

**Grace & Peace**  
*A General Overview of Divine Grace & Peace in the Scriptures*

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The idea or concept of “grace” in the Tanach is used both to describe God’s sovereign design toward those He draws to Himself in a saving and eternal relationship as well as to picture a level of acceptance or friendship between individuals. The most common verbiage used is the verb מצא (*mātzā*), “to find” combined with the noun חן (*chein*), “grace,” [found 88 times in the Tanach] thus “to find grace/favor” in the eyes of someone, which means generally to be treated favorably or to be given help, an advantage, or to gain or be given that which is needed and profitable. The following are a few examples.

The LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor [חן מצא, *mātzā’chein*] in the eyes of the LORD. (Gen 6:7–8)

Now the LORD appeared to him [Abraham] by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, and said, “My Lord, if now I have found favor [חן מצא, *mātzā’chein*] in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. (Gen 18:1–3)

And he [Joseph] said, “What do you mean by all this company which I have met?” And he said, “To find favor [חן מצא, *mātzā’chein*] in the sight of my lord.” (Gen 33:8)

Jacob said, “No, please, if now I have found favor [חן מצא, *mātzā’chein*] in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably. (Gen 33:10)

Then Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people!’ But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have also found favor [חן מצא, *mātzā’chein*] in My sight.’ Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor [חן מצא, *mātzā’chein*] in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor [חן מצא, *mātzā’chein*] in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.” And He said, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” Then he said to Him, “If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. For how then can it be known that I have found favor [חן מצא, *mātzā’chein*] in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?” (Ex 33:12–16)

So Gideon said to Him, “If now I have found favor [חן מצא, *mātzā’chein*] in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me. (Judges 6:17)

The king said to Zadok, “Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor [חן מצא, *’emtā’chein*] in the sight of the LORD, then He will bring me back again and show me both it and His habitation. (2Sam. 15:25)

Thus says the LORD, “The people who survived the sword found grace [חן מצא, *mātzā’chein*] in the wilderness — Israel, when it went to find its rest.” (Jer. 31:2)

And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor [חן מצא, *’emtā’chein*].” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.” (Ruth 2:2)

Then Queen Esther replied, “If I have found favor [חן מצא, *mātzāti chein*] in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request; (Esther 7:3)

The essential equivalent of the Hebrew “grace” (חֵן, *chein*) in the Greek of the Apostolic Scriptures is the noun χάρις (*xaris*), “a beneficent disposition toward someone, favor, grace, gracious care/help, goodwill.”<sup>1</sup> It is found 155 times in the Apostolic Scriptures. The corresponding noun, χάρισμα (*xarisma*) carries the sense of “that which is freely and graciously given, favor bestowed, gift”<sup>2</sup> and is found 17 times in the Apostolic Scriptures. The following are a few texts which utilize either “χάρις, *xaris*” or “χάρισμα, *xarisma*,” or both.

χάρις (*xaris*)

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’” For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Torah was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Yeshua HaMashiach. (John 1:14–17)

Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46–47)

And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Yeshua, and abundant grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33)

The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him, and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household. (Acts 7:9–10)

And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; (Acts 11:21–23)

...even the righteousness of God through faith in Yeshua Messiah for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Messiah Yeshua; (Rom 3:22–24)

For if those who are of the Torah are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Torah 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 grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Torah, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (Rom 4:14–16)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Yeshua Messiah, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Rom 5:1–2)

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Yeshua Messiah. (Rom. 5:17)

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Rom 6:14)

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Yeshua be with you. (Rom 16:20)

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8–9)

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1 BDB, “χάρις,” p. 1079.

2 Ibid., “χάρισμα,” p. 1081.

For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. (Rom 1:11–12)

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Yeshua Messiah, abound to the many. (Rom 5:14–15)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord. (Rom. 6:23)

Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. (1Cor 7:7)

As each one has received a *special gift*, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace [χάρις] of God. (1Pet. 4:10)

### The Sovereignty of God's Grace

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One of the obvious truths we discover when studying the doctrines of God's grace is that, as the words themselves demonstrate, His grace is a gift, and that means it is not something that can be earned as a "reward" or "purchased" in any way. All too often in the wider Christian Church, the truth of God's grace is reduced to an "invitation" that puts the sinner in control of whether he will accept the offer of God's gift of saving grace or not. Now it is true that God works by His Spirit to convict and enable those whom He would save, to repent and believe, receiving the gift of God's grace, but this, once again, is in full harmony with His utter sovereignty and divine purposes to bring about His sovereign will. And the final cause of all God's purposes is the manifestation of His own glory. As one author has emphasized:

