



August 2020

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

Overwhelmed and buried by their own shame and guilt, driven by religious misunderstandings of God and who he is, many are desperately trying to please and appease an angry god whom they believe has not yet forgiven them. Indoctrinated into thinking God responds and acts just like they do, many believe forgiveness works something like this:

Many see forgiveness as a gift one can (or must) give to another once that person pays enough compensation—then and only then may they entertain the idea of forgiving another.

But FOR-give means what is given BEFORE, not AFTER. FOR-give, not AFTER-give.

Because religion has made God into a human image, many assume God makes us earn his forgiveness by our blood, sweat and tears. Many erroneously reason they too are justified in making those whom they might forgive go through hell BEFORE forgiving them.

God's forgiveness is once for all—once and for all. He for-gives and he never takes it back. God forgives ALL of us—his forgiveness has been imparted and granted on the cross of Christ. However, God does not force us to accept his freely given forgiveness.

When we surrender to God and ask him for his forgiveness, we are actually thanking him for a spiritual reality that already exists. When we surrender to God and ask him to forgive us we are doing something un-human—after all, who wants to ask anyone, let alone God, to forgive them? Thus, when we surrender to God and ask him for his forgiveness, we are accepting the eternal truth and certainty of his grace. Apart from his grace leading us to repent, we would not, of and by ourselves, ask him to forgive us.

God's forgiveness does not depend on how often we ask, how much we beg or how many tears we shed, how much penance we perform or upon how many others we have forgiven.

- If we must ask God to forgive us each and every time we sin and fall short, and if God refuses to forgive us until we do so, what if we, being mortal and imperfect, miss a day or two and forget to ask him to forgive us for the sins we committed that day? Are our sins still hanging over us?
- What if, when we initially ask God to forgive us, we forget specific sins we committed many years and decades ago—is God filled with revenge, holding these sins we have not acknowledged over our heads? *Does God's forgiveness depend on our memory?*
- If we believe that God does not forgive unless and until we dutifully request forgiveness for each and every sin, then what is his true nature? Isn't he more of a tyrannical and condemning god than the God of love, mercy and grace?

God will always forgive—no matter what. His love is so inclusive and all-embracing he has already forgiven the entire world. No one can stop God from forgiving them...or anyone else!

God will not force the entire world to accept his freely given forgiveness. **The totality and**

universality of God's forgiveness is not in question—*what is yet to be determined is whether individual humans will accept God's forgiveness, mercy, grace and love. The Jesus Way of life is defined as one of gratitude to God for his forgiveness, rather than a life of daily penance, wherein we must beg him to spare us from his wrath.*

We are all, while in this flesh, sinful and imperfect. However, according to the gospel of Jesus Christ, when we believe in and accept Jesus, God determines not to “see us” as sinners. Instead, God perceives each of us via our new and transformed spiritual reality and identity—as his precious children.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (Matthew 6:12).

Some say this passage in the Lord's Prayer means that God will not forgive us unless and until we forgive others. “After”-giving corrupts and perverts the biblical definition of the word “forgive.” “Forgive” means FOR-give, not AFTER-give. That interpretation of what Jesus said twists the gospel so that God's forgiveness is understood as conditional. God's forgiveness is, as taught and believed by hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, an if-then dynamic. Many, if not most, believe IF and WHEN we forgive others, THEN AND ONLY THEN, will God forgive them/us.

There is something really upsetting about the 100%-with-no-exceptions forgiveness that Jesus proclaimed throughout his teachings. The forever-and-ever-no-ifs-and-or-buts forgiveness announced in the gospel of the Kingdom of God upsets everybody except the person who craves it.

The reality is that apart from God, we humans are unable to pass on the love, grace, mercy and forgiveness of God. As Christ-followers we do not forgive others “out of the goodness of our heart” nor are we genuinely forgiving others hoping to convince God that he should forgive us.

Better stated, the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ goes something like this: *Since we have been forgiven, we can do nothing else but forgive others.* God's forgiveness is a fore-gone conclusion—it is over and done with. There are no performances we must achieve or payments we must make. The word is FOR-give, not AFTER-give.

If God refuses to forgive us unless and until we forgive others then not only is his love, grace and mercy dependent on our behavior, it turns the entire gospel of Jesus Christ upside-down. The truth is that we are unable to forgive others with God's forgiveness until we fully embrace God's forgiveness which has already been granted to us.

When we grasp, embrace and lay hold on the forgiveness of God we are given a new identity in Christ—accepting God's forgiveness creates a new identity in us. Christ-followers live as forgiven children of God—we know we have been forgiven and we live out, as the risen Lord Jesus lives in us, lives wherein we pass on that same forgiveness to others.

