

Peace Like a River

Horatio Spafford (1828-1888) was a wealthy Chicago lawyer with a thriving legal practice, a beautiful home, a wife, four daughters and a son. He was also a devout Christian and faithful student of the Scriptures. His circle of friends included Dwight L. Moody, Ira Sankey and various other well-known Christians of the day.

At the very height of his financial and professional success, Horatio and his wife Anna suffered the tragic loss of their young son. Shortly thereafter on October 8, 1871, the Great Chicago Fire destroyed almost every real estate investment that Spafford had.

In 1873, Spafford scheduled a boat trip to Europe in order to give his wife and daughters a much needed vacation and time to recover from the tragedy. He also went to join Moody and Sankey on an evangelistic campaign in England. Spafford sent his wife and daughters ahead of him while he remained in Chicago to take care of some unexpected last minute business. Several days later he received notice that his family's ship had encountered a collision. All four of his daughters drowned; only his wife had survived.

With a heavy heart, Spafford boarded a boat that would take him to his grieving Anna in England. It was on this trip that he penned those now famous words, *When sorrow like sea billows roll; it is well, it is well with my soul..*