

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY



Wednesday, July 15, 2020 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

PSALMS, HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS “A Bible Study Drawn from Old and New Songs of Faith” *Ephesians 5:18-19*

Music has a rich history in the story of God’s people beginning with the songs of the Old Testament called Psalms, and the rise and spread of Christianity around the globe with the great teaching hymns of faith. And even today, though music has sometimes been a point of contention and division centering on styles and methods of worship, many of the spiritual songs of our day are rich and power lyrics and sounds of worship that exalt our God and feed the souls of men. The Apostle Paul instructs us in Ephesians 5:18-19 to, *“¹⁸...be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” – Ephesians 5:18-19* We are actually commanded in God’s Word to dive head long into the music of faith... to be *“singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* with all kind of expression of music (psalms, hymns and spiritual songs). What many miss in great hymns and songs of faith is the rich Biblical tradition and teaching embedded is many of those songs. The Bible study will attempt to dig into some of those select songs of faith and the powerful Biblical truths and lessons those songs that generations have loved to sing may have for us. Perhaps this will change our worship as we begin to sing these lyrics with deeper appreciation and understanding for what they are actually proclaiming. We have looked at the great old hymn, “Farther Along,” then we looked at the subject of assurance of salvation by looking at the hymn “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine”. Then last week we took at that great hymn that some have called the Baptist Fight Song, *“Victory in Jesus.”* Let’s look at another great hymn of faith, one that some may consider to have a more somber feel to it, that speaks really to loss in life and how to deal with it.

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL – HYMN #412 “How It May Be Well With your Soul” *Psalms 112:1-8 / Selected Scriptures*

Another of the more popular Christian hymn of all time is the famous and storied hymn, *“It Is Well With My Soul,”* by Horatio G. Spafford. Perhaps of all the hymn included in our Hymn Books today, the story behind this song is perhaps one of the most know and shared. The song actually carries a tragic and heart breaking tale, even beyond what many may realize.

Horatio Spafford was a wealthy Chicago lawyer in the 1860’s. He had a vibrant law practice. He owned also many properties along the Chicago lakefront. He had 5 children, four daughters and a son, and everything one could imagine in this life. He was also a strong Christian believer involved in the reform and abolition movements.

The events leading up to the writing of the lyrics began with his son who contracted Scarlet Fever. Today Scarlet Fever is a highly treatable disease, but not in those times. Horatio Spafford's only son died. The Spaffords were devastated.

Their faith was tested further the following year, in 1871, when the Great Chicago Fire swept through the city. The fire leveled much of the city, killing 250 people and leaving 90,000 people homeless. Spafford did not escape the damage. He lost most of his real estate holdings, though his home and family were spared. Financially depleted, the Spaffords used their remaining resources to feed the hungry, help the homeless, care for the sick and injured and comfort their grief stricken neighbors.

In 1873, with Anna's health declining, the Spaffords planned a trip to England for some respite and to participate in a revival being held by Dwight L. Moody, who had become a dear friend to the Spaffords by this time. The day before departure, however, Horatio was required to tend to a business emergency. Not wanting to disappoint his family, he sent them on ahead, planning to follow on a later ship.

On November 22, 1873, the steamer **Ville du Havre** was struck by a British iron sailing ship. The Ville du Havre sunk in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The ship fully sank in only 12 minutes.

The British sailing ship that had collided with the Ville du Havre, though in distress itself, managed to save 81 of the 307 passengers. Another ship, the Trimountain, rescued the survivors from the sinking British vessel, including Anna Spafford.

Anna was found unconscious on some floating debris. She had been sucked down violently in a whirlpool caused by the rapidly sinking ship, pummeled by debris and separated from her daughters. She was taken, bruised, sick and heartbroken, to Cardiff, Wales.

That evening she telegraphed Horatio, "Saved alone. What shall I do...."

All of their daughters perished, and they were left childless. They lost their fortune and five children in three years.

Upon receiving the telegram, Horatio Spafford left Chicago to go to the side of his grieving wife. As his ship passed the area where her ship had sunk, the captain called Horatio to the bridge. Later that night, Horatio Spafford wrote the words to the well-known hymn: "It is Well with My Soul."

The song is inspiring in its uplifting message of God's great love and assurance of salvation. That these lyrics were penned after three years of unimaginable loss and misfortune – and right after the tragic loss of his four daughters – is testament to a heart that is anchored in God's eternal love.

