



August 2022

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Anxiety and fear impact our world. Disturbing and horrific news overwhelms us so that when we do hear good news—such as the good news of the gospel—we can have trouble fully hearing and appreciating it. We are now, once again as in so many hundreds of times since Jesus originally said it, experiencing, in our cities, on national settings and international stages, *"...wars and rumors of wars..."* (Matthew 24:6). Just a few months ago we were shocked by war-mongering Vladimir Putin, a despot if ever there was one, as he directed Russian armies to brutalize the Ukraine, a neighboring, sovereign nation.

It is important for us to realize what Jesus was saying in Matthew 24:6 *"...wars and rumors of wars."* Some religious authorities cite this passage attempting to keep their followers in a high state of speculative and "prophetic" agitation, neglecting to finish reading the verse, let alone attempting to understand the historical context of this chapter. Jesus says *"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed"* (Matthew 24:6).

We are alarmed and agitated when we have no assurance of stability and peace. When we have no hope in our heart we are lost and alone. *Without Jesus Christ we have no heart, no courage, no joy.* Notice the three affirmations of Jesus in John 16:33: 1) *in me you may have peace*; 2) *in the world you will have trouble*, 3) *take heart! I have overcome the world.*

Some imagine authentic Christians as people who are always filled with happiness and resolutely unmoved by the suffering and pain all around them, even in the midst of *"wars and rumors of wars."* But the gospel of Jesus Christ opposes that false primrose-lane picture. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not deny the problems and pains of life. Jesus was not immune from the world—he overcame the world by self-sacrificially accepting all of its hatred, animosity and violence.

Jesus says *"in this world you will have trouble."* This is not breaking news to Christ-followers, who are at rest in him and have faith in the peace of God. The heart and soul of the gospel is an invitation beckoning to us to pick up our individual crosses and follow Jesus, no matter what may befall us. Jesus offers no vaccinations or booster shots protecting us from this world. He reminds us not to be *"alarmed"* and to *"take heart"*—we can overcome the world as he lives in us.

Inevitably we face grief and heartache. It goes with the territory of being a human. Sometimes our tear ducts run dry. Sometimes our heart is sick with sorrow. Sometimes our pain and suffering can cause us to feel as if there is no hope on the horizon, and that we are lost and alone.

When our physical reasons for hope are lost, our hope in our risen Lord empowers us to hope beyond our physical dimensions of the here and now, receiving *the blessed hope* (Titus 2:13). unlimited by time and space. **Our blessed hope** in Christ is anchored to the Cross of Christ upon which the

Lamb of God, our Lord and Savior, poured out his once-and-for-all forever, boundary-less, unlimited love upon all mankind. God is faithful in the toughest of times.

Remember? The disciples and followers of Jesus huddled together in fear and hiding following the crucifixion. They didn't feel God's peace at all—they were afraid, dejected and depressed. **At the time the disciples and followers of Jesus had no idea that the path to our blessed hope in Christ runs through the graveyard of our human hopes and dreams.**

They had no idea how they could “take heart.” The world may buckle, cave in and collapse, but God does not. We may feel utter desolation and defeat, thinking all is lost, believing that there is no hope... but Jesus says “...*take heart! I have overcome the world.*”

The steadfast love of God never ends. His mercies have no end. As Christ-followers, we have firm and eternal hope in our Rock, because in life and in death we belong to Jesus. He is our risen Lord, **our blessed hope**, our Lamb of God who overcame the world. Our blessed hope in Christ empowers us to “take heart.”

The word “*hope*” is found almost 200 times in the Bible, mentioned in over a half of its 66 books. This profound word “*hope*” is so much more than a wish or a desire, dream or human expectation. Hope in God—Christ-centered hope—is the sure and absolute expectation of what God has promised and that he is faithful.

When our focus is primarily on the world and its bad news—on government, politics, economics, illness and employment—then we will see little if any hope. But Jesus overcame the world, so that ***our focus in and on hope changes from our day-to-day trials and difficulties, to our firm foundation, the Rock of Christ.*** Our Christ-centered hope is borne of our convictions that the world will pass away and hope in Christ will endure forever. We await that ***blessed hope.***

Apart from the Bible, the novel *Les Misérables*, by Victor Hugo, is one of the most classic stories of grace ever written. Last month in the *Plain Truth* cover story “Unadorned Clay Pots,” I recalled the story of how Susan Boyle performed *I Dreamed a Dream* (from *Les Misérables*) on the television program “Britain’s Got Talent.” In *Les Misérables* this song describing the despair of the human condition apart from God is sung by a character named Fantine, a beautiful young lady who became pregnant by a rich student who abandoned her. Dumped, deserted and alone, Fantine was forced as a single mother to look after their child, Cosette, on her own.

Victor Hugo tells the story of how the young single mother Fantine first worked in a factory to send money to guardians who agreed to look after Cosette. *I Dreamed a Dream* expressed Fantine’s grief and sorrow after she was fired from the factory because her supervisor found out she was an unwed mother. In desperation, she self-abased herself in order to survive and support Cosette, forced to start selling her once beautiful body. Fantine wonders why everything in her life seems to have gone wrong, as she feels lost, alone and without hope. Fantine’s despair and her hopelessness is symbolic of the challenge confronting all humans, at one point or another and in some way of another.

