



February 2023

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

Let's start with a question: If you had to choose between two images of Jesus which would it be? 1) someone who serves in *the law enforcement profession*, such as a police officer or judge, or 2) someone who serves in *the healing profession*, such as a doctor or a nurse? When those two images are compared and contrasted, a doctor or nurse is the Christ-centered, *healing* answer.

BUT—why does the vast majority of Christendom lean toward a depiction of Jesus as an agent of law and order? More than that, WHY do so many within Christendom feel that any picture of Jesus as a healer, a binder of wounds, a helper... *why oh why* do many feel such an illustration results in a weak, emasculated, and feeble Jesus? The answer goes a long way toward understanding why so many people misunderstand who God is.

Our world today, perhaps as never before, is obsessed with fairness and justice. As they have throughout history, most of the issues which polarize and divide us have been baptized in the language of morality. Thus, in contemporary North America racism is defined as the *racism* of a presumed-to-be-privileged race, *greed* is perceived as the rapacious greed of the rich, *sexism* as unchecked lust and depravity and *corruption* the product of the oppressive, corrupt elite.

It is easy and oh so human to perceive the evil and pain in society as injustice and then even more human to advocate justifiable actions needed to right the wrongs—and it is this desire, a seemingly “Christian” motivation—that leads to a human obsession (including within Christendom) with the not-so-holy grail of fairness and justice as narrowly defined within the confines of forever shifting sands of changing values, culture, society and religion.

Don't get me wrong—this world is a cesspool of injustice. The combined evil in this world is like a horrific, terrifying, deadly and toxic mushroom cloud that hovers over this planet earth. The cries of the oppressed, the impoverished, the victims of warfare, the sexually trafficked, the hungry, the homeless and the abused rise from this earth, witnessing to a hell-on-earth inferno of diabolical and heinous lusts.

In the midst of such travesties, such pain and anguish, our natural human response is to see justice as the product of punishment. We tend to see answers to pain and heartache resulting from equal forces extended against the perpetrators of pain and heartache. We humans tend to simplistically reason that when sufficient aggression, violence and punishment against evil is inflicted, peace will prevail.

Yes, the cry is for fairness and justice, *but in many cases it's just a code word for the desire to see alleged perpetrators “get what's coming to them.” It's often just a cry for revenge to be taken upon those who are defined as the “bad guys.”* This is not the justice of God!

We humans feel a deep-seated desire to punish as a way of protecting and securing who and what we love. As Christ-centered humans, we know our call from Christ to serve the poor, hungry, widows and orphans in his name, but we also feel a pull to protect them from those who would

further abuse and do violence to them. New life in Christ wars against the natural human desire to punish, but then, sadly, we Christ-followers often see punishment as just, good and appropriate—as duty to protect and serve others enters our thoughts.

There are no easy answers in this dilemma, but the essential conundrum many feel torn apart by is the essential distinction between law over against grace. *What do we see at the cross of Christ?* What was happening on that day in Jerusalem almost 2,000 years ago? The forces who executed Jesus felt justified in their actions, as they fulfilled their duties on the part of law enforcement and the morality of obedience to laws.

The forces who executed Jesus, both religious and civil/military judges and authorities, were motivated by the duty to punish, in order that what they perceived as the greater good might be served. One might say that those who executed Jesus felt justified as they fulfilled their sacred duty to “protect and serve” the populace from the dangerous revolutionary named Jesus.

On the part of God-in-the-flesh, the cross was the once and for all defining moment to respond to evil with good. There was no equal and opposite reaction to the hatred and violence of humans being visited upon Jesus, but rather the divine response was to accept all the hatred and violence and forgive it. **Thus divine justice is overwhelmingly defined as love, not punishment.**

I am not proposing easy or glib answers, either of liberalism or conservatism. I have no political expertise or calling – my experience is that efforts to marry my faith with a political viewpoint always tarnishes and corrodes my faith. Politics will invariably corrupt faith—and for me at least, my faith following Jesus is a continual battle to focus upon how Jesus defines and lives out justice rather than diminished, lesser, earthly examples of what many might term as “justice.”

When we are more concerned with punishment than we are Christ-centered justice, then we are more likely to be driven more by revenge than reconciliation, retribution rather than forgiveness. Revenge is almost always primarily emotional while attempts at reconciliation are often difficult struggles, objectively looking for the best solution. Revenge, is a burning desire for punishment and suffering on the behalf of those deemed to have been in the wrong.

Revenge is concerned with “getting even” and hoping to see others “get theirs”—and often leads to vendettas wherein the avenger feels justified causing others to suffer. Revenge is often vindictive, whereas Christ-centered justice is all about forgiveness. There is no value, indeed no love, grace or mercy involved in committing a wrong in order to set the record straight. Punishment is often about retaliation and pay back, wherein Christ-centered justice is concerned with restoration and equity.

