



August 2018

Dear Friends and Partners of CWR/PTM,

I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.—Isaiah 46:4

A rich young ruler came to Jesus asking him, "...what good thing **MUST I DO TO GET** eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16, my emphasis). It's Christ-less religion in a nutshell: What do I have to do to make God happy so he will give me what I want? This rich young man was used to getting what he wanted. He was used to being a success and making a profit. He was a winner. Author Robert Farrar Capon says the rich young ruler was *a successful liver of a lawful life*.

The rich young ruler was addicted to his own abilities to control life—he assumed that the kingdom of heaven operates on the same principles that *work* (pun intended) in the kingdoms of this world. This young man was a winner in physical pursuits and he believed that the same hard *work* that brought him success in the physical world would *work* in his relationship with God.

In many churches and ministries pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps, self-help pep talks overwhelm the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus spoke of our response to him as **surrender, faith and trust**, but the pied pipers of Christ-less religion say that we must work hard so we might one day become Spiritual Super Heroes capable of leaping tall buildings in a single bound!

The purveyors and peddlers of performance-based religion proclaim FAKE NEWS which is no gospel at all (Galatians 1:7). Christ-less religion is the FAKE NEWS that one can get God to do what one wants IF one just pushes the right buttons and does the right things. Christ-less religion is FAKE NEWS because it is based on the proposition that human beings are in control of their lives. The rich young ruler saw himself as a winner—an obedient and successful law-keeper. **The rich young ruler was not about to surrender to Jesus, trust him and become what he perceived to be a dependent loser.**

Jesus never insisted that his followers conquer all obstacles—he told them (us) that one must lose one's life in order to gain it (Matthew 10:39). *The rich young ruler came to Jesus hoping to gain additional spiritual success by more diligently obeying the law.* The rich young ruler may have hoped Jesus would clue him in about spiritual techniques, laws and rules for making a spiritual profit in a similar way that he had achieved physical gain and profits.

Jesus advised him to sell all he had (Matthew 19:21)—to get rid of his cherished religious techniques, rituals and ceremonies and become a disciple, enrolling in the class Jesus taught, titled *Grace—Trust and Surrender 101*.

There's nothing in performance-based religion about surrendering one's values and hopes and dreams and way of life to God—**religion is about control, not about surrendering control**. Better put, religion is about the illusion of control—it's an illusion and fool's errand because in spite of the best efforts of people more virtuous than you or me, no one has ever been, nor will they ever be, successful at controlling life!

The FAKE NEWS of performance-based religion insists that God will finally love you when and if you *improve, do better, build more character, produce more and earn more religious merit badges. Run faster and jump higher. Push, drive and propel yourself* until you are exhausted...sooner or later, hopefully if you catch God on a good day, Christ-less religion promises God will (perhaps somewhat reluctantly) give you what you want.

The wardens of performance-based religious penitentiaries assure the inmates that God will “bless” them after they do all they can to please and appease him. Why do I place quotation marks around the word *bless*?

Blessed, as used within Christendom, particularly within the evangelical world, blurs gift and reward. *Blessed* is a loaded term because it can blur the distinction between something given and something earned.

On the one hand, “*blessed*” can mean that one is thankful to God for imparting his gifts which can ultimately only come from him. In a correct, Christ-centered context, “*blessed*” means “thank you God” for blessing me in ways that I could never have earned or deserved. There is definitely a time and place within the kingdom of heaven to use the word “*blessed*.”

However, Christ-less religion uses the same word “*blessed*” to mean “I am so *blessed* because I did all the right things and God responded and rewarded me.” The word “*blessed*” **works** (pun intended again) well when performance-based religion pumps out its BIG LIE and FAKE NEWS promising God’s grace and favor for religious workers who will achieve his *blessings* through their blood, sweat and tears.

Hard work, in both the physical and religious world, is admired and valued. Surrendering and yielding in both the physical and religious world is seen as weakness and a sign of a loser. Independence is believed to be good, dependence is seen as weak and suspect. **That’s why the grace of God doesn’t “sell” in the religious world.** In the kingdoms of this world the weak surrender and give up, while religious Super-men and Wonder-women subdue and conquer.

Religious Super-Heroes are believed to “live in victory” and never, ever have problems or suffer diseases. A good deal of what passes for Christianity in North America is more about acting and pretending that bad things don’t happen to people who do all the right things.

This nonsensical silliness is yet another product of Christ-less legalism, because when the inevitable bad things happen, people who had been indoctrinated into believing they must either be or appear to be perfect at all times and in every way must quickly retreat into a world of denial. When followers of the health-and-wealth / prosperity gospel wake up and discover that they are not living in a Disneyland-like world of victory and non-stop joy, they realize in order to be accepted in their religious culture they must start living a lie—and many thus begin living in denial.

Surrendering to God and embracing his grace means giving up the illusion that one can control one’s life. Grace involves accepting reality and it means the end of living in denial—realizing that we are weak and vulnerable—we are not capable of being religious Super Heroes.

