

THE GOSPEL LESSON 6 – BY GRACE YOU ARE SAVED

INTRODUCTION

We continue our study of the Gospel of Your Salvation anchored in the truth of Ephesians 1:13: “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.” It is the message of truth that announces God’s grace to the world and offers eternal life through the person, work, and promise of Jesus Christ. We have examined exactly what this gospel is: who Jesus is, what He has done, what He promises, and the nature of believing in Him.

The gospel is not a call to a better life, a religious system, or a vague hope. It is the announcement of good news centered on a Person. Everything rests on the truth of His identity, His finished work, and His sure promises. When a person hears the message of truth and believes it, something decisive takes place. Today we turn to a passage that explains how this salvation comes to us: by grace through faith. Paul makes this clear in the flow of his letter to the Ephesians.

GRACE

The Greek noun χάρις (*charis*) fundamentally conveys the idea of favor, kindness, or a gift freely given, especially to one who has no claim on it. It speaks of that which brings delight or pleasure, often without any prior obligation or merit on the part of the recipient. In secular Greek it could describe a pleasing quality, a favor done, or gratitude shown in return. But in the New Testament it takes on rich theological depth, especially when describing God’s action toward sinners.

Usage in the Septuagint (LXX) In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, *charis* frequently renders the Hebrew יָחַן (*chen*), meaning favor or grace. It often appears in contexts where someone finds favor in the eyes of another (Genesis 6:8 – Noah found *charis* in the eyes of the Lord; Genesis 39:4 – Joseph found *charis* with Potiphar). It highlights unmerited kindness, especially when extended by a superior to an inferior. This sets the stage for the New Testament’s emphasis on God’s gracious initiative.

New Testament Usage – *Charis* occurs over 150 times in the New Testament, with a heavy concentration in Paul’s letters. It consistently portrays God’s generous, unearned action on behalf of sinners. Key categories include:

Key Passages on Grace in Salvation

- **Romans 3:24:** “being justified as a gift by His *charis* through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” Grace is the source of justification, entirely unmerited.
- **Romans 5:15-17:** Paul contrasts Adam’s trespass with the “abundance of *charis*” and the “gift by *charis*” that reigns in life through Jesus Christ. Grace is not like the offense; it is lavishly given.
- **Romans 11:6:** “But if it is by *charis*, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise *charis* is no longer *charis*.” Paul makes grace and works mutually exclusive.

THE GOSPEL LESSON 6 – BY GRACE YOU ARE SAVED

- **Titus 3:5-7:** “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds... but according to His mercy... that being justified by His *charis* we would be made heirs.” Grace stands opposite to human righteousness.
- **2 Timothy 1:9:** God “has saved us and called us... not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and *charis*.”

Romans 4, Grace is the Antithesis of Works

Romans 4 is one of the clearest and most extended developments of *charis* in the New Testament. Paul uses Abraham as the prime example to demonstrate that justification has always been by faith, so that it accords with grace and excludes works.

In Romans 4:2-5 Paul writes: “If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a “grace,” but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.”

Here Paul draws a sharp line: wages are owed; grace is not. The one who works receives what is due; the one who believes receives righteousness as a credit (*logizomai*), not as something earned. This is the language of grace.

Paul then quotes David in Romans 4:6-8: “Just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.’”

David’s language reinforces the same truth: righteousness is credited apart from works. The blessing rests on forgiveness and non-imputation of sin, pure grace.

The argument reaches its climax in Romans 4:13-16: “For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation. For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with *charis*, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.”

Paul explicitly states that the promise is guaranteed by faith “in order that it may be in accordance with *charis*.” If the promise rested on law or works, it would be nullified. Grace secures the promise for every believer — Jew and Gentile alike — because it rests on God’s faithfulness, not human performance.

Theological Implications – In the New Testament, especially Paul, *charis* is God’s free, unmerited favor extended to guilty sinners on the basis of Christ’s finished work. It is not a

THE GOSPEL LESSON 6 – BY GRACE YOU ARE SAVED

reward for repentance, baptism, commitment, or future obedience. It is the very means by which salvation is given and received. Because it is entirely God's gift, it leaves no room for human boasting and cannot be mixed with works without nullifying its character as grace (Romans 11:6).

