



KAHALA

ALDGATE

**When peace like a river attended my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my
soul.**

Horatio Gates Spafford, a prominent American lawyer and Presbyterian church elder, penned this hymn following a family tragedy in which his four daughters died aboard the S.S. *Ville du Havre* on a transatlantic voyage.

'Wow' I hear you say, 'I could never do that'. I would be too devastated... I understand. Later in life Spafford lost a son to Scarlet Fever and also suffered severe financial loss. Yet he never lost his peace. In fact, according to Wikipedia, in August 1881, Horatio and his wife, Anna, left the presbyterian church they had loved and helped to build, to begin a community in Jerusalem where they gained the trust of local Muslims, Jews and Christians. Not too surprisingly, their new sect was dubbed 'The Overcomers' by the American press.

Was Horatio Gates Spafford unique, a one off, or can we too experience that kind of peace. And if so...how? How do we gain that *peace that surpasses all understanding* (Philippians 4:7)? Is it really possible?

Well if the bible says we can have it, we must be able to. Let me share my own personal experience of the last five years with you. On October 9th 2015 (our daughter's birthday) my husband of 22 years died suddenly after contracting an infection during an operation that was supposed to give him a better quality of life.

I was devastated as were our children. However, as my youngest daughter and I climbed into bed exhausted that first night, she said something to me, which gave me a new understanding of God and how He works. She said;

Mum, remember God does not have a body, so He comes to you through people.

From that moment on, I saw God in every phone call, every card, every visitor, every flower, I saw Him through my children, my neighbours etc. etc.. God was everywhere and bringing great comfort and peace with Him. I had real peace in my heart. Did this mean that I didn't cry every day for months? No...I cried a lot! Did this mean I didn't miss my husband? No.. I miss him a lot. Did this mean I didn't grieve? No... I certainly grieved. What it did mean though, was that amongst all the sadness, was real peace. The sure and certain knowledge that God had neither

left nor forsaken me (Hebrews 13:15), and he never would. No matter what was whirling around inside me, I could see Him in the kindness of others and I KNEW everything would eventually be OK... really OK.

Also at that time, this part of Philippians 4 became a 'How To' for me:

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you

In my experience, there is something in every situation that is praiseworthy, and lovely, if we train ourselves to look for it.

Dead Autumn leaves are a sign that Spring is coming. Through the death of my husband I saw the goodness and kindness and love of people and I learned how precious today is. When I was financially broke, I learned the value of thriftiness and learned to be creative in my cooking. When the cafe is lacking customers, I see the value in having time to chat to those who do come in. Looking at what is good and keeping a heart of thanksgiving (and yes I do know how hard this is) really does bring peace..real deep peace.

Do I manage this EVERY single day?? No of course not, and I am fairly convinced that Horatio Gates Spafford had his tough days too. Goodness knows King David did!

For me though, peace is not about feeling happy and relaxed every minute of every day. Peace is that deep down certainty that in the end all will be well. That sure belief that, no matter how dark things seem, Jesus is still the Light of the World, the Holy Spirit is still the healer and counsellor of our souls, and God the Father is still the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He never slumbers nor sleeps, (Psalm 121:4)

God is always in control and He reigns victorious. So in the midst of all the turmoil....stop....take a breath... and cast your burdens on to Him (Psalm 55:22) who is able.

This Advent why not choose peace for yourself. It's a free gift from God and available to everyone no matter who and no matter what...that includes you!