

Sunday, December 31, 2023 pm

## SERMONS FROM SONGS

### It IS Well With My Soul

### #626, Hymn's For Worship

Tonight, being the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday, we want to examine another song that we sing from time to time. I selected this song based upon Jason's talk last Sunday evening where he dealt with the subject of contentment. He used this song as a backdrop for his lesson/invitation. Based on his talk, I decided this would be a good time to review the message of this song.

As songs go, this one has one of the most profound backstories that gives us greater appreciation concerning its message. It also "checks all the boxes" of a great hymn – 1) It has a great melody and harmonies, 2) Words that are spiritually profound and edifying. We will visit the backstory at the conclusion of our lesson. But tonight, as we typically do with these lessons, we will examine the text of this song. (Ephesians 5:18, 1 Corinthians 14:15).

It was written by Hortio B. Spafford, his most well known hymn and put to music by Philip P. Bliss, a very prolific composer and songwriter.

The song challenges us to be content no matter what happens in this life.

#### I. Vs. 1 – Whatever my lot in life

- a. **When peace like a river attendeth my way** – when things are going well. Tied to the next phrase as a contrast. Life typically has joys and for most things go our way some times. The truth is we are abundantly blessed. HOWEVER, with our blessings do we remember God? It is easy at times of prosperity to forget Him. Consider Proverbs 30:8-9 where the writer asks for just enough, ...*Give me neither poverty nor riches— Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God.*
- b. **When sorrows like sea billows roll** – when troubles come, one after the other. For most of us, we also face times of troubles in varying forms. AND at times those troubles seem to come in waves, one after the other.
- c. **Whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say** – It is up to us to determine how we will react, regardless of what we are facing in life. We have frequently emphasized in our studies that you cannot always control what happens, and you CERTAINLY cannot control what others do, BUT you can control how you will react. You can control your attitude! 1 Peter 3:13-15 – sanctify the Lord God in your heart...!
- d. **It is well with my soul** – this is also part of the chorus of this song. This is a statement of contentment and the theme of this song. It is also an underlying disposition that we as Christians are to have. Consider Paul in Philippians 4:11-13.

#### II. Vs. 2 - When tempted by Satan, remember what the Lord has done He defeated Satan

- a. **Though Satan should buffet** – a word meaning to beat or forcefully strike, or to "blacken the eye" (BDAG) (See 1 Corinthians 9:27 - KJV). We know Satan is our enemy and desires to defeat and destroy us. 1 Peter 5:8 describes him as a roaring lion seeking to devour. This is something we need to prepare for – 1 Peter 5:9, 2 Corinthians 2:11
- b. **Though trials should come** – as Christians, we can be assured that trials will come our way – 2 Timothy 3:12. 1 Peter 1:7 speaks of genuine faith being tested by fire and prevailing, even be "*found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"
- c. **Let this blessed assurance control** – what will I think about when facing such trials?
  - i. James 1:2-3 – count it all joy, knowing the testing of your faith produces patience.

- ii. 1 Corinthians 10:13 – no temptation will be given that you cannot handle... but a way of escape.
- iii. It is described as a “**blessed assurance**” that controls our demeanor, attitude and response to such trials. Why do we have this assurance?
  - 1. Because Jesus knows and cares – Matthew 11:28-30
  - 2. Because He will NEVER forsake us – Matthew 28:20 – I am with you always; Hebrews 13:5 – He has said, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*”
  - 3. Philippians 4:6-7 reminds us to be anxious for nothing.
- d. **That Christ has regarded my helpless estate** –
  - i. He came to this earth and lived among the common people - Philippians 2:5-6. Matthew 9:36 notes that He was moved with compassion.
  - ii. Hebrews 2:14-15, 4:14-16 – because of this, He understands!
- e. **And has shed His own blood for my soul** –
  - i. Christ died for us – Romans 5:6-8
  - ii. This is the ultimate example of how He has regarded our helpless condition.

