

# The Path to Peace

*Your Spiritual Roadmap to  
Relief, Release and Rest  
Here and Hereafter*

By Rev. Joseph Kostelnik, Ph.D.

*The Path to Peace*

**The Path to Peace**

*Your Spiritual Roadmap to  
Relief, Release and Rest  
Here and Hereafter*

Copyright ©2006 by Gospel Truth Ministries.  
Cover Photo by David R. Foster;  
Used with Permission.

All Rights Reserved.

ISBN: 1-59872-688-9

Printed in the United States of America.

**Prophetic Voice Publications**

<http://www.gtm.org/pvp/>

Gospel Truth Ministries  
P.O. Box 1885  
Cincinnati, OH 45201-1885  
USA

<http://www.gtm.org/>



---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Number Three	5
Change Your Mind	7
Change Your Heart	19
Change Your Past	27
Change Your Present	35
Change Your Future	61
Change Your World	67
The Path to Peace	73

*The Path to Peace*

## ***The Number Three***

“**A**nd there are three that bear witness in *Earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one*” (I John 5:8).

Three is an important number. We worship a God Who has revealed Himself as One God in Three Divine Persons. Jonah was three days and nights in the fish’s belly. King Solomon reminds us that a three-fold cord is not soon broken. Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day. Peter, James and John were Christ’s three intimate companions during His earthly ministry. The Master guaranteed tremendous results in prayer where two or *three* believers gathered together in His Name.

In this book we are going to examine a three-point sermon the apostle Peter preached as recorded in the Book of Acts, chapter *three*. The truth in that inspired utterance will have a profoundly important effect upon your life, your

## *The Path to Peace*

experience and the world in which you live. I am not overstating the case when I promise you a new life completely as a result of reading and acting upon the truths of God's Word which I will share in the following pages.

Are you tired of being afraid?

Do you long for complete healing from the many scars in your soul placed there as a result of living in a fallen world?

Are you seeking a future much different from your past and present?

We're going to find God's solution to your problems, His answers to your questions and His healing for your hurts. God really can move your mountains, bear your burdens and lift the load of care from off of your shoulders.

In the following pages of this book, we're going to listen to words spoken over 2,000 years ago which are as fresh today as if they just flowed from the mouth of God.

I'm praying and trusting God that this book will become a spiritual roadmap for you, leading you from where you are presently, to release, relief and rest both here and hereafter.

*Joseph Kostelnik, Ph.D.*  
*(White Oak) Cincinnati, Ohio*  
*November, 2006*

## ***Change Your Mind***

“**R***epent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19a).*

My friend was sitting in the room of an elderly, senile patient at a retirement home, fulfilling part of his seminary assignment of “supervised ministry.” Gingerly, he endeavored to shift the conversation to the subject of spiritual matters. He inquired, “*So, excuse me, Ma’am, but do you know Jesus?*” She thought for a moment and then replied with a twinkle in her eye, “*Why, yes; he’s down the hall, third door on the left!*”

In this chapter, we’re going to discuss what it means to really *know* Jesus Christ. In order to do that, we need to examine a very important spiritual concept.

It’s unfortunate the connotations some words seem to acquire with the passage of time. Repentance is one of them. Normally the word

conjures up images of long sleeves, long hair and long faces! In actual fact the word simply means to change one's mind; nothing more, nothing less. But what a powerful word!

The first point in Peter's message involves a change of mind and heart leading to a change in one's past. How many of us long for *that!* How we long for an opportunity to turn back the clock on our lives, to reverse the curse, as it were, to undo some of the damage done by unwise or ill-timed choices, words, attitudes or actions. But how to accomplish this?

When the apostle made this solemn charge, he was speaking to a specific group of persons regarding a specific Subject about which they needed to change their minds. Of course, he was exhorting his listeners—unbelieving Jews—to do an about face regarding the Person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, Whom they had had a hand in having crucified by the Roman authorities of the day. Peter's word is given in much the same way a commanding officer might address the troops under his authority: "*Change your minds, right now!*"

When it comes to receiving God's help and grace in this life, there are some things He does and there are others that we must do. This is one of them. I believe it was Einstein who said,

## *Change Your Mind*

*“One definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.”*

One world class minister has said, *“If you want something you’ve never had, you’ve got to do something you’ve never done.”*

That cuts to the heart of the issue, doesn’t it? It is interesting that although Peter’s command relates to an immediate change of mind regarding one attitude (a turning from unbelief toward, to faith in, Christ), elsewhere in the Bible the original Greek carries with it the idea, *“Repent at once and keep on repenting.”* In other words, in order to find the answers, solutions, healing and deliverance we so desperately need in this life, we need to be humble enough to adopt an *attitude* of being teachable. We begin our new life with one great act of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, but we must be prepared to enter into a life style of continually changing our minds as new light from God’s Word regularly pierces our spiritual darkness. In theological jargon this is called the process of *sanctification*.

### **Sanctifying the Saints**

I remember talking with a Christian psychiatrist

## *The Path to Peace*

about the practice of counseling believers. He said in his experience it simply amounted to finding out where Satan's lies had obscured the Truth in his client's life and then beginning the process of sanctification.

What do *you* need to change your mind about?

For some of us, it's a matter of learning to lean on God's everlasting arms rather than trusting in our own natural inclinations and desires in any given situation.

Generally, after we become believers, we will begin a continual process of having our minds renewed by God's Word. This is just one of many reasons it is *absolutely essential* that we make it a spiritual habit to expose ourselves to God's wonderful Word through reading, studying, meditating and then *acting* on its principles in the varying circumstances of life. I have made it a habit to read anywhere from 11 to 33 chapters of the Bible on a daily basis for the past 32 years and can personally testify to the benefit of this practice. In God's Light we see Light and are thereby enabled to avoid the myriad of pitfalls placed in our way by the enemy of our souls.

Another area of crucial importance in developing our new lives is finding and being

## *Change Your Mind*

faithful to a local fellowship of believers where the Word of God is preached and expounded, the Spirit of God manifests His gifts, the sacraments are administered and the fellowship of other believers is made available.

We were “created for connection” with others by God and the input we receive from them will either foster our new life or pull us away from it and back into the morass of satanic deception from which the Spirit of God has rescued us. How many believers have found their lives wrecked and ruined by following ungodly counsel in the areas of marriage, child-rearing, or occupation?

### **Money Matters**

I can't think of an area in our Christian lives where this is more evident than in our handling of financial affairs. There is a radical difference in this world's wisdom along this line compared to the Word's.

Just recently, I had an impression to sow a significant financial seed from our ministry into another ministry's upcoming mission project. At the time, our church account was just “even.” We were still praising God for a miraculous financial deliverance seven months previously

(see my book, *How to Get Rich, Quick!*).

While not experiencing an overflow, things were current. I knew if I planted that seed, we would have no reserves at all. I have had to *repent* or change my mind about financial matters during a number of occasions since I have become a believer. As one writer has put it, the world's advice is, "*Get all you can, can all you get and get on the can!*" The Word's way is, "*Give and it shall be given*" (Luke 6:38).

Four days after I wrote the missions contribution check, a family in our church sowed an offering to our ministry *five times* larger than the gift we had given! The word works...*when we work it*. Often, that means we will have to change our minds—or repent—before we can reap the benefits of obedience.

## **Jesus Christ**

Of course as we have mentioned, in context, Peter's words to his listeners concerned repenting, or a changing of mind, regarding a specific matter: their attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Not much has changed in the past 2,000 years. People today still have to change their minds about just Who Jesus Christ is before they can relate to Him in the way He desires and

## *Change Your Mind*

in the manner they desperately need to.

Who is Jesus Christ to *you*?

For many, He is simply a figure from the past, much like George Washington or Napoleon. To others a: teacher, example, avatar, miracle-worker, moralizer or philosopher.

What we truly believe about the Person and work of Jesus Christ makes all the difference in our experience of time as well as eternity. We dare not be wrong in our assumptions in this matter. Make no mistake, Jesus Christ was and is: a miracle-worker, teacher, moral influence and philosopher. But He is infinitely more than these things. He is also God in the flesh, the world's Savior and *yours*...if you will only believe and receive.