While Horatio resigned himself to God, Anna was utterly devastated. The other survivors watched her closely, fearing she would take her own life. One day, however, Anna said she heard a soft voice speaking to her, "You were saved for a purpose!" She recalled in that moment something a friend said to her, "It's easy to be grateful and good when you have so much, but take care that you are not a fair-weather friend to God."

Anna joined Horatio in drawing close again to God. The Spaffords spent the rest of their lives living in faith. They had three more children, one of whom also died young of Scarlet Fever. Many years later, **Bertha Spafford Vester**, the youngest child of Horatio and Anna Spafford, wrote these words about her father: “In Chicago, Father searched his life for explanation. Until now, it had flowed gently as a river. Spiritual peace and worldly security had sustained his early years, his family life and his home..... All around him people were asking the unvoiced question; ‘What guilt had brought this sweeping tragedy to Anna and Horatio Spafford?’.... Father became convinced that God was kind and that he would see his children again in heaven. This thought calmed his heart, but it was to bring Father into open conflict with what was then the Christian world.... To Father, this was a passing through the “valley of the shadow of death,” but his faith came through triumphant and strong. On the high seas, near the place where his children perished, he wrote the hymn that was to give comfort to so many.”

Horatio Spafford would later make this statement that is a testament to his enduring faith and such a powerful statement given his tragic loss and heartache in life. Spafford said, “I am glad to be able to trust my Lord when it cost me something.”

1. 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.
It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul.
2. 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.
It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul.
3. 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!
It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul.
4. 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.
It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul. *(not in hymn book)*
5. 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!
It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul. *(not in hymn book)*
6. 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.
It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- (1) *Spafford seem to contrast two different/contrasting life experiences using water as a metaphor or symbol of these two different life experiences. What are these two different life experiences and what metaphor does he use? Why? And what is he saying? He speaks of times of peace and times of sorrow, and he contrast them using water... peace as a gently flowing river, and sorrow like sea billows rolling. He may be saying that water is like life sometimes it gently flows like a refreshing, easy moving stream that soothes, blessing, calm... at other times life is filled with*

tempest waves of waters sweeping over us and threatening to take us under. What is Spafford's determination regardless of which of these life experiences he is going through and how might this relate to his story? How might it relate to our live? What encouragement might he be giving to us in this life... even where we are right now? He says, "whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, it is well with my soul." In other words, whatever kind of experience life give him he is going to trust and know that God is in control and will give him all that he needs to get through it.

- (2) In verse two Spafford make reference to the enemy. What helps do you find in verse 2 for dealing with the enemy? Why can we say, it is well with my soul, even when the enemy attacks?** "Jesus"... that is the answer and help for the attacks of the enemy, Satan. He seems to be saying that since Christ was willing to die for him by shedding his very blood for him, that He will surely help him and come to aid against the enemy... that the enemy is a defeated foe through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross.
- (3) Why does Spafford feel he can say "it is well with my soul" even though he knows he is a great sinner? What does he tell us in verse 3 concerning how our sin has been dealt with and why might that be a source of great peace? That Jesus paid the price for the all of his sin and that he paid the price in full and he doesn't have to bear it (bear the burden of his sin) any longer. Perhaps, this is allusion to the idea that when bad stuff happens in our live it is God getting even with us for our sins... this evil that has befallen me must be God judging me. Maybe, Spafford even had those in his life that insinuated that he must have done something terrible for God to be allowing such misfortune in his life. Spafford says in this song, that's not the case, "my sin may be great, but God's grace and pardon is greater." See verse 3**
- (4) Two of these verses no long appear in our hymnal, but they too carry powerful truth.**
 - **(4) 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. It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul. (not in hymn book)**
 1. Does this verse remind you of a particular Bible verse? Philippians 1:21, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."
 2. What truth might Spafford have had in mind as he wrote these words? That a part of our soul finding peace in this life is the full conviction that we are Christ's and He is ours and as such nothing can cause His desertion of us.
 - **(5) 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! It is well with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul. (not in hymn book)**
 1. What life perspective for a believe is reflected in this verse? That as believers we win in the end. The grave is not our final destination, heaven is!
 2. How does this truth help us now, in the present?
- (5) This son culminate with a victorious verse in verse 4 (or vs.6). What important perspective does Spafford speak of in verse 4 (6) that may help us when we are going through troubling times here and now? That one day He's coming back and all of the heartache of this life will be no more. A day of triumph and victory for the believer is coming... our "faith will be sight."**

Spafford's testimony, even in the midst of great turmoil, loss and grief, heartache and much difficulty is... even in all of this "it is well with my soul." Wow! That is powerful declaration to be able to make, especially from such a place of tragedy. But it is his testimony! Could you and I

have the same perspective and heart? It's a good question. But a better question might be, "How may I be sure it is well with my soul come what may?"

