



# Seeking Solace: The Life and Legacy of Horatio G. Spafford

*Dr. Thomas E. Corts*

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Never had Horatio and Anna Spafford imagined that a family vacation to Europe would forever change their lives. In 1873, the ship *Ville du Havre* was nicknamed the “floating palace” —the finest, most luxurious steamer on the Atlantic. “Unsinkable” was the word used to describe her safety and sturdiness of construction. One week after departure from New York, unsuspecting passengers of the *Ville du Havre* were shuffled from their beds and flung into the dark Atlantic when their ship was dissected by another—the *Loch Earn*. Many lives were saved, but many were lost at sea, including the four daughters of Horatio and Anna. Heartbroken, Horatio put the ebb and flow of his emotions and faith to paper and penned the poem “It Is Well.” Later, Philip P. Bliss, a well-known author of hymns and gospel songs, composed a melody, and the result was the hymn “It Is Well with My Soul,” which has lent comfort to many grief-stricken souls. Too often the telling of the Horatio Spafford story ends with the writing of this hymn. Instead, Dr. Corts takes you to the end of Horatio and Anna’s lives. After the shipwreck, the grieving Spaffords conducted a relentless search for spiritual guidance that ultimately led to Anna’s declaration that she was a prophet of God. The years that followed were ones of spiritual and financial havoc for the Spaffords. What Dr. Corts’s research revealed was that the Spafford story is an example of the indomitable human spirit to survive when faced with personal calamity. More importantly, it is the story of the devastating consequences that can occur when sincere, well-meaning Christians abandon the Bible as their guidebook and seek answers elsewhere.

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