

# IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS

## CLASS 3 and POWER POINT 3:

1. This book will show that Protestantism does not lack the vital tradition of inner spiritual life. It is true that the media driven pop American culture has made the Protestant spiritual legacy to be nearly forgotten. Exploring an older and far-less Americanized theological and spiritual tradition should prove helpful for Christians to keep their bearing. Evangelicals of every stripe would do well to uncover the legacy of the first Evangelicals.
2. Lutherans don't like stealing other sheep from other churches and this is not the point of this book. Any Christian can draw insights from this book and there will be disagreements. For example, Calvin has had far effects on Protestants all the way to Baptists. While they may disagree on an issue or two, they have acknowledged his insight. When Christians deal with hot topics like politics, how to live in a sinful world, and the how to deal with suffering, Dr. Luther has penetrating insights, and he deserves his say. The full dose of Lutheran spirituality can only be found in a Lutheran Church.
3. EV writes as a layman. His approach to what he found helpful with this Lutheran tradition is for ordinary folk to grasp as well. This approach will by no means avoid theology. He will avoid the full blown theological and polemical work of theology. He will say virtually nothing about Dr. Martin Luther as interesting as that can be. Lutherans are grounded in history and some might mistake us worshipping Luther rather than Christ. This book will be no less relevant in the 21st<sup>h</sup> century as it was in the 16th century. It may be more, because of the emptiness of our modern age. He is not here to attack or defend against opposing theologies, but to simply lay out Lutheran Spirituality. Take it or leave it, all will come away with a clearer view of Christian tradition.
4. No doubt defense and rebuttal of false theologies are important. Lutheran theology is serious and has been thoroughly worked out. There is much sophisticated theology/Biblical scholarship among Lutherans. He will reference those deep resources if anyone is interested in follow through. But this is not EV's vocation, (A notion made clearer later) If one wants to go deeper, consult a Lutheran pastor, the office of the "cure of souls," can be more concrete than any book. Spiritual life is lived, not conceptualized, and it takes place in an ordinary (mundane) church.

### **JUSTIFICATION; The Dynamics of Sin and Grace**

5. There are certain patterns that world religions and individuals follow to find meaning in their lives. Adolf Koeberle notes three kinds of spirituality; **Moralism**, in which one finds perfection of conduct, **Speculation**, in which the mind seeks the perfect understanding, and **Mysticism**, in which one seeks to achieve perfection by becoming one with God. These all have some wisdom, but Lutheran Spirituality (LS) is different than that.

6. Instead of becoming perfect, in (LS) one faces the fact that one is not. We can never be perfect no matter the effort. Our minds can not understand God, and we can't become one with Him. Instead of one doing these things, LS says God does them for us. He becomes one with us and reveals Himself to us through our feeble understanding of His Word. In Christ, He forgives our conduct and Christ lives/lived the perfect life for us.
7. We don't ascend to God, God descends to us. Most philosophies and religions are about what I do for God, LS is that we can do nothing and God has done it all. Human sin and God's grace are the two poles of LS. True all Christians have this, but they are heightened in LS. It is resolved in the key doctrine in which the church stands or falls, the doctrine of justification.

#### **PATHS TO GOD: (MORALISM)**

8. Koeberle's three approaches deserve closer attention so that LS can be shown as higher relief. Moralism seeks God's favor by moral perfection. Always do right and avoid wrong. This involves will power and scrupulous conscience. It is laudable if it can be accomplished. Many think LS and Christianity is about Moralism as good people go to heaven and bad people to hell. Christians are those avoiding sin and do good stuff. Sometimes these are lifestyle choices; avoid alcohol, vices, petty pleasures, etc. To some it's working for vast ideals, righting the wrong of society with political activism and political reform.
9. Some versions of Christianity do lean towards Moralism. Moralism characterizes the world's religion. Islam covers every detail of life, diet, family and politics and these are regulated by strict rules. Even non-religious people claim to be Moral; animal rights activists, environmentalists and political activists can be just as zealous, perfectionist and all demanding as most conservative religions.
10. Moralism is impossible and filled with contradictions. People can't, don't and won't live up to their own high standards. We fail. Sometimes attempts at this lead to immoral acts, and higher standards can cause us to hate, coerce and feel better to others. At times our own attitudes undermine our virtuous actions. I have done good works with acclaim and praise, while inside it took away any pretension of my good work meriting anything. The passions, sins of the will and secret desires of my heart chip away at my best moral intentions. Moralists mask their failures with dishonesty and rationalization. Moralism is mostly accompanied by hypocrisy, and external righteousness that reveals the true story inside.
11. Another way to cope when our morality slips are grasp is to hold the correct positions, vote properly or have correct social causes. It can push virtue outside of our experience, even while personal life has become a wreck. We define Moral perfection down so we can make it easier to our control. In doing so we end up violating moral obligations that really count, that with our own behavior and our relationship to others around us.
12. Another problem is that righteousness can become self-righteousness. This superior feeling of pride undoes the virtue that was done. Even the highest moral people slip up and the attempt to be morally perfect breeds harshness, pride, and cruelty, hardly signs of being a 'good person.' Being good is laudable, if we are honest no one can achieve that. We don't have the will power and inner motivation or the inner purity to achieve moral perfection.
13. Next time; Speculation, the Mysticism.