...our creation, redemption, sanctification and glorification were all purposed for the glory of God first and foremost, and to the questions 'Why did God create the world?', 'Why was salvation provided for men, and not for angels?', 'Why among those who hear the Gospel do some receive, and some reject it?', there is only one answer we can give—because thus it seemed good in the eyes of God, for a more perfect revelation of His nature and perfections.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to consider the "Priestly Blessing," also called the "Aaronic Benediction," given to us in Numbers 6:24–26, as a very direct revelation and unfolding of God's grace to his chosen people of Israel. It utilizes both חַנּוּן (*chānan*), "to show favor, grace" and שְׁלוֹם (*shalom*), "to give peace." Here we see God's choosing of the nation of Israel as a foreshadow or early demonstration regarding His ultimate divine election of all who would be eternally saved. For ultimately the covenant promise made to Abraham, that "in your Seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 22:18, cp. Acts 3:25), is fulfilled in the enumerable host of people who are eternally saved by faith in Yeshua, from every "tribe, people, and language" (cf. Rev. 7:9), whose debt of sin has been paid by the infinite payment given in the sacrifice of Yeshua, and who will therefore dwell eternally with God.

(Num. 6:24–26)

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:

The LORD bless you, and keep you;  
The LORD make His face shine on you,  
And be gracious to you;  
The LORD lift up His countenance on you,  
And give you peace.'

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<sup>3</sup> Cheeseman, John; Gardner, Philip; Sadgrove, Michael, Wright, Tom, *The Grace of God in the Gospel* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), p. 21.

- *The LORD bless you, and keep you;*

What then may we derive as to the meaning of the various parts of the poem? The first clause has “The Lord (Adonai, יהוה) bless you and keep you.” The Sages interpret this as material blessing, since if it were solely spiritual blessing (they reason) there would be no need of “keeping” or “guarding it” on the Lord’s part. The point is that as the Lord blesses His people with material blessings, He also will guard them from those who would otherwise rob them of their gifts. Others note that the guarding may not be of the material blessings themselves but of one’s soul in relationship to the material blessings. It is easy to allow the material blessings which God gives us to become stumbling blocks and idols in our lives. God’s blessing of material goods in this life also comes with His guarding our hearts so that we use our wealth for His glory first and foremost. Perhaps the blessing and guarding could just as well be understood to mean that we are blessed with an understanding that material goods are fleeting: they may go as quickly as they came. On the other hand, we have come to understand that spiritual wealth is eternal. The guarding would then be the strength to maintain this perspective in the midst of affluence.

- *The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you;*

In the context of the Ancient Near East, a king “gave grace,” (חַנּוּן, *chanan*) to his subjects by allowing them an audience with him. Having audience with the King was to see the light of his face, whereas to “hide his face” was idiomatic for denying a subject access. As we apply this to the LORD, it reminds us again that His desire is to have communion with His children. Even as He walked with Adam and Chavah in the cool of the day and communed with them, so His desire is to offer an “open door” policy to all who are His. By “shining His face” (יָאֵר, *ya’ar*) He “enlightens us,” i.e., it is in His presence that we come to know and understand who He is, and what His will is for us. He gives to us His own teaching— thoughts from His own heart made ready for His children. As the Psalmist states: “In Your light we see light” (Ps 36:9). Surely this is God’s sovereign gift of grace, for we do not have anything within ourselves by which we could demand an audience with Him. If we are privileged to come into His presence it is because He has invited us and secured a way for us to come through the sacrifice of His own Son, our Savior Yeshua.

- *The LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.*

The idiom “lift up one’s face” means to “smile,” just as “to have one’s face drop” means to frown or show sorrow (Jer. 3:12; cf. Gen. 4:5-6; Job 29:24). Furthermore, to “give peace” may mean to “give friendship” (cf. Judges 4:17, cf. בְּרִית שְׁלוֹם, *b’riti shalom*, “My covenant of peace” in Num. 25:12 and בְּרִית שְׁלוֹמִי *berit sh’lomi*, “covenant of My peace” in Is 54:10). Thus, “may Adonai smile upon you and grant you His friendship” must be the general sense of the final line. Abraham was called a “friend of God” (Is. 41:8) as was Moses (Ex. 33:11). But God does not limit His friendship to a select few. The blessing which the priests are commanded to give is for all who have been granted the gift of saving faith, whether from Israel or from the nations—each one receives the same blessing. But it should be noted that each one receives the blessing only as he or she becomes, by God’s grace, a member of the “eternal covenant” of salvation. In the context of Num. 6:24–26, the blessing is upon the “children of Israel,” בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, *benei Israel*, the people whom the priests represent before the LORD. This reality is surely why Paul teaches us that all people from “the nations” who have been drawn to faith and are thereby “in Messiah,” have been grafted into the believing remnant of Israel (Rom. 11:17ff).

