



March 15, 2026

This is My Story, This is My Song

It Is Well

Philippians 4:4–9 (ESV) 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

- During the night hours of November 22, 1873, the Ville Du Havre (Vill doo AHV-rah) sailed quietly over smooth seas. And the suddenly, passengers were jolted from their beds.
- The ship had collided with another ship in the middle of the ocean. It began to sink immediately.
- Anna Spafford clung to a piece of wreckage, nearly unconscious. Anna's 4 daughters, Maggie (11), Tanetta (9), Annie (5), and Bessie (2) were never found.
- Anna sent a cable back to her husband, Horatio: "*Saved Alone. What shall I do?*"
- Horatio got on the first ship he could to join his wife. On his way across the Atlantic, the captain of that ship knew Horatio's tragedy, and on one particularly cold December night,

he called Horatio aside and said, “I believe we are now passing over the place where the Ville Du Havre went down.

Most of us will never know that level of suffering. But the Apostle Paul did.

- If you make out a list of the most prominent sufferers in Bible, Paul has to be included.
- In Acts 9:15-16 when Saul is converted and becomes Paul, Jesus tells him “*how much he must suffer for the sake of my name*”
- Acts 14:22 - Paul is stoned and left for dead. He says to all those around him that it’s “*only through many tribulations we may enter into the kingdom*”
- Romans 8:35 (ESV) he speaks of ...*tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*
- 1 Corinthians 4:9-13 he writes of being weak, dishonored, in hunger and thirst, poorly dressed and homeless, persecuted and slandered.
- 2 Corinthians 4:8-9;6:4-5; 11:23-29; and 12:10 he tells of being persecuted, perplexed, struck down, afflicted, imprisoned, sleepless, beaten with lashes, beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked at sea not once...but three times...one of those times adrift at sea for a night and a day, in danger from rivers, from robbers, from his own people, from the Gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, at sea.
- He writes that living for Jesus has brought him toil and hardship.
- Jesus knew what he was talking about.
- How did Paul handle all this? How in the world do you keep going with a mission that you know by experience will bring you all this kind of pain?
- One of the places we can see how he did it, is in Philippians 4
- Specifically in vs 7 and vs 9: there is a concept Paul puts forward to comfort his readers: **The peace of God.**

What is the Peace of God?

- **It is an inner calm and composure.**
- Vs 11-12 he says “*I have learned the secret of being content in every situation.*” It means he is ***the same***, no matter the circumstance.
- There is a way to remain the same in your being, no matter what life is throwing at you in the moment.
- The secret is not in Paul or his ability to be able to endure hardship. This is not something you’re born with or your not.
- “I have *learned* the secret.” (vs 11) It was not natural for him. But he learned it.
- We can too. Here’s the secret:
- **Peace is not merely an absence, it is a presence.**
- *Peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but calm even in the midst of conflict.*
- Peace is a sensation of being absolutely protected and safe.
- Vs 7 says. *the peace of God will “guard” your hearts and minds.*
- The word “guard” means to completely surround and fortify a building or city, or a house, to protect it from invasion.

- If you have an army surrounding you, you can sleep, even in the middle of danger. That's the idea.
- Absence isn't the goal, presence is. Not just any presence, but the presence of God himself...
- In vs 9 Paul writes "*The God of peace will be with you.*"
- ***The Peace of God is a sense of God's protection that almost defies reason.***
- Mostly, it takes a great tragedy to experience how profoundly reassuring this peace is.
- Paul is the example: he's been beaten, stoned, flogged, shipwrecked, betrayed, there were murder plots against his life...but there he is.
- *I've found a way to be poised no matter what. All this disaster won't break me. I learned how. It wasn't natural. It won't be for you either. But you can learn it too.*

How do we learn the Peace of God?

Paul gives us the disciplines to practice to develop this kind of peace.

- Three things: By Thinking, By Thanking, By Loving. Just the first one:

1) Thinking

- vs 8-9: **8** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things...and the God of peace will be with you.
- The thoughts he's referring to are specific teachings of scripture.
- He says to "*logizomai*" about these things. "Think about these things."
- *logizomai* is an accounting term and means to "reconcile" or "to count up"
- Paul says, do that kind of spiritual math with the core doctrines of your faith. Count them up. Reason them out.
- This is kind of thinking that leads us to the peace of God.

Think about how counterintuitive this is.

- Most advice for peace is to try and forget your troubles. Think less about them.
- Paul tells us that God's peace comes in exactly the opposite way. **Not by thinking less, but by thinking more.**
- A storm comes in. Ok: my first task is to think! I recon. I count. I add everything up. I think true, lovely, commendable and excellent thoughts as the storm rages.
- Like: Is Jesus the Son of God? Did Jesus come to earth, die for me? Rise again? Ascend to heaven to take his place at the right hand of God? Did Jesus endure infinite suffering for me, so that someday he can embrace me and wipe away every tear from my eye?
- Those are the kind of thoughts I count up. There are innumerable thoughts like that on every page of scripture.
- And because they are true, I have all the comfort in the world that everything ultimately will be made right.

- If God made the unjust and cruel cross of Jesus right, then he can and will make everything right.
- And that helps me navigate my giant waves today.
- Christians: that's what Paul is calling you to do: Think big and high and broad and deep. Look over the span of history and realize who God is. What he has done. Who you are in Jesus. And where all of history is going because of Christ.
- Put your pain in perspective by remembering Christ's pain on your behalf. Remember his promises to you. Remember what he's accomplishing. Remember what he wants for you most.
- Think about the big picture, and as you do, you will be led to the peace of God himself.
- The peace of God comes *to us* when we take intentional time to think about what he's done *for us*.

Days later, Horatio Spafford floats over the spot where his 4 daughters were lost at sea.

- Horatio thought. His faith in Christ brought true and lovely and excellent and commendable thoughts.
- On some hotel stationary he had with him, he penned these words:

*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*

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come
Let this blest assurance control
That Christ (yes, He has) has regarded my helpless estate
And has shed His own blood for my soul*

*My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought (a thought)
My sin, not in part, but the whole (every bit, every bit, all of it)
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more (yes!)
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

*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.*

*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!*

*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
Even so, it is well with my soul!*

Was he not doing what Paul prescribes?

- He's thinking the implications of his faith through. He's reckoning. He's adding everything up. He saying to himself: This is the worst thing I could ever imagine. But even in this darkness, God is here.
- Even though I've been robbed of my very heart, God loves me. Even though I'm literally staring into the sea of death, God is still my life.
- I know Jesus gave his life so we could be God's. That means I'll see my girls again. It won't erase the pain, but it will turn the pain into something useful.

Refrain:

It is well (it is well)

With my soul (with my soul)

It is well, it is well with my soul

Sing up to Jesus, it is well!

It is well (it is well)

With my soul (with my soul)

It is well, it is well with my soul

- There's no way to write those kind of words, unless you've learned the secret of contentment and peace. Unless you know that the very presence of God is with you, guarding your heart and soul with all the forces at his disposal.
- *...the Peace of God will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus.*