

mean non-believers' good deeds lack any value under God's common grace (Matthew 5:45), but they cannot achieve spiritual salvation without faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). Similarly, repentance and grace form a sacred tension. Without repentance, grace is spurned—as Hebrews 10:26-31 warns against deliberately continuing in sin. But without grace, repentance becomes an impossible burden, for no one can atone through effort alone.

At its core, the fullness of God's truth resides in this divine tension. We, as finite beings, often seek to resolve it, craving simplicity and closure. Our discomfort with ambiguity is evident in everyday life. Think of how Hollywood crafts narratives: tension builds with a villain's threat or a romantic misunderstanding, heroes intervene, and resolution arrives, leaving audiences satisfied. While some appreciate open-ended stories, unresolved narratives often frustrate us, prompting complaints about "cliffhangers" or "poor scripting." Yet, in reality, embracing tension fosters balance and depth. Resolving it prematurely can lead to distortion, much like favoring one side of a seesaw, which tips everything into imbalance.

Human aversion to tension

This aversion to tension explains why many approach Scripture selectively. We gravitate toward verses that align with personal preferences while ignoring counterpoints.

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But true biblical understanding demands we hold opposites together. Jesus himself exemplifies this divine tension, portrayed in Scripture as both Lamb and Lion, symbols that could not be more antithetical.

In John 1:29, he is the gentle Lamb of God, sacrificial and meek, taking away the sins of the world. Yet in Revelation 5:5, he is the fierce Lion of the tribe of Judah, triumphant and powerful. Is Jesus submissive or sovereign? Compassionate or conquering? The answer is both/and. This isn't contradiction but completion, a both/and reality that defies our either/or mindset. This duality reflects the hypostatic union: Jesus as fully God and fully man (John 1:14), avoiding heresies like Docetism (denying His humanity) or Arianism (denying His divinity).

To transform your personal Bible study, adopt this lens: for any topic, you're not done until you've identified what holds it in divine tension. What is the "Lamb" to this "Lion"? These tensions serve as the right and left borders of truth, preventing us from veering into extremes. Without them, we either risk heresy or shallow faith. Emphasizing grace without repentance leads to a permissive license to sin, while stressing deeds without faith breeds legalism and a works-oriented Christianity.

Editor's note: This has been cut due to space, please search for this story on DisciplesToday.org for the entire article.

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December 14, 2025 • Halifax-Dartmouth Church of Christ
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December 12, 2025 • Summer Cheung – Hong Kong, China
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Divine Tension: Embracing the Fullness of God's Truth (Part 1A)

December 15, 2025 • Justin Renton – Johannesburg, South Africa

Any serious reader of the Bible soon discovers an uncomfortable reality: the fullness of God's truth is often held in tension. We see this in Scripture and in creation. We live in a world governed by intricate balances, from the vast expanse of the universe to the microscopic dance of atoms. We cannot avoid encountering a profound principle: divine tension. This concept, drawn from the very fabric of creation, reveals how opposing forces coexist to maintain harmony and wholeness.



Consider the solar system, where gravity pulls planets inward while centrifugal force propels them outward, creating stable orbits. Scale it down to the atomic level, and you'll find protons and electrons held in equilibrium by electromagnetic forces, or nuclei bound by strong and weak nuclear interactions. Even our own bodies embody this tension, requiring a delicate balance of eating, sleeping, and exercising to thrive. Imbalance leads to illness, just as excess or deficiency disrupts the natural order. This echoes Romans 1:20, where God's invisible qualities are clearly seen in what has been made. This principle isn't confined to the physical realm; it permeates the spiritual world as well, reflecting the character of God himself. The Bible is rich with examples where truths exist not in isolation but in dynamic tension. Each side complements the other to reveal the fullness of divine wisdom.

Tensions in creation and core doctrines

Faith and deeds, for instance, are like inhaling and exhaling—essential and interdependent. As James 2:26 declares, "Faith without deeds is dead." Yet deeds performed without faith are equally futile, amounting to mere human effort devoid of spiritual life (cf. Isaiah 64:6, where even our righteous acts are like "filthy rags" apart from God). This does not

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Teleios Conference**
February 26-28, 2026
San Antonio, TX, USA
- Marriage Retreat Cruise**
April 4-11, 2026
San Diego, CA, USA
- Church Builders Conference**
April 23-26, 2026
Boston, MA, USA
- Marriage Retreat Cruise**
May 2-9, 2026
Fort Lauderdale, FL, USA
- DT Travel in Bali 2026**
May 2–10, 2026
- DT Travel 2026 Mediterranean Cruise: Footsteps of Paul**
September 12–22, 2026
- North American Teachers Conference**
September 17-19, 2026
Raleigh, NC, USA
- Conferencia de Las Americas**
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Oct 15-18, 2026

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