THE SOUL NOT WELL

It is said that John Wesley would open up all small group meetings with the question "How is it with your soul?" ... much like "Is it well with your soul?" That's a much deeper question than just, "How are you?"

I mean, *how is your soul doing?* How is your spirit faring? *Really*, how are you? It's a jarring question because we often ask, "How are you?" out of habit and usually get impatient when someone has the nerve to actually tell us how they are doing.

Perhaps the question "How is it with your soul?" or "Is it well with your soul?" is a question we like to avoid because answering it forces us to really take stock on the health of our souls — which often leads to admitting that we may not be doing as well as we want others to think. Or maybe, it's just too personal a question... sort of implying that something is wrong with your "soul" and you better check it out.

Think of this what are the things that cause my soul to not be okay? What unsettles my soul? What cause my soul to be restless, or uneasy, or not at peace? Let see if we can list some things.

Take a few moment to list out and discuss some things that may cause our "soul" to not be well? Feel free to use Horatio Spafford's life and hymn as examples:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. <i>ex. the death of loved ones</i> | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Sometimes we need to step back a bit here and really ask ourselves, "How is it with my soul?" "How well is it with my soul?"

Some things that may our soul to be unsettled (restless, not well):

- Seasons of transition in life** – In other words huge life changes either by our own choosing or those thrust upon us. This could include things like moving, changing jobs, or other such life transition that are more of our own choosing or making. But can also include life transition that may be bigger adjustments like getting married, or having children, or becoming empty nesters, retiring, taking care of aging parents. Then it can also include those things that may be unwantedly thrust on us, financial loss/job loss, a wayward child, a health crisis, the loss of loved one, etc. All of these and more may lead us into a season of transition in life and we encounter these all through life... we are going through a season of transition right now in our current world situation and it can have an unsettling effect on your soul. So "How is it with your soul right now?"
- Seasons of overwhelming demands** - It's really easy to get lost in all the demands of life... often... all the time. So we work, work, work and work. We're so consumed and busy with work that we may not realize we're running on steam. Sure, we take days off and vacations... sometimes if it's possible or that opportunity is available to us, but a lot of us are still connected to

our work. We work so hard and so much, we may be in danger of losing our humanity; losing the image of God in us... and our soul can be damaged by such overwhelming pressure and demand. But that is only one of the more obvious overwhelming demands of life that presses in on us all that time that can have deep soul effects on us. There is also the demands put on us by others in our life. You may have overwhelming demands placed on you sometimes by family, friends, a boss or work partner, your church, your children, culture/society. And there are self-imposed demands we place on ourselves... demands to always be okay, always be upbeat, always be perfect, always perform just as those around us expect... and trying to live up to the demands of others can be exhausting and soul-draining. The overwhelming demands of a busy life or a life lived under the constant demands of others, whether real or self-posed can have a tremendous effect on your soul. And that is just two examples of these seasons of overwhelming demands. How is it with your soul today?

3. **Seasons of suffering, trial and heartache** - This is perhaps the one that may most closely relate to our song, "It Is Well With My Soul." The truth is we will all go through some semblance of this season of trial and suffering at some point in our life... we all face hardship, trial, heartache, suffering at some time in life. And Jesus even spoke to it in John 16:33, "*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*"

The truth is all of these seasons are inevitable in your life at some time. You will go through seasons of transition, seasons of overwhelming demand and even seasons of trial and heartache. And each of these can have a tremendous effect on your soul. So it's imperative that we reflect often on the question that Wesley opened meetings with: *How is it with your soul?* Or on the question implied in our song, "It Is Well With My Soul?" Is it? Is it well with your soul.

This really question steers you and I to analyze/evaluate our life and our habits as believers, and it may be more important than ever right now at this juncture in our lives given the days we are living in.

