

OPEN YOUR BIBLE

Study Companion

Charis — χάρις

Grace, Favor, Gift, Thanks—and What the Greek Word Can Actually Tell Us

A printable companion for tracing charis through favor, salvation, gratitude, generosity, service, speech, and transformed life.

Use this packet with your Bible open. Do not begin by forcing every occurrence into one favorite definition. Let the sentence tell you what charis is doing.

WORD-STUDY RULE

A theological truth can be bigger than the dictionary definition of a word. Charis can carry favor, graciousness, gift, benefit, gratitude, or a gracious act depending on context.

Don't take my word for it—Open your Bible.

Before You Study

Record your starting position before you edit it.

If someone asked you to define grace in one sentence, what would you say?

Have you heard “grace means unmerited favor”? What do you think that definition gets right?

What might it leave out?

Do you currently think grace and obedience are opposites? Explain.

Keep These Questions Beside You

For every occurrence ask:

Who is showing favor or giving the benefit?

Who receives it?

Is charis describing favorable regard, a gift, a gracious act, gratitude, speech, ministry, or saving favor?

What in the immediate context selects the sense?

What theological conclusions does the passage support—and what does the word alone NOT prove?

Lexical Snapshot

χάρις — charis

Possible contextual senses include:

- favor / favorable regard
- grace / graciousness
- goodwill / kindness
- benefit / favor received
- gracious act or gift
- gratitude / thanks
- gracious speech
- divine saving favor
- divine provision for ministry or service

Related words:

- χάρισμα — charisma: gracious gift
- χαρίζομαι — charizomai: give graciously / forgive in some contexts
- χαριτώ — charitoō: bestow favor / favor greatly

Why should related words illuminate one another without being treated as synonyms?

My First Working Definition

Write a careful one-sentence definition before studying the passages.

Grace Before the New Testament

Genesis 6:8 LXX

READ: Genesis 6:5–9

Hebrew: חֵן — chen

Greek Septuagint: χάρις — charis

What does Noah “find” in Yehovah’s eyes?

What comes immediately before and after that statement?

What does the verse prove about grace/favor before the New Testament?

Exodus 33:12–17 LXX

What does Moses ask for because he has found favor?

How is favor connected with Yehovah's presence and guidance?

EVIDENCE CHECK

Charis already belongs to the Greek Scriptures as a word for favor. The New Testament deepens its theological use; it does not invent divine favor from nothing.

Ordinary Favor

COMPARE:

- Luke 2:52
- Acts 2:47
- Acts 7:10

Who has favor with whom in each passage?

Would “unmerited favor” communicate each occurrence naturally? Why or why not?

What does this show about the lexical range of charis?

Charis as Thanks

READ:

- Romans 6:17
- Romans 7:25
- 1 Corinthians 15:57

How do most English translations render charis here?

What relationship exists between favor received and gratitude expressed?

SEMANTIC RANGE

The same noun can move from favor/benefit on the giver's side to gratitude/thanks on the receiver's side.

Grace as a Gracious Act

2 Corinthians 8–9

READ: 2 Corinthians 8:1–9; 8:16–24; 9:6–15

What gracious action is Paul organizing?

Where does grace appear as God's favor?

Where does grace describe participation, generosity, or the collection itself?

What does this add to your definition?

Grace and Gifts

COMPARE:

- Romans 12:3–8
- Ephesians 4:7–16
- 1 Peter 4:10–11

How are charis and charisma related?

What kinds of service flow from grace in these passages?

Why is a gracious gift not identical to grace itself?

Grace Versus Wages

Romans 4:1–5

What contrast does Paul make between wages and grace?

When does payment become a debt rather than a gift?

What does this passage support about the phrase “unmerited favor”?

Does the passage say every act of obedience is an attempt to earn salvation?

Grace and Works

Romans 11:1-6

What is the immediate subject around “if by grace, no longer by works”?

What kind of claim or boasting does grace exclude?

Ephesians 2:1-10

What is salvation NOT from?

What are the saved created FOR?

DO NOT COLLAPSE THE CATEGORIES

Works as the grounds of debt or boasting are not the same category as good works produced in a life rescued by grace.

