



July 2023

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

**I**n 1921, Albert Einstein presented his unproven Theory of Relativity at the Sorbonne, the prestigious French university in Paris. He said, “*If my theory of relativity is proven successful, Germany will claim me as a German and France will declare I am a citizen of the world. Should my theory prove untrue, France will say I am a German and Germany will declare that I am a Jew.*”

Who are we? Do others “claim us” only as and when we are successful? Who and what dictates the essence of who and what we are and how others describe and recognize us?

You may have heard the old joke (perhaps from me, it’s one of my favorites!)—Jews don’t *recognize* Jesus as the Son of God. Protestants don’t *recognize* the Pope as the supreme religious leader of all Christians. Baptists don’t *recognize* each other in the liquor store.

One more story—trust me, these anecdotes all fit together with the theme of this letter! American Dwight Moody (1837-1899) and Englishman Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) were two of the greatest preachers of the 19th century. Moody travelled to London in order to visit Spurgeon. As the story goes, Spurgeon welcomed Moody to his home by coming to the front door with a cigar in his mouth.

Moody believed smoking tobacco to be a sin. He was appalled. He sputtered, “How can you, Mr. Spurgeon, a man of God, smoke that cigar?” Spurgeon took the cigar from his mouth, smiled, and put his hand on Moody’s ample stomach, asking, “The same way you, Mr. Moody, a man of God, can be that fat!”

Sadly, in many churches and denominations across the landscape of Christendom faith in God has been reduced to efforts, programs, rituals, ceremonies, duties and regulations to overcome sin and wrong doing. **It is *nothing less than law-religion***. With such an emphasis, those who are assured they are “Christians” are given endless programs of eradicating sin, overcoming it, and ways in which they can build character, produce moral virtues and thus please God.

While lists which specify actions and behaviors that must be produced and must be avoided vary, the overwhelming tide of churchianity today is focused on the eradication of sin and the production of moral values.

The basic idea of law-religion is that before conversion one is presumed powerless to do what God expects and demands. But after conversion a new convert is told they will be given divine help to do what needs to be done and avoid the temptation of sin. But what really happens after a person becomes a member or follower of law-religion is they are given a road-map, a battle plan, for what they are expected to do and produce.

The road-map/battle plan method of pleasing God via obedience, deeds and performance is an impossible dream! While the New Testament consistently and dogmatically insists that it is impossible for a human to fulfill the deeds of the law, Christ-less religion says that the impossible dream is possible for those who follow its dictates and teachings.

Christ-less religion, even as it is found in so much of churchianity today, denies God’s grace.

Christ-less religion denies Christ. Whereas Jesus says "...apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5) Christ-less religion effectively says "when you do what we say, when you follow our rules, laws and dogmas, when you perform our rituals and ceremonies, say our prayers and recite our creeds, then you can do what God demands." With us, says Christ-less religion, you can do everything. That is a lie, a perversion and denial of Jesus and a corruption of the gospel!

When people who follow law-religion and its road-map/battle plan of pleasing and appeasing God inevitably fail, they are told they must do better. They are told their failure is their fault. They must try harder and do more.

When problems still don't go away, when temptations are still not overcome, when character is not built and moral virtues are not produced, preachers and teachers just yell more loudly at their followers. Followers of law-religion are filled with guilt and shame, wondering what is wrong with them. They are captives—slaves—of a religious salt mine, and there is no where to go.

The only escape is Jesus. The only redemption is the grace of God. The only way of life is the Jesus Way. We are Christ-followers because that is what we do—we follow Christ, rather than religion. We believe in Christianity Without the Religion.

**WHO decides our spiritual identity? WHO and what dictates the essence of who and what we are, in Christ?**

Spiritual identity in Christ-less religion is all about overcoming sin, and when it is not possible to do so, some are so ashamed for failing God they hide from religious authorities and even hope to hide from God (Adam and Eve tried that) pretending they are something they are not. Law-religion leads to hypocrisy. It produces guilt and shame. Spiritual identity in law-religion is all about the pretense of acting like one has virtues and righteousness which one does not have.

The failure of law-religion, of sin-management religion and what is also called "behavior-modification religion" is the arrogance and pride, the condemnation and judgment it produces. Law-religion is not only dangerous, it is a disaster. It is a lie. It short-circuits, avoids and denies Jesus Christ and the grace of God, thus rather than Christ in us producing love and compassion, law-religion produces resentment and despair.

Jesus taught that no program, no law, no ritual or observance can produce goodness in humans. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not the bad news of sin-management but of new birth, renewal and transformation in Christ.

When we become one in Christ, we are transformed from our life of sin, whether that sin be a long list of so-called sins of the flesh or whether our sin be the religious lie that we can heal ourselves and create our own righteousness by religious programs of sin-management and behavior-modification.

The gospel of Jesus Christ was not another new religion—the world then and the world now has more than its fill of Christ-less religion. The gospel of Jesus Christ is all about another kingdom—not at all about the kingdoms of this world, but the kingdom of heaven—the kingdom of God.

