



October 2019

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it to completion until the day of Jesus Christ.—Philippians 1:3-6 (my emphasis)

It was about fifteen years ago. Eddie was the outspoken and engaging leader of the “gym rats” at the gym my wife and I still frequent. The “gym rats” were all 80 years of age, or older, and they all “worked out” every day (if that’s an apt description of what people of a “certain” age do in a gym). Though we didn’t pass the age requirements for full membership, Eddie invited us to join the “gym rats” for their monthly breakfast at a local coffee shop after “working out.” Eddie forewarned me that even though some were not as mentally acute as they once had been, they often had vigorous discussions on a variety of topics. He said, “Greg, not all of us have all the marbles we once had, but we bring all the marbles we have left to the table.”

Getting older requires adjustments and modifications as we write the later chapters in the stories of our lives. As we age, we continually encounter new stages, new challenges, new limitations and new opportunities. Physically, we lose mobility, our eyesight and hearing diminish and as our friend Eddie said, *we don’t have as many marbles as we did before*. Ironically, we all hope to live to old age, but then when it arrives we complain, don’t we?

Emotionally, we seniors can feel that the walls are closing in on us—we can feel life shrinking rather than expanding. We lose friends and family and we are lonely. We desire more time with and from our children, but, as the lyrics of the song “Cats in the Cradle” explain, each and every generation becomes busy and overwhelmed with the demands placed on their own lives and unable to spend much time with parents and grandparents.

In one of those old “Peanuts” comic strips Charlie Brown was at the beach, building a beautiful, ornate sandcastle. He spent all day working on it. He finally finished his creation and as he stood back to admire it a storm arose—huge waves attacked the beach, crashing down and destroying his masterpiece. Looking at the remains of his sandcastle he reflected, “I know there’s a lesson in all of this—I’m just not sure what it is.”

Like Charlie Brown, we can all wonder what lesson we are supposed to be learning as we age. It is easy and so natural to look back on a long life and focus on regrets, grieving our failures—becoming self-absorbed by debilitating emotions as we endlessly gaze into the rearview mirror of our lives. Paul reminds us of God’s promise to each of us:

“...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it to completion until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:3-6).

When he wrote the book of Philippians, Paul was imprisoned. He realized that much, if not all, of his productive ministry was over. His physical life hung in the balances. He had no idea how

much more time on planet earth he had left. But instead of writing a letter filled with regret and grief about unrealized dreams and ambitions and lost opportunities in his past, *Paul looked forward*. Using the metaphor of a race when the runner does not look back nor drop out *Paul looked forward*.

You have no doubt heard the adage—growing old is inevitable; growing up is optional. Paul was inevitably growing old...that he could not change. But Paul had determined to embrace the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and grow up spiritually. Paul's choice was to trust God, believe in Jesus and "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 3:18).

Paul's goal was Jesus. He wasn't fixated on the rearview mirror, but instead Paul looked out of the front windshield of his life. Paul focused on Jesus... "*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal...*" (Philippians 3:13). Yes, Paul was growing older but he was also growing "up"—he was growing and maturing in Christ.

Paul was restrained, by virtue of his imprisonment, from doing what he wanted to do. He was not as independent nor was he in control of his life as he would like, but he did not allow his limitations to define him...

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is like to be in need, and I know what it is like to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want..." (Philippians 4:11-12).

Life is not over though the calendar indicates we have passed a milestone—life is not over when we endure limitations and health issues and disease. Life is not over when we are more dependent than we once were—life is not over just because we can't bring "*as many marbles to the table*" as we once did.

As seniors we have contributions to make that we never were qualified for when we were young. We have graduated from the school of hard knocks, with the benefits of lessons learned. And the lessons we learned at the school of hard knocks were expensive—tuition isn't cheap in that school, is it? As seniors we can, in one way or another, offer insights gained over many decades to those younger than we are (if we can just get someone to listen, that is!)

Senior citizens converse, read, take walks, listen to music, attend events, visit with friends, support others in need, serve as volunteers, become involved in a variety of service projects...and let's not forget, take full advantage of those senior discounts! *Senior citizens plant trees that will shade the next generation*. There are many tasks for each of us—*life is not over until it is over*. We all have, in the words of Robert Frost, "miles to go before we sleep."

Karen and I live about a mile from Santa Anita Racetrack in Arcadia, California. We have not "gone to the races" at Santa Anita for several years, but we still enjoy watching televised races as these magnificent animals energetically and gracefully make their way around the track. These gorgeous horses are not focused on the starting gate behind them but they are singularly "*straining toward what is ahead...*" as they "*press on toward the goal*" (Philippians 3:13).

