

# God's Favored People

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## God's favor

The Greek *charis* [5485] typically translated as “grace,” simply means “favor.” Therefore, it should have been translated consistently as “favor” rather than “grace” throughout the New Testament. Why use the generic word “grace” to obscure its more specific and descriptive meaning?

In translation work, it's easier for subjective bias to creep into Paul's doctrinal letters but not as easy in the four Gospels and Acts. This is because the historical narratives of the Gospels and Acts many times force a context which binds the translators' hands so to speak. But doctrinal writings, unfortunately, can allow them more freedom superimpose their own doctrinal bias by fudging certain words. Some of the biggest culprits are rendering the Greek *pneuma* as “spirit” rather than “breath,” *pistis* as “faith” rather than “faithfulness,” *pisteuo* as “believe” rather than “trust,” and *charis* as “grace” rather than “favor.”

Many have noted an inconsistency in the gospel message Paul preached as compared with what Jesus Christ Himself preached. In his two books “The Gospel According to Jesus” and “The Gospel According to Paul,” John MacArthur made an unsuccessful attempt to reconcile this issue. But the true cause is simply translator bias in Paul's letters. Christ's parables about faithful servants set a context in which there's no doubt as to the message of the gospel. But rather than being true to Christ's message and rendering *pistis* as “faithfulness” in Paul's doctrinal teachings, the translators cloaked it with “faith” instead. Now they can claim that Paul taught we're saved by believing some facts are true rather than being faithful servants to the Lord as the Lord Himself taught.

In the King James Version, *charis* is translated as “favour” several times in Luke and Acts: “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found **favour [charis]** with God” (Luk 1:30); “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in **favour [charis]** with God and man” (Luk 2:52); “Praising God, and having **favour [charis]** with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Act 2:47); “And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him **favour [charis]** and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house ... Who found **favour [charis]** before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob” (Act 7:10, 46); “And desired **favour [charis]** against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him” (Act 25:3). However, in the epistles *charis* isn't translated “favour” even once! Why not? It's because the doctrinal genre of the epistles allowed the translators this liberty.

This word is used 78 times in the Greek Septuagint and more than half of its occurrences speak of someone being favored in the eyes or the sight of another. These quotations are from the KJV but they contain *charis* in the Septuagint: “But Noah found **grace [charis]** in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen 6:8), “My Lord, if now I have found **favour [charis]** in thy sight” (Gen 18:3), “that I may find **grace [charis]** in thy sight” (Gen 32:5), “*These are to find **grace [charis]** in the sight of my lord*” (Gen 33:8), “if now I have found **grace [charis]** in thy sight” (Gen 33:10), “let me find **grace [charis]** in the sight of my lord” (Gen 33:15), “Let me find **grace [charis]** in your eyes” (Gen 34:11), “And Joseph found **grace [charis]** in his sight” (Gen 39:4), “and gave him **favour [charis]** in the sight of the keeper of the prison” (Gen 39:21), “And God Almighty give you **mercy [charis]** before the