Regardless of the nonsense being propagated by unbelieving persons through fictional books and films today, the clear record of the scriptures and history reveal the truth about Jesus Christ. He fulfilled over 300 prophecies from the Old Testament, many of them written hundreds and thousands of years before His advent into the bloodstream of humanity. Despite the often ridiculous assertions of people without faith, He was and is the fulfillment of God's prophetic plan for mankind. Honestly, could *anyone* really arrange the particulars of his own birth (city,

nation, etc.) or, for that matter, his genealogy in order to further a hoax?! Yet this is exactly what some “researchers” today are asking us to believe.

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen once wrote of a Jewish scholar who had become a Christian and who had reported that 456 Old Testament prophecies were believed to foretell the coming of the Messiah at the time of Christ’s birth. Suppose the chance of any one prophecy being fulfilled by accident was one in a hundred. If two were fulfilled accidentally, the chances would be one in a thousand, if three, one in 10,000 and so on.

What would the chances be of all 456 prophecies being fulfilled at the precise moment in place and time? One would have to take a pencil and write the numeral 1 and draw a line under it. Beneath the line one would have to write 84...followed by 126 zeros. The “chances” of all of the prophecies regarding Christ being fulfilled would run into the millions & millions, trillions and trillions!

Now what about *you*?

To paraphrase the scripture, “*What think ye of Christ, whose Son is He?*” Your honest answer will determine your experience in life, here and hereafter. Kindly take a few moments

to consider the following facts.

## **Sin & Salvation**

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that we must all be born again. That is, we are all dead, spiritually, and must be brought to life by the Power of God.

*"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).*

The word sin means a transgression (breaking) of the Law (I Jn. 3:4). There are two laws spoken of in the Bible. One is the revealed Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. The other is the intuitive knowledge of God man derives from the created world order and his own conscience (Rom. 1:18-32; 2:11-16). To transgress either of these Laws of God places us under the penalty of the broken Law, death. It must be pointed out that death in the Bible does not mean extinction of being, but, rather, *separation*. For instance, physical death is the separation of the spirit of man from his body (Ja. 2:26).

Spiritual death, then, is the separation of man's spirit from relationship with God due to sin. This is the condition into which we are all

born.

## **God's Gift**

Man is unable to save himself. But God, in His grace, sent His own Son, the Sinless One, the Lord Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty of man's sin. This salvation is a free gift. We cannot earn it. All we have earned is the wages of our sin: death, eternal separation from God (Rev. 20:11-15). We must either pay this penalty ourselves, or accept God's Divinely appointed Substitute: the physical death of His Sinless Son on our behalf (Lev. 17:11; I Pet. 2:24).

This was the message of the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament sacrificial system. It declared the coming of the Messiah Who would shed His sinless Blood in voluntary offering to God as a Divine Substitute to our eternal spiritual death penalty.

If we repent of (turn from) our sin and by faith surrender our wills to the Sinless One, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who died in our place, we are freed from the penalty of our sins and become children of God as His Spirit comes into our hearts.

Here is a prayer you may pray to establish

## *Change Your Mind*

this relationship with the Heavenly Father:

*"Dear God, I confess that I have sinned. But I believe that you sent Jesus to the Earth. I believe that He lived a sinless life. I believe that He died in my place. I believe He shed His Blood to forgive my sin and I believe that He was buried and raised from the dead in order that I may have Eternal Life. Lord Jesus, I surrender my heart and my will to you. Come into my heart, come into my life and make me the kind of person you want me to be. By your grace, I'll live for you, all the days of my life. Thank you, Jesus, for coming into my heart. Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul."*

If you prayed that prayer in faith, you are saved! I would be happy to send you my little book, ***"Your New Life,"*** to help you grow in your new-found faith, if you request it.

*The Path to Peace*

## ***Change Your Heart***

**“*R*epent ye therefore, and **be converted**, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).**

Many years ago I was preaching a crusade in the city of Cairns, Queensland, Australia. It was quite a meeting for a number of reasons, not the least of which was that it was held in a building known for being a night club and dance hall. The owner, reputed to have ties of some kind to organized crime, had graciously donated the use of it for religious services. She, too, received a touch from God by the end of the week. An elderly woman—stone blind—in one eye with the other going blind, was perfectly healed as was a little child whose one short leg grew out over an inch in length before the hundreds of people watching. Uncommon miracles took place. During one service I remarked that the Spirit of the Lord was unusually present in one

particular area of the room near the platform. Folks who gathered and stood there received healing without my praying for them. One young lady was freed from a long-standing cigarette habit by just walking over to that spot. She and her friend (who were both unbelievers at the time) experimented. As she stood on the anointed spot, *the bangs on her forehead stood up*. As she moved away to the side, her hair returned to her forehead.

One evening I preached about the difference between believing in Jesus as Savior and actually receiving Him as *Lord*. I emphasized the fact that nowhere in the scriptures are we instructed to “believe on the Savior, Jesus Christ” in order to be saved. In each and every instance, we are admonished to make Jesus *Lord* of our lives, not just Savior. I pressed the point that real salvation involves not only a change of belief or mind, but a surrender of the will or *heart*. Australians could easily relate to the concept of *lordship* since the nation owes its existence to England where such titles are still in evidence among the populace even today. I then closed my remarks and gave the invitation for my listeners to return to God by expressing heart faith in Jesus, receiving Him as personal Savior and *Lord*. To my utter astonishment, not only did a great

## *Change Your Heart*

number of those in the congregation come forward, so did 17 of the altar workers!

What had happened?

Apparently, they had realized the incompleteness of their spiritual experience.

For example, most Americans *believe* George Washington was our first president; they *really* believe it. But that belief has no lasting effect upon the conduct of their lives. In the same way, many in this world *believe*—honestly and sincerely—that Jesus Christ is God’s Son and the Savior of the world, and that He died for *them*, but that faith doesn’t necessarily have any lasting effect upon their words or works.

In my own case, I *believed* the gospel I heard Billy Graham preach on television and prayed with him the “prayer of salvation.” I actually received Eternal Life, however, nine months later in the office of an evangelical pastor when I *surrendered my will* to Jesus, receiving Him as *Lord*.

Can you begin to understand now why the Lord Jesus said the Way to Life was *narrow*, with *few* finding it? According to the Master, fully one half of those who profess to belong to Him are deceived about their soul’s salvation. He spoke of: good seed and bad, good fish and bad, wheat and tares, wise and foolish virgins

and profitable and unprofitable servants. According to the Master, we shall not know—fully and finally—the spiritual condition of many around us in the visible “church” of organized Christianity until He returns to separate the “sheep” from the “goats.” The leader of one large Christian organization in America remarked sometime ago that he estimated at least 50% of his denomination’s membership were yet unsaved, possessing only a formal and nominal relationship to Christ and His church.

The good news is we don’t have to be confused or deceived about our *own* relationship to the Lord. We can *know*.

### **Turn Back**

Not only did Peter exhort his audience to repent or change their minds about the Person and work of Jesus Christ, he admonished them to “be converted.” The Greek word is very illuminating. It means to “turn back.” It’s unfortunate that the King James version appears to teach that this conversion is something that happens *to* the individual who chooses to repent. In actual fact, it is an active verb, describing something a person *does*. The apostle is in effect saying, “*Change your minds and turn yourselves*

## *Change Your Heart*

*back at once!*” The prophet Isaiah would have agreed with him wholeheartedly. Speaking of wayward humanity, he writes:

*“All we like sheep have gone astray; **we have turned every one to his own way; and Yahweh hath laid on him the iniquity of us all**” (Is. 53:6).*

This is the condition of the entire human race and the essence of sin and wrongdoing. We have all chosen to do *our* thing rather than God’s. The result is spiritual darkness rather than light. The unfortunate aspect of this is we often blame our condition on the very God Who wants to save us! We whine and complain—especially when trouble comes—*“Where is God now?!”* The sad truth is, He hasn’t gone anywhere; *we* have!

