

Salvation By Grace

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Preforatory Remarks

To me, the idea that we are saved by the grace of God, that he has done us a favor we didn't deserve and accomplished for us a justification we could not have otherwise attained, seems like a simple concept. But there is considerable discussion and even controversy associated with this concept, and so I have attempted to create an outline that makes it seem complicated, or maybe I should say, that is long enough (though in no wise approaching Kevin Kayish thoroughness) that it suggests I appreciate the difficulty of the subject.

But then again, I think the real issue that gives people difficulty is simply this: Is our justification conditioned upon anything we do or not? If the answer is "yes," then the debate is over. God gets to define the conditions, and that doesn't change the fact that he has done us an undeserved and otherwise unattainable favor. If the answer is "no," then let's all go home, go about our business, live our lives as we please, and just wait and see what happens.

However, if I submitted the foregoing in outline form and as the entirety of my outline, I'm sure there are those who would say, "it's not that simple." Well I may be missing something, but I don't know what it is, unless it be that it does get complicated when we try to reconcile our preconceived ideas with the notion of salvation by grace. So all I know to do is present some passages that illustrate the meaning of the words involved in the discussion (and I do believe there is value in that activity), talk a little bit about what is indeed the simple but profound mechanism through which God justifies us with a view to underscoring that God's gracious justification of us is most certainly an undeserved favor to us, and then summarize what I believe are the conclusions we should draw. That is what you will see in the outline that follows. Then those who read this or listen to my presentation of this material can enlighten me as to why this is really very complicated. I know that last line sounds sarcastic, maybe even snarky. It is not so intended. Truly I will not be surprised if you who read this and listen to my presentation will be able to pose questions that I have not considered, perhaps even questions that will befuddle me.

I. Word Study "Grace," "Faith," "Works"

A. **Grace** (Grk., *charis*) **Charm** (a false cognate, that is, not etymologically related to *charis*; however, absent the magical connotation of the word, especially because of the phonetic similarity to *charis*, *charm* is a useful English synonym.)

1. Comparing *charis* and true cognates
 - a. *chairō*, rejoice
 - b. *chara*, joy
 - c. *charis* “is what delights” -TDNT
2. Meanings
 - a. **Charm**
 - i. BDAG’s attempt to give more than a gloss is, “a winning quality or attractiveness that invites a favorable reaction, *graciousness, attractiveness, charm, winsomeness.*”
 - ii. In Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, Theseus speaks to his dying son, Hippolytus: οὐδέ μοι χάρις βίου, “There is no **charm** of life to me,” i.e. “Life has no **charm** for me”
 - iii. Col. 4:6 “Let your speech be always with grace (ἐν χάριτι), seasoned with salt.”
 - iv. BDAG puts Lk. 4:22 in this category: “And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace (τῆς χάριτος) which proceeded out of his mouth.”
 - α. I’m skeptical, wondering if perhaps the definite article (they were marvelling at the words of **the** grace (τῆς χάριτος) that proceeded from his mouth”) points to the proclamation of specific acts, *viz.* release, recovering of sight, liberty. In other words, they were not merely marvelling because his words were charming, but because his words announced particular pleasing actions that constituted grace.
 - β. Of course, words announcing pleasing actions would for that reason be charming (gracious).
 - γ. The question is the precise function of **χάριτος**: Is it used in apposition to λόγοις (*words*), such that the words were the grace (cf. τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ σώματος, “*the temple of the body*” Jn. 2:21, ἡ...οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους “*the house of the tabernacle*” 2 Cor. 5:1), or is the genitive used here descriptively (cf. ἡμέρα σωτηρίας “*day of*