Thus, in the Priestly Blessing given to Israel, we see a foreshadow of the blessing the comes upon all who, by faith, become children of God through the sacrifice of the Great High Priest, Yeshua the Messiah! Here, once again, we see that the grace of God is given to those He has chosen for Himself, and the magnificent value of His grace is to grant saving faith to each one and thus they are forever changed and given both the desire and the ability to become more and more like the very One Who has procured eternal salvation for them, that is, Yeshua the Messiah, the One and only true Savior Who, through His death, fully paid the penalty of sin for all those He would save.

What is more, the Priestly Blessing emphasizes a very important reality, and it is this: that when God’s grace is given to an individual, the result is that He establishes a relationship built upon peace, a relationship of eternal love and salvation. This is because the penalty for sin, which is an eternal punishment, has been paid by Yeshua, for He, being infinite, died an infinite death which is the very necessary payment to redeem a sinner and grant them eternal life. Note these Scriptures:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift (τὸ δὲ χάρισμα, *to de xarisma*) of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord. (Rom. 6:23)

Note that the word “death” is here the opposite of “eternal life,” which indicates that the word “death” in this text should be understood as “eternal death,” where the ultimate definition of “death” in this context is “eternal separation from God.” Here we have *xarisma* used to emphasize that salvation is a “free gift” of God to those He draws to Himself. This makes it clear that coming to faith in Yeshua is the work of God and not something “earned” or “rewarded” on the bases of the sin-

ner's deeds. Indeed, faith includes the confession of the one coming to faith that he or she is unable to "save themselves" but are fully and eternally dependent upon God in giving them the "gift of faith."

Once again, we see that the "dimensions" of divine salvation as well as divine punishment are "eternal dimensions." For those whom the Father draws to Himself, by His infinite grace, He grants them life via the gift of faith in Yeshua, and this life is eternal.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1Thess 4:16–18)

The same is true for all who are lost, having rejected the gospel and even the reality of God's existence as proclaimed by the wonder of the created universe. Their punishment is likewise eternal.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Rom 1:18–20)

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. (Ps 19:1)

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Rev. 20:10)

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:15)

That the utter sovereignty of God in all aspects of this created world is clearly taught in the Scriptures has become a difficulty for some people, because to affirm the sovereignty of God appears to negate that mankind has the ability to make a free and personal choice in the matter of saving faith. My simple answer to those who have such a difficulty is, first, that we must allow the Scriptures to be the foundation upon which God's truth is known, and secondly, that we must realize that in our finite abilities, we will never fully plummet the depths of the Almighty's actions. Indeed, who could fully explain that the sovereign, eternal, all-powerful Creator would humble Himself in the incarnation, taking on Himself human form, and even give up His life to pay the penalty of sin owed by those He would save? Clearly, while saving faith is based upon understandable and verifiable truths, there is a point at which faith calls us to accept those aspects of God's infinite glory and majesty which are beyond our finite ability to fully understand and explain.

Surely the biblical teaching of God's sovereignty never negates the need for sinful mankind to repent, to exercise the gift of faith, and to humble themselves before Him with genuine worship and adoration, and to live by the power of the Ruach (Holy Spirit) to put to death the deeds of the flesh and to honor the One Who has saved them by giving Him the praise and glory He deserves.

Let us therefore examine further Scriptures which teach us the glory and wonder of God's grace and the peace it brings to those He draws to Himself, granting them eternal salvation.

### **Romans 8:28–30**

**28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**

The fact that Paul begins with "and" (*δέ, de*) clearly ties this verse with that which precedes. The fact that the Spirit must intercede for us with silent groanings only highlights the fact that we are engaged in a life of struggle—a life which anticipates the rich future promised by God but must, for the present, bear up under the sorrows of fallenness. Yet in spite of this inevitability, the Apostle wants us to know that this groaning which we experience as we hope for the future is not the result of chaos or undetermined randomness, but is, in fact, a part of the Master's plan as He providentially guides our lives to His appointed purpose.