### **Alexander**

Perhaps you are familiar with the story of Alexander the Great and his war horse, Bucephalus. If the legend has any credibility, the stallion colt was unable to be gentled and was destined to be put down. Young Alexander appealed to the animal’s handlers to allow him to try and subdue the mighty equine. Having carefully studied the animal and its reactions to its trainers, the young Greek king wisely

observed that the horse was afraid of his own shadow. He simply *turned the horse around* to face the sun and easily controlled the stallion thought to be impossible to train. He and his horse went on to conquer the known world providing, among other things, the language the New Testament would later utilize to conquer the spiritual world.

The lesson is quite simple.

If you are in spiritual darkness, *turn around*.

God has not gone anywhere. In actual fact, in Him we “live and move and exist,” since all of us are His “offspring” (Acts 17:28).

This verse is perplexing and distasteful to some irate and brash “Bible-thumpers” in the organized church. To hear some of them preach, God loves the church but hates the world. The very opposite is the truth. When Paul spoke the words I just quoted to the unbelieving Greeks in Athens he included *himself*—a converted Jew—*with them*, in his declaration. In short, all human persons are *children of God*, having been created in His image and after His likeness. The difference between believers and unbelievers is simply that some of us are still *Prodigals* who have yet to *return* to our Father’s House. May God help us to repent of our judgmental, critical and often offensive attitudes toward those whom

## *Change Your Heart*

we consider *sinner*s, and simply begin accepting them where they are as Paul did. Then we can go on to share with them the gospel truth which will give them the Eternal Life which we have received.

### **Make It Personal**

Now what about *you*?

Have you experienced a change of mind only, or have you really followed through with a change of *heart* and *will*?

The spiritual situation in which humanity finds itself has not changed in 2,000 years since the early church preached the good news as recorded in the Book of Acts. To really *know* God in depth requires a meeting with God of the *whole* person, including that most sensitive citadel of all: the human *will*.

*“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and **turned unto the Lord**” (Acts 11:21).*

The very same Greek verb Peter used in the verse with which we began this chapter occurs here. Again, the Holy Spirit specifies that subtle difference between *head* salvation and *heart* surrender. In other words, it is unfortunately possible to *believe* the gospel without subsequently *turning back* to the Lord.

*The Path to Peace*

However, for the sincere soul who wholeheartedly throws himself upon the mercy and grace of a loving God, he finds Light where once was darkness and all things become new.

## ***Change Your Past***

“**T**hat your sins may be **blotted out**” (Acts 3:19).

It was Halloween night. I had just turned off the car. We sat in the moonlight behind her parent’s garage. Suddenly, she burst into tears, exclaiming, “*My life is a mess; I’ve ruined it. I’ve ruined everything!*”

I had been sharing the gospel intermittently with the young lady for over three months. It seemed the seed had not taken root at all. She appeared no closer to making Jesus Christ the Lord of her life than when I had first briefly shared my testimony of faith with her early in the summer. Two weeks before this incident, I had prayed in the quiet of my bedroom, “*God, I believe she could be the one. I could become serious about her, but not if she refuses to become a believer. Please Lord, if she is your will for me, do something soon before I have to break off the relationship.*”

As is often the case, the Word was working all along, without my even being aware of it. She was fast losing interest in the show business career she had embarked upon, as well as the life style that went with it. All of my witnessing and sharing of the Word as well as her growing disinterest in the “ways of the world” had combined to culminate in this moment of Truth. Quietly I offered, “*Would you like a whole new start in life? Would you like the past completely erased?*” She replied, “*Oh yes, I’d give anything in the world for that!*” She then followed me in the “sinner’s prayer” and received Eternal Life. She shared with me that it was as if she lived the next few weeks in a field of flowers; all things had become new and brightly beautiful.

If God permits, she and I will celebrate 30 years of marriage next year.

### **The Past Can Be Past**

How many of us would love to adapt that familiar scriptural phrase to our past life’s circumstances: “*And it came to pass...*”

Yet it seems that our past is determined to *stay*. Can you imagine the hope that sprang up in the heart of the Jews to whom Peter preached

## *Change Your Past*

when he offered them a blank slate rather than a stubborn spiritual debt that refused to be paid, despite the repeated lashings of their awakened consciences?

Who among us has not longed for the day when we could recover the lost innocence of our youth? And yet our faults, failures and foibles continue to follow us through life with the tenacity of a Bulldog. It seems there is no escape from “*what might have been,*” nor from “*what ought not to have been.*” Sins of omission and commission dog our steps relentlessly driving us to drink, despair and worse.

A great part of the glorious good news is our past can really be *past*. When Peter preached this sermon his listeners understood him to mean their past could be: wiped, blotted and smeared out or obliterated. Who among us wouldn't want *that*? The verb is in the passive voice, meaning God is the One Who does the work. It is also in the aorist tense, having us to understand this wonderful work will take place in a moment. This beautiful Greek verb is also used by the apostle Paul in Colossians 2:14:

*“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his*

*cross.”*

### **What Can Wash Away My Sin?**

Paul’s readers as well as Peter’s listeners would have understood him to mean the entire Mosaic Law had been wiped out and set aside. In Bible days, it was customary for a criminal to have the law(s) he had broken written down and the inscription then nailed above his head on the cross on which he was impaled. Often, the particular offense was also described in the writing.

Through the Cross of Christ, the Blood of Jesus has paid the sin debt of all humanity for all time (Lev. 17:11; I Pt. 2:24; Rev. 1:5). As amazing as it might sound to our fallen spiritual hearing, our loving God is no longer holding the sins of lost humanity against it:

*“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (II Cor. 5:19).*

When the apostle speaks of God “reconciling the world to himself,” he means just that. It is *we* who needed to be reconciled to the Father, not vice versa. God has always been watching, waiting and willing to receive us the very

moment we “come to ourselves” and choose to return to Him in humility and repentance (see the story of the *Prodigal Son* in Luke’s gospel, chapter 15).

This is why the preaching of the message of redemption is called the “gospel” or “good news.” It is not the declaration of an angry God’s plans, purposes and provisions for eternal torment of those made in His image and after His likeness, but just the opposite. It is the declaration to lost humanity that our sins *have already been forgiven* in the Cross of Christ and we must simply *believe, receive and act upon* this gospel truth with heart-felt repentance and faith. Perhaps we should remind ourselves of just *why* hell was created in the first place:

*“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for **the devil and his angels**” (Mt. 25:41).*

It is wonderfully encouraging to hear the Father speak to the Elder Son in Christ’s parable regarding his younger brother, the “Prodigal Son” upon his safe return to the Father’s house:

*“For this **my son** was dead, and is alive **again**; he was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:24).*

Notice, please, the repentant sinner is a *son* who *was dead* and who now lives *again*.

Which came first, his “sin nature” or “God’s?”

Your understanding and answer will determine your attitude toward your wayward self and that of those around you. Again, this flies in the face of much of the misguided “ministry” posing as “evangelism” today. Let God be true and every man (and “preacher”) a liar.

*“For God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3;17).*

### **Goodbye to Guilt**

I’m sure I don’t know what particular guilt you struggle with. I have no personal knowledge of the many laws of God and man you may have transgressed. I am not familiar with the difficult life you experience today due perhaps, in part, to the mistakes and sins you have committed in the past. But I do know that in the mind of God, no such “sinful past” of yours exists. There is no condemnation, no judgment, no criticism from your Heavenly Father awaiting you *if will simply believe in His work on your behalf accomplished on the Cross for you by His Son, Jesus Christ.*

Your past—all of it—as well as the *Celestial*

*Change Your Past*

*Code of Conduct* written on tables of stone and in the sensitive feelings of your own conscience, has been permanently blotted out. It no longer exists.

Your nature can be *new*.

Your present can be *pleasant*.

Your future can be *fabulous*.

The choice is *yours*.