Apart from Christ, the normal human definition of justice is that a rapist or murderer is imprisoned for life or executed. We think of justice as thieves forced to make restitution for what they illegally appropriated. We think of justice as “eye for an eye” or “what goes around comes around.” And in our physical world, that’s the best we can do in terms of justice.

The gospel offers a full pardon awaiting all upon a request for God’s forgiveness. The gospel proclaims that Jesus—God in the flesh, the Word of God—is the once-and-for-all supreme revelation of God’s love to all humanity—and **his cross forgives ALL.**

Jesus taught that the greatest commandments are to love God with all one’s heart, soul and mind, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself (Matthew 22:34-40). These two commands are the greatest and supreme law—filled with love, mercy and grace. **Divine justice is to love God and to love one’s neighbor.**

Jesus did not leave us with a civil or religious legal code. He left us with a spiritual path of following him that is defined by love, mercy, forgiveness and grace. **The supreme law of God, revealed to us in the life and teachings of Jesus, is the law of love.**

When Jesus taught his way of life, his gospel, to his disciples, they wanted to be victorious and smack down people who disrespected them and Jesus. They wanted to meet force with force when others wanted to muscle in on their territory. The disciples wanted to police people and enforce the law. That's still the primary goal of Christ-less religion!

Many religions around this world enforce their rules by deputizing "morality police"! Jesus however wanted to heal and restore and embrace those who suffered. The disciples were far more interested in the wrong they felt other people were doing and correcting them.

Love stands alone and supreme and forever. Love stands when the desire for revenge has burned out. Love remains when punishment and an eye-for-an eye reach their logical ends.

Love stands alone as does the cross—the empty cross where all has been forgiven.

Love stands alone as does the empty tomb—the empty tomb that tried in vain to confine the lifeless body of God in the flesh, but now is empty for our risen Lord has triumphed over death and the grave.

Love stands alone because Jesus is eternal. Love remains because Jesus is forever.

Love stands alone when all else has been tried and exhausted and when all else has failed—the love of God remains.

Policing and enforcing the law, or healing, comforting and nourishing those in need—which image of Jesus do you prefer? Which image of Jesus do you follow? As we follow Christ, and focus on him, what is our mission—*law enforcement or healing?*

Children often talk about *who they want to be when they grow up. As we grow up and mature in Christ, who do we want to be?* Law enforcers who arrest and punish, or medical professionals who heal and nurture?

My friends, we here at CWR/PTM send our love and prayers to you, one and all, our brothers and sisters in the faith, our fellow Christ-followers.

Your brother in Christ,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

CWR/PTM Prayer List—February 2023

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 me. I have a broken left shoulder and I'm also suffering with severe knee and back pain.—Minnesota

I'm in the hospital and have been for a long time. Please pray for my healing.—British Columbia, Canada

Please pray for a dear friend who is recovering from recent hip replacement surgery.—North Carolina

Please pray for the healing of my hips and right shoulder. Thank you for your prayers.—Washington

I pray for all of you at CWR/PTM every day for your protection, health and inspiration to speak and write what we need to hear and read. Thank you for the "meaty" articles you are writing.—Alabama

My son's cancer has now spread to his brain. He had surgery recently. Please continue to pray for his health and a full recovery.—Georgia

Please pray for all those who have been affected by the recent hurricanes and storms.—Florida

I have two serious prayer requests; one is my recovering from hip surgery and the other one is my ailing health issues due to previous surgeries.—Arizona

Please pray for relief from the pain in my feet. I deeply appreciate your prayers!—Texas

Please pray that more people will escape the bondage of religion and be on the same page spiritually. Thank you for your grace filled messages.—Indiana

Please pray that my wife and I will be able to have a closer relationship with our family members who have distanced themselves from us. Thank you for your ministry as you show us who the Lord Jesus really is. We are praying for you and everyone at PTM!—New York

Thank you for all your words of encouragement. CWR/PTM is in my daily prayers. I pray that you will be able to keep doing God's good work.—Michigan

Please pray for my friend who is suffering with continued difficulties with COPD.—California

An elderly friend in Georgia has been suffering with Ataxia, a neurological condition for quite a while. Please pray for God's intervention.—Pennsylvania

Thank you so much for your monthly letters. They are so inspiring and keep us grounded in the word of God. They also keep us learning more and more about God the Father, our Lord and Savior and God the Holy Spirit. Our prayers are with all of you at CWR/PTM.—Louisiana

Please pray for my sister who just had knee surgery. She has a weak heart and isn't doing well. She is too weak to do the therapy. Her husband also hurt his back lifting her.—Kentucky

Please continue to pray for me. My thyroid surgery went well, but I still have trouble hearing and talking. I'll be seeing a specialist soon.—Alabama

Please continue to pray for my wife. Her left knee has no cartilage and bone is grinding on bone.—Washington

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.