



September 2023

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

“...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6, NIV).

“To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.”—Winston Churchill

Does it ever feel to you like life just seems to stay the same, day-after-day, with little-to-no change in the events and circumstances we face? We can tend to settle into the natural rhythms of our daily lives, prayerfully, and live to the best of our ability *one day at a time*. Often, however, that *one day at a time* can come and go with such predictable familiarity, some level of tedium and even with no apparent answers to many days of prayer. If you feel this way at times, you are not alone.

I’m thinking back, way back now, to my high school Chemistry class. My teacher at the time, Mrs. DeMoise, was instructing us early one morning on the topic of energy, and how energy—*when focused and directed over a period of time*—can change the state of a physical element or object in our natural world. To illustrate her point, Mrs. DeMoise produced a long fireplace match, a tray, a pair of scientific-looking tongs and an ice cube. As the classroom fell silent, Mrs. DeMoise knew she had our attention.

Mrs. DeMoise then proceeded to hold the ice cube in the tongs over the tray, and lit the long fireplace match. At first, the flame from the match, a source of energy, had no apparent effect on the clear, square cube. As she held the flame beneath the cube, nothing seemed to happen as the solid form of the ice appeared to stay exactly the same. However, with time, as Mrs. DeMoise continued to hold the flame in place, we began to see tiny droplets of water fall and collect in the tray beneath. A process had begun. The size, shape and state of the ice cube had begun to change.

As the ice cube melted completely into a pool of water in the tray, Mrs. DeMoise continued her illustration by lighting a Bunsen burner. As she did, the flame from the burner rose to heat the underside of the tray. For a few moments, the water in the tray rested completely motionless, with no apparent change taking place. Yet, as the flame continued to burn, the energy being released into the water began to cause a boil. Within a few more moments, the size, shape and state of the water changed, turning to steam. The once-solid form of the ice cube had vanished into thin air.

Mrs. DeMoise turned off the Bunsen burner and concluded her lecture by telling us that on the surface of each individual form, the process at work looked as if nothing was happening. It looked as if nothing was taking place. However, at the molecular level, inside each form, the energy being focused and directed was causing the molecules that made up each form to vibrate more rapidly. Eventually, the energy caused the size, shape and state of each form to change completely. It was a natural physical process, and it was inevitable.

Life can sometimes feel like that, can't it? We can feel as if change in our lives takes so long to occur. We find that we put all kinds of energy, focused and directed energy, into making a constructive change in our day-to-day, yet nothing ever seems to happen. On the surface, things can look exactly the same.

But, what about those times in our lives when change does occur, and occurs rapidly? Almost out-of-the-blue it seems outcomes we have been praying for (or better circumstances and events) take place for us. The pace of change can take our breath away. We can feel as if we can't quite keep up with all of it. It seems like *nothing happens until everything happens*, all at once.

Whether change in our lives takes place slowly over a period of time, or occurs suddenly and rapidly, we know that we have an **Author** and **Finisher** of our faith. We remember that we have a **Lord** and **Master** who will complete the good work *he began* in us, until his day. As Christ-followers, we know **Who** is at work in our lives, both our natural, physical lives and our spiritual lives. Christ Jesus is the One who perfects us; nothing happens in our lives without him.

As Winston Churchill wrote, *to improve is to change*, at least in terms of our natural, physical lives. We as humans are more than capable of making constructive changes, changes that can benefit our health, our finances, as well as our friendships and family relationships. I believe that Christ Jesus is at work in us as we do.

When it comes to being perfected, however, *to be perfect is to change often*, as the English statesmen continues. That kind of change, that kind of perfection, is Christ Jesus' domain. **He and he alone transforms us**; he changes us into the spiritual size, shape and state of his good work, of his good pleasure. *Everything happens* with, in and by him.

It is true that we partner with Christ Jesus in all aspects of our lives. We participate, yield, let and allow his holy presence to work within us. Christ Jesus never forces us to change. He offers us his indwelling Spirit, his energy if you will, focused and directed to complete the good work he began.