*The Path to Peace*

## ***Change Your Present***

**“***When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).*

He sat across from me in my office, his face mirroring the deep depression he was experiencing. Inwardly, I prayed for some sort of guidance, some advice I might give him to lighten the load he was carrying. He continued. *“It’s gotten to the place now where I can’t even look people in the eyes.”* With that he slowly reached up and pulled the baseball cap he was wearing down over his face. I spent the second half-hour of the counseling session speaking to his hat and listening to his muffled replies.

Why is it that people today suffer in this manner?

What, if anything, can be done about it?

The King James version of the text quoted above is a bit misleading. Some other translations render it a little differently.

“...so there may come seasons of refreshing (ASV).”

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century translation is striking:

“...and then better and brighter days will come direct from the Lord Himself.”

The New English Bible renders this last phrase, “a *time of recovery*.”

One simply needs to browse the shelves of any bookstore to view an entire section labeled, *Recovery*. So many of us need *that!*

But where to find it?

If the truth were told, the many secular solutions being offered to end the inner pain of readers today are simply a shame and a sham. They are normally variations on the same theme: a psychological raising of one’s consciousness by one’s own inner “boot straps.” The advice often amounts to the equivalent of suggesting someone cure his headache by changing his hat. There must be an *inner* change before there can be an outer transformation. Mankind is unable to acquire a new nature from within. We need help from a *Higher Place*. Thank God, as we have seen, it is available.

## **Justification Versus Sanctification**

This second point in Peter’s sermon follows

## *Change Your Present*

logically from his first. If we truly have changed our hearts and minds through an authentic faith encounter with God through Jesus Christ, our past really is gone. We have become, in the words of the apostle Paul, “new creations.” That is, we are a new species of being which never existed before (II Cor. 5:17, Gk). This gives us a brand new present.

In theological jargon, the first step of receiving forgiveness and having our sinful past erased is called *justification*. It is a legal, forensic term. Through our acceptance of the saving work of Jesus Christ on our behalf we have become redeemed children of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

However, we must remember that this change took place in our *spirit*, the inner recesses of our being. Paul refers to this as the *inward man* and Peter describes him as the *hidden man of the heart* (Rom. 7:22; I Pt. 3:4).

The Bible is very clear that we were originally created in God’s image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:27). Jesus reminded the woman at the well that God is a *Spirit* (John 4:24). The apostle Paul refers to the Heavenly Father as the Father of *spirits* (Heb. 12:9). According to the revelation of the scriptures, man is a three-fold, tripartite being: spirit, soul and body (I Thess.

5:23). We are essentially spirit beings who live in physical bodies. The result of this union is our *soul*, self or personality. It is here, in the intellect, emotions and will that an additional work of restoration and healing must begin.

What about those areas of our lives which continue to cause us emotional pain? It's one thing to be declared "not guilty" by the Supreme Court of Heaven, but quite another to *feel* forgiven and at peace with God, man and ourselves. The process of inner transformation that we so desperately need is referred to by theologians as *sanctification*.

As Peter preached to the Jews, he offered them "*times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord.*" This phrase is the spiritual equivalent of a vitamin or "super food" for the soul. There is a wealth of truth here for the diligent student of the scriptures.

### **Windows of Opportunity**

There are two ways of viewing time set forth in the Bible. The first is chronological time: seconds, minutes, hours, etc. The second could be best described as *seasons*. This is the word Peter uses in his sermon. Even today, we speak of *windows* of opportunity. God is saying to us

## *Change Your Present*

that there are numerous and ongoing seasons of healing available to us as His children. They come from His *Presence*. The Greek noun is literally, *Face*.

Have you ever noticed the effect someone's countenance has on you? I remember the time, some 34 years ago, that my mother came into my room with an expression of shock and sadness on her face that I had never seen. She then informed me my best friend had died: drowned in only four feet of water. Again, I remember the many times I would walk into my father's study and have him look up, take his glasses off and burst into a smile with his usual greeting, "*What's on your mind, boy?*"

How wonderful to know that our Lord's *Face* is *toward* us and His ear is *open* to our cry (Ps. 34:15).

### **Seasons of Refreshing**

Another beautiful truth here is the one related to the word rendered, *refreshing*. This Greek word appears only this once in the entire New Testament. Bible scholars tell us it is a medical term used to describe the treatment of a wound by exposure to air for cooling and drying. It was used in the Greek Old Testament in Ex. 8:15 to

describe “*respite, relief*” or, literally, “*room to breathe.*”

*“But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as Yahweh had said” (Ex. 8:15).*

This word later came to mean *relief* or *refreshing* for body or spirit.

Isn't *this* what we're all looking for?

Isn't *this* what we try to find in persons, places and possessions?

Isn't it in *this* area that life seems to come up short for us?

It is no coincidence that this word originally carried with it the idea of the healing of a bruise or wound with cool *air*. The Holy Spirit is the *Breath of God*.

*“And they were all filled with holy breath and began speaking in other languages as the spirit granted them to speak their mind” (Acts 2:4, Gaus).”*

Indeed, the apostle Paul, in his discussion of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the corporate worship services of the church, quotes the prophet Isaiah as foretelling the New Testament experience of being “filled with the Holy Spirit” and “speaking in other tongues (I Cor. 14:21).”

*“For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he*

said, ***This is the rest*** wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and ***this is the refreshing***” (Is. 28:11-12).

### **The Work of the Spirit**

The Lord Jesus stated that He had come to, among other things, “*heal the broken-hearted*” (Luke 4:18). But you will search the gospel accounts in vain to find an example of Him doing this. Although He healed the sick, cast out devils, cleansed the lepers and even raised the dead, there are no accounts of Him doing this work of “inner healing” during His tenure among us as a Man. Evidently, He chose to do this type of ministry through the Person of His Holy Spirit, beginning with His coming on the Day of Pentecost.

If you read the Book of Acts and the Epistles carefully, you quickly come to the conclusion that a believer receiving the Holy Spirit in His fullness is considered the ultimate Christian experience and the culmination of Christ’s work on his behalf.

*“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come*

*on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13-14).*

Depending upon which Bible teacher one follows, there are anywhere from 250 to 7,000 promises recorded in the Bible which a believer may claim in faith today. But there is only one *experience* described as *The Promise*. That is, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, or the believer being filled with God’s Presence (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:39; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13).

Paul describes Peter’s first two sermon points in a verse from his letter to Titus.

*“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the **washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost**; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Ti. 3:5-6).*

It is this “renewing of the Holy Spirit” to which Peter refers when he makes the inviting offer of “times of refreshing” from the Presence of God.

Consider the following information carefully and ask yourself if you are in need of this healing, invigorating ministry of the Spirit of God in your heart and life.

## **Prayer to receive the Holy Spirit**

*"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Lk. 11:13)?*

Notice in this verse that the Holy Spirit is a *gift* which children ask of their Heavenly Father. The infilling of the Holy Ghost, like the experience of salvation, is a *free gift*, offered by the Lord, to be received by *faith*.

Here is a prayer you may pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit:

*"Heavenly Father, I come to you as your child in the Name of Jesus. Thank you for your promise to give the Holy Spirit to all of your children who ask. Thank you for the Gift of Salvation. And thank you for delivering me from all the power of the Evil One. Satan, and every evil spirit, I renounce you and all your works in the Name of Jesus. I rebuke you in Jesus' Name. Loose me in spirit, soul and body now in the Name of Jesus. Heavenly Father, fill me now, with the Holy Spirit. I receive the Holy Spirit, now, by faith, in the Name of Jesus."*

And now, as you are in the Presence of God, simply begin to speak out the first words or syllables that come into your mind, but *don't speak in English*.

You may feel an inner warmth, or quickening, or you may feel nothing in particular. But, in simple, child-like faith, lift the sound of your voice and begin to speak forth as you are prompted by the Holy Spirit within. The Holy Spirit will not move your tongue or lips or cause you to speak. You must, by faith, physically begin to speak; but He will give you the utterance (words, syllables). Some have described *seeing* words in a foreign language in their mind's eye after prayer. Others report *feeling* as though they wish to speak words not in their own language. Regardless of your experience, put works with your faith and begin to speak as the Spirit gives you the ability.

