

Greetings.

**'I call to remembrance my song in the night' (Psa. 77. 6).**

As you may well be aware, this is the last Monday in October.

I felt that I could not let the month pass without making at least some reference to one of the spiritual giants of the nineteenth century – a man who happened both to be born in, and to die in, the month of October. I refer to **Horatio Gates Spafford** (born: 20 October 1828; died: 16 October 1888).

The story is well known of the tragic sinking of the large French liner, *Ville du Havre*, halfway across the Atlantic Ocean, which (i) robbed Horatio and Anna Spafford of their four young daughters at one stroke: *'the sea, beneath whose midnight billows the brood we loved went down' [1]*, and (ii) which occasioned Mr Spafford's later writing the lyrics of the much-loved hymn, 'It is well with my soul'.

I do not intend to rehearse these events of 1873 here – but see below.

It is not so well known, that, five years after the drowning of their four girls, Horatio and Anna Spafford lost their beloved baby son (Horatio Goertner Spafford) to scarlet fever.

Little Horatio had been born into a then childless home, more-or-less exactly three years after the death of the Spafford's four daughters. His *first* name, Horatio, continued that of both his father and grandfather, and his *second* name, Goertner, was given him in memory of the young playmate of the four girls, who had gone down with them to a watery grave [2].

In later life, the Spafford's daughter, Bertha (born some 18 months after little Horatio), recorded:

'Among my treasures is a little cardboard box found in Father's desk after his death in Jerusalem. In it are some faded flowers bound with white ribbon and the words: "Flowers from little Horatio's funeral". He brought this with him to Jerusalem when so little was taken. No one knew how deep was the grief he and Mother shared ...

'After Horatio's death, Father wrote the hymn, "A Song in the Night" [3].

With that dark background in *your* mind, ponder these three stanzas of Mr Spafford's moving poem/hymn, together with the Scripture passage which he had in *his* mind when he wrote them:

**(i) Scripture**

**Psalms 42. 5-11 (The New King James Version)**

Why are you cast down, O my soul?  
And why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him  
For the help of His countenance.

O my God, my soul is cast down within me ...  
Deep calls unto deep at the noise of your waterfalls;  
All your waves and billows have gone over me.

The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime,  
And **in the night His song shall be with me—**  
A prayer to the God of my life ...

Why are you cast down, O my soul?  
And why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him,  
The help of my countenance and my God.

**A Song in the Night [4],**

*There's darkness all round in my earthly affairs,  
Wave following wave, tribulation and cares;  
My way is shut up on the left and the right;  
And, yet, I've a mind for a song in the night!*  
A song in the night, a song in the night,  
My heart, canst thou give Him a song in the night?

The way and the time I'm not certain about;  
Of this sure I am, that *He will bring me out*;  
And so, waiting not for fulfilment and sight,  
I'll discount [5] His promise with songs in the night.  
A song in the night, a song in the night,  
Right here, now, I'll give Him a song in the night!

*No incense which rises to God on our part,  
So grateful as songs from a pain-stricken heart;*  
So, sorrow itself shall be clad with delight,  
For *sorrow alone can give songs in the night*.  
A song in the night, a song in the night,  
Let all that is in me, give songs in the night!

[1] Horatio Spafford, 'As Silver is Tried', Waiting for the Morning, page 12.

[2] Bertha Spafford Vester, 'Our Jerusalem', pages 51-53.

[3] Bertha Spafford Vester, *ibid.*, page 54.

[4] Horatio Spafford, 'A Song in the Night', Waiting for the Morning, pages 30-31; copyrighted 1878.

[5] To us, this is an unusual use of the word 'discount'; it was probably used by Mr Spafford with the meaning, 'to take into account (something, such as a future event) in present calculations or planning' (*the Merriam-Webster Dictionary*).

[For further information about these incidents (and much more), see pages 1-6 and relevant footnotes of 'Hymn Stories: Number 2', the document attached to the Monday Musings for 10 August 2020. This document can be accessed directly at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/126>. I might, perhaps, add that Bertha Spafford Vester's 'Our Jerusalem' can be borrowed freely electronically at [https://archive.org/details/ourjerusalemamer0000vest.](https://archive.org/details/ourjerusalemamer0000vest/)]

For this week, I attach the usual 'Musings'.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

---

## (ii) Food for thought.

### **'Thy words were found, and I did eat them' (Jer. 15. 16).**

'A man can't be always defending the truth; there must be a time to feed on it'.

(C. S. Lewis, 'Reflections on the Psalms (Fount Paperback)', page 6.)