*we know* – Paul uses this opening four other times (2:2; 3:19; 7:14; 8:22) and in each case is introducing something he is sure his readers are both well aware of and with which they are in agreement. That God "causes all things to work together for good" is a well substantiated teaching of the Tanach and throughout the entire Scriptures.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> There are some manuscripts that leave out the word "God" in the phrase "we know that God..." But the fact that the sentence includes v. 29 which clearly is referring to the work of God, makes it clear that v. 28 is likewise referring to the work of the God. See my *Romans Comm.*, Vol. 1, pp. 227-228 for further details on this textual variant.



...*God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God* – For the subject is “God” and the object of the verb “to work” is “all things,” so that the meaning is that God actively works all things together for good. In the midst of this life’s struggles and groanings (vv. 26-27), we may take full assurance that all matters of life, particularly those which are burdensome, are fully within the purview of God’s providence as He sovereignly works the events of history together to accomplish His purposes for each of His children.

The fact that the Apostle presumes all are in agreement with this (“And we know”) is also telling. In an era of theological drift, where biblical illiteracy is the norm rather than the exception, it is no wonder that people who claim faith in Yeshua are driven this way and that by the tyranny of life’s worries. We have learned to live life from one care to another, unable to “cast all our cares” upon the One Who alone is able to control all things by the word of His power. And we have done this because we have never owned as our personal possession the glorious gift of God’s sovereignty. We have not practiced the faith-exercise of placing into the hands of the Almighty the events of our lives which are out of our control. Yet for Paul’s audience, he presumes that they are not only well aware of this truth, but that they likewise live with this reality in mind. Therefore Paul, at the beginning of this great crescendo of praise, emphasizes the all-controlling, merciful hand of God in ordering the affairs of our lives.

The actual order of the words in the Greek is this: “And we know that to those who love God all things He (or God) works together resulting in good, to those who according to His purpose are called.” The phrase “to those who love God” identifies Paul’s target audience in the statement of this verse. Placed at the beginning of the verse, “to those who love God” is emphasized as the normal characteristic of those who have come into a covenant relationship with Him. The whole idea of “loving” God is a common thread in the Tanach and early Jewish literature. It speaks, not so much of the emotional aspects so associated with our English word “love,” but of covenant loyalty and obedience—of covenant relationship based upon a commitment to honor and sanctify the Lord in one’s life and actions. “Loving God” means keeping His commandments<sup>5</sup> and demonstrating covenant membership through faithfulness to the King.

*to those who are called according to His purpose* – Paul ends the verse by adding an additional phrase by which he further characterizes and identifies those he first designates as “those who love God.” The word translated “purpose” is *πρόθεσις* (*prothesin*). If we look where the Greek word is used elsewhere, we find it only one other time in the Apostolic Scriptures, namely, at Rom 9:11— “for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God’s purpose according to His choice might stand.” Here Paul surely has God’s choice in mind, not that of mankind. And this is also the thrust of Paul in our own context as vv. 29-30 show, in which the verbs “foreknew” and “predestined” clearly put the emphasis upon God’s sovereign choice, not man’s.

Why does Paul add the term “according to purpose?” It seems clear that his reason is to emphasize the effectual nature of the “call” to which he refers, for the words of Yeshua, “many are called but few are chosen” (Mt 22:14) may have been understood by some (as they were by later fathers in the church) to imply a non-effectual calling by the Father, i.e., a call which could be refused. However, in John 10 Yeshua teaches that His sheep hear (=obey) His voice and follow Him, so that when He calls, they come. Thus, we find that in the Scriptures the context determines whether the divine “call” to salvation is that of the general proclamation of the gospel (which can be refused) or the divine call of the Father drawing His own to Himself (Jn 6:44). It is to the latter that Paul refers here, for the unbreakable chain of salvation in vv. 29-30 begins with the divine call of the elect to salvation.

So why was it that Paul added this final phrase to the verse, an additional characterization of those who “love God?” It seems clear now to see that the additional phrase puts the love the elect have for God in correct perspective. Behind the love which those who are righteous by faith have for God is God’s own prior choice of them.