Jesus said his kingdom was "at hand" and that it is "within you" and "in your midst" and that it is "from another place—not of this world." The kingdom of God is a gift of God's grace, it is not attained or acquired or maintained or earned or deserved.

*"... giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the*

*kingdom of light. 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).*

**Our identity is in Christ and Christ alone. He claims us, he gives us validity, purpose and new life. Through Jesus we are given a new spiritual identity—we become new creations in Christ. Thus God and God alone, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, transforms us so that we are now one in Christ, and that is who we are! Children of God, by his grace, by spiritual renewal and transformation.**

By divine rebirth and spiritual transformation, we are now new creations, God’s very own children. Our risen Lord Jesus Christ lives in us and we in him. What we are on the outside does not determine our spiritual identity, who we are inside, by God’s grace, most definitely does.

A group of former students got together to visit one of their old favorite university professors. Arriving at the professor’s home he offered them coffee. First, he went to the kitchen and returned to the living room with an assortment of cups—most of the cups were attractive and even expensive, while a few were plain and rather uninviting. No two cups were the same.

Once all his former students, who were now all successful in their careers, had chosen a cup the professor poured coffee. When they were served, as they held the coffee cups they had chosen, the professor said, “If you have noticed, all the nice looking and rather expensive cups have been chosen, with the rather plain cups left over. But as you know, attractive and expensive cups add no quality to the coffee.”

“Life is the coffee—money, careers, religion and prestige are the cups. Cups are just containers that contain life, and do not change the quality of life nor do they define it. Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to drink deeply and enjoy the coffee God provides.”

The lesson for you and me is obvious. God’s grace is the coffee. Jesus is the coffee. In our CWR/PTM office, we have a poster by the coffee pot proclaiming, “*Give me a little bit of coffee and a whole lot of Jesus.*” The cups that hold that coffee are you and me, flawed and imperfect that we are. Paul says we have this treasure (the riches of God’s kingdom of grace) in clay pots (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Thank God for his mercy, his grace and his love. Thank God he has shown us that our spiritual identity is in Christ, by the grace of God. Thank God for his spiritual transformation so that we are his, his very children, new creations in Christ!

Because of Christ, by his grace, your brother-in-Christ,



Greg Albrecht  
President, Plain Truth Ministries

**PS.** Be sure to check out the new *Question & Response (Q&R)* feature available on our website!

## CWR/PTM Prayer List—July 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.

*I want to inform you of the recent passing of my mother at the age of 90. She was a faithful supporter of CWR/PTM and devoted to God. Please pray for comfort and peace for our family. In my opinion, no one proclaims the gospel of God better than PTM.—Illinois*

*Please keep me in your prayers, as I had a heart attack a few months ago, and now I'm having symptoms that I may have cancer.—Saskatchewan, Canada*

*Please pray for my daughter who has a brain tumor and is having to wait a long time to see a neurologist.—Arizona*

*Please pray for my brother and my nephew as they recently lost their wife (mother) to cancer.—West Virginia*

*Please pray about my son's colitis problems. Thank you for all your prayers and for your teachings.—North Carolina*

*Thank you for the encouragement you provide to those who are disillusioned by legalistic religion. My prayers are with all of you at CWR/PTM.—Louisiana*

*Please pray for my niece who lives in Germany. She has a tumor on her pancreas.—California*

*Please continue to pray that the doctors will find and fix my intestinal problems.—Maine*

*Please pray for my son. He is going to have surgery for an aortic aneurism.—Tennessee*

*Please keep praying for my wife. She fell down on a sidewalk and hurt her head.—Indiana*

*Please pray about my son's upcoming court hearing, that all the serious issues will be resolved.—Arizona*

*Please pray for the healing of my eyes and ears. Thank you in advance for your prayers.—West Virginia*

*Please ask for comfort and healing for my wife, who is suffering with sciatic nerve pain in her leg.—Florida*

*This is an urgent request for prayers. I have more problems physically, mentally and emotionally. My home and family are in total disarray, and I don't know what to do. Thanks for your prayers.—Georgia*

*Please pray for my sister-in-law who fell and broke her leg, requiring surgery. She has a tough recovery ahead of her. Thank you in advance for your prayers.—California*

*Please pray for my nephew. He has an ongoing struggle with breathing and pneumonia.—Kansas*

*Thank you so much for your prayers for our much-needed rainfall here in the Southwest the first part of this year. Please continue to pray that our water infrastructure gets fixed.—Arizona*

*Please pray for my son and his wife who are having problems in their marriage.—Oklahoma*

*My sister has severe back pain, heart failure and other health issues. Please keep her in your prayers.—Virginia*

*Please pray for my aunt on her upcoming surgery to remove a mass.—Florida*

*Thank you for your compassion and encouragement over the loss of my wife. I am trying to move on, but it is a lonely and slow journey.—New York*

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.