### **Isaac Watts and 'plain promises'.**

Isaac Watts died at the age of seventy-five. 'When he was almost worn out, and broken down by his infirmities, he said, in conversation with a friend, "I remember an aged minister used to observe, that 'the most learned and knowing Christians, when they come to die, have only the same plain promises of the Gospel for their support as the common and unlearned'; and so I find it. It is the plain promises of the Gospel that are my support; and, I bless God, they are plain promises, that do not require much labour and pains to understand them"'.  
(D. W. Clark, 'Death-bed Scenes', 1851, pages 219-220.)

### **Three things which God counts.**

(i) 'He counts the number of the stars' (Psa. 147. 4).

(ii) 'Does He not see my ways and count all my steps?' (Job. 31. 4).

(iii) 'All the hairs on your head have been counted' (Luke 12. 7).

### **'Where?'**

(i) 'Where are you?' (Gen. 3. 9).

(ii) 'Where is your brother?' (Gen. 4. 9).

(iii) 'Where is your wife?' (Gen. 18. 9).

(iv) 'Where is your faith?' (Luke 8. 25).

(v) 'Where is the good way?' (Jer. 6. 16).

(vi) 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews?' (Matt. 2. 2).

### **1 Samuel 25: Selfishness ... (i) Nabal, (ii) the rich fool and (iii) the 'Todder's Creed'.**

(i) 'Nabal answered, "... Shall **I** take **my** bread and **my** water and **my** meat that **I** have killed for **my** shearers and give it to men who come from **I** do not know where?" (1 Sam. 25. 11). [Abigail said of Nabal, 'as his name is, so is he. Nabal ('Fool') is his name, and folly is with him' (1 Sam. 25. 25).]

(ii) 'The rich man ... said, "**I** will do this: **I** will tear down **my** barns and build larger ones, and there **I** will store all **my** grain and **my** goods. And **I** will say to **my** soul, 'Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry'" But God said to him, "You fool! This night your soul is required of you". (Luke 12. 18-19).

(iii) 'If **I** want it, it's **mine**. If **I** give it to you, and change **my** mind later, it's **mine**. If **I** can take it away from you, it's **mine**. If **I** had it before, it's **mine**. If it's **mine**, it will never belong to anyone else, no matter what. If we are building something together; all the pieces are **mine**. If it looks just like **mine**, it is **mine**' (The 'Toddler's Creed', written by Elisa Morgan, president of Mothers of Preschoolers.)

### **1 Samuel 25: Ungodly anger suppressed ... Abigail, 'a cool hand on a hot head'.**

'Abigail makes two fundamental appeals. First, she urges David to refrain from shedding innocent blood and working salvation with his own hand (1 Sam. 25. 26). By doing so, he will avoid the grief and pangs of conscience that will come if he brings bloodguilt by his hand or seeks to save himself (1 Sam. 25. 31). Second, she reminds David that the Lord will fight for him, that David's life is "bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord your God" (1 Sam. 25. 29) ... Ungodly anger will only add iniquity to your injury'.

(Joe Rigney, 'Beware the Anger of Your Soul'; accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/beware-the-anger-of-your-soul>.)

'The rules for us could not be clearer. "Dearly beloved", Paul wrote to the Romans, "avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to (God's) wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12. 19). Vengeance is *God's* right, and His right *alone*. It is not for us to execute it. For us to take vengeance is to invade God's domain and usurp God's prerogative. What appalling presumption!

"Give place to (God's) wrath" is the flipside of what he says in Ephesians 4, where he pictures the devil as lurking around angry people, all set to pounce and exploit the opportunity which they have so kindly given him: 'let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil' (Eph 4. 26-27).

In Romans 12, Paul teaches us that to restrain our anger 'gives place' to God to act and execute vengeance if He will; in Ephesians 4, he teaches us that to retain our anger 'gives place', not to God, but to the devil!

Satan is just waiting for the opportunity to get his foot in the door – and, Paul warns us, uncontrolled anger opens the door wide for him.

('Personal notes on 1 Sam. 25. 31'.)

### **The actions of two Ethiopian eunuchs.**

(i) Up and out: The one Ethiopian eunuch (a servant of a king) raised a prophet out of the mire (Jer. 38. 6-13).

(ii) Down and in: The other Ethiopian eunuch (a servant of a queen) went down with a preacher into the water (Acts 8. 38).

### **Examples of the grace of the Lord Jesus.**

'Jesus touched lepers who were untouchable according to the law. He welcomed sinners who were despised. He blessed children when others tried to nudge them away. He expressed compassion for a woman taken in adultery, and He accepted the worship of a woman criticized for pouring perfume on His feet.

He touched the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf. He cast demons from the violent. During His final hours He comforted a criminal nailed to a cross beside Him. After His resurrection, He reassured a doubting disciple and re-established the one who had denied Him'.

