



April 2018

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.—John 15:13

By the grace of God, you and I have been written into the greatest love story ever. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the love story of God with us—and of course the leading role in this amazing drama is Jesus. **The greatest love story ever** is the story of God, in the person of Jesus, becoming flesh, coming from the eternity and splendor of heavenly places *to search us out and relentlessly pursue us* as his own beloved. Every spring the story of God's love for you and me springs eternal. Every spring Christ-followers ponder the wonder and the beauty of the Cross and the Resurrection, *the twin foundational building blocks of the greatest love story ever*.

The story of Desmond Doss, a pacifist soldier during World War 2 who received the Congressional Medal of Honor and a Purple Heart, is told in the 2017 award-winning movie "Hacksaw Ridge." Though he was beaten and humiliated by his fellow soldiers during basic training because he refused to touch a firearm, Doss *laid down his own life for his friends*—saving over 100 men on a steep cliff called "Hacksaw Ridge" during the Battle of Okinawa,

When his superiors questioned him, Doss explained his refusal to bear arms by citing the Old Testament command not to kill and Jesus' new commandment to love one's neighbor. But he did not refuse to serve. Desmond Doss objected to the term "conscientious objector" favoring "conscientious cooperator." Doss insisted he was willing to serve his country at the risk of his own life by tending to the wounds of his fellow soldiers on the battlefield. The military had grave reservations, but in the end they permitted Doss to go to war without a weapon.

Dispatched to the South Pacific, Doss and his fellow soldiers stepped into hell when they landed on Japanese-held Okinawa. It was a nightmarish scene of brutality and horrific bloodshed—critically wounded died alone in the mud next to the corpses of their comrades that littered the landscape. The other medics wanted to leave soldiers they deemed to have mortal wounds behind, but Doss protested.

Laying down his own life, without any means of defending himself, Doss was able to have many of the severely wounded sent to MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) units, though his fellow medics had left them for dead. Then, when his squadron was told to retreat, Doss remained to help retrieve the dying—single-handedly lowering 100 men over "Hacksaw Ridge" while exposed to enemy fire.

An inspiring example of Christ-like love, Desmond Doss was an unbelievable man doing unbelievable things for people who didn't even like him. His story of selfless self-sacrifice, of marching into hell for a heavenly cause, of saving men who had rejected him, is a Christ-like story of faith and commitment. Doss was a man of faith, a medic/healer who refused to take up his sword, but courageously risked his own life in the middle of staggering mayhem and bloodletting in order to help heal the wounds of his friends. The parallels in the military service and heroics of Desmond Doss to the selfless love of Jesus Christ are obvious.

In the greatest demonstration of love, Jesus laid down his life for the whole world, though no one, not even his disciples, gave him any promise or even hope of reciprocating his love. In fact, they betrayed him and abandoned him in his moment of need. Yet he loved them—and he loves the whole world—always and forever. Every spring Christians are called to remember **this greatest love story of all**—to remember Jesus—with *the twin foundational building blocks* that uphold our faith—the Cross and the Resurrection.

The Cross is of course the greatest demonstration of God's love for you and me, but it is also a sobering reminder of the commitment we made when we enlisted to follow Jesus. The unflinching commitment of Jesus to love each of us, to the very end, though it involved his own suffering and death on his cross, speaks to us, reminding us of our decision to pick up our own cross, forsaking our self-interest in saving our own life and being willing to lose all, in service of Jesus (Matthew 10:39; John 12:25).

When we pick up our own cross, whatever it may be to each of us, it is part of our spiritual death. The New Testament is filled with passages that speak of our surrender to God and our willingness to become a Christ-follower as being a time of our spiritual death.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of God, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:3-4).

The Cross and the Resurrection are *the twin foundational building blocks* of our faith—they are inseparable spiritual twins, interwoven and interlinked. The cross reminds us of the selfless sacrifice and service involved in our own spiritual death—the resurrection is the means by which we are infused with new life, graciously given by Jesus' victory over death and the grave. The cross of Christ is inexorably linked to his resurrection—as is our own: *"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive"* (1 Corinthians 15:22).

God has been faithful to us—by the glorious resurrection of our Lord, he has given us new life, so that in that new life we may serve others, in the name of Jesus. Before we embraced the grace of God, and before we surrendered and yielded our lives to Jesus that we might now become infused with the life of our risen Lord, we were dead in our sins. Before we embraced God's grace, and believed in **the greatest love story ever, we were oblivious of the One who loved.**

But the love of God is relentless—he never gives up. God's relationship with you and me is the great romance of our life. God's love is the greatest love—the greatest romance story of all. Jesus is always "there for us"—he is always near—he is always available—he is always opening his arms to us, sending us love notes and romantic invitations. How do we know of his love? What is the proof of his love? How much does he love us?

