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## Practicality of Grace in Protestant Theology

### Introduction

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By Dr. Michael G. Maness  
Managing Editor, *Testamentum Imperium*<sup>1</sup>

What an honor it has been to work with so many fine scholars.

Kevaghn Mattis began *Testamentum Imperium—An International Theological Journal* in 2005 with a vision to gather scholarly dialogue from a multitude of disciplines on the security of the Christian believer, our “Great Testament,” which in Latin is *Testamentum Imperium*.

Our first publication in 2009 was *Perspectives on Eternal Security* with 13 articles from the 60 published in the 2007 journal.<sup>2</sup>

This volume brings together 13 carefully chosen articles from the 163 articles published in the 2011 journal, plus one by Dr. Keith

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<sup>1</sup> Maness earned a D.Min. at NOBTS and a M.Div. at SWBTS, and is a retired senior clinical chaplain from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (20 years). He is the author of nine books and over 100 articles, including, *How We Saved Texas Prison Chaplaincy 2011—Immeasurable Value of Volunteers and Their Chaplains* (AuthorHouse, 2015; 414p. [www.PreciousHeart.net/Saved](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/Saved)), which chronicled the networking that saved the Texas prison chaplaincy from cancellation in 2011; *Ocean Devotions—from the Hold of Charles H. Spurgeon* (2008); *Would You Lie To Save a Life?—A Theology on the Ethics of Love, Love Will Find a Way Home* (2007); *Heaven—Treasures of Our Everlasting Rest* (2004; 132p.); and *Heart of the Living God—Love, Free Will, Foreknowledge, Heaven—A Theology of the Treasure of Love* (2004; 728p.); *Queen of Prison Ministry—the Story of Gertha Rogers, First Woman to Minister on Texas Death Row* (2008); and *Precious Heart, Broken Heart—Love and the Search for Finality in Divorce* (2003). He is web master of [www.PreciousHeart.net](http://www.PreciousHeart.net) with links to over 10k sites to resources all over the world and hosts perhaps the largest collection of papers and data on prison chaplaincy in the world, and the most for Texas. He has been managing editor and publisher of *Testamentum Imperium* for most of its publication history, [www.PreciousHeart.net/ti](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/ti).

<sup>2</sup> See [www.PreciousHeart.net/ti/2007](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/ti/2007).

Evans and another me. While all 163 relate a facet of the practicality of grace, yet—goodness—so much work was done by so many, and each made a *unique* contribution. We felt these best represented the diversity and met needs in unique venues in fresh, relevant, and intriguing ways.

Furthermore, each touch many news headlines today.

While several bestsellers from scientific atheists deride all things religious—and slander Christ’s divinity in the ugliest ways (cf. Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris)—Glenn Kreider resolutely anchors the gospel in the stupendous incarnation where the Creator in Christ exemplifies humility to humanity in practical tenderness.

Timothy Demy’s masterly and historically-linked exposition on suicide corrects the depressive “unpardonable sin” in that horrendous tragedy to a more biblical view of forgiveness for all parties. His veteran military chaplaincy experience, so apropos today, touches all affected by suicide, especially veterans and law officers.

Evans reveals the skill set of the hospital chaplain and the inherent contributions of caring for the soul to the entire mission of medical and healthcare.

Alan Martin’s carefully resolute pastoral care of male sexual addiction seems to head off those afflicted—we hope—before more embarrassment ensues for the church, indeed, before more headlines expose clergy abuse in both Protestant and Catholic churches.

LaVerne Bell-Tolliver beseeches the church in a powerfully prescient treatise to *finally* deal with rape—perfect timing here—and hits our hearts hard today as the #MeToo movement has *finally* empowered more brave women to speak up. Her experience as a victim and a top clinician resonate with a determined heart to help all in Christ survive such trauma and overcome.

In a world that conspires to gut God out any meaning of life, D. J. Louw pushes us in heavy existential theologizing to view the cross of Christ and the resurrection as the quintessential necessity for every authentic sense of certain hope. Without the resurrection, there is no hope in this life, and Louw takes us to the root of our being in Christ.

Every article seems to hit a U.S. headline in a uniquely exquisite revelation, melding the academic with the deeply practical. How can we say this? In many ways, if grace cannot be made

### **Practical**

or in some way reach and *aid* the hurting, then grace seems to lose some of its most elemental and living treasure.

*Grace*—the unmerited favor from God through his son Jesus Christ allows us access to the Throne of God, all of us, everywhere, where we all stand on level ground. All need grace, and the Christian is guaranteed grace when they come to God with a humble heart.

*Grace*—with the above definition—many faith traditions have refined their understanding for centuries. However, when the church meets the lost person, the poor person, and the victim of crime and exploitation, it seems to us at *Testamentum Imperium* that we lose many of our differences and coalesce around “loving our neighbor.”

In such, we become the witness of God’s grace to the hurting, to those wounded, and to those scarred by the evils of the world. Each of us in our faith traditions becomes a unique vehicle for God to use. May God help us—the church—bring healing, or give comfort, or strengthen a soul in a trial of affliction.

These 15 articles touch a broad scope of affliction, some real areas of struggle, from physical suffering to moral and theological dilemmas. And part of the choice was *not* to find from the 161 those who see eye-to-eye theologically or philosophically. We desired to share the unique expertise of 15 in 15 unique oceans, as it were, who feel with a *pastoral heart* and have set sail in their rugged crafts upon 13 separate tumultuous oceans of pain. Each of the 13 chart a course through a uniquely deep sea of pain. Each weathered captain ferry in the hold of their vessels a precious cargo of healing balm from God to help bring a soul to a port of healing and peaceful victory—in Christ.

We hope they bless you in your service, too, in the

### **Practical Grace**

God has given to each Christian reader, and impel each further, even to read the other scholars who have contributed to grace’s practicality within the precious Kingdom of our loving God.

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