



April 2021

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

*Love and marriage, love and marriage
They go together like a horse and carriage
This I tell you, brother, you can't have one without the other.*
— Frank Sinatra, 1955

If you receive hard copies of these monthly letters, this month's message should arrive in your mailbox at the beginning of Passion Week—when traditionally Christians recall the week of historical events leading up to Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

With the cross of Christ and his resurrection as our focal point, as we remember the first Passion Week, almost 2,000 years ago, I begin this month's letter with a song about love and marriage recorded by Frank Sinatra 66 years ago? *These lyrics can help us take another look at divine love and marriage in the light of the cross of Christ, the full revelation of God's love.*

I believe that the cross of Christ is by far and away the most stupendous demonstration of the love of God ever. Ever! Because God's love never wavers and is always consistent and present, it may be a fool's errand to start categorizing and "rating" any act of God's love, but stay with me... *surely no demonstration of God's love can ever match the cross of Christ.*

The cross of Christ and the magnificent and unsurpassed divine love of God are absolutely and forever married together. In human marriage two fallible and flawed people pursue the impossible ideal of self-sacrificially and unconditionally loving each other. Inevitably, husbands and wives encounter and realize the reality that humans are incapable of giving unconditional love.

But there is another kind of marriage—a divine union based on unconditional love and passion. Passion Week reminds us of the passion of Jesus—"passion" is often associated with the love expressed in sexual desire and intercourse, but "passion" is more than physical intimacy. "Passion" defines the suffering that is always associated with genuine and authentic love—self-sacrificial behavior and actions that form the heart and core of love.

In Ephesians 5:25-33 Paul explains and illustrates the divine love of Jesus Christ for his own body, his universal body of followers (the church). Paul says that Christ loves his church—Christ followers—and *gave himself up for her [his passion] to make her holy, cleansing her...so that he might present her [we, his followers, his universal church, his body] to himself...without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless* (vs. 27). Then Paul reminds us that when a man is *united to his wife...the two will become one flesh* (vs. 31).

The cross of Christ is the evidence of his unflinching and steadfast passion and fidelity—the cross stands forever as a symbol of his love. The cross is the sign that stands forever of the divine love it takes to unite us with Christ! **The cross of Christ is the full revelation of the love of God.**

How are we united with Christ? Because of how lovable we are? Because of how hard we have

worked to present ourselves to him as a beautiful wife, *without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish* (Ephesians 5:27)?

We don't purchase or create the wedding dress we wear as the bride of the Lamb—rather, fine linen, bright and clean is given to us to wear (Revelation 18:8). We become one flesh with Jesus because of his supreme and unsurpassed love revealed on and through his cross, whereby **HE PRESENTS US TO HIMSELF WITHOUT STAIN OR WRINKLE OR ANY OTHER BLEMISH, BUT HOLY AND BLAMELESS** (Ephesians 5:27).

In our divine marriage with Jesus, the Lamb of God, we become so intimately and passionately united with him that we, in a spiritually mysterious and transcendent way, become one with him and one in him.

The cross of Christ testifies that we are now in Christ, and he is ours, by his incomparable love and grace demonstrated and given to us on his cross. The cross of Christ reminds us he has done all that is necessary to qualify us to be his wife...as Paul says, *he presents us to himself!* We don't present ourselves to him...through his passion *he presents us to himself!*

Jesus, our Lord and Savior, became sin for us. *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God* (2 Corinthians 5:21). In our divine marriage with Jesus, the Lamb of God, he became one with us and in us, one flesh if you will, by taking on our imperfections, our flaws and our sins.

There is nothing worthy or spiritually beautiful enough about you and me that Jesus would take us as his wife on the strength of our own attempts to qualify to be his wife. Paul tells us that the love of God has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:12-14).

We can't buy, earn or deserve God's love. We can't ever be spiritually beautiful and perfect and holy enough for him to be one with us. We can't ever qualify to be deserving of his love. **BUT—the Cross of Christ testifies about God's love finding a way for us to be the bride of Christ.** As his bride, the dazzling wedding dress with which we are adorned is given to us as a gift of his passion.

He was fully aware that we were and are filled with lust, anger, resentment and vanity—he was fully aware that we of and by ourselves are incapable of unconditional love for him. Out of his passionate love for you and me, he revealed and demonstrated the lengths to which he would go to present us to himself without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (Ephesians 5:27).