Four great questions to ask yourself in relation to the wellness of your soul:

1. **What are the things that I'm engaging in that bring my soul closer God?**
2. **What are the things that I'm doing that are putting a wedge between God and myself?**
3. **What are the things that I'm doing in my life that really make my soul shine brightly and flourish?**
4. **What are things I'm engaged in that are draining the life out of my soul?**

The question, "How is it with your soul?" or "Is it well with your soul?" can help make sure that we still find life in things that we may have taken for granted because of their routine-ness. Someone once told me that prayer is to our souls as breathing is to our bodies. Wesley's question helps me to make sure my soul is breathing. Maybe you could benefit from asking yourself, "How is it with my soul?" Or maybe you could help someone by asking how *their* soul is and then genuinely listen to their response. It's an important question that we should ask and answer frequently.

THE SOUL WELL – "How It May Be Well With Your Soul?"

READ: Psalm 112:1-8 **some suggest that this Psalm may be one that was some inspiration to Horatio Spafford in the penning of this great hymn of faith*

- Imagine yourself on a 747 jetliner, 35,000 feet in the air, and the word comes over the loud speaker from the pilot, "We are in trouble, and the aircraft is going down. Prepare yourself for a crash landing." You are sitting there with one and a half minutes to live. Could you sing the song that we are looking at this evening... **"It Is Well With My Soul?"**
- Or perhaps you are off by yourself somewhere and there is a severe pain in your chest and your breath leaves you. Death will be upon you in 90 seconds. What would you do? Would you be able to say, **"Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul?"**
- Or what about this one... someone slips up behind you in the service this evening and whispers in your ear, "You have an emergency telephone call." You leave the service and go to the phone. The voice on the other end tells you that your home is burning down at this very moment. Could you have that kind of peace that takes a deep breath and sighs... and then says, **"Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! It is well, it is well with my soul!"**
- Try this one, maybe when you get to work tomorrow morning the boss calls you in and says, "We are making some changes in the company and our plans no longer include your services. Here is your final paycheck." **"It is well with my soul!"**
- Or the doctor calls you and tells you that the tests he ran last week have the worst possible news. You have cancer. **"It is well with my soul!"**

We could give many more hypothetical situations that each of us could find ourselves in, but you get the picture without me saying any more. Let me ask you "Is it well with your soul"? Are you confident that everything is all right between you and the Creator of the universe?

Psalm 112:7 says, **"He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord."**

The psalmist is talking about a person whose faith is such that even when bad news comes, he could say, 'It is well with my soul'.

Each of us may experience any one of these evil tidings at any moment of the day. What is it that will cause us to have a fixed heart about the matter? To be able to say 'It is well?'

3 Ways You May Be Sure It Is Well With Your Soul:

- 1. Be certain of your salvation (Matthew 19:16-22) - READ: Matthew 19:16-22** The rich young ruler wanted to be sure of his salvation and he thought he had done everything necessary to secure and be certain of his salvation. But notice in verse 22 that he went away "sorrowful" ... in other words he went away saying and knowing that "it is not well with my soul." There is only one way to know that is well with your soul and that starts with Jesus and a personal relationship with him.

Some things that won't give you certainty of salvation because they can't save:

- (1) Being sincere**
- (2) Being good/moral**
- (3) Being religious**
- (4) Being knowledgeable**
- (5) Being wealthy**

Some important verses for being sure of your salvation:

- (1) **Ephesians 2:8-9**, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."*
- (2) **Romans 10:9-10**, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*
- (3) **John 5:24**, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."*

Notice that we are not talking about religious rhetoric. We are talking about an experience with the Lord Jesus Christ. A time of cleansing of our heart and life. A time when Christ came into your life and changed you. It's not just walking an aisle or signing a card. Some other songs says it... Have You Been To Jesus For That Cleansing Power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

2. **Bear the right kind of fruit (Matthew 7:15-23) – READ: Matthew 7:15-12** A true/genuine believer bears fruit. In Galatians 5 the Apostle Paul speaks of the fruit that should be present in the life of a believer/Christian. He calls it the fruit of the spirit in **Galatians 5:22-24**, *"²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."* And James, the half-brother of Jesus, spoke of the same idea in **James 2:14-20**, *"¹⁴ What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? ¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without ¹⁹ your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"* Our fruit or work doesn't save us but it is a verification of the genuineness of our faith... that we have been saved.
3. **Walk/live daily by faith (Hebrews 12:1-3) – 2 Corinthians 5:7** reminds us as believers of this truth when it states, *"For we walk by faith, not by sight."* The great faith chapter in Hebrews 11 gives us example after example of those who patterned this daily faith walk for us. We are to follow their example. But this we read these words in **Hebrews 12:1-3**, *"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."*