**29–30 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.**

Verses 29-30 form a five-fold chain, linked together and unbreakable. A literal (or somewhat wooden) translation of the core sentence brings this out:

“For those He foreknew, He also predestined . . . and those He predestined, these also He called. And those He called, these He also declared righteous. And those He declared righteous, these He also glorified.”

Thus, all those gathered together under one action of God are inevitably moved to the next group—none are lost in the process, for everyone who is foreknown ends up in the group designated by the term “glorified.”

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5 Ex. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1; 11:13; 30:16; Josh. 22:5; Neh. 1:5; Ps. 119:47,127; Dan. 9:4; Jn 14:15; 14:21; 15:10; 1Jn 5:2; 2Jn 1:6. All of these combine the idea of “love” with “keeping commandments.”

That Paul begins the verse with “For” alerts us to the fact that he is here giving further substantiation of the previous stated fact, that God works all things together for good.

*whom He foreknew* – The Greek προέγνω (*proegno*) has the common word for “know” as its base (γινώσκει, *ginosko*) and should be understood in the context of Hebrew יָדָע, *yādaʿ*, which denotes that special relationship between God and a chosen individual, which is the result of God’s electing grace.<sup>6</sup> That He is said to “foreknow,” should be understood as “have relationship (=know) before” in the sense of having been chosen and brought into the covenant even before the world was created.<sup>7</sup> The verb in its present context is surely the action of God and results in ultimate and final salvation. To attempt to bring into this context the “decision” of the individual as simply “seen in advance by God” is to miss the thrust which Paul desires, namely, that God is the One who is in control and working everything out according to His purpose.

*He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son* – This is the second link in the five-fold chain of God’s salvific work on behalf of sinners. Whereas “foreknow” denoted God’s gracious election or choice of those who would be His, the term “predestined” envisions the means by which this choosing would affect the individual. God has determined each and every event through which He, in His effectual grace, will bring the elect to faith. And, the ultimate goal of this predestination is the full realization of mankind’s creation, i.e., the full outshining of the image of God in which they were created. Since Paul sees Messiah as the focal point of all creation (cf. Col 1:16) as well as the perfect revelation of the Father (cf. 2Co 4:4; Col 1:15), it is obvious that those who realize their creative purpose will have become conformed to the image of God as seen in the incarnate Son. Thus, becoming “like Messiah” is the inevitable end of God’s providence as worked out by His grace.

Now in the context Paul certainly intends that his readers recognize that the present “groaning” is part of this providence, so that suffering for righteousness in this life is part of the means by which God conforms His children into the very image of His Son, Yeshua. (On the idea of predestination, cf. Ac 4:28; Eph 1:5, 11. Also cp. Acts 14:38.)

*that He might be the firstborn among many brethren* – Here we have, as often in Paul, the purpose given for God’s salvation of the elect. It is not, in the first case, for their own comfort or safety, but rather for the glory of Messiah. God has determined that Messiah be seen not as the only One who enjoys the blessings and privileges of sonship, but as the Head of a multitude of brothers who, through Him, have come into that familial relationship with the Father. Even as the former context spoke of the groaning with regard to the adoption as sons, so here we see that the enjoyment of this adoptive privilege and the status of “sonship” awaits (at least in its full expression) the time when the elect will be fully conformed to the likeness of Yeshua.

The word “firstborn” (πρωτότοκος, *prototokos*) is found in Col 1:15, 18; Heb 1:6; Rev 1:5, and conveys first a “priority” or “pre-eminence,” as the firstborn son was allotted a double portion in matters of inheritance. That Yeshua should receive the “double-portion” (as it were) from creation is at least one primary intent of God’s willingness to save sinners.

But the term “firstborn” also denotes the idea of “unique” for the simple reason that there could be only one “firstborn” in the family. Yeshua as the “only begotten” (cf. Jn 3:16, μονογενής, *monogenes*) is the unique Son of God. In this position of unique pre-eminence, Yeshua is willing to share His privileges of sonship with all of His brethren.

*and whom He predestined, these He also called* – This is the third link in the five-link chain and brings us into the realm of history. Here we have, not the general call of the gospel, but the specific and individual event in which God, through the means of the gospel, effectually calls the sinner to repentance, giving him or her faith to believe in the Lamb of God as a substitute for the punishment of sin rightfully deserved. Thus, when God so works upon the heart of the elect as to call him or her to faith, the elect individual always responds with the obedience of faith (cf. Rom 1:5). This is usually labelled the “effectual call” by systematic theologians.