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

This greatest love story ever is about the adventures that God has taken, leaving no stone unturned to get our attention and to deliver the message of his love. **He is relentless—he will never give up**. He will not force us to accept his love but he will never go away. It is not possible to do something or fail to do something that will cause God to give up on us, because his love is not like human love—God's love endures anything and everything.

God's love has gone to hell and back for us—death and the grave could not hold Jesus, and because of his risen life, no hell of any kind can hold you or me. Jesus has reached into every hell you have ever experienced, or any you ever will—he has broken the gates of hell—and anything that might condemn or shame you.

While the love of God can be understood logically and experienced intellectually it is not fully experienced until one allows oneself to be grasped by him. Being grasped and enveloped and embraced by God's love is what Paul had in mind when he said "*I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me*" (Philippians 3:12, my emphasis).

This is the GOOD NEWS you and I share in proclaiming through the many media outlets and resources of CWR/PTM. We are boldly proclaiming THE GOOD NEWS that GOD REALLY DOES LOVE THE WORLD to a world in such desperate need of the gospel. The line Americans attribute to the flag, Old Glory... the one about "with liberty and justice for all" can only absolutely be attributed to the Cross and the Resurrection—the twin foundational building blocks of our faith.

So many people fall into the cracks in these United States, Canada and all around the world—so many suffer abuse, oppression, indignity and injustice—"liberty and justice for all" is not provided by any government or indeed any religion. But God makes his way into the dark places, into the soil of this tired old earth, soil that is soaked with the blood, sweat and tears of his little children—and offers his liberty and justice for all.

The GREATEST LOVE STORY EVER is that God loves YOU, and ME, and the WHOLE WORLD! With Paul, may we "take hold" of his love, may we fully embrace, believe and grasp his love, and so live in the fullness and confidence of his undying love for us all.

Thanks to each and every one of you who stand faithfully, back-to-back with friends, co-workers, brothers and sisters in Christ, your team members and partners in this worldwide work to publish and proclaim the greatest love story of all. BECAUSE OUR LORD AND SAVIOR IS RISEN, may we be filled with his love and may his great love, *like streams of living water* (John 7:38) flow out from us, from the life he lives within us. May we radiate the Light of the love of Jesus—may we beam with the blessed assurance that Jesus loves not just us, but the whole world!

Because of the staggering and stupendous, wonderful and magnificent love of God,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

PS. Here's a note from someone who is thankful for the work of CWR/PTM—which you support with your prayers and financial gifts. **THANK YOU** for your continued support!

There is much happening in the world that is painful and scary. But my wife and I are among the very blessed, because we belong to Jesus Christ and we listen to Greg and the team at CWR/PTM.—Nevada

CWR/PTM Prayer List—April 2018

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

I'm doing better but still haven't gotten my strength back and my blood pressure is not stable yet.—Georgia

Thank you for all the prayers. I came through my surgery OK and am hoping to be feeling better soon.—Illinois

Please pray for me and my brothers. We are retired, living on small incomes and have many health trials.—Maryland

My 59-year-old son just suffered his second stroke. He lives alone and has no one to care for him.—Kentucky

Pray for my wife's health and for my son, that he will find gainful work.—New York

Please pray for my wife—she has an inflamed joint in her hip that is causing much discomfort.—Florida

I recently had cancer and the doctors prescribed shots to keep my bones strong. Please pray for me.—North Carolina

Pray for financial easement of the overwhelming debts that many are experiencing.—Arizona

My husband and I are in our 80's and not in good health. Please keep us in your prayers.—Missouri

I'm having severe problems from clinical depression, nervous anxiety disorder and PTSD.—Tennessee

Please pray for me as I suffer from pain in my legs, knees and back.—South Carolina

I'm going to have knee replacement surgery; I'm unable to build up my cartilage through supplements.—Michigan

Please pray for healing for my knees and guidance on what is the best direction to take.—Idaho

Pray for my healing—I recently had to go to emergency for my blood pressure and dizziness.—Florida

Pray for me that God will give me strength to battle and put a stop to the sins that I do.—West Virginia

Could you please pray for me and my family? My dad died recently and I feel lost. I was really close to him.—Texas

I pray that God will protect me from evil and keep people away from me that try to take me from Jesus.—Delaware

Please pray for me. I am suffering with anxiety and fear. I need a miracle in my mental health.—Georgia

Please pray for my daughter as she is in a lot of pain.—Arizona

Please pray for my brother who is going through a divorce after suffering marital problems for 15 years.—Virginia

My heart palpitations have stopped—thank you for your prayers!—Florida

Please pray for my grandson who has to serve 12 months in jail—so far he's been doing great.—Alabama

Please pray for my sister who fell and has strained muscles. Please also pray for my granddaughter who needs an internship this summer.—Minnesota

Please pray for my daughter and her three children as she is going through a divorce and it's taking a toll on them, especially on my ten-year-old granddaughter.— Washington

Please continue to pray for my health as I have many things going wrong in my body.—Mississippi

Dear God: We bring you many requests and needs. You know each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for your love and grace, we pray in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—Amen.