



Far Above Rubies

Peace On Earth

“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men” is the wonderful chorus that the angels sang to the shepherds in Luke 2:14. This is what God desires for us and yet, as we consider the year that has just passed, it is hard to imagine that there could ever be peace on earth. We live in a world bound by fear of economic collapse, disease, crime and war! We have watched the rise of radical, violent extremists and other terrorist organisations, and have been horrified as we have seen the persecution, and indeed the martyrdom, of many Christians and other minorities across the world. Living in Northern Ireland we have also known times of violence, but experience has shown us that the absence of conflict does not necessarily mean that we have peace. Peace doesn't come from Global Summits, envoys, ceasefires and peace initiatives – it comes from having peace with God. As the saying goes

“No God, no peace. Know God, know peace!”

The most basic need in the world today is **peace with God**. I remember, before I was saved, waking up at night in a cold sweat with a fear that I might die and go to hell. I realise now that it was the Holy Spirit convicting me of my sin and prompting me to get right with God. At that time I went to church, sang in the choir, read the Bible and prayed regularly, but I was still living a sinful lifestyle and knew that I needed to be saved. Even though I believed there was a God, I knew it wasn't enough, as the Bible tells us *“even the demons believe – and tremble!”* (James 2:19). I only found real peace and experienced the love of God when I repented and accepted Jesus as Saviour and Lord of my life. In Jeremiah 29:11 we read *“For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”* I remember an occasion at the Christian Union meeting in Castle Court, when I asked our guest speaker, who was a missionary in Afghanistan, if she feared for her life when she was working out there. I will never forget her reply *“The safest place to be is in the will of God.”* God has great plans for us but we must work with Him and be obedient to His word.

The song of the angels at Jesus' birth not only heralded peace with God, but also spoke of **peace with others** – our families, friends, those we come in contact with and even our enemies! Now, as I'm sure you know, peace with others is not as easy as it may sound. A friend of mine once had a fridge magnet which said *"If mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy!"* and this is so true. When there is friction in the home it rubs off on everyone! Now I know children can be noisy and messy, but I have been shocked by the amount of yelling and bickering that goes on in some Christian homes, and it's not just from the children. You can tell that there is no discipline or boundaries, and so there is a free-for-all! In Ephesians 6:1- 4 Paul gives these instructions:

"Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honour your father and mother.... that it may be well with youFathers do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." If we are to have peace in our families we all need to work at it.

I'm sure you'll agree that to live peaceably with those outside of your immediate family may require a little more effort. Do you ever get more than a little steamed up when someone jumps the queue in front of you in the supermarket or your neighbours play their music too loud, so you go in all guns blazing? Now I know we shouldn't be pushovers, but there are times when a quiet word is all that is needed. In Romans 12:18 Paul writes *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."*

I find one of the hardest things in life is to be at **peace with yourself** and if you are not at peace with yourself then you won't enjoy your life. We can get into the habit of complaining about everything and focussing on our faults. How many of us ladies are not too happy about our appearance? Too fat, too thin, too short, too tall, nose too big, too many wrinkles – the list goes on. Now there may be some steps we can take to make us feel better about our appearance, like losing a few pounds (I am speaking to myself), but we need to remind ourselves that God created us in His image and that we are *"fearfully and wonderfully made"* (Psalm 139:14). We are unique! There are times, of course, when it is only natural that we should lose our peace. Times when we have found ourselves in a place or situation that isn't honouring to God, or have offended someone and we lose our peace. It's then that we need to repent and get back on track in obedience to His Word. If we want peace to rule in our lives then we must let God rule in our lives.

"And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds though Christ Jesus."(Phil 4:7). **Shalom!**