*and whom He called, these He also justified* – Each and everyone included in the group labelled “predestined” is likewise “called” with an effectual call. The reason we know this calling is effectual is because the chain continues forward with the word “justified” (declared righteous). All those who are called become part of the group labeled “justified” or “declared righteous.” The calling of the gospel upon the heart of the elect is energized by the Spirit in such a way as to always lead to an acceptance of Yeshua, a repentance of sin, and a turning to live unto the Lord through the power of the Spirit. Having placed faith in the Lamb of God, His death is accredited to the elect, and their sin is therefore expunged. He is declared “justified” (not guilty) in the courts of heaven.

*and whom He justified, these He also glorified* – The use of the same past tense (aorist) in the word “glorified,” as with the former verbs, is significant. In a very real sense the glorification of the elect is still future, and in fact, is that upon which the believer has laid their hope (cf. vv. 25ff; 5:2). And this future aspect is not to be lost sight of, for we cannot expect that in this fallen world the righteousness which characterizes the very dwelling of God should be the norm. Rather,

<sup>6</sup> Cp. Gen 18:19; Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Eph 1:4; 2Tim 1:9; 1Pet. 1:20.

recognizing that the making-right of all things is still future, we wait with growing anticipation.

But the fact that Paul has cast the glorification of the elect in the same aorist tense as their justification only highlights the fact that for Paul, the glorification of the elect is equally as sure as their justification, for it has, like justification, been ordained of God.

Moreover, Messiah, in whose destiny their destiny is included, has already been glorified, so that in Him their glorification has already been accomplished.<sup>8</sup>

As an accomplished fact, then, it need only be applied in the course of time at the appearing of Yeshua for His bride.

What is more, the fact that sanctification is not mentioned as an intermediate link between justification and glorification should in no way be construed to say that sanctification is relatively unimportant to Paul. On the contrary, Paul has spent a good deal of time (chapters 6-7) speaking to the very issue of sanctification. Rather, it seems clear that for Paul, glorification was viewed as the final aspect of sanctification, which culminates in a full conformity to the image of the Messiah which will only take place at the time when mortal puts on immortality. In this way, glorification is the final step of sanctification for the believer.

### **Ephesian 1:2–6**

**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Yeshua Messiah to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

Paul begins his epistle to the Ephesian community with a fairly long “hymn of praise,” which comprises vs. 3–14 of the opening chapter. He includes his customary phrase, incorporating “Grace...and peace,” which he utilizes 14 times in his epistles (Rom.1:7; 16:20; 1Cor.1:3; 2Cor.1:2; Gal.1:3; Eph.1:2; Phil.1:2; Col.1:2; 1Thess.1:1; 2Thess.1:2; 1Tim.1:2; 2Tim.1:2; Titus 1:4). Surely the emphasis Paul intends his readers to understand is that God’s grace is given freely (not earned nor as a reward) and that the gift of His grace is centered in the redemptive work accomplished in the death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Yeshua. It is therefore by His grace bestowed in the redemptive work of Yeshua, applied by the Holy Spirit, that grants eternal peace to all whom He redeems unto Himself. For the debt of sin, which requires God’s eternal punishment, was paid by the infinite sacrifice of Yeshua for all those for whom He died, rose again, and “always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

As Paul begins to note the blessings that have been given by God to His children, he begins with the blessing of divine election. For some, this does not appear to be a blessing at all, for it goes contrary to the teaching of “free will” by which one person accepts the offer of the gospel and another refuses, making the individual person the one who determines the outcome. But, of course, this cannot stand in the face of the clear and straightforward statements of Scripture. Abraham is chosen by God and called out of the Ur of the Chaldees to become His covenant partner in the divine plan of salvation.

For I have chosen him [literally “known him,” יָדָעְתִּי], so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him. (Gen 18:19) (Gen 18:19).

Likewise, Jacob and his offspring were chosen by God to be His covenant people Israel.

You only have I chosen [literally “known,” יָדָעְתִּי] among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” (Amos 3:2)

Thus, all the blessings that God has lavished upon those who are in Messiah Yeshua flow from His eternal choosing of them before anything was created. In the eternity in which God alone existed, He determined to save a host of people from every tribe, family, and language group, and to bless them with every spiritual blessing in Messiah.