### **Help From Heaven**

It is interesting and encouraging that the inspired apostle promised his listeners many and varied *seasons* of refreshing, healing, health and restoration. One can not live long in this fallen world amongst other fallen human beings without finding an occasion arising that requires

## *Change Your Present*

healing of the inner man.

Peter is saying, *“God is faithful to heal you during marital difficulties, following the death of a loved one, amidst a physical trial, in the time of financial reversals, as you struggle with addictions, compulsions and neuroses. God is able, ready and willing to deliver you continually!”*

A person who has received the fullness of the Holy Spirit need never ask during such seasons, *“Where is God now?”*

*He knows.*

*“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (II Cor. 7:15).*

## **Supernatural Prayer**

Not only does this being “clothed with Power from on High” enable us to effectively share the message of the Good News with those within our sphere of influence (Acts 1:8), but it changes our personal experience of daily life for the good and the godly. It is as if it were possible to have an all-knowing psychiatrist, physician, lawyer and life-coach continually present with us at all

times. All of life becomes touched with the light and power of the celestial world. Our days become brighter, our paths become smoother and our relationships become richer. It is as though we live our lives “surrounded by God.”

We do.

*“For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:28).*

Nowhere is this more evident than in our personal communication with Him. An entirely new dimension of prayer has entered our lives bringing with it all the resources of Heaven.

We are finally enabled to commune with God on *His* level: spirit to *Spirit*.

Isn't it obvious by now that our problems cannot be solved on their own level? Wouldn't we be sailing successfully along in life by now if they could?

Don't our hearts long for the protecting, providing and prevailing Hand of God ministering on our behalf as we face life's fight? We have this. He is infinitely more interested in our healing and wholeness than we are. He is eternally committed to our best interests in this life as well as in the one to come.

*“When God put His Spirit in us He is a*

*jealous lover” (James 4:5, Laubach).*

*“The Spirit which has its home in us yearns over us unto jealousy” (James 4:5, Montgomery).*

Andy Gaus’s translation adds an additional insight:

*“With jealous longing He seeks out the spirit He implanted in us” (James 4:5).*

We are “unspeakably” precious to God and this love toward and for us becomes remarkably real and vital when we allow His Spirit to help our weaknesses in prayer. The apostle Paul mentions this ministry in his letter to the Romans (see also, Eph. 6:18, Jude 20).

*“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:26-28).*

In my book, *Prayer in the Spirit: the Missing Link*, I wrote:

“The following material by Greek authority Kenneth S. Wuest is informative:

“The weakness spoken of here is the inability of the saint to know what to pray for. We do know what the general objects of prayer are. But we do not know what the specific, detailed objects of prayer in any given emergency or situation are.

“The definite article is used before the word ‘what.’ Paul says, ‘We do not know *the* what we should pray for, the particular what.’ The words ‘as we ought’ are in the Greek text *katho dei*, namely, just what is necessary in the nature of the case to pray for.

“Denney says, ‘Broadly speaking, we do know what we are to pray for—the perfecting of salvation, but we do not know what we are to pray for according to what is necessary—according as the need is at the moment; we know the end, which is common to all prayers, but not what is necessary at each crisis of need in order to enable us to attain this end.’

## *Change Your Present*

“The Spirit Himself makes intercession. The words ‘makes intercession’ are *huperentugchano*, ‘to intercede for one.’

“Robertson says, ‘It is a picturesque word of rescue by one who ‘happens on’ (*entugchano*) one who is in trouble, and ‘in his behalf’ (*huper*) pleads ‘with unuttered groanings’ (instrumental case) or with ‘sighs that baffle words’ (Denney).’

“Thayer says, ‘Although we have no very definite conception of what we desire, and cannot state it in fit language (as we ought) in our prayer but only disclose it by inarticulate groanings, yet God receives these groanings as acceptable prayers inasmuch as they come from a soul full of the Holy Spirit.’

“Alford says, ‘The Holy Spirit of God dwelling in us, knowing our wants better than we, Himself pleads in our prayers, raising us to higher and holier desires than we can express in words, which can only find utterance in sighings and aspirations.’

“That is, God the Father Who searches the

hearts of His saints, understands the intent or bent of our unutterable prayers, unutterable because we do not know the particular things we should pray for in connection with a certain circumstance, for He knows the mind of the Holy Spirit praying for us and in our stead in our prayers in the case of the above-mentioned items for prayer, the Holy Spirit praying according to the plan of God for our lives.”

*Kenneth S. Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, (Romans), pp. 141-142.*

### **A Personal Practice**

Is all this just “impractical mysticism,” or does it relate to every day life?

If the truth were really understood, this is the *only* practical life worth living. Seriously now, where has *your* approach gotten you?

Aren't you tired of being afraid?

Don't you long for a true independence from people, places, possessions and predicaments?

You can have it and you can have it *now*.

This is not a “spiritual pep talk” but an

## *Change Your Present*

accurate assessment of a real experience you can live with *daily*.

You have a problem, a pain, an unfulfilled longing; you need a question answered, a problem solved, a spiritual mountain moved. What are you to do about it?

The Master spoke to the woman at the well and made an *insightful* observation which I invite you to consider carefully.

*"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4:10).*

Remember the context of His comments. This woman from Samaria had come to draw water from Jacob's well. As is always the case, Jesus saw past the obvious to the not so obvious below the surface of her personality. She needed sustenance all right, but she needed it to come from *another Source*. She was not unlike the rest of us who mistakenly believe that what we see with our physical senses is really all that matters in life.

This woman was what we would call today *dysfunctional*. That is, she was a relationship addict. She had been married five times already and her sixth companion was a common-law husband. She needed more than her physical

thirst quenched; she needed to become personally acquainted with the One Who created her: the Holy Spirit (Job 33:4).

Augustine was right when he declared, “*Our hearts are restless Lord until they find their rest in Thee.*”

This is not a piece of pious prose but a practical principle you can demonstrate to your own satisfaction *today*.

“*Jesus answered and said unto her, ‘Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life’*” (John 4:13-14).

This portion of scripture becomes much more illuminating when we look a bit closer. The original text has it, “*Whoever is **constantly drinking** of this water shall thirst again.*”

How many of us have discovered *that*? It doesn’t matter what arena you consider: family, fortune or fame, power, politics or possessions. We were not created to be satisfied with the physical, natural or material world. We were “hardwired” for God.

Someone has said, “*Americans are the only people on earth who insist on spending money*

*they don't have in order to purchase items they don't need so that they can impress people they don't like."*

You don't have to be one of them.

In the second verse just quoted, the original text reads, "*But whoever **takes one drink** of the water that I shall give him shall **never thirst again forever.***"

Strong language.

How can He be so bold?

*"But the water that I shall give him shall **become in him** a well of water leaping up into Eternal Life."*

The Master speaks here of one spiritual experience which leads to another, in much the same way as Peter spoke in his message to the Jews in the Book of Acts, chapter three.

In other words, with one authentic act of faith, a person can receive Eternal Life. This makes possible the second experience of being filled with that Life or being personally indwelled by the fullness of the Presence of God through the Holy Spirit.

God's gift to the world is Eternal Life (John 3:16).

The Father's gift to the believer is the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13).

And with the Gift of the Holy Spirit comes

the intimate, personal and purifying Presence of the divine nature evidenced initially by the ability to pray and praise God supernaturally in a language we have never learned. This enables us to transcend our troubles and find the help for our hurting souls that we so desperately need. The *cool air* of the *Celestial Comforter* does in fact bind up our broken hearts and set at liberty those of us who have been beaten, bruised and battered on the “Jericho Roads” of life, left there to sigh and cry and die. The Master is the ever-present Good Samaritan Who is ready, willing and abundantly able to kneel down and pour into our lives the Oil and Wine of His Presence, healing, restoring and renewing our souls.

The apostle Paul describes this procedure in a number of places, including I Cor. 14:4, 28.

*“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself.”*

*“But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.”*

### **Practice Makes Perfect**

This blessing was also spoken of by the Master, later in John’s Gospel, chapter seven, verses 37-39.

