



February 2019

Dear CWR/PTM Friends and Partners,

Those who attempt to please and appease God via their own accomplishments, good deeds and virtues find that it's a long and bitterly disappointing never-ending road. People who struggle down the broad road (Matthew 7:13) of Christ-less religion are dragging a ball and chain, because their best efforts to convince God to love them will never be enough.

I lived on that road for almost 40 years—I often call it “40 Miles of Bad Road” after an old Duane Eddy song (released in 1959, but who’s counting?!?). I discovered that the road to hell can be paved with the best of intentions.

Those who trudge down *the road of pleasing and appeasing God* are in bondage, jumping every time a religious authority tells them to. They may observe all the rituals, participate in all of the required ceremonies and fulfill all the obligations demanded by the religion to which they belong (a nice way of saying they are enslaved and owned by that religious entity)—but all of their work and efforts still won’t be enough to earn God’s love.

IRONICALLY, God already loves them. He loved them long before they ever started down the broad road of religious bondage. **IRONICALLY**, nothing they ever did or ever will do can ever change his love or increase the “amount” of love that God has for them.

Apart from the grace of God, the human condition is a hideous, horrible reality. Even as Christ-followers we wake up every morning with the grim reality that our bodies are broken down hunks of junk—falling apart physically—while our heart and soul is in need of spiritual healing. There is no way that you and I can produce enough righteousness to save us from our vanity, ego, lusts and desires.

The incredibly wonderful news is, of course, that Jesus heals us, by the grace of God. The incredibly beyond-belief, staggering news is that God loves us because that’s who he is, not because of who we are or become, or because of what we do or have done. ***Our healing and redemption is not an exchange for services rendered.*** The “exchange” (such a “deal” for you and me!) has already taken place, on the cross, by our Savior and Healer.

Legalistic religion continually keeps its followers agitated and in fear with relentless tirades about human vices, dysfunctions and shortcomings. Legalistic, Christ-less religion is all about shame and guilt—I believe Christ-less religion invented the guilt trip. It does not take a rocket scientist or an electronic genius to explain that many human behaviors are definitely not Christ-like. But will a harsh and ruthless campaign of self-denial, wherein we engage in a war against our vices, sins and lust make us Christ-like?

The good news is that God loves us, but sadly, most humans are not inclined to accept and fully embrace his love because they are too much in love with all the “good” things they have done to earn and deserve God’s love.

Embracing God's love fully and unconditionally means that we will repent of our vices AND OUR VIRTUES. *Anything we produce as a result of our efforts is tainted, substandard and corrupted, as compared with the righteousness given to us in Christ, by the grace of God.*

It's not that hard to be convinced that we need to repent of our sins. But it is a much harder proposition to believe that we must also repent of our virtues. There's an incredible line in the grand old hymn "The Old Rugged Cross" that goes "...till my trophies at last I lay down."

We must lay down all our trophies at his cross—we must surrender all those achievements that institutionalized religion assures us will earn us God's favor once we accomplish them (preferably in their buildings, under their control, observing their teachings, dogmas and rituals). Repentance involves laying down all the trophies Christ-less religion has awarded us, while deceiving us with the BIG LIE—the FAKE NEWS—that religious trophies have great value.

When Paul laid down all his trophies before the cross of Christ he considered them nothing but dung. Paul surrendered what Christ-less religion defined as virtues produced by his efforts, so that he would be found in Christ, "not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes by God and is by faith" (Philippians 3:9). **Religious trophies are worthless!**

Accepting Jesus Christ means that we must renounce the works of the flesh—the works of the flesh include both the sins of the flesh and the presumed virtues that the FAKE NEWS of bad news religion convinces humans as having spiritual value contributing to their salvation.

Hell-fire and brimstone preachers harangue their followers about their vices...and it seems they regularly yell and scream when they have nothing else to talk about. But yelling about sin is an easy target. We all have sinned—we all continue to sin because we live in a fleshly body of lust, vanity and greed.

Vices are vices—vices and sins are not Christ-like. However, the hell-fire and brimstone marching and chowder society insists that the answer to vices is hard work and effort on the part of sinners so that they can produce virtues that will please God. But **virtues produced assuming they will earn God's love are just as much an obstacle to our relationship with God as are our vices.** All our works are dirty rags. All our deeds amount to nothing. Without Jesus we can do nothing and we are nothing.

All we do, all we produce (vices or virtues), is incapable of changing God's love for us and his willingness to always forgive us and forever love us. Of course we should reject sin and run the other way, but sin is not merely the sins of our flesh. Sin is anything that takes our focus away from Jesus.

Both "bad" sins of lust, vanity and greed and "good" sins of religious requirements, programs, ceremonies and rituals that are presumed to earn the grace and favor of God take our focus away from Jesus Christ.

