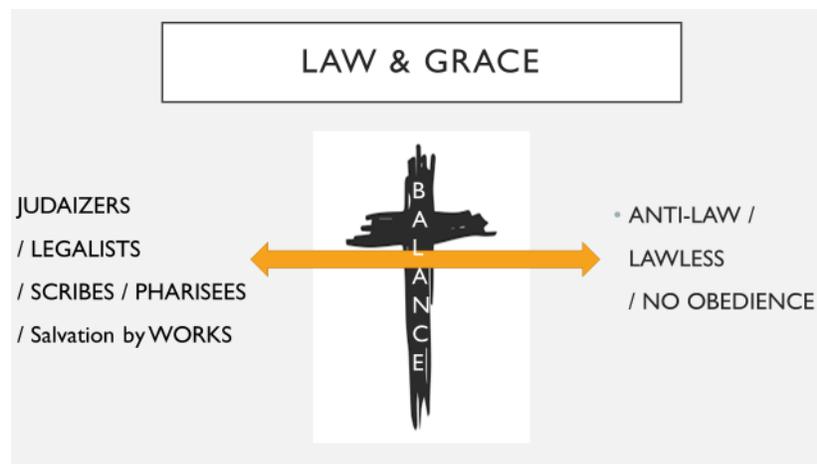


**FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD, FORT MYERS  
DEEP DIVE WED NIGHT - PHILIPPIANS 3:15-20 - Dr. Joe Mulvihill**

*<sup>15</sup>All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. <sup>16</sup>Only let us live up to what we have already attained. <sup>17</sup>Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. <sup>18</sup>For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup>Their destiny is destruction, **their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.** <sup>20</sup>But our citizenship is in heaven.*

Deep need for solid role models / exemplars...



**ROMANS 16:17-19**

*<sup>17</sup>I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. <sup>18</sup>For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, **but their own appetites.** By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. <sup>19</sup>Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*

**Resolving an Age-Old Biblical Issue – Law and Grace**

**EPHESIANS 2:3-10**

*<sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh<sup>[a]</sup> and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - <sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

VS.

JAMES 2:17, 26

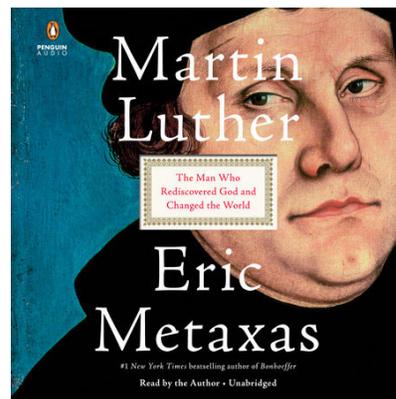
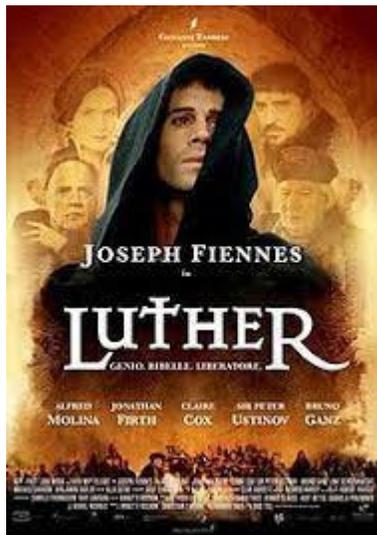
*17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

*26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

**Atheist:** “See?? Contradiction and confusion. THROW OUT THIS BOOK!”

**Roman Catholic (RC) Solution** - “Hold on – perhaps works are to be *MERGED* with grace/salvation – yes, see it is a “both/and” – OK but what are the new implications of that?? BECAUSE different people have different works in this life (I am no Mother Theresa, and most aren’t) so the RC Christian leaders must construct out of no real Biblical data a PURGATORY IDEA... WHY? Because if your salvation is connected *in that way/essentially* to your works/actions, then we need a perfecting place before heaven (again a place/concept that is not in the Bible) where one can ascend the ladder of holiness not gained here on earth to finally get holy enough to get into heaven!

Grace + WORKS = Salvation → HEAVEN (through purgatory)



From Luther on... Here’s the **PROTESTANT resolution** and why we don’t go the purgatorial route (one reason is “*sola scriptura*”) and it was this... you resolve the “works and salvation” APPARENT tension between JAMES 2 and EPHESIANS 2 by seeing as stages/step one and then step two –

EPHESIANS 2: FAITH IS BY GRACE so no one falls into the sinful pride of bragging about earning it (and thereby turning Christianity into every other false religion on the planet) but (listen!) IF THE TRUST/FAITH IS REAL it will RESULT in WORKS of OBEDIENT,

REPENTANT RIGHTEOUSNESS. JESUS said: *“those that love me OBEY MY COMMANDS”* – it is ALL OVER SCRIPTURE - one cannot edit out life-changing obedience by way of a new perspective/a renewed mind.



Luther’s right-hand man in ministry, the oft-ill gent with a genius IQ, Phillip Melancthon, put it this way (I cannot improve upon it...) the Protestant (after Luther) solution to the conundrum is this... which is the tension Paul is bringing in Philippians 3 in the context of defining and identifying a mature Christian.

