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## *Grace And Law / Faith And Works*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip**

*"My beloved, , work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;  
for it is God who is at work in you,  
enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.  
Philippians 2.12-13*

We have lingered over these beautiful bible verses in several of my studies during the past months. In both a men's bible study and a women's bible study, we were studying Paul's crisp letter to the Philippians, crisp with energy and joy, and crisp with powerfully succinct statements of life and faith.

Any study of the New Testament will soon turn to the tension between law and grace. That's because much of the New Testament turns out to have been written by St. Paul, a man of the law, who found grace in Jesus Christ. It was his genius that proclaimed grace, again and again, in a culture laden with law (Jewish, Greek, and Roman law!).

Though he always decides on grace, St. Paul realized that we human beings always live in a tension between grace and law. (Jesus realized the same thing. Even graceful Jesus relies on law; look at the Gospel of Matthew, 5-7.) Delightful bible discussion occurs when we speak of living according to grace or according to law.

In most bible studies, the tension between law and grace is also expressed in a discussion of "works and faith." Are we supposed to rely on faith and grace for our salvation? Or are we supposed to rely on works and law? Are we supposed to believe or to act?

The answer is not simply "Both."

The answer is exactly the way St. Paul phrased it to the Philippians. "Work out your own salvation, and you will find that God is already at work in you." God is always the One who provides grace and energy. (It is God "who strengthens us," St. Paul will say later at Philippians 4.13.) It is grace that is always first. However, we never know that grace until we begin to work ourselves. It is we who must actually do the work

Thus, in Philippians 2.12-13, St. Paul instructs the Philippians to work, because we do not know the grace of God until we set about working out salvation. That is, the notion of grace occurring "first" in our lives never appears to us until we first set about working!

Memorial Day is this Monday. The entire weekend is set aside as a holiday. Some of us will remember those who have died while serving patriotically. May God bless their souls. Others of us will use the weekend to declare officially that summer has begun. In either case, let us remember that we always live by grace-but we never realize grace until work has occurred. There is no holiday until some people have worked to give their very lives to a cause. There is no real summer relaxation unless someone has worked hard during the academic year. We live by grace, and we must always work.

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