man" (Gen 43:14), "let us find **grace [charis]** in the sight of my lord" (Gen 47:25), "If now I have found **grace [charis]** in thy sight" (Gen 47:29), "If now I have found **grace [charis]** in your eyes" (Gen 50:4), "And I will give this people **favour [charis]** in the sight of the Egyptians" (Exo 3:21), "And the LORD gave the people **favour [charis]** in the sight of the Egyptians" (Exo 11:3), "And the LORD gave the people **favour [charis]** in the sight of the Egyptians" (Exo 12:36), "and thou hast also found **grace [charis]** in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found **grace [charis]** in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find **grace [charis]** in thy sight" (Exo 33:12-13), "For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found **grace [charis]** in thy sight?" (Exo 33:16), "for thou hast found **grace [charis]** in my sight" (Exo 33:17), "If now I have found **grace [charis]** in thy sight" (Exo 34:9), "wherefore have I not found **favour [charis]** in thy sight" (Num 11:11), "if we have found **grace [charis]** in thy sight" (Num 32:5), "she find no **favour [charis]** in his eyes" (Deu 24:1), "If now I have found **grace [charis]** in thy sight" (Jdg 6:17), "in whose sight I shall find **grace [charis]**" (Rth 2:2), "Why have I found **grace [charis]** in thine eyes" (Rth 2:10), "Let me find **favour [charis]** in thy sight, my lord" (Rth 2:13), "Let thine handmaid find **grace [charis]** in thy sight" (1Sa 1:18), "for he hath found **favour [charis]** in my sight" (1Sa 16:22), "I have found **grace [charis]** in thine eyes" (1Sa 20:3), "if I have found **favour [charis]** in thine eyes" (1Sa 20:29), "Wherefore let the young men find **favour [charis]** in thine eyes" (1Sa 25:8), "If I have now found **grace [charis]** in thine eyes" (1Sa 27:5), "I have found **grace [charis]** in thy sight" (2Sa 14:22), "if I shall find **favour [charis]** in the eyes of the LORD" (2Sa 15:25), "I may find **grace [charis]** in thy sight" (2Sa 16:4), "And Hadad found great **favour [charis]** in the sight of Pharaoh" (1Ki 11:19), "And Esther obtained **favour [charis]** in the sight of all them that looked upon her" (Est 2:15), "she obtained grace and **favour [charis]** in his sight" (Est 2:17), "she obtained **favour [charis]** in his sight" (Est 5:2), "If I have found **favour [charis]** in the sight of the king" (Est 5:8), "If I have found **favour [charis]** in thy sight" (Est 7:3), "if I have found **favour [charis]** in his sight" (Est 8:5).

The translators of the Septuagint used this word for Moses' statement about God's favor toward him and His chosen people, "For wherein shall it be known here that **I and thy people have found grace [charis] in thy sight?** *is it* not in that thou goest with us? **so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.** And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: **for thou hast found grace [charis] in my sight,** and I know thee by name." (Exo 33:16-17). Our English "cherish" hints at its etymology from the Greek *charis*. God favors and *cherishes* His people!

God's chosen people found *charis* or favor in His sight, and Moses defined this favor as them being separated from all other people on earth: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then **ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people:** for all the earth *is* mine" (Exo 19:5); "For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, **the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations**" (Num 23:9); "**For what nation is there so great,** who *hath* God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God *is* in all *things that we call upon him for?*" (Deu 4:7); "**And what one nation in the earth is like thy people,** *even* like Israel, **whom God went to redeem for a people to himself,** and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, *from* the nations and their gods?" (2Sa 7:23); "**For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth,** *to be* thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD" (1Ki 8:53); "**He hath not dealt so with any nation:** and *as for his* judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD." (Psa 147:20); "**Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate,** saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you" (2Co 6:17).

To be favored in God's sight is to be treated differently by Him in comparison with other people. God sees His chosen people distinctly from all other people. They are His peculiar treasure. He doesn't reckon them among other nations and doesn't deal with them like He does with other nations. They are separate and favored by Him.

## God's favored people

Once we recognize that *charis* is simply favor, then in the context of salvation, it's about God favoring His people above all other people. Recorded in Acts chapter 13 is the time when Paul and Barnabas went into the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia and taught the Jews forgiveness of sins through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These Jews then had to embrace this truth to continue as one of God's favored people, "Now when the congregation was broken up, many of **the Jews and religious proselytes** followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to **continue in the grace [favor] of God**" (Act 13:43).

God's favor is what John meant by, "And of his fulness have all we received, and **grace [favor] for grace [favor]**. For the law was given **by Moses, but grace [favor]** and truth came **by Jesus Christ.**" (Jhn 1:16-17). Other translations have, "**grace [favor]** upon **grace [favor]**" (DBY), "**grace [favor]** in place of **grace [favor]** already given" (NIV), "**grace [favor]** over-against **grace [favor]**" (YLT). The Law of Moses itself didn't bring God's favor—Jesus Christ did. God's chosen people were favored under the Old Covenant. However, those alive when the Messiah came had to receive Him for favor in place of favor already given. Rejecting God's own Son would be rejecting His favor and no longer being favored as one of His people.