(David Jeremiah, 'Where Do We Go from Here?', accessed at <https://www.faithgateway.com/a-political-prophecy-cancel-culture/#.YV6tM5rMLcs>.)

### **'The Saviour of the World' (John 4. 39-42).**

'The men of Sychar not only "came to Him", v. 30, and "believed on Him", v. 39, but "they besought Him that He would tarry with them", v. 40. How marked the contrast between these Samaritans and those of the Samaritan village who "did not receive him", Luke 9.52-53.

How blessed the men of Sychar were in return. Although as a general and temporary rule, the Lord and His apostles did not enter "into any city of the Samaritans" to preach, Matt. 10. 5, this particular city benefited from His presence for two whole days: "He abode there", John 4. 40.

The high watermark of the Lord's journey through Samaria comes in the very last words of the section; "we ... know that this is ... the Saviour of the world", v. 42. The woman at the well had

progressed in her appreciation of Jesus from “a Jew”, to “a prophet”, to “the Christ”, vv. 9, 19, 25-26, but the men of the city, with the advantage of two days of His own instruction, reached even higher and confessed Him as “the Saviour of the world” – that is, of the human race, the ‘world’ of men which God loved so much, John 3. 16. It was not to judge this world but to save it that He had been sent and that He had come, John 3. 17; 12. 47.

Although “salvation is of the Jews”, v. 22, it is by no means exclusively for the Jews and the faith of the men of Sychar embraced One whose saving ministry, though encompassing Israel, Acts 13. 23, is certainly not confined to it.

In company with the author of the Gospel, they saw and testified that He had been sent to be “the Saviour of the world”, 1 John 4. 14. Adequate provision has been made for the whole world, 1 John 2. 2; the salvation of God knows no national barriers and no racial discrimination, Acts 28. 28’.

(‘*Moments with the Master*’, Precious Seed Publications, page 57.)

### **Jesus ‘delivered’.**

(i) **By Judas** to the chief priests, out of greed: ‘One of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?’ (Matt. 26. 14-15).

(ii) **By the chief priests** to Pilate, out of envy (Matt. 27. 18): ‘When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death: and when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor’ (Matt. 27. 1-2).

(iii) **By Pilate** to be crucified, out of duress: ‘Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified’ (Matt. 27. 26).

But ultimately ...

(iv) **By God Himself** ‘for us all’, out of love: ‘He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?’ (Rom. 8. 32).

### **‘Jesus ... said, Father ... Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me’ (John 17. 1, 23).**

‘The Lord ceases to speak to His disciples; He looks beyond the cross, and empties His heart into the Father’s bosom about His disciples ... *You are as fit to be in the presence of God through the finished work of Christ as He is*’.

(J. N. Darby, ‘*Notes of a lecture on John 17*’, Helps in Things Concerning Himself, Volume 3, pages 194, 196).

### **Seven things celebrated by heavenly beings.**

(i) God’s creatorial achievement: ‘Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? ... when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?’ (Job 38. 4-7).

(ii) God’s faithfulness: ‘Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!’ (Psa. 89. 5).

(iii) God’s holiness: ‘Above Him stood the seraphim ... one called to another and said, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts”’ (Isa. 6. 2-3; cf. Rev. 4. 8).

(iv) God’s glory: ‘Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest”’ (Luke 2. 13-14).

(v) God’s wisdom: ‘Through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and authorities in the heavenly places’ (Eph. 3. 10).

(vi) The repentance of the sinner: ‘There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents’ (Luke 15. 10).

(vii) The worthiness of the Lamb: ‘The voice of many angels ... saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing!”’ (Rev. 5. 11-12).

‘Little did these angelic beings realise as they witnessed God’s power in creation and in fact sang together (Job 38. 7) that God had a secret hid in His heart, that He was erecting a stage upon which in our day He would introduce the church and display in it to these same angelic beings His very varied wisdom (Eph. 3. 10) ... Here is the master-piece of divine wisdom’.

(A. Leckie, ‘*Galatians to Philemon: What the Bible Teaches*’, page 134.)

### **‘Ye are no more strangers and foreigners’ (Eph. 2. 19).**

‘The “ye” undoubtedly refers to the Gentiles, who once knowing God had not glorified Him as God, but in the blindness of their minds and foolishness of their hearts had given themselves up to idolatry (Romans 1. 21-23). Having departed from God they went out into the far country of utter moral degradation.

‘But note the marvellous change in the heart of that elder brother, the erstwhile bigot, Saul of Tarsus! Listen to that Hebrew of the Hebrews, as he welcomes the prodigal son home: “But fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” ... “We both”, as members of the household of God, have the same access to the Father’s heart and home’.

(Ruth Paxson, ‘*The Wealth, Walk and Warfare of the Christian*’, pages 68-69.)