## *Change Your Present*

*“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).”*

Again, the original language carries with it the thought, **“Let him come and *keep on coming*; let him drink and *keep on drinking*.”** In other words, this is to be a new habit of life for the one who has received Eternal Life and been filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the only practical and fulfilling life there is.

For example, let’s imagine you have a problem with anger. The scriptures remind us that man’s anger doesn’t accomplish God’s will (James 1:20). In addition, Paul encourages us to, **“Be angered, and stop sinning; stop letting the sun go down on your outbursts of rage”** (Eph. 4:26, Gk.).

What is a believer to do?

*Before* we lash out at others in an outburst we will regret later, we bring the matter before the Lord in private prayer. We begin to pray quietly “in the Spirit” while inwardly, in our

spirits, in our own language, releasing to God all of the reasons for our angry or violent feelings. Soon, the emotion dissipates and we are left with God's alternative: *peace*. The practice is the same for any temptation, testing or trial. Will it work?

If you are hungry and enjoy a full meal at a wonderful local steakhouse, *will you be craving junk food afterwards?*

There is no reason to struggle with any life problem or difficulty. There is no necessity to camp at the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," struggling with the temptations of life (i.e., "*Should I, shouldn't I?*").

We can "turn our backs on the problem" and simply eat from the other Tree, the "Tree of *Life*." In this way, all our struggles cease.

## **Help From Heaven**

All of our emotional and psychological aberrations are simply variations on a theme. We gaze *outward* as a means of satisfying an *inward* need. We depend upon *people* to do for us what only God can. We sense our spiritual incompleteness and then scramble to find the nearest physical equivalent. And we injure ourselves and others in the process, often

irreparably. Is this God's will?

I remember years ago hearing the secular jeers assailing Rev. David Wilkerson and his fledgling ***Teen Challenge*** ministry. He had a heart for those involved in alcohol and drug addiction, pornography and prostitution in the New York City slums. He was taunted regarding his "30-second cure": *the Baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by "speaking in tongues."*

*"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:18-19).*

Decades later, his organization's cure rate continues to eclipse all other programs in efficacy and rate of recidivism.

## **Interpersonal Peace**

Our relationship problems will cease to trouble us when we have our inner "house in order." God's eternal rule of reality was given several times in the scriptures: *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Gal. 5:14).*

Notice, please, the order here. We will *never* love others any more than we love ourselves, or even properly at all, until we have the correct

relationship with ourselves. In the psychological realm, “charity begins at home.” That is, we must have a *full inner life first*, before we can have smooth interpersonal relationships, whether with spouse, siblings, parents or coworkers. In other words, we were designed by God to live “from the inside out.”

*“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, **Keep yourselves in the love of God**” (Jude 20-21).*

What a wonderful relief to live in such a way that we demand nothing psychologically or emotionally from others!

You can have that relief *now*.

Aren’t you weary of thinking and feeling (if not saying):

*“Everything would be fine if only he/she/they would do/stop doing, this/that/the other...?”*

God’s Good News is you can get off this maddening merry-go-round any time you choose.

Search the scriptures carefully and you will discover all of the interpersonal exhortations in the epistles, for instance, always and only advise the individual regarding *his* responsibilities, never what he or she should make certain the *other* party do or be.

## *Change Your Present*

*How they live their lives is their responsibility.*

*“If it be possible, **as much as lieth in you**, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18).*

You might as well face facts. Some people will choose not to be at peace with you. But that is their problem, not yours.

Your only duty is to live your own life in a God-pleasing and self-fulfilling manner. Why not begin this adventure *today*?

*The Path to Peace*

## ***Change Your Future***

“**A**nd he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you” (Acts 3:20).

The third point in Peter’s sermon follows logically from the previous two points. A changed past and present makes available to us the possibility of a changed future, for us and our world.

Someone has written, “*Life isn’t one darned thing after another; it’s one darned thing over and over!*”

Some folks have the same idea about spiritual matters. For instance, Eastern religion has a *cyclical* or *circular* view of history. Related to this is the concept of reincarnation or a rebirth after death of the same soul in a new physical body. This is not the teaching of the Bible. It is not spiritual Truth.

God has planned, not reincarnation, but *resurrection*. In actual fact, Christianity is the

only world religion that promises and professes this.

Why?

The biblical view of life is *linear*. That is, mankind is progressing toward the final end of one age that will lead to another. The culmination of this present age is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. *This* is to be the focal point of our redeemed lives. In other words, we should be living in the light of our Lord's return. This means—in the words of the Master—*occupying* until He comes.

Admittedly, this will mean ordering our everyday lives by the Golden Rule of love, toward God, ourselves and others. In addition it will include doing our secular work “as unto the Lord” for it is Him that we are actually serving (Col. 3:23-24).

But there is also a spiritual dimension to our lives' service. Even though we continue *in* this present world system, we are no longer *of* it (John 17:16). In actual fact, our new citizenship is in Heaven (Phil. 3:30). We have become sons, servants and soldiers of God, placed upon earth in order to serve Him. We are also described as “members of Christ's Body” (I Cor. 12:27). As such, we have been gifted by God to serve the other members in various capacities.

How is one to find out where God has placed him in the Church? How can we discover our gifts and then express them to His glory, our fulfillment and the blessing and benefit of others?

### **Full Surrender**

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).*

This dedication of our *new* lives (we surrendered our *old* selves to God when we became believers) is the doorway into the breathtaking future God has planned for us from eternity past. This step of surrender is what I described as the *fourth foundational experience* every Christian should enter into in order for them to reach their full spiritual potential.

In my discipleship lesson on the subject I wrote:

“The fourth foundational Christian

experience is one of entire, complete, unconditional and eternal dedication of one's born again, water-baptized, Spirit-filled life unto God in order that one's gifts and ministries may become manifest and the Body of Christ edified and the world ministered to in the Power of God.

“This commitment of one's entire being—once and for all, forever—is the very starting point of any real service to God. It is this consecration which paves the way for the renewing of the mind of a Christian as well as his understanding of the perfect will of God for him in the area of ministry (Rom. 12:1-10, see my book, *Seven Keys of Successful Ministry* in the second course, *Diploma in the Deaconate*).

“The importance of this complete and hearty abandonment to the will of God cannot be overemphasized or gainsaid. It is indispensable to the believer's fruitfulness and God's glory being manifested through his life. Here is a prayer you may pray:

## *Change Your Future*

*“Heavenly Father, I thank you for the gift of Eternal Life and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. I now present you with the gift of my new life in Christ. I surrender my spirit, soul and body, past, present and future to You, unconditionally, to be used for Your divine purpose. Release every spiritual and ministry gift in my life and use me for Your glory. Reveal Your perfect will for my life. Thank You, Father, for accepting my consecration; thank you for revealing Your will for my life. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”*

### **Payday Isn’t Always On Friday**

*“...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:10-11).*

The *accounting* mentioned here has nothing to do with a judgment for sin (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1), but, rather, is a reference to a time of reward or demerit for the believer at His Lord’s return in glory. The Master will review our secular and spiritual works done as His

*The Path to Peace*

ambassadors and reward us accordingly.

What a wonderful perspective this gives to life and living!

## ***Change Your World***

“**W**hom the heaven must receive **until the times of restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

I was tired, staring mindlessly out the bus window, on my way home from college. It was then that I noticed it. A small white business card sticking in the window frame. A “smiley face” accompanied some dark type on the plain white card. It read:

*“There’s a message for you!  
Of cheer, of hope,  
for young and old. Dial...”*

Ordinarily, I would never pick something like that up. But as I looked at that little advertisement *something* (really *Someone*) seemed to urge me to do so. When I got home I

sneaked upstairs and dialed the number. I was greeted by a brief devotional recording featuring the most perfect speaking voice I had ever heard (I was studying journalism and communications at the time and working at the college radio station). The man's brief remarks from the Bible accompanied by homespun illustrations arrested me. It seemed he was answering questions I had been wrestling with for over three months, since my best friend had passed away unexpectedly.