- God loves you so much he has engraved you on the palm of his hand (Isaiah 49:16).
- God loves you so much he saves all your tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8).
- God loves you so much he knows the precise number of hairs on your head (Matthew 10:30).
- God loves you with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3).

The cross of Christ is the eternal symbol and reality of the forever and everlasting love of God becoming one with you and me.

Three Stages or Acts of God's Love Revealed in and Through Jesus Christ

Jesus was born as *Emmanuel*—God with us (Matthew 1:23). God became a man and put flesh on his

love, revealing the fullness of that love to us, in Christ. When Jesus became incarnate, at his birth, his presence in our flesh was 1) the first revelation—the first act introducing the life and ministry of Jesus which revealed God—his love, mercy and grace.

2) The second act, and perhaps the supreme revelation and evidence of God's love was Jesus, the Lamb of God self-sacrificially giving himself for us. Jesus willingly accepted all that we are (our sin, our self-serving lust, our hatred and our corruption) and perfected us, so that we might become his own, as Paul says *he presents us to himself without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

3) The third act in revealing God's matchless love is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through the forever alive love of God we are given the riches of God's grace, and we are invited to experience eternal intimacy of the life of our risen Lord living within us, forever united with us. Jesus is risen. He is forever alive. He will forever live within us and forever will be united, one flesh if you will, with us. We will forever be married to him. He will never leave us or forsake us, nor can anyone take our risen Lord from us. We are his and he is ours, by the grace, mercy and love of God!

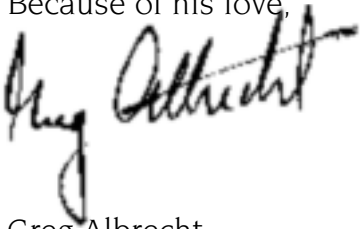
The cross of Christ is not a warm and fuzzy security blanket to warm our hearts. **The cross of Christ does not remove the reality of suffering in our lives, and the necessity of picking up our own cross and following him.**

Paul testifies, *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me* (Galatians 2:20). *The way of the cross is a life in which we, as Christ followers, fully participate in the love of God and, while we do not deserve the love, mercy and grace of God we live, share and display it through its presence in us.*

The cross of Christ is the eternal, unequalled revelation of God's supreme and forever and undying and everlasting love for you and me! May this beautiful truth assure you—may the love, mercy and grace of God continue to comfort and cover and unite you in and with our Lord and Savior, who is our beloved all in all, now and forever!

A joyful and Christ-centered Easter to you all!

Because of his love,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

CWR/PTM Prayer List—April 2021

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 request prayers for God's guidance for my retirement and part-time employment. Thank you for all the encouraging articles, letters, books and all the resources available on your website.—Maryland

Please pray for my granddaughter who suffers with migraines.—Minnesota

Your messages are blessings from God. Please keep praying for me. I'm having another spell with nerves and depression.—Louisiana

Please pray for our family. My brother recently died from complications due to Covid-19, and my sister-in-law was in the hospital with it too, but now she is grieving his loss while also at home recovering.—California

Please pray for the healing of all the division in this country. Unfortunately, religion and politics are so intertwined for so many people. Lord, give us your peace.—Texas

Please pray for all the people who are suffering from depression because of the pandemic and the isolation and uncertainty it has caused.—Delaware

Please pray that my daughter finds a job soon. Thank you for your prayers.—North Carolina

Please pray for God's help in my life, as everything seems to be going wrong.—Puerto Rico

Please pray for me and my family. We are struggling to make ends meet and I haven't been able to get an unemployment check yet, even though I qualified for it. Thank you for all you do to encourage us.—Michigan

Please pray for my friend who is suffering from complications from Covid-19. She's home now, but she still has pneumonia and "adult onset asthma." She was really healthy and active before this disease struck.—Oklahoma

Please pray for my family and friends who are having so many health problems.—Arkansas

Please pray for my mother, who is 88 years old and is in a weakened state due to shingles that affected her nervous system. Please pray for God to ease her pain.—Illinois

Please pray for my friend who has prostate cancer and another friend who has arthritis in his jaw. And also, please pray for me, I've had a minor stroke and I suffered a broken arm.—Mississippi

Please pray for all the Covid-19 victims and the medical staff.—Texas

Keep up the good work. I'm praying for everyone involved with CWR/PTM.—Georgia

Please pray for my daughter who has high blood pressure and the doctors can't find the cause. And please pray for all my health problems as well.—Louisiana

My friend has colon cancer and will soon be having surgery. Please pray that it is successful and that the surgeon will be able to remove all of the cancer.—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.