I often think of senior citizenship as being like a race horse *rounding the final turn* of the track, now able to fully see the finish line just ahead. One of my ministry friends said that old age is the time when we start cramming for finals! As we can more easily see the finish line, we become more aware of eternal values, and less concerned with the physical, here-today-and-gone-tomorrow fleeting interests. "Cramming for finals" does not mean a mad rush to do more and work harder hoping we will qualify for what Jesus has already given us.

Rather, by the grace of God, we give thanks “to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light” (Colossians 1:12). However, “cramming for finals” does mean that we know that each hour and each day and each week seems more important than it once was, because we realize we don’t have that much “time” left here on planet earth. Thus we are not sluggish or lazy, for as Paul says, “The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11).

Rounding the final turn means being able to see the finish line more clearly than ever before (and that’s a good thing because many of us don’t see as well as we once did!) We can be thankful for the work that God started in us long ago and the maturity in Christ we have been granted by the grace of God. We are assured that “...**he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 1:6).

As I conclude, I want to tell you that while I have stressed the second part of Philippians 1:6 in this letter, his words in the first part of this verse ring true to me, and perfectly describe my love and affection for you all—“I thank God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now...” Amen and amen!

NEVER FORGET, my dear friends and partners in the gospel: God assures us he has saved us by his grace. God has qualified us to share in the inheritance he has for us. God promises we are his workmanship and he will finish his work in us. Jesus turns to us and says “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Let it be Lord, let it be.

Your brother in Christ,

Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. Here is a letter from a friend in Canada, thanking us for this ministry YOU support through your prayers and offerings. THANK YOU!

The house of cards upon which my religious house was built has turned to dust. All I have left is what your ministry is all about—Jesus—God with us and for us. I served as part of a religious institution for many years, but given a huge mess in my life (including divorce), I am now turning to Jesus while leaving organized religion. I deeply appreciate all the work you do and the encouragement and teaching I receive through Plain Truth Ministries.

CWR/PTM Prayer List—October 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.

Though we go through trials, God is in our lives helping us through them. Your ministry helps us see that.—Oklahoma

Thanks for your prayers about my A-Fib condition. I still have attacks, but I'm doing much better.—North Carolina

My niece's infant son needs prayers for several severe health problems.—Tennessee

I'm experiencing financial difficulties. I pray I'll be able to send in more to support the work of CWR/PTM.—Virginia

Please pray that the beautiful gospel would break into the religious strongholds in America.—Wisconsin

Please pray that my adult son and I may have a better relationship as father and son.—New York

Please pray for my loving wife—her legs are weak and numb and she can hardly walk.—Florida

Please pray for me as I'm being treated for bone cancer.—Pennsylvania

I ask for your prayers as I suffer from arthritis and high cholesterol.—Mississippi

Please pray for me as I'm going to have knee replacement surgery.—Kentucky

Please pray for me. I'm 82 and I was hospitalized for a month with congestive heart failure and lung problems.—Texas

Please pray for a friend who had surgery for a blocked artery in his neck.—Maryland

Please pray for my sister—she suffers from back pain due to being struck by a car.—Florida

Please continue to pray that my unemployment situation improves soon.—North Carolina

Please pray for health and well-being for myself, my mom and all my siblings.—Arizona

Please pray for my husband's health which is failing. He gets really depressed about it.—Kentucky

Pray I won't have severe reactions as I receive iron infusions for my red blood cell count.—New York

Please pray for my healing from an auto-immune disorder and Parkinson's.—Virginia

Please pray that my son will get a job soon. He hasn't worked for over three years.—California

My wife and son suffer from intense headaches and depression, and I have tendonitis. Please pray for us.—Florida

Please pray for my sister who has Stage Four lung cancer. She is in the hospital with pneumonia.—Ohio

I'm having problems with my left eye and I'm also having problems with my bladder. Please pray.—Arizona

Pray for my nephew, recently divorced and having a rough time. He and his ex have joint custody of a son.—Pennsylvania

My husband recently died and we have no children so I'm living alone and I have health problems.—Alabama

Please continue to remember me in your prayers. I still have difficulty with PTSD and clinical depression.—Tennessee

Please pray for my cousin who has a rare form of cancer, and my elderly aunt who is caring for her.—Kentucky

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.