To make a long story short, I eventually made an appointment to speak with that gentleman. He answered yet more of my questions in person and then quietly and confidently led me in a prayer to surrender my life to Jesus Christ, receiving Him as Lord and Savior. I left his office "walking on air." Two years later I was filled with the Holy Spirit and called into the ministry.

What if he hadn't been effectively equipped to tell me the Gospel Truth?

What if he had refused to even meet with me since I was not a member of his congregation nor his denomination?

What if one of his church's members hadn't placed that card in the bus window?

If you have received Light for your spiritual path, is it not incumbent upon you to let that

Light shine so that others might see?

The Master spoke of all of us being *salt* and *light* in this world, a city *set on a hill* for all to see. Is it fair to others for us to keep our light under a bushel of fear or pride when there are so many who need to find the *Path to Peace*?

### Won by One

In my ministry's *Diploma in Discipleship* course, in the chapter, "*Worldwide Witnessing*," I shared an intriguing fact I gleaned from the book, "*God's Psychiatry*," by Methodist minister, Dr. Charles L. Allen. In that little volume, he made note of the fact that if there were only one true believer on earth and that individual won one other person to Christ in one year, there would be two true believers. If those two, in turn, went on to each win an additional person to faith in Jesus Christ, in two years there would be four. If this process continued—each one winning one person per year—in only 32 years (at the time of his writing) *the entire world's population would be saved!*

The really interesting fact for us today is there are an estimated *one billion* persons alive today who claim to belong to Jesus Christ through personal faith. Fully three fourths of

them also profess to possess the empowering fullness of the Holy Spirit. That means if *each one, won one*, the present population of our planet would be evangelized in a matter of *days!*

### **God's Plan**

As the apostle Peter brought his message, recorded in the Book of Acts, to a conclusion, he set forth God's ultimate plan for mankind. It involves the Lord Jesus Christ returning to rule and reign upon this earth. Everyone who has received God's grace in Christ may share in disseminating this Good News of total redemption for humanity. We needn't all become Bible scholars or full time ministers of the Word; but we can all share our faith in some method or manner, as the Spirit of the Lord leads us.

There is a theory held by a number of theologians stating that before the creation of mankind, Satan (formerly Lucifer, the Light-bearer) rebelled against God along with an innumerable company of angels. This rebellion took place from Earth where they had dwelt as stewards over God's physical creation as well as enjoying worship of the one, true God. After their fall from grace, after they stormed Heaven

## *Change Your World*

in an attempt to dethrone God and were summarily defeated and judged, Yahweh formed Adam's body from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of Life and man became a living soul. God then created Eve from Adam's own flesh and gave the dominion over the created world order to them and their progeny.

We know the story of their fall from grace, which is also our story (see Rom. 7:9). According to this theological theory, there were a certain number of angels who fell from grace with Lucifer and who were to be replaced by human beings. When this number has been reached, the Lord Jesus Christ will return and set up His Kingdom on earth, a Kingdom that shall never end. Each prodigal person who returns to the Father in saving faith brings humanity one step closer to the culmination of all things.

How this should inspire us to be diligent in the sharing of our faith! Perhaps *you* are that final person. Perhaps the *next person* you lead home to God will be.

May I suggest that you return to the first chapter of this book and spend a few minutes reviewing the section detailing the Gift of Salvation? You might also consider enrolling in our ministry's free online Christian training

program in order to gain additional education and information regarding the faith.

No one expects you to do the work of a full time minister of the Gospel. However, all of us should be ready, willing and spiritually able to explain the simple facts of God's Love Plan for man in our own words and in our own way. No one knows what God has done for us better than we do. It is our privilege and responsibility to share our experience and knowledge—as limited as it may be—of the Way of Salvation, wherever and whenever we are given the opportunity. God can and will use all of His children to make a difference in His world through sharing His Father's heart with those who so desperately need to experience it.

My prayer is that you will become a person He can use just as He has hopefully used me to minister to you.

## *The Path to Peace*

“**B**ut the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Pr. 4:18).

Many years ago I was listening to a call-in radio talk show where the listeners were invited to share their various problems with a spiritual psychologist who would then give them general advice. The particular exchange went something like this:

Caller: *“I still struggle with such overwhelming”*...(there followed a litany of distressing symptoms).

Host: *“You’ve called before, haven’t you?”*

Caller: (weakly) *“Yes.”*

Host: *“And did I give you some advice?”*

Caller: (hesitantly) *“Yes...”*

Host: *“And did you follow it?”*

Caller: *“No.”*

Host: *“Well then, you’ll just have to suffer.”*

Perhaps a little harsh, but rather direct and to

the point, wouldn't you say?

### **Take As Directed**

We come now to one of the mysteries of the human personality: the concept of acting or refusing to act upon the Truth that is revealed to us.

Imagine a suffering human being visiting their primary care physician, being diagnosed with a particular ailment and then being given a script to be filled at the drugstore. Imagine that individual having that prescription filled and then returning home with the medicine only to place it securely in a drawer.

Would the promised healing take place?

Now imagine that same sick and suffering person telephoning the physician and complaining—long and loud—that he is incompetent and his medicine is a complete failure. Would that be accurate? Would it be fair to the doctor, druggist or drug?

In actual fact, the hurting human simply suffered from self-sabotage by *refusing to take the medicine as directed*.

*“The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against Yahweh” (Pr. 19:3).*

## *The Path to Peace*

Lest the Authorized version be a bit blind to us, here are some additional translations:

*“People’s own foolishness ruins their lives, but in their minds they blame the Lord.” (NCV)*

*“...and then he bears a grudge against the Lord.” (NEB)*

The Bible calls this kind of person a fool. This type of thinking and acting is simply spiritual ignorance “gone to seed.”

I have been in the ministry over 32 years at the time of this writing and have served as pastor for six congregations as well as ministering as an evangelist, Bible teacher, missionary, author, educator, counselor and media minister. I have completed nearly 50 short-term mission trips to foreign fields and have lived for a time on the mission field. I don’t believe in giving “free advice.”

I have seen this unfortunate situation repeated endlessly.

It is one thing to *hear* and *know* the Truth, but quite another to *act* on it.

### **The Two Foundations**

Jesus, Himself, drove this point home in a powerfully profound parable of two builders who both constructed homes. One built his on a sand

## *The Path to Peace*

foundation, the other on stone. When the storms came to both (and Satan will see to it that they do), the one who built on sand experienced total devastation. The other who built on stone was protected and prevailed. What was the difference?

They *both* heard the word.

The difference was, only one *acted* on it (Mt. 7:24ff.).

The Master repeatedly cautioned us that what we hear and *put into practice* will be added to. What we hear and don't utilize will be taken away from us.

### **The Path to Peace**

I promised, at the beginning of this book, the offer of: questions answered, problems solved, hurts healed, burdens borne, loads lifted and mountains moved. God offers us all of that and more.

The *Path to Peace* is just that: a *path* or journey to be completed *one obedient step of faith at a time*. It is a pleasant path, from faith to faith and glory to glory. But we must *put the Truth revealed into practice* if we are to move successfully ahead in life.

- You can have your past erased.
- You can receive a new nature.
- You can be filled to overflowing with God's Presence.
- You can know the companionship of God daily.
- You can experience God's Healing touch.

But you must *act* upon the Truth of God in living faith before you can reap the benefits He has reserved for you.

It has been unspeakably sad for me to witness the often needless suffering of professing Spirit-filled believers over the years.

### **“It's Too Easy”**

It has been nearly 30 years, but I remember the conversation quite clearly. I was in my first semester of seminary. Since I was single at the time, I shared a room with another single young man who had, coincidentally, attended the same home church as me back in Pittsburgh (the seminary was 400 miles away).

As we discussed spiritual matters one afternoon, the subject of the Spirit-filled life came up. I mentioned how my Christian life had been totally transformed two years after I

became a believer, when I was filled with the Holy Spirit and “spoke in tongues.” In addition, I shared how my prayer life had also been radically improved through my daily practice of “casting my cares upon the Lord” through the practice of “praying in the Holy Spirit.”

His face reddened a bit. Then he offered, *“Uh,...I had that experience. My dad received it first, then my mom and finally me.”*

*“Amazing, isn’t it?”* I replied.