Moreover, God’s divine election of all those whom He would save unto Himself eternally was not based upon their own abilities or desire to seek Him. In vs. 5-6 it is clear that God’s predestined choice was upon those He would “adopt as sons through Yeshua Messiah to Himself,” and He did so “according to kind intention of His will,” granting them His grace

<sup>8</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, Vol. 1, p. 433.



“which He freely bestowed on” all those He would redeem, uniting them all through the redemption Yeshua bought for them in His infinite sacrifice.

Here, once again, we see the Scriptures teaching unequivocally that the individual’s choice in receiving the message of the Gospel was ultimately the work of the Ruach drawing unto Himself all those “predestined...to adoption as sons,” made possible by the redemption price paid by Yeshua in His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession for those who would be saved eternally. Yet in view of the eternal and sovereign work of God in choosing those whom He would save, this does not negate the reality that every believer throughout history was drawn to the Lord and thus willingly submitted to the power of His grace. For His grace is presented to those He has chosen in such a way as to draw each of them to accept the unspeakable gift of His salvation, so that ultimately all who are redeemed will forever be witnesses of the unmeasurable glory of His grace.

“...which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” This final phrase of v. 6 makes it absolutely clear and certain that salvation is a gift given freely by God to those He has chosen, and is not earned or in some manner rewarded for their individual actions or choices. Yet in the wonder of God’s all powerful majesty, those He draws to Himself and who are granted eternal salvation do yield themselves to Him by gladly receiving the unmeasurable gift of His love, grace, forgiveness and being adopted as children in His family. Drawn by His irresistible love, which He reveals to those He has chosen, their eternal salvation is secure through the redeeming work of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

### Ephesians 2:8–9

**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

*For by grace* – In the Greek, the opening words of v. 8 include the article for the word “grace” – Τῇ γὰρ χάριτί (*tē gar xariti*), “for by the grace.... This use of the article points back to the parenthetical statement in v. 5, “... made us alive together with Messiah (by grace you have been saved”). Thus, in our verse Paul continues what he began in v. 5, to speak of God’s grace as the fountain from which His saving love flows. The opening words of this verse describe the cause of our salvation, that is, that which brought it about. And that “cause” is God’s grace.<sup>9</sup>

What is grace (χάρις, *xaris*)? While the Greek word, like our English word “grace,” can have the sense of “graciousness” or “kindness,” when used in biblical contexts which speak of God’s grace in the saving of sinners, the word is best defined succinctly as “unmerited favor.” That which is “earned” or “achieved” cannot be considered as having received it “by grace.” For something that is “earned” is owed and something that is “achieved” is likewise received as obligatory. But grace cannot be earned or awarded, for by definition grace is that which is freely given, i.e., a gift, as Paul makes clear in our text.

...you have been saved – In the Greek, the verb “you have been” is plural (ἐστε, *este*), and thus envisions the community of believers. All who are saved by God’s grace come into the family of God the same way. There is only one way of salvation and people-group identification, station in life, or gender make no difference. As Paul makes clear in his epistle to the Galatians:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua. (Gal 3:28)

The verb “saved” is in the Greek perfect tense (σῳσμένοι, *sesōsmenoi* < σώζω, *sōzō*) which envisions an event completed in the past but which has on-going effect in the present and future. Once again Paul is emphasizing that our eternal salvation is based upon a finished work, Yeshua’s death and resurrection, the merit of which is continuously applied to the believer. That which Yeshua accomplished in His death and resurrection remains constantly effective for all who are in Messiah. Those whom God has saved will never be lost. Tompkins, in the final stanzas of his hymn “Christ’s Grave is Vacant Now,” describes the believer in this way:

And cries with wondering joy, “As He is so am I,  
Pure, holy, loved as Christ Himself – who shall my peace destroy?”  
Reach my blest Saviour first, take Him from God’s esteem,  
Prove Jesus bears one spot of sin. Then tell me I’m unclean!  
Nay! For He purged my guilt by His own precious blood,  
And such its virtue not a stain e’er meets the eye of God.

9 The dative Τῇ γὰρ χάριτί should be taken as a dative of cause and not a dative of means. Cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Zondervan, 1996), pp. 167–68. [hereafter, Wallace, *Greek Grammar*]

*...through faith* – Paul makes clear that the cause of our salvation is God’s sovereignty motivated by His abundant grace. The means by which the sinner lays hold of God’s grace is the exercise of faith in Yeshua and the eternal redemption He has procured for all who are His. Thus Paul teaches us here that God’s grace in salvation is manifest when the one being called exercises genuine faith, that is, faith which agrees with God and accepts the gift of salvation in Yeshua.