This understanding protects the simplicity of the gospel: hear the message of truth about Jesus, be convinced it is true, and you receive the gift. Anything added to "believe" turns the free gift back into a wage. Grace, rightly understood, magnifies the finished work of Christ and gives the believer full assurance that salvation is secure because it rests entirely on God's favor, not our performance.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

Ephesians 2 opens with a stark picture of our condition apart from Christ: dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, living in the lusts of our flesh, and children of wrath by nature. Then comes the glorious turn in verses 4-7: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Paul now explains this salvation more fully in verses 8-9. Here is the Greek text with a literal rendering:

τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μὴ τις καυχῆσεται (*tē gar chariti este sesōsmenoi dia pisteōs; kai touto ouk ex humōn, theou to dōron; ouk ex ergōn, hina mē tis kauchēsētai*).

"For by that grace you are ones having been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves, God's gift; not from works, so that no one would boast."

Pay close attention to the grammar, because it guards the simplicity and certainty of the gospel.

"By that grace you are ones having been saved" – The phrase "you are ones having been saved" translates a perfect periphrastic construction (ἐστε σεσωσμένοι, *este sesōsmenoi*). The perfect tense emphasizes a completed action with ongoing results. Salvation is not a process we work toward or maintain. It is something God has already accomplished for the believer, and the effects remain. The passive voice reminds us that God is the one who saves. We do not save ourselves. The article with *charis* (*tē chariti*) points back to the particular grace mentioned in the context — the rich mercy and great love of God that makes the dead alive in Christ.

Grace (χάρις charis) carries the core idea of favor, kindness, or gift freely given, especially to those who do not deserve it. Lexically it speaks of that which delights or brings pleasure,

THE GOSPEL LESSON 6 – BY GRACE YOU ARE SAVED

without any obligation on the part of the recipient. In the New Testament this word is used over 150 times, and in the context of salvation it consistently highlights God's unmerited action toward sinners.

Scripture proves this repeatedly. In Romans 3:24, we are “justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” The word “gift” here is *δῶρον dōron*, emphasizing something freely given. In Romans 5:15-17 Paul contrasts the gift of grace with the judgment that came through Adam; the gift reigns in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Titus 3:5-7 tells us God saved us “not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy... that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Grace is not earned or activated by human effort. It is God's generous provision in Christ, received by the one who believes.

“Through faith” – The preposition *dia* with the genitive points to faith as the means or instrument by which God's grace is received. Faith is not a work we perform to earn salvation. As we have seen in the Gospel of John, *pisteuō* (πιστεύω) carries the idea of being persuaded or convinced by the testimony and evidence. It comes from *peithō* (πείθω), to persuade or win over. To believe in Jesus is to be convinced that He is who He claimed to be, that He did what He said He would do, and that His promise of eternal life is true — and therefore to receive that life from Him. John never presents this as a multi-step process or an emotional decision detached from conviction. It is the singular, God-given response to the gospel message.

“And this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” – The demonstrative “this” (*touto*) refers to the entire concept of salvation by grace through faith. The salvation itself is not from us. It is God's gift. The word for gift here is *dōron* (δῶρον), emphasizing the thing given rather than the act of giving. This stands in direct contrast to any notion that we contribute to our salvation.

“Not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” – Salvation is not sourced in our deeds. The purpose clause (*hina mē tis kauchēsētai*, ἵνα μή τις καυχῆσῃται) shows God's design: no room for human boasting. If even the smallest part depended on our effort, we could claim credit. But because it is entirely by grace through faith, all glory belongs to God.

This matches the consistent testimony of Scripture. Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness (Romans 4:3). The one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness (Romans 4:5). We are justified by faith apart from works of the Law (Romans 3:28). The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

CONCLUSION

Salvation is provided by the grace of God. If we do not understand grace, we do not understand salvation.

Salvation: The Gift of Grace

THE NATURE OF GRACE (CHARIS) & EPHESIANS 2:8-9

Unmerited Favor (Charis)

A gift freely given to those with no claim on it or merit.

Faith as the Instrument

Being convinced by the truth of the gospel message.

χάρις

The Greek "perfect tense" signifies salvation is already finished with ongoing results.

A Gift vs. A Wage

No Room for Boasting

Salvation is sourced in God's gift, specifically to prevent human pride.



GIFT (DŌRON)
Freely given, apart from human performance

vs.



WAGE
Earned and owed



A COMPLETED ACTION

SALVATION BY WORKS (CONTRAST)

Mutually Exclusive to Works

Mixing works with grace nullifies its character as a free gift.



HUMAN ROLE: PERFORMING DEEDS OR LAW

CONCEPT	SALVATION BY GRACE	SALVATION BY WORKS
Nature	A free gift (dōron)	A debt or wage owed
Human Role	Believing/Being persuaded	Performing deeds or Law
Outcome	God receives all glory	Humans have cause to boast



Humans have cause to boast