We pass on divine forgiveness to others in ever-increasing ways as we grow and mature in Christ. We are not now perfect, in this flesh, nor will we ever be. Forgiving others, as we have been forgiven, even when we fully embrace God's forgiveness to and for us is one of the hardest things any human can ever do.

In another widely believed misconception about forgiveness many believe forgiveness is necessary because of the harm the person who fails to forgive will experience.

They believe that forgiveness is a tool—a spiritual medicine—that forgivers use to treat themselves, because anger and resentment is like an acid that is emotionally and spiritually eating them alive.

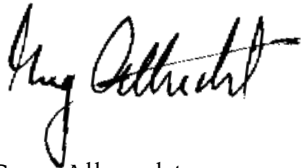
Seen in this way the forgiver is forgiving because they will benefit. Seen in this way we should forgive because it helps us. So, according to this perspective, let's just forget about the wrong and move on, because continuing to grind on past hurts and pains will only hurt ourselves. This notion about forgiveness is widely believed because it is based on self-interest.

- We do not genuinely forgive others because it will help us anymore than we forgive others because unless and until we do God will withhold his forgiveness from us.
- Christ-followers forgive because it is the gift of God—we forgive because it is fundamental to our faith. We forgive because at the depth of our souls we realize that since God has forgiven us, who are we to withhold his forgiveness to others?
- Forgiveness is not a gift that we wrap in a protective sandwich bag and put it in our freezer, keeping it safe for ourselves. Forgiveness is not like the one talent one of the servants (Matthew 25:24-25) took and hid in the ground, burying it so that when God demanded it, the servant would have it to use for himself.

Thanks be to God, he has forgiven you and me and transformed us from who and what we were, given us a new identity in Christ, so that we are now his dear children!

Never forget, we are, by his grace, forgiven children of God!

Because of his amazing, forever-and-ever grace,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. Here are two notes from friends who are grateful for the work that we all are doing together, collectively, through this ministry.

Every month, without fail, you send me a letter and a magazine that always feeds me with spiritual food. Sometimes you do that with humor, sometimes with stories but always with logic and grace. You don't yell at or demean those you serve. Because of you and this ministry I am on a path and direction where I follow Jesus. This is my journey in life now, and you are so instrumental in helping me along the Jesus Way. Many thanks!—Mississippi

It was never more clear to me how much I value and appreciate PTM than during the pandemic. We're all having to adjust to "the new normal"—but during those lonely days of fear and isolation you served us, in the name of Jesus. Thanks so very much!—New York

CWR/PTM Prayer List—August 2020

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.

Please pray for all those who are dealing with financial problems because of the corona virus pandemic.—California

Please pray for the healing of my prostate cancer. Thank you for your prayers!—Saskatchewan, Canada

Please pray my blood pressure will return to normal, and for other health troubles. Thanks for the prayers.—Tennessee

Please pray for my cousin who is anemic and has high blood pressure. She may also soon have to go on dialysis. Thank you to everyone for your prayers.—Ohio

Please pray for my sister who is in a rehab nursing home. She is suffering with possible Parkinson's Disease and other health problems.—Louisiana

Please pray for my daughter-in-law that the radiation treatments for her breast cancer will be successful.—Colorado

Please pray that I will use wisdom in handling my finances and be able to pay all my bills.—Maryland

Please pray that God will help me discover what he has in store for me in this new phase of my life—to do his will and to find joy and be of service for others.—Tennessee

I request your prayers for encouragement and comfort. I was a caretaker for my elderly mother for many years, and she recently passed away.—California

Please pray for my grandson's wife who has foot, ankle and back pain.—Minnesota

Please pray for my son and daughter-in-law. They are having severe financial problems and they are under a lot of stress.—Pennsylvania

I had triple bypass heart surgery last year. I truly believe Christ was guiding the hands of the surgeons. Please pray for my continued physical healing and spiritual growth.—Texas

Please pray for my son, who has severe back and neck pain. He had several surgeries for this several years ago but he continues to be in terrible pain.—Tennessee

Please pray for my friend as she has a skin problem that isn't healing. I pray God will continue to bless CWR/PTM and all those involved with this life-changing ministry.—Arizona

I need God's healing and encouragement. My lung cancer was in remission for a few years, but it has now returned and I will have to endure chemotherapy again. Please pray for me.—California

Please pray for my daughter and granddaughter to find a good place to live and for my niece who is going through a rough time in her life right now.—Tennessee

Please pray for my elderly mother, who recently lost her balance and had a bad fall. She underwent surgery for a broken hip and six fractured vertebrae. She is doing better but she is still in a lot of pain.—South Carolina

Please pray for my friend who is recovering from a mild stroke, and fighting prostate cancer. I appreciate all your prayers and I thank God for his faithfulness and healing.—California

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.