- salvation*" 2 Cor. 6:2), *i.e.*, words about, or pertaining to grace?
- v. I wonder if we might not ought to include 2 Pt. 3:18 here, "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*," so as to see the nouns as attributes of Jesus just as are those in 2 Cor. 10:1, and to see the exhortation as similar to Phil. 2:5.
 - α. If indeed this were correct, we should understand the "knowledge of our Lord" to be in contrast to that which is falsely called knowledge, the Gnosticism which is in view in 2 Pt. 2.
 - b. *A Favorable Disposition (on the part of one for another)*
 - i. Plutarch, Demosthenes 7.1 "At another time, too, they say, when he had been rebuffed by the people and was going off homewards disconcerted and in great distress, Satyrus the actor, who was a familiar acquaintance of his, followed after and went indoors with him. Demosthenes lamented to him that although he was the most laborious of all the orators and had almost used up the vigour of his body in this calling, he had no favour with the people (*χάριν οὐκ ἔχει πρὸς τὸν δῆμον*), but debauchees, sailors, and illiterate fellows were listened to and held the bema, while he himself was ignored."
 - ii. In the LXX, *one finds favor in the eyes of another*, Gen. 6:8, Gen. 30:27, Ex. 3:21, 1 Bas. 16:22, 2 Bas. 14:22, Ex. 33:13, 16, 2 Bas 15:25
 - c. *An Act of Kindness, i.e. a Favor*
 - i. Lysias 31.24, repay **favors** (*χάριτας*) for deeds done¹
 - ii. Favorable things, Prov. 18:22 "*He who found a good woman found favors*"²
 - d. *The Sentiment or Motivation Behind an Act of Kindness*—Lysias 14.40, "Wherfore you ought now to condemn this man as one whom you have judged to be a hereditary enemy of the city, and to set neither pity nor forgiveness nor any favour (*μήτε ἔλεον μήτε*

¹ σωφρονέστερον γάρ ἐστιν ὕστερον πᾶσι τῶν ἔργων τὰς χάριτας ἀποδιδόναι· δεινὸν γάρ ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ εἶναι εἰ ἐξ ὧν μὲν ἡδη ἡμάρτηκε μηδέποτε τιμωρηθήσεται, ἐξ ὧν δὲ μέλλει εὖ ποιήσειν ἡδη τετιμήσεται

² ὃς εὗρεν γυναῖκα ἀγαθήν, εὗρεν χάριτας

συγγνώμην μήτε χάριν μηδεμίαν) above the established laws and the oaths that you have sworn."

- e. *A Response, viz. Thanksgiving, to an Act of Kindness*, 2 Cor. 2:14.
3. The following is a partial listing of usage categories given in LSJ
 - a. in objective sense, *outward grace, beauty*
 - b. in subjective sense, *grace or favour felt*
 - i. on the part of the doer, *grace, kindness, goodwill*
 - ii. on the part of the receiver, *sense of favour received, thankfulness, gratitude*
 - c. in concrete sense, *a favour done or returned, boon*
 - d. *gratification, delight in or from a thing*
 - e. *homage due*

 4. Grace in the NT
 - a. Not always the favor of forgiveness in Christ Jesus:
 - i. Eph. 3:7
 - ii. Eph. 3:8
 - b. Not necessarily "unmerited" favor
 - i. Luke 2:40, 52
 - α. I do not at all mean to suggest we merit God's grace.
 - β. Truly, we do not merit the favor God has bestowed on us in Christ Jesus. Rom 11:5-6
 - c. Not necessarily unconditional
 - d. God's favor toward us in Christ
 - i. Eph. 1:6, τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἡς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ιγαπημένῳ
 - α. From my coming commentary on Ephesians: We may say, "his grace, *with* which he graced us" or "his grace, which he bestowed *on* us," or "...gave *to* us." Perhaps the English wording that would be most true to the Greek *structure* is "his grace, which he gave us," but *gave* hardly suffices to convey fully the thought of ἐχαρίτωσεν. ἐχαρίτωσεν, from χαριτώ and obviously cognate to χάρις (*grace, favor*), occurs in the New Testament only here and in Lk. 1:28 where Mary is addressed as the one who has been favored. Not only was the adoption of ourselves accomplished through Christ, but it was a work of God's grace, grace he bestowed on us, with which he favored us, in the Beloved, that is, in Christ.