As we partner with him, we live by his faith as the process takes place. Whether his work, his perfecting and transformation, happens over a long period of time, or suddenly and rapidly, we trust and rest in him. We trust and rest in the fact that he is our **Lord** and **Master**. Christ Jesus knows what change and timing is best for us. *Nothing of spiritual consequence happens in our lives until everything happens in, by and through him.*

Thank you, our dear friend and partner, for all your help and support in sharing this Good News with so many around the world.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,



Ed Dunn
Vice President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. Thanks Ed, for your uplifting and Christ-centered words in this month's letter. As Ed and I were talking about his theme, my mind went to the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:1-4. Jesus responded to a question from the disciples about who was the "greatest" in the kingdom of heaven. He said, in part, "*unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven*" (vs. 3).

Jesus was speaking of the internal, spiritual directional change that one accepts, when one repents, turns and follows Jesus. That part is what each individual decides—we accept or reject the invitation of Jesus to follow him.

The next part is what God alone can do, and sadly, Christ-less religion presumes itself to do work that rightly belongs only to God. After our decision to yield to Jesus and follow him, then we are changed. The transformation God alone works, and completes (as per the passage in Philippians Ed cites as the introduction to his letter) is a work of his grace, "not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:9).

And what a transformation God works in us! God chooses, as a metaphor of the spiritual transformation he works in those who follow Jesus, to liken us to little ones (children)—the insignificant—the "losers" as society-at-large might perceive.

The kingdom of heaven is a counter-intuitive kingdom, where humility rather than pride and arrogance is the order of the day. The grace of God is the spiritual dynamic that powers the kingdom of heaven, not human strength, resources or capabilities. The "greatest" in the kingdom of heaven are those in whom Jesus lives, and thus are willing to assume the lowest places, to self-sacrifice themselves for others, without thought of significance, status or the definition placed on "success" by the kingdoms of this world.

Concluding my remarks, I am struck by the larger context of the introductory verses of the first chapter of Philippians. Forgive me for paraphrasing Paul, but these verses are the thoughts of all of us on the CWR/PTM staff for all we serve, and for that matter, all of our Friends and Partners (that would be YOU) for one another and all whom we serve around the world:

*We thank our God every time we remember you. In all our prayers for all of you we always pray with joy because of your **partnership in the gospel** from the first day until now* (vs. 3-5 paraphrased)... now continuing, with Philippians 1:6, as Ed cites in the introduction to this letter:

"...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

CWR/PTM Prayer List—September 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 am sorry to let you know my beloved husband died after a short illness. He is greatly missed and it's a huge adjustment for me. Please keep me and our family in your prayers.—California

I would appreciate your prayers for my son who is serving in the Air Force. He's looking for a new job, one more suited to his interests and well-being.—Florida

Thank you for all you do. I continue to keep all the staff at CWR/PTM in my prayers.—Minnesota

Please pray that God will provide for my needs and help me deal with terrible loneliness.—Texas

Please pray for me. I have painful inflammation in my left foot. Thanks for all you do.—Idaho

Please pray for my niece who is suffering with leukemia and now her liver is affected. Pray for her to go into remission, and pray for encouragement for her and all our family.—Georgia

Please pray for my sister who is on dialysis. Please pray that she will be able to get a new kidney.—Ohio

Please pray for our family—our son is dying of liver failure.—Colorado

Thank you for your latest letter and magazine—it came at just the right time. I was dealing with depression. Please pray that God will help me to take up my cross and follow Jesus.—New York

Please pray for my niece who is suffering with breast cancer and has to have a mastectomy. Please pray for God to heal her and encourage her.—Kentucky

Thanks for all the letters, magazines and other materials you send and post online. Thank you for doing God's work. Our love and prayers are for you and your families and everyone at CWR/PTM.—Kansas

Please pray about my seizures and heart issues. Pray that doctors can diagnose the problems properly and that I'll be completely healed.—Wisconsin

Please pray for my brother-in-law who is dealing with alcoholism and is verbally abusive.—Oregon

Thanks to everyone at PTM for the precious work of spreading the gospel of Christ throughout the world. My prayers are with you always.—Louisiana

Please keep me in your prayers that God will continue to make a way for me to keep going.—Georgia

Please pray for our family needs and for our grandchildren to come to know Jesus.—Missouri

Thanks for the encouragement to deal with the struggles of life. We pray for PTM always.—Washington

Please pray for my childhood friend and her family. She was diagnosed with stage-4 cancer. Pray for God's healing and encouragement.—Oklahoma

Please pray for my wife—she is dealing with pain in her jaw and neck. Thank you for your prayers.—California

Please pray for my wife's health problems, specifically low energy and for our daughter who is graduating medical school. Please pray that she can stay at the hospital she's currently at now.—Florida

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.