

## 'Precious Stones'



Several years ago, I read that a flawless 100 carat diamond was sold for £14.8 million at Sotheby's Auction House in New York. The 'gem' (originally mined by De Beers in South Africa) was snapped up by an anonymous buyer after only 3 minutes bidding. The diamond had taken more than a year to cut, polish and perfect and was described as a 'definition of perfection' – the colour being whiter than white and free of any internal imperfections.

There are many verses in the Bible that refer to precious stones. To 'know God's wisdom' in situations and decisions is described as more profitable than silver ... yields better return than gold ... is more precious than rubies, and nothing we desire can compare with wisdom. (Read Proverbs 3:13-15) It is not surprising – that Jesus' brother James says "If any of you lack wisdom, he should ask God ... and it will be given to him." (James 1:5)

The diamond 'cutting process' takes a rough diamond and changes it into a shaped and beautiful gem. In a similar way – God takes people with sinful, broken, and imperfect lives and changes them into 'precious living stones' – people who have been shaped by His Word and refined by His power and love at work through them. Job endured great suffering, trials, and loss - but through it all - he declared of the Lord, "He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10) God takes us through the refining fire circumstances of life; because He uses everything we go through to strengthen our faith and trust in Him. No experience is wasted in God's plan for our lives.

The apostle Peter wrote "... you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour ..." (1 Peter 1:6-7) The Bible tells us – God is the author and perfecter of our faith. Many diamonds do not reach the consumer market because they are too flawed. In contrast, we are never too flawed for God to choose us, change us - and use us.

The apostle Paul used to persecute the Church before Jesus changed him – and called him to be a preacher of the gospel. As we allow Jesus to shape and hone us - we will stand before Him as radiant, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish – made holy and blameless. As disciples of Jesus, we are God's children - which is the most treasured and valuable thing in life that we can be. The Bible says: "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1)

*Jim Collins*