- ii. The favor God extends to us in Christ Jesus is conditional
 - a. In a word, that condition is *faith*
 - b. And in fact, *faith (properly understood) only* (James 2 notwithstanding; see below)

5. Grace in Ephesians 1-2

- a. 1:2 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ Θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.
- b. 1:6 εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἡς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἥγαπημένῳ
- c. 1:7 out of his grace arise redemption forgiveness: ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἀφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων, κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, 8 ἡς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς
- d. 2:5 χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι (in connection with ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ)
- e. 2:7 τὸ ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἐν χρηστότητι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (this whole phrase is the object of ἐνδείξηται in the phrase, ἵνα ἐνδείξηται ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις)
- f. 2:8 τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως (Paul's commentary on this was, καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, Θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μή τις καυχήσηται) Notice that here, "not of works" means "not of yourselves, that no one may glory."
 - i. Excerpts from my forthcoming commentary:
 - α. χάριτι is articular. The definite article serves to specify the grace as that previously mentioned in verse 5 — "the aforementioned grace."
 - β. χάριτι, dative in form, is instrumental, indicating the means of our being saved.
 - γ. διὰ πίστεως *through faith*. The new thought in the clause is that the salvation is through faith. That is, "It is through faith that you are being saved by the aforementioned grace."
 - δ. καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, Θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον And this not of yourselves, it is God's gift. τοῦτο is anaphoric, carrying along the idea of what is already in view, namely ἐστε σεσωσμένοι ("you have been saved"). It is not pointing to πίστεως (faith) which is feminine, for if that were the intended meaning, we would expect the feminine αὕτη. Paul does not affirm that

God's gift is faith, but rather that God's gift is our being saved; it is God's gift inasmuch as it is by Christ and thus by grace rather than of ourselves. χάριτι (grace) is also feminine, and therefore while it is true that God's grace is a gift, here, in saying καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, Paul "refers to the whole conception, not to χάριτι" [Robertson, p. 1182].

Examples of neuter τοῦτο used to refer to an abstract verbal idea are numerous (cf. Mt. 1:22, 8:9, 9:28, 13:28, 16:22, 19:26, 21:4, 26:56, 28:14, Mk. 9:21, 11:3, Lk. 1:18, 1:34, 5:6, and many more, including many occurrences of the phrase διὰ τοῦτο="on account of this").

In Ephesians in particular, see 6:1, "For this is right" (Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ, τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν δίκαιον).

ii. Three Concepts in Is. 53 that explain the favor in detail:

α. Transference

- 1) (illustrated and foreshadowed in Lev. 1:3, 3:8, 3:12, 16:20-22)
- 2) Is. 53:4
- 3) Is. 53:6 (cf. 1 Pt. 2:24)
- 4) Is. 53:11
- 5) Is. 53:12

β. Substitution (illustrated and foreshadowed in Gen. 22:13)

- 1) Is. 53:5
- 2) Is. 53:8
- 3) Is. 53:11a

γ. Justice

- 1) Is. 53:10
- 2) Is. 53:11
- 3) Cf. Rom. 3:24-26

6. Grace as a motivation for good works

- a. Eph. 2:8-10
- b. Chapters 1-3, wherein Paul explains God's great grace, followed by "therefore walk worthily" (chapters 4-6)

7. The concept of grace was not intended to be a theological football, nor even a theological complexity. It is presented in the Bible as a simple fact: a gracious God chose to extend mercy to sinful man by means of a substitutionary, *i.e.*, vicarious, punishment of man's sin in the death of Jesus. For the most part, the emphasis is on God's generosity and not on abstract theology. Save for the explanation of how God's mercy can be reconciled with his justice, it is practical, not theoretical. It is not abstractly pondered, but is concretely demonstrated in Jesus Christ.

B. Faith (Grk. πίστις)

1. Used in a variety of ways, but for our purposes in this discussion, the usage of πίστις in the sense of "trust" is germane.
 - a. Thucydides 4.86
 - i. "And therefore I claim not only that you be not jealous of me (especially having given you so good assurance [πίστεις γε διδοὺς τὰς μεγίστας]), or think me unable to defend you, but also that you declare yourselves boldly with me." – trns. by Thomas Hobbes
 - ii. "I think that you ought not to doubt my word when I offer you the most solemn pledges (πίστεις γε διδοὺς τὰς μεγίστας), nor should I be regarded as an inefficient champion; but you should confidently join me." – trns. by Benjamin Jowett
 - b. Demosthenes 8.215, Demosthenes speaking to the Athenians about their reception by the Thebans, "when they put into your power what they, like all other men, were most anxious to safeguard, namely their wives and their children, they exhibited their confidence (πίστιν) in your sobriety." My translation of the last part: "having acted reasonably toward you, they showed that they had confidence (πίστιν) concerning you."
 - c. Polybius 1.43.4 In an account of the 2nd century B.C. siege of Lilybaeum on the western most cape of Sicily, the Carthaginian general who held the city learned that some of the officers in charge of his mercenary force snuck out by night and conspired with the attacking Romans to turn the city over to them. One Alexon, an Achaean, got wind of this and informed the Carthaginian general, Himilco. Himilco responded by promising those officers still loyal to him great rewards if they would remain loyal. When they agreed, he sent them to secure the loyalty of their subordinate