*...and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God* – The real issue in understanding Paul’s meaning in this phrase is the demonstrative “that” (τοῦτο, *touto* < οὗτος, *houtos*). In Greek, a demonstrative must agree in gender with the word it modifies. So when we begin to ask what is “not of yourselves,” we obviously look in the preceding context to find the answer. The word “grace” in the Greek is feminine gender, and the word “faith” in the Greek is also feminine. However, the demonstrative “that” is in the neuter gender. The best explanation of Paul’s words here is that the neuter demonstrative can be used to refer back to an entire clause or to the previous context in general.<sup>10</sup>

Further, in the English translation of “it is the gift of God,” the English words “it is” are not actually written in the Greek but, as often, are expected to be supplied as an ellipsis. If we were to translate the entire verse woodenly it would be: “For by the grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of you, the gift of God.”

Thus, the best understanding of the grammar is this: Paul is stating that the cause of our salvation is the grace of God and that we receive His salvation by faith, and neither His grace nor our faith is something which begins with ourselves. Both His grace as well as the faith to receive His gracious offer of salvation are gifts which He gives.

This is in full concert with what Paul has taught us from the beginning of the epistle, for our salvation is the result of God having chosen us from before the foundation of the world (1:4), predestined us to be adopted into His family (1:5), made us alive together with Messiah (2:5), raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenlies (2:6). All of this is necessarily the work of God, for the person who is the object of God’s saving grace is initially dead in trespasses and sin (2:1).

But I hasten to say that, in the mystery of God’s working, the one to whom He grants the gift of salvation is still the one who actively exercises the faith that lays hold of God’s gift of salvation. God in His mercy grants us the gift, which includes faith, and enables us to exercise that faith resulting in salvation. We are active and not passive in this operation, for He has brought us to life from the dead and we have become partners with Him so that we may glorify Him and render to Him the praise He deserves.

In considering those who take the view that “grace is God’s part, faith is ours,” Hendrickson disagrees, taking the demonstrative “this” to refer to the entire previous context, including “faith” as a gift from God.

This is true first because in a context in which the apostle places such tremendous stress on the fact that from start to finish man owes his salvation to God, to Him alone, it would have been very strange, indeed, for Paul to say, “Grace is God’s part, faith ours.” True though it be that both the responsibility of believing and also its activity are ours, for God does not believe for us, nevertheless, in the present context (verses 5–10) one rather expects emphasis on the fact that both in its initiation and in its continuation faith is entirely dependent on God, and so is our complete salvation.<sup>11</sup>

*...not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.* – This is obvious in the context, but Paul emphasizes it once again. Such emphasis is necessary since deep in the heart and mind of fallen mankind is that notion that one could actually win the favor of God by what one does. And this was even more the mindset among the Judaisms of Paul’s day, that by one’s own “righteousness” one could attract God’s grace or that one’s ethnic status gave an advantage in winning God’s favor.

But Paul has already concluded that all, both Jew and non-Jew, are dead in trespasses and sin. There is therefore only one way to come to God, and that is with a heart of repentance, with empty hands seeking His mercy and forgiveness.

Paul’s emphasis here is parallel to what he has written in his epistle to the Romans.

In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. (Rom 11:5–6)

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For 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.” (Rom 4:1–3, cf. Gal 3:6)

It was Abraham’s faith that was credited as righteousness, not his works. “And where divine grace operates, human merit is excluded, and human boasting too.”<sup>12</sup>

Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. (Rom 3:27)

10 See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, pp. 334–35; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, pp. 342–43.

11 Hendricksen, *Ephesians*, p. 121.

12 F. F. Bruce, *Ephesians*, p. 289.

*...so that no one may boast.* – If the salvation of a lost soul depends upon the sinner himself, then those who “make the right decision” to accept Yeshua as their Lord and Savior could well look upon themselves as superior to those who reject the call of the gospel. But here in Ephesians as well as in the unified message of the Scriptures, those whom God saves have nothing in and of themselves to warrant boasting. Salvation is the work of God’s grace, bringing sinners to life, giving them the gift of faith, endowing them with His Spirit, and thus enabling them to love Him, to put to death the deeds of the flesh, and to glorify Him for His great love, mercy and grace.

just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.” (1Cor 1:31, cf. Ps 34:2)