When writing to the Galatians, Paul expressed that the Jews are rejecting God's favor if righteousness comes by the law, "I do not **frustrate [atheteō 114] the grace [favor]** of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal 2:21). The Greek *atheteō* translated as "frustrate" is rendered several other places in the New Testament as "reject" or "despise." He wrote later, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are **fallen from grace [favor]**" (Gal 5:4). We could say the last phrase as "fallen out of favor." His point was that Gentiles were now being favored by God as His people, but if they became circumcised with the intent of placing themselves under the Old Covenant, they would be rejecting God's favor.

Recognizing that *charis* simply means favor opens our understanding of Paul's letter to the Ephesians in particular because God purposed from the beginning the salvation of a chosen people to Himself, "According as he hath **chosen us in him** before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). He would favor these people above all other people and save them by sending His Son Jesus Christ to shed His blood for their sins, "To the praise of the glory of his **grace [favor]**, wherein he hath made us **accepted [favored] in the beloved**. In whom we have redemption **through his blood, the forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of his **grace [favor]**" (Eph 1:6-7).

God's only begotten Son was seen figuratively and prophetically in Adam, while His chosen people the *ekklesia* (church, assembly, congregation) were seen in Adam's wife taken out of him, "And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because **she was taken out of Man**. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall **cleave unto his wife**: and they shall be one flesh." (Gen 2:23-24). Paul quoted from this passage and said it was a mystery that foretold of Christ and the church, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be **joined unto his wife**, and they

two shall be one flesh. **This is a great mystery:** but I speak concerning **Christ and the church [ekklesia 1577].**” (Eph 5:31-32). This is what he meant by, “he hath **chosen us in him** before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4).

## The church is a Jewish body

The Greek *ekklesia* is an assembly, gathering, or congregation of people. This word was used once in the New Testament for God’s people under the Old Covenant, “This is he, that was in the **church [ekklēsia 1577] in the wilderness** with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us” (Act 7:38). The very first time Israel was called a congregation or assembly was during the Exodus on the first Passover, “Speak ye unto all the **congregation [‘ēdā 5712]** of Israel, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man **a lamb**, according to the house of *their* fathers, **a lamb** for an house” (Exo 12:3), “And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole **assembly [qāhēl 6951]** of the **congregation [‘ēdā 5712]** of Israel shall **kill it in the evening**” (Exo 12:6). Thus, the true Passover Lamb shed His precious blood for this assembly of God’s people.

We’re told several times that Gentiles partake of the salvation God provided for His chosen people: “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for **salvation is of the Jews**” (Jhn 4:22); “And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert **grafted in among them**, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Rom 11:17); “It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if **the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things**, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.” (Rom 15:27); “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but **fellowcitizens with the saints**, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:19); “**That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs**, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph 3:6); “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be **partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light**” (Col 1:12); “For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**” (Heb 8:8).

Salvation was provided for the Jews, and the gospel message was sent to them first: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, **beginning at Jerusalem**” (Luk 24:47); “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both **in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea**, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Act 1:8); “**Unto you first** God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Act 3:26); “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that **the word of God should first have been spoken to you:** but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” (Act 13:46); “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; **to the Jew first**, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16); “Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, **of the Jew first**, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, **to the Jew first**, and also to the Gentile” (Rom 2:9-10).

## Christ's faithfulness

“For by grace [*favor*] are ye saved **through faith [*faithfulness*]**; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: **Not of works**, lest any man should boast.” (Eph 2:8-9). Here Paul was not speaking of our faith but Christ's faithfulness. We can be sure of this because he will go on to say a little later, “by the faith [*faithfulness*] of him” (Eph 3:11-12), “because of Christ's faithfulness” (NET). He was teaching salvation by Christ's faithfulness, not by the works of the law, “**through faith [*faithfulness*]**; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: **Not of works**” (Eph 2:8-9). This corresponds to what he also taught the Galatians and Romans:

We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet we know that no one is justified **by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ**. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified **by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the law**, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. (Galatians 2:15-16 NET).

