

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

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Peace Like a River

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Peace Like a River

Abstract

"How can we walk through the 'valley of the shadow' when it feels like another trial or loss might be the one that finally breaks us?"

Posting about peace through suffering from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/peace-like-a-river/>

Keywords

In All Things, lectionary, peace, death, Psalm 23, grief

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Peace Like a River

 [inallthings.org /peace-like-a-river/](https://inallthings.org/peace-like-a-river/)

Erin Olson

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 23](#)

[1 Samuel 15:10-21](#)

[Ephesians 4:25-32](#)

“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...”

Just last week we sang this song at my brother-in-law’s funeral. He was forty-five years old at his time of death. He was in the prime of his life—the father of two middle schoolers. He was not supposed to die; he was supposed to live another 45 years with my sister, watching his children graduate from high school, get married, and have kids of their own. However, that was not how things went. My brother-in-law battled with a rare sarcoma facing surgeries, chemotherapy, and ultimately hospice for close to two years before succumbing to the cancer. He walked through the “valley of the shadow of death” and my sister, his kids, and many others could do nothing else but walk with him through it.

In Psalm 23: 1-4, David says, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me.” It is uncertain when David wrote this Psalm, but it seems to be something written by an older David one who has experienced many trials, but is now able to reflect on God’s goodness and mercy through all of them. This sounds like a David who has quiet confidence in the goodness of God as he reflects on his life. As he’s writing this, David is now able to see how even through the trials of his life, God his Shepherd was with him.

The song, “When Peace Like A River,” was written by [Horatio A. Spafford](#) after he and his wife lost their four daughters at sea during a boat collision and then sinking. Years later, Spafford and his wife traveled back out to sea and he’s said to have written this song as they were passing over the approximate area where his girls had died. I hope most of us never experience the grief Spafford did, but each of us is subject to our own trials and tribulations in this life whether it be a loved one lost too soon, a financial hardship, a broken relationship, or a mental illness. How can we sing and believe the words “it is well with my soul” at times when it feels anything but? How can we walk through the “valley of the shadow” when it feels like another trial or loss might be the one that finally breaks us?

It’s at times such as these that we must trust God as our all-knowing, all-loving Shepherd. We may not see where He’s leading us and maybe we can’t possibly understand how we can follow Him through the fiery trial in front of us, but he promises that He will comfort us, He will guide us, and He will be with us.

And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, shall keep your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7