What is it like to surrender to God’s grace? God’s grace is like undressing before huge floor-to-ceiling mirrors—all pretenses and all imperfections are exposed. God’s grace strips away the masks, deception and hypocrisy of performance-based religion. When one surrenders to Jesus one surrenders all religious costumes and masks and stands before him naked as a jay bird, completely dependent on the goodness of God.

That's why of course that Paul uses the metaphor that one who repents of performance-based religion and embraces the grace of God is "taking off" the clothing of the world of legalistic religion and "putting on" Christ.

You are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.—Galatians 3:27

It is so very natural to wonder "because God's grace cannot be earned or deserved, and because Jesus has **d-o-n-e** for us all that we can never **d-o** for him, does that mean that those who surrender to Jesus and trust him are do-nothing Christ-followers?"

God asks us to 1) accept his invitation, surrendering the FAKE NEWS that God loves us in response to our good works, 2) Trust in Jesus to do for us what we can never do for ourselves, 3) Yield our lives, in surrender to Jesus, so that God may use us in his service.

Ephesians 2:8-9 helps us see that we are saved by God's grace, not by our works, because if that is the case then we might boast of our spiritual accomplishments. While we are saved BY GRACE, we are saved FOR WORKS.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.—Ephesians 2:10

Make no mistake—Christ-followers are busy and active and serving! We reject religious FAKE NEWS that pretends our works earn us favorable standing with God—we embrace the grace of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ that enables and empowers us to follow Jesus and his work (which is not always one and the same as that of religion!).

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.—1 Corinthians 15:58

Your co-worker in Christ, serving together, in his name



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

PS. We share a few notes of thanks to CWR/PTM—and **THANK YOU** for continuing to support this ongoing ministry with your prayers and faithful donations!

I am grateful for the work done through CWR/PTM. I can assure you that all of your resources I've had the privilege of receiving over the years have been a blessing, and your labor of love is cherished beyond words.—Texas

Thank you for continuing to preach the gospel. You are truly inspired by the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us. May God bless all of you at CWR/PTM.—Prince Edward, Canada

Thank you for the encouraging letters you send each month. They inspire and strengthen us.—North Carolina

CWR/PTM Prayer List—August 2018

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.

Pray that I'll be an example of the love of Jesus especially to those who have not accepted Jesus at this time.—West Virginia

Please pray for my friend who is having cancer surgery and my four granddaughters' scholarship paperwork.—Minnesota

Please pray for my vision to improve in both eyes, and pray for my spiritual growth.—Louisiana

Please continue to pray for my sciatic nerve pain and for my husband who has fluid in his inner ear.—Mississippi

Please pray for our family livestock, more rain in the southwest, and employment opportunities this coming fall.—Arizona

Please pray for me as my family is giving me a hard time about selling my house.—Idaho

Please pray for my husband's foot. He sprained his ankle and now he has shooting pains to his knee and hip.—Ohio

Please pray for my friend who is a probation officer. He is required to report violations he hears about from his probation clients. Please pray for him and all those involved.—Michigan

Please pray for my husband and son; they both have COPD. Also pray that my health won't get any worse.—Missouri

Please pray for the healing of both my eyes and relief from my vision problems.—Ontario, Canada

Please pray for refugees everywhere in the world...there but for the grace of God go we.—Texas

My husband is losing weight, his legs and feet are swelling. Please pray for him and doctors working with him.—South Carolina

Please keep praying for my grandson—he is doing better and he finished his chemotherapy. Thank you!—Tennessee

My husband's body has nearly stopped building blood and he has little energy. He's having a bone marrow test.—Alabama

Our granddaughter desperately needs a kidney transplant. She's thirty years old with young children.—Oklahoma

Your prayers have helped my daughter who is bipolar. She now needs a job, and her fiance needs a better job.—Mississippi

Please pray for my wife who has thyroid trouble, has heart palpitations and suffers from dizziness.—Ontario, Canada

Please pray that my family will accept Jesus. Also pray that I'll be able to start and operate my new business.—Maryland

Please pray for my friend who needs healing of her mind, and pray for healing from my arthritis.—Ohio

I am requesting your prayers for the healing of my fractured elbow. Thank you and may God bless you!—Minnesota

Please pray for my two friends who are fighting cancer. Thank you for all you do!—North Carolina

I have cancer. Please pray for healing and for my relationship with God as I deal with this trial.—Texas

I suffer from loneliness since the loss of my husband. I know I'm alone but not forsaken, as Christ is with me.—Missouri

I am getting very old and feeble. My mind is not as good as it used to be. Please pray for me.—Virginia

I'm 98 years old. Please pray for me that I will understand what the Bible says and keep my opinion out of it.—Kentucky

Please continue to keep my wife in your prayers as she is battling cancer.—New York

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You know 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.