For no one is declared righteous before him **by the works of the law**, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. But now **apart from the law** the righteousness of God (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed - namely, the righteousness of God through **the faithfulness of Jesus Christ** for all who believe. (Romans 3:20-22 NET)

## The gift of God

“For **by grace [*favor*]** are ye saved **through faith [*faithfulness*]**; and that not of yourselves: *it is* **the gift of God**” (Eph 2:8). Calvinists insist that we believe because we're saved and not that we're saved because we believe. This is because in their soteriological system it's necessary to get the cart before the horse to stay logically consistent. Therefore, they must maintain that “the gift of God” in this verse is our faith. But Paul wasn't even talking about our faith but Christ's faithfulness. Therefore, all of this wrangling about faith being a gift is a complete non-issue that distracts and wastes our time, “strive not about **words to no profit**, *but* to the **subverting of the hearers**” (2Ti 2:14).

Paul himself settled what he meant by “the gift of God” later in his letter: “If ye have heard of the dispensation of **the grace [*favor*] of God which is given me** to you-ward” (Eph 3:2); “Whereof I was made a minister, according to **the gift of the grace [*favor*] of God given unto me** by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this **grace [*favor*] given**, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;” (Eph 3:7-8); “But unto every one of us is **given grace [*favor*]** according to the measure of **the gift of Christ**” (Eph 4:7). He stated several times that the gift is God's favor—His favor toward His people.

## Christ pleads in our favor

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another **Comforter [*paraklētos* 3875]**” (Jhn 14:16); “But **the Comforter [*paraklētos* 3875]**, *which is the Holy Ghost [*breath*]*” (Jhn 14:26); “But when **the Comforter [*paraklētos* 3875]** is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even the Spirit*

**[breath] of truth**” (Jhn 15:26); “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, **the Comforter [paraklētos 3875]** will not come unto you” (Jhn 16:7).

Just before His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension back to His Father, Christ taught His disciples about the Advocate which is the holy breath. Most English translations render the Greek *paraklētos* either as “Comforter,” “Counselor,” or “Helper,” but the New International Version renders it best as “Advocate.” John later wrote that the *paraklētos* is Jesus Christ Himself in His role as our Advocate with the Father, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have **an advocate [paraklētos 3875] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous**” (1Jo 2:1).

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the noun *advocate* as “one who pleads the cause of another,” and the verb *advocate* as “to plead **in favor of.**” Dictionary.com defines the noun as “a person who pleads for or in behalf of another; **intercessor,**” and the verb “to speak or write **in favor of.**” As God’s people, the favor we’re shown is that His Son advocates or intercedes for us at His right hand. When we sin and confess it, He advocates on our behalf and the Father forgives us, “**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins ... And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father**” (1Jo 1:9, 2:1). Also, when we’re falsely accused and condemned by our enemies, He intercedes and the Father justifies or vindicates us from the charges, “Who shall lay any thing **to the charge of God’s elect [chosen]? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.**” (Rom 8:33-34). God’s people are blessed with this favor before Him.

This is also what Paul taught the Ephesians, “Which he wrought in Christ, when he **raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places**” (Eph 1:20), “Even when we were **dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace [favor] ye are saved;)** And hath **raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places** in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-6). It’s by God’s favor that we’re saved—the favor of being represented by His Son seated at His right hand. Paul then went on to reiterate this favor by which we are saved, “**For by grace [favor] are ye saved through faith [faithfulness]**” (Eph 2:8). God’s people are saved by God’s favor through Christ’s faithfulness to die for their sins.

## Conclusion

Bible translations have effectively expunged the idea of God’s favor toward His chosen people by rendering *charis* as “grace” throughout the New Testament. Rather than salvation coming to the world by God favoring His people and sending His Son to die for them, the gospel has become a generalized salvation to everyone that is severed from the promises made to Abraham.

Jesus Christ was talking about Himself as the Advocate through God’s holy breath (Jhn 14:16,26,15:26,16:7). An advocate pleads in favor of another and this is what He does. He doesn’t intercede for the rest of the world but only for God’s people. Therefore, His people are shown favor over everyone else. But the good news is that all nations and ethnicities of people can join themselves to this assembly of people and partake of this favor!

Paul’s statement, “For **by grace [favor] are ye saved through faith [faithfulness];** and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God: Not of works,** lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8), is taken to mean that people are saved by God’s grace through faith—through believing some facts about Jesus are true. However, Paul was saying

that God's people are saved by His favor through Christ's faithfulness to shed His blood for them—that they're saved by the gift of His favor.