### III. Vs. 3 – I am forgiven

- a. **My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought** –
  - i. Romans 3:23 – we are sinners! And that sin separates us from God – Romans 6:23. Romans 8:12-13 warns, Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
  - ii. “O the bliss...” – an interjected statement preparing us for what is about to be sung.
- b. **My sin, not in part, but the whole** – Jesus died so that ALL our sins could be forgiven. While another study, understand that there is no sin God will not forgive (except one – blasphemy of the HS – Matthew 12:31-32), provided to comply with our part. NOTE that this does not negate the consequences of sins.
- c. **Is nailed to the cross** – Colossians 2:13-14
- d. **And I bear it no more** – when God forgives, our sins are washed away.
  - i. Hebrews 10:17-18 – quoting from Jeremiah 31:34 we are promised this!
  - ii. Acts 22:16 - arise and be baptized and WASH AWAY your sins!
  - iii. The OT expresses this so powerfully – Isaiah 1:18, “*Come now, and let us reason together,*” Says the Lord, “*Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*” Micah 7:18-20, *Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.* We often have a hard time forgiving ourselves because of our sins, but if we have repented – God forgives and that is end of the matter.
- e. **Praise the Lord, O my soul** – the Hebrew word for “praise the Lord” is Hallelujah! How often do we glorify God because we have been forgiven? Romans 4:7-8 – blessed are those whose sins are forgiven and covered... (quoting Psalm 32:1-2).
- f. As we deal with struggles in this life, we sing this song and it gives us REASONS to be assured and to praise the Lord.

### IV. Vs. 4 - Lord, haste the day

- a. **And Lord haste the day when the faith shall be sight** – we walk by faith NOW (2 Corinthians 5:7). 1 Peter 1:6-8 speaks of living by faith, with trials and such, but anticipating that day when we finally see our Lord and *receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.* We ought to anticipate His

return. The question we need to ask is, how much do we really want the Lord to return right now? And if not, WHY?

- b. **The clouds be rolled back as a scroll, the trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend** – this is alluding to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 where Paul is assuring his audience that the Lord IS going to return and gives us a glimpse as to what will happen (notice that nowhere in that verse does it imply His intention to return TO earth to reign here). BUT, it is a reminder that He is going to return! Revelation 1:7 begins, *Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*
- c. **Even so, it is well with my soul.** IS it? Are you ready for His return? Someone who has fully surrendered their life to Him cannot wait for His return. 1 Corinthians 16:22, the book reaches its end with the expression, *“O Lord, come!”*
- d. David Baker, in a sermon he prepared and presented about 15½ years ago asked the question in relation this phrase of the song, “Why hurry it?” He gave 6 answers:
  - i. We look for new heavens and a new earth – 2 Peter 3:11-13
  - ii. We anticipate receiving our victor’s crown – 2 Timothy 4:6-8
  - iii. We will receive our inheritance – Romans 8:16-17
  - iv. We will put on immortality – 1 Corinthians 15:51-53
  - v. We are going home, where our spiritual citizenship is – Philippians 3:20-21
  - vi. What a great reunion that will be – 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 – thus we shall ALWAYS be with the Lord.

And thus we see a very moving and always needed hymns. The backstory lends even greater impact to its message. It was penned by Horatio Spafford in 1873. Spafford was a Presbyterian elder and a lawyer in Chicago. Much of his fortune was lost during the great Chicago fire of 1871. 2 years after the fire the family planned a trip to Europe where they would meet up with Dwight L. Moody who was preaching in England. They boarded the ocean liner steamship, *Ville du Havre*. But because of business, Horatio had to stay behind so he sent his family ahead. During the Atlantic crossing the ship collided with another vessel and sank, killing 226 people. Spafford and his wife had 4 daughters (ages 12 years to 18 months) who all perished in the shipwreck. His wife, Anna survived. When she arrived in Wales she sent a telegram to Horatio with 2 words, “Saved alone.” Shortly afterwards, Horatio prepared to cross the Atlantic to be with his grieving wife. When they approached the spot where the *Ville du Harve* sank, he was told. Following this he penned the words to this great hymn. It was put to music 3 years later by Philippi Bliss (whose life also ended in tragedy 3 years later).

Considering the backstory that gives us insight into the depth of the meaning of this song.

The chorus of this song, says 3 times, **“It is well with my soul”** – a phrase repeated 14x in the song if we sing all verses with chorus. That is NOT “vain repetition”, but it is a constant reminder that no matter where we are at, we need to be content and graciously accept whatever lot have been given to us. What about you, “Is it well with your soul?” (Which is actually another song). Think about it!