Strict religious rule-keeping assumes that spiritual character is being developed, that goodness is being produced, righteousness earned and merits are being accumulated. Strict rule-keeping assumes that our efforts are closing the distance between us and God. *But strict rule-keeping leads us away from God, not toward him! The greater the emphasis on humans earning God's favor by avoiding sin and performing external actions the greater the distance between us and the cross of Christ.*

Christ-less legalism urges us to work harder and whip ourselves into spiritual shape so that

God will be more pleased with us than he would have been otherwise. Legalism assumes God to be less than what he is—a God who can be manipulated and appeased if only we can ever accomplish enough to soften his heart. But God loves us now as much as he ever has or ever will, and his love has absolutely nothing to do with what we do or fail to do.

Here's God's message of his love and grace for you and me:

I've seen the ugly side of you and I'm not going anywhere. I know all there is to know about you and I love you anyway. It doesn't matter what you have done or what you do, you can't make me stop loving you.

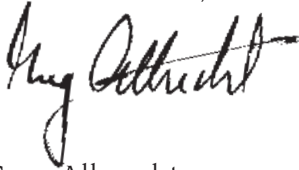
I've seen all of your attempts to produce goodness and manufacture virtue. I've seen the futility you have experienced as you attempted to build enough character to earn some "brownie points" from me.

I've seen you trapped by the edicts and teachings of legalistic religion, as you have flailed away, in vain, trying to be good enough. I know you've done your time on 40 Miles of Bad Road. I know all of that, I forgive it and I still love you anyway.

It doesn't matter how fast you have run, how hard you have worked to be a person worthy of my love, you can't make me love you by anything you do or accomplish and you can't make me stop loving you either.
I ALWAYS LOVED YOU AND ALWAYS WILL!

Thank you for your part in this ministry and our collective mission in proclaiming the authentic love and grace of God as contrasted with the FAKE NEWS AND BIG LIE of Christ-less religion. Thanks for your support and your prayers. Thank you for allowing us to serve you!

Until next time, I remain your brother in Christ,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

PS. Here are two letters of thanks we want to share with you. **Thank you** for your prayers and donations which help us continue to share the good news of God's love and grace around the world.

When I want a biblical question answered I do not ask my pastor—he seems to regard me as an inconvenience and a bother. Sometimes it seems to me that he may not even have an answer. I ask CWR/PTM—sometimes I read the answers in your letters and magazines or hear the answers to my questions on the daily or weekly audio you provide—even before I ask them! It's uncanny how you seem to anticipate my thoughts—but then, maybe it's not "uncanny" at all. Thanks for being there and serving so many around the world in Jesus' name.—Iowa

I used to read your literature years ago, and a few months ago I found you again—by chance? Coincidence? I don't think so. Anyway, I'm back and...wow...your ministry is better than ever! I am so enjoying all the resources you provide. Thanks so much for keeping on keeping on all these years. Great to be back with you!—New Jersey

CWR/PTM Prayer List—February 2019

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.

My left knee has pain in bending and walking. I exercise and walk, but it is painful.—California

Please pray for peace and strength for my family members to get through trying times of life.—Illinois

I have a very important financial decision to make. Pray that God will direct me to make the right decision.—West Virginia

Please pray for my mother who is 91 and in poor health. She is in an assisted living facility, which is very expensive and emotionally trying for me and my sister. Pray for God's guidance and help with this chapter of our lives.—Florida

Please continue to pray for my grandson who has cancer. He's only 25 years old.—Tennessee

Please pray for healing of the inflammation of my temple artery.—Louisiana

My brother has dementia and needs to go to assisted living but he hasn't so far. I have power of attorney for him. Please pray for us.—Colorado

Please pray for my sister who is living in Brazil. She just had open heart surgery and is not doing well.—New York

Please pray for my son to stop smoking. He has been coughing for a long time.—California

Please pray for my husband. He had surgery on both eyes. He goes to dialysis three times a week and suffers from COPD.—North Carolina

Please pray for my son who has multi-melanoma cancer. He is 44 years old, married with two small children.—Wisconsin

I've been diagnosed with heart failure. Please pray for a speedy and complete recovery.—Texas

Please pray for my granddaughter who needs a kidney and for my friend's daughter who was involved in a serious car accident.—Oklahoma

Please keep me in your prayers as I have just had a battle with congestive heart failure. I am doing better now, and I pray I won't, but I may have another episode.—Illinois

Please pray for my mother who has cancer. She was given less than a year to live. Her dementia is also getting worse. Thank you for your prayers.—Pennsylvania

Please pray for us older people on fixed incomes and struggling to just exist from one month to the next. It's hard, but with God's help, we will survive!—Tennessee

My husband of almost 52 years had to be put in a nursing home. This is very hard on us. Please pray for mercy and strength.—Virginia

Please pray for my wife's knee. She is in pain 24-7. The doctors will do nothing until she loses 100 pounds.—Washington

Please pray that God will heal my brother as he suffers from pneumonia and weak lungs.—Ohio

Please pray for my friend who has broken a lot of bones these past two years. Please also pray about my son's knee problems.—Illinois

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.