**'That I may know Him' (Phil. 3. 10).**

O Jesus, make Thyself to me,  
A living bright reality:  
More present to faith's vision keen,  
Than any outward object seen:  
More dear, more intimately rich,  
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie.

(Miss Charlotte Elliott – the authoress of the well-known hymn, 'Just as I am'.)

'The lines were for many years the private expression of her own daily prayers, and were so much a part of her own hidden life with her Saviour that they were rarely communicated by her to any one, and only to her most intimate friends'.

(J. Babbington, brother-in-law to Miss Elliott; quoted by John Julian, 'A Dictionary of Hymnology', page 839.)

**'Well doing' in 1 Peter.**

(i) 'The praise of them that do well' (1 Pet. 2. 14).

(ii) 'So is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men' (1 Pet. 2. 15).

(iii) 'If, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God' (1 Pet. 2. 20).

(iv) 'Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are, as long as you do well' (1 Pet. 3. 6).

(v) 'It is better ... that you suffer for well doing, than for evil doing' (1 Pet. 3. 17).

(vi) 'Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing' (1 Pet. 4. 19).

**'Now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials' (1 Pet. 1. 6 ESV).**

'Made Perfect Through Sufferings'.

'I kept for nearly a year the flask-shaped cocoon of an emperor moth. It is very peculiar in its construction. A narrow opening is left in the neck of the flask, through which the perfect insect forces its way, so that a forsaken cocoon is as entire as one still tenanted, no rupture of the interlacing fibres having taken place. The great disproportion between the means of egress and the size of the imprisoned insect makes one wonder how the exit is ever accomplished at all--and it never is without great labour and difficulty.

It is supposed that the pressure to which the moth's body is subjected in passing through such a narrow opening is a provision of nature for forcing the juices into the vessels of the wings, these being less developed at the period of emerging from the chrysalis than they are in other insects.

I happened to witness the first efforts of my prisoned moth to escape from its long confinement. During a whole forenoon, from time to time, I watched it patiently striving and struggling to get out. It never seemed able to get beyond a certain point, and at last my patience was exhausted. Very probably the confining fibres were drier and less elastic than if the cocoon had been left all winter on its native heather, as nature meant it to be.

At all events I thought I was wiser and more compassionate than its Maker, and I resolved to give it a helping hand. With the point of my scissors I snipped the confining threads to make the exit just a very little easier, and lo! immediately, and with perfect case, out crawled my moth dragging a huge swollen body and little shrivelled wings.

In vain I watched to see that marvellous process of expansion in which these silently and swiftly develop before one's eyes; and as I traced the exquisite spots and markings of divers colours which were all there in miniature, I longed to see these assume their due proportions and the creature to appear in all its perfect beauty, as it is, in truth, one of the loveliest of its kind.

But I looked in vain. My false tenderness had proved its ruin. It never was anything but a stunted abortion, crawling painfully through that brief life which it should have spent flying through the air on rainbow wings. I have thought of it often, often, when watching with pitiful eyes those who were struggling with sorrow, suffering, and distress; and I would fain cut short the discipline and give deliverance.

Short-sighted man! How knew I that one of these pangs or groans could be spared? The far-sighted, perfect love that seeks the perfection of its object does not weakly shrink from present, transient suffering. Our Father's love is too true to be weak. Because He loves His children, He chastises them that they may be partakers of His holiness.

With this glorious end in view, He spares not for their crying. Made perfect through sufferings ... the sons of God are trained up to obedience and brought to glory through much tribulation'.

(Quoted by Mrs Charles E. Cowman, 'Streams in the Desert', the devotional for June 23.)

**(iii) Go on, smile.**

***Spouse hunting:***

1. The poor fellow was in real trouble. Bill was in love with a girl but he didn't have any idea how to express it.

So he asked for advice from a neighbour who had been married for over thirty years.

'I'll gladly help you', the neighbour replied.

'When you meet the girl tonight', he advised, 'go up close and say softly, "Whenever I look into your face, time seems to stop".'

Bill mulled over the idea for the next few hours.

That evening, he met the girl as arranged.

Throwing caution to the winds, he drew closely to her and stammered out, 'I want you to know that *your face would stop the clock*'.

He remembered waking up on the pavement.

2. An elderly man moved into the local nursing home.

He soon became aware that one of the ladies there was constantly watching him.

After a few days of this, he approached her and asked, 'Ma'am, I was wondering why you are staring at me all the time?'

'Oh, am I? she replied. 'I'm sorry, but you look just like my third husband'.

'Fancy that', the man responded. 'Tell me, how many times have you been married?'

'*Twice*', she answered.

***Separately***, I liked one father's complaint: 'My teenage daughter thinks I'm far too nosy. At least, that's what she *keeps writing about me in her diary*'.