troops. And he also sent Alexon with them διὰ τὴν παρ' ἐκείνοις ἀποδοχὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ πίστιν, “*on account of his reception and trustworthiness with them*,” or “*on account of his reception with them and his trustworthiness*.”

- d. We see πίστιν used in a sense somewhat similar to Paul’s use of πιστός (“faithful is the saying”) at Polybius 4.33.1, Ό δὲ λόγος οὗτος ἔχει μὲν ἵσως καὶ διὰ τῶν πάλαι γεγονότων πίστιν, “*And this assertion perhaps has trustworthiness (πίστιν), having come through the ancients.*”
 - e. Xenophon, Hiero, 4.1 “Next take **confidence** (πίστεως). Surely he who has very little of that is stinted in a great blessing? What companionship is pleasant without mutual **trust** (πίστεως)? What intercourse between husband and wife is delightful without **confidence** (πίστεως)? What squire is pleasant if **he is not trusted** (ἀπιστούμενος)? [2] Now of this **confidence** (πιστῶς) in others despots enjoy the smallest share. They go in constant suspicion even of their meat and drink; they bid their servitors taste them first, before the libation is offered to the gods, because of their misgiving that they may sup poison in the dish or the bowl. [3] Again, to all other men their fatherland is very precious. For citizens ward one another without pay from their slaves and from evildoers, to the end that none of the citizens may perish by a violent death.”¹
2. The verb, πιστεύω
- a. “πιστεύω (only from the 7th cent.), derived from πιστός, means ‘to trust,’ ‘to rely on.’” TDNT vol. 6 p. 177
 - b. “From a purely formal standpoint there is nothing very distinctive in the usage of the NT and early Chr. writings as compared with Gk. usage. As in Gk.... πιστεύειν means ‘to rely on,’ ‘to trust,’ ‘to believe.’” T DNT Vol. 6, p. 203. -Rudolf Bultman
 - c. In the NT as well as in ancient Greek generally, the verb πιστεύω can mean merely “believe.”
 - i. Especially when followed by ὅτι (believe that...)

¹ ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ πίστεως ὄστις ἐλάχιστον μετέχει, πῶς οὐχὶ μεγάλου ἀγαθοῦ μειονεκτεῖ; ποίᾳ μὲν γὰρ ξυνουσίᾳ ἡδεῖα ἀνευ πίστεως τῆς πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ποίᾳ δ' ἀνδρὶ καὶ γυναικὶ τερπνῇ ἀνευ πίστεως ὄμιλίᾳ, ποίος δὲ θεράπων ἡδὺς ἀπιστούμενος; [2] καὶ τούτου τοίνυν τοῦ πιστῶς πρός τινας ἔχειν ἐλάχιστον μέτεστι τυράννῳ: ὅπότε γε οὐδὲ σιτίοις καὶ ποτοῖς πιστεύων διάγει, ἀλλὰ καὶ τούτων πρὸς ἀπάρχεσθαι τοῖς θεοῖς τοὺς διακόνους πρῶτον κελεύουσιν ἀπογεύεσθαι διὰ τὸ ἀπιστεῖν μὴ καὶ ἐν τούτοις κακόν τι φάγωσιν ἢ πίωσιν:

- ii. Bultman argued that the use equivalent to our “believe” arose from the fundamental meaning, “trust” when used in regard to words: “Since words can be the obj. of *πιστεύειν*, it can also mean ‘to believe,’ and in this sense it can have a personal obj. (dat.) or a material obj. (acc.).” TDNT, vol. 6, p. 178.
- 3. But it is *trust*, not mere belief, that is the condition of salvation.
 - a. Jms. 2:19
 - b. Ac. 19:15
 - c. Heb. 3:12, 19
 - d. Jn. 3:16ff

