



April 2024

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

*“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).*

**T**he Romans had many ways they executed criminals, from decapitation to being eaten by animals in the arena before bloodthirsty mobs—but crucifixion was the worst of the worst. Crucifixion was the most humiliating method of warning everyone against “crossing” the power and might of Rome—the public, graphic, fear-inducing depiction of the absurd futility, from Rome’s perspective, of opposing its might and supremacy.

The cross was intended as demeaning, disgraceful and degrading. In the world and culture in which *Jesus lived briefly, died violently and rose unexpectedly* there was no honor in the cross. The cross at that time was not a symbol of love, hope and forgiveness—it did not inspire awe and worship, but rather it brought to mind humiliation and shame. The cross at that time was all about loss of life and the pain, heartache and horror of the most ignominious end reserved for those whom Roman culture regarded as foolish.

**Jesus lived briefly, he died violently and he rose unexpectedly.**

The Romans also felt that anyone who followed the teachings of one who had been crucified was a fool. Over 150 years ago archaeologists digging in the ruins of part of the ancient city of Rome found graffiti on a plaster wall depicting a naked human figure with the head of a donkey nailed to a cross. It stands as stark evidence of the way in which the world at that time, and apart from Jesus today, a world that continues to regard Christ-followers stubborn (the head of a donkey) fools who worship a man who had died on a cross.

Foolish—far-fetched—unreasonable. Does the story “make sense”? Why did Jesus do all that he did in the way he did? Was he driven by a sense of obligation? Was his mission just another fool’s errand?

**Rivers, streams, and waterfalls do not flow out of a sense of duty. They flow because they are full—fullness causes flow and overflow.**

Everything that Jesus did, all that he taught and all of his actions were the fullness of the revelation of God. *Jesus lived briefly, died violently and rose unexpectedly.*

**HIS BRIEF LIFE, INCARNATION, WITH US AND ONE OF US:**

Jesus came in the flesh, willingly and lovingly incarnating himself with his own creation, in the midst of all of our limitations and need and desires, out of the overflow of God’s grace and love.

Why did Jesus become a powerless embryo and then a fetus in Mary’s womb? Why was Jesus content to be born as a helpless, dependent baby, whose diapers needed to be changed, whose nurturing would be at the breast of a human he had created? *Why not just show up as a full-grown adult?*

Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus, of and by itself, is not the totality of the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Jesus lived briefly*—comforting, teaching, preaching and healing—not because he was trying to build a religious empire, but rather out of the overflow of God's grace and love.

Jesus brought the kingdom of God, but, as has often been said, he was a king like no other. He was the king of the kingdom, a kingdom which he announced but seemed for all intents and purposes at the time to be doomed to failure, a kingdom which would never have been thought to grow in the way it has and eventually will. Why not establish the kingdom then and there, and put humanity and its corrupt attempts at civilization, out of its misery?

#### **HIS VIOLENT DEATH ON THE CROSS:**

*Jesus died violently*—he embraced, accepted, absorbed and forgave the hatred and the violence of the Cross, not because the Father demanded that the Son pay for penalties humanity owed, not because he was saving humanity from the so-called wrath of God the Father, but because Jesus' Cross was all about the overflow of God's grace and love.

The crucified Christ is the fullness of the revelation of God. No further revelation of God is necessary—the Cross of Christ is who God is. He was shamed and mocked, he was regarded as an abject loser and a failure—all out of the totality of his love for us.

**The Cross is how far God goes for us.** He loves us “to the ends of the earth” and will do all that is necessary to love, rescue and redeem us.

#### **HIS TRIUMPHANT AND UNEXPECTED RESURRECTION:**

*Jesus rose unexpectedly* not because he wanted to be the first to ever be resurrected and never to die again, which he was—not because he was seeking an entry in the Guinness Book of World Records—he rose from the dead to bring hope, a future, a living reality to all who would trust in and believe in him. He rose from the dead out of the overflow of God's grace and love.

Many have noted that the similarity between the words “God” and “dog”—the three-letter words changed by replacing the first and last letters. Of course, no dog is a god, and God is not a dog, but that said, I am particularly fond of the connection made between God and you and me, by the 19th-century English novelist Samuel Butler. He once said, “The great pleasure of a dog is that you may make a fool out of yourself with him and not only will he not scold you, but he will make a fool of himself too.”

It's a great picture of how we humans, deserving as we are of punishment and correction, but rather God in Christ subjected himself to the judgment we deserved. Just because God loves us!