- *Is there Someone out there* Who cares?
- *Is there really Someone out there* Who loves us in spite of the mess we, and others, have made of our lives?
- *Is there Someone out there* Who transcends the ugliness, hatred, brutality, lust and violence that overwhelm our world?

- Is *there Someone out there* Who can and will rescue not just us but everyone from the pain and misery of this battle ground—this dungeon, this pig pen—we call Earth? Is there any hope?

Fantine, without hope in this world, pessimistically concludes *I Dreamed a Dream*:

*But there are dreams that cannot be
And there are storms we cannot weather
I had a dream my life would be
So different from this hell I'm living
So different now from what it seemed
Now life has killed the dream I dreamed.*

The story of *Les Miserables* does not end with the pathetic despair and hopelessness Fantine sings of in *I Dreamed a Dream*. ***Her story, like all those who follow Christ, is not the end, but only a small part of the story.*** Given its haunting lyrics and its introspective search into the human dilemma, I have listened to many different soloists perform *I Dreamed a Dream*. I am fond of how Neil Diamond refused to end his rendition on the emptiness of “now life has killed the dream I dreamed” changing it to “but life can’t kill the dream I dreamed.” In this masterstroke, he changed the ending from miserable hopelessness into triumphant hope.

What Fantine did not express in *I Dreamed a Dream* is that God, in the person of Jesus, knew all about losing hope. Jesus, the incarnate God, knew despair and death. Jesus knew about the connection between waiting and hope. Jesus knew that the story is not over until it’s over, and that his death on the Cross was not the end...in fact it was the beginning of the victory he would live in hundreds of millions who would follow him. ***Out of the death of Jesus came his resurrection, and new life in him.***

God is with us. We have a *blessed hope*—real and abiding hope. We have hope in Christ, because he lives that hope in us. We know God is faithful. Our spiritual foundation is based on the Rock of Jesus Christ, rather than the shifting sands of government, politics and economics.

In spite of how we might suffer now—in spite of how we despair, in spite of death and loss, in spite of “*wars and rumors of wars*”—as Christ-followers, we wait on the Lord, clinging confidently to the Rock of our salvation, for he is our eternal stability, security and salvation. Let us, my dear friends, my brothers and sisters in Christ, take heart because of *our blessed hope!*

Taking heart, focused on Jesus, our living and *our blessed hope*,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

PS. Here’s a brief note from one of our listeners in New Jersey.

My husband and I listen to your podcasts almost every day, and we catch up if we miss a day or two. I used to listen by myself, but my husband was hearing you and he got interested and started listening, too. Now he asks me to put it on and we always listen together. We love it! I would like to send a donation to your ministry. It would be wonderful to help spread the word to others about Jesus and his love. Indeed it is good news. All Jesus, all the time!

CWR/PTM Prayer List—August 2022

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 mother is going into an assisted living facility. Please remember her in your prayers.—Wisconsin

Thank you for all the books and other materials you send me. They are very meaningful, nourishing and helpful. Please pray for the safety and protection of the Ukrainian people.—Saskatchewan, Canada

Please pray for my daughter and son-in-law who are dealing with depression and health issues.—Oregon

Pray for our family. My mother (in her 70s) recently died after complications from Covid. We're devastated.—Virginia

Please pray for my friend who has a severely broken foot. Please pray they won't have to amputate.—North Carolina

Please pray for me as I'm going to see my doctor about prostate issues. Please also pray that I ask the right questions about my blood thinners.—New York

Please pray for my stepson and his wife that Jesus may give them peace in their troubles.—California

Please pray that God will heal my good friend from liver and Stage-4 gallbladder cancer.—Maine

Please pray for me. I just came out of the hospital and I'm still weak.—Puerto Rico

Please pray that God will have mercy on the people of Ukraine. Please pray that CWR/PTM will reach more people each day. May God continue to bless this work.—Arizona

Please pray for my niece whose husband recently died, that God would give her his comfort and strength she needs to carry on with life.—Minnesota

Please pray for my great-grandson who is diabetic. We're so thankful for CWR/PTM—keep up the good work!—Florida

Please continue to hold me in your prayers. I appreciate the work of this ministry, which has a Christ-centered focus, and I pray for you always.—North Carolina

Please pray for my granddaughter, age 23, who is bi-polar and has made three suicide attempts.—Illinois

Please pray for all the men, women and especially the children in Ukraine, who have become refugees.—Colorado

Please pray for my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to turn their lives over to God. And please pray for my son's financial troubles and my brother and sister-in-law who have several medical problems.—West Virginia

Please pray for me as I'm suffering from severe acid reflux that often flares up suddenly.—Wisconsin

Please pray that Russia will stop this meaningless war in the Ukraine. Many innocent children are being killed.—Texas

Please pray for my wife. Her youngest brother just recently died from drugs and alcohol. Please pray for my mother-in-law who is taking it very hard.—Florida

Please pray that God will keep the children of Ukraine safe and comfort the Ukrainian refugees.—Colorado

Please keep us in prayer for healing and relief from pain. My wife and I both have arthritis throughout our bodies. My wife also has heart problems and I have kidney problems.—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.