C. Works

- 1. We are not saved by works
 - a. Rom. 3:21-4:8
 - b. Ephesians 2:8-9
- 2. We are created for good works, Ephesians 2:10.
 - a. “works” here is about godliness, conduct, Eph. 4-6, cf. James 2 (helping the poor, speech that edifies, working with one’s hands, etc.).
 - b. Such “works” are not the condition of initial justification, but are the response to grace.
 - c. If baptism is deemed a “work” and therefore unnecessary, which sort of work is it?
 - i. Surely it is not the sort of work such that the reward would be reckoned as a debt, eternal life being owed.
 - ii. Nor does it seem appropriate to suppose it is the sort of thing Paul had in mind when he spoke of our being created for good works.
- 3. Faith works (*trust complies*), and our salvation is conditioned upon faith.

II. Some Conclusions

- A. All men who will be saved, before and after the cross, are saved by grace through faith.
 - a. Romans 3:25f
 - b. Abraham’s justification is the prototype of our own; Romans 4.

- c. The blessing of righteousness that we have is that which Abraham received, is that which David received; Romans 4.
- d. OT pictures of deliverance and reward are meant to demonstrate the reliability of the God who promises us our deliverance and reward, and to provide a foretaste of our salvation
 - i. Joshua leads Israel into the promised land
 - ii. His very name, YHWH saves
 - iii. He is a prototype, a shadow of Jesus.
 - iv. He leads Israel to their rest (Ps. 95), which foreshadows our rest (Heb. 4)
 - v. They were not to think their victories were of their own doing (Judges, Gideon)
 - vi. They conquer the land by faith (Heb. 11:30)
 - vii. But obviously, that faith involved them doing something, e.g., marching around Jericho.
 - viii. This is a picture of how we are saved.
- B. Salvation by Grace through faith excludes boasting (Rom. 4, Eph. 2, Gideon)
 - a. Illustrations by Scott Smelser
 - b. The 5 step presentation, especially when presented as a stair step, can be misleading.
 - c. Subtracting Baptism makes it no less so.
- C. Reconciling Necessity of Works & Salvation by Grace (The following are not mutually exclusive)
 - a. The edited works view (Scott's PowerPoint)
 - i. Saved by grace (not of works), Eph. 2:8, Titus 3:5
 - ii. Judged according to works, Rev. 20:12, 1 Pt. 1:17, Rom. 2:6
 - b. The working faith view
 - i. Faith is the condition of Salvation by Grace, Eph. 2:8, Rom. 3:24-26
 - ii. John 3:16-21, that faith is a trust that comes to the light, does the truth.
- D. James 2 and Romans 4
 - a. I have always thought Paul and James are using "faith" in different senses.
 - b. I notice now that they use "grace" differently also. Whereas Paul often speaks of grace with specific reference to the forgiveness available through the sacrifice of Jesus, James uses "grace" (*charis*) only twice, both times in 4:6, where it is probably the less soteriological and less specific notion of "favor."
 - c. I think it is fair to say when Paul talks about grace and faith, he is talking about the scheme of redemption, whereas when James talks about grace or faith, he is talking about less pregnant ideas.

- i. In James, faith (at least hypothetically) can be discussed as independent of works, independent of obedience. It can mean mere "belief," as in 2:19, far short of trust.
 - ii. In Paul, faith clearly means trust (Ro. 1:5, 1 Thess. 1:8, 3:5) and is roughly equivalent to James' non-dead faith. An exception in Paul is when he talks about a specific conviction, as e.g., to eat meat (Rom. 14:2, 14:22).
- E. Our initial justification truly is not conditioned upon works in any sense other than that of Jn. 6:29.
- a. Certainly not in the sense of Romans 4:5.
 - b. Nor in the sense of James 2 and Ephesians 2:10.
- F. But our ultimate salvation is conditioned upon faith, or faithfulness, i.e., trust, and trustworthiness, and a trust in God that is not manifested as a life conformed to his will is no trust at all.