



Many of us have need of God's guidance to let our souls accept the peace of our Lord Jesus that is freely given us, yet we have a hard time accepting. Each of us has a tendency, some more some less, to believe our actions are primary to the outcome of our lives. To some extent this is true, Jesus call us to action, not mere diction. But we need to recognize where our duty to act ends and our duty to trust begins. This hymn more than any other with which I am familiar makes that point. The tune is *Ville du Havre*, from the name of the stricken vessel, by Phillip Bliss.

The writer Horatio Spafford experienced the action trust dilemma as much as anyone can do. He was a prominent Chicago attorney and real estate investor in the late 1800s. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 ruined him financially, as most of his holdings were destroyed. His business interests were further hit by the economic downturn of 1873, at which time he had planned to travel to Europe with his family on the SS *Ville du Havre*. In a late change of plan, he sent the family ahead while he was delayed on business concerning zoning problems following the Great Chicago Fire. While crossing the Atlantic, the ship sank rapidly after a collision with another vessel, *Loch Earn*, with a loss of 226 people including all four of Spafford's daughters. His wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram, "Saved alone ...".

As Spafford sailed to England to join his wife following the accident, he wrote *It Is Well With My Soul* – crossing the ocean where he'd just lost his daughters and probably passing near the same area.

The Spaffords later had three more children; their son, Horatio Goertner Spafford, died at the age of four, of scarlet fever. Their daughters were Bertha Hedges Spafford and Grace Spafford. In 1881, the Spaffords, including baby Bertha and newborn Grace, set sail for Ottoman-Turkish Palestine. The Spaffords settled in Jerusalem and helped found a group called the American Colony. Colony members, later joined by Swedish

Christians, engaged in philanthropic work among the people of Jerusalem regardless of their religious affiliation and without proselytizing motives—thereby gaining the trust of the local Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities. During and immediately after World War I, the American Colony played a critical role in supporting these communities through the great suffering and deprivations by running soup kitchens, hospitals, orphanages and other charitable ventures. Horatio Spafford died from malaria days before his 60th birthday.

No matter what our current state, Horatio Spafford gently prods us to remember all that is really important is that it is well with my soul. No matter the slings and arrows of this life, there is nothing, nothing that matters compared to the fact that with our Lord's gift of grace and help, it is well with my soul. When you read or hear the hymn, think of the picture painted in those words. Put your trust in God as you hear...

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.

Refrain:
It is well with my soul,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

Refrain

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, O my soul!

Refrain

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

Refrain

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

Refrain

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.

Walk through the hymn slowly.

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.

No matter, peace or turmoil, with God in our hearts, it will be well with our soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

No matter the trials and tribulations of this world, take full assurance that our Lord knows our hopelessness and helplessness and has shed His very own blood that it might be well with our soul.

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, O my soul!

We are accounted as perfect, not in part, but in whole. Not setting aside some of our sin, but every last bit. It is nailed firmly to the Cross from where it cannot leave. It is separated from us. Thanks be to God!

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

We live in Christ for ever more. No matter if the River Jordan is over us or we over it, we live none the less, no fear of what others might believe to be death. For us there is only life and peace in our soul.

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

While we wait here on earth for the end of our time, ours or that of the earth matter not to us. For our end is never ending in heaven, not the Pit or the grave. We look to the trumpet blast of the angels, not the deathly quiet of the grave.

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.

We look forward with great expectation for that day we see heaven and not just think about it. We look forward to the clouded vision clearing to brightness and the sights and sounds of our Lord.

Until then:

It is well with my soul!