

Is It Well with Your Soul?

"**S**AVED ALONE!" These two words, cabled from Cardiff, Wales, brought the devastating news to Horatio G. Spafford, a Chicago lawyer, that his four little daughters were lost at sea, and that his wife had been "saved alone."

The European holiday had seemed like such a good idea. It would be a welcome change from the worrisome business difficulties brought about by the great Chicago fire in which much of Mr. Spafford's real estate holdings had been wiped out. Reservations were made on the most luxurious ship then afloat, the French liner *S. S. Ville du Havre*. At the last moment pressing business obligations forced Mr. Spafford to cancel his reservation, but he sent his wife and four daughters on as planned, promising to follow them within two weeks' time.

On board the luxurious liner all was ideal. Except for a brief squall near Nova Scotia, the weather was perfect. Then in the mid-Atlantic at about two o'clock in the morning of Nov. 22, 1873, there was a thunderous collision. A large, iron sailing vessel, the *Lochearn*, at full speed had struck the *Villa du Havre* amidships and nearly sliced her in two.

The horrible nightmare of the next twelve minutes can scarcely be imagined. Many of the passengers and crew rushed to the deck in their night clothes and began frantically to get into the life boats and life jackets. Several boats heavily loaded were smashed to bits by the falling mast. Life jackets were glued to the bulwarks by fresh paint, and many could not be used.

Mother Spafford gathered her four daughters around her, and together they prayed. As the ship slipped under the sea just twelve minutes after the impact, the strong, cold waters wrenched the children from her desperate grasp. Somehow the unconscious form of Mrs. Spafford was swept onto a flat wooden piece of wreckage. She was one of the fifty-seven rescued out of the 283 on board.

Mr. Spafford had been waiting for news of the safe arrival of his family in France. Since there was neither radio nor wireless

at that time, the cable from Wales, instead of France, was the first news Mr. Spafford received of the disaster. It was a shocking blow. He paced the floor all through the night, calling on the Lord. Toward morning the peace of God flooded his heart. He turned to his friend, Major D. W. Whittle, and expressed his trust in the Lord. He was assured that he would see his girls again in heaven.

Quickly Mr. Spafford sailed to be at his wife's side. The captain of the ship he sailed on carefully reckoned the location of the *Ville du Havre's* disaster. There on the high sea near the place of the terrible disaster, he wrote the hymn that has given comfort to many, *It is Well With My Soul*.

Another daughter, born after the disaster, wrote of her father: "That he could write such words at such a time was made possible by the fierceness of his struggle and the completeness of the victory. Hymns that are the fruit of anguish victoriously overcome are bound to bring blessing."

The source of Mr. Spafford's strength, dear reader, is an open secret. It is available to you and will enable you to live victoriously. It is to be found first of all, in the forgiveness of sins:

*My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to His cross, and I bear it no more!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

To know one's sins are forgiven brings great release, for "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He removes our sins as far as the east is from the west and buries them in the deepest sea.

Another source of strength is the knowledge that God works all things together for good to them that love Him (Rom. 8:28). God's unfailing love enables us to be master of our circumstances, instead of its victim.

Finally, the sure hope of the resurrection is an unbounded source of strength. The hope of reunion with loved ones, the joy of seeing our Lord face to face supply strength enough and to spare to face all of life's trials and fill us with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Reader, is it well with your soul?

—Robert D. Kallis