Jesus came in our flesh, becoming one of us. He did not come to scold us, but rather he was willing to be regarded as a fool for us. The sacrificial love and grace of God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, willingly being a fool for us is the reason *Jesus lived briefly, died violently and rose unexpectedly*. **The cross is the overflow of God's grace and love.**

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The gospel of the crucified God is that strength is found in weakness, life is found in death, triumph and victory are found in forgiveness, evil is overcome by good, violence is defeated by non-violence—the list of how the Cross of Christ turns human assumptions, judgments and values on

their head (actually right side up) is endless. The gospel of the crucified God is *why God is* and *how he is* in his revelation of himself to us.

*Jesus lived briefly, died violently and rose unexpectedly.*

IN HIS INCARNATION God the Son, who was immortal and eternal, lived only a brief part of a human life. Long physical life was not central to his mission, nor is it to ours. **He knows. He cares. He loves.**

IN AND ON HIS CROSS God the Son revealed the fullness and totality of the love of God, willingly self-sacrificing himself as a lamb being led to the slaughter, embodying for us what the eternal and forever love, grace, mercy and forgiveness of God is all about. **He knows. He cares. He loves.**

IN AND BY HIS RESURRECTION God the Son rose from the dead, becoming our risen Lord, offering to live his risen life in us, and in so doing he demonstrated that he did far more than merely die—he defeated death and the grave. **He knows. He cares. He loves.**

Jesus calls us, his followers, to pick up our crosses and follow him. It's what defines a Christ-follower. In so doing, we are fools for Christ. We are, *because of him, by him, with him and for him* willing, more than that, **we are honored** to be regarded as someone who is less than intelligent, successful or accomplished.

What a joy, what a privilege and what a high honor it is to follow Jesus Christ, to know him, our crucified and resurrected Lord and Savior.

May you enjoy a wonderful season of celebrating Jesus, who *lived briefly, died violently and rose unexpectedly!*

Because of him,



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

P.S. We share these two notes with you—your consistent support makes it possible for us to keep providing this ministry around the world. **THANK YOU!**

*Thank you for all your much-appreciated work. You shine a bright light in a dark world. Your encouragement is contagious, and makes us able to carry on.—Washington*

*Thank you PTM for all the resources you have provided over the years. The friendship, love and compassion expressed by PTM over the years is what Jesus meant when he said that others will know we are his disciples by our love.—New York*

## CWR/PTM Prayer List—April 2024

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 my son-in-law who is suffering with severe pain in his jaw, making it hard for him to eat. He also struggles with dizziness and vertigo at times.—Indiana*

*Please pray for a dear friend who is suffering with neuropathy and recovering from cancer. Thanking you in advance for your prayers!—California*

*I pray for God's blessing on everyone at CWR/PTM that you will be able to continue this helpful, encouraging and hopeful ministry.—Puerto Rico*

*Please pray for healing of my injured thigh and for comfort and relief of my wife's back pain.—Florida*

*Please pray for me. I'm having pain and difficulty in walking, and the medications my doctors have prescribed aren't helping.—Arizona*

*Please pray for my sister who has heart failure and is suffering severe pain from a compression fracture. She needs surgery.—Virginia*

*Thanks for all your prayers for my right knee replacement, it is healing well. Please continue to pray for me—as I am having head, neck and shoulder pain.—Alabama*

*Please pray for me. I am 88 years old, and I forget things sometimes. I pray for all of you at PTM and for everyone on the prayer list.—California*

*Please pray for the people of Israel and for the people of Gaza. Pray for peace everywhere as it seems the world is in an increasingly precarious position.—Ohio*

*Please pray for my friend who is undergoing surgery for breast cancer.—Florida*

*Please pray for my cousin who recently suffered a bad case of Covid. She has many underlying health issues and she's having a difficult time recovering.—North Carolina*

*Please pray that I will be able to obtain medical assistance in my local area.—Louisiana*

*Please pray for all the children who are caught in the destruction and tragedy of war —Tennessee*

*My wife is having anxiety attacks and she struggles daily with a lot of joint pain. Please pray for her and for me as I do my best to take care of her.—Nevada*

*I am going through treatment for a hiatal hernia. Please pray for me—I truly appreciate your prayers and I keep you all in my prayers as well.—Wisconsin*

*I thank God for everyone at PTM. You have helped to build and maintain my hope. I pray God will bless everyone involved in this ministry.—South Carolina*

*Please pray for my friend who was in a serious accident. She is now in a wheelchair and facing a long recovery from a broken pelvis.—California*

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.