, Spafford suffered several serious misfortunes. He was someone who experienced the unfairness of life.

In 1870 Spafford's four-year-old son died of scarlet fever. Then, in 1871 when he was still struggling with his grief, the Great Chicago fire came. Since he had invested heavily in real estate, Spafford lost a fortune. He worked hard for rebuilding his city and helped the 100,000 people who had been left homeless by the blaze.

Two years later, in November of 1873, things were looking better in his windy city. Spafford decided to take his wife and daughters to Europe. Their journey was to be part family vacation...and part family mission trip. The family traveled from Chicago to New York where they were to board a luxury French liner, called the Ville du Havre. However, at the last minute, an urgent matter came up and rather than make the whole family wait on him, it was decided that his wife and their four daughters would go on ahead. Horatio would finish his work and then join them in a few weeks. They said their goodbyes and he reluctantly left the ship to complete his work.

In his book, *Then Sings My Soul*, Robert Morgan describes what happened next: On November 22, 1873, as the Ville du Havre glided over smooth seas, the passengers were jolted from their bunks. Their ship had crashed with an iron sailing vessel and water poured

in like Niagara. The Ville du Havre tilted dangerously. Screams, prayers, and oaths merged into a nightmare of unmeasured terror. Passengers clung to posts and were swept away by powerful currents of icy ocean. Loved ones fell from each other's grasp and disappeared into foaming blackness. Within two hours, the mighty ship vanished beneath the waters. 226 were killed including all four of Spafford's daughters, Maggie, Tanetta, Annie, and Bessie. Mrs. Spafford was found nearly unconscious, clinging to a piece of the wreckage. When she landed in Cardiff, Wales, she cabled her husband: 'Saved alone.' Horatio immediately booked passage to join his wife. En route, on a cold December night, the captain of his ship called him aside and said, 'I believe we are now passing over the place where the Ville du Havre went down.' Spafford stood silently at the rails for a long time and then went to his cabin but found it hard to sleep. He said to himself, 'It is well; the will of God be done.'

He later wrote his famous hymn based on those words. As we read the first verse of this hymn, we can imagine this grief-stricken father, standing there that cold December night, looking out over the ocean.

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.'

Many people love its words, because all of us can connect to some example of heartbreak or hardship. All of us have experienced the unfairness of life. Spafford points us to powerful truth, comforting facts that help us when sorrows threaten and overwhelm us. His hymn tells us how to be content no matter what happens or how it can be well with our soul when it's not well with our life.

1. Having peace is something that must be learned. Spafford puts it in the last part of his first verse:

Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,

'It is well, it is well, with my soul.'

We're not born with the ability to be happy and at peace when we are going through hardship and grief. This contentment is something we have to learn. Our natural bent is to always think we need more than we have. We always want something newer or better. We always want more. Paul confesses in Philippians 4:11, "*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*"

But we realize that in those difficult times God draws close to us. Those experiences of closeness with God teach us that nothing is worth more than our relationship with God. God's nearness becomes the most precious thing to us.

2. God suffered with the greatest unfairness of life.

Jesus died on the cross for the sins of all mankind. 1 John 2:2 says, "*Jesus Christ, the righteous One, is the atoning sacrifice for our sin and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world.*" You know we do live in an unfair world. None of us should be exempt from tragedy and unfairness. Our Holy God Himself was not exempt. His only Son suffered and died unfairly for the sins of others.

So, God suffered with the greatest unfairness. It humbles us and puts our own heartaches and heartbreaks in perspective what Jesus did on the cross, the unfairness he suffered. His sacrifice is the one thing that can heal our souls and make them well.

If we accept God's forgiveness, we are saved and have eternal life. Look at the words in verses 2 and 3 where Spafford says:

Though Satan should buffet  
though trials should come  
let this blest assurance control  
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate  
and hath shed His own blood for my soul.