

## TUESDAY 14 June 2022 "Times of Refreshing" (Acts 3:19)

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Summer is upon us and for many in the northern climates these warm days are welcome, *refreshing* relief from the long very cold winter you've had. We've seen the pictures of snow piled high and frozen rivers and lakes. For many people the word 'summer' means time off school, time for vacation, time for weddings and graduations and new beginnings. *So, I have a question... when you think of this phrase "times of refreshing" what comes to your mind?* As you look at the faces of people you see every day, wherever you live, do you sense people around you are living REFRESHED or DISCOURAGED?

Lately in our "Walking with Jesus" journey we've been in a miraculous experience in Jerusalem about 2000 years ago, as recorded in Acts 3. *A man crippled from birth has been powerfully healed by God, evidently in response to his great FAITH in the name and person of Jesus*, when Peter extended a challenge of faith to this beggar. Peter had explained that several weeks before many of these same people in this same city of Jerusalem had called for the execution of Jesus, but God raised Jesus from the dead and *God had verified IN Jesus' resurrection that Jesus was God's sent Savior for the world!* Then Peter challenged the people with this: ***"Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord..."*** (Acts 3:19)

The people were stunned! Peter was actually declaring that God was willing to forgive them the sin of rejecting Jesus and calling for the death of God the Son! If that wasn't big enough, Peter was also claiming God would then send them *'times of refreshing'*! Obviously, Peter was not talking about the weather or climate! Nor is he talking about an adrenaline rush or even an artificial, drug induced high. Peter is talking about something much more personal and significant, *something that most people NEVER experience! Have you?* It's a miracle of the heart and mind, it's a work of God, it's *'times of refreshing'* deep in your soul! In fact, Paul once wrote this phrase which I think describes it very well: ***"...a peace that passes all understanding which will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus..."*** (Phil. 4:7) So what is it and where does it come from? How do you get it, how do you keep it vibrant, and what does it guard your heart and mind from? Let's look deeply into this miracle my friends, because if you and I can figure it out, it will be priceless in these increasingly discouraging, even frightening days, no matter where you live in our darkening world.

*Peter had urged the people in this Jerusalem crowd to REPENT of their sin and TURN to God.* Well, there's the first important step in this miracle. These elusive *'times of refreshing'* are found only when we are honest enough to admit our hearts are heavy with shame, guilt, fear, worry, anger and so many other dark kingdom emotions that can suffocate us in our increasingly dysfunctional world. Kings should be immune to such painful, dark emotions, right? But King David found himself in that dark place once.

David wrote a powerful Psalm about a time of despair in his life when he desperately needed **'times of refreshing'**... *but because he refused to be honest with himself or with God, David couldn't find his way out of the suffocating darkness of his secret sin.* Even though he was king, he had committed adultery and then had the husband of that woman killed! He thought no one knew, but God had seen it all! David wrote: **"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand, O God, was heavy upon me, my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer."** (Ps. 32:3,4)

Now we've all been there, haven't we? So has every person in the world! We've all felt the heaviness of guilt or shame, but we refused to face it, didn't we? We pretended nothing was wrong. *We try hard to excuse our actions or attitudes and we look for someone else to blame for our pain.* But the Holy Spirit of God keeps convicting us and the heaviness gets heavier! It's amazing isn't it, how long we can stay in that bitter, refusal to admit our wrong dark place? And the weight of conviction gets heavier and heavier, and the darkness of our soul gets darker and darker. *That's the road to despair... have you ever been walking down that road with your back toward God?*

Some people think... *'over time, I'll forget all about it!'* But you know that isn't true. God loves us too much to allow us to wallow in the quicksand of our sin guilt and shame. *Did you know the conviction that we feel from God is actually His unconditional love that is beckoning us back to an unrestrained, undamaged, pure, love filled relationship with God?* But that return and reconciliation with God requires one thing... REPENT! I can't stay in my rebellion and enjoy a relationship with Holy God at the same time. It simply can't happen. John wrote it this way: **"This is the message we have heard from Jesus and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with God yet walk in the darkness we lie, and the truth is not in us."** (1 John 1:5,6) So when I finally acknowledge my sin, my guilt to God, and I ask for His forgiveness, *God then does what Peter claimed, He 'wipes out' my sin, as He accepts Jesus' sacrificial death as payment for my sin!* And after wiping out my sin, then God draws me to Himself, and God restores me into a wonderful reunited, unrestrained relationship with HIM!

Paul wrote it like this: **"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come. All this is from God who has reconciled us to Himself..."** (2 Corinthians 5:17,18) When I'm drawn by God back into a restored relationship with Him guess what? **My mind experiences "...times of refreshing..."** as I am overwhelmed with the truth, *the fact that I am no longer guilty, I have been forgiven by God and God has restored me to my position as His son, a royal prince of the Most High God!* (1 Peter 2:9) **A powerful peace fills my mind...** peace that guilt or failure or sin no longer defines or describes me! That powerful peace then turns into joy, almost exhilaration as I contemplate what God has done to wipe out my sin guilt and restore me to relationship and position with Him! *That power peace of my mind actually rises up as a weapon and defends me when my mind is attacked by the dark kingdom with accusations and lies!*

But there's more, **my heart experiences "...times of refreshing..."** as I am overwhelmed by Holy God's love for me, even when I was in that despicable secret sin place! This great truth which Paul wrote fills my heart with gratitude: **"God demonstrates His love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** (Romans 5:8). And as I experience God's loving forgiveness, then the reality that God the Spirit lives in me and is cleansing me, restoring me, healing the woundedness caused by my sin, and refining me to be more and more the person God has designed me to be, HIS ambassador in this crazy world! *Wow, my heart nearly explodes with hope, with joy, with great anticipation for what this new day will bring as I walk with Jesus through this day, experiencing the powerful Presence of His Holy Spirit IN me every minute of the day!*

Oh, my friends, now do we understand what Peter wanted the crowd to understand that day when he said: **"Repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out and times of refreshing may come from the Lord..."** (Acts 3:19) Let's pause right here, take our journal and begin writing... *honestly now, what is the condition of your mind and heart today? Discouraged? Worried? Shame or Guilt? Secret sin? Angry? Or can you say you are living in a time of God given REFRESHING and your heart and mind is guarded with a God given peace that really does pass all understanding, and you're ready to step out into this day confident you can face anything with Jesus?*

If not, perhaps you need to go back and work through for a second time what I've given you today. Let's not settle for anything less than living God given "times of refreshing with Jesus"! And here's a song to help you enjoy the wonder of this new day...

**Today's Scripture is Acts 3:19.**