He ignored my comment and continued.

*“Yeah, I used to do that kind of thing you’re talking about too. Then I grew up. I realized that anytime I had a problem or felt bad, I was just spending time with the Lord and praying in tongues until I felt better. I knew that couldn’t be right; it was too easy, so I quit.”*

I wonder where that fellow is today.

In another book of mine I included the following information regarding praying in the Spirit (other tongues), from the online service, *Newswise*:

“Glossolalia, otherwise known as “speaking in tongues:” is an unusual mental state that has been documented for thousands of years and is often associated with religious traditions.

“The affected individual appears to be communicating in an incomprehensible language, yet it is often perceived by the person speaking, and those near enough to witness it, that the bizarre “words” have some sort of profound meaning.

“Now, in the first study of its kind, scientists are attempting to explain what actually happens inside the brain of someone speaking in tongues. Radiology investigators at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine observed brain activity while subjects were speaking in tongues. They then compared that activity to what happened in the brain while subjects sang gospel music and found something very interesting: decreased activity in the brain’s frontal lobes, an area associated with being in control of one’s self.

“‘We noticed a number of changes that occurred functionally in the brain:’ comments principal investigator Andrew Newberg, Director for the Center for Spirituality and the Mind at Penn. ‘Our

finding of decreased activity in the frontal lobes during the practice of speaking in tongues is fascinating because these subjects truly believe that the spirit of God is moving through them and controlling them to speak. Our brain imaging research shows us that these subjects *are not in control of the usual language centers during this activity*, which is consistent with their description of a lack of intentional control while speaking in tongues.’

“Newberg went on to explain, ‘These findings could be interpreted as *the subject's sense of self being taken over by something else*. We, scientifically, assume it's being taken over by another part of the brain, *but we couldn't see where this took place*’” (emphasis mine).

According to physicians who study these matters, the frontal lobes of the brain are very important for a number of reasons, including but not limited to, the following information:

“Dopamine-sensitive neurons in the

cerebral cortex are found primarily in the frontal lobes. The dopamine system is associated with pleasure, long-term memory, planning and drive. Dopamine tends to limit and select sensory information arriving from the thalamus to the fore-brain. Poor regulation of dopamine pathways has been associated with schizophrenia.

The so-called executive functions of the frontal lobes involve the ability to recognize future consequences resulting from current actions, to choose between good and bad actions (or better and best), override and suppress unacceptable social responses, and determine similarities and differences between things or events” (**Wikipedia**, *Frontal Lobe Function*).

How different might your life be if you voluntarily invited the Presence of God to directly control the frontal lobes of your brain on a daily basis by yielding to His leadership in private prayer in other tongues?

## **Two Worlds**

As a believer, you live in two worlds: the outer world of the senses (the flesh) and the inner world of the spirit. Until you leave this world through death or receive your new body at the Second Coming of Christ, you will have the opportunity to *choose* your daily experience. You can elect to live by faith—in the Spirit—choosing to live by the principles outlined in God’s Word and in the peace of the indwelling Holy Spirit, or you can live after the flesh and its debilitating desires (see my book, ***“The Man Who Wasn’t There”***).

*“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Pr. 14:12).*

*“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).*

It is my prayer that you will choose to live within the boundaries of God’s plan, purpose and provision for your life.

May your life’s journey be the *Path to Peace* here and hereafter.

## ALSO BY THE SAME AUTHOR

At the Master's Feet	Creative Faith
Faith's Formula	Help from Heaven
How to Get Rich, Quick!	Light For Living
Living on the Threshold of Eternity	The Perfect Weapon
Plead the Blood!	The Presence of God
Ready for the Rapture	Seven Secrets of Successful Living
Success Secrets From Sacred Scripture	Walk with God
What Price, Freedom?	When You Need a Miracle
Why Not Women?	Wonder-Working Words
You Must Be Drunk!	Your New Life

The Man Who Wasn't There

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

Dr. Joseph Kostelnik is founder and president of Gospel Truth Ministries, an apostolic ministry with a three-fold vision: a local church (**White Oak Chapel**), training up and sending out of ministers of the Word (**The Prophetic Voice Institute**), and short-term mission trips to foreign fields as God leads.

He holds a B.A. from Point Park University, an M.Div. from Asbury Theological Seminary, a Th.D. and Ph.D. from International Seminary, an honorary D.D. from Kingsway Christian College & Theological Seminary and an honorary Litt. D. from International Seminary.

He has served as: pastor, assistant pastor, evangelist, Bible teacher, missionary, author, educator, and media minister. He has ministered in the United States as well as overseas, including: England, Scotland, Australia, France, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Crete, Haiti and New Zealand and his ministry is marked by the miraculous.

## FREE ONLINE MINISTRY TRAINING

[HTTP://WWW.GTM.ORG/PVI/](http://www.gtm.org/pvi/)

Study the Word of God online in the comfort of your own home: **free!** Dr. Kostelnik's plan is to offer his courses, sharing knowledge acquired over 30 years through study, personal experiences with God and experience in all phases of Gospel ministry, **FREE** over the Internet, to *everyone* who wishes to take them!

**Diploma in Discipleship:** This first course covers ten basic doctrines of the Christian faith, and then builds on these through the ten Discipleship lessons, which show one how to put the doctrines and beliefs into practice, according to the Word of God; two books: *Doctrine & Discipleship*.

**Diploma in the Deaconate:** This second course covers the God-ordained ministry of deacon as a whole, the specifics of the office, and also includes other volumes aimed at encouraging the lay Christian who desires to do his part as a believer in the local church; four books: *Seven Keys of Successful Ministry; The Empty Office; All About the Anointing; The Dark World of Demons*.

**Diploma in Ministry:** This third and final course covers the specifics of the ministry of Christ, what is required of the minister, and how to effectively live out the call God has put on the minister's life; six books: *Miracles & the Ministry; The Making of a Minister; Gifts Unto Men; The Lord Jesus: The Christ; Prayer in the Spirit: The Missing Link; Psychiatry, Sin & Salvation*.

## **WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ...**

“Dr. Kostelnik's book *The Lord Jesus: the Christ* is one of the most edifying and uplifting books I've ever read...and working with Dr. Cerullo, I've read a lot of good books.” - **Ruth Meadows, European director, Morris Cerullo World Evangelism**

“His anointed teaching has inspired me and many others in Australia; after having Dr. Kostelnik minister in our church and in a citywide crusade, I recommend that you acquire more of this Divinely inspired material through which you will undoubtedly be blessed also.” - **Rev. Merv Westbrook, Outback Evangelism, (Darwin, Australia)**

“I appreciate Joe's books, teaching and great evangelistic ministry; he has a unique combination of intellectual and educational depth, strict scriptural adherence and outstanding preaching ability.” - **Rev. Dick Taylor, founder & president FOCAS, (Cincinnati, Ohio)**

“We recommend Dr. Kostelnik and his ministry highly, he has been a great blessing in all of our churches in Holland and Belgium, with many saved, healed and filled with the Holy Spirit. We have published his articles in our magazine and are busy translating *Prayer in the Spirit: The Missing Link*, into Dutch.” - **Gerie van der Dussen, secretary, Maasbach World Mission (Holland)**

“Now that we have translated your book on ministry into Greek, we can start on your others; the people here desperately need this anointed ministry.” - **the late Rev. D. Jimmy Zachariou, Assemblies Of God, (Athens, Greece)**

“Brother Joe has a real touch of God on his ministry. We saw this in Haiti in great outdoor mass crusades... many were saved, healed, baptized in the Holy Ghost and delivered! We are very anxious for his next crusades here.” - **Bishop Octamoliere Liberius (Port-au-Prince, Haiti, W.I.)**

“Through the revelation of the Spirit and also the manifestation of God's Power to His children through him, I believe Dr. Kostelnik is qualified to tell God's people that signs, wonders and miracles are for the Body of Christ today.” (from the foreword to *Miracles and the Ministry*) - **the late Rev. Dr. Brian Graham, pastor-evangelist (Darlington, England)**