Grace and Justification

READ:

- Romans 3:21-26
- Romans 5:1-2, 15-21

What does grace accomplish in these passages?

Who is the giver?

What prevents the recipient from boasting?

Under Grace

Romans 6

READ: Romans 6:1-23

What question follows the statement that grace abounds where sin increases?

What does Paul reject?

What question immediately follows “not under law but under grace”?

What kind of life does Paul describe instead?

INTERPRETIVE BOUNDARY

Whatever “under grace” means, Paul explicitly refuses to let it mean permission to remain in sin.

Grace Trains

Titus 2:11-14

What has appeared?

What does grace train believers to renounce?

What does grace train believers to practice?

What did Yeshua give Himself to accomplish?

How does this passage complicate the slogan “grace means obedience does not matter”?

Grace That Works

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

What does Paul say grace accomplished in him?

How does Paul describe his labor?

Was labor the cause of grace or fruit of grace?

Ephesians 3:7-8

How are grace, ministry, gift, and power related?

CAREFUL WORDING

Grace can be effective and empowering without “power” becoming the universal dictionary definition of charis.

Grace in Speech

READ:

- Luke 4:22
- Ephesians 4:29
- Colossians 4:5–6

What does charis communicate about speech in these contexts?

What kind of speech gives benefit to the hearer?

Throne of Grace

Hebrews 4:14–16

Why are believers invited to draw near?

What do they receive?

How does this passage make grace relational rather than merely abstract?

Greater Grace

James 4:1–10

Who does Yehovah oppose?

To whom does He give grace?

Why is humility different from earning grace?

Fallen From Grace

Galatians 5:1-6

What controversy surrounds circumcision in this paragraph?

What does Paul say some are seeking through law?

Is “fallen from grace” attached to every act of obedience or to a particular justification claim?

John 1

READ: John 1:14-18

What is Yeshua full of?

What has been received from His fullness?

Does John explicitly say Torah was evil or graceless?

What does the passage emphasize about Yeshua?

Test the Claims

Claim 1

“Charis literally means unmerited favor.”

EVIDENCE FOR:

EVIDENCE AGAINST MAKING IT UNIVERSAL:

MY CONCLUSION:

Claim 2

“Grace is divine power.”

EVIDENCE FOR EFFECTIVE / EMPOWERING GRACE:

EVIDENCE THAT POWER IS NOT THE UNIVERSAL GLOSS:

MY CONCLUSION:

Claim 3

“Grace means obedience no longer matters.”

PASSAGES TO TEST:

Romans 6; Titus 2; Ephesians 2:8–10

MY CONCLUSION:

Claim 4

“Grace and works can never appear together positively.”

PASSAGES TO TEST:

Romans 4; Ephesians 2; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Titus 2

MY CONCLUSION:

Claim 5

“The Old Testament was law; the New Testament is grace.”

PASSAGES TO TEST:

Genesis 6:8 LXX; Exodus 33 LXX; John 1; Romans 6

MY CONCLUSION:

Coffee Break Reflection

Which definition of grace did you bring into this study?

Which passage stretched that definition the most?

Have you ever used “grace” to mean something the passage itself did not say?

Which matters more to you now: protecting a slogan or letting the word keep its biblical range?

Build Your Definition

Complete the evidence map.

Charis can mean ordinary favor

Evidence:

Charis can mean thanks / gratitude

Evidence:

Charis can name a gracious act or gift

Evidence:

Charis can describe saving favor

Evidence:

Charis can equip / produce service

Evidence:

Charis is not wages owed

Evidence:

Charis does not mean permission to sin

Evidence:

Final Working Definition

Write your definition of charis now.

In one sentence, explain why “unmerited favor” is useful but incomplete.

In one sentence, explain the relationship between grace and obedience.

Personal Application

Where are you still tempted to treat Yehovah as though He owes you?

Where are you tempted to use grace as permission rather than rescue?

What gracious gift, opportunity, or ability have you received that should become service to someone else?

What would it look like for your speech to “give grace” this week?

Write a short prayer of gratitude to Yehovah for grace you could never purchase.

Notes