Here’s how Melancthon put it – “Yes, it is true that when one comes to Christ it is FAITH ALONE (*sola fide*) **but if it is authentic/true, THAT FAITH WILL NEVER REMAIN ALONE.**” It will produce life-changing, FRUITFUL works. There is an observable, recognizable DIFFERENCE in the life of the receiver of said grace – there will be a new cooperation, a trajectory of improvement – the gospel CHANGES PEOPLE but it does not immediately perfect them in all areas. EXAMPLE: Take Luther’s life; he not only rejected purgatory and all that came with it as unbiblical RC legalism, but priestly celibacy, as well. BUT THAT DID NOT MEAN THERE WAS NO OBEDIENCE OR CONSTRAINT OR LAW for Martin Luther as a husband or Christian leader! GRACE first (Salvation) which invariably LEADS to WORKS of obedience and eventual Heaven (no purgatory needed).

**Protestant:** Grace THEN Works

**Put it this way, if you come to the altar and you struggled with habitual gossip and now one year later you do drugs, have started intermittent thieving, are less loving and gossip even more frequently/habitually – YOU HAVE EVERY REASON TO QUESTION that altar experience and judge it as momentary emotion alone! Hello – God help us, God help us – one should see a trajectory of improvement.**



**Your/our imperfect attempts at H.S. cooperative holiness / sanctification does not save you** (no “progressive salvation” here) but your **progressive, imperfect obedience is a PROOF that you did indeed receive Grace through REAL faith/TRUST**. This is why Paul says in the letter long scold to one of the most unlikely church plants in the ancient world in Corinth in his letter to the Corinthians (ch. 5) – let’s just read it here...because it is one of the most avoided passages in preaching and it is relevant here...

**1 Corinthians 5** - *(immorality rebuked) you Christians are proud/boastful (first sign you aren't a believer) with incest going on that even Gentiles (who have the law on their hearts – Rom. 2) think this incest is diseased human behavior – boot him and her out – VV. 5-13* <sup>5</sup> *hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.* <sup>6</sup> *Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?* <sup>7</sup> *Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.* <sup>8</sup> *Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* <sup>9</sup> *I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people -* <sup>10</sup> *not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.* <sup>11</sup> *But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.* <sup>12</sup> *What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?* <sup>13</sup> *God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked person from among you.”*

I once heard a preacher say he wished this was not in the Bible!

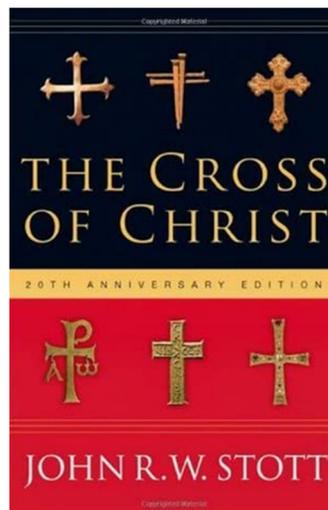
SO WE NEED HOLY SPIRIT POWER TO AVOID the two extremes – HUMANS WE DO NOT DO BALANCE WELL – ONE of the BEST BOOKS on the tension between LAW AND GRACE and the process of Biblical application is *Putting Truth to Work* by Daniel Doriani (and his companion book *Getting the Message*).

**Reinhold Niebuhr “We want a God without wrath, that brings men without sin into His Kingdom without justice through the ministrations of a CHRIST without a CROSS.”**

*The Kingdom of God in America*

- John Stott – “*Earn it*” - Legalism attraction: “First, we have to humble ourselves at the foot of the cross, confess that we have sinned and deserve nothing at his hand but judgment, thank him that he loved us and died for us, and receive from him a full and free forgiveness. Against this self-humbling our ingrained pride rebels. We resent the idea that we cannot earn – or even contribute to – our own salvation. So we stumble, as Paul put it, over the stumbling-block of the cross.” – **John Stott, *The Cross of Christ***
- John Stott – “*Don’t worry about it*” - Lawless attraction: “There is much shallowness and levity among us. Prophets and psalmists would probably say of us that ‘there is no fear of God before their eyes.’ In public worship our habit is to slouch or squat; we do not kneel nowadays... It is more characteristic of us to clap our hands with joy than to blush with shame or tears. We saunter up to God to claim his patronage and friendship; it does not occur to us that he might send us away. We need to hear again the apostle Peter’s sobering words: ‘Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives... in reverent fear.’ **In other words, if we dare to call our Judge our Father, we must beware of presuming on Him.** It must even be said that our evangelical emphasis on the atonement is dangerous **if we come to it too quickly.** We learn to appreciate the access to God which Christ has won for us only after we have first seen God’s inaccessibility to sinners. We can cry ‘Hallelujah’ with authenticity only after we have first cried ‘Woe is me, for I am lost’...‘it is partly because sin does not provoke our own wrath, that we do not believe that sin provokes the wrath of God’.”

– **John R.W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ***



## Psalm 42

- <sup>1</sup> As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, my God.
- <sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?
- <sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while people say to me all day long,  
“Where is your God?”
- <sup>4</sup> These things I remember  
as I pour out my soul:  
how I used to go to the house of God  
under the protection of the Mighty One  
with shouts of joy and praise  
among the festive throng.
- <sup>5</sup> Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.
- <sup>6</sup> My soul is downcast within me;  
therefore I will remember you  
from the land of the Jordan,  
the heights of Hermon - from Mount Mizar.
- <sup>7</sup> Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls;  
all your waves and breakers have swept over me.
- <sup>8</sup> By day the LORD directs his love,  
at night his song is with me -  
a prayer to the God of my life.
- <sup>9</sup> I say to God my Rock,  
“Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I go about mourning,  
oppressed by the enemy?”
- <sup>10</sup> My bones suffer mortal agony  
as my foes taunt me,  
saying to me all day long,  
“Where is your God?”
- <sup>11</sup> Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.