



February 2010

Dear Friend and Partner of PTM,

*...two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference. —Robert Frost*

Christians in North America today stand at a crossroads, faced with two choices. Contemporary Christendom, with its churches and ministries, presents two contrasting choices which are as different as darkness and light. The most popular and well-trodden path seems the most natural and reasonable choice. The broad, **Religious Road**, assures travelers that they are in charge of their lives and their eternal destiny.

Religious Road is the most traveled road because it offers the illusion that a relationship with God can be earned, and that God can be pleased and appeased on the basis of human performance. Humans naturally resist God's promise of doing for them what they can never do for themselves. Humans are thus easy prey for the false promises of **Religious Road** which seductively offers the gates of heaven for those who toil, labor and produce according to the dictates of their religious masters.

Religious Road is bleak and murky, though religious institutions provide artificial illumination through their lamps and candles. **Religious Road** is crowded with people who take themselves and their religion seriously. No matter how fast they run, pilgrims on **Religious Road** are never certain that God loves them—worried expressions and furrowed brows create a grim dog-eat-dog atmosphere as everyone scrambles to gain God's favor. Signposts advise travelers that God is angry and filled with wrath. Guilt, fear and shame enslave the souls of those who travel **Religious Road**.

Religious Road is a noisy and turbulent boulevard, filled with strident, fearful warnings for those who refuse the decrees and directives of religion. Endless commotion and thundering voices compete, all insisting that they are superior, separate and better than "the world." Merchants hawk their wares, offering memberships in exclusive, better-than-every-other-church religious

country clubs, each one touting itself as the “one and only” and best church. Quarrels and fights on **Religious Road** often become “holy wars” as “holier-than-thou” travelers kill fellow travelers (in the name of God) who do not agree with their version of performance-based religion.

Religious authorities give pep-talks, exhorting their members and followers to run faster, do more, get more involved, give more, work harder and generally be more productive, industrious and diligent. Toll booths abound on **Religious Road** where required tithes and sacrifices must be paid. **Religious Road** is an insatiable master, a demanding way of life where nothing accomplished is ever enough. Sadly, those who travel on **Religious Road** are tragically deceived. They believe they are free, but are in reality slaves of religion. They believe they will earn heaven, but **Religious Road** is a spiritual dead-end, resulting in destruction.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.—Matthew 7:13-14

Grace Way—the Road Less Traveled

In the seventh chapter of Matthew Jesus offers four contrasts about how humans may relate to God: 1) two ways (vs. 13-14), 2) two kinds of fruit (vs. 15-20), 3) two kinds of followers (vs. 21-23) and two kinds of builders (vs. 24-27). In each of these contrasts Jesus confronts the religion of his day, drawing a sharp distinction between grace and legalism.

The narrow road of verses 13-14 is **Grace Way**, the road less traveled.

- **Religious Road** is based on law. **Grace Way** is based on the relationship God offers us.

- **Religious Road** attempts to wrap Jesus in a political flag and dress him in a military uniform. **Grace Way** follows the footsteps of the Prince of peace, who teaches us to pray for our enemies.

- **Religious Road** trumpets dire warnings of Jesus’ return, spewing out fear of the future judgment awaiting those who fail to measure up. **Grace Way** centers on the here-and-now kingdom of God experienced by those who travel its narrow path.

- **Religious Road** is a grim way of spiritual death, dead men and women walking. **Grace Way** is the way of the full, abundant, joyful life of the risen Lord.

- **Religious Road** places its trust on good behavior and right doctrinal

beliefs. **Grace Way** is all about *faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone*.

- **Religious Road** instructs its followers to let religion make their decisions and check their brains at the door of their church. **Grace Way** encourages Christ-followers to make hard and uncomfortable choices—not just once in their life, but all the time.

Grace Way is the road less traveled. Those who accept Jesus' offer to join him on the road less traveled reflect the Light of Christ and Christ-centered fruits of love, mercy and forgiveness in a world of national, political, religious and racial intolerance, self-interest and pride.

Those who journey with Jesus on **Grace Way**, the road less traveled, know that denominational goals, bigger churches and more members take a backseat as the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed and lived out—the gospel of ministering to the least, the lost and the last.

Those who journey with Jesus on the road less traveled work as his hands and feet in this world, passing on the gift of Living Water to those who are spiritually thirsty—the Bread of Life to those who spiritually hunger—and the healing and forgiveness of Jesus to those who are battered and bruised by religion.

Those who journey with Jesus on **Grace Way** love others not because they are of the same political party, race or religion, or because their attitudes and cultures and habits appeal to them, but because God loves us all.

Those who journey with Jesus on the narrow path of **Grace Way** choose new life in Christ, and thus swim upstream against religious conventions and barriers. **Grace Way** insists that religious corporate interests are not as important as “one of the least of these brothers of mine...” (Matthew 25:40).

Jesus, God in the flesh, himself took the road less traveled. He took the road to humiliation and suffering, the road that led to self-sacrifice for the sake of others, the path of service rather than being served. Out of his love for you and me, and for the whole world, including the hundreds of millions who walk the miserable **Religious Road**, Jesus took the ultimate road less traveled, enduring the cross, despising the shame, so that we might know and travel **Grace Way**.

Grace at the Crossroads

There are many reasonable, all-too-human reasons why we resist grace. Even those of us who, by God's grace, journey with Jesus on the road less traveled endure times when we resist God's grace. We resist grace because grace

transforms us from our comfortable, all-too-human ways and habits. Humanly we have an aversion to the fundamentals of grace—it gets under our skin!

Standing at the crossroads of **Religious Road** and **Grace Way** is a singular event when we make a life-changing decision. But it is also a day-by-day process of yielding to Jesus, as our lives are transformed (2 Corinthians 4:16). We are all constantly faced with a choice: Will it be Jesus or will it be religion?

Choosing Jesus over religion does not instantly solve our physical problems. Choosing grace is not the same as choosing to spend a day at Disneyland. **Grace Way** is an intentional path of following Jesus no matter what.

Grace Way is following Jesus, whose life is about serving others rather than being served. Grace is about a God of love and vulnerability. Grace is about a God who refuses to control us, but instead always walks beside us, working with us, encouraging us, reasoning and living with us. Grace rewards us for Jesus' perfect behavior, rather than our own feeble, futile attempts at good behavior.

In these early days of 2010 join me in a commitment to **Grace Way**. Join with your brothers and sisters all over the world here at PTM and CWR in yielding to the grace of God, that our risen Lord might more fully live out his life of grace in our lives, for the glory of God. Let 2010, for each of us, be a year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:19)—an amazing year filled with God's grace!

Our free resource this month is titled *Beside Quiet Waters*, a wonderful compilation by the International Bible Society of God's promises of peace and rest to each of us, his children. Request your free copy using the enclosed card.

There are many projects that PTM's had in planning stages for some time that are now bringing forth fruit. One of them is *Free From Gravity* our exciting new contemporary ministry, available on our website (www.ptm.org). It's for everyone who is young at heart, but might especially appeal to younger members of your family or your friends. Be sure to tell them about it! Until next time,

Serving Jesus with you,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries